

Underground Russia: Revolutionary profiles and sketches from life

Sergei Stepniak

Contents

The Moscow Attempt	3
I. A Band of Hermits	3
II. The Mine	4
Two Escapes	8
I.	8
II.	11
The Ukrivateli	
(The Concealers)	15
I.	15
II.	18
III.	20
The Secret Press	23
A Trip to St. Petersburg	28
Introduction	28
I.	31
II.	33
III.	34
IV.	38
V.	40
VI.	42

The Moscow Attempt

I. A Band of Hermits

Upon the outskirts of the old capital of Russia, just where that half Asiatic city, immense as the antique Babylon or Nineveh, is at last lost in the distance, and its houses, becoming fewer, are scattered among the market gardens and fields, and the immense uncultivated plains which surround it on all sides, as the sea surrounds an islet; on these outskirts is a little cottage, one story high, old, grimy with age, and half in ruins.

Although in a capital, this poor dwelling is not out of harmony with the district. The other houses round about have the same mean and rough aspect; and all this part of the immense city resembles a little village lost in the plains of Russia, rather than a district of one of the largest capitals in Europe. In summer, grass grows in the streets, so high that a cavalry regiment might exercise there; and in the rainy autumn, these streets are full of puddles and miniature lakes, in which the ducks and geese swim about.

There is no movement. From time to time a passerby is seen, and if he does not belong to the district the boys stare at him until he is out of sight. If by chance a carriage, or a hired vehicle, arrives in these parts, all the shutters, green, red, and blue, are hurriedly opened, and girls and women peep forth, curious to see such an extraordinary sight.

All the inhabitants of this tranquil district know each other, for they were born there, and have grown old there. They are simple, patriarchal people, who seem in no way to belong to modern civilisation. They live exactly as their fathers lived two or three centuries ago. Almost all belong to the old religious sects which were formed in the seventeenth century, when the Patriarch Nikon, a gifted but despotic and implacable man, wished to correct various orthographical errors in the old books. Refusing to recognise the corrections of Nikon, which he strove to impose by force upon the zealots of the ancient rite, these sects even rejected all the ordinances of the State which supported the ferocious Patriarch, especially after the reforms of Peter the Great, effected according to the example of the infidel Germans. They even rejected the European dress, which the reforming Czar wanted to impose upon them by violence.

Cruelly persecuted for a couple of centuries, these sects spread notwithstanding throughout all Russia among the poorer classes, and now number at least ten millions of followers. Their principal centre is the old capital, abandoned by the Emperors, like the old religion. The Preobragenskoie and Rogoscoe districts, which we are describing, received their names from the two cemeteries where so many of the martyrs of these sects are buried; they are their real capitals, where their priests and bishops reside clandestinely, and where their ecumenical councils are held.

It is true, the corruption of the age is beginning to invade even these last retreats of the ancient faith. When on festival evenings the people go forth and sit, according to Eastern custom, outside their houses, chatting with their neighbours, it is no unusual thing to see some lively young man who works in one of the city manufactories playing the harmonica instead of the ancient guitar,

and wearing a jacket with bright buttons, instead of the ancient straight coat, besides boots with heels — which things are German abominations. It is even related that some of them secretly smoke tobacco, which is a heinous offence, as it makes a man resemble not God, but the Devil in person, who in the lives of the saints is always represented with filthy smoke issuing from his mouth.

The old folks mournfully shake their heads and say that the end of the world is at hand, as the ancient devotion is dying out.

The occupants of the house which we have above referred to do not belong, however, to the original inhabitants of this patriarchal district. They have newly come to reside there. Notwithstanding this, they are not unfavourably regarded in the neighbourhood, for they are good, simple, God-fearing people. The family consists of husband and wife. They are expecting every moment the arrival of their old parents.

Although the wife seems very young, she is an excellent housewife; the husband, an artisan of Saratoff, is about thirty-two or thirty-three, but is very grave for his age. Evidently he, also, is a member of the sect. He does not smoke tobacco, he does not shave — which is also considered a very grave transgression, as it takes from a man the likeness of God, in whose image, as is well known, he was created. True, the newcomer wears boots with heels, and a jacket. But this perhaps is 'from fear of the Jews,' or perhaps because he belongs to another sect, which allows these things, and then no censure attaches to him, for the various sects display perfect tolerance towards each other.

There was an important indication which assisted in changing this friendly suspicion into a certainty.

The family was two in number. There could be no doubt, however, that the house was occupied by several persons; provisions to such an extent were purchased, that, however hearty their appetites, they could not consume them alone. Then, too, some of the old folks during their sleepless nights had heard the creaking of the gate, and even the sound of vehicles, evidently bringing people from a distance. 'Who could they be but brethren?' the old folks said to each other in confidence. Certainly no one would have gone and breathed a word of this to their common enemy the policeman standing there at the corner of the street. No one would have dreamed of it.

These pious folks were not mistaken. The house was in fact occupied by an entire band of hermits — miners by trade. The vehicles which came by night brought dynamite and the necessary instruments for its explosion.

It was the Moscow mine.

II. The Mine

The excavation of the Moscow mine, by which the Imperial train was to be blown up, commenced about the middle of September, and finished two months afterwards, was part of the vast plan of a triple attempt of the same kind, which was to be carried out during the journey of the Emperor from the Crimea to St. Petersburg, without mentioning three others which belonged to about the same time.

The mines under the railway line were placed at three different points; near Moscow, near Alexandrovsk, and near Odessa.

It was believed, therefore, that the blow could not possibly fail.

Owing, however, to a combination of various circumstances, this was precisely what happened. The preparation's upon the Odessa railway, together with those upon the Italianskaia, recently discovered, for blowing up the Imperial carriage while passing through the streets of the city, had to be abandoned, owing to a change in the itinerary of the Emperor. In that of Alexandrovsk, organised by Geliaboff and Okladsky, the mine, owing to some defect of the capsule, did not explode, although the battery was closed at the right moment, and thus the Imperial train massed uninjured, over a precipice, to the bottom of which it would infallibly have rolled at the slightest shock. The two previous attempts failed in the same manner; that of blowing up the stone bridge in St. Petersburg organised by the same Geliaboff, and Tetiorka, as the latter did not keep his appointment; and that of blowing up the Imperial steamer near Nicolaieff, organised by Logodenko, the sole attempt discovered by the police. By the merest chance they paid a domiciliary visit to the very apartment in which the electric wires were placed.

In Moscow alone, the Terrorists were fortunate enough to make at least an attempt. Yet it was precisely there that the undertaking seemed most difficult, and the probabilities of success much less, owing especially to the cyclopean labor, which required many men, whom it was difficult to keep concealed, and to the vicinity of the capital, where the surveillance was so strict.

I will not relate what is already known from the newspapers of that date. I simply propose to draw attention to two circumstances, as they were related to me by a friend who took part in the undertaking, and for whose veracity I can unhesitatingly answer.

The first relates to the organisation, the second to the execution of the project. Both are very characteristic, not only of this attempt, but of all the undertakings of the Terrorists; I mean the extreme simplicity, which is in such flagrant contradiction with all the preconceived ideas upon Nihilism, and the means and methods of execution, attributed to it.

It is generally believed that the Nihilists have enormous means at their disposition. This is a great error, and the Moscow attempt is the best proof of it. The expenses of the struggle are so immense, that the Nihilists are always hunting about for a few roubles. They are thus compelled to do everything in the most economical manner, often at the risk of their lives.

As a matter of fact, the Egyptian labours of the Moscow mine, and of the two other railway attempts organised for the same month of November, cost in all the pitiful sum of from 3,000 lire to 4,000 lire, including travelling expenses. The other undertakings, of less extent, cost still less. Thus the attempt to liberate one of the prisoners condemned at the trial 'of the 193' while he was being taken from St. Petersburg to the central prison of Karkoff, was organised upon a large scale; five horses, a vehicle, and a supply of arms had to be bought, and the expenses paid of a large body of sentinels, placed in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kursk, and Karkoff to watch every movement of the police. Yet this attempt, according to the detailed accounts sent in to the Organisation by those who were entrusted with it, cost only 4,500 roubles, and some odd money, or about 600 lire.

Spending so little, the Terrorists are often compelled to fill up, so to speak, with their own flesh and blood, the cracks in the edifice, caused by undue economy of wood. Thus, in the Moscow attempt, from want of money a loan had to be contracted, upon the mortgage of the very house in which the mine was being made. A survey had then to be made by an expert, which is always done in the presence of the police, and this when the mine was already almost finished. Upon the danger of such a survey I need not insist. The work itself was carried out at the least possible expense.

Thus, the instrument for boring was not obtained till towards the last, when, owing to their excessive toil, the miners were absolutely exhausted. At first the work was done by hand, and although, owing to the wet weather, the passage was always full of water, which dripped from the top and collected at the bottom, so that they had to work drenched in freezing water, standing in it up to their knees, and even to lie down in the mud, the miners had no waterproof clothing, such as divers wear, which would have preserved them from so much suffering in this horrible Dantean hole.

In order to keep the passage in a right direction, means and instruments were employed, which a surveyor would have scornfully rejected. Thus no astrolabe was bought, not even a compass with a quadrant, but a mere pocket compass, only used for drawing up military plans.

By means of this compass, the cardinal points were found, with more or less precision, and to indicate them inside the passage, little pieces of iron were used attached by a wire along the beams.

Notwithstanding all this, when the mine was examined, after the explosion, by the engineers, they found that it was extremely well made. Diligence made up for the defects of the implements of labour, — and good spirits sustained strength.

It would be a grave error to picture this terrible band invested with the traditional attributes of the theatrical conspirator. All the meetings of the Nihilists are distinguished by their simplicity, and by the complete absence of that parade and ostentation so thoroughly opposed to the Russian character, the tendency of which is towards the humorous.

In graver matters in which life or lives have to be risked, or even undoubtedly lost, everything is settled among us in two words. There is no display of oratorical art. There is no passionate harangue, for it would merely cause a smile, as being completely out of place. The public is not admitted to our discussions. Everything is done by people who thoroughly know each other, and who perfectly understand what there is to do.

Why, therefore, make a display of what is understood of itself? Rarely, indeed, does some phrase or word vibrate, involuntarily, with a deeper tone, or some flash of enthusiasm shine forth in a glance. If some one not understanding our language had been present at a meeting of the Terrorists, in which the most terrible schemes were planned, he would have taken it for a gathering of peaceful folks, speaking calmly and simply upon some harmless matter.

I say this for the guidance of the worthy novelists who have had the goodness to represent types of Nihilist life. All make them melodramatic heroes, who, among us, instead of exciting the enthusiasm attributed to them, would have produced precisely the opposite effect; for they would undoubtedly have aroused suspicions of their firmness by too much eloquence. We have all heard of the dog whose bark is worse than his bite.

The Moscow mine may serve as an excellent illustration of what I am saying. As to the danger which hung over all who were in the fatal house, it certainly could neither be exaggerated nor forgotten. According to the Russian laws, in any attempt against the life of the Emperor, all the accomplices, without any distinction of degree, including the non-informers, are punished with death. This death was hovering at every moment, night and day, over the heads of the miners, and from time to time they felt the cold flapping of its sombre wings, and knew that it was ready to seize them.

Some days before the Emperor passed, the police went to this house on some frivolous pretext. The miners were immediately warned. The police saw only the legitimate occupants of the house, and everything was arranged in such a manner as to excite not the least suspicion. Yet the

slightest embarrassment, the slightest trembling of the voice, might have caused mistrust, and led to a stricter search, by which everything would have been discovered.

At other times it was to be feared that some suspicions would arise in the minds of prying neighbours (as may be read in the report of the trial of the sixteen), suspicions which were so well averted by Sophia Perovskaia.

To show that the miners were under no illusion as to the fate which awaited them, it will be sufficient to recall the fact of the bottle of nitro-glycerine placed inside the room.

Notwithstanding all this, unflagging good spirits prevailed in the household throughout the whole period of the work. At dinner time, when all met, there was chatting and joking as though nothing were at stake, and it was then that Sophia Perovskaia, at the very moment when she had in her pocket a loaded revolver intended to blow up everything and everybody into the air, most frequently delighted the company with her silvery laugh. One of the miners even composed some comic verses, in which was related in burlesque style the various vicissitudes and incidents of the mining work.

Two Escapes

I.

One evening in the middle of January, 1880 — I forget the exact day — some exiles met in Geneva to take a cup of tea at the house of one of their number, M. G.

It was a somewhat numerous party, six or seven persons perhaps, and, what is much rarer in the gatherings of the exiles, it was rather a lively one. Our charming hostess was seated at the piano, which she played with much taste and feeling, and she sang to us several Ukrainian songs. We were all somewhat excited by the music. We joked and laughed. The principal subject of our conversation was the escape from Siberia of one of our friends, News of which had reached us that very day.

All the particulars of the escape then known having been related, and all the observations and conjectures with regard to it having been made, a moment of silence followed; of that dead, insupportable silence, when the Russians say, 'A fool has been born' or 'The angel of silence is hovering over us,' according to their respective tastes.

Under the influence of this conversation respecting the escape of our friends, the idea came into my mind to propose to the company, which included Kropotkin and Bokanovski, to relate to each other the particulars of their own escapes, as almost everyone had succeeded in escaping.

It was owing to this proposal, which met with general approval, that I am able to write this sketch.

Kropotkin parried the proposal, saying that he had been compelled to relate the particulars of his escape over and over again, until he was quite sick of the subject. He was obliged, however, to yield to the importunity of the company.

'The firm determination to escape at all hazards,' he began, I never left me from the first day of my arrest. But if there is anything impossible in the world, it is to escape from the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. I drew up plans, or rather, indulged in wild fancies, as I could not but perceive that they were only vain dreams.'

After this prelude, Kropotkin related how he was transferred to the Nicholas Hospital, how he induced those in charge of him always to believe him in *extremis*, etc. I will not repeat all this, for I have already spoken of it in his biography. I pass at once to the main facts.

The doctor ordered me daily exercise, and about one o'clock I was taken into the large courtyard of the Hospital. A sentinel, musket in hand, was always by my side.

'I began to take close note of everything, so as to draw up my plans.

'The courtyard was large. The gate, ordinarily shut, was then open; for at that period of the year (it was July) the Hospital was taking in its supplies of wood for the winter. As this, however, would last only a few weeks, no sentinel had been placed at the gate. It was a great advantage.

I walked up and down at the bottom of the courtyard, exactly opposite the gate. The sentinel was always near, between me and the gate. As, however, I walked more slowly than a tortoise, which, as is well known, wearies a vigorous man more than he would be wearied by leaps and

bounds, the soldier had recourse to the following stratagem: he followed a line parallel to mine, but five paces nearer the gate. He was thus able to make his walk ten paces longer than mine, for at each extremity of his line he was always at the same distance from the gate, as I was at the extremity of my line. This calculation, which the sentinel evidently made with his eye, was absolutely correct theoretically. I, however, had thought, that if once we both began to run, the soldier, by a natural instinct, would endeavour to seize me as quickly as possible, and would therefore rush upon me, instead of running directly to the gate to cut off my retreat. He would thus describe two sides of the triangle, of which I should describe the third alone. Upon this point, thus, I had an advantage. I might hope to reach the gate before the sentinel, running at the same speed. I hoped, however to run faster, but was not certain of it, being much weakened by illness

‘If a vehicle were waiting at the gate for me, so that I might easily jump into it, I said to myself I should have a good chance of escaping.

‘When I was about to send a letter to my friends containing the outlines of my plan, I received another from them on the same subject. I began a correspondence. I need not relate the various plans and projects proposed and abandoned; there were so many. Several questions had to be settled; whether my friends should enter the courtyard as they proposed, and engage in some way or other the attention of the sentinel; whether the vehicle should await me at the gate, or at the corner of the hospital, where it would not be so much in sight; whether one of our party should post himself there, or the driver should remain alone.

‘I proposed the most simple and natural plan, which was finally adopted. No one should enter the courtyard. The vehicle should await me at the gate, because I felt too weak to run as far as the corner. An intimate friend proposed to post himself there to assist me, if necessary, in getting in more quickly, and especially in dressing me directly afterwards, as I should be compelled to escape with scarcely anything on except my trousers and shirt.

‘All we had to cover us in the hospital was an invalid’s dressing-gown. It was so large, so inconvenient, and so long, that in walking I was obliged to carry my train upon my arm. To run in such a garb was absolutely impossible. It must be thrown off at all hazards, before I could take to my heels. But this must be done with the rapidity of lightning, for a single moment lost might ruin all. For many days in succession I practised this performance in my cell. I found that, to do it with the utmost possible celerity, the operation must be divided into three elementary movements, like the musketry exercise of soldiers, — one, two, three.

‘The greatest difficulty remained; the selection of the moment. This depended upon the condition of the streets through which we had to pass. A string of wood carts, a detachment of passing soldiers, a mounted Cossack, might upset the attempt, especially as the streets through which we had to pass were very narrow and winding. They must therefore be watched and I must be informed when they were free from all obstacles. For this purpose sentinels had to be placed at four different points. The fifth sentinel, receiving information from the four others, had to give me the decisive signal at the proper moment. The signal was to be an air-ball, which would ascend at a given spot behind the high wall of the courtyard in which I took exercise.

‘I had also proposed to place a sixth sentinel at the corner of a lane a little beyond, because, according to my calculations, this very narrow lane was so long, that a vehicle being in it at the moment of our departure would infallibly have stopped our progress. It could not reach the end while we were passing from the gate of the hospital to the entrance of this lane. As men were few, however, we did without this sixth sentinel.

‘On the day fixed I went to take my exercise, full of hope and excitement. I looked again and again towards that part of the wall where the red air-ball was to ascend. Nothing was to be seen. My time was drawing to an end; still nothing. It ended, and with it my hopes. With the impressionable imagination of a prisoner, I gave way to the gloomiest conjectures. I felt convinced that everything had broken down.

‘Nothing much, however, had happened. By a singular chance, a red air-ball could not be found anywhere in the Gostini Dvor, or in any of the toy-shops, though a whole morning had been spent in looking for one. Only white and blue balls could be had, which my friends would not take, and with good reason; for no change whatever, however insignificant it may appear, is ever permitted in signals. They hurriedly purchased a red india-rubber ball in a gutta-percha shop, and filled it with gas of their own manufacture. But the ball turned out so badly, that at the proper moment when the sentinel let go the string, instead of rising high into the air it went up only a few yards and fell to the ground before reaching the top of the courtyard wall, The sentinel frenziedly endeavoured to throw it with his hands, but this was even less successful.

‘To this fortuitous circumstance I owed many hours of torture, and, at the same time, my safety; for at the very moment when the ball was sent up into the air, a long string of wood carts entered the lane of which I have spoken where no sentinel had been placed. They would infallibly have stopped our progress, and all would have been lost.

‘Another interval followed for the necessary correspondence in order to arrange the modifications, which were indispensable. Another sentinel was posted, naturally, at the entrance of the lane. But this required a modification of the entire plan, as there were no means of combining the signals of all the five sentinels outside the wall of the courtyard so as to give me the decisive signal. Either additional sentinels would have to be introduced, for the mere transmission of the signals, or the decisive signal would have to be changed.

‘The latter expedient was chosen.

‘One of our party hired a room on the third storey directly opposite the hospital. From the window could be seen not only all the five sentinels, but the courtyard also, where I took exercise. The signal was to be given to me by means of a violin, which my friend was to play whenever all the signals were favourable, and the music was to cease when any of them became unfavourable. This mode also presented the great advantage of indicating to me repeatedly the favourable time for flight, leaving to me the selection of the proper moment.

‘The first day, when everything was ready and the vehicle already awaited me at the gate, it was I who caused my friends some cruel moments; my illness increased, and I felt so weak that I did not dare to make the attempt. I did -not even go down, therefore, into the courtyard, and they thought that the suspicions of the police had been aroused, and that I was no longer to be allowed to take exercise.

‘I recovered in two days and resolved to profit by the interval which my illness had given me.

‘I prepared everything; the shoes, the dressing-gown, which required a little ripping-up in order to be thrown off more quickly – everything.

‘I went to take my exercise. No sooner had I entered the courtyard than I heard the violin. The music lasted for five minutes, but I did not care to profit by it immediately, for at first the surveillance instinctively is always somewhat greater. But lo! The Violin stopped. Two minutes afterwards some carts with wood entered the Courtyard. The violin recommenced.

‘This time I was determined to turn it to account. I looked at the sentinel; he was walking along his usual line, some five paces distant, between me and the gate. I looked at his musket. It

was loaded'; I knew it. Would he fire or not? Probably not, because I, being so near, he would father wish to seize hold of me. His bayonet was more dangerous, in case, during this long run, my strength failed me. I had, however, already made my calculations even upon this point. If I remained in prison I was certain to die. "Now or never," I said to myself. I seized my dressing-gown ... One! ...

'But lo! The violin ceased.

'I felt as though I should drop.

'A moment afterwards, however, the music recommenced; a patrol at that very moment had passed through one of the lanes.

'Directly the sentinel reached the extremity of his line, without a moment's pause I threw off my dressing-gown with three well-practised movements, and I was off like an arrow. The sentinel, with a howl, rushed at to seize me, instead of running straight to the gate to prevent my escape, and thus described his two sides of the triangle, as I foresaw. I was so weak, however, that those who saw our desperate race from above said that the soldier was within three paces of me, and that his bayonet, which he thrust forward, was within an ace of touching me. This, however, I did not see. I only heard his howling and that of the carters who were unloading the wood at the bottom of the courtyard.

'On reaching the gate I saw a vehicle; but for a moment I was in doubt whether it was ours, for I could not recognise my friend in the officer who was on the alert in the street. To make him turn round I clapped my hands, to the surprise of the friends who were observing this scene. It was taken by them as a sign of joy. The officer turned round. I recognised him, and in less time than it takes to say these words I was inside the vehicle, which went off like a flash of lightning, and I was wrapped in a military cloak which my friend had in readiness, as well as an officer's cap.

'At the hospital, as we afterwards learnt, an incredible uproar followed. The officer of the guard hastened out with his soldiers, at the shouts of the sentinel. Completely losing his head, he tore his hair, and exclaimed: "I am ruined! I am ruined! Run after him. Follow him. Follow him!"

'He was incapable, however, of giving any orders. One of our party, the signalman, the very one who played the violin, hastily descended into the street, and approaching the officer, began to exhibit the utmost compassion for the state he was in, actually asking him what had happened, who had escaped, how, when, where, etc. The frenzied officer tried to reply to him, and thus lost precious time.

'An old woman gave a terrible piece of advice.

"They will go a roundabout way," she said, "and then make straight for the Nevski. There can't be a doubt about it. Take out the horses from these omnibuses [there were some at the hospital gate], and cut off their escape. It is the simplest thing possible."

'This was exactly the course we were adopting, but the old crone's advice was not followed.'

II.

When Kropotkin had finished his narrative, the turn came of John Bokanovski, surnamed the Cossack, because being a native of the Ukraine, he resembled the ancient Cossacks of that country, by his courage, his imperturbable coolness, and his taciturnity.

Everyone turned towards him. He took his little wooden pipe from his mouth, and said 'Why, there's nothing to relate. He came, took us, and we went out. That's all.'

'No, no!' exclaimed those present. 'Relate it all, from beginning to end.'

'Well, then, when the day fixed arrived, he came with the keys of our cells-'

'No, no,' they broke in again. 'Let us have it all. Relate everything from the commencement.'

The Cossack seeing that every way of escape was closed against him, slowly filled his pipe with the air of a man preparing for a long journey, lit it, tried it to see if it drew properly, and began his narrative, which contained more words perhaps than the Cossack would ordinarily pronounce in three months at least.

'Michael came to the prison about two months before our flight. It was a very long and difficult business to get him in. At last he succeeded in being received, ' with a false passport of a rustic named Fomenko, first as a mere odd-man, and afterwards as a warder.

'In, a short time, by his diligence in the performance of his duties, and his unexceptionable conduct, he succeeded in gaining the favour of all his superiors. A month afterwards, he was promoted to the rank of head warder in one of the corridors of the prisoners confined for ordinary offences.

'In order to give the Governor of the prison a splendid proof of his excellent moral qualities, Michael, acting on the advice of Stefanovic, went one day to play the spy upon him, while the latter was writing, expressly for the purpose in his cell, a note of no importance whatever, so as to be taken *in flagrante delicto*.

'The Governor would not, however, take advantage of this denunciation.

'It should be stated that in the prison at Kieff, the position of the political prisoners was quite exceptional at that time. The Terrorism which at the commencement struck at the secondary officials, produced such a panic fear at Kieff that everyone, from the Procurator to the Governor of the prison, vied with the rest in paying court to us; for they all feared they would be killed at our first signal. When the Governor learned that it was that very Stefanovic, the most feared of all, who was writing, 'he said, 'Let him write,' and did nothing more. From that day, however, Michael had gained his heart.

'In order to make himself agreeable to us, the political prisoners, the Governor had appointed as our head warder, a certain Nikita, an excellent man, as good as gold. It was essential, however, to get rid of him at all hazards, as, on his post becoming vacant, it would most probably be given to Michael.

'This, however, was no easy matter. The worthy man had done nothing whatever to us, so we audaciously invented offences which he had not, even thought of committing, in order that we might complain to the Governor, who censured him, reprimanded him, and threatened him, although he was not in the least to blame. But the honest fellow, instead of growing angry with us, and committing, as we hoped, some imprudent act, bore all quite quietly, repeating

"Jesus Christ suffered. I also will suffer."

'We were in despair. At last Valerian Ossinsky, who was organising our escape outside, luckily thought of going to the tavern which Nikita frequented, and, having made his acquaintance there, as though by accident, said he was in want of a book-keeper for a sugar refinery in the country. The conditions were very advantageous, and Nikita swallowed the bait. Having received his travelling expenses, and a month's pay in advance, Nikita resigned his situation in the prison, as he had to set out immediately. Then came various delays, and then others, until our escape having been arranged and a note effected, his passport was sent to him, and a note in which he was

told that nothing more was wanted of him, and that he would have no difficulty in guessing the reason.

His post in the prison being vacant, the governor went to Stefanovic and Deuc, to speak in a friendly manner with them, respecting the appointment of his successor.

"Don't you think that Fomenko [Michael] would be a very good man?"

Stefanovic made a grimace, and reflected.

"A spy, it seems."

"No, no. He is an excellent fellow." The governor defended him.

"Michael was appointed head warder in the corridor of the political prisoners.

"The most important move was made; but this was not all. He might open the doors of our cells, but how were four of us to pass out of a prison under military guard?"

"Meanwhile not a minute of time was to be lost. Michael's position was terribly dangerous. The prison was crammed with political offenders of all kinds, from mere lads, confined there on suspicion, to Revolutionists seriously compromised. There were prisoners of every rank, and owing to his past activity, Michael was known and recognised by many. No denunciation was to be feared; for Michael, having been for many years "illegal" kept up no direct intercourse except with those who could be trusted. Who, however, could guarantee him against innocent indiscretions especially in such a ticklish matter as this?"

"We were upon tenter-hooks.

"We resolved to take advantage at the earliest possible opportunity, of the favourable position in which we were placed by Michael's appointment. No sooner was he thoroughly established in his new office, than we, fixed the night for our escape.

"The most natural mode of passing out, was that of disguising ourselves as sentinels who, having finished their turn of duty, were leaving to return to their barracks. Michael prepared soldiers' uniforms for two of us, but two others had to remain in civilian dress. For the whole four of us there was only one sword, but we determined not to wait for more.

"On the evening of the day fixed, Michael brought us the military uniforms. We disguised ourselves and then arranged the counterpanes of our beds in such a manner, that in the morning it would appear as though we were asleep.

"At midnight Michael came to open the doors of our cells. But before an unforeseen obstacle arose. The warder on duty, who had to watch all night, came into our corridor at that very moment, and showed not the slightest eagerness to leave it.

"Stefanovic thereupon let a book with loose leaves fall, as though by accident, into the garden. The rest of the leaves were scattered about on the ground, and Stefanovic, turning to Michael, begged him to fetch them at once. Michael sent the warder to pick them up, and take them to the office. While the latter was thus occupied, we noiselessly left our cells, and proceeded towards the entrance.

"When we had passed through the corridor, a terrible occurrence happened at the end. The rope of the alarm-bell was dangling there. Groping along against the wall in utter darkness, I stumbled against something. I felt myself slipping, instinctively stretched out my hands, felt something touch my fingers, and caught hold of it to avoid falling. On the instant, a loud sound boomed throughout the prison. I had caught hold of the bell-rope. The horror, the shame, the absurdity of our unfortunate accident, flashed upon me like lightning. We thought all was lost. Already the noise and the voices of the soldiers on guard, who were hastily mustering, were heard. Michael, however, did not lose his coolness. He told us to hide ourselves in various corners, and ran to the

guard, saying that it was he who had rung the bell by accident. All became quiet again. But then another perplexity arose; having hidden ourselves in various corners, we were within an ace of losing each other in the utter darkness, when we wanted to come forth. Michael had to run hither and thither to get us together again. Once more in order, we started again. The greatest difficulty, however, was yet to come. We had to pass through the gate of the prison before the door-keeper and the sentinel. In this, however, we succeeded admirably. On hearing the voice of Michael, the door-keeper gave him the key to open the wicket, and the sentinel in his box paid no attention to our strange attire.

‘We had advanced a few steps, when lo! an officer stood before us as though he had sprung from the ground. He, however, paid no attention, and we saw the handsome face of Valerian Ossinsky, who, radiant with joy, grasped our hands. He was awaiting us with a vehicle, so as to hurry us at full speed towards the Dnieper, where a skip fitted for a long voyage, and supplied with provisions of every kind, was ready.

‘A moment afterwards we glided into the middle of the river and steered southward. This voyage lasted about a week. By night we hauled our boat up under the thickets on the banks, so as to get some hours’ rest. By day we tugged hard at the oars, and whenever we caught sight on the distant horizon of the smoke of some steamer, we hid ourselves in the rushes which line the Dnieper.

‘On arriving at Kremenciug we again met Ossinsky, who had reached there by railway, and was waiting for us with passports and everything necessary.

‘From him we learnt that the whole city of Kieff had been thrown into commotion, because it was believed we were concealed there.

‘At the prison our escape was not discovered until broad daylight. When it was seen that Michael had also disappeared with us, no one divined the truth. He had inspired such confidence, that the Governor and everybody believed we had killed him, and search was made in vain for his body in every direction.

‘It was not until the necessary verifications had been made, and it was found that his passport was a false one, that the mystery was explained, which had, until then, been incomprehensible.’

Thus finished the Cossack’s narrative.

Others spoke afterwards; but their narratives being of little interests and my space valuable, I will not repeat them.

The Ukrivатели (The Concealers)

I.

We are again in St. Petersburg. I was pursued; I had the police at my heels. Twice I had to change my lodgings, and my passport.

I could not, however, quit the capital for any provincial town. I had a post which I could not leave to anyone, and then I was so fond of that city with its volcanic throbbings and its nervous and ardent life, under an aspect cold and calm.

I hoped that the storm, which from time to time bursts over almost all the 'illegal' men, would after a while subside of itself, and that I should weather it, with a slight increase of precaution in my own house, without needing to have recourse to the Ukrivатели.

But what are these 'Ukrivатели'?

They are a very large class, composed of people in every position, beginning with the aristocracy and the upper middle class, and reaching even to the minor of the Government service, officials in every branch, including the police, who, sharing the revolutionary ideas, take no active part in the struggle, for various reasons, but, making use of their social position, lend powerful support to the combatants, by concealing, whenever necessary, both objects and men.

It would require a special volume to describe this unique body, which is a very large one, and perhaps more mixed than the militant body. I have no pretension, however, to do more than present in this essay of mine some types among those whom I have had the opportunity of personally knowing.

I was just finishing my tea when the *dvornik* entered my room, not the *dvornik* of the house, who is the representative of the supreme power of the police, but our friend the terrible *dvornik* who received this pseudonym as a joke because he would not permit any neglect or transgression in anything relating to the precautions for security prescribed by our 'Constitution.'

'What is the matter?' I asked, offering him a cup, for I knew very well that he would not have come except on 'business.'

'You are under surveillance even here,' he replied. It must be stopped; I have come to take you to a place of concealment.'

I expected it. As no one, however, cares to go to prison of his own free will in a city full of life and activity, I asked the *dvornik* for explanations.

He began his story, I listened to him, and as I sipped my tea, I put some little questions to him in order to convince myself of the reality of the danger. Our life is so occupied, that if we paid attention to everything, we might as well throw ourselves into the Neva at once.

To say, the truth, it was nothing of much moment even now; I was under surveillance, but only slightly. The thing might blow over, and if anybody else but the *dvornik* had come, I should

have rebelled, so as to preserve my independence a little longer; but he was not to be trifled with. After some vain attempts at resistance, I was obliged to consent to place myself in his hands.

I asked him where he wanted to take me.

"To Bucephalus."

I sighed deeply in thinking upon my wretched fate. This Bucephalus was a certain Councillor Tarakanoff, an official in the Ministry of the Interior, and was thus nicknamed because, like the horse of Alexander of Macedon, he was afraid of his own shadow.

He was as timid as a hare, and was afraid of everything. He never stationed himself near the window, because he was afraid of droughts; he never crossed the Neva in a boat, because he was afraid he should be drowned; he never married, because he was afraid he should be jilted.

It is easy to imagine that, with such a custodian, the lot of those under his guardianship would be disagreeable enough.

I remarked to the *dvornik* that it would be better to wait for the evening before leaving, because then the spies he had seen prowling about the house, perhaps would have gone away. He, however, said 'No,' adding that, as for the spies, he would answer for them.

When tea was over, we proceeded to 'clear' the room, that is, to destroy every scrap of paper which might be of use to the police. After informing the mistress of the house that I was going for a few days into the country, and that I would write to her if I stayed, etc., we left.

We had advanced a few steps when I saw two gentlemen at a window, as though on the lookout. The *dvornik*, pointing them out to me with a glance, made an imperceptible sign with his head which signified there they are,' and then another with his chin, which meant let us be off.'

The 'chase' commenced, but it is too uninteresting an occurrence to be described and too common to trouble about. With a man like my companion, it was something of an amusement.

The *dvornik* was a thorough specialist in everything relating to the struggle with the police and the spies, and in this branch had vast knowledge, increased by long and indefatigable study. Having hired a room on purpose, exactly opposite the house of the chief of the Secret Police, he passed whole days in observing everyone who entered. Thus he knew by sight a good number of the St. Petersburg spies, and made a species of classification according to their manners, character, method of surveillance, of giving chase, etc., and could furnish most interesting particulars upon all these details. From having had so much to do with this vile set, he acquired a special ability ill recognising them at a glance, by certain indications, so insignificant that they escape the most observant eyes. He really resembled one of Cooper's Redskins, warring with the hostile race. Then, too, the *dvornik* had the topography of St. Petersburg at his fingers' ends, and knew every one of the houses with two entrances, having made a long and patient study of them.

Passing through these houses, and dodging about in different directions, on foot, and in cabs, he succeeded in half an hour in sweeping away our traces,' as he said and we set out for Tarakanoff's with a profusion of precautions, of Signs and of Signals, which were the weakness of the *dvornik*.

Tarakanoff, a man of about thirty-five, short, fat, and chubby, was expecting us, having been informed of our coming. He himself opened the door, and immediately took us into all inner room. It was an entirely superfluous precautions for he was quite alone in his little lodging of three rooms; but Tarakanoff could not help taking it.

As we were slightly acquainted, no introduction was necessary.

Tarakanoff began by asking if we had not been seen ascending the staircase.

'You know,' he added, 'the lodger downstairs, a woman with great staring eyes, a milliner or something of that sort, always looks at me when she sees I me pass. She's a spy, I am sure of it.'

As we replied in the negative, he was reassured; but thinking to me, said with a serious look: 'In any case you must never leave the place. By day there is the milliner, by night there is the doorkeeper, who is also a spy. It is very dangerous. Everything necessary, I myself will bring you.'

I mournfully assented with a nod especially as I felt that the severe look of the *dvornik* was upon me.

When the latter had gone, Tarakanoff took me into the room intended for me, where I found a little writing-table, some books upon political economy, and a sofa to serve me as a bed.

A few days, before, he had dismissed his cook; it was said, because he suspected her also of being a spy; but Tarakanoff denied this, saying that it was mere banter, and that he dismissed her because she pilfered so much out of the expenses. Meanwhile he determined not to employ another cook, but had his dinner sent in from a neighbouring eating-house.

Not wishing to disturb his habits, Tarakanoff went out and left me alone. He promised, however, to return towards dark. The gas had been for lighted a long while in the street before me, and yet he did not return. I began to grow apprehensive. At last, however, I heard the key turn in the door, and he reappeared, safe and sound.

I shook him heartily by the hand, and told him of my fears.

'I did not care to come back straight,' he replied, lest I should be followed, and I have, therefore, returned in a somewhat roundabout way.'

I marvelled inwardly at the strange precautions of the worthy man. It was as though a doctor had taken his own medicine, in order to cure his patient.

We passed the evening together, chatting on various subjects. At the least noise upon the staircase, Tarakanoff broke off to listen. I endeavoured to tranquillise him, and said that there could not be any danger.

'Yes,' he replied, frankly, 'I know it, otherwise I should not have invited you; but I can't help it. I am afraid.'

Towards midnight I took leave of my host to go to bed. While I remained awake, I heard him incessantly pacing his room.

On the following day, when Tarakanoff had gone to his office, after we had taken tea together, the *dvornik* came to pay me a visit, and to bring me a commission to write an article upon some circumstance of the moment, also bringing with him the necessary materials, newspapers and books. I thanked him heartily, both for his visit and for his commission, and begged him to return as early as possible, the next day or the day after, promising to do everything in my power to finish the article.

In the evening I worked diligently, and passed a good part of the night at the desk. At intervals I heard my host turning in his bed. Two o'clock struck; three, four; he was not asleep. What was the matter? He could not be disturbed by the noise I made, for I had put on his slippers on purpose. It could not even be the light, for the door was close shut. Could he be ill? I remembered that, the day before, I saw he was looking rather pale, but I paid no attention to it.

In the morning I was awakened by the noise of the cups which he was getting ready for the tea. I rose immediately, so as not to keep him waiting.

He had, in fact, a woful aspect. He was pale, almost yellowish his eyes were sunken; his look was dejected.

'What is the matter with you?' I asked.

'Nothing.'

'Nothing! Why you have the face of a corpse, and you did not sleep before four o'clock.'

'Say rather that I did not sleep all night.'
 'But you must be ill, then.'
 'No; I can never sleep when there is anyone with me.'
 Then I understood all.
 I took his hand and shook it warmly.
 'I thank you with all my heart,' I said; but I will not cause you so much trouble, and at the very first moment I will go away.'
 'No, no; certainly not; certainly not. If I had imagined what you were going to say, I would have concealed it. You must remain. It is nothing.'
 'But you may fall ill.'
 'Don't give it a thought. I can sleep by day, or, better still, take some medicine.'
 I learnt afterwards, in fact, that in such cases he took chloral when he could bear up no longer. Our conversation ended there.
 I looked at him with a mixed feeling of astonishment and of profound respect. This man was ludicrous in his fear; but how great he was in his devotion knew that his house was always open to all who were in my position, and that some of our party had remained there for weeks, as his guests. What must this man have suffered, who, by a cruel caprice of nature, was deprived of that merely physiological quality called courage? How great, on the other hand, must have been his moral force!
 When, on the following day, the *dvornik* came to fetch my article, I told him that I would not, on any account, remain longer with my host, and I begged him to find me another place of concealment as soon as possible.
 To my great astonishment he consented without offering much resistance.
 'I have seen Seroff today,' he said, 'and he asked about you; if you like, I will speak to him. Just now, it seems, he is in an excellent position.'
 Nothing could be better. The matter was settled. Two days afterwards I had already received a reply in the affirmative from Seroff.
 I arranged the matter so as to make my host believe I was going to a provincial town on certain business, and after having shaken hands and warmly thanked him,
 I took my leave,
 'Good-bye for the present. Good-bye for the present,' he repeated. 'A pleasant journey. When you return I shall expect you. I am always at your service. Don't forget.'
 The night was already beginning to spread its sable wings over the capital when I left. I was alone, for I knew very well how to find Seroff, who was an old friend.

II.

There was a flood of light in the room. Around a large table, upon which a great shining *samovar* was steaming, five or six persons of both sexes were seated. They were Seroff's family, with some intimate friends.

The host rose with a joyous exclamation.

Boris Seroff was a man already in years. His thick long hair was almost white. It was not, however, years alone which had blanched this haughty head, for he was only fifty.

He had been implicated in the first conspiracies of the reign of Alexander II. Towards the year 1861, being an army surgeon at Kasan, he took an active part in the military conspiracy of Ivanizky, and others of the same character, one of the most glorious episodes of the Russian revolutionary movement, too soon forgotten by the present generation-and had to look on at the inhuman slaughter of all his friends. By a miracle he escaped detection, and some years afterwards settled in St. Petersburg.

From that time, however, the police kept him in sight, and almost every year paid him a domiciliary visit. He was imprisoned ten or twelve times, although his confinement never lasted long, as the police could not succeed in proving anything against him. It is true, he no longer took an active part in the conspiracies, for so many years of continuous effort, and of continuous failure, had extinguished in him, what is the soul of all revolutionary activity — faith. From the enthusiasm of his early years, he had passed to that disheartening scepticism which, in Russia, is the bane of the cultivated classes. Hence, among us in our revolutions, mature men are rare. Only the young and the old are to be met with.

No scepticism, however, could eradicate from the heart of Boris Seroff an affection and a kind of worship for those who, more fortunate or more youthful than himself, were able to remain in the ranks of the combatants. This affection, combined with a certain chivalrous spirit, and an unparalleled courage, always impelled him to render every kind of service to the Revolutionists.

So many years' experience had given him great ability in everything relating to the externals of conspiracy; the Organisation of correspondence, places of deposit for books, newspapers and prohibited papers, collection of money by subscriptions or monthly payments, etc. But he was unrivalled in the most difficult and most valuable of all accessory functions, that of the Concealer, which he exercised continually. Indeed, one day he invited some friends to celebrate the jubilee of his tenth year of successful service in this office. With his courage, which was proof against everything, he never exaggerated anything, and never mistook the shadows created by over-excited imagination for real dangers. If, however, there were danger, he never avoided it. He could discern the approach of the police in the distance, and even detect their traces when they had passed on, exactly like sporting dogs with game. From the more or less martial aspect of the *gorodovoi* (municipal guard) standing at the corner of the street., he was able to determine whether the man had orders to watch his house or not. From certain inflections of the *dvornik's* voice, from his manner of raising his bat when he passed, Seroff could divine whether the police had spoken to the man and in what sense. From certain mysterious signs and tokens, he could tell when a search was imminent.

A man whom he took under his protection might, therefore, sleep with both eyes shut.

To give an idea of the account in which he was held as a Concealer it will suffice to say that it was, to his house Vera Zassulic was taken by her admirers after her acquittal, when the whole city was turned topsy-turvy in the search for her, and the honour of the entire party was involved in secreting her.

Sophia Perovskaia, who was a great friend of his, used to say that when Boris Seroff put up the safety signal over his door, she entered much more at ease than the Emperor entered his palace.

Such was the man whose hand I shook.

I joined the company seated around the table, and passed that evening very pleasantly, and every other evening while I remained in his house

This was not only the safest, but also the pleasantest imaginable of our places of concealment. Seroff never required any of those superfluous precautions, which are so wearisome, and in time

become insupportable. By day I remained at work in an inner room, so as to avoid being- seen by the chance visitors who came to consult him as a medical practitioner. At night I was occasionally allowed to go out. Usually, however, I spent the evening there in the pleasant company of his family, graced by two charming young girls, his daughters, with whom I soon formed that close friendship, so common in Russia between -women and men, and so natural in our respective positions; I, the protected; they, the protectors.

My stay in this family lasted, however, only about a week.

One day Seroff, who had come in at the dinner hour, turned to me and smilingly uttered, with a little inclination of the head, his customary remark *They smell a rat.*

'What has happened? What has happened?' exclaimed the ladies.

'Oh, nothing yet,' he said. *'But they smell a rat.'*

'Do you think that the danger is imminent?' I asked.

'No, I don't think so,' replied Seroff musingly, as though he were at the same time mentally weighing the matter.

'I expect them, however, in a few days; but, in any case, you must leave.'

To the suggestions of such a man, no objections of any kind could be urged.

After dinner, Seroff went and warned our friend and the same evening I took my leave, grieved beyond measure to leave this delightful family, and, in company with a friend, recommenced my pilgrimage.

A few days afterwards I was informed that the police had in fact gone to Seroff's to pay him their *I sanitary visit,* as he called these almost periodical searches; but finding nothing suspicious, they went away again with empty hands.

III.

Madame Ottilia Horn was an old lady of about seventy. She was not a Russian, and she could only speak our language very badly. She had nothing whatever to do with our questions, home or foreign. She was, nevertheless, a Nihilist; nay, a furious Terrorist.

The story of her conversion to Nihilism is so singular that it deserves to be related.

Madame Ottilia was a Dane. She came with her first husband to Riga, and soon being left a widow, married a Russian, and proceeded to St. Petersburg, where her spouse obtained a small appointment in the police. She would have quietly passed her days there without ever thinking of Terrorism or Nihilism, or anything of the kind, if Fate had not decreed that the Princess Dagmar should become the wife of the hereditary Prince of the Russian Empire.

It was really this event, however, which impelled Madame Ottilia towards Nihilism; and in this manner.

Being a Dane by birth, and of a very fanciful disposition, she conceived the ambitious plan of obtaining for her husband one of the innumerable Court appointments in the establishment of the new Archduchess. In order to carry out her project, Madame Ottilia went in person and presented herself to the Danish ambassador, so that he might use his influence in favour of her husband; her first spouse, half a century before, having had either a contract or some small post — I don't remember which — at the Court of Copenhagen.

As was to be expected, the ambassador would have nothing whatever to do with the matter, and sent her away; but as Madame Ottilia was extremely tenacious of purpose, she returned to the charge, and then he was discourteous enough to laugh at her.

Hence arose in the fiery mind of Madame Ottilia an implacable hatred against the poor ambassador.

How was she to gratify it? Evidently she must chafe in secret without any probability of succeeding.

In this manner years and years passed.

Meanwhile the Nihilists had commenced their undertakings. An idea flashed through the mind of Madame Ottilia. 'This is exactly what I want,' she repeated to herself, and became inflamed with unbounded enthusiasm for the Nihilists; perhaps because she hoped that, having commenced with Trepoff, Mesenzeff, and Kropotkin, they would finish with the Danish ambassador, the greatest scoundrel of all; perhaps because the hatred against a man in the upper ranks, so many years restrained, burst forth in every direction and extended to his entire class.' No one, Can say, what was brooding in her mind. Who can divine, in fact, the thoughts passing through the giddy brain of a woman of seventy?

The undeniable fact, thoroughly true and historical, is that Madame Ottilia was seized with an immense admiration for the Nihilists.

As she lent out rooms to the students, who are all more, or less Nihilists, they, after laughing at first, at the tardy political ardour of Madame Ottilia, ended by taking it seriously; for, in the investigations to which almost all the students are subjected, Madame Ottilia gave proof of a courage and a presence of mind by no means common. She succeeded in hiding away books in her house and compromising papers under the very nose of the police, thanks to her age, which placed her above all suspicion; and to all the questions of the Procurator she replied with a shrewdness and prudence worthy of all praise.

The students put her in communication with some members of the Organisation, and Madame Ottilia began her revolutionary career, first by taking charge of books, then of correspondence, and so on, until she ended by becoming an excellent Concealer; she could be thoroughly trusted. She was prudence itself, and incorruptible, as she showed on various occasions.

This was related to me by my companion, as we passed through the streets of the capital to the little house upon the Kamenostrovsky, which Madame Ottilia possessed.

The lady was awaiting us. She was a tall, sturdy woman, with an energetic, almost martial aspect, and seemed to be not more than fifty-five or sixty.

Although this was the first time I had seen her, I was received with open arms, like a relative returning after a long absence. She immediately brought in the *samovar* with bread, milk, and sweets, bustled about, and showed me the room prepared for me, where I found all sorts of little preparations made, which only women think about.

Madame Ottilia eagerly asked me for news of such and such a one, who had had to spend some few weeks. Evidently, after having made personal acquaintance with the terrorists, whom at first she admired at a distance, she had ended by loving them as tenderly as though they were her own children; especially as she had none. But all her tenderness was concentrated upon those entrusted to her protection. I had much ado to keep her from troubling too much about 'me. She would, however, insist upon introducing me to her husband.

The poor old fellow was just about to get into bed, but she imperiously made him get up, and a few minutes afterwards he entered, wrapped up in a shabby dressing gown, and came shuffling in, with his slippers down at heel.

With a little childish smile playing about his toothless mouth, he stretched out his hand to me, making repeated bows with his bald head.

The worthy old fellow was all submission to his fiery consort.

‘If necessary,’ said Madame Ottilia, with a martial gesture, ‘I will send him to-morrow to the police office to get some information.’

The worthy old fellow kept on smiling, and bowing his bald head.

He also had been affiliated to the Nihilists by his energetic wife.

It was in the house of this excellent woman that I passed all my time until the storm had blown over, and the police, following up the tracks of others, had forgotten me. On being restored to liberty, I returned to active life, under another name, and in another district of the capital.

The Secret Press

To establish a secret printing office, to give that powerful weapon to the Freethought which struggles against Despotism, had always been the ardent, imperious desire of all the organisations, directly they felt themselves in a position to undertake anything of importance.

As far back as the year 1860, when the first Secret Societies were formed for the purpose of effecting the Agrarian Revolution, such as the Societies named 'Land and Liberty' and 'Young Russia,' we see the first rudimentary attempts to establish something like a printing press in embryo, which, however, lasted only a few weeks.

It was evident, henceforth, that the free press already existing, abroad, although it had a writer like Herzen at its head, no longer sufficed for the wants of the militant party.

During the last ten or fifteen years, when the movement had acquired a force and an extent previously unknown, the insufficiency of the free printing offices at work in Switzerland and in London, became more and more manifest, and the need of a local press ready to respond to the questions of the moment, became more and more urgent.

Hence, all the organisations which afterwards dwindled down and disappeared one after the other in the prisons, and the fortresses, and the mines of Siberia, attempted to establish their printing offices in Russia itself.

A fatality seemed, however, to weigh upon the undertakings of this kind; all proved short lived, and lasted only for a moment. They were sure to be discovered, directly they were established.

The Circle of the Karakosovzi had its printing office, which lasted only a few months.

The Circle of Neciaevzi had its own, but it had to be kept hidden all the time, until it was discovered together with the Organisation. The Dolguscini also had theirs, which was discovered directly it had printed two proclamations. The Circle of the Ciackovzi made several attempts to establish one, and had the type and an excellent machine ready, but was not been lucky enough to set it up, and for five years the machine and the type remained hidden away in some hole and corner, the Organisation being unable to make any use of them.

The difficulty, in fact, of setting up a printing office in a country where everything is watched, seemed insurmountable, because inherent in the undertaking. Books, papers, men, may be bidden; but how is a printing office to be bidden, which by its very nature betrays itself; which, in addition to its complicated and noisy operations, often requiring many people in combination, demands the continuous use of paper in large quantities, afterwards to be sent out as printed matter?

After the innumerable attempts which had been made and had failed, the establishment of a Secret Press was universally recognised, not as being merely difficult, but impossible; it was only an idle dream, a waste of money, and a useless and senseless sacrifice of men.

Earnest men did not speak about it, and did not care to hear it spoken of.

There was however, a 'dreamer' who would not accept the universally received opinion. He maintained, in the teeth of everyone, that a secret printing office could be established in St. Petersburg itself, and that he would establish it, if supplied with the necessary means.

This dreamer, named Aaron Zundelevic, was a native of Wilna (Lithuania) and the son of a little Jewish shopkeeper.

In the Organisation to which he belonged (which afterwards adopted the motto, always old and always new, 'Land and Liberty') everyone laughed at first at the fancies of Zundelevic; but he overcame this mistrust. About 400*l.* was allotted to him; he went abroad, brought everything necessary to St. Petersburg, and having mastered the compositor's art, he taught it to four other persons, and established with them in 1877 'the free printing office' in St. Petersburg, the first deserving that name, as it could be kept going regularly, and print works of some size.

The plan upon which he established his undertaking was so well conceived and arranged, that for four consecutive years the police, notwithstanding the most obstinate search, discovered nothing, until treachery and a mere accident came to their aid.

The ice was, however, already broken. One press destroyed others were established upon the same plan which kept on, and worked without interruption.

And from time to time, from secret hiding places, a mighty voice arises amid the whispers of so many hypocrites and flatterers, which drowns their feeble clamour, and, resounding from the Frozen Sea to the Black Sea, makes Despotism tremble beneath its bloodstained purple; for it proclaims aloud that there is a greater power than Despotism, the power of Freethought, which has its abiding place in generous hearts, and its instruments in zealous arms.

Freethought called fire and sword to its aid, and with these terrible arms engaged in a desperate conflict, which will only end with the destruction of Despotism. In this conflict, its glorious banner, around which raged the thickest of the fight, and upon which the anxious looks of the combatants were turned, was the Secret Press. While this banner waved, while all the efforts of the enemy failed to wrest it from the hands of its defenders, there was no reason to despair of the fate of the party and the Organisation, even after the most terrible partial defeats.

How are we to explain, therefore, the marvellous fact of the existence, under the very eyes of the police, in a country like Russia, of a permanent secret printing press?

This fact, which gives, in my opinion, a better idea of the strength of the party than would be given by many dashing enterprises, is explained in a very simple manner. It was the result of the devotion of those who worked in the printing office, and of the care with which they carried out the minutest precautions, in order to keep it in operation.

Nobody went there; nobody, except those who were compelled, knew where it was or anything about it.

To give an idea of the caution upon this point, it need only be said that 'not only the members of the organisation by which the office was maintained, but even the editors and contributors of the journal printed there, did not know where it was. One person only in the management - was usually initiated into this secret by the representative of the office, and all communications had to be kept up by him.

I went there once only, under these circumstances. I was one of the editors of 'Land and Liberty,' the journal of the party before it was divided into two sections.

Communications were carried on at neutral points, the safest being always selected. I delivered the manuscripts, took the proofs, and fixed the place and the exact time for the next appointment. In case of any unforeseen need, or of the communications being interrupted, I sent a post-card, fixing a fresh meeting, in a manner agreed upon.

Once, however, as I have said, I went to the office. It was on November 30, the very day on which the first number of the journal was to appear. That same morning a friend came to me, and

related that, having gone to the house of Trosciansky, where the police were lying hid, he was on the point of falling into their hands, but succeeded in escaping, thanks to his dexterity, and to his lucky idea of calling out 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' while the police were running after him.

I was very anxious to insert this piece of news in the number about to be issued, for the express purpose of ridiculing Zuroff, the head of the police, who declared everywhere that our printing office could not possibly be in the capitals because otherwise he would infallibly have discovered it.

I profited, therefore, by this occasion to go to the printing office, which deeply interested me, especially as I had a pressing invitation from the compositors to pay them a visit.

The office was in one of the central streets of the city.

After infinite precautions, I reached the door, and rang in the customary manner. The door was opened by Mari Kriloff. I entered with the subdued feeling of a worshipper entering a church.

There were four persons engaged in the office — two women and two men.

Maria Kriloff, who acted as mistress of the house, was a woman of about forty-five. She passed for one of the oldest and most deserving members of our party. She had been implicated in the conspiracies of the Karakosovzi. She was imprisoned and condemned to deportation to one of the northern provinces, but succeeded in escaping, and became one of the 'illegal.' She continued to work indefatigably for our cause in various ways, until she was arrested at her post, like a soldier, arms in hand, in the printing office of the 'Cerni Perediel' in 1880. Thus, for sixteen consecutive years she remained in the ranks of the conspirators, caring for nothing except to be of use to the cause, and occupying the most modest and dangerous positions.

She had worked in the printing offices from the first, and although in very bad health, and half blind from increasing shortsightedness, she continued to work, and with so much zeal and self-devotion, that, notwithstanding her infirmity, she was, as a compositor, equal to the most skilled workman.

Basil Buch, the son of a general and the nephew of a senator, passed as the lodger of Madame Kriloff. He had a passport as an official in one of the Ministries, and went out accordingly every day, at a fixed hour, carrying in his portfolio the copies of the paper. He was a man of about twenty-six or twenty-seven, pale, aristocratically elegant, and so taciturn that, for days together, he never opened his mouth. It was he who acted as the medium of communication between the printing office and the outer world.

The third compositor did not hand down his name to posterity. He had already been in the ranks for three years, and was liked and esteemed by all; but the member who introduced him into the Organisation being dead, nobody else knew his name. He was known by the nickname of 'Ptiza' (the bird), given to him on account of his voice, and was never called otherwise. He committed suicide when, after four hours of desperate resistance, the printing office of the 'Narodnaia Volia,' was compelled to yield to the military by which it was besieged.

He lived, thus, unknown, and unknown he descended into his grave.

His fate was cruel indeed; for, by way of greater precaution, he lived without his name being placed upon the registers of the population, well knowing that every passport presented, to the police was always a danger. He had, therefore, always to remain concealed, and for several months never left the house, so as to avoid being seen by the *dvornik*.

In general, all those who work in the printing offices break off almost all intimacy with the outer world and lead a monastic life; but the poor 'Bird' had to carry this caution to such an

extent, that he was all but a complete prisoner, and was eternally shut up along with the type, in his dismal cage.

He was a young man of twenty-two or twenty-three, by long raven tall, spare, with a skinny face, shaded black hair, which heightened the effect of his cadaverous pallor, arising from continuous deprivation of fresh air and light, and from handling the type in this atmosphere full of poisonous exhalations. His eyes alone were full of life; very large and black, like those of the gazelle, bright, full of inexpressible kindness, and melancholy. He was consumptive, and knew it, but he would not abandon his post, for he was very skilful at the work, and there was no one to take his place.

The fourth person was a girl who passed as the servant of Madame Kriloff. I never heard her name. She was a girl of about eighteen or nineteen, fair, with blue eyes, delicate and graceful, who would have appeared very beautiful but for the expression of constant nervous tension in her pale face, which produced a most painful impression. She was a living reflection of the continuous efforts which this life cost, maintained for months and months in this terrible place, exposed to the incessant prying of so many thousand police spies.

After the first greetings I explained the object of my visit, that is to say, the desire to insert in the paper the amusing anecdote of the morning already mentioned. It need scarcely be added that this was received with the utmost delight. As, however, the paper was already set up, something had to be taken away to make room for the paragraph, though it was only a few lines.

I went over all the rooms in which the work was carried on. The mechanism was extremely simple. A few cases with various kinds of type; a little cylinder just cast, of a kind of gelatinous substance closely resembling carpenter's glue, and somewhat pleasant to smell; a large heavy cylinder covered with cloth, which served as the press; some blackened brushes and sponges in a pan; two jars of printing ink. Everything was arranged in such a manner that it could be hidden in a quarter of an hour, in a large clothes-press standing in a corner.

They explained to me the mechanism of the work, and smilingly told me of some little artifices which they employed to divert the suspicion of the *dvornik*, who came every day with water, wood, &c. The system adopted was not that of -not allowing him to enter, but precisely the reverse. Under various pretexts, they made him see the whole of the rooms as often as possible, having first removed everything which could excite suspicion. When these pretexts failed, others were invented. Being unable to find a plausible reason for him to enter the inner room, Madame Kriloff one day went and told him that there was a rat there which must be killed. The *dvornik* went, and certainly found nothing; but the trick was played; he had seen the whole of the rooms, and could bear testimony that there was absolutely nothing suspicious in them. Once a month they invariably had people in to clean the floors of all the rooms.

I was in no mood, however, to hear of these trifles or to smile at them.

I was assailed by profound melancholy, at the sight of all these people. Involuntarily, I compared their terrible life with my own, and felt overcome with shame. What was our activity in the broad light of day amid the excitement of a multitude of friends, and the stir of our daily life and struggles, compared with this continuous sacrifice of their whole existence, wasting away in this dungeon.

I left. I slowly descended the stairs and went out into the street, a prey to various emotions.

I thought of what I had just seen. I thought of the struggle for which they were offering up their lives. I thought of our party.

An idea suddenly flashed through my mind.

Are not these people, I thought, the real representatives of our party? Is not this the living picture which typifies in itself the character of our whole struggle? A feeling of enthusiasm fired my heart. We are invincible, I thought, while the source is unexhausted whence springs so much unknown heroism, the greatest of all heroism; we are invincible while the party has such adherents.

A Trip to St. Petersburg

Introduction

Loud and repeated knocks at my door made me start from my bed.

What could be the matter? Had I been in Russia I should have immediately thought that it was the police. But I was in Switzerland; there was no danger.

'*Que est la?*' I exclaimed, in French. 'It is I,' replied in Russian a well-known voice.

'Open the door at once.'

I lit the candle, for it was dark, and hastily dressed. My heart was oppressed by a sad presentiment.

A fortnight before, a member of our party, one of my earliest friends who was seriously compromised in the final attempts against the Emperor, after staying some months abroad, set out for Russia. For several days we had waited in vain for the news that he had crossed the frontier.

A terrible suspicion, which I dared not express, flashed across my mind. I hastily slipped on my clothes.

I opened the door.

Andrew abruptly entered the room without his hat, without shaking hands.

'Basil is arrested,' he said, at once.

Basil was also his friend as well as mine. His broken voice betrayed his grief.

I looked at him for a few moments with fixed staring eyes, as though not understanding what he had said. Then I inwardly repeated the three terrible words,

'Basil is arrested,' at first faintly, mechanically, like an echo, then with terrible distinctness, tearfully, and with a feeling of indescribable horror.

Then all became silent.

Something cold, horrible, awful, appeared to have surrounded me, to have invaded the whole room, the entire space, and to have penetrated to the very depths of my being, freezing my blood and numbing my thoughts. This something was the shadow of death.

There was no time to lose, however, in idle despair. The first thing was to ascertain if all was really lost, or if something could yet be done.

I asked for the particulars.

He had been arrested on the frontier, and the worst of it was that this had taken place four days back, the contrabandist, instead of informing us by a telegram, having from economy sent a letter.

'Where is the letter?'

'John has got it; he has only just arrived. He is waiting for you at my house. I have come for you.'

We left the house.

The dawn was just breaking, and illuminating the deserted streets with a pallid light. We proceeded in silence, with bent heads, plunged in mournful thoughts.

John was awaiting me. We were friends; we had not seen each other for some time. But sad indeed was our meeting. No friendly word, no question, no smile was exchanged. Silent and serious, we shook hands. Thus people greet each other in the house of death.

He read again the letter of the contrabandist. Basil had been arrested on the Prussian frontier, near Vergbolovo, and thrown into the prison of that town. What had happened since was not known, as the terrified contrabandist had immediately recrossed the frontier. His subsequent information was very contradictory; at first it seemed as though Basil had been taken as a mere recruit infringing the regulations; afterwards, however, the rumour ran that the gendarmes were mixed up in the matter, which indicated that it had a political character.

As to the arrest itself, one thing was clear enough, the contrabandist was in no way to blame. He cleared himself, and, after having expressed his regret, asked for the money due to him. The arrest was the result of Basil's own carelessness. Shut up in a garret all day, he wearied of the confinement, and went out for a walk. It was a childish act of unpardonable negligence.

Our grief having need of some outlet, found vent in anger.

'What a stupid fellow,' I exclaimed, wringing my hands, 'to run risks at such a moment! To allow himself to be seen in a little frontier village, where everyone is closely watched; at thirty to be such a child! To be taken upon the frontier which everybody, without exception, passes quietly. It seems almost as though he had done it on purpose! Well,' I added, grinding my teeth, 'he will get what he-'

I meant 'what he might expect,' but the words stuck in my throat. I drew a horrible picture. A scaffold, a beam, a noose, and within it —

I turned aside; I had to bite my lips till the blood came to prevent myself from bursting into tears.

I continued for a time to pace the narrow room, in my agitation.

Andrew, crushed by his grief as though by an enormous weight, was seated near the table, supporting almost all his body upon his elbow, seemingly prostrated. His commanding form lit up by the dull and dying light of the candle, seemed as though utterly broken down.

Suddenly I stopped before him.

'And now what is to be done?' Andrew asked me.

This was exactly what I wished to ask him.

I abruptly turned away and resumed my walk, violently pressing my hand against my forehead, as though to force out some idea.

'What is to be done?' I repeated to myself. 'That's the point. What is to be done in such a desperate position? Including John's journey, five days have passed since the arrest of Basil. To reach the frontier and cross it would take five more days. In ten days the gendarmes will have had a hundred opportunities of recognising the man they have in their bands, and of sending him, under a strong escort, to St. Petersburg. The case is desperate. But perhaps they will still keep him at Vergbolovo, or in some prison of one of the neighbouring towns. He has fallen into their hands in such a blundering manner, that they will perhaps think he is someone of no importance. But no, it is impossible. We have had our secret information that the gendarmes expected someone from abroad. The case is desperate. Something, however, must be done.'

'We must send Rina' I said, with a faint smile. If anything can yet be done, she will do it.'

'Yes, yes, we must send Rina!' Andrew exclaimed, and a gleam of hope seemed to reanimate his pale face.

'Yes, yes; Rina,' assented John, eagerly, 'if there is anything to be done, she will do it.'

Rina was a Pole, the daughter of one of the many martyrs of her noble country, born in a little town near the frontier, the principal, almost the sole, industry of which consists in smuggling. Having gone to St. Petersburg to study, she was fired by the Socialist ideas, and in the Revolutionary movement of the early years of the last decade, occupied a special post; that of 'holding the frontier,' that is, of organisms the communications between Russia and foreign countries, where in those days so many Revolutionary books were published.

Her origin and a certain practical instinct, so common among Polish women, united with an acuteness and a cunning peculiar to her, rendered her not only very apt in dealing with the contrabandists, but made her really popular among them. She used jokingly to say that she could do more on the frontier than the Governor; and she spoke the truth, for every one is venal there, beginning with the soldiers and the Custom House officials, and ending with the very magistrates of the towns. The only thing is to know how to deal with them.

The propagandist period having passed, and the sanguinary days of the Terrorism having succeeded, Rina no longer took any part in the movement, as she did not believe in the possibility of succeeding by these means. She went abroad, studied in Paris, and then remained in Switzerland on account of her health.

It was to this lady's house that I went direct. Andrew and John would wait for me. I rang. The door was immediately opened, for it was now daylight, and people rise early in Switzerland.

'My mistress is asleep,' the servant said.

'Yes, I know it, but a relation has arrived whom she will like to see at once,' I replied in conformity with the Russian habit of always concealing everything relating to the Revolution.

I went to Rina's door, and loudly knocking, I said in Russian, 'I want to speak to you immediately; come at once.'

'Directly, directly,' replied the somewhat troubled voice of Rina.

Five minutes afterwards the door opened and she appeared, with her fine long raven tresses somewhat in disorder.

'What is the matter?' she asked directly she had entered the room timidly fixing upon me her large blue eyes.

I told her in two words what had happened.

Notwithstanding her dark complexion, I could see that she turned pale at the fatal news.

Without answering a word, she bent her head, and her entire girlish figure expressed indescribable grief.

I would not disturb her in her thoughts. I waited for her to speak.

'If we had only known of it in time,' she said at last, deliberately, as though speaking to herself, 'all might perhaps have been made right, but now

'Who knows?' I replied. Perhaps they are still keeping him on the frontier.'

She shook her head doubtingly, without replying.

In any case,' I said, 'we must try. I came expressly to ask you to go there.'

Rina remained silent and motionless, as though she had not heard, or were not concerned. She did not even raise her long eyelashes which concealed her eyes, and her look was fixed upon the floor.

'Oh as far as I am concerned, not a word need be said,' she at last lightly replied; 'but-'

She roused herself, and began to discuss the matter in a practical manner.

It was anything but reassuring, I could not but admit. But she argued that an attempt must be made. In five minutes the matter was arranged.

An hour afterwards Rina, with a few hundred francs, hastily collected among our friends, was flying by express train towards the Russian frontier, bearing with her all our hopes.

The attempt failed, as Rina had clearly foreseen. On reaching the frontier, she lost a couple of days in vainly searching for our contrabandist, in order to obtain exact information from him. He kept in concealment, protracted matters, and at last escaped to America, taking with him the money, which meanwhile we had sent him by telegraph, for the eventual expenses.

On learning of his flight, Rina crossed the frontier almost unaided, exposing herself to very serious danger, so as not to lose a moment's time. But Basil had already, for some little time, been sent away from the frontier. Having been recognised, he had been transferred to one of the chief towns and then to St. Petersburg.

Rina went there. It was not so much for the purpose of attempting to do anything more, but from a mere desire to visit the city, and see her old friends, as she was so near them.

She reached St. Petersburg about a week before March 13, and remained a fortnight more in the infernal caldron which St. Petersburg became after Alexander II. had been put to death. She set out towards the end of the month for one of the provinces in the interior of Russia, where she still remains.

Having undertaken to write these sketches, I thought that it would not be without interest to add to them her reminiscences of those terrible days. I therefore wrote a letter to her on the subject.

She consented, merely urging her non-participation in the movement, and her inexperience in writing. 'But,' she added, 'I will tell you everything I saw, just as it was. It will be for you to select what you require.'

Having read her letters, I found them extremely interesting, in almost every respect. The fact that they were written by a person not belonging to the militant party, increases their value, in my opinion, by giving them a character of impartiality.

With regard to the literary part, I have done nothing more than put these letters into shape, for, with the additions and explanations which I asked for, there were a good many of them. I had to make, it is true, some little amplification, but without importance, some fifty lines in all, which it would be mere pedantry to give as notes. They are confined to the accessory figures, and to certain things which would not be understood by a foreigner. I have sought to preserve the words of the authoress herself even in her general considerations (Part V., respecting the Russian youth), so as not to spoil this document, interesting, in my opinion, precisely because of its genuine character.

As to the scones connected with our great martyrs, I have not taken the liberty of changing one single word, for it would have been a sacrilege. She commences thus:

I.

On reaching St. Petersburg, I went in search of my fellow countrywoman, and old friend, Madame Dubrovina. I knew that, although she took no part in the movement, she held, so to speak, a revolutionary *salon*, and would therefore be able to give me all necessary information. I was welcomed with open arms. She told me that some of the Terrorists came, in fact, from time to time to her *salon*. She could give me no information, however, respecting Betty, the wife of poor Basil, whom I desired, above all, to see.

Not having been for several years in St. Petersburg, I fancied that, in these later days, the life of a Nihilist must be a terrible one.

Madame Dubrovina assured me, indeed, that after every fresh attempt, for some little time, in fact, it was rather hot work; when the storm had passed, however, it was all right again. Now, she added, we are in a dead calm.

I had no passport, and this caused me much anxiety. Madame Dubrovina however, assured me that I had nothing to fear, and that, I should get on very well without one.

Meanwhile Betty must be found. It was a very arduous task for the Nihilists, keeping especially secret their places of residence, are generally very difficult to find. I was told that a certain D., in order to find a friend residing, like himself, in St. Petersburg, had to journey to Kieff, two days distant by railway, to learn his address, and then return to St. Petersburg.

I had to make interminable journeys throughout the city, to call upon one person and another, presumed to be capable of furnishing some information to enable me to find Betty. But nothing came of them.

Two days passed thus. I scarcely knew what to do. Madame Dubrovina, however, who was evidently thoroughly acquainted with the world in which she lived, advised me not to trouble about it, and to trust to Fate.

In the Nihilist world, news, however slight may be its interest, spreads with marvellous rapidity. She thought that the news of the arrival of a lady from Switzerland would soon get about, and that Betty, hearing it, would divine that I was the lady and send somebody to fetch me.

This in fact happened.

On the third day we were pleasantly chatting with Madame Dubrovina and some of her friends, when Bonzo entered, the same Bonzo who, owing to his fondness for experiments, was four times within an ace of killing himself with different poisons, and said to me in a mysterious manner:

‘May I have the pleasure of taking your arm.’

He said this with so much solemnity that we all of us burst into a loud laugh. He, on the other hand, impassible and serious, buttoned his gloves. His tall and meagre form was as upright as a pole. I sprang up, amid the general merriment and took him by the arm, showing how I should play the fine lady in the street.

Bonzo, as serious as ever, with his bald head thrown back, his bronzed forehead without eyebrows, and his skinny face, looked something between the Knight of the Rueful Countenance and an Indian idol.

There was no need for him to tell me, when we left, where he was taking me. I knew he was a friend of Betty and of Basil, who admired him for his determination while ridiculing his excessive fondness for precautions. Having walked some two hundred yards, arm in arm, as if on show, Bonzo took a cab for Pesky, as it was a long way off. The horse went slowly. The journey seemed interminable.

‘Oh, how far it is!’ I said to my companion.

‘At present we are going away from it,’ he said.

I rebelled against such a profusion of precautions, declaring that I wanted to go to Betty’s direct; but Bonzo was inexorable.

On reaching Pesky, Bonzo took a second cab for the Polytechnic after walking another two hundred yards.

We had scarcely alighted from the vehicle when it was taken by an officer. This filled my companion with apprehensions. Upon the pavement were two little mendicants, a girl and a boy of eight or ten. I stopped before them, they were so handsome.

‘Give us a kopeck, lady?’ exclaimed the children, holding out their hands.

I said a few words to them, and gave a kopeck to each.

‘What a thing to do,’ said Bonzo to me in a troubled voice, when we had passed on. ‘Don’t you know that they are little spies? The police have plenty of these sham beggars and send them about to watch people.’

I smiled at Bonzo’s extreme shrewdness, and we continued our wanderings, which lasted at least an hour. When we reached the house where Betty was awaiting me, the gas was being lighted in the streets.

The aspect of the poor lady was most painful. I had some difficulty in recognising her, she was so thin, pale and prostrated.

The room in which we conversed began by degrees to fill with people. Many came with, the plaid and blouse of the students. A few minutes afterwards, the mistress of the house came in, a young and handsome brunette, and taking Betty aside, told her the room was engaged that evening for a meeting of students.

She invited us to attend it, but we were not in the mood. I could not, however, but express my astonishment and pleasure that, after so many attempts, there should be so much freedom of action in St. Petersburg.

‘Yes,’ replied Betty, ‘and it is a bad sign. But, as everyone knows,’ she added, citing a Russian proverb, ‘until the thunderbolt falls, the peasant never crosses himself.’

It was suggested that we should descend to a lower floor where there were other rooms at our disposal.

We spent the rest of the evening there, talking upon our business. I related to her all my adventures upon the frontier the flight of the contrabandist, the removal of Basil; everything. She told me what, meanwhile, she had done in St. Petersburg. It amounted to very little. I regarded the matter as utterly hopeless. Betty would not give in she still hoped.

II.

On the following day I saw for the first time Jessie Helfman at Madame Dubrovina’s.

What struck me in her face was an expression of indescribable suffering around her mouth, and in her eyes. But no sooner was I presented to her than she began to talk with animation upon ‘business,’ upon the programmes of the various sections, upon the Red Cross, etc.

I saw her many times afterwards, and she gave me the impression of being one of the most sincere, simple, and modest of women, and devoted beyond all expression to the cause; without, however, possessing any power of Initiative.

Her husband, Kolotkevic, had been arrested some days before my arrival. Notwithstanding the overwhelming sadness which oppressed her heart, and revealed itself in spite of her, in her eyes, her face, and her voice, she was always occupied with the business of the party, and of all those who wished to entrust some commission to her. Madame Dubrovina, and everyone who knew her, said her kindness was beyond all comparison.

She seemed to have no time to devote to her own affairs and her own grief, or to be ashamed to do so.

I recollect that one day she handed a note to Madame Dubrovina to be taken to Skripaceva, who was in regular communication with the gendarme who secretly transmitted letters to the political prisoners confined in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. What grief revealed itself in her voice, which she vainly endeavoured to control, when she begged Madame Dubrovina to forward this little note to her husband, who was also detained in the fortress!

Unfortunately the communications with the fortress being broken off, her note could not be transmitted, and I saw that Madame Dubrovina gave it back to her.

Jessy Helfman often came to Madame Dubrovina's, and everybody in the house liked her, even the old grandmother.

I noticed that she was very timid. Whenever they invited her to dine, or to eat something, she invariably refused. Very rarely would she take a cup of tea, although I knew that she was often very hungry, for, engaged as she was, she frequently had no time to return home, and take some food.

In my long peregrinations subsequently in search of my night's lodging, I had to visit very many houses. Jessy Helfman was known everywhere, and the young spoke of her with great respect. The students had much affection and esteem for her, and were always pleased when Jessy paid them a visit. She was always thoroughly acquainted with everything now in the Revolutionary world, so interesting to society at large, and especially to be young. Her pockets and her large leather reticule from which she was never separated, were always full of proclamations of the Committee, of copies of the 'Narodnaia Volia,' of tickets for lotteries, concerts, balls, and dramatic performances for the benefit of the exiles or the prisoners, or the Secret Press. She knew no end of addresses, and could arrange an appointment with any of the principal Terrorists.

It was she who brought me one day a message from Sophia Perovskaia, whom I had known some years before. She said that Sophia would have come to see me had she not been ill.

III.

Some days afterwards, I saw Sophia Perovskaia at Olenin's, an old friend of mine employed in an office. White as a sheet, she could scarcely drag one foot before the other, and no sooner had she entered the room than she reclined on the sofa.

She came to receive the monthly collection made by Olenin; a very small sum, a hundred roubles or so. Unfortunately the money had not yet been paid in. I had in my pocket a hundred roubles not belonging to me, which I had been asked to hand over to a person about to arrive in St. Petersburg. I offered to lend them to her for a couple of days; her aspect was so painful, and I thought that-, except for some very urgent -need nobody would ask for the money at such a late hour (it was already eleven o'clock) and in her state of health. But Sophia Perovskaia did not accept my offer, saying that she was not sure she would be able to return the money to me in such a short time. Meanwhile she told us that she had spent her last farthing, having been followed by a spy, and compelled to change her cab several times in order to escape. She added that she was not even sure she had succeeded, and that at any moment the police might come to Olenin's to arrest her. It was essential that Sophia should leave as quickly as possible. We emptied our purses into hers. As to Olenin, who was an old fox, his residence was always perfectly clean,

that is, had nothing compromising about it. But I had in my pocket a number of copies of the 'Narodnaia Volia.' Rather than let them be burnt Sophia took them with her, saying that if she were arrested with such things about her, it would not make any difference as far as she was concerned.

She left hastily; but before going said she should like to make an appointment with me for the next day if she were still 'alive,' that is to say, at large. We fixed the place and the hour. But she did not come, and I was terribly afraid she 'had been arrested. On the following day Jessy pacified me. Sophia was at large, but could not leave the house, being seriously ill.

All this took place two or three days before March 13. As I learned afterwards, on the day before our meeting at Olenin's, Geliaboff was arrested.

On the morning of the 13th, it was a Sunday, I went to a friend's at Gatschina, which in those days was not what it is now, but one of the quietest little places in all Russia.

We heard rumours of the event from Nadia's servant one Monday morning.

The parish priest came about one o'clock and related that he had heard something about it from the country people, who had arrived from St. Petersburg; but no official news reached us. In the evening, however, Nadia's elder sister arrived with the -newspapers

What hours we passed I need not relate. Nadia was taken ill.

Then came terrible days. Days of torment, of suspicion, of horror. The end of the world seemed to have arrived. Every fresh newspaper brought news of fresh rigours against the Nihilists, and of fresh discoveries made by the police. Then came the terrible Telegnaia incident, the suicide of a person unknown. Then came arrest after arrest, singly and in scores.

How enter this hell upon earth? How remain out of it?

At last I could endure it no longer, and resolved to go to St. Petersburg.

It was on the Thursday.

The city, in mourning throughout, oppressed the mind. The lamps, the houses, the balconies, the windows, all were covered with mournful stripes of black and white.

I went direct to Madame Dubrovina's. The whole family was staying in-doors. Upon every face, a panic fear was depicted. Madame Dubrovina received me with exclamations of terror. The aspect of the others was not more reassuring.

'What ill wind has brought you here? Why have you come into this horrible place? Do you not know that I myself am being watched by the police? Where on earth do you think I can conceal you at such a moment?'

All this Madame Dubrovina said to me with an agitated voice, pacing the room, and occasionally stopping in front of me.

'Why had I not remained at Gatschida? Why had I come into this horrible place? What a nice predicament I was in!' I thought to myself.

A few days afterwards my dear friend made it up with me, and it was to her I was indebted for at least a fourth of my nights' lodgings, for which I shall be grateful to her as long as I live. But just then she was inexorable. Her irritation against me reached its height when an unknown lady, very well dressed, suddenly entered the room, and said she wished to speak to Madame Dubrovina in private.

On the instant everyone was dumb. We were perplexed and alarmed, for the younger sister of Madame Dubrovina had disappeared for some few hours. No one knew where she was. We immediately thought some disaster had happened.

In a short time, however, Madame Dubrovina returned, and taking me aside, said the lady had come in search of me from Sophia Perovskaia.

I could have leaped for joy at bearing these words. She was 'alive,' and evidently wanted to go abroad. The idea never occurred to me that she could need me for any other purpose than that of passing the frontier, which was my special office.

Filled with these pleasant thoughts I entered the room where Sophia awaited me. She advanced to meet me. I began by expressing to her my extreme pleasure at her determination to go abroad.

She stared as though she had heard something utterly incomprehensible.

Seeing my error, I implored her to quit the capital, where such close search was being made for her. I had not then the faintest shadow of suspicion respecting her participation in the event of March 13, and only learnt it from the newspapers. But the part she had taken in the Moscow attempt, already revealed by, Goldenberg, and related in the newspapers, was, in my opinion, a reason more than sufficient for withdrawing from St. Petersburg at such a time.

But she met all my urgent appeals with a persistent refusal.

'It is impossible,' she said, 'to quit the capital at such an important moment. There is so much to do, so many people to see.'

She was enthusiastically excited by the terrible victory obtained by the party. She believed in the future, and saw every-thing in a rose-coloured light.

She resolutely cut short my entreaties, and explained why she had sent for me.

She wanted to know something about the trial of the Czaricides. The idea was to go to a very great personage, an 'Excellency,' a man connected with the Superior Police, who undoubtedly would be able to give us some information respecting the trial, although the investigations were being carried on with the utmost secrecy. This man was not in regular communication with the Nihilists. It so happened that I had known him personally for some years. That was why Perovskaia had thought of me. She was very anxious about it. The man she loved was among the accused. Although terribly compromised, it so happened that he had taken no direct part in the event of March 13; and Sophia hoped.

I told her I would willingly go, not only to His Excellency,' but, if she thought it desirable, to my 'gendarme' also, with whom some years previously, I had been in communication for the correspondence of the political prisoners.

To this, Sophia, however, would not agree, saying that my 'gendarme' had broken off all connection with the Nihilists, and would infallibly hand me over to the police, and, if afraid of my revelations, would send a swarm of spies after me. In any case he would tell us nothing, and perhaps would know nothing. With 'His Excellence' on the other hand, there was nothing to fear, as he was personally incapable of any baseness, and at heart sympathised, up to a certain point, with the Nihilists.

It was arranged that at ten o'clock the next morning I should go to 'His Excellency.' Sophia wished to have a reply as soon as possible, but contrive as she might, she could not make an appointment with me before six o'clock in the evening. Being unable to repress my astonishment at this, she explained to me the distribution of her time; she had seven appointments for the next day, and all in different parts of the city. Our conversation having ended, Sophia called a young man, who was a member of the family in whose house we had our appointment, and sent him to the *adresni stol* (the address bureau) to get the address of my 'Excellency.' A young lady, a friend of the family, was sent by Sophia Perovskaia to find me a night's lodging, as I told her I was in want of one.

Meanwhile we remained alone, and I began to implore her anew to get out of the country. I proposed to her, if she thought it impossible to quit Russia for some time, as she said, she was very tired, merely to take her to some little frontier town, where we could spend two or three weeks together. She would not hear of it, and ridiculed my weakness, but in a good-natured manner.

Then she changed the subject. She told me who was the young man killed by the explosion of the bomb thrown at the feet of the Emperor. She told me that the man who had committed suicide upon the Telegnaia was Nicholas Sablin, whom I had known some years previously. This news made me shudder.

When the young lady returned who had been sent to find me a night's lodging, we parted. Sophia asked me if I wanted any money to enable me to be elegantly dressed when presenting myself to 'His Excellence.' This time her pockets were full of money, but I said I was in no need of any, as I had a dress with me that was quite good enough. The following day I called upon 'His Excellency,' who received me much more politely than I expected, and gave me all the necessary information very fully. It was sad news indeed! The fate of Geliaboff, as of all the others, was irrevocably fixed. The trial was to be merely *pro forma* for appearance sake.

Towards six o'clock I went with this news to keep my appointment. Sophia Perovskaia did not come until nine. When I saw her enter I gave a deep sigh of relief. We both had anything but an inviting appearance in my case, because of the torture caused by the delay in hers because, or perhaps from some other cause. They brought us the *samovar* and left us to ourselves.

I communicated to her at once the information I had received. I did not see her face, for her eyes were cast down. When she raised them I saw that she was trembling all over. Then she grasped my hands, sank down, and buried her face in my lap. She remained this for several minutes; she did not weep, but trembled all over. Then she arose and sat down, endeavouring to compose herself. But with a sudden movement she again grasped my hands, and pressed them so hard as to hurt me.

I remember that I proposed to her to go to Odessa and fetch some of Geliaboff's relatives for the visits. But she replied that she did not know their exact address; and that, moreover, it was too late to arrive before the trial.

'His Excellency' was astonished that Geliaboff had declared that he was the organiser of the attempt.

When I told this to Perovskaia, she replied in these words:

'It could not be otherwise. The trial of Risakoff alone would have been too colourless.'

'His Excellency' had communicated to me many particulars respecting the proud and noble bearing of Geliaboff.

When I related them to Sophia, I observed that her eyes flashed and the colour returned to her cheeks. Evidently it was a great relief to her.

'His Excellency' also told me that all the accused already knew the fate awaiting them, and had received the announcement of their approaching death with wonderful tranquillity and composure.

On hearing this, Sophia sighed. She suffered immensely. She wanted to weep, but restrained herself. For a moment, however, her eyes were filled with tears.

At that time persistent rumours were in circulation throughout the city, that Risakoff had made some disclosure. But 'His Excellency' denied this, I do not know why. I remember that I referred to this denial, drawing the conclusion from it that perhaps even 'His Excellency' did not know everything. I simply wished to tranquillise her in any way; but she replied

‘No, I am persuaded it is quite true. On this point, also, he must be right. I know Risakoff, and believe he will say nothing; nor Micailoff either.’

She then told me who this Micailoff was, there being so many other men of this name among the Terrorists, and begged me to communicate to a friend of mine what one of them had disclosed respecting him.

We remained together almost until midnight. She wished to leave first, but was so worn out that she could scarcely stand. This time she spoke little, her voice being faint, and her words brief.

Sophia promised to come to the same house on the following day between two and three o’clock in the afternoon. I arrived at half-past two, but she had preceded me, and had not had time to wait for me. Thus I never saw her again.

Two days afterwards she was arrested.

IV.

My days became very melancholy. My equivocal position, neither ‘legal’ nor ‘illegal,’ caused me infinite anxiety. Being absolutely unconnected with the movement, I did not care to take a false passport.

Being without a passport I had, however, to go continually in search of places of concealment, and of my night’s lodging; to find them, owing to my strange position, was extremely difficult.

I could not avail myself of the places of concealment which the Terrorists live, especially as in those days they themselves had urgent need of them. I had to act for myself. To whom could I turn? My personal friends, who alone did anything for me, were, like Madame Dubrovina, ‘suspected persons.’ Only very rarely could I go to them.

Whether I liked it or not, I had to appeal, as it were, to the public charity.

I thus had opportunities of becoming acquainted partly at least, with the middle class, which may be called neutral; because it either does not wish to take any part in the struggle, or, while sympathising to the utmost with the Revolutionaries, has not yet taken a direct part in the movement. I speak of the peaceful middle class, which thinks only of its own selfish comforts; and of the young engaged in study.

Of these two classes only can I speak.

With regard to the former I shall be very brief; the subject is too sickening. I have remarked this in Russia, those quake most who have the least reason to quake.

I will relate only a single incident.

I learnt on one occasion by chance that one of my earliest and most intimate friends, Emilia — we had been more than sisters together for many years — had come to St. Petersburg. I wished to see her immediately; but as she had just arrived, her address could not be found in the *adresni stol* and I was obliged to have recourse to Professor Boiko, also from my part of the country, who was a friend of the family.

I spent half a day in this search, in a state of almost feverish excitement.

Boiko advised me not to go and see her, saying that Emilia, being from my part of the country, knew I was a ‘refugee,’ and that therefore my arrival would terrify her not a little. But I paid no attention to him, so great was my confidence in Emilia.

At last, in company with Boiko, I arrived at the wished-for door. I asked the door-keeper if they were in.

He said 'Yes,' and I flew up the stairs with my heart full of delight, slowly followed by Boiko. It was Sunday. The servants had probably gone out, and therefore Emilia opened the door herself.

The scene which followed passes my powers of description.

At sight of me she began to tremble in every limb. I advanced towards her, and she fell back. Some minutes passed before I was able to embrace her retreating form, and cover her pale face with kisses.

When at last we entered the sitting-room from the antechamber, this was the picture that presented itself before me. Emilia's husband and her brother, the latter also a friend of my childhood, were seated at a table playing cards.

They did not move; they did not offer me the slightest greeting; they remained as though petrified.

The silence, embarrassing and oppressive beyond measure, lasted some little time.

'Do not interrupt the game,' I said at last to relieve Emilia in this embarrassment.

She tried to smile, but her smile resembled a grimace. I began to speak of myself. I said I had taken not the slightest part in what had happened during the previous years, that I was almost 'legal,' that if this fatal time had not come I should have endeavoured to obtain a fresh passport; in a word, that she ran not the slightest risk in receiving me, for otherwise I should not have come.

Emilia knew thoroughly well that I was incapable of telling an untruth.

I thought my words would have tranquillised her. But they produced no impression. It was one of those instinctive panic fears which are uncontrollable, and against which no reasoning avails.

Emilia, still as pale as death, stammered out that she was terrified to see me at such a time.

At last the two gentlemen arose, and advanced to shake my hand. The paralysis which had seized them seemed to have lost something of its acute character.

I remained at Emilia's about twenty minutes, chatting on various subjects, so as to save my hosts from the necessity of opening their mouths.

When I took leave, Emilia showed me to the door, muttering by way of apology, 'I was so terrified.'

Directly we started, Boiko began to laugh at me.

'Well, did I not advise you not to go? With your "Quick, quick,"' and he laughingly imitated my voice. I replied, but not without annoyance, that it was no matter, that I was very glad I had gone to see her, etc.

Meanwhile, a very urgent question presented itself, that of my night's lodging.

It was already too late to find one, for it was by no means an easy matter. Directly I arose my first thought was always to find a night's lodging, and in this search I usually spent my entire day.

But this time, owing to my approaching meeting with Emilia, I had not thought about it.

'I shall have to pass the night in the street,' I said. Boiko would not hear of it, and puzzled his brains in thinking where he could take me. But he could not think of any place.

Being, with regard to politics, as innocent as a new-born babe, he had only friends just as innocent, and therefore excessively timid. Rack his brains as he might, he could not think of any place to which I could go.

'Come to my house,' he said, at last.

I had known him as a child, and loved him as a brother; but I did not like the idea of passing the night in his room, especially as I knew he had only one. I began to raise objections, and spoke of the *dvorniks*, the servant and the landlady.

‘Oh, that’s nothing,’ he replied. ‘The landlady will not know about it, until tomorrow morning, the servant also. Don’t mind them.’

‘Not mind them! How do you mean? Don’t the *dvorniks* count for something? They will let us enter, and afterwards go and inform the police.’

‘Nothing of the kind,’ repeated Boiko. ‘The *dvorniks* will not go and fetch the police; they will merely think that-’

I told him to be silent, as the *dvorniks* would think nothing of the kind. Meanwhile, what was to be done? To pass the night in the street was not only unpleasant, but even dangerous, and there was nothing else left. I accepted.

We passed close to the *dvorniks* without being interfered with, and they saluted us very politely, as it appeared to me.

The landlady and the servant were asleep. We entered without being seen by them. I gave a sigh of relief.

‘We have succeeded in passing all the barriers,’ I said to my host; ‘but that amounts to nothing. The *dvorniks* will go and fetch the police.’

He declared that they would not do so, and, to divert me, told me that on one occasion, having to work till a late hour with a friend, also a professor, he invited him to pass the night there. ‘One day, however,’ he went on, ‘the head *dvornik* began to abuse me because I harboured vagabonds without passports.’

‘Yes,’ I said to him, ‘and not one only, but many, and I shall be very much obliged to you if you will drive them all away.’ The *dvornik* stared. I showed him a swarm of black beetles. ‘Here,’ I continued, ‘here are my vagabonds, residing here without passports. Look what a lot there are. As to my friend, he is a black beetle with an authenticated and registered passport.’ The *dvornik* laughed, and the matter ended there.

We should have been glad to pass the whole night chatting, but we were compelled to blow out the candle as the window looked upon the courtyard, and the light might have made the *dvornik* suspect something revolutionary was going on.

The bed was given up to me. Boiko stretched himself upon the floor; he took off his coat and waistcoat. I got into bed with all my clothes on, without even taking off my cuffs and collar, and, as his pillows smelt of tobacco, I had even to wrap up my head in my black scarf.

If the police came to-night,’ I thought to myself, I should not keep them waiting long.’

V.

I should like now to say a few words respecting the other section of Russian society, which, owing to my position, I frequented much more; I mean the students, not yet enrolled among the conspirators—for those already in the ranks it would be impossible to say too much.

Had I not the evidence of my own eyes, I should have difficulty in believing that in the same city, within so short a distance, such striking contrasts could exist as are presented between the peaceful middle classes and the Russian young men.

I will merely relate what I have seen and heard.

Civil courage, in which the maturer portion of Russian society is entirely wanting, is only to be found among the young.

It is strange, but it is perfectly true. Here is a notorious fact, which for many days was in every mouth

In the Academy of Medicine, one of the students, a Viscount,' as they called him, took it into his head to start a collection for a crown of flowers to be placed upon the coffin of the dead Emperor.

This proposal was received in utter silence. The Viscount flung five roubles into his hat, and then went about from one to another. Nobody gave him even a kopeck.

'But, gentlemen,' asked the Viscount, what shall we do then!'

'Attend Professor Mergeevski's lecture,' said a voice among the students.

But he would not give in, and continued to go about pestering everybody. At last he succeeded in finding somebody who put two more roubles into his hat. The lecture of Professor Mergeevski being over, the Viscount went about again and urged them to subscribe. But he obtained nothing more.

But what shall we do, then, gentlemen?' he cried in despair.

'Attend the lecture of Professor-' I do not recollect the name.

This second lecture passed off. Then the Viscount resolved to put his companions in a fix.

Throwing the money upon the table, he exclaimed:

'What shall I do with this money?'

'Give it to the prisoners,' replied a voice among the throng, which everybody present echoed.

The Viscount and his companion hurried away in a fury.

One of the students then arose, took the money which remained upon the table, and no one doubted that the famous seven roubles were sent to those who were entitled to them.

The same day the students of the Academy collected fifty roubles for 'the prisoners.'

This happened some days after the event of March 13, when the whole population was delirious with terror.

In the other higher schools the conduct of the throng was similar, but not identical; for only those who were in Russia at that time can understand what courage was required to act as the students of, the Academy of Medicine acted.

What is so striking in the life of the great mass of the Russian students, is the slight account taken a personal interests connected with their profession, their future, etc., and even of the pleasures which are said to grace the morning of life.'

It would seem as though the Russian students cared only for intellectual interests.

Their sympathy with the Revolution is immense, universal, almost undivided. They give their last farthing for the Narodnaia Volia and for the Red Cross; that is, for the prisoners and exiles. All take an active part in the Organisation of concerts and balls, in order to obtain, by the sale of tickets, some few roubles to assist the revolution. Many endure hunger and cold in order to give their mite to the 'cause.' I leave known whole *Communes* which lived upon nothing but bread and soup, so as to give all their savings to the Revolution.

The Revolution may be said to be the principal and absorbing interest of these young men, and it should be borne in mind that when arrests, trials, executions happen, they lose the privilege of continuing their studies.

They meet in little parties in their rooms, and there, around the *samovar*, whisper, discuss, and communicate to each other their views and their feelings of indignation, of horror, and of

admiration, and thus their revolutionary fervour increases, and is strengthened. That is the time to see them; their faces become anxious and serious, exactly like those of elderly men.

They grasp with avidity at everything, at every trifle connected with the revolutionary world. The rapidity with which everything now of this kind spreads throughout the entire city is incredible. The telegraph, which the Government has in its hands, cannot vie with the legs of the Nihilists. Somebody is arrested, perhaps. The very next day the melancholy news is disseminated throughout the whole of St. Petersburg. Somebody has arrived; someone else is making disclosures; a third, on the other hand, maintains an exemplary firmness towards the police; all this is known immediately and everywhere.

It need scarcely be added that, animated by such feelings, these young men are always ready to render every kind of service to the Revolutionists without giving a thought to the danger they may run. And with what ardour, with what solicitude they act!

But I must finish. I have not the slightest pretension to depict the young men of Russia as they are; it would be a task much above my powers.

I return, therefore, to my peregrinations.

It was from these young men I had all my nights' lodgings when the worthy Madame Dubrovnia and a few other friends could no longer conceal me in their houses.

But here I cannot pass by in silence another circumstance.

Having received the invitation I went, and, although in accordance with the rules of Nihilist hospitality, no questions respecting myself were ever put to me, I always began the same old story, that I had nothing whatever to do with the conspiracy, that I was not even one of the illegal,' but merely a I vagabond,' as I had no passport, and did not care to get a false one. I said this to tranquillise my hosts, and so as not to appear in borrowed plumes, and even, I must confess it in the hope that I should be invited another time.

But to my great astonishment, my words never produced the desired effect. Notwithstanding that I am short-sighted, I could discern upon their faces a slight expression of disappointment, which seemed to say: 'What! Nothing more?'

And they never invited me to return a second time. At first this vexed me, but afterwards I laughed at it, and became accustomed to my lot, that of passing the whole day in search of a lodging, for the night.

I observed that, generally speaking, the more the Revolutionist is feared and sought after by the police, the more readily is he welcomed concealed, and everything done for him. In the first place, a man who belongs to the Organisation always has something interesting to relate; then, to conceal him gives more satisfaction; for, to assist a man of great importance is, in a sense, to display revolutionary 'activity.' Finally, there is also the honour. This counts for not a little. A young man of a rich middle-class family said to me one day:

'Do you know we have a sofa, an easy chair, and a seat upon which Geliaboff and Perovskaia sat. We shall never part with them,' he added, 'for all these things, are "historical."'

VI.

From these placid regions let us pass anew to the fiery zone of the Revolution.

I remember it was on a Tuesday. At four o'clock precisely, notwithstanding the most horrible weather, I was waiting at the railway station to meet Varia, who was coming expressly to see

Tania (Lebedeva). I shall be asked, perhaps, why I went to meet her? It was for this reason: when anyone comes to St. Petersburg, the greatest difficulty is to know where to go which friend is arrested and which not; whose house can be visited without falling into a trap set by the police. For these reasons, it is always useful and encouraging to be met by somebody at the station.

I wished to render this service to Varia. But unfortunately she did not come. It was arranged between us that, in this case, I should keep the appointment with Tania. Two hundred roubles intended for her, which had been deposited with Madame Dubrovina, had to be handed over to her. I went there, and having obtained the money, kept the appointment, hoping that with this sum Tania would be able to go into the country, or perhaps abroad.

When I entered the room, Tania, together with Slobodina, her hostess, exclaimed with one voice:

‘Where is Varia?’

The news that she had not come greatly agitated Tania. She turned pale, and for several minutes could not utter a word.

I lost no time in giving her the two hundred roubles. But she told me she wanted eighty more, otherwise she could not leave, as the two hundred were intended for another purpose.

The same day Michael was arrested, not in his own house, but while keeping an appointment. This money, as I learnt afterwards, she intended for the mother of Michael, who lived in the Caucasus, to enable her to come to St. Petersburg.

I told her the matter could be arranged. Madame Dubrovina had always small sums of money by her, collected for the Revolution, and I could go and get some of it.

‘Yes,’ she said, it is necessary. But it is better that Slobodina should go, because I have something to communicate to you. Meanwhile, tell us whether you have not been followed.’

Both began to ask me whether there had been nothing suspicious in the street, at the door, or upon

I said I had seen nothing; but, as I was shortsighted, I added, my powers of observation were not to be trusted.

‘I am sure there was something, though you have seen nothing at all,’ exclaimed Tania, with a gesture of impatience.

Then she related to me what follows:

‘I had no sooner left the house than I saw I was followed by a spy. I took the first *likhac* I met. The spy had to take an ordinary cab, and for a moment lost sight of me. But at the corner of the Basseinaia, the tramway stopped the traffic, and the spy, regaining lost ground, was at hand ready to police on me. When my *likhac* moved on again, the spy gave a whistle, and another person jumped into the vehicle. I ordered the *likhac* to go to the Ligovka, then to Peski, then to St. Michael the Archangel, in a word, I was driven in various directions for at least an hour. Having assured myself that they had lost sight of me, I stopped before a tobacconist’s and entered it, in order to change a bank note and purchase a packet of cigarettes. When I left the shop, the *likhac* was by itself, and there was nobody in the street. I then dismissed my cab and came here on foot. I am not, however, sure that I was not followed.’

Then she related to me what she knew about the arrest of Michael. As the both lived together in the same lodging, it was almost a miracle that the police had not arrested her also.

Having heard all this, and knowing her antecedents, I begged her to leave St. Petersburg immediately.

‘No, it is impossible,’ replied Tania, pensively, as though speaking to herself

The lodging must be cleared.'

Cannot I clear it?' I asked.

She shook her head without replying to me.

Thereupon I told her that if she could not trust to my discretion to clear the room for her, she was wrong; and I assured her that I would not read, or even look at anything, on any account whatever. I remember that our discussion almost ended in a quarrel.

To say the truth, I had a horrible fear of going into their terrible don; but I had a still greater fear of letting Tania go there, for the hangman's halter was already round her neck. This emboldened me to repeat my urgent appeals.

'Perhaps we could 'go together,' I said. Two would clear the peace very quickly, and we could go away quietly.'

'No, it is impossible. Especially as I must pass the night there.

At these words my hair stood on end. I implored her not to do so. I felt convinced that she would undoubtedly be arrested. It seemed to me that in her despair she would go to her own destruction.

For a moment I fancied she would yield to me. She remained thoughtful; I began to hope.

'No, it is impossible,' she said at last. 'If I did not sleep at home, the *dvornik*, who comes at seven o'clock every morning with the water, finding nobody, would immediately go and inform the police. Spies will be placed at all the stations, and I shall undoubtedly be arrested. I cannot leave today without first seeing "ours." I must pass the night at home.' I cannot describe my despair.

I proposed to her that I should go and pass the night in place of her. Next day, when the *dvornik* came, I would open the door to him, and say that she had been taken ill, and that I had been fetched to attend her. He certainly would not go into her bedroom to convince him.

But Tania rejected this proposal. I do not know from what motive. She, however, agreed that I should assist her the next day in clearing out.

We arranged all the details, and the appointment, was fixed for ten o'clock precisely at the Moghilevskaia.

She wanted to go to Moscow, and as her friends in that city could not be informed beforehand, she would have to stop at some hotel. For this, she would need a portmanteau, something to eat, some linen, &c., so that no suspicion might be aroused at the hotel where she stopped. I was to purchase all these things the following morning, and take them to Slobodina's.

Tania asked me to spend as little as possible, and would not let me buy her some new gloves, and a bonnet, although her own was an old one. A black crape veil, a sign of mourning, would cover up everything.

When the details were arranged, there came the question of the order in which we should leave the house. Tania said it appeared to her that it would be better to show ourselves in the street both together. A woman who is alone, they keep their eyes on. Seeing two together might confuse them. We left. We had scarcely advanced a few steps, when a cabman drove up and was very anxious to take us.

Tania said to me in a whisper, 'He is a spy, I know him, you will see what a difficulty we shall have in getting away from him.' For ten minutes, in fact, he would not go away.

After many turnings, we found a cab in a by street with a driver dozing. Tania took the cab and departed. It was already very late in the evening when we separated. I was compelled to go to the place where I was to have my night's lodging, for to present one's self too late was

not permitted. I took a cab and went straight to the house indicated to me. I found it by the description. Naturally enough, the *dvornik* was seated at the door. It was not permitted either to ask anything or to look at the number of the house. Such was the regulation. I entered resolutely, without, however, being sure, owing to my short sight, that it was the house indicated to me. On reaching the second story I saw three doors. In the profound darkness I could recognise nothing, and with a trembling heart, I rang the first bell at haphazard.

Great was my joy when, to the question inevitable then, which I put to the servant, whether such-a-one lived there, I saw a handsome woman appear, who said to me:

Yes, yes, it is here. Pray come in.'

The next morning, at the hour fixed, I entered the Moghilevskaia. I had not yet had time to reach the position assigned to me, when I saw Tania in front of me, with a basket full of vegetables in her hand, and a black scarf round her head, such as housewives wear when they go to market.

We proceeded towards her house. She gave me the key of her door, and told me to go on in front, so that the *dvornik* should not see us enter together.

I did so.

The lodging comprised two rooms with a kitchen. I was struck by the perfect order which everywhere prevailed. The furniture the little parlour, the husband's writing-table, all had an inviting aspect. Nothing was wanting. It seemed a perfect little nest of peace and joy.

Tania entered a few minutes afterwards, bringing with her the provisions for the dinner, and lit the fire. All this was done for mere appearance sake -for the *dvornik*. Then she packed up the things she was to take away, taking only those which would not be missed, so as not to arouse the suspicions of the *dvornik* in case he should enter during her absence by means of the double keys which the *dvorniks* possess.

Before allowing me to leave, she looked into the courtyard to see what the *dvorniks* were doing. They were cutting wood.

Tania explained to me that I could pass through the courtyard unobserved when they took the wood to some tenant living upstairs.

I did so, and left without any difficulty, with a rather large parcel in my hand, and having taken a cab, went to Slobodina's.

Having packed the portmanteau, I went to the station. I was to take the tickets, deliver up the luggage, and do everything, so that Tania should show herself as little as possible. She was not to arrive until minutes before the departure of the train, so as then to go at once and take her place in the carriage. But unfortunately the train was crowded with passengers. There was no room left, and another carriage had to be put on. We passed five minutes upon the platform, which seemed to me an age.

At last the carriage was attached. Tania took her place, and the compartment was soon filled with people. But they were uninteresting. Tania expressed her regret that she had not brought some book with her to read. I gave her a newspaper I had in my pocket, and told her that at the first large station she would be able to buy one. I showed her the oranges which she was very fond of, I had expressly put in her bag; but in a whisper I recommended her not to smoke during the journey.

She smiled, thanked me for the oranges, and said that, with regard to the smoking, she could not promise.

On leaving, when the guard called out, I uttered, I do not know why, some unconnected remarks.

‘Remember me to all at home. Kiss the little one for me,’ etc.

The train left, and I gave a sigh of relief.

She reached Moscow and remained there a short time. Several letters, sent by her from that city, were received, one of which I read. She told us in it that there was nothing for her to do in Moscow, that she was utterly sick of the place, and ardently desired to return to St. Petersburg.

She returned, in fact; but I was no longer there. Being invited by a friend who had a landed estate in one of the provinces of the Volga, I left in order to proceed there; with what joy I need not say.

Four months having elapsed since that terrible 13th of March, and calmness being somewhat restored, I succeeded, through my friend’s husband, in obtaining a regular passport; and thus ended my Odyssey.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Sergei Stepniak
Underground Russia: Revolutionary profiles and sketches from life
1882

Retrieved on 24 April 2011 from nihilpress.subvert.info

theanarchistlibrary.org