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# Sholom Aleichem

The celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the birth of Sholom Aleichem is an important event in the cultural life of the Soviet Union. The entire country will honor the memory of the great writer of the Jewish people, who has left us a rich literary heritage. Sholom Aleichem's works have been translated into the Russian and other languages of the brotherhood of peoples of the U.S.S.R. as well as into most of the languages of Europe. His work is well known in the United

States, where he lived many years.

Nevertheless, many of his stories, among them some of the best, have not been translated into English. Others have been published in magazines and are

bibliographical rarities.

Three of the stories presented here: Accepted, Berl-Isaac and The Man From

Yiddish by L. Talmy.

Sholom Aleichem was thoroughly acquainted with the bitter life of the Jewish people under the tsarist regime. The horrible conditions of this life he portrayed brilliantly. Even now one cannot but be deeply moved by many of his stories of the hard life of poor Jews in tsarist Russia, where they were deprived of all

These stories are timely today, bringing to mind as they do the tragic fate of hundreds of thousands of Jews who have become victims of fascist pogrom-makers in Hitler's "Third Reich." These stories bring out in sharp relief the depths of barbarism to which the Hitlerites have gone, for what is taking place now in fascist Germany is baser than the foulest manifestations of anti-semitism in tsarist

We publish several of Sholom Aleichem's stories showing various aspects of his work, depicting the hard life of his heroes, their dreams of a more joyous future. This future of which they dreamed has now become a reality. The Jewish people has found its "promised land" in the great Soviet Union, its happiness in Socialist labor, its dreams of a free life come true in the Soviet land, where all the peoples, together with the Jews, are developing their culture, national in form and Socialist in content. In joint struggle, shoulder to shoulder with the Russian people, and the other fraternal peoples of the U.S.S.R., against the dark forces of tsarism, against the capitalist system of exploitation, against all enemies of the land of Socialism, the Jewish people won the right to a happy life. The Stalinist Constitution defends this right. And the Jewish people will never surrender to anyone the happiness it has won in battle.

## The High School

It was winter. Opposite me sat a middle-aged Jew with a reddish goatee tinged with grey. His coat of fitch fur was moth-eaten in several places. We started a conversation.

"A man's worst enemy," he said, "couldn't do him more harm than he can do to himself. Especially when a woman, a wife, I mean, mixes in. Of whom do you think I'm speaking? Of myself, of course.

"Take, for example, myself, just as you see me: is there anything exceptional about me? Nothing at all, an ordinary human being. Is it written on my forehead whether I have money or not, or whether I am up to my neck in debt? Perhaps I did have money once, and not only money, either. Money's nothing. I had an income, I was respected. I lived modestly, I was not one of those who aim high, I didn't make a commotion like others who like to rush around and make a lot of noise.

"No! I had my own idea: better to go cautiously and quietly. I ran my business cautiously and quietly. Cautiously and quietly I went bankrupt on several occasions. Cautiously and quietly I settled accounts with the merchants and started again quietly and cau-

tiously from the beginning.

"But, after all, there is a god in this world.... And he endowed me with a wife. She's not here, so we can speak quite frankly. A wife like all wives. Not so bad to look at, really. In fact she is a fine figure of a woman, twice my height, and handsome, as wives go. A beauty, you might say, and not a fool by any means—clever, and she can argue like a man!

"But that's the whole trouble. Let me tell you, it's no good when your wife is like a man! I don't care if she's a thousand times clever, but after all god created Adam first and then Eve. Only try to

tell her that!

"'That god created you first and then us,' she says, 'is his business. But that he put more brains in my little finger than in your head is not my fault.'

"'And in what connection, may I ask, are you bringing this up now?"

"'I'm bringing it up because I have to bear the brunt of everything. And, if our boy has to be admitted into the high school that's my worry, too,' she says.

that's my worry, too,' she says.
"''Where is it written that the
boy has to be entered in the high
school? Do you think I mind if
he gets all his learning at home?'
says I.

"'How many times have I told you,' she answers, 'that I have no intention of doing the opposite of what the world is doing. Don't you know,' she says, 'that everybody sends their boys to the high school nowadays?'

"'Well, all I can say,' says I, 'is that everybody's gone mad then!"

"'Huh!' says she, 'cnly you have remained in your right mind, eh? If other people had the kind of mind you have, I would be sorry for them!'

"'Well,' says I, 'everyone is

guided by his own mind.

"'Hmph,' says she, 'if my enemies and my friends' enemies had in their pockets and their trunks and their closets what you have in your head, I wouldn't envy them.'

"'And I don't envy the man whom a woman judges," I said.

"'And l,' she retorted, 'don't envy the woman who has a man that even a woman can judge. . . .'

"That's what you get for arguing with your wife! You tell her one thing and she will tell you the lord knows what. You utter a word and she gives you an argument. And just try not to answer her! She will start bawling, or simply faint. And then, let me tell you, you're in for it. In short, she had her way and not I, because—what's the use of fooling yourself?—if she wants something, she'll get it.

"Well, that's how the high school business started. The thing to do, it seemed, was to prepare the boy for the junior preparatory class. 'Junior preparatory'! How important it sounds, to be sure. Why, any Jewish boy from the kheder, from the first kheder, could beat them all hollow, not to mention a youngster like mine! You could travel up and down

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew religious school.

the whole empire and you wouldn't find another like him. Of course. I'm his father and may be prejudiced, but that boy really is so smart, you wouldn't believe it.

"Well, to cut a long story short. the kid took the examinationand flunked. What d'you think was the trouble? They gave him a 'two' for arithmetic. He can't count, they said, he's weak in mathematics, if you please. How do you like that? My lad, than whom there isn't a smarter in the whole empire, and they talk to me about mathematics! In short, he failed!

"I was very annoyed of course: once he had taken their examination he cught to have passed. But after all I'm a man and not a woman, so I decided: to hell with them! We Jews have put up with worse. But try and make her understand! Once she got the high school bee in her bonnet there was nothing to be done about it!

"'For god's sake,' I said to her, 'what the devil d'you want that high school for, will you tell me? To avoid military service? But he's our only son, thank god.1 You want to guarantee him a living when he grows up? But why shouldn't he be a shopkeeper like myself, or a merchant, like all Jews, I should like to know? And if it's his lot to become a rich man or a banker I wouldn't upset myself about that either!'

"But you tell her one thing, and she harps on her own string. It's like water off a duck's back!

"'Perhaps it's better for him not to enter the junior preparatory course,' she says.

"'And why better?"

"'Because,' says she, curtly, then he'll be able to go straight into the senior preparatory.'

"Let it be the senior preparatory, I don't mind. As if it mattered when there isn't another head like his in the whole empire! But what do you think, when he went for his exams he got another 'two'!

"More trouble: his spelling isn't as it should be. You see, he writes all right, but there's one letter that stumps him every time, that's the letter 'b.'1 I don't say he doesn't write it down, he does, but he doesn't put it exactly where it belongs.

"As if that mattered! I suppose I couldn't go to the fair at Lodz or Poltava if my son puts the letter 'b' wherever he feels like putting

"But when she learned the news she took it very much to heart, of course. She began running here and there. Went to the principal. Swore by all that's sacred that the boy knows everything and knows it well and that he must be given another examination. Of course, they didn't want to listen to her. They gave him a 'two' and that was that. And a 'two' with a minus in front of it! What could you do, if that's the way they felt about it?

"But the wife was beside herself at the thought that he had

failed twice!

"' 'Well,' says I, 'what are we supposed to do? Go and drown ourselves? Not a bit of it. We Jews have put up with worse troubles, I daresay.'

"But, of course, she went up in the air and began to rant and

rave, the way women do.

"All that is beside the point, however. As for me I was sorry for the boy more than anything. My heart ached for him. It was hard on the lad, really. All the boys would be going around in those

<sup>1</sup> Only sons were exempt from conscription in tsarist Russia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This letter (yat) was dropped when the Russian alphabet was simplified after the October Revolution.

shiny silver buttons and he would be the only one without buttons.

"'You're a little fool,' I told him. 'Do you think everyone can get in? Someone has to stay at home.' But when the wife heard me she went into a tantrum and flew at me.

"'Look how tender-hearted he's become all of a sudden! Who asked you to console the boy with such smart talk? You better get a good tutor for him, a special Russian one, too. For Russian grammar!'

"How do you like that? Go and provide two tutors, in other words. One tutor and the melamed are not enough, I suppose. Well, with one thing and another, she, of course, had her way, and not I, because—why fool yourself?—if she wants something she'll get it.

"To cut a long story short, we hired another teacher, a Russian this time, no Jew for us, oh no! A real bona tide Russian. Because, ccmpared to the grammar required for the first class of the high school, horse-radish is sweet. Grammar with that letter 'b' is no joke, I can tell

"And what a teacher the lord sent us, to be sure! I'm ashamed even to talk about him. He made our life miserable, he did. He treated us like dirt and made fun of us to our faces. For instance, the scoundrel couldn't find a better word for his grammar exercises than 'garlic': garlic, of the garlic, to the garlic, by the garlic! The devil take him! If it hadn't been for the wife I should have taken him by the collar and thrown him out together with his cursed grammar!

"But she put up with everything. As long as the boy learned where to put the letter 'b.' How they tortured the poor child that winter! The examinations, you see, weren't to be held until May.

"After seven weeks he went to the exams and came home, not with a 'two' this time, but with a 'four' and a 'five.'

"What rejoicing there was! Everyone came to congratulate us. Wait a bit, think I, with your congratulations. We don't know yet whether he'll be accepted. And we won't know until August.

"Why August, I'd like to know? Just go and ask them! Well, we Iews have had worse things to put

up with!

"August arrived at last. I see the wife is on pins and needles. She runs around like mad-from the principal to the inspector, from the inspector to the principal. 'Why,' I ask her, 'do you rush about like mad from the one to the other?"

" 'What do you mean, why do I rush about? So you're a greenhorn here-are you? So you don't know what has been happening in the high schools in the last few years? You never heard of quotas for Tews?'

"And, what do you think, she was right! They didn't take our son after all. Why, you ask? Because he didn't get two 'fives.'

" 'If your son had two fives,' they said, 'he might have been

accepted.'

"How do you like that, 'might have been'? Of course, I got such an earful from the wife that I'd rather not dwell upon it. But I was sorry for our youngster most of all. He lay on his bed, his face buried in the pillow, and wept as though his heart was breaking.

"In short, I had to hire another. tutor, a student from the same high school, to coach him for the second class, but this time everything was different, because the second class is no joke! Besides grammar and mathematics, you have to study geography and spelling and all sorts of things. Although, between you and me, all that isn't worth an empty egg-shell. Any page from the Talmud is more

difficult than all their learning, and there is a great deal more sense in it, too, But what can you do! Jews have put up with worse!

"Then began the fuss with the lessons. From early morning—lessons, prayers rattled off,—lessons, breakfast bolted down—lessons, the whole day lessons! From morning till night you could hear him in his little room, repeating: 'nominative, accusative, addative and subtractative.' The whole day it dinned in your ears! The child neither ate nor slept.

"' 'What has the boy done that you should torture him so?' I said. 'You've no mercy. The child may

get sick, god forbid!'

"' 'May you bite off your tongue for saying a thing like that,' my wife retorts.

"At last the long-awaited day arrived. Again he went to the examination, and returned with 'fives' in all subjects. And how could it be otherwise, when you could scour the whole empire without finding another head like his?

"Well, now everything is fine and dandy, you might think? But when they hung up the list of new pupils my son's name was missing!

"The wife, of course, raised a hullaballoo. What was the idea, she wanted to know. It was scandalous! Hadn't the boy passed with 'fives' for everything? Oh, yes, she would go and show them, she'd tell them a thing or two, you'd see!

"Well, she went and showed them until they told her to stop bothering them—or, between you and me, simply threw her out. And then

there was the devil to pay!

"''What kind of a father are you!' she screamed. 'If you were a decent father, a loving father, like others, you would also find a way to get to the principal, like others do. Use influential friends. . . .'

"How do you like that? Leave

it to a woman!

"'That will do," says I. 'It's enough for me that I have to remember to pay my fees to the kheder, I have my bills, the market accounts and notes, and all the rest of it to attend to. How would you like it if I went bankrupt because of your damned high school, eh? I'm fed up to the neck with that high school of yours!'

"After all, I am only a human being and there is a limit to any man's patience, so I lost control and let her have it... But in the end it was she, of course, who had her way, and not I, because—why fool yourself?—if she wants some-

thing she'll get it.

"So I began to search for strings to pull, for influential friends. I suffered plenty of insults and humiliation. I often had to blush with shame. For everyone asked me the same question, and I must admit

they were justified.

"' 'You, Reb Aaron,' they would say, 'are a man of means, and you have an only son. What evil spirit is urging you to stick your nose where you're not wanted?' Try and tell them that god has blessed you with a wife who has high school on her brain!

"But I am not a simpleton, either; with god's help I found a way to secure an audience with the principal himself. I went into his office and sat down to have a talk with him. Never mind, I know how to talk to the gentry, too, when I want! I don't have to search in my pocket for words.

"'What can I do for you?' he asked me, and offered me a seat. I began talking to him softly, almost

in a whisper:

"''Mr. Principal,' says I, 'we are not rich, but we have some small means and a very nice boy, a fine chap who,' says I, 'wants to study. I also want him to study. And my wife wants it very much.'

" 'Well, and what can I do for

you?' he asks me again. I move closer to him and repeat: 'Sir,' says I, 'we are not rich, but we have some small means and a very nice boy, a fine chap who wants to study. I also want it. And my wife,' I says, 'wants it very much.'...

"I emphasize the word 'very' to make him understand. But how can they understand such subtleties? Of course, he didn't catch on, and he asks me again, in quite an angry tone this time: 'But what do you

want?' . .

"Then I put my hand slowly into my pocket, withdrew it slowly and said to him slowly: Excuse me, Mr. Principal, we are not rich, but we have some small means and a very fine boy, who wants to study. I also want him to study. And my wife,' says I, 'wants it very much,' and I emphasized the word 'very' even more and pushed the banknote into his hand. . . .

"Then he understood quick enough. He took out his notebook and asked me my name, my son's name and what class he wanted to enter. Ah, thinks I, now you're talking! And I explained to him that my name is Katz, Aaron Katz, and my son's name is Moishe, which is the same as Moshka, and he wants to enter the third class.

"' 'In that case,' he says, 'bring him in January. Then he will get

in for certain."

"You hear that? A different matter altogether. If you don't grease the wheels, they won't go round,

as they say.

"I was sorry he couldn't start at once. But once they tell you to wait, you have to wait. We Jews have put up with worse than that.

"January came around. Again a hullabaloo, again a hustle and bustle. Today or tomorrow they had to have a meeting, a council, they call it. The principal and the inspector and all the teachers would

get together and only after this meeting, council, I mean, it would be decided whether he was to be accepted.

"Well, the day came and, of course, the wife was not at home all day. No dinner, no samovar, no

nothing.

"Where was she? At the high school, of course! That is, not exactly at the school, but outside the gates. She stood in the frost from early morning, waiting for the meeting, the council, that is, to end.

"It was bitter cold, a snow-storm was raging, and she stood outside the doors of the high school waiting and waiting. Remarkable! You'd think she ought to have known that once the man had promised, everything would be all right, especially after . . . you know what I mean. But try and tell a woman! She waited an hour, two, three, four. All the students had gone home, and still she waited. And what do you think, she did find out, after all!

"The door opened and one of the teachers appeared. She dashed up to him: 'Perhaps you know what was decided at the meeting, the council, I mean?'

"' 'Why shouldn't I know?' he answers. 'Altogether twenty-five boys have been accepted: twenty-three gentiles and two Jews.'

" 'Which Jews?' she asks." 'Shepselson and Katz."

"When she heard the name Katz, the wife made a bee-line for home. She dashed in, gasping from exhaustion: 'He's accepted! Accepted! Congratulations! The lord be praised!'

"She actually had tears in her eyes. Well, I, too, was glad, but I didn't see any reason why I should start dancing with joy. After all, I'm a man and not a woman.

" 'You don't seem to be much

affected by the good news,' she said to me.

" 'Why do you jump to such

conclusions?' I asked.

"Because you stand there like a dummy,' she replied. 'If you knew how our poor boy was pining away, you wouldn't stand there like that! You'd be off to the store to buy him a student's uniform, with a cap and a brief-case, and arrange a little party and invite the friends.'

"' 'What's the occasion for such festivity, I'd like to know? What is this anyway—a bar mitsva, or a wedding, eh?' I asked quite calmly, because, after all, I'm a man

and not a woman.

"Of course, she took offense and refused to speak to me altogether. When a wife stops speaking to you it's a thousand times worse than if she were hollering. When she hollers you hear her voice, at least, but when she says nothing, you can talk and talk until you're blue in the face. . . . And, of course, she had her way, and not I, because—why fool yourself?—when she wants something she gets it.

"To cut a long story short, we had a party and invited all the friends and acquaintances. We dressed the boy from head to foot in new clothes: a handsome student's uniform with shiny buttons, and a cap with a badge. He looked

just like a governor.

"How pleased he was, the poor kid. He was a different child! He beamed with joy like the sun in August. The guests ate and drank, and showered the boy with all sorts of good wishes: that he should study in good health and graduate in good health and enter the university. . . .

" 'University?' says I. 'That's going a bit too far. We'll get along quite all right without that. Let him

finish the first few classes of the high school and then, with god's help, we'll marry him off.'...

"The wife laughed and, winking in my direction, she said: Tell him he's making a big mistake. He's still old-fashioned," she says.

" 'Tell her,' says I, 'that we oldfashioned people are smarter than

the new-fashioned ones.'

"' 'And you may let him know,' she retorts, 'that he is—excuse me for the expression—an old—.'

"Everyone laughed.

" 'What a wife you've got, Reb Aaron, not a woman, a regular Cossack!'

"By this tme the guests had drunk up all the wine and were quite gay and then they started to dance—you could hear the floor creaking under them! They dragged me and the wife in, with the boy in the middle. The dancing kept up until dawn.

"The next morning I took him to the high school. We came a bit too early, of course. The doors and the gates were locked. There wasn't a soul in sight. We had to wait a good long time in the street and we

got good and frozen.

"We were quite relieved when the doors opened at last and they admitted us into the building. Before long, youngsters with briefcases began to arrive, and soon the noise was deafening, they were talking and laughing and running hither and thither—a regular bazaar!

"Presently someone in gold buttons (a teacher, I suppose) comes up to me with a slip of paper in his hands and asks: 'What have you come for?'

"For answer I pointed to the boy. 'My son has just been enrolled."

"' 'In what class?' he asks.

" 'In the third,' says I.
" 'And what's his name?'

" 'Katz. Katz,' says I, 'Moishe Katz, that is, Moshka Katz.'

<sup>1</sup> Confirmation.

"' 'Moshka Katz?' he says, 'There is no Moshka Katz in the third class. There is a Katz, not Moshka, but Mordukh Katz.'

" 'What do you mean, Mordukh?' says I. 'Moshka and not Mordukh!'

"'No,' says he, 'Mordukh!' and shoves the paper under my nose. I yell 'Moshka,' and he yells 'Mordukh!' Well, we kept up this Moshka-Mordukh, Mordukh-Moshka, until I finally realized that a very cu-

rious thing had occurred: what had been intended for my scn had gone to someone else.

"How do you like that, eh? A mistake, if you please! They accepted a Katz all right, but not mine. You see, there is another Katz in our town, two Katzes!

"My heart was wrung to see that child. Of course, they immediately ordered him to remove the badge from his cap. A bride be-



Drawing by Aveninder Tishler

fore the altar never shed as many tears as that boy of ours that day. I argued and pleaded with him but

nothing helped.

"'Just look what you have done now," I said to the wife. 'Didn't I tell you that the high school will be the ruination of him? I hope to god that the whole business will end well and that the boy, god forbid, won't get sick from all this!"

"'Let my enemies get sick if they wish,' she replied, 'but my son must enter the high school. He will enter next year, with god's help. And if he doesn't get in here he'll get in somewhere else. But enter he must and shall! If I die in the attempt!'

"Did you ever hear of such a thing? Naturally, she had her way, and not I, because—why fool yourself?—when she wants something

she gets it.

"In a word, I'll spare you the details. I traveled all over Russia with him. We stopped in every town that had a high school, sent in our application, took the examinations, and passed, of course, passed very well, in fact, but still they wouldn't take him in anywhere. Why? All because of those accursed quotas for Jews.

"You won't believe me, but I thought I had gone mad myself: 'You fool, why are you rushing about like a lunatic from one town to another? What the hell do you do it for?' I asked myself.

"Everyone likes to have his own way, and I had my mind made up: the whole business had made

me obstinate.

"Finally, the creator took pity on us. In Poland I found a high school, a 'commercial' proposition, where one Jew was accepted for every gentile, which means fifty per cent.

"But what was the fly in the ointment this time? It appeared that every Jew who wanted to

enter his son there must appear together with his own gentile and if the gentile passed the examination and if the tuition fees were paid for him, then the Jew might also be accepted. That meant you had two burdens to bear instead of one.

"You understand? It wasn't enough that my head ached with worrying about my son, it must ache now for a stranger, because if, god forbid, Esau didn't pass the examinations, then Jacob was lost!

"I nearly ran my legs off before I found a gentile, the son of a local shoemaker, Kholyava, they called him. But when the time came for the examinations, my shoemaker failed, of course, and

how!

"And in what do you think he failed? In Scripture! My son had to take him in hand and coach him in Scripture! You may ask, of course, how my son came to know about Scripture? There is nothing surprising about it. When a boy has a head the like of which you couldn't find anywhere in the em-

pire . . .

"Finally the long-awaited day arrived and both, thank the lord, passed. All that had to be done was to register them and get a receipt. And what do you think, my Kholyava wasn't there! What had happened? It seems his father didn't want his son to go to school with so many Jews! He didn't want it, and that was the end of it! Why should he, he said, all doors were open to him anyway. He could enter his son wherever he wished. And wasn't he right? Of course, he was right!

" 'And what do you really want, Mr. Kholyava?' I asked him.

" 'Nothing!' says he.

"Well, I dashed hither and thither. Thank goodness, some kind friends intervened, took Kholyava to the saloon, drank two or three beers with him, and everything

was arranged.

"My eyes nearly popped out of my head when at last I saw the receipt. Praised be the lord! At last! Now I could offer up a prayer of thanksgiving to the lord: 'Glory be to god for relieving me of this

punishment. . . .'

"I took the next train home and found more trouble awaiting me. What's the matter this time? The wife had been thinking and thinking, and had decided: how could she live here without her only son? Why should he be there and we here? What was the use of living at all in that case?

" 'And what would you suggest,

for example?' I ask her.

"' 'What would I suggest? Don't you know yourself what I would suggest? I want to live with my son!"

" 'And what about the house-

hold?' I ask.

" 'Nothing will happen to the household."

"What can you do with a woman like that?

"In a word, she packed up and went off to our son in Poland. I remained alone in the house.

"It was a torture I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. I existed rather than lived, my business was neglected, everything went to pieces. All I did was write letters. Letters flew back and forth: 'My dear wife . . .' 'My dear husband . . .'

"'For god's sake,' I wrote to her, 'come to your senses. What will be the end of all this? After all, I am only a man. Without a woman in the house, you know yourself...' But she was deaf

to my entreaties.

"And, of course, she had her way, and not I, for—why fool your-self?—if she wants something she's bound to get it.

"In short, my story is coming to

an end. I went out of business, sold everything at half its value, and went to live with them in Poland. I arrived and began to lock about and see whither god had brought me. I snooped around and after a great deal of trouble I entered into partnership with one of the local merchants. A decent person to look at, a well-to-do householder from Warsaw, an elder in the synagogue. . . . But I soon discovered that he was a rascal. a swindler and a thief. Nearly made a beggar of me, in fact. I can imagine how I should have liked that!

"One day I come home and see my son coming to meet me, looking rather strange. He was red in the face and the badge was missing from his cap.

" 'Say, Moishe,' I ask him, 'what's happened to that thingum-

bob you wear in your cap?'
""
"What thingumbob?"

" 'The badge!'

" 'What badge?' he asks.

"' 'The badge off your cap. Didn't I buy you a new cap with a new badge for the holidays?"

"He got still redder. 'I took it

off,' he answers.

" 'What d'you mean, you took it off?"

" 'I am free now. . . .' he says.

" 'How, free?'

" 'We're all free,' he says.

" 'All free?'

" 'We're not going to classes any more,' he says.

"' 'Not going to classes any more?'
"' 'We've gone on strike,' he

savs

"' 'On strike—you!' says I. 'Fine strikers, I must say! Is it for this that I spent all my money and energy, in order that you should make strikes? If you don't pity us,' I said, 'pity yourself at least! Don't you know the Jews will have to answer for everything! We're always the scapegoats!'

"And I began to shame him.

and reason with him as a father should reason with his son.

"But after all, god blessed me with a wife! In she runs, and starts lecturing me. I've gone feeble-minded in my old age, it seems. I don't understand anything that is going on in the world. The world has got wise now. Everything is open to everybody, everything is free. The world is equal for everyone, there are no rich and poor, no masters and slaves, no underdogs, no undercats, no millionaires, no top hats. . . .

"'Now, now,' says I, 'where did you get all these fancy words from? You have got hold of a new language altogether. All you need now is to go and let the chickens out

of the coop, let them free.'

"Well, she flew into such a rage as if I had scalded her with hot water, and she started to holler at me. You know the way they do. There is nothing you can do but stand and listen calmly until the end, if there ever is an end.

"You know what," I said, 'I repent, I was wrong. Only for goodness sake, keep quiet, calm down! I beat my breast—I have sinned.... I am guilty. But stop, for the love of god, stop!

"Stop? Not her!

"''No," she yells, "I want to know why, for what reason, what the deuce, how on earth, whatever for..."

"Tell me, I beg you, who invented wives?"

#### Berl-Isaac Tells Wonders of America

"America is a land of bluff. . . ."
"American bluffers. . . ." That's what the foreigners say. But they are greenhorns and don't know what they're talking about. As far as that's concerned, America doesn't come up to our Kasrilevka—not by a long shot, and all your American bluffers are mere babies compared with our Berl-Isaac.

You can get an idea about what kind of a person Berl-Isaac is if I tell you that in Kasrilevka when anybody lets his imagination run away with him or, as you would say in your American language, "he raps a teapot," we interrupt him with the words: "Greetings from Berl-Isaac." He gets the hint at once and stops spinning his yarn.

There is a joke they tell in Kasrilevka about a certain Jew of arrogant disposition. On Easter day the custom among the Gentiles in Russia is to greet each other with the glad tidings that Chirst has risen again: Christos vos-

kresse, and the answer is Voistinoo voskresse, meaning: that's right he has risen indeed. . . . So it happened once that a Christian met that arrogant Jew and greeted him with the words: Christos voskresse. The Jew was in a quandary: what was he to do? He couldn't answer Voistinoo voskresse because he knew that it is a lie and against our religion. . . . And he couldn't tell the Gentile: 'No, he has not risen,' because he might pay dearly for words like those.

So he reflected for a moment and then said to the Christian: "Yes, I've already heard it today from our Berl-Isaac."

Imagine, then, that this very Berl-Isaac went to America, spent a good many years there and then returned to Kasrilevka. What wonders he has been telling of America ever since!

"To begin with, the country itself," he says, "a land flowing with milk and honey. People make

plenty of money; you dig into money with both hands, you pick up gold by the shovelful! And as for 'business,' as they call it in America, there is so much of it that it just makes your head spin! You can do anything you like. You want a factory-so you have a factory; you want to open a store-so you open a store. If you like to push a pushcart, you push a pushcart; and if you don't, you peddle or go to work in a shop—it's a free country! You may starve or drop dead of hunger right in the streetthere is nothing to prevent you, nobody will object.

"Then, the size of the cities! The width of the streets! The height of the buildings! They have a building there, they call it the Woolworth—so the top of its chimneypot reaches into the clouds and even higher; it is said that this house has several hundred floors. You want to know, how do they climb up to the attic? By a ladder, which they call an elevator. If you want somebody on the top floor, you sit down in the elevator early in the morning, so you get there towards sunset, just in time for your evening

prayers.

Once I had a notion to take a trip up, just for curiosity, to see what's going on there on the top. Well, I do not regret it. What I saw there I shall never see again. And what I felt—that can hardly be described at all. Just imagine; I stood there on the top, looking down, and all of a sudden I felt something strangely cold touching my left cheek, something smooth like ice, yet not so much like ice as like very chilled jelly—sort of slippery and soft, I slowly turned my head to the left and took a look, and what do you think it was? It was the moon.

"Now take their life—it's all a rushing and a running and a hustling. 'Urry-hop,' they call it there. Everything is in a hurry, and even when it comes to eating it is also done heels over head. You rush into a restaurant, order a schnapps, and as for the meal, I myself once saw a fellow being served something on a plate, something fresh, alive and kicking, and when he cut it in two, one half of it flew away to one side and the other half to the other side, and the fellow was through with his lunch.

"Still, you ought to see how strong they are! Iron! Regular athletes! They have a custom of boxing with each other right in the streets. Not that they mean to beat you up, kill you, give you a black eye or knock out some of your teeth for you, as they do here. God forbid! It's all just for fun. They roll up their sleeves and hit each other—they want to see who can hit better. They call it 'fightling.' Once, while I was taking a walk in the Bronx-I was carrying some merchandise—I met two boys, loafers, good-for-nothings, as we would say here, who started to dare me: they wanted to fightle with me. I told them: No sir, I don't fightle. I tried to dodge this way and that, but they wouldn't let me go. So I said to myself: If that's the kind of loafers you are, I'm going to show you who's who. And I put down my bundle and took off my coatand blows began to shower on me so fast it's a miracle I escaped alive. You see, I was only one against the two of them. Since then I don't fightle any morenot even if you shower me with gold.

"Now, take their language. It's all turned upside down, as if for spite. If we call somebody a meatmerchant, they call him a butcher; if we say a house-owner, they say a landlord; a neighbor is a next-doorman or a nextdoorwoman; a hen

is a chicken. Everything topsyturvy. Once I asked the missus to buy a cock to kill for Atonement. So I couldn't explain to her what I wanted until I hit on the idea of telling her: 'Buy me the gentleman of the chickens.' This she understood, and only then did she deliver herself of that fine word, 'Alright,' which means almost the same as when we say: 'Be it so, why not? Sure, with the

greatest of pleasures!'

"Now, take the honor which we Jews enjoy there. No other nation or race in America is so exalted, revered and glorified as the Jew. A lew is made a whole fuss about. It's even a distinction to be a Jew. On the Feast of Tabernacles, let us say, you may meet a Jew walking right in the middle of Fifth Avenue carrying a palm leaf and citron, and not afraid that he'll be arrested for it. I'm telling you, they love the Jew in America, so what's the use of talking? They only hate Jewish beards-'whiskers,' they call them there. As soon as they see a Jew with whiskers, they let the Jew go his way in peace, but they do pull at his whiskers, and they keep on pulling until he must get rid of them, shave them off. That's why most of the Iews there have no beards or mustaches, and their faces are as smooth as a plate. You can hardly recognize who's a Jew and who is not, because there are no beards, and their language isn't Jewish, either. Except that you may perhaps tell a Jew by his haste when he walks, or by the way he talks with his hands, there's nothing else to distinguish him. . . . Otherwise they are Jews-Jews in every respect: they observe all Jewish customs, love all Jewish dishes and celebrate all Jewish holidays. Passover with them is Passover. Matzoth they bake there all year round, and as for the Passover

mortar, they have a special factory for it—thousands upon thousands of workers sit in that factory and manufacture mortared nuts with apple. Jews make a living even out of the bitter herbs we use on Passover—that's America for you!"

"Yes, Berl-Isaac, all these stories of yours are all very fine. But tell us just one thing that we'd like to know: do people die in America, too, just as they do here, or do they live there forever?"

"They die, why shouldn't they die? In America, when it comes to dying, they die a thousand in one day, ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand! Whole streets die out at once! Cities are swallowed up by the earth, as Korah was in the Bible! That's America for you!"

"Now, wait a moment, Berl-Isaac. If that's the case, then how, we should like to know, are they better off in America? If, as you say, they die there just as we do here?"

"Yes, they die. But-how do they die? That's the point. And not so much the dying itself. People die the same everywhere-they die of death. The main thing is the burying—that's what it is. In the first place, there is a rule in America that everybody knows beforehand where he is going to buried. Because he himself. while he is still alive, goes to the graveyard-they call it there 'cemeteria'-selects a place for himself and bargains until they settle about the price. Then he takes his wife out for a trip to the 'cemeteria,' and tells her: 'See, darling, that's where you are going to lie, and this is where I am going to lie, and there's where our children will lie.' Then he goes to the office of the funerals and orders a funeral for himself-to be held after his death. He orders any

class he likes. There are three classes: first, second and third class.

"A first class funeral—for very rich people, for millionaires costs a thousand dollars. Well, that's as good a funeral as one could wish. The sun is shining, and the weather is a pleasure. The coffin stands on a black catafalque, inlaid with silver. The horses all wear black trappings and white feathers. The reverends-rabbis, cantors, synagogue beadles-are also dressed in black, with white buttons. And coaches follow the hearse -no end of coaches! Children from all the Hebrew schools walk in front and sing with sonorous voices, slowly: 'V-i-r-t-u-e m-a-rc-h-e-s b-e-f-o-r-e h-i-m a-n-d d-ir-e-c-t-s h-i-s s-t-e-p-s!' The whole town rings with this singing. A thousand dollars is a thousand dollars-it talks!

"Second class is also a fine funeral. But it costs five hundred dollars, and it isn't quite the thing. The weather is not so bright. The coffin is also placed on a black catafalque; but it isn't inlaid with silver. The horses and the reverends are dressed in black, but without feathers and without buttons. Coaches follow the hearse, but not so many. Children-of only a few Hebrew schools—walk in front, but their singing is in faster movement: 'Vir-tue march-es be-fore him and di-rects his steps!' The singing is bad as you might expect for five hundred dollars.

"Third class—that's quite a common sort of funeral and costs one hundred dollars all in all. It is chilly outside, and cloudy. The coffin is not placed on a catafalque. There are only two horses and two reverends. Not a single coach follows. Children of only one Hebrew school walk in front, and they don't sing but mumble in a hurry, without any tune: 'Virtue march b'for'im andirects's steps.' They are sleepy and you can hardly hear them. After all, it's only one hundred dollars-what can you expect for a hundred dollars?"

"Yes, Berl-Isaac, but what about one who can't afford even a hun-

dred dollars?"

"Well, then he's out of luck! Without money one is hard up everywhere. The poor man always lies nine feet underground! . . . Still, make no mistake! In America they don't allow even a poor man to lie unburied. They give him a funeral for nothing, it doesn't cost him a penny. Of course, it's a rather sad sort of funeral. No ceremonies whatever, not a trace of horses, or of reverends. And it pours cats and dogs. There are only two synagogue beadles; the beadles on each side and the corpse in between, and all three of thempoor fellows-have to walk all the way to the graveyard. . . . If you have no money, I am telling you, better don't get born at all-it's a lousy world. . . . Can any of you spare a cigarette?"

## The Happiest Man in Kodnya

Do you know the best time of the year to travel by train? In the autumn, after the Feast of Tabernacles.

Then it is neither hot nor cold. You see neither the weeping sky nor the gloomy, melancholy earth;

the rain lashes the windows in thick drops that roll down the steaming glass like tears. And you sit like a gentleman, with many more such gentlemen, in a thirdclass carriage, and from time to time cast an incurious glance at the view from the window. You see a cart deep in mud dragging along painfully, away in the distance. Doubled in two on the cart sits one of god's creatures with a sack over his shoulders, venting his spite on another of god's creatures, his unfortunate horse. And you give thanks to the lord that you yourself are in shelter, among people. I do not know about you, but I am very fond of traveling by train in the autumn, say, about the end of September.

The most important thing for me is the seat I get. If I manage to engage a place by the window, on the right side of the car, I feel like a little king. Taking out your cigarette case and smoking one cigarette after another, you begin to look around at your fellow travelers and decide with whom you could exchange a remark or two about business. There are plenty of passengers, goodness knows, they are packed as tightly as herrings in a barrel. Here are beards, noses, caps, bellies, figures of people. But not a single person. Wait, though there is one queer fellow over in the corner who does not look like the others. I have a sharp eye. I can pick out the one uncommon person in hundreds.

At a first glance he does not, perhaps, stand out in any way. The most ordinary fellow, one might almost say—the kind that are sold by the bushel, the usual, everyday type of fellow. But he is dressed in a funny way: in a garment something between a caftan and a dressing-gown, and on his head wears something that is neither a hat nor a skull cap, and carries something that might be either an umbrella or a broom. A curious

raiment.

It is not the raiment that is the point, however, but the man him-

point, however, but the man himself. He is surprisingly lively and keeps glancing about him all the

what is most important—he has a beaming, cheerful, lively countenance that wears an expression of great happiness. It can only mean that he has either won something in a lottery, or made a good match for his daughter, or got his son into high school. He jumps up every minute to look out of the window and says to himself: "What station is this? Aren't we there yet?" Then he sits down again, beaming, cheerful, happy—each time a little nearer to me.

I should point out here that by nature I am not the sort of person who likes to poke his nose into other people's business and smell out things and ask questions, as to the why and the wherefore of everything. I look at it this way: if a man has anything on his mind, he is sure to begin to talk about it himself. That was actually how it turned out now. After the second station my lively neighbor sat down still closer to me, that is, his mouth was right under my nose now.

"Where are you going?" he asked me.

Now, by the way he asked the question, and by the way he glanced round and scratched behind his ear, I guessed at once that he didn't so much want to know where I was going as to tell me where he was going himself. So I gratified his curiosity, that is to say, I did not answer his question, but simply asked: "And where are you going?" That was all that was wanted.

"Where am I going? To Kodnya. Ever heard of Kodnya? I come from there, I'm a Kodnya man. It's not far from here. The third stop. But from the station it's an hour anda-half's drive to Kodnya. Well, they call it an hour and a half, but as a matter of fact it's about two, a good two hours and more, even. And that's only if the road's good and you go in a phaeton. I've wir-

ed for a phaeton already. I've sent a telegram to tell them to send a phaeton to meet me at the station. You think it's for myself? Don't be alarmed. I can go sixth passenger on an ordinary coach. Or, if it comes to that, I can simply take my umbrella in one hand and my bundle in the other and trot along. Funds wouldn't hold out long if you were to go in for these phaetons. And as far as my money affairs are concerned I might as well sit at home anyway. Eh? What did you say?"

At this point my companion paused, sighed and then resumed his talk in a whisper. He spoke right in my ear, first looking round to see that nobody was listening.

"I'm not going alone. I'm going with a professor.... What have I to do with a professor, you want to know? I'll explain in a minute. Ever heard of Kashevarovka? Well, there's a place called Kashevarovka, where a rich Jew lives, an upstart, Borodenko by name. Itzik Borodenko. How do you like that for a surname? A real Russian surname! But it's all the same, isn't it, whatever name you take, a Jewish or Russian—so long as you've got money. And he has a great deal of money, a very great deal. So they say in Kodnya; there they reckon him at a half million. But if you were to insist, I'd agree, maybe, that he has a whole million. And judging by his piggishness—if you'll excuse me—it might well be two millions. Here's a proof of it:

"Although I see you for the first time, still I understand perfectly well that you travel about much oftener than I do. Now just tell me: did you ever hear the name Borodenko associated with good works, with big subscriptions for charity or anything of that kind? We in Kodnya have never yet heard of his doing anything like that.

Not that I'm a lawyer to defend Borodenko's name—there are always plenty ready to benefit from some-

one else's pocket.

"Well, we aren't going to talk about charity and subscriptions. It's a question of compassion. Say you're rich enough, thank god, to send for a big specialist, a professor; what harm is it if someone else besides yourself can take advantage of this, thanks to you? After all, it doesn't cost you anything. All you're asked to do is say one word. Surely your tongue wouldn't drop off just because of this. And now just listen to what happened.

"We found out in Kodnya (people in Kodnya know everything) that the daughter of Itzik Borodenko, the Kashevarovka millionaire, was sick. What do you suppose was the matter with her? Some rubbish or other—love! It seems she fell in love with a Russian lad, but he refused her. So she poisoned herself in despair (people in Kodnya know everything). It

only happened yesterday.

"Of course, they rushed off at once for a doctor—a specialist, the most famous professor they could get. A rich fellow like Itzik can afford anything. Well, and it occurred to me—the specialist wouldn't be likely to stay there very long. Either today or tomorrow he'd be going back. And he'd be bound to pass our station, Kodnya, that is. It wouldn't be a bad idea, I think to myself, to persuade him to come to us to Kodnya, to me, that is, between trains.

"I've got a son sick in bed at home. What do you imagine is the matter with him? I don't know myself. Something wrong inside. He doesn't cough, thank god, and you couldn't say he suffers with a pain in his chest, either. It's a kind of weakness. There's not a drop of blood in his face and he's as feeble as a fly. . . . All because

he doesn't eat. Not a morsel of anything does he eat. He'll drink a glass of milk from time to time, but only after a fuss, if you beg and pray and cry over him. But nothing else. Not a spoonful of soup, not a crumb of bread. As for meat—it's out of the question. He can't even look at meat, he turns his head away. . . .

"His sickness began the time that blood gushed out of his throat. That was in the summer. It only happened once, but it was very violent while it lasted. It never came on again, thank god. But from that day on he grew so weak, you'd find it hard to imagine. He can hardly stand on his feet. It's no joke, I can tell you, when a body's always in a fever. He burns as if he had measles. Right from Pentecost his temperature's been thirty-nine and five and thirtynine minus five. And nothing can be done for him. I've taken him to the doctor often. But what do they know, these doctors of ours? They say he needs to be fed well and be in the fresh air.

"But what's the use of talking about feeding him well, when he won't hear of food? And as for fresh air! Where are we to get fresh air? Air-in Kodnya! Ha-ha! It's a nice enough little place, Kodnya, a Jewish place. Plenty of Jews, thank god. There's a synagogue and a school and a rabbi-everything, in fact. But there are just two things god saw fit to deprive us of-fresh air and a bit of bread. Talk about bread! They snatch the bread from each other's mouths and have to be satisfied with that. And as for air? Whoever wants fresh air goes to the gentlemen's 'park.' There's enough air there, I must say, for everyone. Formerly, when the 'park' belonged to the Polish landowners, no Jew could put his nose inside it. The gentry wouldn't let us in.

Not so much the gentry even, as

their dogs.

"But ever since the Kodnya park came into the hands of the Jews, the dogs have been got rid of, and the park itself is quite another place. It's pleasant to go there nowadays. The gentry are there, just the same, but they're Jewish gentry. . . . They talk Jewish, just as you and I talk it, and they love the Jews. In short, they're regular Jews. I wouldn't say, mind you, that they lead godly lives. They don't go to the synagogue often, and as for coming to our bathhouse—they never think of it! They aren't particularly afraid of breaking the Sabbath, either. And a chicken fried in butter doesn't bother them. As for clipping their beards short and walking about with their heads uncovered and all the rest of it—that's hardly worth mentioning, it's become such a common thing everywhere. Why, even in Kodnya itself you can see fellows who find their caps too heavy for their heads.

"True, it would be a sin for Kodnya to complain of its landowners and gentry. Our local landowners behave very well by the place and help as much as possible. As the autumn draws on they always send a hundred sacks or so of potatoes for the poor, and straw for fuel in winter-time. Just before the Passover they send money for unleavened bread. Not long ago they donated bricks for the synagogue. They live in decent, gentlemanly fashion, I must say. If it wasn't for those chickens fried in butter! Oh, to think of those chickens!

"I don't want to slander them, don't think it for a moment. I've nothing to complain of at all. On the contrary, I'm greatly respected among them. They wouldn't exchange their Alter (that's my name, I'm called Alter), they wouldn't exchange me for anyone.

Whenever they need anything in town—say a new calendar at the Jewish New Year, or unleavened bread for the Passover, or willow-branches for the Feast of Tabernacles, and similar articles required in a Jew's life—they always send for Alter.

"They spend quite a lot at my wife's shop, too (my wife keeps a little shop): they buy salt and pepper and matches and all sorts of goods like that from her. Those are the kind of landowners we have. And their sons are students, and think no end of my boy. As soon as they arrive home for the summer holidays from St. Petersburg, they come over to us and start to study all manner of things. Why, they sit with him the livelong day over their books. Now my son, I ought to tell you, would give his life for books, he wouldn't spare his own father and mother, I think! I'm afraid to say so, but it seems to me that these books have been the ruin of him and his health. All his misfortunes started with books....

"'She' may say if she likes that it all started with his being called up for service in the army. What has that got to do with it? What conscription? He has forgotten all about it ages ago. But, no matter what it was, whether the books or the conscription was the reason, there my son lies wasting away. Melting away, poor thing, like a candle. Lord have mercy on us and save him!"

For a minute it was as though a cloud passed over the radiant countenance. But it lasted no more than a minute. Soon the sun shone again and drove away the cloud. His face beamed once more, his eyes sparkled, a smile played about his lips.

"So—what were we talking about?" he went on. "Oh, yes. Well, so I made up my mind—now I'll go over to Kashevarovka and see

Itzik Borodenko—the rich man, I mean.

"Naturally, I didn't start out with empty hands. I took with me a letter from our rabbi. (Our Kodnya rabbi is world-famous, you must know!) Very well written the letter was, too, it was clever: 'Since god has seen fit to bless your house with plenty, and you were therefore able to afford to send for a specialist; and since our Alter's son is lying on his deathbed, will not a spark of compassion be kindled in your heart, and will you not condescend, from the heights of your material blessings, to show consideration for his position and contrive that this specialist should, on his way back, as he passes through Kodnya, halt there, even for just a quarter of an hour, between trains, in order to examine the sick boy? And for your kindness may the lord bless you and keep you' and so on. A very fine letter it was!"

A whistle sounded suddenly. The train came to a standstill. My companion was out of his seat at a bound.

"What's that? A station? I'll pop round to the first class for a minute. I'll have a look at my professor and be back again."

He returned with a still more radiant countenance. If I were sure one could express it that way, I would say that his face was illumined with the light of the holy spirit. He leaned over to my ear and whispered very softly, as though fearful of waking someone:

"My professor is asleep. God grant he sleep well, so that his head may be fresh and clear when he comes to us. In short, where

were we? . . .

"Oh, yes, well, I got to Kashevarovka and made straight for the house. I rang once, twice, three times. Then a well-fet looking knave with his mug scraped bare darts out, licking his chops like a tom-

cat, and asks me in Russian: 'Want something?' and I answer in Jewish—on purpose. Certainly. If I didn't want anything, I wouldn't be likely to trail all the way here from Kodnya. He listens to me, chewing something all the while and licking his lips, and shakes his head. 'You can't come in now. We've got a professor in the house.'

"'That's very good indeed,' I say, 'that you've got the professor in the house; it's because of that very professor,' I say, 'that I've come here.' 'What business can you have with a professor, all of a sudden?' 'Be good enough to tell him the whole story, if you please.' I handed him the letter and said: 'Talking is all right for you because you're standing indoors, but what do you think it's like for me, standing outside, getting wet in the rain? Here, take this document,' I said to him, 'and please deliver it to your master at once, right into his own hands.'

"He went off and I was left out in the street, waiting until they called me. I waited half an hour, an hour, two. The rain was pouring down in bucketfuls. No one called me in

"I got vexed. Not so much for my own sake as for the rabbi's. After all, it wasn't as if the letter came from some boy or other, the rabbi himself wrote it. (And our Kodnya rabbi is world famous, you know!) So I rang at the door again, once or twice.

"'The same red-faced knave bounced out and started to shout and swear at me: 'What impudence,' he says, 'to come here pulling at the bell and disturbing people!' 'And what impudence,' I told him, 'to make a Jew stand out in the rain two hours!'

"I started toward the door. But there was no chance of that. He banged it right before my very nose. Try to talk things over with a fellow of that kind! What was I to do? Things looked pretty glum. To go home snubbed like that was not to my mind. To stay out in the rain made me feel ashamed of myself. I'm not a beggar, after all, I'm the master of my house at home in Kodnya. . . . But my heart ached for my son. . . . Poor child. . . .

for my son. . . . Poor child. . . . "But great is the god of Israel! I looked up and saw a carriage-and-four driving up to the steps. 'Whose carriage is this?' I asked the coachman. 'Whose horses?' I found out they were Borodenko's. Brought for the professor. The professor had to be driven to the station.

"Well, thought I to myself, things are turning out well for me! They couldn't be better! I had hardly time to look round, when the door opened and the professor himself appeared. A little old man with a face like-how shall I describe it to you?—like an angel out of heaven. Behind him came the rich man himself, Itzik Borodenko, without a hat. And last of all that same barefaced knave, who was carrying the doctor's bag. If you could only have seen that rich man, that Iew who was all but a millionaire! He wore an ordinary jacket made of the stuff called diagonal serge, the kind we wear in Kodnya. He had his hands in his pockets and kept staring somewhere away to the side, sort of squinting. I stood there, thinking: god in heaven! To think that a creature like this owns millions! . . .

"'Well... you can't go asking god for explanations, can you? As soon as the rich man caught sight of me he fixed me with a piercing eye. Then he said to me: 'What do you want?' I went up to him and explained: 'It's like this and like that and it was I who brought the letter from the rabbi.'

"'From what rabbi?' he says.

How do you like that! As if he didn't know which rabbi it was from! 'From the Kodnya rabbi,' I said. 'I'm from there, from Kodnya, and I've come here specially to see the professor, and ask him if he would be so good as to drive into Kodnya between one train and the other, just for a quarter of an hour, to look at my son? My child is lying at the point of death.' That is what I said to him. I'm not exaggerating a scrap, not

one whit!

"What was I counting on? I was counting on this: The man's had a misfortune, his daughter has taken poison. It may be that his heart will be softened and he'll feel for a poor father.... Nothing of the kind! He didn't even think it necessary to utter a wordnot half a word. Just glanced at the fellow with the big bare face, as much as to say: 'How can we get this Jew out of the way?' And here was my professor settling into the carriage with his bag. Another minute and it would be goodbye to the professor for ever.

"What was I to do? My game was up, I could see. Then I thought to myself: 'Never mind what happens! Let come what come may,

I've got to save my son.'

"I took a breath and flung myself down before the horses. I can't truthfully say it was very pleasant lying under the horses. I don't even remember how long I had to lie there. It's quite possible that I didn't even lie there.

"I only knew that before another moment went by, the old professor was standing beside me. saying, 'What's the matter, my man?' He asked me to tell him all about it and not to be shy or afraid, but to say exactly what

it was I wanted.

"The rich man watched me out of his squinting eye, but I started to talk! Well, I must tell you, I'm no great hand at talking Russian. But this time the lord gave me the power and I spoke, and how I spoke! I told him all, everything, I laid my whole soul bare before

"Thus and thus, I said. It may be, Mr. Professor, that you are destined to be a messenger from the lord, sent to save my son, my only son, the last one remaining to me out of six. And if, I told him, you want money, I've got twenty-five rubles here. Not my own, god save me, where would I get all that money? It's my wife's. She was intending to go to town for goods for the shop. But devil take the money, devil take the wife's shop, if it comes to that, if I can only save my son!

"As I said that, I opened my caftan to get out the money. But the old professor—god send him health!—laid his hand on my shoulder, and said, 'That's not necessary.' Then he told me to get into the carriage with him.

"May I never see my son alive again if I lie! Borodenko (may the devil take him when he comes for his own) stood there, plucking out his moustache with rage. He was staring daggers at me, the robber!

"It was a great thing that god was merciful and everything passed off well. But, supposing, god forbid, it had turned out differently! Eh! What would you say

There was a sudden stir and bustle in the car. My companion darted up to the guard.

"Is it Kodnya?"

"Yes, this is Kodnya."

"Well, goodbye. I wish you good health and a pleasant journey. And may I ask you not to mention to anyone who I'm driving with? I don't want the people in Kodnya to know I'm bringing a specialist, or else they'll come crowd-



Drawing by Alexander Tishler

ing in from everywhere!" said the Jew. He shook hands with me and

disappeared.

A few minutes later, when the train was moving again, I saw through the window an ancient vehicle swaying behind a pair of mangy, weary grey horses. In the carriage sat a little old bespectacled man with youthful rosy cheeks and a grey beard. Opposite him my acquaintance sat, or rather hung, as if on a thread. He was

gazing straight into the old man's eyes, as he swayed with the movement of the carriage. His face shone and his eyes were ready to start out of his head with joy.

It's a pity I'm not a photographer and don't carry a camera with me. My acquaintance should certainly have been photographed at that moment. Then people would have been able to see what it means to be happy, to be the happiest man in Kodnya.

### A Man From Buenos Aires

Traveling in a railway car is not at all so monotonous as some people think—if only you fall in with good company. Sometimes you get a business man as your companion—one well versed in business matters; in which case you don't notice how the time passes. Some-

times you come across one who, though not a business man, is a man of the world—clever, shrewd, a live wire—one who has the affairs of the world at his fingertips. It is a pleasure to travel with a man like that, and occasionally you can pick up some instructive infor-

mation that way. Sometimes, again, god places you next to a passenger who happens to be just a lively person—lively and jolly and talkative—one who talks and talks and talks without end. He never shuts his mouth, never gets tired of talking and all about himself, always about himself.

It was this kind of person I once happened to travel with for quite

a long distance.

Our acquaintance began—as acquaintances usually begin in a railway car-with some chance remark or trivial question, such as: "Do you happen to know the name of this station?" or "What's the time?" or: "Have you a match?" Soon—very soon indeed—we became quite friendly, as if we had known each other for ages. At the first station where the train stopped for a few minutes he slipped his arm in mine, led me straight to the railway station buffet, and-without even troubling to inquire whether I drink or not-ordered two decanters of brandy. Then he motioned me to get busy with a fork and, after we had partaken of the various hor d'œuvres that one usually finds in a railway buffet, he ordered two beers, lighted a cigar, offered me one-and our friendship was sealed.

"I must tell you quite franklyand I don't mean to flatter you a bit," said my new acquaintance when we were again installed in our seats in the car, "that-believe it or not—the very first moment I saw you, as soon as I set eyes on you, I said to myself: 'There's a man with whom one can have a friendly chat.' You must know that I hate to sit like a dummy and keep silent. I like to talk to live people. And that's why I'm traveling third class—so as to have somebody to talk to. As a rule, I travel second class. And suppose I wanted to travel first class—you think I couldn't afford it? Well, I could. Maybe you think I'm just bragging? Here, look at this!"

And, saying this, my man produced from his hip pocket a pocket-book stuffed with bills, slapped it with his hand as if it were a soft cushion, and put it back, adding:

"Don't worry, there's plenty there."

I scrutinized the man, and for the life of me I couldn't make out his age. He might have been forty, and he might have been just a few years over twenty. His face was smooth and round, and tanned. Not a trace of beard or mustache. His eyes were small, laughing, with a lascivious look in them. And as for the whole of his personhe was small, round, sprightly and vivacious, and clad nobly from head to foot—as well as one could wish: an immaculately white shirt with gold buttons, a chic necktie with a pretty pin, an elegant blue suit of real English serge, patent leather shoes—smart shoes, indeed: and a heavy gold ring on his finger, with a diamond scintillating in the sun with a thousand waters (the ring, if it was genuine, must have been worth at least four or five hundred, perhaps even more).

To dress well—that, in my opinion, is what counts. I like to be well dressed myself, and I like others to dress well. I can tell by one's dress whether he is a decent sort of person or not. True, there are some who think that dress is of no importance. One may be very nicely dressed, they say, and still be a rascal. If that's the case, let me ask you! Why does everybody want to be well dressed? Why does one wear one kind of suit and another another? Why does one buy himself a Diplomat necktie of smooth pearl-green velvet, and another insists on a Regatta necktie-red. with white dots?

I could cite plenty of other examples of the same kind, but I don't think it's worth while. So let's return to my new acquaintance and hear what he has to tell us:

"Yes, my dear friend, that's how it is. Now you see that I can afford to travel second class. But maybe you think I'm holding on tight to the money? Well, money's nothing to me. Only-believe it or not-I like to travel third class. I'm a plain person myself, and I like plain people. You see, I'm a democrat. I started my career at the bottom, at the very bottom." (Here my new acquaintance reached down to the floor to show how close to the bottom he started his career.) "And I went up and up." (Here he reached up to the ceiling, to show me how high he had come.) "Not right off. And not in a hurry. But slowly, little by little. First I worked for others. Ha-ha-ha! That's easily said. 'Worked for others!' Plenty of water had flowed under the bridges before I got to that point! When I sometimes think of myself as a child, my hairbelieve it or not—stands on end! I really can't think of those years. I can't and I don't want to. You think, perhaps, that it's because I'm ashamed of my past? Not a bit. I tell everybody who I am. When I'm asked where I come from, I don't hesitate to say I hail from the great realm called Somashken, and I don't care who knows it. You've never heard of Somashken? Well, there's a little town in Courland, not far from Mitau, so it's called Somashken. The town is so big that today I could buy it up whole with everything in it. Maybe the town has changed, maybe it's grown. Who knows? But in my time the whole town of Somashkenbelieve it or not—owned one orange, which went the round of all the hostesses—from one hostess another-who used it to put on the table during the reception of guests on Saturdays.

"Well, in that there Somashken I was brought up—on resounding slaps, blows, kicks, red sparks in my eyes, blue marks on my body and hunger in my belly. Ah, hunger! There's nothing, I'm telling you, that I remember so vividly as hunger. I was hungry when I first came into god's world, hunger was the first thing I was conscious of, and it tormented me for years after. Hunger, heartache and utter wretchedness.... Wait a moment! You know the sap of the pine treewhat musicians sometimes use in place of resin? Well, I once lived on this sap—believe it or not for a whole summer. It was the summer when my step-father, a pugnosed tailor, dislocated my arm and turned me out of my mother's house. I ran away to Mitau that time. See this arm? There must still be a mark where it was dislocated."

Here my new acquaintance rolled up his sleeve and displayed a soft, fat, healthy-looking arm, and

then proceeded:

"I roamed the streets of Mitau hungry, ragged and barefoot, exploring every garbage dump in the town, until at last I found a job. It was my first job. I acted as guide to an old cantor who had been famous in his time, but had lost his eyesight and was now going around from house to house begging for bread. So I became his guide. It was not a bad job, as jobs go, but the old cantor was terribly hard to please. He would always grumble and pinch me to make me writhe with pain. He would complain that I wasn't leading him where I should. To this day I don't know where he wanted me to lead him. He was a terribly captious cantor. You couldn't humor him no matter what you did. To cap it all, he taught me some funny tricks. He would boast before everybody that-believe it

not-my parents had turned Christian and wanted to baptise me, too, but he, the cantor, had saved me after a lot of trouble, and thus I escaped from their hands. You see, I had to listen to these lies and not burst out laughing! He even insisted that I must make a wry face when he was telling these stories.

"To make a long story short, I saw that I wouldn't last long with the cantor, so I gave up my 'job' and walked from Mitau to Liebau. For a time I starved in Liebau, wandering the streets, until one day I came across a group of poor emigrants who were preparing to sail to some very distant place—to Buenos Aires, they said. I begged them to take me with them. Nothing doing, they said; impossible. It doesn't depend on them, it's up to some sort of a committee. So I went to the committee, cried there, and fainted, until at last I wheedled permission to go along with the others to Buenos Aires.

"At that time I had no idea, of course, what Buenos Aires meant, or where it was. They were all going there, so I went along. Only when we landed, did I find out that it wasn't really Buenos Aires at all we had been going to, but that we would be sent on to various other places. That's exactly what happened. As soon as we arrived in Buenos Aires we were all registered, and then they sent us to places which, I'm sure, Adam himself never saw even in his dreams. There we were put to work. Now, you probably want to know what kind of work? Well, better don't ask. Our forefathers in Egypt surely never had to do what we did. And their sufferings of which we read in the scriptures didn't amount to a tenth of what we had to endure. Our forefathers, they say, kneaded clay, made bricks and built the cities of Thebes and Rameses. You think that's something to brag about?

Well, I should have liked to hear what they would have said if they had to work like we did-with bare hands tilling the vast wild prairies overgrown with burdock, handling giant buffaloes that can kill a man with one twist of their bodies, or chasing a hundred miles after wild horses until you lasso them; or if they had for one night felt the bites of mosquitoes that tear pieces out of your flesh; or if they had had to live on old biscuits that taste like stones, or drink putrid water teeming with worms.... Once I looked down into a river, saw my face, and—believe it or not-got scared of myself. The skin had peeled off, the eyes were swollen, the hands like raw chops, the feet bleeding, and I was all covered with a thick growth of hair.

"'Is that you, Motek of Somashken?'—That's what I said to myself, and laughed aloud. That same day I said goodbye to the big buffaloes, and the wild horses and the barren prairies, and the putrid water with the worms; and yours truly retraced his steps and walked back to

Buenos Aires.

"I think there must be a regular restaurant at the station where we're stopping. Take a look in your timetable. Don't you think it's time we had something to eat? Incidentally, we'll be in a better mood to go on with the story."

We had a good bite, which we washed down with beer, and again lighted a cigar each—fine. fragrant, genuine Havana cigars from Buenos Aires. Then we returned to our seats in the car, and my new acquaintance resumed his story:

"Buenos Aires, you know, is a place which, ever since god created the world. . . . Wait a moment! Have you ever been in America? In New York? Never? And in London? No? And in Madrid? Or Constantinople? Or Paris? No? Well, then I can't give you an

idea of what Buenos Aires is. . . . All I can tell you is that it's an abyss. It's hell itself. Hell and heaven. There are those for whom it is hell, and those for whom it is heaven. If you're wide awake and seize your opportunity, you can make your fortune. There is gold—believe it or not—lying in the streets. You walk, and you step on gold. You just have to bend down, reach out your hand and pick up as much as you want. But you must take care not to be trampled underfoot. The main thing is: don't stop, don't ponder, don't meditate on what's proper and what isn't. Everything is proper. Be a waiter in a restaurant?— All right. Be a helper in a store?— All right. Wash bottles in a tavern?—All right. Help push a cart?— All right. Run through the streets and shout the latest news in the newspapers?—All right. Wash dogs? -All right. Breed cats?-All right. To catch mice is all right, and to skin them is all right too. In a word, everything is all right. I tried out all these things, and everywhere, you know, I came to the same conclusion: that it's no use working for somebody else. It's a thousand times preferable that somebody else should work for me. Well, what can you do if that's the way god created the world and arranged it so that one has to sweat and brew the beer, and I have to drink it; that somebody else has to sweat and roll the cigars and I have to smoke them? Let the locomotive engineer drive the engine, let the fireman shovel the coal, and let some other man grease the wheelsas for you and me, we'll sit in the car here and tell each other stories. Maybe they don't like it? Well, let them try and change the world!''

I looked at the fellow and thought: What could he be? An upstart who had made his fortune? A former tailor in America who now owns a clothing shop? Perhaps even a manufacturer? Or a landlord? Or just a capitalist drawing a fixed income in interest? But we'll let him go on with his story. He tells it much better:

"Well, you see, it's a clever world, and a sweet world, and a good world, and it's a pleasure to live in this world. You only have to watch out that nobody gets the better of you. Well, I tried this and that and the other thing served, as they say, every god under the sun. There was no work too hard for me, and no trade too low. If you want to know, there is no low trade in the world. All trades are respectable, as long as you deal honestly and keep your word. I judge by myself. I'm not going to boast, you know, that I'm the Rabbi of Lemberg. But you take my word for it that I'm no thief, either, Neither am I a swindler. I'm an honest businessman, so help me god. I'm honest in my dealings. I don't cheat anybody. I sell what I have. No cats in the bag. To make a long story shortyou want to know who I am? I'm just a plain supplier, or, as you call it here, a contractor. I supply merchandise to the world. It's a kind of merchandise that everybody knows, but nobody mentions by name. . . . Why? Because the world is just too clever, and people are too sly. They don't like to be told that something is black when it's black, or that it's white when it's white. They prefer to be told that black is white, and white is black.... Well, what can you do about it? . . . ''

I looked at my man from Buenos Aires and thought: For heaven's sake, what could this fellow be? What kind of goods does he supply, this contractor? And what does he mean by all this funny talk about black being white and white

being black? . . . But I didn't want to interrupt him to ask him: "My dear man, what is your business?" So I let him talk on.

"Well, to make a long story short,-where was I? Oh, yes, my present business in Buenos Aires. The business itself, to be exact, is not in Buenos Aires. My business, if you must know, is everywhereall over the world: in Paris, in London, in Budapest, in Boston. But the main office is in Buenos Aires. It's a pity we're not in Buenos Aires at this moment. I'd take you to my bureau, and I'd show you an office, with a lot of employees. My employees-believe it or not—live like Rothschilds. Eight hours a day—that's all they work, not a minute more. To me an employee is a real man, and that's how I treat him. You want to know why? Because I was once

an employee myself.

"At that time I worked for my present partners. We are three partners now. Formerly they were two, and I worked for them. I was their right hand man, I was, you might say, in charge of the whole business. Whether it was a matter of buying merchandise, or of selling merchandise, or of appraising merchandise, or of sorting the merchandise-I was in charge of everything.... I have an eye—believe it or not-and when I take one look at a piece of merchandise, I can tell you at once how much it's worth and where it ought to be sent. . . . But that isn't all. In our business, you know, an eye alone is not enough. You must have a good nose, too. You must be able to sense what's what, even if it's miles away. You must be able to feel where there's a chance to make a good deal, and where there's a chance of breaking your neck and getting into a mess so deep, you know, that you won't be able to get out of it. . . . There are too many peepers in the world, you know. Too many eyes prying intoour business-and ours happens to be a business that's afraid of an evil eye, ha-ha! . . . You make one false step, and you can never wash yourself clean again. . . . As soon as something happens, there's an outcry, and a hullabaloo, and the papers are full of it. . . . The papers are just waiting for something to happen. They're happy when they can make a big noise. They smear it all over their pages, raise a terrible uproar, and set the whole police in motion... Although I must tell you—but that's a secret between you and me-that we've got the police all over the world in our pockets. Ha-ha! . . . If I were to mention to you the sums we spend every year on the police alone, why, it would take your breath away. . . . With us-believe it or not—a bribe of ten thousand, fifteen thousand, twenty thousand, is just like that!"

And my fellow snapped his fingers. The diamond ring flashed in the light, and the man from Buenos Aires who flings around the thousands as if they were just so much trash paused for a moment, looked at me to see whether I had been properly impressed with his thousands, and then continued:

"And if it happens that a greater sum has to be paid, do you think that's something to stop us? Not at all. As far as that's concerned, we trust each other completely. I mean, we, the three partners. No matter how many thousands anyone of us charges to the account of the police, we trust each other.... All our expenses are on faith. We take each other's word for them. Neither of us, you know, will cheat the others, even for this much. . . . But then, let one just try to cheathe'll be sure to regret it to the end of his days.... Because, you see, we know each other well, and we know each place, and the whole world is an open book to us. Every one of us has his own agents and his own spies. . . . What else would you have us do? In a business that's run on trust, this is the only way. . . .

"Well, don't you think it would be a good idea to get off at this station here and have something to drink?"

With this, my man took my hand and looked into my eyes.

Of course, I had nothing against the proposition. So we got off at the station and had a drink. The bottles of lemonade popped in quick succession, and the fellow drank with an appetite that was nothing but enviable. But there was one thought that preyed on my mind all the time: What kind of goods does he deal in, this man from Buenos Aires? Why does he fling thousands around with such ease? How is it that he has the police of the whole world in his pocket? And what do they want with agents and spies? . . . Is it, perhaps, smuggled goods he disposes of? Or spurious diamonds? Or stolen goods? . . . Or maybe he's just a plain liar, a humbug, a braggart, one of those fine customers on whose tongues everything seems to swell to the most monstrous proportions, both in length and width? . . . We traveling salesmen, when we come across this sort of juggler and story-teller, have our own name for him: we call him "wholesaler," that is to say, a man with whom everything is "wholesale." In plain language it means a liar who bluffs away for all he's worth. . . . We again lit our cigars, took our seats in the car, and the man from Buenos Aires rattled on:

"Well, now where did we leave off? Yes, I was speaking about my partners. I mean my present part-

ners. Formerly they were my em-ployers, and I, as I have already told you, worked for them. I'm not going to tell you they were bad employers—that would be a lie. How could they have been bad to me if I served them as faithfully as any dog? I watched over every cent of theirs as if it were my own. And I made plenty of enemies on account of them-mortal enemies! There were times—believe it or not-when some of my enemies wanted to poison me for my faithfulness to my employers. They actually wanted to poison me! I'm not boasting, I'm telling you the honest truth when I say you can't serve an employer more faithfully than I served mine. True, I looked out for my own interests, too.... One should never forget one's own interests. One must always remember that one is just a mortal; today you live, and tomorrow? . . . Haha! There's no future in always working for somebody else. Why—haven't I got hands and feet, and a tongue? Particularly, considering that I knew that they couldn't get along without me even a single day. They couldn't and daren't.... Because there are so many secrets, you know-secrets upon secrets . . . as usual in business. . . . So once, on a fine morning I made up my mind, went to see my employers and told them: 'Adieu, gentlemen.'

"They looked at me with some surprise and asked: 'What do you mean, adieu?'

"'Adieu," I said, "means: good-bye."

"So they said: 'What's the matter?'

"So I said: 'How long do you expect me to work for you?'

"So they exchanged glances and then asked me: 'How much capital have you?'

"So I said: 'No matter how much I've got,' I said, 'it will be suffi-

cient to start with,' I said, 'and if,' I said, 'I should run short of money,' I said, 'so god is a merciful father,' I said, 'and Buenos Aires

is a fine town.'...

"Of course, they understood what I was driving at. Why shouldn't they? Their brains hadn't run dry, and they still had their wits about them. . . . And that's how we became partners. We're three partners, three masters, all on equal terms. There's no such thing as one getting less and the other more. Whatever god sends is divided equally. Nor do we ever quarrel. Why should we quarrel? Thank god, we're making handsome money, and the business is growing. The world is getting bigger, and so are the prices on our merchandise. Each of us draws as much as he needs for his expenses. We're all heavy spenders. I myself, although I have no wife and children, spendbelieve it or not—three times as much as others who have to support wives and children. What I spend for charity alone would be enough for somebody to live on. Believe me, there isn't a thing doesn't cost me money; synagogues and hospitals, and emigrant funds, and concerts-Buenos Aires, you know, is quite a city! And what about other towns? Palestine-believe it or not-also costs me money. Recently I received a letter from a seminary in Jerusalem. It was a fine letter-with an emblem and a seal and the signatures of the rabbis. The letter was addressed personally to me, with a full title: 'To our Master, the Renowned and Rich Rabbi Mordecai.' 'Eh-h.!' I thought to myself, 'if you are such kind people and address me by my name, I can't act the swine, I must send something.' So I sent them a hundred... These are accidental donations. But, then, what about my home town? My Somashken? Somashken costs me

every year—believe it or not—such a hatful of money! Every time I get a different letter from them—and always they need money. If it isn't one thing it's another.... Not to mention money for matsoth—a hundred every Passover. That's already an established rule. I'm going to Somashken now, so I know beforehand that it's going to cost me at least a thousand. What am I saying, a thousand? I'll be glad if I get off with two thousand. But it's more likely that it'll cost me three thousand.

"Just think of it—I was away from home so many years-from my very childhood. Ha-ha! And Somashken, I'll have you know, is my home! I know beforehand that the whole town will be seething with excitement. Everybody will be there to meet me. And how glad they will all be: 'Motek is here! Our Motek from Buenos Aires!'. . . A regular holiday! Believe me, they're already waiting there for me as for a Messiah. They're terribly poor people there. From each station I let them know I'm on my way. Each day I send them a telegram: 'Coming. Motek.' I myself—believe it or not—am terribly impatient to get to Somashken as fast as possible, to take a look at Somashken, to kiss the earth of Somashken, the dust of Scmashken. To hell, I'm telling you, with Buenos Aires! To hell with New York! To hell with London! To hell with Paris! Ha-ha! Somashken—that's my home!"

As he spoke these words the man's face seemed to change. It became a different face. As if it had grown younger—younger and nicer. The small lascivious eyes now burned with a different flame and sparkled with joy and pride and love. With real, unfeigned love. . . . .

Only it was a pity I was still in the dark about his business. . . .

But he didn't let me guess long. He went on:

"Why, do you think, am I going to Somashken? Well, I'm a little lonesome for the old town: and then, there are the graves. There's father and mother, brothers and sisters—a whole family in the graveyard. And, besides, I want to marry. How long can one stay a bachelor? And if I marry, I want to marry a girl from Somashkenfrom my town, from my class of people—from my family. I wrote about it to my friends in Somashken, and told them to look out for the right girl. . . . So they wrote to tell me that all I have to do is to come home, and everything will be all right... You see, I'm possessed with the idea. In Buenos Aires-believe it or not-I was offered the choice of the most beautiful women in the world. If I only wanted I could have something that would turn the sultan of Turkey green with envy. . . . But I told myself once and for all: No. sir. When I want to marry I must go to Somashken. I want a decent Jewish girl for my wife. I don't care how poor she is. I'll give her all the gold she wants. I'll make her parents rich. I'll make her whole family happy. And her I'll take back with me to Buenos Aires. I'll fix up a palace for her as for a princess. Not a speck will ever fall on her. She'll be happy with me as-believe it or not-as no woman is happy anywhere in the world. She'll have no worry and nothing to think about but her household, her husband and her children. The children will study. One son for a doctor, one for an engineer, one for a lawyer. And I'll send the daughter to a private Jewish boarding school. You know where?—In Frankfurt."

Just then the conductor came in and asked for the tickets. I had

already noticed many a time that the devil always brings the conductor when he is least wanted. At once the car became noisy and began to bustle with activity. Everybody got down his luggage and I followed suit, because I had to change at the next station. The man from Buenos Aires helped me pack my luggage, and in the meantime we carried on the following conversation, which I reproduce here word for word:

The man from Buenos Aires: What a pity you are not going further! I'll have nobody to speak to.

I: It can't be helped. Business is business.

The man from Buenos Aires: Well said. Business is business. I think I'll have to pay the additional charge and move over to a second class car. I can afford first class too, thank god. When I travel...

I: I beg your pardon for interrupting you. We have only a half minute left. I want to ask you something.

The man from Buenos Aires: For instance?

I: For instance, I should like to ask you . . . Oh, there goes the whistle! . . . What is your business? What do you deal in?

The man from Buenos Aires: What I deal in? Ho-ho! It's not holy books I deal in, my friend, not holy books!

It's quite some time since I left that car and took out my luggage. But still I see before me the man from Buenos Aires, with his smooth, smug face, with the fragrant cigar in his teeth, and I still hear his "Ha-ha!"

"It's not holy books I deal in, my friend, not holy books!"

## Accepted

"So that's what you've got to say? I'll tell you a nicer one. There is a certain Finkelstein in our town-a very wealthy Jew, a mighty rich man. So he is worried about two sons. What I say is that, if I had his money, I'd spit on all this hullabaloo. How much, do you think, has it cost him? Wish we'd have the half of it between the two of us!"

"Damn it all! I said it as far back as a year ago. You'll see, I said, that more than half of them will submit to baptism and turn

Christian."

"Same thing here. In our town there was a certain Marshak who traveled all over Russia, far and near, from end to end; but he didn't get accepted anywhere. So he went

and poisoned himself."

"God grant it turns out to be a lie, I said; you'll see, I said, they'll start turning Christian at such a rate that not a single lew will remain, damn it! What would you expect? You think it is easy to suffer all these misfortunes, with the quotas and circulars ? Every day a new circular. As many circulars as there are Jewish children. Wait, I said, and you'll see, we'll get to a point when they'll refuse to accept Jews altogether. If you want an example, take, for instance, Shpola. Shpola is a Jewish town, isn't it?"

"For that matter, take Nemirov. I received a letter from Nemirov. They tell me very ugly things about what's going on there."

"Well, if you think things are better in Lubny, you're mistaken."

"And what's the matter with Lubny?"

"Or, for instance, in Ananyev. In Ananyev they used to accept

at least three Jews every year." "What's the use of talking of Ananyev? You better take To-mashpol. In Tomashpol, they say, they didn't accept a single Jew this year, not one!"

"In our town they accepted eigh-

teen Jews this year."

This latter information came from above. My two companions (and I, too) turned up our heads and raised our eyes to the upper berth whence came the voice. We saw two feet in galoshes suspended from the upper berth; the legs to which these feet belonged carried a Jew with matted black hair and a sleepy face which looked swollen.

My two companions scrutinized the sleepy Jew with the swollen face, as if he were a curiosity which one never meets in our parts. At once both of them became animated, they seemed to have cheered up, and their eyes shone as they asked the man on the upper berth:

"So in your town, you say, they

accepted eighteen Jews?"

"Eighteen lads to a man, and mine is one of them."

"Yours has also been accepted?"

"Of course."

"Where? Where is this?"

"Why, in our town, in Little Pereshchepena."

"In what Pereshchepena? Where

is this Pereshchepena?"

Both of them jumped to their feet. They looked at each other, and both together at the Jew on the upper berth. The latter looked down at them with his swollen face and said:

"You don't know where Little Pereshchepena is? It's a town. How is it you never heard of it? There are two Pereshchepenas: Greater Pereshchepena and Little Pereshchepena. I come from Little Pereshchepena."

<sup>1</sup> Government circulars regulating the terms of admission for Jewish students.

"Here's a how-do-you-do! Climb down; why should you sit there

all alone next to the sky?"

The owner of the feet with the galoshes climbed down, groaning, and joined the two below. The two made room for him on the seat and then pounced upon him like hungry locusts.

"So your son was accepted, you say?"

"Of course!"

"Tell us, please, dear friend, how did you manage it? Apparently in your town they accept

bribes, don't they?"

"Bribes? Gcd forbid! We wouldn't even dare to mention money. The fact of the matter is that formerly they did accept bribes. And what bribes! Ho, ho! People would come to us from all the towns in the neighborhood. It was known everywhere that Pereshchepena is a place where they take bribes. But a few years ago someone squealed about it to the authorities and—as my luck would have it—ever since then they don't accept any more bribes in Pereshchepena."

"How did you manage it, then?

Had some pull?"

"What pull? It's an agreed arrangement among themselves that if it's a Jew they take him. 'Accepted!' and that's the end of it."

"You mean it? Impossible! You

must be making fun of us."

"I make fun? What do you think

I am, a fun-maker?"

The three looked at each other as if they were trying to read what was written on their several faces. But since nothing happened to be written on their faces, the two asked the third one:

"Wait a moment. Where did

you say you come from?"

The third one seemed to be getting angry.

"From Pereshchepena—I told

you that three times already. From Little Pereshchepena."

"We apologize. But it's the first time we've ever heard of this city."

"Ha-ha-ha! Pereshchepena a city? Some city! Pereshchepena is no city, if you want to know; it's a little town, you might say a village—township, that's what it is!"

"And still, you say, you have there in your . . . what did you say was the name of your town? Per . . . Pere . . ."

Now the Jew from Little Pereshchepena was angry in real earnest.

"Funny kind of Jews you are! Can't you pronounce a Jewish name, or what? Pe-resh-che-pe-na! Pe-resh-che-pe-na!"

"All right, all right. If you want Pereshchepena, let it be Pereshchepena. No reason why you should lose your temper like that."

"I'm not losing my temper. Only I hate people to ask me the same question ninety-nine times."

"We apologize. But, you see, we're in the same fix as you were. So when we heard that your son was accepted, we became excited, and interested. That's why we're asking all these questions. We'll tell you the honest truth: we never imagined that in your town—what's the name of it again? Pere—Pere—shchepena—that there could be a high school in your town."

The Jew from Pereshchepena fixed his eyes on the two of them

with a sullen look.

"Who told you that we have a high school in Pereshchepena?"

My two companions fixed their

eyes on the other Jew.

"Why, haven't you just said that your son was accepted right in your Pereshchepena?"

The Jew from Pereshchepena eyed them with flashing scorn. Then he rose and shouted in their faces:

"He was accepted as a soldier in the army! In the army! That's what he was!"

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Outside, the sun had risen, and bluish-grey light stole through the windows of the car. The passengers began to get up. Some stretched after their sleep, some coughed, and some busied themselves with their baggage, preparing to leave.

My three companions separated, became strangers, as if they had never spoken a word to one another. One of them moved over into a corner and slowly lit a cigarette. One opened a small prayer-book

and began to read the prayers, keeping one eye shut and murmuring inaudibly. The third one, the irascible Jew from Little Pereshchepena, sat down to eat.

Funny, how the three of them became perfect strangers all at once. Not only did they refrain from speaking to one another, but they avoided each other's eyes; as if they had been partners in some dirty business, or had done something to be ashamed of. . . .

#### Three Little Heads

Were my pen an artist's, or at least a camera, I would present you, my friends, with an enchanting group of three heads, the charming heads of three poor, ragged Jewish children. Heads of black curls, with great shining eyes, gazing at you in wonder, as if inquiring of the world: "Why?" You look at them and wonder, too, and feel somehow guilty, as if it were actually your fault that they have come into the world—three more unwanted souls.

These three pretty little heads belong to Abrasha, Misha and Verochka, two brothers and a little sister. Their father, Peisya the bookbinder, altered their names to the Russian forms—"Abrasha" and "Misha." If it were not that he stands in dread of his wife and is so terribly poor, he would have changed his own name from "Peisya'' to "Petya." But since he is, after all, a little afraid of his wife, and extremely poor, he has to be content with the name "Peisya" until the happy time comes of which Karl Marx, August Bebel and all good and wise people tell us. Then . . . oh, then everything will be quite different.... But while we are waiting for that day to come we have to stand on our feet from dawn till late at night,

cutting cardboard and pasting boxes together.

stands on his feet all day cutting cardboard and making boxes. And while he works he sings songs, old and new, Jewish and non-Jewish, most of all those which have a kind of light-hearted melancholy and a cheerfully sad refrain.

"Will you ever stop singing your Russian songs, I wonder!" exclaims his wife, "You must have fallen in love with the Russians, that's all. Ever since we came to live in a big town you've turned into a regular Russian."

All three children, Abrasha, Misha and Verochka, were born and grew up in a corner, between the wall and the stove. The three always see the same thing: the lively father who cuts cardboard, pastes boxes together and sings songs, and the anxious, withered mother who cooks, bakes, sweeps and cleans and can never get through her work. The two are always busymother around the stove, the father with his boxes. "Who wants these boxes? Why should they want so many? The whole world will soon be filled up with boxes!" These are the thoughts that flit through the pretty little heads and they wait

impatiently for their father to collect many, many boxes. He carries them on his head and under his arms to the market, and returns without any boxes, but with money for their mother and with rolls, crackers and sweets for them. He is a good father—ah, how good! Pure gold!

Mother is good, too, but very cross: she slaps you and pushes you and pulls you by the ears. She doesn't like disorder in the room, she doesn't like children to play at "Papa-and-Mama," she doesn't like Abrasha to cut up the bits of left-over cardboard, nor Misha to take his father's paste, nor Verochka to make sand-pies. . . . Mother wants children to sit quiet and not fidget. She evidently does not know that the infant heads are ever active, that the infant souls are ever longing, yearning, straining to get out somewhere. Out-of-doors! To the light! To the window! To the window!

There is only one window. All three heads are struggling for that window. And what is there to see through it? A wall. A high, long, grey, damp wall. It is always damp. Even in summer! Does the sun ever show itself here? Why not? It sometimes happens that it does. That is, not the sun itself, that is never to be seen, but the reflection of the sunlight comes in. Occasions like these are a real holiday for the children. All three charming heads crowd to the window, and gaze upwards as far as possible to where there is a glimpse of a long narrow strip of blue, a long, blue ribbon. "Can you see it, children? That's the sky," the eldest, Abrasha, explains.

Abrasha knows. Abrasha goes to school. He knows the alphabet already. The school is two doors away from their house. Ah, and what wonderful tales Ab-

rasha brings home from school! He says that he has seen a big stone house with windows from top to bottom. He swears—may god send down all good things!-that he himself has seen a tall, tall chimney out of which smoke poured. . . . Abrasha says he has seen a machine that sews without the aid of human hands. He has seen a cart that rushes along without being drawn by horses. And many more wonders does Abrasha bring home from school, and each time he swears—as his mother swears— "May god send me all good things!" Misha and Verochka listen and envy Abrasha. He knows everything, simply everything. . . .

For example, he knows that a tree grows. True, he has never seen it growing, any more than they have. There are no trees in their street. But he knows (he has heard it at school) that fruit grows on trees. That is why, when people eat fruit, they repeat the prayer, "Creator of all the fruits."

Abrasha knows (what doesn't that boy know?) that potatoes, or, say, cucumbers, onions and garlic, grow right out of the earth. That is why when you eat them you say the prayer; "Creator of all the fruits of the earth." Abrasha knows everything.

One thing only he does not know, and that is, where and how a tree does actually grow, for, like his brother and sister, he has never seen a living tree. In their street you can see huge houses, grey walls, tall chimneys out of which smoke pours, numberless windows in the most enormous house—thousands and thousands of windows; and machines that sew without the aid of human hands, and carts that go without horses, but nothing else, nothing at all!

You rarely see even a bird here. An occasional sparrow appears, grey as the grey wall, pecks once or twice at the grey stones and flies away again. Of the larger birds the only specimen they ever see is the quarter of a chicken (with one pale, outstretched leg) sometimes to be found in the house on Saturdays. . "How many legs has a bird?" "Four, like a horse," Abrasha promptly decides; after all, Abrasha knows everything. Sometimes mother brings home from market the head of a hen with starting eyes dulled with a thin white film. "It's dead," Abrasha explains, and the heads of the three little children turn to lock at each other with their black eyes, and they sigh.

Born and brought up in a big town, in a big house, terribly crowded and terribly poor, they have never had the chance to see a live bird or beast or any domestic animal except a cat. They have their own cat, a live grey one, grey as the damp grey wall opposite their house. The cat is their only joy. They play with her for hours on end, dress her up with a shawl over her head, pretend she is a relative, and go into fits of laughter over her. If the mether catches sight of them, she treats one to a push, another to a smack, and a third to a twitch of the ear.

The children huddle in their corner behind the stove. Abrasha talks while the two younger, Misha and Verochka, listen. They gaze at their elder brother with their big eyes and listen.

Abrasha says their mother is right, that a cat is an unclean animal, that there is an evil spirit in her, and that to play with a cat is a sin. Abrasha knows everything. There is nothing in the world that Abrasha does not know.

Abrasha knows everything. He knows that far, far away there is a country called America. They have many relatives and aquaintances in that distant America.

In America Jews are free and happy. They, too, are going there next year, as soon as they book their places on a ship. You cannot go without booking your place because you have to cross the sea, and there are storms at sea that toss you about—oh, something terrible!

thing terrible!

Everything! Even what is going on in the next world. He knows, for example, that in the next world there is a garden of Eden. And in the garden of Eden grow trees with marvelous fruit. The rivers run with oil. Diamonds and other jewels lie about in the streets, you can stoop and pick up as many as you want. Devout people there spend their days and nights poring over books of wisdom and basking in the light of the holy spirit. . . .

So Abrasha tells them. The eyes of the little ones sparkle. They envy their elder brother, who knows everything. He even knows what goes on in heaven. Abrasha says—and vows it is true—that twice a year, on the eve of two Jewish holidays—shvu's and hosheina rabah—

the heavens open.

True, he himself has never once seen this, because it is impossible to see the sky from their room. But his comrades have seen it, and they have sworn-"May god send down all good things"-that they have seen it. They would not take the name of god in vain. That would be a sin. What a pity that in their street there is no sky, but only a long narrow strip of blue, like a long blue ribbon. What can you see in a scrap of sky like that except two or three tiny stars and the pale reflection of the moon?... So, seeking for a means to convince his young brother Misha and his sister Verochka that the heavens really do open, Abrasha gces up to his mother and tugs at her skirt.

"Mama, isn't it true that today, on the eve of shvues, the sky will crack in two and open?" "I'll give you a crack over the head, that's what I'll do, and then you'll know."

Receiving nothing but a box on the ear from his mother, Abrasha decides to wait for his father to come home. Father has gone to market with a pile of boxes.

"Now, let's see who'll guess right. What'll father bring us today?" Abrasha asks. The children try to guess what their father will bring back from market. They tick off on their fingers every single thing that the human eye can see and the human heart desire; rolls and crackers and sweets—but they do not guess right.

And you, my reader, would never guess, either. For on this occasion Peisya the bookbinder brings home from market neither rolls nor crackers nor even sweets: he brings grass, a strange, green, sweetsmelling grass.

The three little heads—Abrasha, Misha and Verochka—crowd round their father.

"Papa, what's that? What is it?"

"Herbs."

"What's herbs?"

"Green stuff for the holiday. You must have green herbs in the house for shvues."

"Where do people get them,

papa?"

"Where do they get them? Hm.

... They buy them in the market..."

So their father replies as he sprinkles the aromatic green herbs about the freshly-swept room. He is delighted that they are so green and smell so nice, and calls out cheerfully to his wife:

"Mama, it's a heliday! Congra-

tulations!"

"The same to you! I suppose there wasn't enough mess without this! Those little imps dirty the whole house," his wife retorts, vexedly as usual, giving one a push, another a smack, and the third a twitch of the ear. What a queer mother they have! She is always displeased, always sad, always worried, the very opposite to their father.

The three pretty little heads glance from their mother to their father and then at one another. And when their parents' backs are turned, they all three lie down on the floor and press their faces to the aromatic grass, and kiss the sweet-smelling stuff that people call "herbs" and require at holiday-times and buy in the market

You can get everything in the market, even herbs. Their father buys them everything. People need all sorts of thing, and people have all sorts of things. Even herbs!

Even green herbs!

#### Conscription

"Where I am from?" replied my neighbor, a tall, lean, bearded Jew in a plush cap, as he folded up his praying robe after concluding his morning prayers. "Where am I from? Ah, woe is me!...I've just come from the conscription office. That's where I've come from—the conscription office. With my son. There he is, my son, lying stretched out on that bench.

That young fellow there. That's the very one. We're from Yegupetz. I went there to see the lawyers, and to pay a visit to the doctors—to hear what they had to say. It's been a regular visitation from god—his being called up. Yes, a visitation... Four times they've called him up already and the end is not in sight yet. Though he's my one and only

son, a real son, you might say—a pure, genuine, first-rate fellow. What are you looking at me like that for? Don't you believe me? Well, now listen: it's an inter-

esting story....

"The history of the whole business goes like this: I'm a Mizhirichi man, from Mizhirichi, that is. I was really born, if you want to know, in Mazepovka. But I'm registered as living in Vorotilovsk. That is to say, I once had the misfortune to live in Vorotilovsk! Now

I'm living in Mizhirichi.

"You would like to know, of course, who I am and what I'm called, but I don't think that makes any difference to you. I must tell you the name of my son, though, because that has a bearing on the whole business, and I might say. a very important one. His real name is Izzik, that is, Avraam Itzhok, but we call him Alter. She-my old woman, I mean, called him that, as a pet name, because he's very dear to us, being our only child. We had, as a matter of fact, another son, a year or eighteen months younger than this one.... Isaac he was called.... Isaac. But he met with a dreadful accident....

"I was a Vorotilovsk man at that time, I mean we were living in Vorotilovsk, unfortunately for us. Once I left the child alone in the house. And he took and crawled right under the boiling samovar, tipped it over on himself and was scalded to death. To death! And from that day to this Izzik-Avraam-Itzhok is our only one. It was then that she, my old woman, I mean (god send her health), started to call the boy Alter, for

a pet name.

"You ask, naturally enough, well, what about it? He's our only one, and what has he to do with compulsory military service? That's just what all the bother is about.

You think, perhaps, that he turned out a fine healthy fellow, as so often happens with children brought up in the lap of luxury? You're quite mistaken! You wouldn't give a cracked farthing for him; a puny, sickly lad. And yet you couldn't exactly call him so very sickly. It isn't as if he was, god forbid, ailing; still, he's not so strong. He'll be getting up soon, and then you'll see for yourself what make of a fellow he is: all skin and bone, as long as a pole and as thin as a shaving, with a little wizened face like a dried fig.

"In short, he takes after her, my old woman (god send her health). You know, she's tall and skinny, too, delicate, sort of.... And just tell me, why on earth should I ever think and worry about military service when a lad is as long and lanky as he is? As you might say, quite unfit, and got an exemption into the bargain?

"Yet just imagine, when the time for calling-up came round, there was no exemption whatever! What exemption? Nothing of the kind! What, as a matter of fact,

did happen?

"It was all very simple. My second son, Isaac, the one who, (may it never be said of yourself!) scalded himself to death with the boiling samovar, had never been crossed out, it seems, in the register: they'd simply forgotten to do it."

"Of course, I rushed straight to that idiot of an official rabbi, and started to shout at him: 'What did you do that for? You robber, you! You murderer, you! You've done for me! Why didn't you cross out my Isaac? Why, tell me that!'

"And he, the blockhead, actually asks me: "Who is this Isaac?"
""What do you mean?" I say.

'You don't know Isaac, my son Isaac who tipped the samovar over himself?' "' 'What samovar?' says he.

"Good-day to you! I say, 'You don't belong to these parts, maybe? You've got a head-and so has a pin! The only thing a head like yours is good for is to crack nuts on, I'd say.... Who doesn't remember what happened to Isaac, my little Isaac, who scalded himself with the samovar? It beats me,' I say, 'how you can call yourself a rabbi after that and of what use are you here in this place, anyway? You can't even make head or tail of a chicken and say whether it's kosher or not. For that we've got a real spiritual rabbi,' I say, 'and may god send him long life! . . . You might at least,' I say, 'in that case, look after the dead. . . . Else what the devil use are you to us, with your fees?'

"And what do you think, after all that? Just listen. . . . It seems I'd been blaming him, this lovely rabbi of ours, for what was no fault of his, because the samovar business didn't happen here in Mizhirichi, it happened when we lived—and a great misfortune it was for us!—in Voroti-

lovsk.

"Now what do you say to that! What a mistake! I'd clean forgotten. Forgotten, and that's all about it!

"To cut a long story short, I'm not going over a lot of unnecessary stories and into a lot of details. I rushed here, there and everywhere, getting a paper here, a paper there, but what good was that? My Avraam-Itzhok—Izzik, that is (we call him Alter), had lost his exemption! Lost it for good and all.

"Well, since he wasn't to be exempted, things looked bad! There was nothing but shouting, and yelling, as much as to say, 'What for, indeed?' My one and only son, a real, pure, as you might say, a genuine first-rate lad—

and there wasn't a chance of exemption for him! Shout or not, just as you like, but the point was,

things looked bad.

"But there is still the great god in heaven above! My Alter—Izzik. that is-went up and drew the biggest number—six hundred and ninety-nine. The whole council was agog over it. The head chairman himself clapped my Alter on the shoulder: 'Bravo, Izko,' he says, 'well done!' Everybody in our town envied me: number six hundred What ninety-nine! Congratulations, congratulations! Thanks, the same to you! In a word, you'd think he'd won first prize in a lottery, two hundred thousand or so, you know!

"But what can you do with these Jews of ours? ... The medical examination started, and once they started rejecting, they rejected without stopping! All of a sudden the whole lot turned into poor, miserable cripples: one had this the matter with him, another something else, and so on....

"To cut a long story short—for why should I tell you a lot of unnecessary stories and go into all sorts of details?—the point is, they got to my son's number, six hundred and ninety-nine, and my Izzik—Alter, that is—had to appear in his own person for examination along with the whole bunch of tailors and cobblers.

"Then, I can tell you, there was weeping and wailing in the house. And what weeping and wailing! Sobbing, hysterics . . . . My wife (god send her good health!) tore her hair, while as for my daughter-in-law, she just dropped down senseless. It's no joke; whoever heard of a pure, as you might say, a real, genuine first-rate lad like my son being treated all of a sudden without the slightest exemption!

"But he himself, my son, I mean, didn't seem to care a hang. 'What-



Drawing by Alexander Tishler

ever happens to all the Jews, will happen to this Jew here' (to himself, that is)... That was the way he talked, sort of joking, but, never fear, it must have made his blood run cold to think of it....

And was it any wonder?

"But great is the god in heaven! They led him, my Izzik, naked, if you'll excuse my saying so, into the office, and the doctor started to examine him, my Izzik-Alter that is-and measure the length and breadth of him, and feel him and look at him and torment him, this way and that way, but to what purpose? He wouldn't do, a creature like that, if you'll allow me to say so. (Of course, he does very well, in general, but not for a soldier!) He lacked about four and a quarter inches across. Four and a quarter inches! 'Unfit! Give him a white card....'

"Again there was great rejoic-

ing and gladness and congratulations... All our kith and kin gathered round and started treating and drinking healths, and clinking glasses. Thank the lord, we thought, he won't be called up for military service any more.

"But what can you do, when all's said and done, with these Jews of ours?... Don't worry, in no time at all some scoundrel or other had written to the county council, reporting that I had, so he pretended, 'greased the palms' of the local council.... In short, before two months were past, I get a notice requesting my Izzik—Alter, that is—to be good enough to step round to the county council for a second examination, a trial, that is.

"A nice bit of news to get, wasn't it? Well, I can tell you there was such a to-do in the house as is beyond my powers to describe. My

wife (god send her health!) tears the hair off her head and my daughter-in-law drops down senseless, if you please. It's no joke, you know, to be called up twice; after all he's our only one, a pure, as you might say, a real genuine firstrate son.

"Well, to cut a long story short for why should I tell you a lot of unnecessary things and go into a lot of unnecessary detail?—if you're sent for to the county council, it just means, well, don't be

a swine, just go!

"So I went up to the county town and, of course, began to run here, there and everywhere, looking for acquaintances, people who had influence and would, perhaps, put in a good word for us. But everyone wanted to know all about it from beginning to end and I had to explain that he was my only one and not very strong into the bargain... And they wouldn't hear of it, they just made fun of me!

"And as for my son... I declare to god I've seen corpses look better. It wasn't on account of the calling-up he looked like that. Oh, no. That bothered him least of all, he said. What he couldn't bear was to see us suffering, he said, he couldn't bear to see women's suffering, he said. Who can tell what this county council may do, you couldn't be up to them, he said! It's all a lottery, as the saying is.

"But there is still a great god in heaven. They led my Izzik—Alter, that is—into the council room as naked, if you'll excuse my saying so, as the day his mother bore him, and took to examining him again up and down and round about, feeling him, listening to him breathing, and generally tormenting him. But—to what purpose? When he won't do at all, a creature like that?—(that is, he'll do all right, but not for a soldier!)

"Someone, it's true, started to object and tried to declare him fit. But the doctor put the fellow down at once, and said: 'Unfit!' One said: 'Fit!' The other, 'Unfit!'

"In short, there they were at cross-purposes, until the governor himself got up off his chair, came over to look at my son, and said: 'Absolutely unfit!' That meant my son was no good at all....
"That very minute, of course,

I ran out and sent my wife a telegram, saying, in other words (as one always does in these cases): 'Congratulations! Goods finally

rejected!'

"It was just my luck, of course, that it should so happen (only listen to this!) that my message was delivered not at my house, but at my cousin's, the same name as mine, he's very rich, and, if you'll excuse my saying so, a down-

right swine.

"There's nothing surprising about that, by the way, because he's a cattle-dealer, trades in beasts, so to speak. And at that very time he'd sent off a drove of cattle to the same county and was nearly beside himself with impatience, waiting for a telegram about them. Imagine what he felt like, then, when my telegram 'Goods finally rejected,' was delivered to him. I thought he'd eat me alive when I got home.

"What do you think of the impertinence of that swine? Rich, too! Grabs other people's telegrams, and gets into a sweat about

them, into the bargain.

"Now let's go back to the time when I, to my great misfortune, still lived in Vorotilovsk, and my Izzik—Alter, that is—was only

a little chap.

"One fine day, quite unexpectedly, some sort of a census was taken in our town; they went from house to house, registering every

single soul, from the youngest to the oldest. And it was: 'What are you called?' and 'How old are you? How many children have you? Male or female? And what is each of them called?'

"In time, of course, they got round to my Izzik. What was his name? My wife (god send her health!) said it was Alter. And, of course, the fellow wanted nothing better, devil take him! Alter, was it? So Alter it was! He took and wrote down, the rascal, the name 'Alter.'

"Before a year was out, after the calling-up, I get, all of a sudden, a notice to say, they're looking for my son Alter, requesting him to have the goodness to step round to Vorotilovsk for conscription.

"What the devil was this? A visitation! that's what it was, upon my word! Well, and there you are! A new Jew-Alterhad appeared on the face of the earth, so to speak! Well done, reb Alter!

"To cut a long story shortfor why should I bother you with unnecessary stories and a lot of unnecessary detail?-my son Izzik—Alter, that is—was called up again. So just go back to the beginning! My wife (god send her good health!) tears the hair out of her head, and as for my daughter-in-law, she falls down senseless. It's no joke, you know. Who ever heard of such a thing? Never in all the world will you find another case of an only son, a pure, you might say, a real, genuine, first-rate lad, having to do military service three times, and having to go up for examination!

"But who could you go and explain all that to, and who would understand you? What's to be done, in a case like this? I appealed to the community, and raised a row and managed to get ten Jews to take their oath and sign a paper saying that Izzik was to their certain knowledge Avraam-Itzhok, and Avraam-Itzhok was Alter, and that Alter, Izzik and Avraam-Itzhok were one and the same person.

"With this paper in my hand, off I went to Vorotilovsk. When I got there, I proved to be a welcome guest. It was: 'Good morning, Reb Yokhel! How are you, Reb Yokhel? What brings you here?'

"I wasn't very anxious to tell them my affairs, as you may guess. Why should I be? It's always better, believe me, when a Jew knows the least possible. 'Oh, nothing much,' I say, 'I've got to see a landowner here.'

" 'What about?'

" 'About some millet,' I say. 'I bought a small quantity here, paid part in advance, and now I've got neither the millet nor the money. I've lost the cow, as the saying is, and the calf into the bargain.'

"And away I go, straight to the council, but find no one there but a clerk. I hand him the paper, he reads it and flies into a rage! He threw it right back in my face and worked himself into such a state—I thought he was going to

kill me on the spot.
"'Clear out!' he shouted. 'Go to the devil with all your names and your Yiddish tricks! You want to get out of doing military service, you crooks, and so you turn Avraam into Itzhok, Itzhok into Izzik, and Izzik into Alter! No, no, we're not having any of that, none of your double-dealing here!'

"Well, I think, when I hear him mention 'dealing,' it's a few rubles he wants.... So I pull out a bank note and am just going to shove it into his hand.

"'Excuse me, your honor's excellent worship,' I say, very, very softly.

"But up he jumps, shouting: "What! Bribes!" And some more clerks run in and-well, why dwell on it?-they saw me off the premises 'with honor,' as the saying is. What a failure, just my luck to hit on a fellow who didn't take bribes!

"It's all talk, by the way: I found out the Jew through whom this fellow did his bribe-taking.

"But it was all about as much good as incense to a corpse. It was decided that I had still another son, called Alter. And this Alter had better turn up in Vorotilovsk for military service. There was a nice how-d'ye-do! It needed an iron constitution to live through

a year like that.

"Although, between ourselves, what had I to be frightened of. fool that I was? Let them call him up ten times if they like, when all's said and done, I know he won't do, a creature like that (I mean to say, he'll do very well, in general, but not as a soldier!). Especially, as they'd already rejected him twice, this brave lad of ours. . . . But still, you know, when you come to think of it, after all, you're in a strange town, where the council is made up of people who aren't to be bought-and who knows what it may do!

"But there is still the great god in heaven above! My Alter-Izzik that is-drew lots once more, appeared for examination, and again god was merciful, the council decided: 'Unfit!' and gave him a white card. Now we had two white

cards, thank the lord.

"We came home and once again there was gladness and rejoicing in the house. We had a party, invited nearly the whole town, and played and enjoyed ourselves and danced till morning. Because, now, who was there for me to be afraid of and who was equal to me? The tsar himself, maybe!

"Now we'll go back to my Isaac. god rest his soul, that same son of mine who, as a small child. tipped the samovar over on himself. This will be an interesting story, very interesting, indeed. One would have to be a prophet to guess that that clever fellow. the official rabbi of Vorotilovsk. had forgotten to cross him—the dear child. I mean—out of the register.

'So that I was 'liable,' so to speak, because I had, or rather, am supposed to have, somewhere, another son Isaac, who is to be called up this year for military service. Another plague! Another

misfortune on my head!
"' 'What Isaac?" I say, 'Isaac is in Paradise long ago,' I tell our rabbi. 'Advise me what to do.' "'It's a bad business,' says he.

"' 'Why is it a bad business?' I ask. 'Tell me why.'

"' 'Because,' he says, 'Izzik and Isaac are the same name.'

"' 'Now that's very smart of you," I say, 'How is it that Izzik and Isaac are the same name?'

"Because, he says, 'Izzik is Itzhok, Itzhok is Issakh, Issakh is Izaak, and Izaak and Isaac are one and the same.' See how he turn-

ed it. eh?

"To cut a long story short for why should I tell unnecessary tales and go into all sorts of details? —they started after my Isaac. They wouldn't let me alone, I'd no life with them, produce Isaac for conscription, they wouldn't

hear of anything else!

"Then the weeping and the wailing started in the house again. And what weeping and wailing! The end of the world was nothing to it! In the first place, my wife (god send her good health!) was reminded of the dead child, and that irritated the old wound. 'It would have been better for him to be living to this day and be

called up, than to be lying under the damp sod with his bones rotting. . . . '

"In the second place, she is afraid that, perhaps, god forbid, the Vorotilovsk rabbi, who says that Issakh is Izaak and Izaak is Isaak is right, after all. And if it is so, why, then it is a bad business.

"So my old woman (god send her health!) tears the hair on her head, and my daughter-in-law drops down senseless on the floor. That's no joke, is it? The one and only son, a pure, as you might say, a real, genuine, first-rater, who has done his military service three times over, has two white cards, and even that isn't enough for them.

"Without taking very long to think about it, I went to Yegupets to consult a good lawyer, and, while I was about it, I took my son along with me—to take the opportunity of calling to see a doctor—a specialist, and hear what he had to tell me; was my son fit or unfit?

"Although I know perfectly well that he's not fit, a creature like that (I mean, he's fit for anything, in general, but not for a soldier!), but I thought, let's hear what the lawyer and the doctor have to say, and then it'll be off my mind, and I can live in peace without thinking of military service all the time. . .

"And what happened? It turned out that all the lawyers and all the specialists know just as much as you and I do. One says one thing, another says another. If one says one thing, the next will be certain to say just the very opposite. It's enough to drive a body mad! Just listen to this.

"The first lawyer I went to was a slow-witted numbskull, though he had a huge forehead and a bald spot that covered his whole head, a bald spot you could see your face in, as if it was a mirror!

"This wiseacre couldn't seem to understand who Alter was, who Izzik was, who Avraam-Itzhok was, and who Isaac was. I explained it to him once, I explained it to him twice, that Alter and Izzik and Avraam-Itzhok were one and the same person, and that Isaac was the one who scalded himself to death with the boiling water from the samovar, while I was still a Vorotilovsk man, I mean, when I had the misfortune to live in Vorotilovsk.

"At long last, I thought, he's grasped it. And here he begins the whole tale from the very beginning and asks: 'Cne moment! Which of them is the eldest? —Izzik, Alter or Avraam-Itzhok?'

"''Good morning to your night-cap!' I say to him. 'I have explained to you fifteen times already that Izzik, Avraam-Itzhok and Alter are one and the same person. His real name is Izzik, that is, Avraam-Itzhok, but we call him Alter. His mother called him that for a pet-name. But Isaac,' I say, 'that's the one that tipped the samovar over on himself when I was in Vorotilovsk....'

"' 'And what year was he called up, this Avraam-Alter? . . . I mean to say, Itzhok-Isaac?'

"' 'What on earth are you talking about?' I say to him. 'You're mixing up two quite different things. It's the first time in my life I ever see anyone with a pigiron head on their shoulders! I'm explaining to you, as plain as I can speak, that Itzhok, Avraam-Itzhok, Izzik and Alter are one and the same, one and the same person!'

"' 'Sh-sh,' says he, 'don't raise your voice.... What are you

shouting for?'

"How do you like that? He's in the right, it appears, in spite of everything!

"To cut a long story short, I spat on the ground and went to another lawyer. This time I hit on a brainy fellow, only he was a lot too smart.

"He rubbed his forehead, and went into this thing and that thing, and referred to all the laws; and turned it this way and then that way, and came to the conclusion that on the basis of Article soand-so, the Mizhirichi council had no right even to enroll him, but . . . a law exists, says he, whereby it follows that if one council has enrolled him, the second is bound to cross him off their roll. 'Exclude him, that is to say . . . . And again, there is a law,' he goes on, 'according to which if one council has enrolled him, and the other has not crossed him off the roll, not excluded him, that is, they are in duty bound to do so, to exclude him, that is. And then,' says he 'there is a law of annulment, namely, that if the second council does not want to cross him off the roll, exclude him, that is....'

"In short, there's such-and-such a law and such-and-such a law, and there's this annulment and that annulment, and he got me into such a muddle with his annulments that I was obliged to go to a third lawyer. And now I hit on another wiseacre. A brandnew young lawyer, not long out of college. A very pleasant young man, indeed, and a tongue—like a bell, it sounded so sweet. He must be just learning to talk, that lad! You could tell by the way he seemed to admire his own words, he enjoyed every word he uttered.

"He spread himself so much, and got so worked up, and made such a speech, that I was obliged

to interrupt him.

"'This is all very true," I said, 'and you're perfectly right, of course, but what do I want with your tears? What I want is not that you should cry over me, you'd do much better to advise me what to do about my son if he should be called up again, which god forbid!'

"To cut a long story short—for why should I tell you unnecessary tales and go into all sorts of details?—at last I found a regular good lawyer. This was one of the old-fashioned kind, the sort that has all his wits about him.

that has all his wits about him. "I told him the whole story from beginning to end, and he sat with his eyes closed all the time, listening. He heard me to the end and then he asked me: 'Is that all? You've quite finished? It's a trifle. There won't be more than three hundred rubles fine.'

"'No more?' said I. 'If I had known it was only a matter of a three-hundred-ruble fine! I'm afraid

for my son!'

"' 'Which son?' says he.

"''What do you mean by "which son"?' I say. 'My son Alter, Izzik, that is.'

"'What has that to do with

Izzik?' says he.

"" 'What do you mean by asking what has it got to do with Izzik?' I say. 'Supposing they call him up again (which god forbid!). He has a white card, two white cards, in fact....'

"'And what about it? What exactly is it that you want?"

"'What should I want? I don't want anything exactly. I'm only afraid that, as they're looking for Isaac just now, and there isn't any Isaac, and since Alter—Izzik, that is—is registered in the name of Avraam-Itzhok, and Itzhok—as the official rabbi (that blockhead!) says—is the same as Isaach and Isaach's the same as Izaak and Izaak is Isaac, they might (god forbid!) say that my Izzik or Avraam-Itzhok—Alter, that is—I mean they might say he is that same Isaac."

"'Well, and what of it?' he says.
'All the better! If Izzik is Isaac,
you won't even have to pay the
fine. You say he has a white card?'

"'Not one,' I say, 'but two, two white cards.... But they're Iz-

zik's cards, not Isaac's.'

"''But you say, don't you,' he keeps insisting, 'that Izzik is this same Isaac?'

"' 'Who ever said,' I say, 'that

Izzik was Isaac?'

"' 'Why, you've just said so,' says he, 'you said Izzik is Isaac.'

"I said so? ... How could

I say such a thing? I said Izzik is Alter, but Isaac is the one who tipped the samovar over on himself when I was a Vorotilovsk man, that is, when I had the misfortune to be living in Vorotilovsk.'

"Then my lawyer flared up all of a sudden and told me to go away

that very minute.

"''Go away,' says he. 'You're nothing but a bothersome Jew.'
"''You understand what that means? It means I'm regarded as a nuisance! Do you hear that?...
I—a nuisance!"

#### **ERICH WEINERT**

# NICHT BARCELONA

No sooner do you fall asleep when the roar of exploding bombs and the crackle of the anti-aircraft batteries wake you. It thunders ten minutes and then all is quiet. Only you can't fall asleep again.

At such moments memories which have faded and grown unreal in the whirl of passing days detach themselves from the dark and become clothed in flesh and blood. The flickering spots before your mind's eye change gradually into shadows—familiar, beloved shadows. Little by little they take on distinct shape and life and color, like a picture projected onto the screen and then brought into focus.

They are the figures of men no longer among the living. The faces of comrades who perished in Aragon, at Teruel, on the Ebro, in Catalonia. Now their bodies are ashes. They are gone from the face of the earth. But they rise from the dead, they live and move, before your mind's eye, penetrating deep into the dark.

How distinctly I see you, Leo! You are smiling at me again, your teeth shining. Once again we are together, discussing Vienna, where Schober's detectives hounded us and we fooled them so cleverly, where you took your place as a Socialist on the barricades in the great Fob-

ruary days; we talk about the Vienna forest grove you loved so dearly.

Out of the dark behind your face, Leo, there appear the wooded mountains of the Escorial and the grey roofs of Castile villages. As we walk along together we suddenly see the mountain summits transformed into the tall buildings of the new Okhotny Ryad in Moscow, our beloved Moscow, and you are saying: "Well, it's time I went back to the Ball Berring Plant. We are having a production conference." You hold out your hand to me as we part, and, smiling proudly, you say: "I'm a Stakhanovite now, you know."

Again we are at the small Villalba railway station, its sides pockmarked with bullet holes. The thunder of guns from Brunete disturbs the calm of evening.

"If I ever go back there," you say—and your voice sings in my ears—"I'll be a far better Stakhanovite." And when the word Moscow comes to your lips your eyes sparkle with pride.

I never saw you again, Leo.

A couple of weeks later I ascended a hillock which our brigade had taken two days before. A small plank stuck out of the earth. On it a name was inscribed in pencil. It was your name.

Today that hillock is again in the hands of the fascists. They must have trodden into the earth the plank with your name. Nobody knows where your grave is. But what does a grave matter to the living?

I hear you speak again...

But it is no long r your face,
Leo. It is you, Franz. I see you raise your hand in your friendly, rough manner, grasp the back of my head and pull me close. "Our hair has grown grey since the stormy days in Berlin, old boy!" you say, "Do you still remember, Erich, how we celebrated May First in 1929, in the saloon on Hermannsplatz, opposite the Hasenheide?"

Now I see you again in the dark garret in Torralba, where your battalion headquarters were. You lay stretched out on a mattress, you held out a glass of wine to me and said: "Never mind, Erich, Red Wed-

ding marches forward!"

A damp, wet October day. We are standing on a hill near the church. Every minute more fascist aviators emerge from the clouds. You were so worried that they might bomb the village. "That will be the end of all our fellows," you said. "This miserable village will be smashed by the first bomb like a house of cards."

Two months later you were kill-

ed at Teruel.

You smile at me, dear Comrade Franz, and your glance says: "It doesn't matter!"

No, Franz, it doesn't matter, for, though you are dead, you still live in me today, and I hear you say again: "Never mind, brother-Red Wedding marches forward!"

Suddenly I see Max standing next to you. His face screens yours, and still I see your features behind

Now you are looking at me, Max, anti-fascist, engineer, seaman, Brazilian, Swiss, battalion commander, Max, with the earnest face of a man who has gone through much in his

"Iron discipline," I again hear your voice. (It was in Torre de Barbues, remember?) "I make short shrift of men who disrupt disci-

pline."

Again I see you, Max, on the Huesca plain as I walked across the fields with Otto, your military commissar. You came galloping along at full speed, like a daredevil cowboy.

"Where are you going?" shouted

Otto.

"To inspect the front line!"

"On horseback?" "It's quicker." "Stop! Dismount!"

Unwillingly you turned your horse.

"Do you want to put yourself in the way of a bullet? What's the idea?" shouted Otto. You laughed your gay, infectious laugh.

"There's nothing to laugh about," Otto said. "Is this what you call discipline? Would you send a comrade on horseback to inspect the front line?"

You continued to smile, there was embarrassment in your smile now. You turned your horse and tried to slip away.

"Stop!" shouted Otto. "As your commander I order you to ride straight back to headquarters."

Never shall I forget the embarrassment on your face as you turned and rode back to the village.

Here you are again, in battalion

headquarters.

"What can I do for you?" I asked the young comrade who came to headquarters with his belongings in a bundle over his shoulder.

"I want to see Max, the com-

mander."

"Max! Somebody wants to see

"Oh," you said. "It's the little Catalonian who was demicbilized. He's wounded and he's young. He's to be sent home."

"Well, my boy, you must go home to your mother," you told him.

The youth stood before you. His

lips quivered.

"Couldn't I stay with you, comrade commander? If I went home now they'd say I'm a deserter."

Once more I see your affectionate look as you stood undecided for a moment and then, as the tears welled into the youth's eyes, you embraced him and said: "You are a brave comrade! Go home, my boy."

Your eyes filled with tears, too. You met your death at Teruel. Nobody knows where your grave is.

Now, in this sinister night of bombings, your face stands dis-

tinctly before me.

And now I see your adjutant, the poor Polish Jew Joseph. The narrow oval of his face takes your place as your features vanish.

"I am the Wandering Jew," you once told me, Joseph, when I asked where you came from. In Poland, the land of the ghetto, you were nearly beaten to death in a pogrom. After that you became a Communist, secretly. When it was discovered, even your relatives refused to have anything to do with you. In Czechoslovakia you had to work in secret until you were caught and sent across the

Austrian frontier.

In Hietzing you did underground work. And in the great February days you stood on the barricades behind a machine gun, and for the first time you experienced the happiness of shooting at your enemies. They nearly caught you, but you managed to escape across the Swiss border. You were seized on your way to Chur and jailed in Zurich. "Wandering Jews without money or passports are undesirable everywhere," you said, smiling. You slipped across the French border at night. The French said: "You may remain here, but you have no right to work." That meant starvation.

A couple of poor comrades of the Butte Chaumont helped you. You joined them in a demonstration, and again you found yourself in the hands of the police. They sent you across the Belgian frontier. A kind old matzoth baker in Brussels took pity on the Wandering Jew and let you deliver matzoth for him. But again stupid fate intervened in the shape of an inspector who followed you. The next night you spent in a hayrick on the other side of the French border. The gendarme who found you and to whom you related your misfortunes gave you ten francs and the advice, "get away while your skin is whole." In Paris you found shelter at some poor comrades' in the Rue Vandamme. "Spain is afire!" they told you. Three days later you were clambering over the steep Pyrenees. In the first Spanish village you entered the peasants ran forward



"Spain Will Always Be Your Fatherland"-a list of members of the International Brigade who fell in battle

to embrace you as comrades, brothers, friends. The starving Wandering Jew, driven from country to country, became a soldier of the revolution. At last he had found a country which accepted him as a friend.

Captain Joseph, what would your relatives say if they could see you now? In spite of all the mean-spiritedness they displayed when you became a Communist, wouldn't they be proud to recognize their absent Joseph in the officer of one of the most renowned armies of the world?

You wanted to go home again when Poland would be free. . . .

"Just think!" you said. "What will they say when I arrive in the small grey mail coach? The whole village will stand there and say: 'There is our Captain Joseph!' It will be a holiday, a yontof."

Perhaps your relatives have already forgotten you, Joseph, as calumniated, absent people are usually forgotten. If by chance they learn Joseph was killed somewhere at Lerida they will say: "We always said that he'd come to a bad end!"

But perhaps they'll live to see the day when the youths of your poor beggarly village will raise the banner of liberty—the banner that will be consecrated to the name of Captain Joseph Kogan, and then they will beat their breasts and complain: "Why did you turn our hearts away from one of our best sons?"

But now your face is vanishing, Joseph, and another one appears in its place, distinct in the blackness.

Once more I see you, Hubert, and again I hear the lark that filled our hearts with homesickness in the peaceful Sunday afternoon on the barren Robres mountains. We had gone for a stroll along the Granen canal, to practice shooting, and on the way you opened your heart

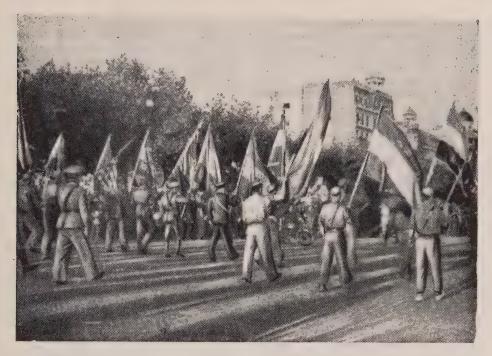
to me—the heart of a young worker of Neukölln. We saw the lakes of Berlin, wide and mirror-like, before our eyes. We heard songs and laughter under the warm pine trees. An outing of the Young Socialist Workers' Alliance.

In the long winter evenings you read everything that fell into your hands. Bürgel's Popular Astronomy, Cosmos, Faust, Darwin's Natural Selection, Haeckel's World Enigma, The Fundamentals of Integral Calculus, Lao-tse's Tao-teking. Many of the books were hard to digest, but you stuffed yourself with them with the eagerness of a young man craving for knowledge.

You had a beloved wife, Hubert, whom you had to leave in Holland, where you had been in emigration when Spain called you. You told me how you had announced your decision to her. "That's all very well, but why must it be you, who are quite innocent of the knowledge of warfare?" she said. At first this argument made you thoughtful. But you finally had to confess that flight on the basis of this objection would be only an attempt to deceive your conscience. Nevertheless it was very hard for you to come to a decision.

The next night, a beautiful night in Indian summer, you lay sleep-less alongside your wife, near the open window, staring at the flickering stars. Neither of you uttered a word. Suddenly your wife buried her head in the pillow and began to cry. When the grey dawn broke, you were stroking her hair. "Do you agree with me?" She wept no more, only asked: "What things must I pack for you, Hubert?" "Is it very painful, my leaving?" you asked. "Very painful," she answered, but she smiled \*proudly.

You wrote to her from the front, beautiful, pensive letters. You re-



Banners pass in review at the send-off for the International Brigade

corded in your diary all your thoughts.

Now I see your face as you used to stare at the earth with your light blue eyes of a bird of passage, saying: "How beautiful it will be when the war is over and I will be able to go to the seashore with my beloved wife!"

Weeks and weeks we slept at the front on thin, filthy mattresses, and when the cold Aragon wind brought rain from the Pyrenees and woke us early in the morning you used to sit up but for a long time you kept your eyes closed.

"Can't you wake up, Hubert? You slept right through two alarms."

"I want to see my dream again," you would answer, without opening your eyes.

I knew you were dreaming again

of our lakes.

But in battle you were wide awake and you held your own.

When our brigade had to retreat from Azaila you were killed by a

grenade. It must have happened near the rapid little mountain stream where we bathed on hot days. We had to leave your body there.

Once more I hear the wind rustling through the reeds on the banks of the narrow, wild Rio Agre, on a hot summer evening; I see another face before me: Walter.

We are seated on cold stones on the bank. The quiet evening air is shaken by the roar of bombs at the Mediana positions.

"You come from America, Walter, but you speak the Hamburg dia-lect."

"Yes, I left Hamburg when I was a young man, and set off into the wide world. I was disgusted with Europe. But things were not much better in America. Only you could make something of yourself easier-a dishwasher, or shoe shine stand owner or preacher, or whatever you prefer. Besides, I had a good job as manager of a firm, I could live without worries. I had a little house, a flower garden, a car, a library. Sometimes I was ashamed of my prosperity when tramps came begging."

"And you came here straight from

America?"

"Yes."

"What made you come here, Walter?"

"I am a Communist."

"Were you a Communist there,

too?"

"Yes. Even my boss knew about it. When he first found out he didn't object because he needed me-I was his right hand man. When I heard what was going on in Spain I told my boss: 'Well, Mr. Paddock, tomorrow I'm leaving for Spain. I want to give notice now.' 'Go to hell,' he shouted. 'Have you lost your wits?' 'No,' I answered, 'only I'm a fellow-countryman of Ernst Thaelmann, and that implies certain obligations.' 'When are you coming back?' he asked.'Who knows? After we have beaten Franco it will be Hitler's turn, and then I shall go to Hamburg."

Never will you see Hamburg again, dear Comrade Walter; for you were killed by the fascists in a battle somewhere near an olive grove near Caspe. But your manly face will remain alive in our memory. You were a worthy fellow-countryman of Thaelmann. That implies certain obligations.

Your face vanishes in a crowd of faces. A whole battalion of shadows. The battalion is marching to the front. Faces, helmets, knapsacks, bayonets, tin mess cans gleaming. A thousand faces waiting for the order to march forward. Behind the barren hills on the other side of the Ebro a new battle is roaring.

And a thousand voices sing:

Forward, International Brigade! Hold high the banner of solidarity! Out of the crowd of faces one stands out distinctly. Now I see you, Reinhold, with your shy smile, holding out three sheets of paper. "I wrote a couple of poems, comrade. Are they any good? I am a German-Czech. Sometimes I can't find the right German word."

"Do you like to write poetry, Reinhold?"

"I write at night, by the light of a candle, when the others sleep. I love to write poetry. Later, when the war is over I'll write poems about our days in Spain. But they will be better poems."

"Your captain is calling you. The battalion is setting out."

And as you salute me for the last time, raising your fist, all of a sudden your face vanishes, swallowed in the crowd of a thousand faces marching by, singing.

After a while I meet your captain, and inquire about you.

"Ah! The one who wrote poems and whom you advised not to use such stereotyped words?"

"Yes, that's the one."

"Reinhold? He was a brave lad. His end was awful. He lay between our lines near the Muela with his arm torn off. We wanted to carry him away. Two stretcher-bearers went out for him. They were killed. Under cover of night we finally managed to bring him in, but he had already bled to death. He still had his poems in his pocket—soaked in blood. Somebody took them for a keepsake."

Again I see your pale, narrow face before me. It is alive, Reinhold. And as I look at it in my mind's eye, trying to capture its features and hold them in the dark depths of my dream, I see it vanish again. It merges with other faces, more and more faces, and all at once, all of you, as many faces as you have, merge into one

face.

# THE Silver SHOE

"It only needs sewing in two places, Martin. It's a matter of no more than two minutes. Look," and the padre tapped the rent in his shoe with the end of his huge green umbrella.

"I can't work any more today, padre, help me god, I can't."

The shoemaker was already pulling off his black apron, tar-smudged and torn, and was trying to wash some of the dirt off his hands in an enormous rusty basin in which leather cuttings and an old torn boot floated dismally.

"But you only have to do a couple of stitches... How can I, a servant of god, walk the streets in such a state?" implored the priest, crossing his hands over his flabby

chest.

The shoemaker looked slyly at the padre and shook his head with finality.

"I can't, I tell you."

"You are incorrigible, Martin: the minute you get a few centes-imi in your pocket, you . . . I know very well where you're off to . . . And you'd rather do that than help your reverend father to look respectable. Ah, Martin, Martin, you'll end badly, mark my words!"

But Martin was not listening. He dried his hands on his apron and donned his coat, the coat he had inherited from his father twenty years ago and which he wore only on gala occasions. Then, from under his straw mattress, the only hiding place safe from the cat, he pulled out a cap matching the coat, placed it reverently on his bald head and announced to the priest:

"No more work today. I am going away on business... and to rest. My occupation is very injurious to the health and it would get the better of me if I didn't wet my whistle once in a while. Mending shoes isn't as simple as swinging a censer. Come tomorrow morning and I'll sew your shoe for you."

"Well, if it's only a matter of moistening your throat, I can of-

fer you a glass."

"Sorry! I have had a good bit of work lately and this is Easter week, you know! I would be a bad Christian if I didn't drink to this happy occasion. You'll have to excuse us this time!" And with a wicked wink at his visitor the shoemaker stepped out of his shack.

The priest followed him, sighing heavily. Martin set off in the direction of the inn and the priest walked down the street to the church, nodding benedictions on all sides as he went.

The street ended in a square. On it stood the church—a beautiful big building. Next to it stood the ramshackle school house, and, beyond, the shabby shops of the apothecary, the barber who did carpentry in his spare time and the tailor who was also the village grave-digger. Opposite the church stood the huge barracks where the carabinieri were quartered and beside it the local fascist committee. An automobile from the town might frequently be seen parked outside the committee building. Of course no one in the village owned an automobile. The population was poor, illiterate and superstitious.

The padre therefore lived quite well. Yet he was discontented. He yearned for a miracle. If only a miracle, even the most negligible miracle, would happen in his church! Oh, then his income would increase tenfold! And he would never be obliged to mend his torn shoes and lower himself by cajoling Martin, who was notorious for his drunkenness and profanity. Then, ah, then he would simply throw his old shoes onto the rubbish heap and buy a new pair. Shoes. . . And not only shoes. What of the wine he would be able to store in his cellar? . . . Why, he might even be able to bask in the luxury of an automobile! Indulging in such sweet reveries, the padre walked slowly to his church.

In the meantime Martin had passed by the pub, without even looking in, and was now walking hastily in the direction of the railway station. At the very moment when the padre was entering the church, Martin was buying a ticket to the nearby town.

The shoemaker did not return from town until the following morning and from that day on his booth was closed for two whole weeks, during which Martin imbibed alcohol in the village public house from early morning till night. Never had the shoemaker gone on such a prolonged drinking bout. How he could afford it was a mystery to everyone. He had ceased working altogether. Even his spiritual father's shoes went unmended, and the padre was obliged to wear his Sunday best. Toward the end of the second week of Martin's drunken spree something happened that set the whole village agog.

It was Sunday and the padre had gone to church to hold mass. Arriving some time before the service, he decided to inspect the church to make sure that the sexton really kept the statues and other holy objects free from dust.

He was highly dissatisfied with the result of his inspection and scolded the sexton severely.

"You are a lazy good-for-nothing, Antenio. Do you know that you are serving the antichrist when you keep Christ and the Holy Mother so dirty? Look at that black smudge under his nose, as though he did nothing but snuff tobacco all his life! And there is a cobweb below the Holy Virgin's waist. And the offerings of the believers are in a devil of a state, as if they were made of pig iron instead of silver. . . . "

At this point the padre went pop-eyed and his mouth dropped

open.

"The slipper! Where's the slipper? What have you done with

it, you rascal? . . . Where is it?"
But the sexton's face expressed utter bewilderment and horror as he returned the padre's wrathful gaze. The reverend father loved to boast about this little silver slipper, an offering to the Holy Virgin from the pious wife of a neighboring landowner. He was always trying to calculate how much this little ornament must have cost the landowner. And a terrible suspicion crept into the sexton's heart. The padre could not stand the reproachful gaze of his servant and he cried out in a voice of despair:

"Stolen! . . . Sacrilege! . . ." He rushed out into the street and hurried breathless across the square to the apothecary.

A few minutes later almost the whole village had gathered outside the apothecary's and some of the more curious had pushed their way respectfully into the shop despite the vehement protests of the apothecary's bristle-haired apprentice. The apothecary himself was offering a drink of his own concoction to the priest, who sat with face flushed from agitation, and clutched at his heart, groaning.

"What's all this about?" a stern voice broke in on the commotion. And the chief of the *carabinieri* appeared on the threshold, accom-

panied by two fascists.

"Disperse!" commanded one of the fascists, and in an instant the apothecary's was empty, and a few moments later the square was cleared as well.

"You have come just in time, signori, god himself has sent you here," said the padre.

"I was informed that a crowd had gathered on the square and it was my duty. . ."

"Something terrible has happened," interrupted the padre.

Diving into the pocket of his uniform, the captain of the *carabinieri* produced a notebook and a stump of pencil, and prepared to write.

"A sacrilege, the Holy Virgin has been robbed. . . . ' explained

the padre.

"When and by whom was the robbery committed? And exactly what articles were stolen?" the

officer inquired sternly.

"The Holy Virgin's silver slipper has been stolen, and I wish I knew who did it. But it's your business, signor captain, to find the criminal and return the stolen treasure to the church."

"Don't worry, father," said the captain with an important air, "the criminal will not escape me. As for the stolen treasure, we will make the criminal return it, provided it has not been sold, for it is silver, after all. When was the robbery committed? Day, hour, minute?"

"When?" repeated the padre, and paused to reflect. "I noticed it this morning, but . . . After all I do not look over the church ornaments every day, so it might have been, let me see . . ."

"When did you make your last inspection?" the apothecary ven-

tured.

"The last time? . . . Just before Easter: that's right, just before Easter it was. We were decorating the church for the festival, and I supervized the work myself. I remember that everything was in order then."

"It is established, then," the captain said solemnly, "that the silver slipper was stolen between Easter and the present day. Whom do you suspect?" he asked the

padre.

"Whom do I suspect? Everybody! A silver slipper is extremely valuable and a great temptation..." and the padre sighed heavily.

"Have no fear, father, the criminal will be found," the captain assured him as he departed.

That evening he came to the padre's house and proudly announced that the criminal had been found, had confessed his guilt and had been sent to town under escort.

"Who is it?" inquired the priest excitedly. "And what about the slipper?"

"It's Martin Beltruti, the shoemaker. He sold the slipper in town and spent the money on drink."

"Martin!" gasped the padre. "So that's why the scoundrel refused

to mend my shoes. Now I understand all!"

Almost the whole village flocked to town the day the shoemaker's case was to be heard in court. The townspeople gaped to see the villagers alighting from the train, each carrying a basket of eatables, so as to avoid spending money in the taverns, where food was so expensive. The padre, the carabinieri captain and the chief of the fascist committee also came to the trial. The padre had been called in both as plaintiff and as expert on religious matters. For Martin had declared at the preliminary investigation that he had not stolen the silver slipper at all, but that the Holy Virgin herself had presented it to him so that he might celebrate the Easter holidays in meet fashion.

"Is he not a rascal, signor captain, eh?" said the indignant padre as he sat in the station cafe awaiting a call from the court. "Imagine! The Holy Virgin gave it to him! Gave it to that evil-tongued sot! Why to him, I ask you, and why not to me?"

The padre was scarlet with indignation. The captain of the cara-

binieri cleared his throat.

"To tell the truth, I don't believe

in miracles," he said.

"Now, now, signor captain, how can you say that? There are indeed miracles, but not, of course, for such as Martin the drunkard," protested the padre. "He stole the slipper, that's obvious. And that is what I shall declare in court, in the name of god."

"I should not advise you, father," intervened the fascist. "I should not advise you to deny this miracle. You know yourself what the people have come to, these days; even in the villages they have the impudence to argue. And as a result you have disobedience to the au-

thorities and godlessness. Miracles

strengthen their faith."

"Yes, times are difficult indeed. The people are constantly voicing their dissatisfaction with fascism; a little miracle would be a good thing for you and for us," the second fascist affirmed.

"Excuse me, signori, if it would help to keep order I am also for a miracle," said the captain, and looked sternly at the padre.

"But signori," protested the latter, "a miracle is a splendid thing, but not when it happens to a scoundrel, a drunkard, a thief, a good-

for-nothing like Martin!"

"It can't be helped, father. Of course it would be more pleasant had the slipper been stol...er... if the miracle had happened not to Martin but to some more worthy member of your congregation; but after all it was Martin's idea."

"May the evil one take him!" the padre muttered wrathfully.

"The accursed drunkard!"

"Do not distress yourself, father, the miracle has happened—and you had better not deny it, for one cannot doubt the power of the almighty. I would strongly advise you to think the matter over," the fascist said significantly.

The padre pondered this counsel

for a while.

"Of course, a miracle is a good thing. It means crowds of worshippers, offerings, a good income, honor... the archbishop himself may come to the church, and—who knows?—I may even be raised in orders.

"Indeed, a miracle is a splendid thing!"

Everything in the court was exactly as it should be: the portrait of the king on the wall, the crucifix over the table, the prosecutor on the right and the lawyer on the left. The court provided the lawyer, for the shoemaker, naturally, could

not afford to pay for his own defense. Martin sat in the dock between two carabinieri and he looked as though it were his birthday and not his trial. He looked round happily on all sides and when his fellowvillagers poured into the court-room he beamed with pride: think of it, they had all come here to his, Martin's, trial! He nodded greetings, smiled loftily, and even attempted to exchange a few words with his acquaintances.

But the bell rang. The attendant loudly announced the arrival of the court and Martin had perforce to subside, but his whole deportment was, in the padre's opinion, insolent in the extreme. At sight of the shoemaker the padre's heart filled

with bitterness.

"There he is, a thief and ruffian. No, I cannot let him triumph. I shan't acknowledge the miracle," he resolved.

The indictment was read out. "Do you acknowledge your guilt?" the judge demanded.

"No," declared Martin proudly. "But you took the slipper?"
"Yes," admitted the shoemaker in the same proud tone.

"Tell us what happened."

Martin told his story so well that the padre himself could scarce-

ly have done better.

"I am a poor man. All my life I have toiled and sinned but always have I honored the Holy Virgin. And just before Easter I went into church to pray to her and lo, I had a vision. I bowed before the statue and all at once I saw her pointing her finger at the slipper on her foot. I kissed the slipper and the Holy Virgin, bending down, lifted the slipper and placed it in my hand saying: 'Take this gift, Martin, for the holiday. Sell it in town, and make merry!' Then everything grew black before my eyes and I came to myself in the train, whither some miraculous force had led me."

Here Martin paused to brush his sleeve over his eyes.

The dumbfounded padre was about to cry out that the whole thing was a lie, when suddenly the sound of weeping made him turn his head. Behind him one of the most pious members of his flock was weeping copiously. She crossed herself devoutly, repeating ecstatically: "A miracle, a miracle has happened!"

And many of her fellow-villagers. were also making the sign of the cross, whispering and shedding tears.

The carabinieri, seated at the padre's right, leaned over toward his neighbor and whispered:

"All of which means that you had better acknowledge this miracle."

And the fascist on the left said sternly and emphatically:

"I advise you, father, not to be obstinate, and acknowledge the miracle. We fascists approve of it.'

When the court passed over to

the padre, he was asked:

"Do you, as a servant of the church, confirm the possibility of such a miracle?"

"As a servant of the church I do confirm the possibility of the miracle," choked the padre.

"Do you recognize as a miracle in the present case the handing of a silver slipper by the Virgin Mary to defendant Martin Beltruti, the shoemaker?"

"I do," replied the padre, more

firmly.

At this point Martin almost spoiled the whole business. So astonished was he by the padre's statement that he forgot himself and emitted a loud whistle. But, to his good fortune, one of the carabinieri beside him chose this moment to sneeze loudly, and the judge, looking sternly in his direction, remarked:

"Carabiniere, a little more respect for the court, please!"

The verdict was "miracle, not guilty."



"Ai-ya! Chabancheh Makai!". . . . That was our guerrilla cuss word.

Anyone could be a Chabancheh Makai. Even the commander. If we asked him for cigarettes and he didn't want to give us any, hiding them in his waist band, we'd all call out with a roar, "Hey! Commander, Chabancheh Makai!" Or if someone sneezed unexpectedly and his snot shot onto his sleeve, the men would cry out derisively: "Aiyou Chabancheh Makai!"

We all have lice. Usually they aren't so bad. They just take a walk and a nibble here and there. Then you give 'em a scratch. But when they get too troublesome and their gnawing gives you real itches, then you rub a couple of them to death under your clothes. And when we have time for a long rest and sleep we kill 'em all. Lice and the Japanese are the two big enemies of the people.

When we mop up those devilish lice we sit around a rearing fire, take off our clothes and turn them inside out over the blaze. The wretches swell up at the belly like roasted sesame seed and roll down into the flames with a rustling sound and a bad smell.

Then we jump up cheerfully, clap each other on the shoulder and shout: "There you, Chabancheh

Makai, nibble that with your snout!"

To call people Chabancheh Makai was a good way to make fun of them. We didn't care if it made sense or not. We were always using the name because it made us laugh. If it hadn't been for those words our life would have been as humorless and grey as the winter hills.

Chabancheh Makai was really the name of a comrade who left our band a long time ago. He was a good farm hand and an interesting fellow. He was one of our best comrades from the day he joined us until the night he left, lying unconscious on a stretcher. Long after he had gone we used to think of him and tell stories about him. The commander even kept his pipe as a reminder of him, just as if it were a letter from a sweetheart.

Chabancheh Makai used to keep his pipe in his mouth whether there was tobacco in it or not. If we were in a village he liked to get away by himself and squat under a tree where he could look out over the fields. His forehead would wrinkle up in thought, and he would suck at his pipe. Sometimes he would close his lips tight and two clouds of smoke would roll slowly out of his nostrils.

If our comrades passed by, then they would say:

"Ah, Makai, so you're thinking about that pale-faced wife of yours

again?"

Chabancheh Makai would flush and stammer: "Why not? Our commander hasn't told me where my woman and child is, for a pretty long time."

Makai seemed to think that the commander knew everything, even about family affairs, and didn't want to tell him only because it

might tempt him to desert.

Actually Makai's daydreams were not so much on account of his family as on account of his land. He was homesick for his fields.

"Look how thick the wild grass is growing in the fields!" he complained, drawing deep at his pipe and emitting the last words with a cloud of smoke. "If people could go about their work in peace the grass would never be allowed to grow so wild and thick."

Wiping the dirt from the corner of his eyes he walked into the field and pinched up a bit of earth . . . ground it finely between his thumb and forefinger. He examined it closely, tasted it and sniffed at it. Then he nodded to himself, mur-

muring:

"Good, fertile land."

All the time he was with us Chabancheh Makai never could learn a single patriotic song. Once he tried to sing in chorus with us but as soon as he hummed out the first lines there was a roar of laughter so hearty that it brought tears to our eyes. After this happened a few times he never tried to sing with us any more. He only sat smiling with his pipe in his mouth, his slightly bloodshot eyes fixed on our lips as we sang.

All he knew in the way of songs was two simple lines that he sang whether he was marching or resting, whether we were happy or sad. He had learnt the words and tune when he was a boy, he said.



Chinese soldier—sculpture by Lena Prisyazhnikova, pupil of the eighth grade in the Central Music School, Moscow. This sculpture won first prize at a Moscow exhibition of the work of young artists

A poor widow planned to leave the capital But always she met the wind, or the rain...

That was all he knew.

For some reason or other his tobacco pouch left an unforgettable impression on me. Whenever I saw it, it recalled a strange scene.

It was a frosty evening, just getting dark, when a sudden cry was raised and the whole gang of us rushed excitedly into the courtyard, and crowded round a man whose face was deathly pale. His arms were bound behind his back and he was all a-tremble. A traitor, sure. He wore a bronze colored fur cap, and a scythe and a pipe were stuck in his waist band.

Our commander wore a cold air and in his hands he twirled a sunbanner<sup>1</sup> that had been taken from

the prisoner.

We shouted frantically. "Devil take him, see how cleverly he disguises himself as a farmer! Shoot him, the traitor!"

Someone kicked him in the behind and instantly the fellow slumped down like a paralytic in front of the commander. This took us by surprise and someone spat and said scornfully:

"Why the man's nothing but

a heap of duck's --!"

Our commander stood cold and unmoving as before. His eyes shone under his dark brows as if they would worm all the secrets out of the traitor.

"Your lordship!" mumbled the man at his feet, in pleading tones. "I'm an innocent farmer. My name is Du... Du... Dumb Wang. Everybody knows that. Everybody."

"Is that your small name?" questioned the commander. And I noticed that his left cheek twitched irritably.

"Yes, your lordship. My father it was who gave me this small name. He was not an educated man."

"Then what is your formal name? Speak up!"

"I've got no formal name, your lordship," Dumb Wang said perplexedly, becoming still more distressed. "My father said that a tiller of the soil never goes to school and never visits a gentleman, so he never needs a formal name."

"Have you a nickname, then?"

"Yes, your lordship, Cha... Cha... Chabancheh Makai."

"Eh?" The commander's cheek twitched again. "What do you owe?"

"Chabancheh Makai, your lord-

ship."

"To whom do you owe it?"

"People call me that," explained Dumb Wang, crimsoning. "The name was given me by Smallpox Wang, because that fellow always insisted that I was a good-for-nothing."

A roar of laughter greeted this explanation. But our commander's face was still serious and he went on questioning the man to find out where he lived and why he had

become a traitor.

"I live in the village of Wang-chwang," Dumb Wang stuttered, "in the Big Wangchwang, not the small one. Then the damned northern troops came. They insulted the women and shot or beheaded the men. My woman said, 'Let's move away. All the villagers have gone. Let's find some peaceful place and we shall be happier than we are here even if we only have water to live on.'

"So I left the village with my woman and my child, Small Dog. My woman didn't taste rice or water for two days. Her stomach is as empty as an empty can. And my Small Dog wants to take the breast but there's nothing in it.... And he cried and cried..."

Two streams of tears rolled down the rough cheeks of the peasant. The commander said in a low tone: "Tell me why you had that banner."

"Ah, your lordship, my woman said to me: 'In a war like this we never know when we may die of hunger. We must take care of the child. He must live. Why should the innocent thing die?' So my woman said again: 'Go back to the village. Dig some carrots from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Japanese flag.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Literally "Owe-half-a-cartload-of-hay."

field so that the child can have a little food.' So I went back to the village one morning. But just as I got near some devil soldiers with fur caps on their heads came out and started shouting at me. I ran away in a hurry. When I got back I saw my Small Dog crying on his mother's empty breasts."

And Dumb Wang himself burst

into convulsive sobs.

"Crying won't do you any good," the commander said. "So you be-

came a traitor that way?"

"Devil take all traitors! If I were such a man, your lordship, the heaven over me would see that I fell like the sun!" Chabancheh Makai now sat up and went on with his story excitedly and confidential-

ly, as if among friends:

Some people say that the northern soldiers won't attack you if you have a sun banner in your hand. So my woman gave me the flag that she made herself, saying, 'Don't waste time, go, and come back soon.' Then I asked her: 'Isn't it dangerous to have such a damned thing in my hands? Suppose I meet the southern soldiers?' But she replied, 'Don't be nervous, the southern troops are Chinese like yourself. Don't be a blockhead!' Why, your lordship, why should I become a traitor when I am a Chinese? Drat the woman for making me take the sun banner!"

And he cried out aloud again, "Ah-yah!" Then he clenched his teeth and looked fixedly at the

commander.

The commander went on questioning him, but soon, satisfied with the answers he got, he assumed a more friendly air. To tell the truth I had early lost all my doubts about this interesting Makai and wanted to tell the commander that it was obvious that our suspicions

of him were groundless.

Finally the commander ordered us to untie his hands. As soon as

he was free Chabancheh Makai stooped down and blew his nose, wiping the snot off his fingers on the side of his shoe. And I noticed that he wore a newish pair but that the toes and backs were smeared with snot.

"From now on don't make a mistakè and call the Japanese devils 'northern troops,' '' said the commander in a friendly tone. "The present situation is quite different from what it was in the past. Now there are only two armies fighting: the Chinese, and the Japanese dev-

ils. Now do you understand?"
"Of course," answered Chabancheh Makai very civilly. "I'm not

a good-for-nothing."

The commander returned the sun

banner to him.

"Have supper with us tonight. Afterwards you can go back to the village and get your carrots. It's quite safe. We chased the devils away last night. Take the sun banner with you, though, and if you come across them, show it to them, but don't tell them where we are."

While we were eating we crowded around him and pulled him this way and that to get his attention to our questions, so that we almost tore the coat off him. At first he seemed to feel a little upset. but when he saw that we were friendly to him and urged him to eat, he suddenly became bold and set to with a will. He began to eat rapidly and eagerly. He cleaned the bowl to the very bottom. After supper he blew his nose again, rubbed his fingers clean on the heel of his shoe, hiccoughed, scraped a bit of onion skin from between his teeth, and threw it over the head of a comrade.

A few days later, just as we finished lunch, Chabancheh Makai came back to the courtyard. The commander told us that he had joined our partisan band. We jumped up at the news and were very glad. We shouted slogans and sang the Partisan Song. Chabancheh Makai remained standing all through it with a simple smile on his face and his pipe in his mouth.

That night Makai slept on the

same k'ang as myself.

"Why did you join our guerrilla band?"

"Why not?" he replied. "All

of you are honest men!"

He paused for a moment while he sucked at his pipe, and then added:

"If we don't drive those foreign devils out we'll never be able to till our land again!"

I burst out laughing, then on a

sudden asked him:

"Where is your sun banner?"

"My woman used it as a diaper for Small Dog," he said carelessly. And in a low tone he began to

tell me about his family affairs.

It seemed that he had decided that he should fight to drive the Japanese devils out, because while they were in the villages it was impossible to go on working the land as in the old peaceful days. So he had sent his wife and child back to the rear with some other refugees who were relatives of his. As he chattered on I noticed that his eyes wandered restlessly from corner to corner of the room, as if something were bothering him. I looked at him curiously. He sat quietly enough with his pipe in his mouth, now locking at me, now at the lamp. Then he got up, fixed the wick in the lamp and went out. I heard him making water in a corner of the courtyard. Then he caughed intentionally and came in again.

"What a strange fellow he is," I thought to myself. "In spite of his rough appearance he yet has delicate feelings."

Partisans like to sleep with the light burning. But after Chaban-

cheh Makai came to join the band the light was turned off two nights running, and on both nights disagreeable incidents occurred. The first night a comrade's nose was nearly broken as another man got up in the night to make water. On the next night a sentinel let off his gun. We all jumped up at the sound, imagining that the enemy was on us. People ran in confusion for their arms, jostling one another. Some took the wrong rifles. Others lost their swords. After the alarm we had tempers like tigers. We cursed one another in a rage and were bent on finding the man who had put out the light.

The commander questioned everybody, but none ventured to confess that he had done it. I had a good idea who the culprit was, so I stole a stealthy look at Chabancheh Makai. He guessed what I was thinking and turned pale all of a sudden. His legs began to tremble. The commander walked up to him. All eyes were turned on the two men. "The devil take him," I said to myself, "he deserves a beating!" His legs were shaking so that he could hardly stand. But the commander unexpectedly smiled and asked him, mildly enough:

"Can you stand the life here?"
"Of course I can, your lordship,"
said Makai, all of a sudden getting
his strength back, and he took
out his pipe from his waist band
and offered it to the commander:
"Does your lordship like to

"Does your smoke?"

We shook with laughter, and the commander laughed most of all. Chabancheh Makai, however, didn't seem to see the joke. He looked on quietly as if it no longer concerned him. Scratched his head, then scratched his chest with his fingers and nipped out a louse.

Next day I took him apart and asked him in a low voice why he

put the light out at night. He flushed, smiled and muttered: "Why, because the oil is so dear, it is much dearer than before...." and he scratched again. "I can't sleep with a light on. Well, do you like smoking a pipe?"

By and by he got accustomed to the collective life. He became more courageous and alert.

"Hey!" I called to him one day. "From now on you must call me Comrade!"

He shook his head and smiled.

"We natives of Shantung Prcvince call each other 'second brother,' which is a most respectful expression."

"But we are revolutionary fighters, don't you see?" I said. "Revolutionaries should use revolutionary terms!"

"Ai-ya, again new ways!" he said discontentedly. "I don't understand these new ways."

"The word comrade means 'to work together,' "I explained." Just think, we share a common life and common death, common sufferings and the common struggle against the Japanese. Are we not comrades?"

"Right, second brother!" he shouted. "We fear nothing if we really work together like comrades!"

One evening we were marching to engage the enemy. Chabancheh Makai stealthily touched my shoulder and uttered in a low voice: "Comrade," and again he shock me by the shoulder. "Are we going to fight the Japanese devils tonight?"

I nodded and asked him, "Are you afraid?"

"No," he said. "I've often fought against bandits." And we marched on side by side. But in the stillness of the evening I could hear his heart beating mightily, so I could not help laughing.

"Aha, Chabancheh Makai," I said, "you have just told me a lie. I can hear your heart thumping!"

He looked embarrassed. He turned his pipe round and round in his

hands and stammered:

"I am not afraid of the fighting, never. Otherwise I would not be a man. When I was fighting the bandits I used to feel my heart beating like a drum, but that is only at the beginning. After a few minutes I get calm again."

We stopped about two *li* from the village where the enemy was situated. The commander called for two brave comrades to volunteer to go ahead and spy out the road. The rest of us would follow at a slower pace, while a small detachment would go to the rear of the village where it was to lie in ambush. Quite unexpectedly Chabancheh Makai stepped out and volunteered.

"Your lordship, I know the place well. Please let me enter the village first."

We were all amazed. The commander was silent for a moment and his left cheek twitched convulsively. Then he asked with a surprised air:

"Do you mean that you want

to be a scout?"

"Yes, your lordship, I had a lot of experience in attacking bandits before."

Someone whispered to the commander that Makai was not fit for the task and might ruin the whole thing. But the commander replied to Chabancheh Makai in a firm, unhesitating voice:

"Good, but you must be care-

And he turned to me: "You go with him. Be careful!"

We left immediately, I following close on Makai's heels. I heard some discontented voices raised behind us. Then came the firm voice of the commander:

"Never mind, he's a careful fellow in spite of his seeming stupidity."

About a hundred paces from the village we lay down on our stomachs and listened carefully for sounds from the village. It was very quiet. Chabancheh Makai whispered in my ear:

"Those Japanese devils have fallen asleep. You wait here a minute

while I take a look."

He took off his shoes, tied them to his waist and crawled toward the village. I soon began to worry about him. I hid myself in a clump of thick willows nearer the village.

Nearly twenty minutes passed. Still not a sound from Chabancheh Makai. Becoming uneasy I crept forward. Finally, as I passed by the water wheel, I saw a black shadow and heard the crunching. of gravel. My heart began to beat like the hooves of a galloping horse. I aimed my gun at the shadow and called out: "Who is that?"
"I! Comrade!" replied a fa-

miliar voice. "Those devils have all gone away. I looked everywhere for them."

I jumped out and asked: "Have you looked through the whole vil-

lage?"

"I looked in every courtyard and house. I didn't find hide or hair of them."

"Why didn't you signal to me

earlier, then?"

"Well . . . well . . . ." Chabancheh Makai touched me confidentially on the shoulder and stammered in his embarrassed way: "You see I wanted a rope to tie my cow with. I found it in the village. Isn't it good to have one? When I was fighting bandits before I sometimes took things from people!"

And he showed me the rope and

smiled happily.

"Put it down!" I commanded sternly. "The commander will shoot you if he sees it!"

Chabancheh Makai stared at me. disappointment written in every feature, and reluctantly untied the rope from his waist. Meanwhile I coughed loudly and torches suddenly flared up all around. Our comrades rushed upon the village from all sides.

brother," murmured "Second Chabancheh Makai in a frightened and rather tearful voice. "Look, I've taken off the rope. . ."
On the way back, Chabancheh

Makai followed me closely and in silence. He was like a child who has broken a cup and is waiting for its mother's scolding. I understood the cause of his anxiety, so in a low tone I promised that I would not report the affair to the commander. He sighed, relieved, and offered me his pipe. While I puffed at it, I asked him:

"Do you know why we shouldn't steal things from the people?"

"Because we're revolutionary fighters," he replied. Though I could see that he didn't yet understand what that meant.

He was silent again for a moment, then suddenly asked me:

"But, say, comrade, can't one profit a little bit from the revolution?''

"The revolution will do us a lot of good, as well as many other people," I explained. "Revolution means that in the beginning we must suffer a bit, then we will beat the enemy and be able to enjoy the fruit of our common work together. If we succeed in driving the invaders out of the country, then all the Chinese people will be able to lead a peaceful life. Shall we not profit from that?"

"Of course, if we can live peacefully and work, we also profit . . . "

"Then we shall have a golden time. And our sons and grandsons will be able to walk with their backs straight and unafraid."

From that time on Chabancheh

Makai was a vigorous and happy partisan. He began to learn to read. He learnt one character a day, but just when he had learned about thirty characters he was frightfully wounded in a skirmish.

One moonlight night about twenty of us partisans were ordered to destroy a railway track. The enemy were stationed about thirty li from the spot chosen for the attack. We had no dynamite nor any other kind of modern arms. We planned to derail the train and then attack it.

We worked carefully, but we couldn't help making a noise as we tore up the rails. The sound was especially sharp in the night stillness and seemed to penetrate the blackness like a lightning bolt. As it echoed away we heard the rattle of hasty firing. Then the moon was covered by a cloud.

"Lie down!"

No sooner had the word of command been given than a machine gun began to spit its bullets at us. They fell in front of us, then whizzed over our heads. After a few minutes the machine gun ceased firing suddenly and the trembling of the rails told us that an armored train was moving down the line. The

enemy was coming.

Our detachment commander was a worker on the Kaochow-Tsinan Railway, a very capable fellow. He quickly tied six bombs together and put them under the rail. "Get away!" he commanded. We rushed headlong to the graveyard and lay there behind the mounds. Chabancheh Makai put his pipe in his mouth as if nothing special were happening. But the commander prodded him in the ribs with the butt of his gun. And Makai stuck the pipe back in his waistband, muttering to me discontentedly as he lay down:

Bullets also have eyes for the dark, so why fear showing a light?"

The bombs under the rail exploded with a roar like thunder. The armored train seemed to leap into the air amid a cloud of dust, smoke and bits of metal, and plunged into the bushes at the side of the track.

"A hit!"

Our shouting filled the night. Then a moment of silence, and the quick command from the railway worker. I thought I heard a voice singing:

A poor widow planned to leave

the capital.

We rushed towards the railway. Just then the machine-gun rattled out louder than before. Chabancheh Makai, who was running in front of me, cried out in pain and fell to the ground in a heap. We rushed on. Approaching the rails, we heard the gallop of horses' hooves. We began to retreat. . . .

We found Chabancheh Makai shooting methodically in the direction of the oncoming horses. "Wounded?" I asked. "Can you

still walk?"

"Wounded in the leg," he replied. "I don't want to run away. want to exchange myself for a few more enemies."

In spite of his struggles I managed to put him over my shoulder and ran on. Sometimes we both fell into ditches. . . . Behind usfiring, galloping, but the load on my back seemed nothing to me then. I only knew that I had to run. I must run. . . .

When the firing ceased I found that Makai had been hit by anothbullet. He was unconscious. When we brought him to, we found that he had been badly hit in the back. We decided to send him to the rear. When we put him on the stretcher, he was in a fever and murmured, disordered:

"Ha, ha, ha. . . da, da, da . . . my cow . . . my yellow cow . . . ha . . . ''

# REDARMY Folklore

#### Legend About Voroshilov

We fought our way out of the village and into the steppe. Commissar Voroshilov rushed up to the baggage train and asked sternly:

"Where have the bread carts

gone to?"

Indeed, two carts were missing. Each of them contained forty loaves of rye bread and lots of grain. Truly, it was a heavy loss. What was to be done now? It was impossible to send anybody to the village to fetch them, and just as impossible to leave them, too. So Voroshilov summoned the women and the quick witted lads together and dashed off with them to the village.

It was a dark night, Dogs howled and shooting went on from all

sides.

In one of the yards they found the carts. With their own hands they wheeled them to the camp, a distance of two kilometers.

Happening to look around, Voroshilov saw a woman alongside him straining herself. She breathed heavily as she pushed at a

wheel. She was pregnant.

Voroshilov grew angry at her, for he had summoned only the strong and able. Pushing aside the bread and grain, they laid the pregnant woman on the cart, and rolled on to the camp.

At dawn the woman gave birth

to a daughter. The child was born healthy, cheerful and bawling. Hot battles raged on the way

Hot battles raged on the way to Tsaritsyn. Voroshilov didn't shut his eyes for a wink of sleep even for a moment. He was always on his feet, clean-shaven and neat. He would call a meeting and report so clearly that everything he said is remembered even up to now. You fought with more courage because you knew what you were shedding your blood for in the steppes.

Once, during a battle, Klim came galloping up on his horse. Glancing at the baggage train he asked: "Where is the family with the

child?"

"A shell killed the horse, smashed the cart to pieces and killed the father and mother," he was told.

"And the child?" asked the commissar.

"The child remained under the cart."

He spurred his mettlesome horse and galloped along the field straight toward the enemy, two Lugansk men following him. The Whites saw three riders dashing straight at them, and they ceased firing. Voroshilov came galloping up to the smashed cart and halted his horse. He threw the reins to



Voroshilov and Gorky in the shooting gallery of the Central House of the Red Army—painting by Svaroga

one of the Lugansk comrades, and in the twinkling of an eye he had seized the child and was off like a bird. The deceived Whites began firing, but it was too late.

In the camp he gave the child to the women. "Take care of her," he said. "Feed her."

"What shall we give her to eat?" they asked.

"Try to get a goat," replied the commissar and rode off.

The women surrounded the orphan, trying to amuse her.

"Kind folk, what is her name?" asked one.

"I heard him call her Gul-gul," answered one of the men of Lugansk.

They laughed and named the girl "Gul-gul."

In the Cossack villages they found a goat. They fed the child with its milk. They guarded the goat from bullets, and hid it in the trenches during battles. It followed the camp to Tsaritsyn. And the girl grew up at the front.

#### The Kind of Man Budyonny Is...

Do you know what he once did? He was riding along, a hundred Cossacks with him. Suddenly he found himself in the midst of an infantry army. He halted. At once a plan sprang into his head. Put-

ting on an officer's epaulettes and a gold medal on his breast, he ordered the Cossacks to ride on both sides of him in double file.

Well, the infantry soldiers stared at them, not knowing whether they were friend or foe, and went right on marching forward. They were weary and they really didn't care whether these men were friends or enemies. The infantry men's colonel rode in front, his head hanging, dozing in his stirrups.

Suddenly he beheld an officer before him. "Who are these soldiers?" Budyonny asked him. "Who is in command? Where are they going, and why, and how many men are there in this army?"

It was a howler! The colonel stiffened and saluted Budyonny. "I am the invincible Colonel Fierce," he told Budyonny. "My army consists of two thousand two hundred men, and on orders of His Highness General Vasilyev I am hunting for Budyonny to defeat him."

"And will you be able to get the better of him?" Budyonny asked the colonel.

"Oh, don't worry, my hand hasn't lost its cunning. In my mind I have plans to drown his whole army."

"Indeed?" Budyonny said.

"May I ask who you are, Your Highness?" asked Colonel Fierce.

"I?" asked Budyonny, and winked to one of his Cossacks. The Cossack swung his blade and at one stroke beheaded the colonel. Then Budyonny raised his arm and said to the soldiers.

"I order you to surrender your arms. If you do not submit to my orders, you'll be chopped into mincemeat. I am Budyonny." And he threw open his Cossack coat, showing the red cockade on his breast. And right there and then the infantry were immediately disarmed.

That's the kind of man Budyonny is!

## How Chapayev Selected Men for His Detachment

Many of us wanted to be admitted as volunteers to Chapayev's detachment, but Chapayev selected his men carefully. It usually happened like this: one of our peasants would come to him and say: "Vasili Ivanovich, I want to be enrolled in your detachment, I want to fight with you for the Soviets."

Chapayev would examine him from head to foot. Then he would gradually approach closer and closer. Holding his hands on the pommel of his sword, he'd stare at the peasant, come right up to him, and, suddenly raising his fists under the

man's nose, shout: "Who wants to join the detachment? You? What are you able to do? What are you fit for?"

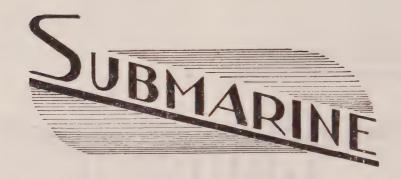
He would storm around, shouting and stamping his feet. But all the while he kept his eye glued to the volunteer to see how he would behave. If the volunteer shied off, Chapayev refused to admit him into the detachment. But to those who answered fearlessly, giving him tit for tat, Chapayev would say: "You're the kind of man I need. Come along and work in my detachment."

### SERGEI MIKHALKOV and LEONID SOBOLEV



Thanks to you, the shores are free,
Cruiser, sailing home from sea.
When your lights went out at night,
Cruiser, you were hid from sight.
Out at sca when day was breaking
We could see your signals say:
"All is well and we are making
For the shore. We shan't delay!"
"All is well"—our foes will never
Harm the boundaries of blue.
Cruiser, we shall trust you ever!
Cruiser, you will guard us true!

### SERGEI MIKHALKOV and LEONID SOBOLEV



Never shall we strike another But if aggressors intervene— Who will fight as never other? The submarine! The submarine!

Our enemies suspect no danger.
The sea is tranquil and serene.
Who is lurking near the stranger?
The submarine!
The submarine!

Boom! And all the sky will darken, The fascist ship in smithereens! My! But we will prove a smart one. The submarine! The submarine!

We are proud of all our sailors. Men of grit, with vision keen! Never will these fellows fail us In submarines! In submarines!

#### HOWWESEEIT

#### Sholom Aleichem

When the eightieth anniversary of the birth of the brilliant Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem is observed on March 2, it will be celebrated not only by the Jewish people, of whom Sholom Aleichem is an outstanding representative, but by all the peoples of the U.S.S.R., living together as one great family. Whenever a great writer of one of the peoples inhabiting the U.S.S.R. is honored thus, the celebration invariably becomes a festival of culture of all the peoples of the country.

Sholom Aleichem, or Sholom Rabinovich, to give him his real name, had a difficult life. He was born in the Ukrainian town of Pereyaslavl, in 1859. His early years are described in his wonderful autobiog-

raphy, From the Fair.

Sholom Aleichem's father, at one time a man of means, later became impoverished. The boy Sholom, who lost his mother early in life, had to help his father run the inn which

he kept.

The earliest education of the future writer was, as customary in the old days, of a religious nature. His father, however, although a religious man, was no stranger to the secular sciences; he was influenced by the new ideas of the times and was well read in Jewish

literature. The father sent Sholom to study in the district school, from which the boy was graduated with honors in 1876.

The tsarist school, while it insisted upon its students obeying the tsar and the "upper hundred thousand," nevertheless gave the young Sholom Rabinovich a knowledge of the Russian language and, thus, access to the treasure store of great Russian literature, with its ideas of humanism and the struggle for liberation. Familiarity with the best works of Russian literature strengthened the influence upon the young man of the enlightened Jewish literature which was struggling against the stagnancy of Jewish life and proclaiming a new way of living for the lews.

Sholom Aleichem's interest in literature began at an early age. When he was twenty he wrote his first article, for the newspaper *Hacafire*, issued in Hebrew, at that time the literary language of the Jewish intellectuals. In the eighties of the last century Sholom Aleichem began writing in the popular Yiddish dialect. He had found his true calling and his name became more and more popular.

On becoming a professional writer, Sholom Aleichem had his first

taste of the hard life of the literary man of those days, dependent completely upon the whim of publishers and newspaper editors.

After experiencing the Jewish pogroms in Kiev in 1905, Sholom Aleichem determined to emigrate to America. He visited various European countries and reached New York in the autumn of 1905.

He did not stay there long. Home was calling him, his country, the common people of whom and for whom he had written.

In the summer of 1908 Sholom Aleichem made an extended trip through the Russian cities and towns with large Jewish populations. Everywhere he was greeted warmly: by this time he was already a famous writer and his name was popular among the Jews.

But the fame which had fallen to his share did not relieve Sholom Aleichem from constant need. To this was added an exhausting illness, tuberculosis, which sapped his vitality still further. In 1909 the committee organized in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of Sholom Aleichem's birth raised a fund to "redeem" the works of the great writer from their private owners.

His illness forced Sholom Aleichem to seek a refuge in southern climes. In the spring of 1914 he made another tour of the cities of Russia.

The beginning of the World War found Sholom Aleichem at a German health resort and, along with numerous other citizens of tsarist Russia, he was sent to Berlin, whence, with his family, he succeeded in escaping to neutral Denmark. Ill, and without the means of livelihood, he spent several difficult months there. At the end of 1914, Sholom Aleichem went to New York, but his disease had already as-

serted itself, and his days were numbered. The great writer died in New York on May 13, 1916, at the age of 57. There were thousands at his funeral.

In his will Shelom Aleichem wrote: "Wherever I may die, let me be buried not among aristocrats, people of fame or wealth, but among simple Jewish workers, so that the gravestone which is placed upon my adorn the simple grave will graves around me, and the simple graves adorn my gravestone, just as the simple and honest people during my lifetime created the glory of their writer." This bit taken from the behest of the great writer is an excellent expression of his closeness to the people.

It is seldom that a writer finds himself at once. Sholom Aleichem tried his skill in poetry without particular success, although some of his verses have found their way into Jewish folklore and are sung as folk songs. Incomparably more significant are the critical articles written by Sholom Aleichem during the eighties in which he came out against the cheap thrillers with which Jewish literature of the period was inundated and which lowered the literary taste of the masses and blinded them to reality and their actual needs. In his critical articles Sholom Aleichem came forth as a champion of a truthful and realistic literature, upholding the interests of the people.

It was in the field of short stories and sketches, however, that Sholom Aleichem's talent came into full flower. The life of the Jewish people during this difficult time, when they suffered under the double burden of the tsarist autocracy and capitalist exploitation, is his theme.

The writer's pseudonym, "Sholom Aleichem," is a customary

Jewish greeting.1 And indeed the Jewish masses greeted Sholom Aleichem as one of themselves, with whom they could share their joys and sorrows.

Sholom Aleichem's reputation as an author dates back to the eighties of the last century, the years of fierce political reaction in Russia which followed the notorious Jewish pogroms. Important social changes were taking place among the Jewish masses, who were persecuted by the tsarist autocracy and forced to live in the so-called "pale of settlement," which they were not permitted to transgress. Sholom Aleichem's predecessor, Mendel Moicher-Sforim, the first of the classical Jewish writers, gave a remarkable portrayal of the old lewish life during the first half of the nineteenth century, when the feudal and the medieval still held sway.

Under the pressure of growing capitalism, the feudal and the medieval crumbled. The new capitalist relations spread to the Jewish ghetto. The old Jewish settlements were shaken from their lethargy and their inhabitants began to seek a place for themselves in the new system of economic relations. This painful process destroyed the old tenor of life, necessitated adjustments to the new capitalist relations, and exerted a tremendous influence upon Sholom Aleichem.

Sholom Aleichem's best works are his cycles of short stories devoted to Menachem Mendel and to Tevye, the Milkman. The writer began to work upon them in the 'nineties and returned to them frequently throughout his entire life.

From a tiny Jewish village, which lived the restricted life of a miserable little ant-hill. Menachem Mendel lands in the big world of capitalism. With feverish excitement, he attempts to adapt himself to the new relations and the new mode of life. But he is neither accustomed to working nor does he have a feeling of firm ground under his feet. He makes endless plans, one more fantastic than the other. flits from one profession to another but always and everywhere he meets with failure. Even when he goes into the business of marriage-broker, he tries to marry off two girls to each other!

In essence, Menachem Mendel understands nothing of the tremendous capitalist world in which he finds himself, he merely catches the outward movement and bustle. It seems to him that together with everyone else he is moving toward some new life. But he is only deceiving himself. Menachem Mendel is a typical luftmensch, a dreamer, such as were to be found without end among the Russian Jews during the old, accursed days of poverty and oppression.

Of course Sholom Aleichem does not see only the humorous side of his Menachem Mendel. He recognizes the tragedy of his hero's spasmodic search for an elusive happiness within the limits of capitalist reality. In Shelom Aleichem's relation to Menachem Mendel there is something reminiscent of Cervantes' treatment of his "knight of the sad countenance": humor and tragedy are joined in a knot which

cannot be untied.

But alongside the feeling of sympathy and compassion, the author evinces a definitely negative atti-tude toward his hero. He himself condemns the category of dreamer as something unhealthy, and contrasts the dreamer with a positive type. Tevye, the milkman, who,

<sup>1</sup> One of our Soviet poets told the author that the celebrated national poet of Daghestan, Suleiman Stalsky, once asked him: "Is it really true that among the Jews there was a writer whose name was Salaam? What a wonderful name!"

despite all his shortcomings, is bound with firm ties to the people.

He has known hard work all his life. True, his conception of life is deeply partriarchal, rooted in the cld ways. He has been put to the test by life again and again. His daughters are whirled around in the vortex of the new life, which he does not always comprehend. But though he may not understand some new phenomenon that takes place before his eyes, he can yet accept it, if not consciously, then, at any rate, instinctively.

Although he has grown up in the old life and is bound by its prejudices, Tevye nevertheless takes the side of his daughter when she follows her revolutionary husband into exile in far-away Siberia. This was Tevye's way of protesting against social injustice. The reader feels that Tevye will find the truth, will come to realize who his enemies are and how they must be dealt with if life is to become better and more just.

Sholom Aleichem in a number of his writings has stressed his own love for Tevye the milkman, as the bearer of the idealistic aspirations of the author himself.

In drawing his little world Sholom Aleichem turned to an old and tried method, that of humor. Humor gave the writer the opportunity of revealing all the ludicrous aspects of the life he was describing, but in the humor of Sholom Aleichem is felt a great sadness and sympathy for people. The great writer knew that the people he was laughing at were often "more sinned against than sinning." The squalor and injustice of their lives had made them ridiculous.

Take, for instance, the teacher in the *kheder*, the elementary religious school, a half-starved dreamer with not a kopek to his name, who occupies the very lowest rung in the teachers' heirarchy. He dreams of becoming a Rothschild, he would like to put an end to wars in which brother kills brother, and would destroy money, the root of all evil in the world. But he is brought sharply back to earth by the more practical question of where to find money for the sabbath.

The poverty of the Jewish masses in tsarist Russia was extreme. In a number of his stories, Sholom Aleichem gives a picture of this poverty, aggravated by the fierce competition then existing. His story *Competitors*, whose main characters are a husband and wife, is genuinely grotesque. In the hunt for customers, they shadow each other's footsteps.

The Jewish masses in Russia, finding no outlet for their abilities in their native country, often sought an escape through emigrating to America. America, that distant dream country which from far away promised the poor a share of its gold-paved streets, turned to dust and ashes at closer inspection. In many of his works Sholom Aleichem described the trials of the Jewish emigrants whom poverty and the arbitrary tsarist regime had driven from their native land.

Sholom Aleichem himself was not a revolutionary in the true sense of the word; he had not found the way to make happy the miserable existence of his characters. But in his wonderful stories he set down for eternity the squalid and sorry life of the "little man," and showed the crime of a society which drives many of its members into such an existence.

Both the squalor of Kasrilevka—musty, narrow, antiquated and poverty-stricken Kasrilevka, as he called the village where his "small people" lived, and the sorrowful dreamer, Menachem Mendel, were generated by the hateful old social system, based on the exploitation of man by man. Behind Sholom Aleichem's laughter there lay tears, and in them sounds a bitter judgment of this system which so mutilated the lives of men.

Like other great humorists, Sholom Aleichem wrote much about children, their joys and sorrows. The childish mind is not yet warped by capitalist society. The child's soul opens wide to greet the beauty of life, the sun, the joy of spring. It was in his children's stories that Sholom Aleichem's lyricism came into its own.

A Boy's Diary belongs among his outstanding works; in it he drew an unforgettable picture of the life of need and privation, the pogroms against the Jews, and the search for happiness in strange lands, all told through the prism of child perceptions. The boy Motl declares: "I have it easy, I'm an orphan," and through the lips of this boy speaks the great humorist, who was himself forced to laugh at this life of sorrow and suffering.

Sholom Aleichem's favorite form for his stories is the monologue. His heroes were not men of action, and all their energy went into words. Through an endless stream of words they tried, as it were, to talk their unfortunate life out of existence.

In reading the humorous writings of Sholom Aleichem one is inclined first of all to laugh with the author. The tremendous social significance behind them is not immediately apparent, one must delve deeper. This is the more true in that Sholom Aleichem belongs to that group of writers, like Balzac and Gogol, in whom the significance of the characters they created went far beyond the author's own social and political outlook. The great service of Jewish Soviet criticism is that behind the humorous sto-

ries of Sholom Aleichem it has been able to reveal the profound social significance of the writer's works.

The State Jewish Theater in Moscow has done much toward bringing out this social significance by its interpretation of Sholom Aleichem's works on the stage. An outstanding actor of this theater. People's Artist S. Mikhoels, reached the heights of artistic mastery and penetration in his recent portrayal of Tevye the milkman. Helped by the new consciousness to which the Great October Socialist Revolution gave birth, Mikhoels found in Sholom Aleichem's work a picture of the evil of the doomed tsarist order and the immortality of the people embodied in Sholom Aleichem's sparkling words.

Sholom Aleichem cannot be called a satirist in the genuine sense of the word. He is a humorist, one of the greatest humorists known to world literature. A truly brilliant writer, a man of the people, his works reflect the age-old tribulations of his people, and in them his sympathies and antipathies are clearly expressed.

He is always on the side of the people, on the side of the masses. Laughter turns to sadness because Sholom Aleichem sees the tragedies of the masses, oppressed and exploited.

But it is not only sadness—Sholom Aleichem found scathing words when it came to branding that "upper ten thousand," which suffered from obesity, which had grown fat at the expense of the people. Sholom Aleichem never lost a feeling of loathing toward the upper bourgeoisie, the plutocrats.

Even in the eighties of the last century, at the very outset of his literary career, Sholom Aleichem wrote a satirical novel, Sender Blank, criticizing the wealthy Jewish family. During the next decade he wrote



Peoples Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. Mikhoels as Tevye and L. Rom as his wife, at the State Jewish Theater, Moscow

the comedy Yaknehoz, unmasking stockbrokers. There is an instinctive disdain for the rich in the words of Sholom Aleichem's hero, Tevye, the milkman, and those of another Sholom Aleichem hero, Shimele Soroker, the tailor in the comedy The Great Winning, as well as of many other characters in his works. Sholom Aleichem saw through the repulsive man from Buenos Aires, who traded in human lives. More than once the author's satirical sketches are directed against the tsarist regime.

Even the lord god came in for his share of the outwardly goodnatured jokes of Tevye, the milkman, who, hiding behind his inadequate knowledge of the scriptures, frequently dealt with sacred texts in a manner that must have been highly displeasing to the good lord.

Sholom Aleichem's perception of the great social processes going on around him was keenest of all when the writer came into contact with the dregs of life. Not a single Jewish writer has ever been as sensitive to all the twistings and turnings of the life of the masses as was Sholom Aleichem.

In the characters and the inimitable language of Sholom Aleichem are to be seen not only the variegated national characteristics of the Jewish people. Tevye takes his place in the gallery of literary characters from the ranks of the people. alongside such heroes as Romain Rolland's Colas Breugnon. Sholom Aleichem's children will remain in the memory of mankind together with the children of Dickens, Mark Twain and Chekhov. The remarkable skill of Sholom Aleichem's realistic art is seen in the character of Menachem Mendel, who with all his typical "Jewishness," is nevertheless something more than just a Jewish type. In this character Sholom Aleichem presents the entire social tragedy of the great mass of the petty bourgeoisie, vainly seeking a place for themselves in the capitalist world, striving to adapt themselves to capitalism, which is mercilessly grinding them under heel. Just as Balzac's Gobsec is a synonym for the power of money, so Sholom Aleichem's Menachem Mendel is a confirmation of the Marxist thesis on the tragic doom of the petty bourgeoisie under capitalism.

It is no less difficult to translate Sholom Aleichem into other languages than to translate Dickens. Gogol or other humorists, since humor to such a large extent is based on the play of words, on the specific character of native dialect, which is lost in translation. Nevertheless, the work of Sholom Aleichem has earned universal recognition.

The great Socialist writer, Maxim Gorky, always spoke with great warmth of Sholom Aleichem. In 1910, soon after the appearance of the Russian translation of A Boy's Diary, Gorky sent the following letter to the Jewish writer:

"Most respected colleague:

"Your book has been received, read, laughed and cried overa wonderful book! It seems to me that the translation has been done skillfully and with love for the author, although in spots one feels that it was difficult to convey in the Russian the sad and warm humor of the original. I repeat—one feels this.

"The book pleases me exceedingly, and let me say once again that it

is a capital book!

"The entire thing scintillates with tender, benign and wise love for the people, and this feeling is so rare in our day.

"I am yours most cordially, "M. Gorky

21, 1910. "Capri, March

Gorky was correct when he wrote of the "wise love for the people" which permeated all the writings of Sholom Aleichem, this genuine people's writer. When he described the pathetic life of the Jewish masses, who, in the words of one of his characters, the "happiest man in Kodnya," had even been deprived by the good lord of a crust of bread to eat and free air to breathe, Sholom Aleichem had unswerving faith in the triumph of the people's cause. He could never get around anything without jokes interming-led with bitterness. The same bitter jokes are used by Sholom Aleichem in describing his characters, artisans forced to "stand on their feet from dawn until late at night" and who will lead a miserable existence "until the happy time comes of which Karl Marx, August Bebel and all good and wise people tell us." Faith in this happy future and unchanging optimism, which always has its roots in the common people, penetrate and animate the works of this great Jewish writer.

This optimism was confirmed by history. The difficult and dark past in which the tragi-comic heroes of Sholom Aleichem lived has been destroyed forever in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Under tsarism Russia was a prison of the peoples. The Jewish people, like other peoples inhabiting Russia, suffered constant persecution and exile. Jews were deprived of the right to travel around the country, they were confined to the pale, they were not accorded the right to work or education.

The October Socialist Revolution freed all the peoples of Russia. Together with the other nationalities of the great multi-national union, the Jews are now building a free Socialist life. The luftmensch bred by the dark old times has disappeared from our Socialist land together

with other phantoms and appari-

tions of the past.

Following the defeat of the first Russian Revolution of 1905, when all kinds of dark forces reappeared from their lairs in an effort to smash the revolutionaries, one of Sholom Aleichem's characters, in his goodnatured and colorful language, heavily interlarded with native wit, expressed a thought which has proved rrophetic: that the enemies had miscalculated, that the time would come when Russia would have a wonderful constitution. When these words are uttered today from the stages of the Jewish theaters in Kiev, Odessa, Minsk Moscow, or Birobijan, they are answered by a storm of applause. This is the applause of Soviet citizens who know that the peoples of the U.S.S.R. have been given the Stalinist Constitution, the greatest constitution the world has ever known.

The history of the Jewish people over many thousands of years is replete with tragic sufferings and wandering, with bloodshed and difficult trials. This tragedy is still more vivid in our own day, when the fascists of Germany are subjecting Jews to criminal pogroms. The entire civilized world is outraged by the barbarity of these contemporary cannibals toward the peaceful Jewish people, from among

whose midst have come such people as Marx and Heine, people who have immeasurably enriched both German and world culture.

It is only in the U.S.S.R. that the Jewish people, together with the other peoples of the world's first Socialist country, have found their true homeland. And side by side with his people, the great writer Sholom Aleichem has discovered his true fatherland in the U.S.S.R. Nowhere is he read and esteemed as in the Soviet Union. Since the October Socialist Revolution his books have appeared in a total of more than two million copies in eight languages. The editions of Sholom Aleichem's books, the numerous translations of his works into the languages of the Soviet peoples, and the statistics furnished by libraries are convincing proof that Sholom Aleichem belongs among the most popular and best loved writers in the U.S.S.R. A brilliant indication of this is the coming anniversary of Sholom Aleichem's birth, which is being widely observed by all the peoples of the land of Socialism. The liberated peoples of the U.S.S.R honor the memory of all those brilliant men whose art during the difficult days of the past served the people and helped pave the way for the present free and happy life of the great Socialist country.

AARON GURSTEIN

### Taras Shevchenko

"... The story of my life is part of the history of my native land," Shevchenko wrote in his autobiography in 1860, a year before his death,

And, indeed, the great Ukrainian poet was bound to the common people by ties of blood; their needs and interests were his, and his entire life was a reflection of the bitter lot of the Ukrainian people, oppress-

ed by tsarism.

Taras Grigoryevich Shevchenko was born on March 9, 1814 (February 25, old style) in the village of Morintsy, Kiev Gubernia. He had no recollection whatsoever of this village and considered the village of Kirillovka, to which the Shevchenko family moved soon after he was born, as his native home.

Sad and dreary was the childhood of this boy, born into a family of serfs and one of the 17,150 serfs owned by the landlord Engelhardt.

The peasants of Kirillovka had tiny plots of land—about three or four acres per family. And what little they had they could not cultivate properly, for all their strength was expended in compulsory labor on the landlord's fields.

Taras rarely saw his mother. She was a sick, weary woman, worn out by heavy labor that left her no strength to bring up her eight children. As well as they could, the older chil-

dren took care of the younger. All his life Shevchenko retained ardent and tender memories of his sister Katra, "my loving, solicitous nurse." His mother died early, leaving but

a hazy memory of herself.

From childhood Taras differed from the other members of his family. His bent for poetry displayed itself at an early age. Nature struck a deep response in him. Recalling his childhood, Shevchenko wrote: "Before me is our old white cottage with its soot-begrimed thatched roof and smoke-blackened chimney, and next to the cottage . . . the apple tree laden with redcheeked fruit, and around the apple tree a flower bed.... At the gate stands a branchy pussywillow, dried out at the top.... On the slope is the garden, and beyond the garden hay is being mowed, and beyond, the valley, and in the valley a quiet, softly murmuring brook lined with pussywillows and snowball trees and enveloped in broad-leaved, green burdocks."

Six-year old Taras loved to swim in this brook. Afterwards, he would run into the shady garden, "fall down at the foot of the first pear tree," and doze off. . . . Awakening, he would gaze at the mountain in the distance and ponder: "What lie beyond the mountain? Of course

iron pillars that hold up the sky." And once he went to seek the iron pillars. He walked on and on, night came and he lost his way, but he still marched ahead stubbornly until some carters picked up the sleepy boy and took him home.

The boy's behavior did not pass unnoticed by his parents. When, two years after the death of his mother, his father died, he left Taras nothing in the division of his meager property: "My son Taras needs none of my property. He will not be an ordinary person; he will either turn out to be something very good or a good-for-nothing."

Grigory Shevchenko's paternal instinct had not deceived him: he saw in his son all the qualities of a great man. Meanwhile, however, Taras had to tend the calves and hogs of the Kirillovka peasants. To free herself of an extra mouth to feed, Taras' stepmother sent him to be a herder. The boy passed whole days in the pasture and steppe, where the many burialmounds "stand and grieve." He had an infinite love for the blue expanse of the sky, for the warm fragrant air of the fields. It was here, obviously, that one must look for the source of the first impulses to his talent, which was later to rush to the surface with such force in cold St. Petersburg, far from his native soil.

Long did Taras listen to the songs of the blind minstrels who came to the village during funerals and marriages or simply to peasant gatherings of an evening. They sang of the glorious past of the Ukraine, how the people had fought for their freedom against the Turks and Poles, how the Ukrainian Cossacks had routed the Polish pans from their land. Plaints of the bitter lot of the enslaved tsarist Ukraine were also voiced in their songs. The heart of the young listener

became filled with wrath and a de-

sire to struggle.

In winter, when Taras had nothing to do, he was sent to study with one of the local deacons. His study cost him dearly, for Deacon Bugorsky made him his servant. The boy took care of the whole school: carried water, cleaned the floors, cooked for everybody...."A million times my young heart was outraged by this progeny of the despotic church schools," Shevchenko wrote in his autobiography, "and I put an end to it as do defenseless people in general who lose their patience—by revenge and flight. Discovering him dead drunk one day, I used his own weapon, the birch rod, against him, and repaid him for all his cruelty with as much of my childish strength as I could summon."

Shevchenko fled from Bugorsky and entered on a path of tribulations. Fleeing to the neighboring village of Lysyanka, he came upon a deacon who painted. The boy was overjoyed, for at that time his passion for drawing had awakened. He drew on scraps of paper and in notebooks with pieces of coal and bits of pencil, for which he was continually beaten. Taras remained with his new teacher only four days, for his methods of "upbringing" were even more severe. A similar unsuccessful experience followed this one, and then Shevchenko returned to his native village, again to become a herder. In the winter he again hired himself out as a farm hand, to the priest Koshiz.

Shevchenko was still determined to study painting, however. When spring came he went to the village of Khlipnovka, which was famed for its "house painters." A staid old painter looked at the boy's work, found that he had ability, and took him on as an apprentice. When, two weeks later, he learned



Taras Shevchenko—a portrait embroidered on silk, exhibited at a folk art exhibition in Kiev

that Taras was fifteen, however, he sent him to the landlord for permission, to live in Khlipnovka and to engage in house painting.

One of the clauses in the regulations on the serfs belonging to Engelhardt stated: "From the age of fourteen, serfs are obliged to work for the master two days in the week."

Shevchenko went to ask Dimintrinko, the manager of Engelhardt's estate, for permission to live in a different village. Seeing that he was an intelligent boy, the manager forthwith made him one of the household servants. It was here that Taras first felt the burden of slavery.

At first he was made to work in the kitchen. Bending over the hot stove from morn to night, Taras longed for the fresh spring fields, for the brook. His hands were always black and raw from peeling potatoes, and he had whole pails of them to clean.

After six months, a trained household worker, he was sent to Vilna. where Engelhardt then resided. Engelhardt took a fancy to Shevchenko and decided to make him a man servant. The boy began a dreary existence. For days on end Taras sat silent and immovable in the anteroom-such was the master's order. At the first call he ran into the room, handed his master his pipe, lit a match or poured a glass of water from a pitcher standing in front of Engelhardt's very nose. This enforced idleness weighed more heavily on Taras than hard labor.

Even here, however, in spite of stern interdictions and beatings and threats, he managed to pursue his beloved pastime—he drew. He saved the few paltry coins he managed to earn from time to time, and bought books with cheap prints, which he copied. Once he was even flogged in the stable for this, but it did not deter him from continuing to draw.

Finally his passion for drawing attracted the attention of Engelhardt, who decided to make Tarashis serf artist, and sent him to study for four years under the painter Shiryayev. This was already in St. Petersburg, whither Engelhardt had moved at the end of 1830.

The new teacher turned out to be as despotic as the former deacons. In return for his lessons, Taras was obliged to fulfill his teacher's house painting orders and do all the house cheres. Only the nights were his own, the joyous nights of youth when, after a day of hard work, one still has enough strength to think, to create. . . .

Taking advantage of the white nights in the summer, Taras ran to the Summer Garden and drew the statues. His first literary efforts were also born in the solitude and quiet of the garden. "The stern Ukrainian muse." he wrote, "was long alien to my spirit, warped by my life in the school, in the landlord's anteroom, in the taverns and city apartments. But when the presentiment of freedom revived the purity of the first years of my childhood, she, my thanks to her, embraced and caressed me in alien land. . . .''

By this time there was some hope that his fervent desire to be freed from the yoke of serfdom would be realized. The artist Soshenko, a fellow-countryman, took an interest in Shevchenko. He began to teach him painting. He introduced him to the famous people of the period. Finally, the poet Zhukovsky, and Carl Brullow, the famous painter, became interested in him.

Shevchenko dreamed of entering the Academy of Arts, but the doors were closed to him as a serf. His influential friends began to act on his behalf. At first, however, Engelhardt would not even listen to proposals that Shevchenko be freed.

"This is not a matter of philan-

thropy," he said. "Shevchenko is a man with a trade and he is needed about the house. . . . Money and nothing else will sway me."

At last, after long bargaining, he agreed to free him for 2,500 rubles. The money was raised in a unique manner: Brullow painted a portrait of Zhukovsky and played it off in a lottery.

On February 22, 1838, Shevchenko received his freedom. For the first time he experienced the joy of studying in freedom under the direction of a charming and talented man, Brullow. His friends helped him with money, for at first Taras had no means of subsistence.

Two artistic trends struggled for the upper hand within Shevchenko at that time. "Having entered, at last, 'the sanctuary,' "—as he named Brullow's studio-'I began to pay more attention to writing poetry. In front of Brullow's marvelous canvases I became wrapped in thought and I fostered the poems The Blind Minstrel and The Haidamaks in my heart. In the shade in his elegant and luxurious studio . . . before me rose my fine, my poor Ukraine, in all the chastity and melancholy of its beauty. I could not turn my thoughts away from its bewitching charm. . . . It is a call—nothing less. . . .

This call carried Shevchenko away. He wrote every day. Frequently, when preparing his lessons for the Academy, he would put aside his brush and an unfinished drawing and take up his pen to write down on the first piece of paper he found the lines of poetry welling up in him. It was in this period that he wrote his first poems, The Spoiled One and Catherine.

When Shevchenko's friend, the Ukrainian writer Grebenko, saw his poetry, he began to persuade him to have it printed. A publisher was



Taras Shevchenko — sculpture by Professor M. Manizer

soon found in the person of Martos, a rich Ukrainian, and in 1840 the first edition of the *Minstrel* appeared, to be followed the next year by a separate edition of *Haidamaks*.

There were various criticisms of the book. In some magazines there were comments noting that Shevchenko's verse had "true fire and many profound sentiments, it breathes a deep love for his native land." Another critic said that "his poetic pictures are true to nature and sparkle with clear, live colors." There were some, however, who met Shevchenko's work with mockery. They attacked him for "mutilating ideas and the Russian language, by writing in the speech of the muzhik."

But Shevchenko already understood that his true calling was that of a poet. With his characteristic passion he said: "They call me an enthusiast, that is, a fool; let it be so, let me be a 'muzhik poet,' if only a poet. I desire nothing else."

He said this in 1843, the year he graduated from the Academy and returned to his native village, for the first time in fourteen years.

By that time his works were widely known in the Ukraine. They exerted a strong influence. The nationalistic landlords wanted to welcome Shevchenko as their own poet; they opened the doors of their estates wide and received him with open arms. Shevchenko, however, was not enraptured either by the glory or the honorary receptions with which the landlords greeted him. He very quickly saw the hypocrisy in their liberal speeches. "In the pubs they rant about freedom, about independence," and meanwhile they suck the last bit of strength out of their peasants.

Shevchenko saw that his peasant brothers were as downtrodden as always. People were still sold, whipped to death, bartered for dogs and conscripted into the army.

Bitter reality evoked poetry of indignation and protest within him. Youth was behind; Shevchenko had become a mature revolutionary poet.

According to Butashevich, one of Shevchenko's contemporaries, his poetry spread throughout the Ukraine

and "gave rise to many strong

thoughts."

His muse became ever sterner and clearer. At the time of his second visit to the Ukraine, in 1845, he was famed for his revolutionary poems, among which was his well-known revolutionary satire on absolutism, *The Dream*. Before his second trip to his native Ukraine, Shevchenko lived for a short period in Petersburg, where he was in touch with an underground circle of Polish revolutionaries, read illegal revolutionary literature and studied French.

Settling down in Kiev in 1846, Shevchenko joined the founders of the "Kirillo-Mefodiyevsky Brotherhood" - Kostomarov, Gulak and others. The aims of the brotherhood were the national and cultural autonomy of the Ukraine in a republican federation of the Slav peoples, the liberation of the peasants and the attainment of democratic liberties. The society was reported to the authorities, however; it was disbanded and its members arrested. At that time Shevchenko was absent from Kiev but, crossing the Dnieper on his return, he was arrested. This happened in 1847. He had with him The Dream. The Caucasus and others of his banned works, and this was instrumental in bringing down upon his head the severe sentence he received.

Shevchenko was sentenced to exile as a rank-and-file soldier in the Orenburg infantry battalion, with strict orders not to write or draw. This prohibition was written by tsar Nicholas I personally on the report on Shevchenko's case compiled by Count Orlov, the chief of the gendarmerie: "To be kept under strictest surveillance—forbidden to write and draw."

"Even were I a tyrant or an extortioner, a worse sentence than exile as a soldier in a separate Orenburg corps could hardly have been conceived.... And on top of it all, I am forbidden to draw, depriving me of the most noble fea-



Kirghizian—painting by Taras Shevchenko

ture of my miserable existence," wrote the poet afterwards in his memoirs.

Shevchenko's lot was typical of that of the finest people in tsarist Russia.

The remarkable poet and artist slowly wasted away in the severe conditions of life of the soldiers of Nicholas' time.

Ten years of heartless drill and insults at the hands of dull-witted and cruel chiefs left their mark on Shevchenko, whose constitution could not stand the life of a soldier; they wrecked his health and sharpened his hatred of the existing order. "On that unforgettable day of my confirmation I said to myself that they will not make a soldier out of me. And they have not," he wrote after ten years' imprisonment. "How endless and disgusting is this drill! Can it be that even this is not the last time I will be dragged out on the drill-ground, like a mute animal put up for show? A shame and disgrace: it is hard, difficult, impossible to stifle all human dignity in oneself, to stand at attention, to listen to commands and to move like a soulless machine."

These disgraces and cruelties shattered neither Shevchenko's convictions nor his passionate sentiments and faith in man and his better future, however. "I torment myself, I suffer, but I do not waver," was the motto of those years of suffering. He did not tire of repeating this in his diary, in his letters and in his poetry:

Punished for the truth, I do not bow to fate,

he affirmed in a letter to his friend Kozachkovsky in 1847.

In spite of the ban, Shevchenko wrote and drew during the first years of his exile, when he composed Varnak, The Sotnik, Marina, If You Knew, and many short poems. All are filled with a longing for his native land, "for my dear Ukraine";

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Captain of a troop of one hundred Cossacks.

"all is still in slumber under the hill, among the pussywillows, there where a white cottage rises by the water side." His lines are filled with hatred for the despotic tsar and the

slave-owning landlords.

There was a period in the hard life of imprisonment when there was a slight amelioration in his situation. The fate of the exiles depended on the character of the chief put in charge of them. Lieutenant Butakov, knowing Shevchenko's artistic talent and his culture, took him on an interesting expedition studying the shores of the Aral Sea, so that he could paint landscapes. Shevchenko's satisfactory work had an exactly opposite effect, however. When it was presented with an appeal that his lot be bettered, an order inspired by Nicholas I came from St. Petersburg, stating that Shevchenko was to be transferred to the remote Novopetrovsk Fort on the Asiatic shore of the Caspian Sea.

A second and sterner order forbidding him to write or draw was issued. His muse was silenced for seven long years. Only one eightline verse of his is known to have been written during this period, a comment on the Sevastopol war, in which he exclaimed in despair: "Again muzhik blood has been shed."

At times he could no longer bear the strain and a depressed mood prevailed in his letters to his friends. "I was born and grew up in servitude, and I will die, it seems, a soldier. Would there were some end to this, for really it is unbearable more . . ." he wrote to Gulak.

Freedom came to the sick and no longer young man in 1857; and a shabby sort of freedom it was; for the last three years of his life (1858-61) he was under police surveillance.

Petitions and requests for permission to live in St. Petersburg dragged on for almost six months

before it was granted. There, in 1860, The Minstrel was again published, but how! The day his book appeared Shevchenko wrote: "Today the censorship released my unfortunate songs from its claws and it has clipped them so, curse it, that I barely recognized my poor creatures."

Striving to serve the people and to reach them better, Shevchenko decided to take up engraving. His determination and conscientiousness is witnessed by the fact that not long after he received the title of academician of engraving.

Only once more, approximately a year before his death, did Shevchenko manage to visit his "dear Ukraine." He visited his relatives, staying with his sister Yarina. There he bemoaned the bitter lot of the peasants. All of Shevchenko's relatives were still serfs.

During his stay in the Ukraine Shevchenko was again arrested, this time for a "disrespectful attitude towards the clergy and the landlords."

He was sent back to St. Petersburg, but all his thoughts were of his native land. He dreamed of a small plot of land, of building a little house and living there to the end of his days.

Just such a place was found. "... On a high hill," his relative Bartholomew Shevchenko wrote from the Ukraine, "there is a grove, and in the middle of the grove a field; far, far from the city; several fishermen's huts below. There are many wild apple and pear trees on the hill; you could have a little garden. The beloved old Dnieper will seem to be at your very feet..."

But Shevchenko did not come to this promised land during his lifetime. He died on March 10 (Febuary 26, old style) in his studio. The poet was forty-seven years old; the years of physical and mental torture had prematurely undermined his health. Many years before his death the poet wrote his behest. In this remarkable poem he wrote:

When I am dead, bury me deep within the funeral mound.
Bury me out in the wide steppe, in Ukraine's beloved ground,
Out where the boundless stretching fields

forever may be seen,

And the steep banks with the Dnieper roaring along between....

His behest was carried out. The great poet was buried in the very place in which he had dreamed of settling, high above the Dnieper, not far from the city of Kanev.

But his work did not end upon his death, His name was long linked with the finest ideals of the oppressed people in their struggle for independence.

Crowds flocked to his grave.

It is not surprising that the name of Shevchenko, a fighter for the liberation of the serfs, was a bugbear for autocratic Russia. Soon after Shevchenko's funeral, Gorvat, the Kiev Marshal of the Nobility, reported to the authorities that many visitors were flocking to Shevchenko's grave and were spreading rumors of the hopes of the serfs to take free possession of the landlords' domains in the future.

It was not for nothing that the tsarist gendarmes stood guard over Shevchenko's grave on the centenary of his birth, fearing anti-govern-

ment demonstrations.

At that time, in April 1914, Lenin wrote in his article On the Question of the National Policy: "The ban on honoring Shevchenko was such a splendid, superb and uniquely happy and fortunate measure from the viewpoint of agitation against the government that one could not imagine a better means of agitation. I think that all our best Social - Democratic agitators against the government could never achieve such dizzying successes in such a short space of time as this measure has achieved in the antigovernment sense. After this measure, millions and millions of 'philistines' began to become transformed into conscious citizens and to become convinced of the correctness of the dictum that Russia is a 'prison of the peoples.' "1

The poet's behest to the working people has been realized in the So-

viet Union:

Bury me deep, but yourselves rise up and break your chains in glee! And with the oppressors' evil blood sprinkle liberty!

And when that great new family's

the family of the free,

O have a kindly and peaceful word

with which to remember me.

The Soviet Union, which has created "that great new family, the family of the free," has justly rewarded the revolutionary poet Taras

Shevchenko's great talent.

His fine revolutionary poetry has been freed from the distortions of the tsarist censorship and published in scores of thousands of copies. The celebration of the 125th anniversary of his birth, this year, is being conducted on a countrywide scale. The Soviet people utter his name and read his verses with love and admiration.

#### L. BAT and A. DEUTSCH

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XVII, pp. 324-25, Russian edition.

### In Memory of Karel Capek

The Czechoslovakian people and world literature have lost one of the outstanding men of letters of our time through Karel Capek's untimely death.

Capek's name was recently advanced for the Nobel Prize in literature by the International Association of Writers in Defense of Culture, and this initiative was supported by another international organization of writers—the Pen Clubs. All the progressive writers of the world who see in fascism a mortal menace to the achievements of culture and democracy agreed on Capek's name for this award.

In the twenty-odd years of his literary work Capek wrote many novels, stories and plays. He was the author of a number of realistic works dealing with modern life. But it was his brilliant satires, usually couched in the form of fantasies or utopias, which brought him world fame. Beginning with R.U.R. (1921), a play depicting the rebellion of the robots against the capitalists who created them, Capek came to the fore as an author who constantly exposed the shady sides of capitalist society. He exposed and bitterly condemned the decay of modern life which technical progress bears with it under capitalism.

After the Hitlerites' seizure of pow-



er in Germany Capek saw in fascism the most dangerous enemy of his humanitarian ideals. He came out against the cannibals of the twentieth century, first in an allegorical novel, War Against the Salamanders, and soon he openly named fascism the chief enemy of humanity, in his play, The White Malady (1936). By this act he drew down upon himself the bitter hatred of the Hitlerites, and Left Czech

critics pointed out that the fascists hated Capek more than any other Czechoslovakian writer.

Capek's last play, The Mother, deserves particular attention, both for the artistic mastery with which it is written and for the anti-fascist position Capek took in it. In his previous works he had been pessimistic about the prospects of the immediate struggle with fascism, and he had not called upon the people to rebuff the aggressors. In The Mother Capek drew a memorable portrait of a woman who has lost her husband and four sons, yet, moved by the horrors wreaked by the interventionists invading her country, she sends her remaining son to the front to defend the freedom of their native land. Capek shows the inspired enthusiasm of the people, taking to arms and ready to bar the enemy's path with every means at their command.

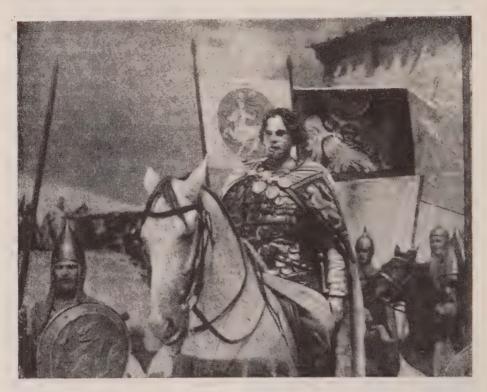
The Mother was produced with great success in Prague, and it is now being shown in Paris. Undoubtedly it plays a great role and will play a still greater role in mobilizing the masses against the fascist aggressors.

Capek conducted widespread antifascist activity in the days before the Munich deal. He headed all the appeals of Czechoslovakian writers to the democratic countries. He sign-

ed the well known appeal of Czechoslovakian writers "To the Conscience of Mankind." Undoubtedly he felt deeply the tragedy of his country, of his people, of the countries of the West which are loyal to democracy. And in what he wrote we see the result of that inner shock which Capek felt during fascism's dismemberment of his native land.

Only two years ago Capek wondered "whether we shall live to see the time when we will again speak of art, philosophy and literature with the same passion and deep-felt interest as we now speak of politics and economics." The deceased writer was a great humanist who deeply loved culture and science. He came out firmly in their defense against fascism, and believed in the final triumph of civilization and demock racy. He did not live to see the day of which he dreamed. But that day is not far off. The time will come, and the free Czechoslovakian people, lovingly discussing questions of its culture, with gratefulness will honor the memory of its outstanding writer, who saw the danger menacing his native land and devoted his talent in the last days of his life to fighting that menace.

TIMOFEI ROKOTOV



A still from "Alexander Nevsky"

### My Subject is Patriotism

Such is the inscription on the scrap of paper on which I jotted down my first ideas about the new picture when I undertook the task of reproducing on the screen the thirteenth century, the great national struggle of the Russian people against aggression and the figure of Alexander Nevsky, that remarkable warrior and statesman.

My subject is patriotism—the phrase was constantly before me and before our entire group, during the shots, during the sound recordings and during the cutting.

And I believe this slogan, which guided the production of the entire picture, makes itself felt in the finished film.

The great ideas of our Socialist fatherland endow our art with remarkable fecundity. I tried to serve these ideas in all the films which I made in the course of nearly fifteen years. The themes dealt with the underground revolutionary struggle in tsarist Russia, the October Socialist Revolution, collectivization. And now, in this picture, we have approached the national and patriotic theme, which engages foremost minds not only in our

country, but in the West as well. For the guardian of national dignity, of national pride, national independence and true patriotism throughout the world is first of all the Communist Party, is Communism.

The bourgeoisie, in fear of its impending doom, has betrayed its previous ideals, its countries and its peoples, endeavoring at any price, by means of various "axes," agreements, both secret and open, to create a barrier to the onslaught of the working people. It is trying at any price to postpone the final, decisive battle for freedom and independence.

It is impossible to view the capitalist world without feelings of horror. I do not believe that any period in history witnessed such an orgy of violence to all human ideals as has resulted in recent years from the growing insolence of fascist aggression. The suppression of the independence of the so-called small countries, blood-drenched Spain, dismembered Czechoslovakia, China gasping in desperate

struggle, these realities appear like a gory nightmare. Nothing could seem more terrible. But every new day brings us news of greater outrages, greater savagery. It is hard to believe your eyes when you read of the unbridled ferocity of the Jewish pogroms in Germany, where before the eyes of the world hundreds of thousands of downtrodden people, shorn of human aid, are being wiped from the face of the earth. Opposed to this bloody nightmare as champions of humanity and culture, as an active force rallying the energy of the best men, are first of all the Communists.

The struggle for the human ideal of fairness, freedom and national rights, even for the very right of national existence, derives its moral strength from the Soviet Union. Exposing all fascist obscurantism, the mighty voice of the Soviet Union may be heard unfaltering, persistent and uncompromising. All that is finest in thinking humanity cannot fail to add its voice to the appeal of the



Alexander Nevsky among his warriors—a still from the film

Soviet intellectuals to condemn the babarians.

Naturally Soviet art could not ignore these all-important themes; and this applies not only to those themes directly connected with the struggle waged by the Soviet Union, defending peace against constant aggression, which seeks to attack the integrity and inviolability of our borders. It also includes generalized themes.

This applies, for example, to the theme of national defense, which at the present time arouses equal interest in all corners of the world where human dignity has not been lost, where belief in human ideals still remains.

This is the subject of our film. We have taken a historic episode from the thirteenth century, when the Teutonic and Livonian knights, the ancestors of the contemporary fascists, undertook a systematic advance eastward in order to subjugate the Slavonic and other peoples, in precisely the same spirit as contemporary fascist Germany is trying to do, with the same frenzied slogans and the same fanaticism.

When you read the chronicles of the thirteenth century alternately with the newspapers of today, you lose your sense of time, for the bloody terror which the invading orders of knighthood sowed is scarcely distinguishable from present events in Europe.

This is why the picture, though it deals with a specific historic epoch, with specific historic events, seems like a modern picture, according to the testimony of those who have seen it. The feelings which inflamed the Russian people in the thirteenth century when they repelled the foe are quite close to those which the Soviet peoples feel at the present time. Undoubtedly the same feelings fire those upon whom the predatory paws of Hitlerite aggression have already been laid.

After devouring all the small intermediate peoples in its fierce attack, the wave of German invasion reached Slavic territory. Despite the fact that eighteen years before, Russia had experienced the frightful invasion of the Tartars, who had devastated

almost all the country, so that only the northwestern part remained, with Novgorod as the center, the Russian people found the strength whereby to collect sufficient troops and prevent the German invasion, prevent the imposition of the German yoke, which was more terrible than that of the Tartars. The Tartars were interested only in tribute, but the Germans, just like the fascists today, sought to destroy the national spirit of the people, they completely obliterated every trace of national independence and character in the countries they conquered.

Just as today the hounds of fascism are tearing to shreds Czechoslovakian culture, destroying the language, the schools and literature, destroying the intellectuals and the working class, so did the Teuton knights of the thirteenth century eradicate everything which each nation or nationality possessed and treasured as its own. The roads of conquest of the knights were marked with blood and fire. Cities. villages and people were destroyeduntil Alexander Nevsky and the Russian levies met the Germans on the ice of Lake Peipus. Here Alexander crushed the German knights, who used a special fighting formation, forming an iron wedge with their cavalry which swept all barriers from its path. This formation, famed as the "pig," became legendary.

Alexander Nevsky, with the genius of a great military leader, repeated Hannibal's maneuvre at Canna; he succeeded in squeezing the hitherto invincible "pig"; in the vice of crushing blows from the flanks and in completing its defeat with the aid of the peasant levy, which attacked the "pig" from the rear.

The blow struck against the Germans was crushing and merciless. Before their defeat in the battle on the ice, the knights had been surrounded with the halo of invincible might. There are many people who are weak or lacking in confidence, who likewise believe blindly in the invincibility and indestructibility of the brazen diplomatic and military adventurism practiced in the world arena by fascism.



Buslai, one of the warriors, with his mother and his bride — a still from "Alexander Nevsky"

We want our film not only to inspire those who are in the very thick of the fight against fascism, but to bring spirit, courage and confidence to those quarters of the world where fascism seems as invincible as the order of knights appeared in the thirteenth century. May the fainthearted cease kneeling humbly before fascism, may they cease the constant concessions and tribute to the ravenous monster. Let them remember that there is no force of ignorance and darkness which can resist the united forces of all that is fine, healthy and progressive in humanity.

These feelings are inspired and these forces led by the most splendid country in the world, which is experiencing the vigorous development of the great Stalinist epoch. This country has recently repaid the aggressive attempts of Japan with the same relentlessness with which it defeated German aggression in the thirteenth century. The forces of civilization must convince themselves and are convincing

themselves, that unyielding determination in struggle always brings victory, and the forces of civilization must be mobilized for this victory.

Now, as I write this article, the picture Alexander Nevsky is finished.

Our entire collective, imbued with the lofty ideas of the picture, worked on it enthusiastically; we are sure that the close of the film, Alexander Nevsky's splendid speech, will resound in our day as a terrible warning to all enemies of the Soviet Union:

"... Should anyone raise his sword against us, he shall perish by the sword. On this the Russian land stands and shall stand!"

These words express the feelings and will of the masses of the Soviet people.

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

At the present time the group of people who made Alexander Nevsky is preparing to produce a new historical revolutionary

film, *Perekop*, scheduled to be finished at the end of 1939. This film will show the heroic struggle of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army to liberate the Crimea from the Whites, the epic of the taking of the Isthmus of Perekop; and will portray M. V. Frunze, who led the Red Army in this decisive blow, which wiped out Wrangel's forces and brought the Civil War to a victorious finish.

### "Alexander Nevsky"

I remember the time when the writer Pavlenko and director Sergei Eisenstein were just starting their work on Alexander Nevsky. They were faced with a gigantic task. Now when you see the completed production, so simple, so full of life, so stirring, with its clear and convincing story, it is hard to realize how complex, almost insurmountable, some obstacles in the work on the film appeared.

The subject of the picture was to be the boundless love of the Russian people for their country, the love which more than once in our history gave rise to a tremendous upsurge of popular will and energy which overwhelmed all enemies. The picture had to be patriotic in the loftiest Bolshevik sense of the word. And so it proved, to the credit of the entire group which took part in making it.

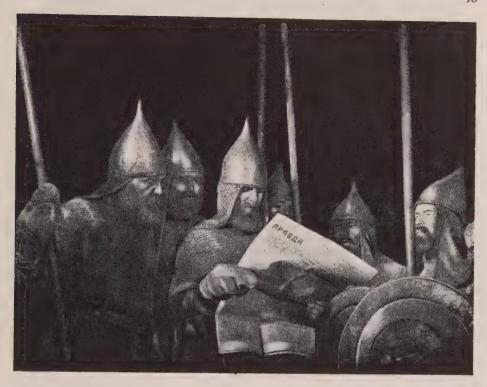
It is not enough merely to define the abstract content of the future work of art. The artist becomes a real master when he finds vivid and expressive form for the content.

This is where tremendous difficulties arose. There were no beaten paths to follow. We had no experience in the production of historic films of the distant past, save a few feeble efforts in silent photography. The life and peculiarities of the period (the thirteenth century), which left few records either in writing or in imagery, opened a broad field for the creative imagination, while on the other hand it required great care and conscientiousness in the use of the meager material.

How should we tell our modern audience of events and people of six hundred years ago? Where and how should we find the voice, the form of speech, the music and rhythm of that speech, to correspond to the significance of events that happened so long ago that they have already acquired legendary proportions?

The authors of the scenario took the correct initial step. They promptly turned to a marvelous and invaluable source, the popular epic. The spirit of the folk narrative was perceptible in the scenario. The figures of the Novgorod heroes Vaska Buslai and Gavril Oleksich came from folk tales, as did their quick wits and the joyous and confident spirit with which they fought countless enemies. The biting comparison of the Germans to a fox caught in a crevass is also taken from folk tales. Moreover, the tale told by the picture itself is in fact the tale of the popular epic.

The directors, Eisenstein and the Vasilyevs, together with cameraman Tisse and artist Shpinel, found a language of visual images splendid in its strength and vividness and fully expressing the spirit of the popular epos which inspired the authors of the scenario. To appreciate this it is enough to recall the splendid figure of Alexander. glittering as though forged from silver; the gloomy, terrifying expanse of icebound Lake Peipus, and the mad fury of the battle, which throbs with a mighty will. It must be said that in Alexander Nevsky the impact of the screen image plays a leading, often decisive, role. It would be utterly wrong to rebuke the directors for this. Individual acting, which usually occupies every inch of the film nowadays. is lacking in Alexander Nevsky. The actors seem to appear and vanish; the powerful march of events is expressed in the broad movements of masses, articulated only by music. There is little dialogue in the film. Would it have been correct to replace the fray on the ice, reproduced on a vast scale, by the single combat of individuals?



Alexander's warriors read "Pravda" between shots

Or should the splendid scene of Alexander's entry into Pskov, where the people greet their fallen and living heroes, a scene which proceeds through half its course without a single word, be replaced by a scene of acting and speech? Naturally such a proposal would be out of place. Nor can it be said that the small place assigned in the picture to the actor renders the film cold, external and devoid of "living human beings," that is, devoid of verisimilitude.

I saw and heard the cordial and spirited reception accorded by the audience to Vaska Buslai (played by Okhlopkov); saw how the auditors carried away with them the few sparing words uttered by Massalitinova (Buslai's mother), who only appears at the close of the picture. Moreover, the multitude which personifies the Russian people in the mass scenes is alive, realistic and thrilling. Never for an instant does it become a cold element in a scene introduced for artificial effect. How often do directors who work well with individual

actors fail when it comes to utilizing the vast possibilities of the cinema for impressive mass scenes!

The creators of Alexander Nevsky deserve much credit for the fact that they raised the pictorial art of the film to heights perhaps unequalled since the days of the silent cinema. The photographic art represented in Alexander Nevsky might serve as a model. Should we not rejoice that a film devoted to such a vital episode in the history of the Russian people, a film which arouses the finest sentiments of love of country, and which, at the same time, cultivates in the audience appreciation of art, cultivates the thing we call artistic taste, will penetrate everywhere, even to the remotest corners of our country? Such, in my opinion, should be the tasks of art in the deepest Bolshevik sense.

Special mention must be made of the artist of the film, Comrade Shpinel. I do not want to employ the word "decorator," for there is so little in common

between Shpinel's splendid architectural constructions and what we are accustomed to seeing in many pictures, where only a secondary place is reserved for the artist. Shpinel reproduces the simple, austere and at the same time unusually harmonious lines of the ancient Byzantine buildings with the stylistic purity and feeling of artistic proportion that only a great craftsman can achieve. His work deepens the images created by the directors and actors.

The expressive music plays a serious thematic role in the film. When amid the cold wastes of Lake Peipus, still and ominous, the familiar harsh strains of the German theme are first audible the audience is placed on its guard, together with the motionless, embattled Russian army, tensing its muscles and its will to resist; and when the mass of galloping horsemen at last appears on the horizon, its appearance only intensifies and supplements the feelings kindled by the music. The score is everywhere simple, clear

and effective, and proceeds shoulder to shoulder with the visual image towards a common goal, producing thereby an impression of remarkable force.

There are shortcomings on the score of the acting. Certain roles are failures (the women, save for the splendid portrayal by Massalitinova). Other roles, though played by well-known actors, seem uncoordinated. While the epic narrative of events develops in the picture at an uninterrupted pace, the fate and hence the playing of the individual people is often shown in fragmentary form, almost accidentally, one might say. This is the fault of the scenario writer and the directors.

Alexander Nevsky was the first picture in the historical section of our thematic plan approved by the Party and Government. If our future pictures maintain the same high level we may boldly assert that the creation of a great Soviet cinema art is near at hand.

VSEVOLOD PUDOVKIN

# CORRESPONDENCE

# Five Years of the Union of German Writers Abroad

The fifth anniversary of the Union of German Writers abroad, celebrated in the autumn of 1938, afforded an occasion on which to review our work and to discuss plans for the future. In celebrating the fifth anniversary of our union, we mark these years we have lived as emigrants from Hitler Germany: that is, the emigrant phase of the old Union of German Writers founded in Berlin in 1908. Our union is of thirty years' standing; only since 1933 has it become an emigrant union.

For these five years many German writers, including Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Anna Zeghers, Ernst Toller, Ludwig Renn, Egon Erwin Kisch and many others whose works are banned in Germany, have lived as emigrants in foreign lands. The deprivations these years have brought, years of forced wandering, have not daunted our spirit or broken those ties of language and of the real culture of the German people

which bind us to our homeland.

No, these years spent in militant struggle for social justice have welded us into a union of irreconcilable enemies of fascism. We do not mince words. We call the enemy by his name, and our enemy is fascist barbarism. We make this point perfectly clear. We call the militarists warmongers; the murderers, killers; the fibbers, liars; the law-breakers, criminals. We act, help to explain what is taking place, so the whole world may know. We agitate, accuse, expose the rapine and injustice being done in fascist Germany, and the wide world has heard our voice. Heinrich Mann's book Hate expresses our feelings and shows what a trenchant weapon we have against our enemy, the weapon of literature.

Taking the lead in the struggle against German fascism, our union has, in the past five years, rallied to its ranks almost all the German emigrant writers. Today it has a membership of two hundred German writers who have found asylum,

chiefly in France, the U.S.S.R., England, the U.S.A. and, until the Munich betrayal, Czechoslovakia. Our union is a political organization, but our members, while varying in political views, share a common interest in preserving the German literary heritage, representing free German literature abroad and defending our own interests as literary craftsmen.

We are united in the struggle for the emancipation of Germany from fascist oppression. Devotion to this struggle is the sole essential condition for membership. To this end we have allied ourselves with progressive forces waging the struggle for peace and democracy in all countries of

he world

With these aims, our small group began its work five years ago in emigration in Paris. Once a week we assembled to discuss current problems of literature and politics. Very soon we restored contacts with old friends anxious to join the anti-fascist movement in literature. We made speeches, organized mass meetings and raised our voice in protest against every new aggression of the fascist rulers. The friends we found in France—the late Paul Vaillant-Couturier, André Malraux, Jean Richard Bloch, Louis Aragon and the unforgettable Henri Barbusse—proved staunch supporters.

Our activities have brought us in touch with all the progressive cultural movements of our time. We sent a delegation to the Soviet Writers Congress in 1934, and followed the proceedings with the greatest interest, particularly the words of our friend, the late Maxim Gorky. In the autumn of 1934 our union sent leading members to make speeches, read poetry and agitate among the miners fighting for freedom in the Saar Basin. An exhibition of German and world books which are banned in fascist Germany was arranged there.

Our society grew with the affiliation of branch groups which sprang up in

many countries around small bands of German emigrant writers. Supported by progressive forces within the countries, these groups kept alive the best traditions of German culture. Ernst Toller, Bruno Frank, Rudolf Olden and others founded a branch in London. In Prague we had a very active society in which were such writers as F. K. Weiskopf, Oscar Maria Graf and Ernst Bloch. A veteran member of the old Union of German Writers, Niko Rost, assembled a small group in Belgium. Bert Brecht formed a center in Denmark. Groups sprang up literally everywhere where German emigrant writers found a refuge: in Holland, Switzerland, Austria (before it became fascist); in South America, the U.S.A. and Mexico.

Many of these branches, however, were weak, and as the first wave of sympathy for the victims of Hitler's tyranny subsided, publishers grew indifferent to us, many of our magazines had to be closed for want of funds, and liberals in the bourgeois world became more calloused. The meager funds which we had saved or scratched together dribbled out, and residence permits were harder to get. Need, that constant companion of the revolutionary emigrant, became our everpresent shadow. Then it was that we learned what solidarity with the Soviet Union means. Many of our friends had found asylum there, among them Theodore Plivier, Bela Balacz, Willi Bredel, Friedrich Wolf, Erich Weinert and Johannes Becher, and from the Soviet Union came aid in the form of orders for articles, and parcels of food. These parcels, a good twenty-five pounds each, were gifts of Soviet writers to the German emigrant

The First International Congress of Writers in Defense of Culture, held in Paris in 1935, was an occasion upon which we German emigrants made closer ties with the writers of all countries, especially with those of France. This congress heard with great interest the stirring address of our leader Heinrich Mann and sat spellbound when onto the platform came a masked man who delivered an eloquent anti-fascist speech and vanished without disclosing his identity. The mystery was a matter of necessity, for the few of us who had arranged for his speech knew him to be a talented writer then doing underground revolutionary work in Germany.

"Face Germany" has been our slogan and from the very beginning we have maintained underground contacts with friends in Germany. At every meeting we make a collection to assist those in need there or those in concentration camps. "Give to help the imprisoned writers" has been hurled as a challenge at every meeting when we gather, a group of almost penniless emigrants. The hat is nevertheless passed around, and 25- or 30-centime coins are dropped in to swell our mutual aid funds. Large mass meetings of course are our main source of revenue, and during the past five years we have collected many thousand francs to help our friends in fascist Germany.

Some of this money has been used to print books and magazines distributed in Germany. The first number of our magazine, Schriftsteller (The Writer) was a sensation. Published in a format the exact duplicate of the magazine published by Goebbels' society of fascist writers, it was sent out in hundreds of copies to writers living in Germany. A copy soon came into the hands of Goebbels, and for a whole week he gave us free advertising in a daily radio broadcast warning the public against the journal with "the Bolshevik trade-mark." Letters we received from Germany told how people literally fought to get hold of a copy, and they reveal how widely it was circulated, to the chagrin of the fascists.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out and the fascist intervention ensued, many of our members laid down their pens and shouldered a rifle, marching off to fight for the Spanish republic. Fifteen members served as officers, commissars and doctors; five were on non-combatant service in the rear; seven worked as correspondents in Republican Spain. Albert Mueller, historian of art, and one of our members. was killed on the Madrid front. Others were wounded, among them Hans Marchwitza and Gustav Regler, who was hit by the same shell that took the life of the great writer Mathe Zalka-General Lukacz. Another of our members, Ludwig Renn, who had fought in Spain from the beginning of the Civil War, went to the United States after a year and a half at the front. Such outstanding representatives of German culture as Ernst Bush, Erich Weinert, Anna Zeghers, Ernst Toller and Egon Erwin Kisch visited us at the battle front in Spain, inspiring us with speeches and revolutionary songs.

One of the fruits of our participation in the defense of Republican Spain has been the bocks written by our members about Spain: First Battle, by Rede Uze, short stories by Egon Erwin Kisch, Spanish Diaries, by Rudolf Leonard, and numerous articles and poems. My book, The Abandoned Brigade, as well as The History of the Eleventh Brigade, by Willi Bredel, and a novel by Gustav Regler, are to appear in 1939. Our books about Spain give expression to the great feeling of solidarity which



Gustav Regler, German anti-fascist writer, on the front in Spain. Regler was a political commissar of the International Brigade

impelled us to take part in the war for the defense of the Spanish people. We are making this our anniversary year and organizing many meetings in this connection. In December we organized a "Week of German Culture" in Paris with mass meetings addressed by prominent speakers and concerts of the works of Schumann, Mozart and other classic German composers like Mendelsohn, unheard in anti-semite Germany today. We recall in these anniversary days the source from which we sprang, with roots deep in our native German soil. We recall that many of those present five years ago, when our Union was formed abroad, were also present twenty-five years before 1933, as initiators of the original Union of German Writers. Among them were Anna Seghers, Gustav Regler, and the author of this article.

In looking back on the quarter century which our Union of German Writers lived through in Germany, we note that it was marked by Kaiser Wilhelm's imperialism, the revolution of 1918, the Weimar Republic and the inception of fascist terror. In pre-Hitler Germany the progressive elements in our union waged a courageous struggle to unite the writers against the rising tide of fascism within the country. The Berlin group was most spirited in its attack, and one memorable meeting that merits recollection took place a few days before the fascist-instigated Reichstag fire. The chief speaker was the late Karl Ossietski, awarded the Nobel Prize

and robbed of the financial award which goes with it by the fascists in whose prisons he died.

At that time he had just been released for a brief respite from jail and, in addressing the meeting, he proclaimed his credo: "The banner which I follow is not black, red and gold. No, I uphold the red banner of Socialism."

Soon after we reformed our organization abroad, uniting in one strong body many writers who disagreed on certain political issues, Goebbels dissolved those remnants who sought to maintain the old Union of German Writers within Germany, and with about thirty thousand "unified" pen pushers who have no right to represent German literature he formed the "Imperial Union of Writers."

The question of whether we emigrant authors or those scribblers of Goebbels represent the real literature written today in the German language cannot be answered by examining statistics on publications in Germany, where our names never appear on publishers' lists.

The question is answered quite differently outside Germany. To this tribunal of world public opinion let us turn.

During the year 1937, the most recent date for which there are publishing statistics, we find that seventy-nine books translated from the German for publication outside Germany were written by members of the army of writers in the "Imperial Union." During this same

period eighty-five books, the majority of books translated from German for the world book market, were written by members of our Union of German Writers abroad. In the eyes of the world our band of two hundred anti-fascist writers are 166 times more productive than the thirty thousand who wield the pen for the Hitler propaganda machine!

Outnumbered a hundred-and-fifty to one, we nevertheless attained this mark against greater odds than mere numbers. The "Imperial Union" has a monopoly on literary production in Germany and is backed to the hilt by the fascist state. By cajolery and threats pressure was put on foreign publishers. Contracts were concluded with established bourgeois concerns whereby their books were to be published in Germany solely on condition that abroad they issue the books of certain "unified" authors, dear to the fascists. This closed for us the doors of many bourgeois publishers who did not want to imperil their business relations with Germany over some "undesirable" emigrant writer. With the rise of reaction in Czechoslovakia and Switzerland and the fall of Austria, our publishing outlets were still more restricted. Courage alone braced our hearts and a faith in our just cause that neither need nor persecution could break.

"A banker might reason somehow: it's better to be 'unified' than to be banished; but never a writer," said Heinrich Mann, whose leadership we all respect and whose words tell the secret of our success as writers. "Literature," he says, "can become great only where the spirit becomes a power that neither renounces its strength nor grovels before hostile forces.

When the fascists burned our books on a public bonfire in 1933, together with those of such great writers as Heine, Voltaire, Marx, Engels, Tolstoy, Romain Rolland and Maxim Gorky, progressive minds everywhere realized that the Hitler regime was turning Germany toward medieval barbarism and had renounced genuine world culture. So great was the public indignation throughout the civilized world that such figures as Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, Harold Laski, Lord Marley, Lady Asquith, and

many other prominent individuals came forth in defense of us and the masterpieces of world literature defamed by the fascists. With their support we were able, by the first anniversary of this outrage, to open the German Free Public Library in Paris. Here are assembled all those works banned and burned in fascist Germany. With the opening of this library, an occasion for mass meetings held in Paris, London, New York, Prague and Boston, we have gained a staunch ally. Ever since then our union has worked in the closest collaboration with the German Free Public

At the Paris World Fair in 1937 we were able to organize an exhibit of the best works produced by the German people, from Lessing and Goethe, from Heine and Berne, to Thomas and Heinrich Mann. Thousands of German visitors who saw this exhibit went away with a revived realization of the great contributions the German people have made to world culture. We have taken part in the world conferences for Defense of Peace and in the congress of the Pen Clubs. At the New York world exposition to be held this year we look forward again to exhibiting in our own pavilion the genuine cultural achievements of the German people.

Though we have now lived as emigrants for more than five years, we have never felt alone. Friends and supporters have come forth everywhere, but of them all we feel a special regard for Romain Rol-

land. He gave the best expression to what many feel. In an early letter to the Union of German Writers, he wrote: "Yes, I am with you, with you who are the best part of Germany, with the oppressed, the exiled but invincible Ger-

many that, suffering, continues to struggle. "The Germany which we respect and

love is in your camp.

"Goethe and Beethoven are with you; Lessing and Marx as well.

"They are your companions in the struggle you wage.

"I doubt not you will win.

"Believe that your example will not be lost and in the future you will be remembered with respect.

"As a brother I grip your hand."

ALFRED KANTOROVICH

# BOOKOSHELF

### Soviet Views of Some American Books

A number of works by outstanding American authors, published in Russian translation last year, aroused considerable interest. Though penned by writers of diverse styles, all these books had one distinctive feature in commoneach was permeated with great social content, each unfolded before the reader a significant phase of life under capital-

First among them are works of two of the greatest contemporary writers of America: Ernest Hemingway's To Have and Have Not and Upton Sinclair's

The Flivver King.

Though these authors differ so greatly in style, themes and background, their names are both associated by the Soviet reader with the conception of coura-geous anti-fascist fighters, representatives of America's progressive intel-

The Soviet reader was acquainted with Ernest Hemingway's Death in the Ajternoon, Fiesta and Farewell to Arms, and interest in his new book was enhanced ed by the author's active support of the Spanish people in its heroic struggle. It is but natural that in his latest novel, which the author had reworked considerably shortly before publication, Soviet critics sought new motifs, new elements, reflecting the influence of Hemingway's stay in Spain.
"And indeed," wrote Ivan Anisimov

in the magazine October, "this book, which repeats a great deal of what had become typically Hemingway, has elements quite unusual for Hemingway." What then is the new element that So-

viet critics discern in the writer?
"To Have and Have Not," B. Pesis stated in the magazine Literaturnoye

Obozrenie (Literary Review), "is a book written sharply, without any compromise. Those features were evident also in Hemingway's previous books, but there they were the sharp outspoken confession of an artist whose consciousness had been maimed by the war. . . . In To Have and Have Not, Hemingway shows his former heroes in their proper perspective-neither their intellectual nor moral maladjustment can conceal the fact that they belong to the most despicable species of parasites. Hemingway exposes them relentlessly and thoroughly, but this comes as a sort of by-product, the author himself being all absorbed by the new subject which he has perceived the irreconcilability of the two worlds, the world of the 'haves' and the world of the 'have-nots.'

"Hemingway's spirit had returned from the World War sick, solitary and mistrustful. Today Hemingway demands from man hope, struggle and knowledge of how to struggle... To Have and Have Not deals with the fight for human happiness, for a living, for the right to labor honestly. So far Hemingway draws the first conclusion that the most impor-

tant rule in this battle is:
"'One man alone ain't got. No man alone now... No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody f-chance...'.'

These words, uttered by the dying

Harry Morgan in To Have and Have Not, are emphasized by other critics as re-flecting Hemingway's new attitude to

capitalist reality.

"These words," noted the reviewer in the Leningrad Literaturny Sovremennik (Literary Contemporary) "are significant not only for Harry Morgan. They are still more significant for Ernest Hemingway.

The author says of his hero: 'It has taken him a long time to get it out and it had taken him all his life to learn it.' We may add for the author: the unchecked offensive of world fascism and the bloody events in Spain, where he spent a whole year, were needed for him

to write these words.'

The yacht parade, written with great descriptive power, is considered by the reviewer of Literaturnoye Obozrenie as "the first example of sharp social satire in Hemingway's work. Hemingway's laconic style which in the past often resolved itself into merely glossing over, into half tones, now serves the author for a deep-etched portrayal of social contradictions, a portrayal done with masterly economy. Now Hemingway is speaking out unreservedly."

Hemingway lays bare the insignificance and moral desolation of bourgeois intellectuals, in particular the writers,

the critic points out.

"Laughton is simply impotent as a Anisimov notes in October. "In writer, his attempts to find some fresh topic Richard Gordon seeks to make capital of such subjects as a strike at a textile mill. And here the author, with a few lashing strokes, emphasizes Gordon's creative desolation, his inability to write truthfully, the aimlessness of his writing. In this circle of bourgeois esthetes nothing genuine and striking could be conceived. Depicting the animal state to which men sink in the saloons of Key West, the author of the novel approaches the question of the 'logic' of capitalism, which cynically mocks people, depriving them of human dignity. Against the background of this somber tragedy of the World War veterans the banality and despicable hypocrisy of the Laughtons stands out in striking relief."

A number of shortcomings were noted by the critics. Pesis points out a certain disjoint dness and incompleteness. "More determination and consistency might have been expected of Hemingway, particularly if one takes into account the fact that his book was published after his return from Spain, where Hemingway had shown himself a true friend of the Spanish people," Anisimov states.

"The book is scattered and there is a lack of cohesion in certain episodes, an absence of logical connection between the end and the beginning, and too sketchy a presentation of some scenes very significant from the standpoint of ideas."

(Literaturnoye Obozrenie.)

While noting the shortcomings of the novel the critics see in it a sign of a serious change in the writer. "Hemingway's new book shows the writer in mo-

tion, it is not a mere repetition, but an important revaluation of all concepts. To Have and Have Not presents so much that is new for Hemingway, so many fresh and unusual elements, that it should be considered a very significant work, marking an essential stage in the development of the writer." (Anisimov.) "To Have and Have Not undoubtedly marks a turning point. We may expect from Hemingway remarkable new works, works of struggle." (Pesis.)

While Hemingway's novel has been appraised by the critics as marking a new stage in the writer's creative activity. The Flivver King, the sixtieth book by Upton Sinclair, is artistically and ideologically rooted in its author's literary

past.

The publication of *The Flivver King* between covers (it first appeared in Russian in *International Literature*) coincided with the celebration of Sinclair's sixtieth birthday. This coincidence contributed to interest in the book. Together with other recent works like *No Pasaran*, *The Flivver King* shows that "Sinclair has not lost his militant spirit and energy. . . . Its hard-hitting, telling blows, its deepgoing exposure, make this, perhaps, the best of Sinclair's writings." (Anisimov, *October*.)

The legend about Ford as a great benefactor of mankind never gained credence in the Soviet Union. In his interview with H. G. Wells on July 23, 1934, Comrade Stalin gave the following appraisal of Ford:

"You speak about Ford. Of course, he is a capable organizer of production but aren't you aware of his attitude to the working class, don't you know how many workers he throws out into the streets for nothing? A capitalist is shackled to profit, and no force can wrest him from it. Capitalism will be destroyed not by the 'organizers' of production, not by the technical intelligentsia, but by the working class...."

The Soviet people regard Ford as an exploiter of the working class, true, an exploiter who at times attempts hypocritically to drape himself in the toga of social demagogy, but who at other times cynically states: "Gratitude? In business there can be no gratitude. People work for money."

Sinclair's book gives the Soviet reader a wealth of material for comparing Soviet reality with that of Ford's America. It is no matter of chance that reviews of the book can be found not only in the literary magazines or the capital's newspapers, but also in scores of other newspa-

pers.

Of particular interest is the review published in the daily newspaper issued

at the Stalin Auto Plant.

The author of the review, a technician in the heat and power department, is a member of the plant's literary club. After outlining in brief the contents of the book he writes: "Our Soviet worker who enjoys the right to work has no conception of what unemployment is like. There is none and shall not be any in our country....

"On reading this book the first and strongest feeling that imbues one is a burning hatred towards the capitalist system where people of the type of Ford can exist. The second feeling is that of joy for our country, for the fact that the working people in our country know no unemployment, hunger or want."

Pointing out in conclusion that the "book reads very easily and is comprehensible to any worker in the plant," the author of the review proposes that the plant's newspaper publish excerpts from the book and then arrange a readers' conference, together with the plant library.

Critics are unanimous in praise of the book, but at the same time attention

is drawn to shortcomings.

"The figure of Ford himself is not always presented in a light sufficiently convincing," states N. Zalipskaya in Literaturnoye Obozrenie. "For example, the attempt to explain by his naivete Ford's trip to Europe to stop the war - this explanation does not hold water. Sinclair even praises the courage and altruism of the automobile magnate who played at being Don Quixote, while for Ford the trip was primarily a matter of publicity. Sinclair considers Ford's naivete on the war question tantamount to the naivete of his worker Ebner, that is, the average American worker. But exactly a year later this democratic feudal lord very easily changed his opinion about the war as a mass psychosis and hastily began mass production of shell cases, trucks for the war, and submarines. Sinclair did not consider it necessary to explain this 'psychological jump' and limited himself to a mere recital of the events. There is a certain superficiality in the way Sinclair has drawn the figure of Ford.

A different view was voiced by Anisi-

mov (October):

"Sinclair depicts as a sorry farce Ford's publicity trip to Europe during the imperialist war—the notorious 'peace ship' undertaking. Ford wished to don the guise of a pacifist to raise his influence among the workers. The 'flivver king' is portrayed realistically by Sinclair as an

out-and-out reactionary, as one of the most irreconcilable enemies of the workers, as a clever and cynical demagogue."

Among other American books translated into Russian special mention should be made of two books written by Negroes about Negroes. We refer to Uncle Tom's Children by gifted young Richard Wright. and Let Me Live, the autobiography by Angelo Herndon. Both volumes have been warmly received by the Soviet public. Just as The Flivver King vividly brings to the Soviet reader the world of merciless profit, the world of sharp social contrasts and brute exploitation of man by man. so do these two books realistically portray life which to the Soviet reader sounds like a chimera, an absurd and savage survival of primeval times-race hatred and the shadow of Jim Crow.

The very concepts of race and national persecution are alien to the Soviet man. Herein is one of the main reasons for the heightened interest of the Soviet reader in both books, written by authors fighting for the freedom and equality of

the Negro masses.

"The essential feature of Wright's book is that it counterposes to the subservient Uncle Tom the new generation of Negroes who do not wish to carry the fetters of their agelong slavery." (A. Yelistratova, Pravda.) From this viewpoint, the reviewer says, Wright's book is a new phenomenon in American literature "where some superficial bourgeois writers were attracted by the exotic color of Negro life, while others, beginning with Harriet Beecher Stowe and Longfellow, had penned works infused with sincere but futile sympathy and compassion for the Negroes." As distinct from these writers, "Richard Wright does not complain, he accuses."

This point is also stressed by other reviewers. "Wright describes the of the second generation of Negroes since their emancipation from slavery," writes M. Maryamov in the Kharkov Rabochy (Worker). "How unlike that suffering, submissive Tom portrayed by Harriet Beecher Stowe are his progenyl They do not resemble him, but not because less suffering has fallen to their lot. No, slavery actually exists. The Negro is outside the pale of the law; he can be made the subject of derision and torture, he can be killed—everything goes. . . . Poverty and illness constantly stalk near the hovels where Uncle Tom's children live. Starvation and want press no easier than slavery. But where has gone that submissiveness of Tom who knelt to the 'will of the lord'? Uncle Tom's children are a generation of fighters.

The author faced the pitfall of allowing

the sharp political tendency of his book to affect its artistic merits. But the young writer did not cede artistic truth. "Wright's stories," Yelistratova emphasizes, "are free from the schematic. The author has succeeded in permeating his work with a wealth of Negro folklore, lyricism and humor. For its political and literary import Uncle Tom's Children belongs among the best works of contemporary literature."

Angelo Herndon's autobiography is organically akin to Wright's book, for Herndon is one of those grandsons of Uncle Tom who, together with their white comrades, are resolutely struggling for the rights of their people. Herndon's book is a stirring human document.

Soviet critics frequently draw a parallel between Herndon and one of the most vivid characters in Soviet literature, Pavel Korchagin, hero of the famous novel How the Steel Was Tempered, by the late Nikolai Ostrovsky.

John Brown, Leonard Ehrlich's book (published in the Russian edition of International Literature), takes us back to the past. It revives memories of that heroic figure in the history of the American people, champion of the emancipation of the Negroes, whose fame has been immortalized in tales. poems and songs.

It was about the outstanding role of this heroic farmer, this man of boundless courage and hardihood, that Marx wrote to Engels soon after the hanging of Brown, on January 11, 1860: "In my opinion the greatest events in the world at present are—on the one hand the American movement of the slaves, which began with the death of Brown, and on the other hand—the movement of the serfs in Russia."

"In Ehrlich's portrayal, the sixty-year-old, greyhaired patriarch, surrounded by his seven sons, is the personification of strength and majesty," L. Fradkin wrote in Pravda. "He is a true son of the American people, a living embodiment of their democratic traditions, a descendant of those pioneers who in grim toil and suffering had uprooted forests and tilled virgin soil. Brown... bears the traits of his fathers and forefathers: plebeian simplicity, industry, stern honesty, persistence and straightforwardness; he is a man whose word does not deviate from his deed.

"The author of the novel, in his admiration for his hero, frequently shuts his eyes to his weak points, however.

"Brown was a hero capable of great exploits, of personal self-sacrifice, but he was fond of power, and counterposed himself to his comrades, dominated them by his will, and, concealing from them the aims of the movement, sought to lead them into the battle blindfolded. He took no care to agitate among the Negroes, to explain to them his aims, and this predetermined the failure of the uprising."

## CHEREOSNICLE

#### THEATER

Having more than once in the past won acclaim with productions of the works of the great Jewish humorist Sholom Aleichem, the State Jewish Theater in Moscow has again added an outstanding event to the capital's present season by bringing to the stage one of the immortal characters of that profoundly talented writer.

Tevye the Milkman is a deeply human and moving story of a pre-revolutionary Jewish small town, remote, backward, restricted. But, as B. Rozanov points out in Izvestia, even in this stifling environment "there were people who did not walk with bent backs... in spite of the crookedness of little lanes and abundance of blind alleys, there were not a few men

who clearly saw the wide and straightroads leading to the triumph of the rev-

olutionary cause. "

The events of the 1905 Revolution stir even the backwaters of Tevye's provincial town and bring disturbing changes into the life of the poor and hard-working Tevyewith his one cow and his milk route. His daughters refuse to marry the rich husbands found for them by the local matchmaker: one girl goes off to join her revolutionary student in Siberia; another falls in love with a Russian worker, a man of another nationality.

worker, a man of another nationality. People's Artist S. M. Mikhoels "rises to Shakespearian heights" in presenting the internal conflict of Sholom Aleichem's quaint and humorous hero, Rozanov points out. Tevye in the end triumphs over the traditions that bind



A scene from "Tevye the Milkman" at the State Jewish Theater



Petruchio and Katharina in "The Taming of the Shrew" at the Central Theater of the Red Army

him; he recognizes that his daughters are right. One of the most powerful episodes in the play, according to reviewers, is the scene in which Tevye with kind-hearted artifice persuades his wife that the eldest daughter should marry the poor student of her choice and not a rich butcher.

Victor Fink in Literaturnaya Gazeta predicts that the latest hit of the Jewish Theater will take a permanent and high place in the Soviet repertoire.

Interest aroused by the Red Army Theater's unusual production of Taming of the Shrew, in which regisseur A. D. Popov finds in Shakespeare's classic a story of two strong-willed persons taught mutual respect by their love for each other, found expression in a discussion evening at the All-Russian Theatrical Society.

Explaining why the Red Army Theater chose the play, Popov pointed out that its task was not only to present plays concerned with the defense of the country, but to serve Red Army men and commanders with a well-rounded repertoire. He voiced his conviction that the traditional manner of staging Tam'ng of the Shrew, where Katharina is a shrew indeed almost to the final scene, missed the deep underlying truth of the play.

Criticism of the production included regret at the omission of the prologue and epilogue, and at the liberties taken with Shakespeare's text, but the speakers acknowledged the regisseur's handling of the play to be interesting and worthy of attention.

Pages would be needed to deal properly with the vigorous theatrical life throughout the Soviet Union, in capitals of Union and autonomous republics, in industrial towns and collective farm villages. Recent premieres are typical.

The famous Rustaveli Theater of Tbilisi, capital of Soviet Georgia, has for the first time added a Russian classic to its repertoire with Ostrovsky's Guilty Though Guiltless. According to the reviewer in Literaturnaya Gazeta, the marked flair for dramatic presentation which is characteristic of the Rustaveli troupe has very happy results in bringing out the Russian playwright's story of people crushed by the unjust social environment of tsarist Russia. Action is swift and the pit of sentimentality is avoided.

Another noteworthy first night recently was Vishnevsky's Optimistic Tragedy, familiar to Soviet Theater Festival visitors of former years, in the Russian Dramatic Theater of Ioshkar-Ola, capital

of the Marii autonomous republic in the central European part of the U.S.S.R. Under the direction of B. Volodarsky, the production showed the rising capabilities of the troupe.

With a considerable number of experienced actors as a nucleus, the theater's company has recently been strengthened by the addition of younger members, graduates of Soviet theater schools.

The Chelyabinsk Dramatic Theater has

The Chelyabinsk Dramatic Theater has scored a success with its staging of Nikolai Pogodin's The Man W. th the Gun. A Pravda critic selects the mass scenes for special praise as devoid of sterotyped staging.

The Taming of the Shrew has been staged by the Rostov Dramatic Theater this season, as well as The Man With the Gun. Both plays new to the theater's repertoire drew praise from critics and the public.

Recent press items illustrate how rapidly theater facilities are being brought within reach of wider circles of the population. By a decision of the All-Union Committee on Arts, 1939 is to see the opening of six new theaters in coalmining regions all the way from the Maritime Province in the Far East to Tula Province near Moscow.

Another interesting item was a letter on the needs and tasks of collective and state farm theaters recently published. Written by Honored Artist A. Polyakov, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R., it deals concretely with shortcomings in the work of the troupes which are called upon to serve hundreds upon hundreds of rural districts and emphasizes the importance of their productions for the countryside.

Majestic Mount Ararat looks down upon the beautiful new State Theater of Opera and Ballet being built in Yerevan, capital of Soviet Armenia. The theater contains a summer hall, seating two thousand, and a winter hall seating one thousand five hundred. Both halls are semi-circular and for special occasions can be joined, forming one large circular auditorium with the stage in the center. The stage is as large as that of Moscow's famous Bolshoi Theater, and its mechanisms occupy a three-story "hold" underneath the stage. A vast panorama of the Ararat valley, with its flourishing collective farm fields and vineyards, opens up from the roof-garden atop the new theater.

Favorable comment upon E. Mindlin's new play on Cervantes was voiced at

a reading in the Writers' Club in Moscow recently....Prominent Moscow musicians, actors of the Moscow Maly Theater, the Symphony Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. and other stage artists and ensembles are performing regularly at the theater opened last year for workers of the Molotov Auto Plant, Gorky... Theaters of Kiev, Kharkov, Tbilisi, Tomsk, Ufa, Orjonikidze, Barnaul, Petrozavodsk (Karelia), Tambov and Lipetsk were represented at a three-day conference in Moscow on Gorky's play, The Lower Depths. Among the reports delivered at the conference were those of Peoples Actors of the U.S.S.R. I. M. Moskvin and M. M. Tarkhanov of the Gorky Moscow Art Theater, on their work in the role of Luke; Professor S. D. Balukhaty, on the history of the play; Professor I. M. Nusimov on the character of Luke; Professor B. V. Neiman on the language of the play and Honored Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. F. N. Kaverin on the regisseur's work on the play.

#### BOOKS AND WRITERS

Preparations for the jubilee of Taras Shevchenko, famous Ukrainian poet, are going forward rapidly, with publishing houses announcing new editions, poets engaged in translating his verses into Russian and other languages of the U.S.S.R., and musicians setting his songs to music.

The translators' section of the Union of Soviet Writers is arranging a series of special meetings at which translators working on Shevchenko read excerpts from their finished production and get the benefit of criticism.

A meeting of the Shevchenko Jubilee Committee was held in the Writers' Club, Moscow, under the chairmanship of Alexei Tolstoy, to help establish closer contact between the poets engaged in such translation and the music circles of the capital.

In Kiev, the Union of Soviet Writers of the Ukraine is preparing to issue an album for the jubilee entitled Writers of the U.S.R.—to Taras Shevchenko, containing both prose and verse appreciations. The Shevchenko museum in the Ukrainian capital is putting out a special series of photo albums.

A request to Soviet authors to write more books for Red Army men was contained in a recent interview in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, in which the head of the Military Publishing House of the Peoples Commissariat of Defense described plans for a new series of books to be call-



P. Antipova, 85-year old collective farmer, leads a folk song chorus in Gorky Province

ed The Red Army Man's Library. Among the Soviet authors whose works will be republished in the series are Nikolai Ostrovsky, Alexei Tolstoy, Pyotr Pavlenko, A. Fadeyev, Dmitri Furmanov, Mikhail Sholokhov and others.

Soviet press and public have been paying honor to a revolutionary poet and writer, friend and associate of Hertzen in the publication of the famous Polar Star and The Bell, N. P. Ogarev, who was born one hundred and twenty-five

Tsarist censors and subservient literary historians had emasculated the memory of Ogarev, depicting him as a dreamy, lyric poet with his eyes on the glories of the past. His work as revolutionary writer and editor was sedulously glossed over.

In reality he was, like Hertzen, a revolutionary democrat who fought for the victory of the people over tsarism. He died in exile in London in 1877. From 1863 on his very name was expunged from all legally printed literature and it was only in 1904 that a two-volume edition of his poetry was published. Even then his true significance was concealed and it was only after 1917 that his services to progress and democracy won recognition.

G. Baidukov's Across the Pole to America, A. Lyapidevsky's Chelyuskinites, P. G. Golovin's How I Became a Flyer and I. Kaitanov's My Jumps (printed in part in No. 2 and No. 4 of International Literature for 1938) have been published by the Children's Publishing House. Baidukov was recently accepted into the Union of Soviet Writers.

Commemoration days devoted to Pushkin and his works are to be held annually beginning with 1939, according to a plan adopted by the Gorky Institute of World Literature. The first year's program, on February 10 and 11, consists of a series of six discussion-lectures, open to the public, on various phases of the poet's work, including his influence on Russian music. The Moscow Conservatory and the Art Theater are cooperating in the programs.

A special session of the Azerbaijan branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. was held in Baku to mark the hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Mirza Fatali Akhundov, "Molière of Azerbaijan."

The house in Sochi where lived Ni-kolai Ostrovsky, author of How the Steel Was Tempered, who died two years ago, is now a museum. Visitors come from Yakutia, Minsk, Tashkent, Vladivostok.... An exhibition on Ostrovsky's life and work, arranged in the Palace of Culture of the Gorbunov plant, Moscow, by the State Literary Museum, is drawing many visitors daily.

Outstanding poets of the Ukraine are at work on a one-volume edition of the collected works of Heinrich Heine in the Ukrainian language. . . . The Gorky Museum in Moscow is preparing an album, The Life and Work of A. M. Gorky. Characteristic of the museum's popularity is the fact that recently more than two thousand visitors were recorded in two

days.

#### MUSIC

The significance of the recent Festival of Soviet Music for composers, performers and the music-loving public becomes clearer in retrospect than during the progress of the country-wide concerts.

This festival, the second of its kind, focused attention, as it were, on the considerable number of really outstanding works which have been written by Soviet musicians—one may cite Kha-chaturyan's Poem to Stalin, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony and string quartet, Myaskovsky's violin concerto, Prokofiev's concertos for 'cello and piano and other compositions.

Concert audiences during the two weeks of the festival received a well-rounded impression of the vigor and fullness of Soviet musical life, from the field of symphony to that of jazz music, from popular songs to opera. Moreover, the number of concerts held throughout the country served to bring the attention of much wider circles than usual to the recent work of Soviet composers.

In Moscow alone, for example, there

In Moscow alone, for example, there were thirty-four major concerts at the Conservatory, the House of Trade Unions and the House of Scientists, while forty-seven concerts were held in Moscow clubs for factory workers and employees.

Critics devoted considerable attention to Serge Prokofiev, who was represented during the festival by his 'cello and piano concertos, a string quartet and a suite, Songs of Our Days, for chorus and orchestra. Stressing the positive sides of the composer's characteristic tendency to experiment and search for novelties of form, M. Pekelis in Izvestia congratulated him on having in the main passed through a period "of dry and lifeless musical invention." Although traces of this manner are still noticeable in the 'cello concerto, especially

the second movement, the reviewer finds that it contains "many interesting features: the original and expressively lyric theme of the first movement, which is again recalled in the variations, the stern and manly theme of the third movement—all these are significant elements of the work; however, they seem to be deliberately cut short and do not receive their appropriate development."

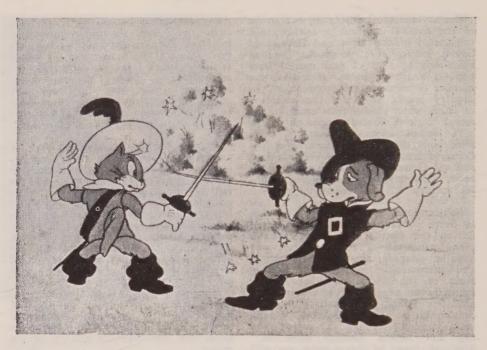
Poem to Stalin, a monumental work for orchestra and chorus by the young Armenian composer, Aram Khachaturyan, was the sensation of the closing days of the festival. Both critics and concert-goers acclaimed its emotional power and joyful lyricism, particularly in the choral passages. Khachaturyan's musical language, permeated with Armenian and Georgian folk melody, is vivid and colorful, but musicians pointed out certain structural looseness in his work, written in sonata form.

A young Georgian, Vano Muradeli, was represented at the festival by his first major composition, a symphony dedicated to the memory of Sergei Kirov. Reviewers noted the fine dramatic quality of his music.

Shaporin's first symphony and excerpts



The State Kalmyk Chorus, Ballet and Orchestra of Folk Instruments gives performances on vessels of the North Caspian fishing fleet



Still from "The Three Musketeers," new Soviet animated cartoon

from an opera, The Decembrists, were performed at the festival.

A feature of the festival programs was the prominent place occupied by new Soviet operas, presented in excerpts for the most part. Kabalevsky's *The Master From Clamsy*, Lev Knipper's *Maria*, Shisbov's *Peter I* and many others might be mentioned. Vocal music, both solo and choral,

also figured largely.

One of the most significant facts about the festival is the country-wide interest and participation. It was not only in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and other cultural centers that the programs drew crowded houses. Far-away Buryat-Mongolia reports the first concert of its newly-established symphony orchestra at Ulan-Ude, the capital; besides residents of the city, two hundred collective farmers were guests. The Odessa philharmonic, besides its programs in the city, arranged musical evenings at machine and tractor stations and collective farm clubs in the province.

Stalinabad, Ashkhabad and other capitals of national republics featured the productions not only of Soviet composers of all-Union fame, but also the works of young musicians of local repute.

#### CINEMA

Filming of On His Own, second part of the Maxim Gorky trilogy, has drawn to a close.

Alyosha Lyarsky, Moscow schoolboy, still plays the part of the young Alyosha Peshkov, who was later to become the famous writer. V. O. Massalitinova once more endows the role of the grandmother with profound wisdom of life and kindheartedness.

Based on Gorky's autobiographical writings, the second film, like the first, is faithful to the writer's text, faithful to his deep and sympathetic interest in people and their struggle, his deep love of nature. After his difficult childhood, in which he saw so much harshness and cruelty, the young Peshkov bids farewell to his grandmother in the closing heartgripping scene and sets out "on his own." The film takes him up to the beginning of the third period of his life, his "university days."

Reviewing the film in *Pravda*, M. Ilyushin declares that Alyosha is depicted as a keen and imaginative youngster. The portrayal, however, does not sufficiently convey the protest against the existing order, that welled up in the boy during those years, the protest that made Gorky the stormy petrel of the Revolution. Although the action in the film is broken up into many episodes, which detracts somewhat from its effectiveness, the critic states that these episodes are very colorful and skillfully drawn.

#### ARCHITECTURE

It was a fitting tribute to the work of Matvei Kazakov as architect and builder that the meeting held to mark the two hundredth anniversary of his birth assembled in the graceful Hall of Columns of the House of Trade Unions, Moscow. This building is one of many in the capital which were put up under the supervision of the great Russian architect, a leading eighteenth century exponent of the clas-

sical style.

Professor V. A. Vesnin, president of the All-Union Academy of Architecture, and I. Y. Bondarenko and G. P. Holtz, architects, addressed the meeting, which was held under the auspices of the Committee on Arts, the Union of Soviet Architects and the Academy of Architecture. In the audience were practicing architects and students, builders, engineers, writers, actors, artists, Stakhanovites from Moscow factories and representatives of public

organizations.

The Soviet Union honors Kazakov as an architect whose work embodies the creative genius of the Russian people, Professor Vesnin pointed out. More than fifty of the eighteenth century architect's buildings are still standing in Moscow, among them the building in the Kremlin which is now the government building. Soviet experts point to Kazakov's skill in harmonizing this structure with the ancient walls and palaces that surround

Son of a poor Moscow scrivener, Kazakov had a gift for drawing that won him a place in the only architectural school in Russia of his day. This was the socalled "architectural command" of D. V. Ukhtomsky, considered the father of Russian architectural education. Here Kazakov received the curious degree of "ensign of architecture."

One of his first big commissions was the rebuilding of Tver, now called Kalinin, after the great fire there in 1763. At the head of a brigade of architects, Kazakov planned the whole central part of the city anew, creating an ensemble of three squares united by straight streets.

Friend of that other great Russian architect, Bazhenov, Kazakov worked with him on the monumental plan for rebuilding the Kremlin. But the plan never got further than the model and the laying of one foundation; the whole project had been but a demonstrative device of the Empress Catherine to uphold her prestige at the time of the Russo-Turkish war.

The burning of Moscow at Napoleon's approach in 1812 dealt Kazakov a shock from which he never recovered. He died

in the following year at Ryazan.

#### FOLK ART

A State Museum of Ukrainian Folk Art opened in Kiev reflects the history of Ukrainian folk art from the eighteenth century to the present day. Ceramics and wood carvings are an important part of the exhibits. Among the displays are paintings. of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. . . . Among recent amateur art olympiads have been a twelve-day city-wide event in Ryazan, an olympiad of Saratov railwaymen and one of Red Army men in Tashkent.... More than six hundred took part in the Ryazan olympiad, seven hundred in Saratov. . . Folk Art Center has been opened in Odessa to train and guide leaders and members of dramatics and music circles. . . . Rubenstein's opera, The Demon, was recently staged by the opera circle of the Novocherkassk Scientists' Club. . . . An exhibition of the folk art of Ossetia, the Caucasus, has opened in the city of Orjonikidze. More than one hundred canvases and sculptures, vividly reflecting the Socialist culture of the Ossetian people, are on display.

#### ARTS AND THE RED ARMY

Interesting figures on the "patronage" over the Red Army by workers of the arts are contained in an article in Pravda by A. Pashkovsky. Pashkovsky points out that in 1937 9,600 concerts were given for Red Army men by the concert artists who have taken patronage over them. Certain artists have paid special attention to this work, one having given concerts for Red Army units throughout the Far East for four years successively. Others devote special attention to aiding Red Army amateur art circles. Writers, playwrights, actors, musicians, composers-all take part.

The idea of cultural patronage over the Red Army and Red Navy was born during the Civil War. In 1920, on a mandate made out to K. S. Stanislavsky and V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, a brigade of actors of the Art Theater and the Bolshoi Opera, led by I. M. Moskvin, set out to perform

for units on the southern front.

The V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko Theater set the example for long-distance tours in 1935 when it visited the Black Sea Fleet and presented its premiere of *Traviata* aboard a cruiser. The Moscow Art Theater and the Bolshoi have taken a leading part in such tours. The Symphony Orchestra of the Radio Committee of the U.S.S.R., led by conductor A. Gauk, visited the Far East in 1936.

The growth of this work is characterized by a few figures: 1935, 7,950 "patronage" performances of various kinds for Red Army units; 1936, 10,075; 1937, 11,960.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

ERICH WEINERT. German anti-fascist writer who fought in the International Brigade defending the Spanish republic from the fascists.

GIOVANNI GERMANETTO. Italian anti-fascist writer, author of

The Barber of Seville. Now lives in the U.S.S.R.

YAO HSUEH-YIN. Contributor to Literature at the Front, organ of the All-Chinese Association of Writers. Jack Chen, young Chinese artist and journalist, collaborated on the translation of Chabancheh Makai.

SERGEI MIKHALKOV. Soviet children's poet. His Comrade Tower

was published in No. 7 of International Literature for 1938.

LEONID SOBOLEV. Well known Soviet writer, author of the novel *Overhauling*.

AARON GURSTEIN. A Soviet critic and authority on Jewish litera-

ture.

L. BAT and A. DEUTSCH. Soviet journalists.

ALFRED KANTOROVICH. German anti-fascist writer, secretary of the Union of German Writers. His latest book, *The Abandoned Brigade*, is to appear soon.

### To our readers

The editors of International Literature would like to know what the readers

think of the magazine.

In this period, more than ever before, with menacing attacks upon world culture, *International Literature* feels the gravity and significance of its role as an organ devoted to the cultural interests of the advanced and progressive people throughout the world. It wishes to fill this role as effectively as possible. For that reason it calls upon its readers for this cooperation.

There may be some features you prefer to others. We would like to know what they are. You will help the work of the magazine if you tell us.

If the magazine has disappointed you in any way please let us know.

Please tell us what type of stories you have liked, whether you object to serialization of material, what type of articles you have valued, what aspects of international and Soviet cultural life you would like to have chronicled in the magazine; and how you would like to have the chronicle material presented.

Do you find the present form of the magazine attractive and readable? Recently, at the request of some of our readers, we introduced illustrated covers and a two-column page. Are there other changes of format readers would like to see introduced? Are you satisfied with the quality of the translations?

Address letters to editor of International Literature, Box 527, Moscow, U.S.S.R.