THE CONFESSIONS OF A LITTLE MAN DURING GREAT DAYS

BY
LEONID
ANDREYE'

THE CONFESSIONS OF A LITTLE MAN DURING GREAT DAYS

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN OF

LEONID ANDREYEV

BY R. S. TOWNSEND

ALFRED A. KNOPF
NEW YORK MCMXVII

Printed in Great Britain
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

THE CONFESSIONS OF A LITTLE MAN DURING GREAT DAYS

CONFESSIONS OF A LITTLE MAN DURING GREAT DAYS

PART I

St Petersburgh,
28th August 1914.

To speak with a clear conscience as one does at confession, even now I can't make out why I was in such a panic on that day. War is war, we all know; no one greets its coming with delight; still, it is a simple matter, when all is said and done; we have been through it before. The Japanese War is still fresh in our memories. At present, for example, when bloody battles are being fought, I have no sense of fear, and live as I always do. I go about my work, see my friends, indulge in a theatre or a picture-show, and were it not for my

wife's brother, Pavel, being at the war, I could almost forget, on occasions, the terrible events that are happening.

Of course, I don't deny that there's a restlessness and anxiety at bottom. I can't exactly describe the sensation; it's a kind of gnawing despair that comes over one mostly in the morning at breakfast. You no sooner open your paper (I take in two besides *Kopeika*) than you are brought back to the horrors that are happening over there to those poor Belgians, to their houses and children, and you feel as though some one had poured cold water over you, and turned you out naked on a frosty winter's day. Still, this sensation has no relation to fear; it's merely a feeling of human pity for those in distress.

As I was saying, on that first day I was ridiculously frightened. It makes me blush to think of it. I need only mention

that on the 2nd August I paid no less than *thirty roubles* for a miserable conveyance to take us from Shuvalov, where we had been staying, back to town, and in less than five days I was taking the whole of my family back again by train, and that we actually remained in the country until the 25th August in the most peaceful manner possible. What a state we were in, to be sure! My wife, unkempt, unwashed, dazed and distraught, jolted along with the children in the cart, while I, the head of the family, marched in the road by their side, feeling as though doomsday were behind us and we must run, run without looking back, without stopping to take breath, not merely to St Petersburgh, but to the very ends of the earth.

All the shops along the road were selling bread in abundance, and I had thrust some stupid crusts into my pocket in case

of need. Prudence and foresight—under any circumstances!

The weather was glorious at the time, but we had no faith even in the weather. It seemed to us that it was bound to pour with rain, or that a sudden snow-storm would descend upon us although it was August, and we should perish on the way! How horribly we worried our driver!

Another disgraceful circumstance comes to my mind. I picked some blue little bell flower on the wayside and gave it to Lidotchka, my little girl, chaffing her a bit as I did so. It was a natural act, being fond of my children as I am, especially of Lidotchka, but it pains me to recall the thought that occurred to me at the time. I congratulated myself on not having lost my head like other people, since there I was picking flowers, joking and trying to

cheer up my family. An extraordinary act of heroism!

With what a sense of relief did we tumble into the house! Beside ourselves with joy as we lighted the candles (the electric light was disconnected owing to our absence) and seated ourselves at the table round the samovar.

The most astonishing thing is that I don't know exactly when the absurd panic left me, nor how it happened that five days later we were going calmly back again to the country, not the least bit ashamed. However, half the carriage was full of heroes like ourselves. I wonder what we must have thought of each other? I don't suppose we bothered, though; we were too engrossed in our journey, telling each other without the least embarrassment what we had been foolish enough to pay for our conveyances!

To do myself a little justice, I was largely infected by my wife's unspeakable horror. At any rate, that is how I explain our "flight from Egypt" to our friends. The explanation, however, does not fully satisfy my own conscience. Had I been a coward, or what might be called an effeminate person, there would have been nothing more to say, but, far from being a coward, I am a man of some courage; a convulsion took place in my brain, and the world was turned upside down. What a fool I must have looked as I strutted along beside the cart, picking flowers into the bargain! And what a smart fellow I considered myself, to have got that cart to save my family!

I wonder what made me go like that?

I know now, to be sure. The vision the war must have presented to me was so appalling and strange as to bear no resem-

blance to a war at all. I can't recall that vision, no matter how hard I try. It must have seemed like the crack of doom, that the end of the world had come and the destruction of all living things. I must have heard a tremendous crash of thunder that cleft the earth in two, and we had to fly for our very lives.

I remember one thing, however, I was not in the least afraid of the Germans or their Kaiser. I never thought of them at all, in fact. It must have seemed plain to any fool that they couldn't come flying to Shuvalov in a day.

And why should I have been afraid of the Germans, anyway? Weren't they human beings like ourselves, as much afraid of us as we of them?

We were both in the same boat, as it were. It was as if some antediluvian animals were close at our heels, crushing

the earth with their tremendous paws. . . . But, no, that doesn't describe it. What is an animal? Who is afraid of an animal nowadays? It was something quite different. Some convulsion must have taken place in my brain as to make the world seem upside down—literally upside down—so that I seemed to be walking not on my feet, but on hands like an acrobat.

I remember, too, how everything astonished me on the road that day; the most ordinary little thing with no claim to the remarkable whatever. For instance, a man would be coming down the road, and as I watched him moving his legs, I thought, "Fancy that, he's walking!" Or a hen would run out of some yard, or a little kitten would sit on a patch of weeds, and again I wonder, "A kitten!" Or a "Good morning" said to some tradesman would make me marvel that he replied "Good

morning," and not some unintelligible *bla, bla!* We saw the streets in the town—again a surprise. And the policeman, too, standing at the corner, and one we knew into the bargain, brought fresh exclamations of surprise, as though at the words from Wilhelm "War is declared" kittens and policemen and streets should have disappeared into the infernal regions, and the human tongue changed to the unintelligible roar of the beasts. What wild ideas a panic will create, to be sure!

It seems ridiculous to me now, and I'm ashamed to think of it. Another incident, besides the one of Lidotchka's flower, bothers my conscience. Whether I am a coward or not, after what I have stated above, is open to conjecture, but of my honesty I have always been assured. Here in my diary, alone with God and my own conscience, I may even say more;

I am not only honest, but remarkably so, and am naturally proud of the fact, but, however, people know what I am. And still, notwithstanding my honesty and decency, on the 2nd August, accursed day, I left our cook, Annisia, behind in Shuvalov, though she shed tears and entreated me to take her.

Even this incident produces nothing but a smile now. What could have happened to the silly thing there? And what did happen, in point of fact? She appeared home a couple of days later, having managed to conceal herself on a train, bringing back a jar of pickled cucumbers. That day, of course, the thing had an ugly look about it. There was I running away to save my family from some impending disaster, and leaving the poor girl behind, because there wasn't room enough for her in the cart, or because I

had to leave some one behind to look after my property! Under no circumstances did I forget my property!

It is consoling to think that, though Annisia cried and begged to be taken, she bore us no grudge for having left her. Foolish woman!

29th August.

I write this diary in the evenings on the pretext of working on some papers I sometimes bring home from the office. My wife is a wonderful creature in every respect; she is a woman in a thousand, good-natured, intelligent and responsive, still, even a man's nearest and dearest hinder him from expressing his thoughts as he would like. To secure freedom of thought and expression, I must be perfectly sure that no one will read what I write. Apart from the fact that one

doesn't like to disclose certain things even to those one loves, there are dangers and pitfalls to be avoided that a man less wary than I might fall into. I don't interfere with other people's thoughts, and I don't want anyone to interfere with me.

I am going to make a great confession. Notwithstanding the general misery I am a shamelessly happy man! Over there a bloody war is raging, full of horrors, while here, Sashenka, my wife, is bathing the children. She has finished darling little Lidotchka and that rascal Peter, and is doing Jena. How sweetly she is smiling to herself! When she has put the children to bed she will go about her own affairs, such as getting things ready for to-morrow, which will be Sunday, or she will play something on the piano, perhaps.

Yesterday we had a postcard from her brother Pavel, so Sashenka will be happy

and contented for a week. Of course, we can't tell what may happen, but if we don't look too far ahead, our life may be said to be a truly happy one. Sashenka's piano is a hired one; Sashenka is very fond of music, and was to have entered the conservatoire. To economise in war-time she offered to give up the piano, but I wouldn't hear of it. Five roubles a month is a paltry sum for which to deprive the household of the pleasure of hearing her play. And Lidotchka, too, is beginning to learn. She shows remarkable talent for a child of six and a half.

Yes, I am truly a happy man. I will mention some of the reasons of my happiness here, though I would not talk of them to a living soul. For one thing, I am forty-five years old, and *no matter what happens* I will never under any circumstances be called to the colours. This is

a thing it would hardly be safe to say to others; it might lead to so much misunderstanding. I have to be somewhat of a humbug at times and pretend, as all the rest do, that if I were younger and stronger and so on, I should most certainly join as a volunteer, but at bottom I can't help rejoicing, that without in any way breaking the law, I can stop at home and not have to expose myself to some silly bullet.

I confess, too, that when the men in our office stand round the map loudly maintaining that this is a great war, essential to some great purpose, I make no attempt to argue with them. What would be the use of any little objection I might make? They would only laugh at or make sport of me, as they did of Vasia, the bookkeeper, a day or two ago, almost reducing the poor man to tears. Besides, a few

indiscreet words in the mood people are in now might be harmful. No one knows how they might be interpreted.

Still, in spite of what the men in our office say, and the newspapers too, I am firmly convinced that I do not like this war at all. Greater minds than mine, such as those of scholars, politicians, or writers, may see some sense in this ugly brawl, but my small mind fails to see any good in it whatever. When I imagine myself standing in some clear field at the front, men aiming at me with rifle and gun with intent to kill—aiming, straining, bursting to hit me—I find it ridiculous; it seems like some silly practical joke. Where is the particular spot they would find so tempting to fire at? Is it my forehead, my chest, or my stomach? But no matter how much I touch myself, nor look myself up and down, I can discover

nothing remarkable about me. I am a man, just an ordinary man, and no one but a fool would want to fire at me. I had some excuse to talk of silly bullets! And when my imagination carries me a little further, and I see a German on the other side of the field feeling his stomach and thinking what a fool I am, it is more than absurd, it becomes disgusting.

Let us suppose even that the German was not feeling his stomach, but aiming with every intent to kill me, does he know why he wants to do it? It's quite possible that I'm a fool and a coward; we won't argue about that, but supposing I'm not the only one? Supposing there are thousands, a hundred thousand men in St Petersburgh like me, who keep diaries and rejoice that they will never be called up nor be killed, and who argue in exactly the same way as I do?

I admit there is nothing to be proud of in the fact of being afraid of one's skin; I hardly expect to receive the St George Cross for it; I wasn't made for the St George Cross, and I never set up to be a hero of the Malakhov Hill. I have never harmed anyone in my life, and I have a perfect right to demand that no one shall harm me by shooting me down like a sparrow. I didn't want the war. Wilhelm did not send his ambassadors to me to find out if I wanted to fight; he just said "fight," and that's all. Needless to say, I love my country, Russia, and should any fool or madman come to attack it, I should be bound to defend it, regardless of my skin. Were I of military age (and this in all honesty) I should not evade my duties under pretext of medical unfitness, or take advantage of influence and hide behind Auntie's skirts in the rear. I should be

in my place at the front with the others, ready to kill or be killed.

This is as plain as broad daylight; but it so happens that I am forty-five and have a perfect right to stay where I am, to think as I choose, to be a coward or a fool, if I like. It is the hand of fate! Instead of being Ilya Petrovitch Dementev, living in Post Office Street in St Petersburgh, I might have been a Belgian, a Maeterlinck; I might have perished beneath a German shell, but I am Ilya Petrovitch, forty-five years old, and do live in Post Office Street in St Petersburgh, where no German shell can reach me, and I am happy in the consciousness thereof.

All sorts of things might have been. Instead of working in our particular bank, which is as sound as any banking house can well be, and likely to withstand any war, I might have been working in some

wretched little business that would have collapsed with the first breath of war, as so many of them have done, and I might have been left homeless with my Lidotchka, nothing but a lottery ticket in my pocket and five hundred roubles in the savings bank—a pleasant prospect indeed! Or I might have been a Pole or a Jew in Galicia and lain as carrion in the dust, or dangling from a tree. No man escapes his fate!

It is useless, however, to speculate on things that are not, and no matter how sorry I might feel for the Belgians or for our own soldiers in the trenches, I can't help rejoicing that I am what I am. God! to think that instead of my dear Sashenka I might have had some wretched woman for a wife, of whom there are so many in the world! That, too, would have been fate; as it is, I can't help gloating over the happiness that is mine.

Sashenka has just been playing the Belgian National Anthem. What beautiful music it is! How exhilarating, and what love of freedom and country it expresses! The tears came into my eyes as I listened. A feeling of pity for the poor Belgians came over me. Their beautiful anthem and their love of their native land availed them nothing; they are being crushed by the confounded Germans.

Yes, no matter what the politicians in our office may say, I can never agree that this war is a good war. How absurd to think of it! People are being crushed and butchered, yet they maintain that there is no harm in it, for when we take Berlin, they argue, justice will be done. What kind of justice, and for whom? What use would justice be to an unfortunate Belgian—a man of my age, let us say? And there must be many men like me.

Sashenka says it's late and time for bed. It's not my fault that after a hard, honest day's work I am well pleased at the prospect of a peaceful night's rest!

PETROGRAD,
Tuesday, 1st September.

This is a great, historic day. The name of St Petersburgh has been changed to Petrograd. Henceforth I shall be a citizen of Petrograd. It will be difficult to get used to the change, though it sounds so well. The men in our office are delighted, but I am sorry to lose familiar old Petersburgh, St Petersburgh, into the bargain. Petrograd makes you feel as though you had been stuck in your chief's waiting-room for a whole day in a new coat. The coat was a good one, no doubt, but you couldn't help regretting the cast-off jacket,

every stain of which reminded you of its lost comfort.

We continue to be victorious. Prussia has been occupied by our troops, and there is a rumour that to-day or to-morrow, we shall take Königsberg. This is becoming serious, indeed! To-day's staff communique says that Lvov and Halitch have fallen, and that the Austrians are completely routed.

I need not conceal what I am going to say. For all that I am a peace-loving man I can't help feeling the glory of it. If there must be a war, of course it is better to beat than be beaten.

How quickly the war has spread! How swift are its fiery footsteps! I am reminded of a fire I once saw in the country when a boy. One house caught fire at first, and in less than an hour every thatched roof in the village was ablaze,

and there seemed no end to the sea of flame.

It would be an interesting study for a moralist to discover what there was in the human soul that found satisfaction in watching a fire. What is it that produces the festive sensation it gives? Is it the alarm bell, the firemen's helmets, or the bustling crowd? I went to a school in a provincial town when I was a boy, and I well remember how we used to run to watch a fire, no matter how far away it was. Workmen would throw down their tools and run, paying no heed to dusty clothes and grimy faces. At the cry of "Fire," men and boys scrambled to the roofs, the iron sheets clanking as they went, and there they stood, arms outstretched, fingers pointing in the direction of the fire, in the attitudes of marshals on monuments. Even at school we did

not fail to rush to the windows at sound of the fire brigade, and the masters, too, were not above looking out themselves. And no one thought at all of the poor people whose house was burning.

I confess to a certain feeling of excitement and curiosity at the European conflagration, and wonder how it will change from day to day. I should have preferred peace, of course, and have no sympathy with the continual assertion of the men in our office that we should be proud to be living at a time like the present and going through this war; nevertheless, I cannot help being interested in the war.

Pavel is the only load at my heart. He is treading as a conqueror on Prussian soil so far, but who knows what may happen to-morrow? Where would I have been had I been, say, twenty or thirty, not forty-five? The thought damps your

ardour somewhat. It would be as well to remember it when your enthusiasm gets the better of you.

Sunday, 20th September.

It is over a fortnight since we have heard any news of Pavel. From his last letter or two we gathered that he was somewhere in Prussia where the Samsonov Corps was so completely smashed up. Sashenka is horribly uneasy, and added to that, her mother comes to us almost every day, and the sight of the poor old lady's grief upsets the whole household. She is here now, having come straight from Mass. Sashenka is giving her coffee in the dining-room as I write here. Besides Pavel, Sashenka's mother has another son, Nikolai, who is married and has a family. The old lady lives with them, having no means of her own, but either because

Nikolai is unsympathetic, or by the very nature of things, she is drawn more towards her daughter, and gives us the benefit of every little trouble and worry she has. I am not complaining of the harmless old lady, but I must confess I do find her visits rather trying at times. One day it's tears and complaints about Nikolai, who doesn't get on very well with his wife, another it's Pavel. There is always something to upset Sashenka and bring discord into our otherwise happy family.

I am very fond of Pavel myself, and can't think without a shudder that at this moment, as I write his name, he may be wounded or even killed. I awoke in the middle of last night and could not go to sleep again for two absurd, conflicting sensations that tormented me. I couldn't think of Pavel as living, yet I had no ground for thinking him dead. I didn't know

whether to pity him exposed to danger in the trenches, or to mourn for him dead.

At the present moment it seems to me that he is alive, but sooner or later he is bound to be killed in this horrible war that is more like some wholesale butchery than the triumph of justice. I never argue with the men in our office when they declare that the war will be over in November. Their view seems to me too optimistic; we can hardly expect peace before Christmas at least. Another four months are before us, and with two hundred thousand killed every month, what earthly chance can Pavel have?

Being a man I can look the inevitable in the face with fortitude, and will bear the blow with dignity should it befall us, but how about mother and Sashenka? The poor old lady is ready to die at the merest breath of misfortune.

When I lay awake last night I wondered how I would break the news to mother in the event of the calamity happening. What could I say to her? My heart began to beat violently at the very thought. To pronounce the word that is to change completely the aspect of the world for another, to make it something different to what it was a moment ago, is not a pleasant task. To be responsible for the first burst of grief was truly terrifying, particularly as I did not know what form it would take. Would it produce a flood of tears, one heart-rending cry, or sudden death?

I watched mother in the dining-room before I came away, as she raised a rusk to her mouth. "I wonder what would happen to that rusk if I were to say that Pavel was killed?" I thought. And a vivid picture rose up in my mind of how that unfortunate rusk would roll to the

floor; I even saw the very spot where it would lie, and how Annisia would pick it up when she swept the room, and eat it, little witting how it came there.

The autumn climate of Petrograd is evidently having a bad effect on us all. The children are very fractious. Even my darling Lidotchka so far forgot her usually angelic ways and had a fight with Peter.

The same Evening.

I have just returned from a three hours' walk along the river and the Nevsky. Our northern capital is indeed a beautiful city, so grand and magnificent! There are many people who compare it unfavourably with Moscow. Even the men in our office are often to be heard in this time-worn dispute, but I hold my tongue according to my usual habit. What is the use of attempting to convince the blind,

or men who refuse to see? The man who irritates me most of all in this respect is Zvoliansky, a Pole, who thinks himself competent to judge because he happened to have spent six months studying in Paris. To see the way he turns up his nose! I should like to set the fool to build a city like ours!

I happened to reach the Nevsky at the moment when the lights went up as by magic, and turned the grey twilight into deep blue. It is really wonderful that no matter what the weather, be it raining or snowing, it seems to change with the lighting of the lamps, to some enchanted weather of its own. I mixed with the crowd with a sense of pleasure; it was denser and more animated than usual; I moved along with it and soon found myself at the Admiralty without having noticed the way I had come. We seemed

to be treading on air. I admired, as I walked, the numberless lights of green, white and mauve. Tramcars streamed past, so many that one lost count of their green and red lamps. Motors swept over the smooth bridge, their electric lamps looking like enormous shining eyes ; electric advertisements flashed in the sky ; and the crowd moved along noisily, onward, ever onward ; cabs darted in and out among the traffic ; a carriage with spirited horses flew past, taking some one to an evening party, no doubt. . . . It is not for me to describe the glories of this scene !

On the embankment huge sombre palaces rose high ; the light of a passing steamer twinkled here and there on the dark surface of the water ; the Peter-Paul Fortress could just be discernible with its memorials of our Tsars. Its doleful bell sounded like the voice of time. . . . Silent

couples sat on the round stone seats as Sashenka and I used to sit together before we were married, when I would put my hand into her warm little muff on pretext of feeling cold. For some time I stood watching the new Palace bridge in course of construction, thinking how that would add to the beauty of our wonderful city.

Wending my way home through the crowd I thought of how remote the horrible war was from us, and how, in spite of its fury, it was powerless to effect human life and all the creations of man. How firm and solid everything seemed! Trams, cabs, even the couples on the seats, and everything connected with our daily life, seemed to be cast in steel. I was more than ever ashamed of my early panic. What had we to fear, indeed!

There are rumours that Berlin is practically in darkness, and that the Germans

are starving. As a Russian, I suppose I ought to rejoice in their misfortunes, since they are to blame for this savage war, but . . . again I am going to say something I wouldn't breathe in our office. I am sorry for the Germans, if Berlin is even a little bit like our Petrograd. How awfully cold those poor, adventurous Teutons must be now, and how they must curse the day that they embarked upon this confounded war. "What is the good of it," they must think, "if for all our crime and slaughter, we have nothing but darkness and cold?" I can't understand the sense of people killing each other!

I must go to bed. By the way, I had nearly forgotten—I suppose it's because I'm not used to keeping a diary that I forget the most essential things—we had a post-card from Pavel. He is alive and

well. It came at the moment when mother was wrapping herself up in her shawls in the hall to go home. Both she and Sashenka were very much cheered. I couldn't help sharing in their happiness. But how frail human happiness is!

25th September.

There is something very low about a crowd, it seems to me. One moment it is ready to curse the war and its cruelties, the next to gloat over it with a morbid pleasure. It may be due to our successes in Galicia, or perhaps to the general excitement over military engagements, but to my mind there is too much noise and rejoicing, both in the papers as well as in our office. No one denies that the Belgians are heroes and that King Albert is an exalted personality, worthy of his crown, but since the throats of these heroes are

being cut wholesale, what is there to rejoice about? I hold my tongue in my usual manner, of course, but their attitude is amazing. However, I couldn't resist the popular enthusiasm, and paid my tribute to it by buying a portrait of King Albert. It doesn't mean, though, that I am carried away by the war. The sight of staring head-lines such as "Yaraslav Ablaze," "Sandomir in Flames," sends a sharp pain through my brain as if some foreign matter had got into it. What an imagination a man must have to visualise the picture of "Yaraslav Ablaze," or "Sandomir in Flames"! Unconsciously you find yourself thanking your stars that Petrograd is so far removed from those horrors.

27th September.

After great deliberation I have decided to let Andrei Vasilevitch read this diary,

if he is fortunate enough to return from the war, that is. He was never a man to agree with my views; let him judge in this case whether I am right or wrong. I found it distinctly disagreeable to read my remarks about my age and personal happiness. It seems mean to write about these things frankly merely for one's own benefit, as though one had something to conceal. I am not mean and have nothing to conceal. I merely did not wish to thrust my opinions on other people. I have nothing to hide; my life is open to any man.

Peter got an attack of quinsy and we had great difficulty in getting a doctor. Our own doctor is at the war; those who have not gone away are so busy at the military hospitals that it is next to impossible to get hold of them. I ought to rejoice, according to some people, that

my sick child is deprived of medical aid, and to find some lofty purpose in the fact, but I can't. I shall always have my own views on the subject.

30th September.

In horror and trepidation have I been following the German siege of Antwerp. Thousands of heavy guns are shelling the town; the ruins are in flames; the people have fled; only detachments of soldiers are to be seen in the deserted streets. "The sky over Antwerp is ablaze," my paper says, and I try to imagine the significance of the phrase. Zeppelins fly in this flaming sky and drop bombs. What fiends in men's shapes must they be to fly over this hell, over the fires, explosions, and roofs, and rain down more destruction on this blazing mass of ruins?

Worked on by the horrors I read in the

newspapers I flew over blazing Antwerp in the night, and despite my unbounded terror, I could not help being envious of those dauntless, fearless men. Did they belong to a different species that they were not afraid and had no pity? Why did their hands not tremble and their hearts not stop still? What kind of eyes must they have to peer over the sides of their Zeppelins (or whatever it is that they do) at the burning, flaming town beneath, and calculate and take aim?

The whole thing seems so much like a fairy tale that I can hardly believe it is true. If it is true, what use am I in the world—a sheep lagging behind the species? It is only in my sleep that I can fly; in my waking moments I look about for a spot where I can hide my head. A long time before the war, one of our dirigibles flew over the Nevsky, and we all rushed

out of the office to admire it. How brilliant it looked beneath the rays of the sun as it soared away in the dizzy heights! The people in the streets, too, craned their necks to have a sight of it, a tipsy civil servant among them, a regulation cap on his head, and the neck of a bottle peeping out of his pocket. He half closed his eyes as he looked, seeming to measure the distance, and said aloud, "It needs a sober man for that job!" He ran away, and the rest of us laughed, but his words come back to me now, when I try to picture the blazing sky over Antwerp. Is a sober or a drunken man needed for that job? I refuse to accept the new type that flies through the clouds dropping inflammable bombs! He is the new despot who despises and oppresses all men alike. We have had enough of his kind—ruthless, mérciless men who would as soon crack a man's

head as an egg. I would sooner be as I am, a lagging sheep, than like one of them. Let them butcher away if they will, I offer my own throat, if it pleases them!

My thoughts keep on reverting to Antwerp. It must be like our Petrograd, spacious and beautiful; its numerous waters reflect the flames now, and blood flows in the darkness of the night. And the sky is ablaze! God! what appalling things are going on in this world!

11th October.

Antwerp has fallen.

15th October.

I don't know whether it is due to the bad weather and the darkness, and all this muddle, but of late I have been very depressed. I take no pleasure in anything and have a constant feeling of nausea in the pit of the stomach. You start the day

each morning with a horrible scramble for a tramcar—there seem more people than ever, in spite of the war, or fewer cars, perhaps—and you come out of the crush bruised and shaken as though you'd been through some drunken brawl. The persistent collectors, men and women alike, with their flags and flowers, do not increase the general pleasantness. Particularly insolent in this respect are the boys and girls whose parents would do much better to keep them at home, than let them drag themselves about the streets.

I am as prepared as any man to take my share of the burden; it is a pleasure to me, in so far as my limited means will allow, and I object to this distrust of my feelings of duty and compassion, and the indecency with which these people search your eyes to demand your purse. People seem afraid to look each other square in

the face as they walk along the streets, but in reality every one takes a stealthy glance to see if his neighbour has the symbol of the day. Even I can't resist doing so. It is more than the scrutiny of my purse that I mind, it is the scrutiny of my soul that I object to. My soul is my own; I am its master. The State can dispose of my body, if it wills, in so far as the law permits, but no one, not Peter the Great himself, has the right of probing into my soul and introducing his laws there, no matter how excellent they may be. People have tampered with my soul too much of late, using it as freely as a public road.

To-day, for instance, I had a wild argument with Sasha. I have always considered myself a Liberal, and was rather proud of the fact. Every intelligent man ought to be a Liberal. Nations are all alike to me. I make no difference between

a German, a Frenchman, or even a Jew. For the past two months, however, the papers, the fellows in the office, and every one, has been trying to impress upon me that I ought to hate the Germans. Sasha even said to me to-day in the most brutal manner, "You must be mean if you can love the Germans now!"

"How do you know I love them?" I demanded. "With my principles I can't hate anyone, no matter who it is."

She laughed.

"Principles, indeed! We should hear a different tale if Pavel had been your brother and not mine! I wonder mother can bear to come here, seeing how much you love her son?"

Then with a brutality of which I should not have thought her capable, she called me a coward and a traitor, and declared that I was glad that my age prevented me from

going to the war. And this, after all the talks we had had when she had seemed to agree with me, and after the way she had been concerned about my digestion but a day or two ago! A fine soldier I should make with my poor digestion and my palpitations.

I didn't say a word the whole evening to show my resentment, and won't speak for a day or two to come; but I fear it will have but little effect.

The war is beginning to get on one's nerves; one can't escape it for a day. I left off reading the papers, but that proved too much for me; I couldn't keep it up for long. The papers are full of sensations, and the men in our office are for ever disputing and arguing round the maps. Horrible! I would go right away if I could afford it. There must be some spot in the world where one would be free from

the war. Living as one is amidst the general folly, it is practically impossible to preserve one's own individuality, and save one's soul from corruption. I didn't want the war, as I said before! I loathe it for all its "significance." Why should I be compelled to think and read about its horrors every day of my life?

I am not a heartless blackguard. I have my sympathies and sense of decency —I say this in all modesty—and I suffer agonies at these unbearable horrors. The killing of thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands, is bad enough, but the fiendish way in which it is done, the deafening noise and the fire, surpasses all understanding. Before death comes to release a man he is driven mad a thousand times by all their devilish inventions and surprises! There is not much use in living in Post Office Street, far removed from the sight of a

gun, when the newspapers, and photographs, and information from people spare me none of the horrors!

What good does my suffering do to anyone? I don't care what people might say to this, but if I could bewitch or hypnotise myself to get this war out of my head, I would do so without the smallest hesitation. Since I am not fighting, my torments are of no use to any one. I don't see why I should lose my sleep and thereby get too ill to do my work!

How sad it is that Sasha doesn't understand it! If she gave the matter a single thought she would see that my health was essential to the family, and that if I began to hate the Germans as she and mother do, and went about in fear and trembling over Pavel, it would be a poor look-out for them all. There she is, sleeping with a feeling of injury, while I cannot sleep,

and suffer in my forced loneliness. Ah, Sasha, Sasha! Do you think my lot is an easy one? I envy every dog barking innocently in its back-yard, for it knows nothing of Germans slaughtering Russians and Russians Germans! Oh, for some dark garret in which to hide, as when a boy I used to hide from my stepfather! "How shall I fly from thy spirit?"

I ought to be thankful that from childhood I have never been in the habit of dreaming; sleep does afford me a certain forgetfulness and rest, but no sooner do I wake than an unbearable irritation takes possession of my being and drives me to despair. I am beginning to sleep badly, too: I lie awake straining to catch some sound. Sasha is also uneasy in her sleep; she moans and throws her arms about. I feel quite sorry for her. She is only a woman, after all.

We've had news of Pavel. He tells us that he has been moved to some base, so that we can be easy about him for some time. Mother made me quite angry to-day. She doesn't seem to know what a base means, and keeps on looking for Pavel's name in the casualty lists. It's useless to tell her that the lists are old ones. She won't believe a word I say. The poor old lady must have lost her senses a bit, I think.

This has been a most unpleasant day. Zvoliansky, the Pole in our office, enlarged on the subject of the Turks entering the war. He was stupidly exultant at the prospect of Tsar-Grad [1] and the Straits becoming ours! I couldn't help thinking what a fool he was, and how glad he ought to be that Petrograd still belonged to us without bothering about Tsar-Grad. I got

[1] The Russian for Constantinople.

a picture of some harmless little Turk sitting quietly in Constantinople, Ibragim-Bey by name, perhaps, or Ilya Petrovitch, as we should call him, little dreaming as he pats his round belly that to-morrow he will make a target for our smart troops. I wonder what he would say if he were told?

A small hospital of fifteen beds has been opened in our block of flats, to be supported by the different residents. I shall do my share, of course.

Ah, Sasha, Sasha, dear!

29th October.

Turkey has opened hostilities against Russia. Dear, dear, how the war is spreading!

30th October.

I am at a loss to understand how I came to join the demonstration over Turkey,

with its flags and banners. To think of my dragging myself about the streets singing and shouting "Hurrah" and making a fool of myself generally! What a hero I felt! My heroism has brought on a bad cold, I am afraid. I have a stiff neck to-day and feel shivery without my coat. When I got home I found a large company collected there. It consisted of Nikolai and his wife and the inevitable Kindiakov, a lawyer, Sashenka's friend, Fimotchka, a midwife, and a few others, making seven in all.

To celebrate the occasion I got out four bottles of wine, presented to me by Zvoliansky some time back in August. We were more intoxicated by the news than the wine. We shouted and argued and made sport of Turkey; we sang national anthems, Kindiakov accompanying on the piano. It was three in the

morning when I got to bed, for I had to see Fimotchka home first. It is well that I have had a snooze to-day, otherwise I should have been very irritable.

This is the first time in my life that I have taken part in a national demonstration, and I must confess, it was an interesting experience. I shall never forget it as long as I live. This may seem absurd to the more experienced, but what interested me the most was, that no matter where we marched, on pavement or road, the traffic stopped to make way for us. And then the flags, the spontaniety of our singing, the fact that police and soldiers saluted us as we passed, gave us a martial air, and made us feel as though we, too, were part of the war—we were the troops for home defence. There were some retired military and naval men among us, and one old fellow, an

admiral, would insist on us marching in time, and when he succeeded in making us do so, now and again, our singing grew more measured and we felt more and more like soldiers on their way to the battlefield. With what a sense of joy did we sing! What faith we had in the invincibility of our strength, and how certain we felt of victory! I don't know whether it was the strangeness of the procession, or the fact that the streets looked different, but despite my enthusiasm, the sense of panic I had felt on the first day came over me again. Distant Turkey and the war itself seemed to have come closer, so close that we could have touched them; we felt their nearness, and the sense of security was gone. It seemed as though the whole structure of our lives would collapse, and we should go down into the abysses of hell. The Turks, again, played

no part in this fear; we despised them too much, and could even afford to pity them for having been duped; our fear was based on some inexplicable cause. Something I saw this morning would perhaps illustrate my meaning. On the way to the office I saw a load of young trees that were meant for planting somewhere, no doubt. Their delicate roots, with the soil clinging to them, were in baskets, but the poor things rocked to and fro on the boards. They must have felt very forlorn and strange, and were wondering where they were going. The new soil may be good for them in time to come, but until they become accustomed to the difference between the old soil and the new, they must feel very insecure.

I don't know whether it was my enthusiasm or my fear that made me shout "Hurrah," but while I shouted with all

my heart in it, I thought, nevertheless, "My God, my God, when is it going to end?" I looked at the drizzling sky, misty and grey . . . the ways of the world are so enigmatical . . . the sky was the same as of old, the houses, those I had known in my boyhood. Where was the difference then, if houses and sky and people were the same? What had happened? I reduced myself to such a state in the end as to wonder whether I had changed personally, and a strong desire came over me to see my own face in the glass as I shouted "Hurrah."

My enthusiasm has gone to-day and my fear too. Nothing on earth would make me open my mouth to shout or to sing. I am filled with a dull aching despair. My God, what is the use of it all? As a good Russian I can't help being pleased at the prospect of the Straits and Tsar-

Grad becoming ours, but my pleasure is not altogether unalloyed. We have got on quite well without Tsar-Grad so far, and what is to happen to my fat little Turk, Ibragim-Bey, who can't escape being killed? I must be sorry for him.

I don't know why I compare myself to that fat little Turk, for I am not fat at all. It seems such a pity that he should be hurt when he never hurt anyone. His blood will rise, of course, for the Turks are a fiery race, but why should he be roused at all? Even the gentlest dog will turn on his master when teased enough. I dislike this war intensely, for all the fine talk of the men in our office.

I was foolish enough to-day to try to explain to Lidotchka something about the war and Turkey. I even pointed Turkey out to her on the map. The little thing didn't understand, of course; she

was more interested in the idea that there was so much water. She made me leave my paper to come and watch her skipping. Skip away, my child, skip away, and rejoice that you are not a Belgian or Polish child, for you would have perished in the flames or been killed by a bomb dropped from the clouds.

How horrible to think that even children are being slaughtered!

2nd November.

There is an alarming rumour that Warsaw has been taken by the Germans. All the men in our office are deeply depressed, and as for Zvoliansky, the Pole, it makes my heart ache to look at him.

There has been a lot of unpleasantness at home, too. Mother has come to live with us for good, owing to a fearful scandal in Nikolai's family about Nikolai's wife

and Kindiakov, the lawyer. Husband and wife have separated. Sasha tells me that Nikolai tried to shoot Kindiakov, but missed aim, fortunately, and the matter was hushed up. Mother happened to spend that night with us, and was consequently spared the disgraceful scene. How people can busy themselves with love and jealousy at a time like the present is more than I can understand. A most disgraceful business! Nikolai has departed for the Caucasus, his wife has gone off with Kindiakov, and we hear that she wants to go on the stage, or something.

We've had no news of Pavel for three weeks, so one can easily imagine the family's mood. Three weeks is not a long time, when one takes into consideration the slowness and uncertainty of the army posts, but mother refuses to consider these things, and depresses us all by her terrible anxiety.

Added to her other misfortunes, the poor old lady is ill at ease and rather afraid of me. The thought of her dependence on us is wounding to her pride. She seems to think she has no right to live with us. When I try to reassure her on Pavel's account by pointing out the uncertainty of the posts, she is over eager to agree with me, yet looking so scared, as though, in some subtle way, I had asked her to leave the house. I rebuked her on one occasion, unable to contain myself. "You really ought to be ashamed to think of me as you do, Mother; you put me in a very awkward position. I am only thinking of your good, and you look upon me as no better than a German straight from Berlin." This only made her more nervous than ever. How ridiculous it is! When I am absent she does nothing but cry, I am told, but when I am at home, she tries

to appear cheerful, and by the way she confuses her words when she is making some joke, one can see what she is really feeling. She has just brought me some coffee, for example, and forgotten the sugar. I hate the old lady's having to wait on me; she can hardly keep up as it is!

The thing, however, that causes me the greatest anxiety, is my dear Sashenka. I don't know what to do with her. This is a subject one can only speak of in a diary. I have mentioned before, I think, that a small hospital has been opened in our block of flats, to be supported by the various inhabitants. It is not the money I grudge, though there is little enough of it, God knows, but with the arrival of the first batch of wounded, Sashenka can't be got away from the place, in her womanly kindness; she is there day and night. She is a staff nurse now, or a probationer,

perhaps, since she has not been through the training, but I think it must be a nurse, though.

It seems that one could raise little objection to such a truly Christian spirit. All our friends admire Sashenka for what she is doing, the soldiers adore her, and she herself finds satisfaction in her work. What objections could there be to raise in such a splendid arrangement? I can do nothing but keep them to myself, for no matter how right I might be, no one would give me the credit of it. I should only be censured by people and annoyed by their distrust. I should gain the reputation of being a hopeless egoist, and a tyrant, who wouldn't allow his wife to work in a hospital. It is certainly difficult for a man to prove his case when people find it to their advantage that a woman should neglect her family to work

for others and help mend the damage that they have caused.

My conscience, however, compels me to say that Sashenka's devotion to the hospital is selfish and wicked to the extreme. It isn't right to give yourself up entirely to charity at the expense of your own home! There is not much virtue in a compassion that devotes itself to some people and neglect others equally as helpless.

Some things a man doesn't like to mention even in a diary. I am unlucky enough to have a bad digestion. It is only by the most careful diet that I can keep well enough to support my family, and Annisia, our cook, gives me such horrible food as to make me quite ill. The digestion of an Ilya Petrovitch is a small matter in face of the horrors of the war, the suffering of the wounded, the destitute and fatherless; it's hardly decent

to mention it. Doctors, I know, look with contempt on such complaints nowadays, yet Ilya Petrovitch is just as much a human being as the rest; he has worked honestly all his life to keep his wife and little ones, and I maintain that his digestion has every claim to attention and care.

I might manage with my scorned digestion somehow or other by starving myself a little, but what can I do with the children? We have three little ones, of whom Lidotchka, the eldest, is only six and a half. (I married late in life.) Our nurse, who acts as housemaid as well, is a most ignorant creature, and is able in good faith to poison or kill a child. She allowed Peter to get his feet wet the other day, and the poor boy had to stay in bed for some time with a high temperature. The youngest child, Jena, too, is not very well; he has lost all appetite and grown

pale and thin. I haven't the remotest idea how to look after children. When I point out their pitiable condition to Sashenka, she tells me to get mother to look after them. As if mother could! She has no more resistance than a feather, and can think of nothing, awake or sleeping, but her Pavel in the trenches. Of course, she could have done it at one time, I admit, but not now; she is too weak. It's not fair to put so much responsibility on the old lady's shoulders. Her efforts are pitiful to see. I don't know whether it was she who started a game with the children the other day, or whether they began it, but they knocked her down (not meaning any harm, of course) and nearly suffocated her like a kitten. When I dragged her out she burst into tears. I, too, was upset at sight of her trembling head and ruffled hair.

Dear, dear! Sashenka is behaving very, very badly! We are not responsible that there is a war. The war has no right to thrust itself among us like a brigand, and lay waste our home. We bear enough trials and sacrifices we have done nothing to deserve. There is no need for us to throw ourselves down for the war to walk over us as the Hindoos throw themselves beneath the chariot wheels of their evil god Juggernaut. I refuse to accept evil gods, I refuse to accept the war for all its "significance." I fail to see the good of it around me, least of all in my own home!

Or must I see good in the fact that the face of my darling Lidotchka is beginning to show signs of sadness? The poor little thing is already trying to exert her little mind in attempts to cheer me when she sees me dull and depressed. Her little hands, too, are trying to be useful by help-

ing to wash up the glasses and to nurse Jena. She herself is badly in need of a nurse.

The cost of living is rising in the most appalling manner. The luxury of a cab or a theatre is not to be thought of. Even a tram fare needs consideration nowadays; one's legs have to serve one in good stead. I am glad of the extra work from the office in real earnest now, and thankful that there is still such work to take home. We were compelled to give up the piano. And the cursed war is only at its beginning; it is only getting into the way of it, so to speak. What horrible deeds men are perpetrating over there! To leave the lower orders out of the question, men of the higher professions, such as scholars, professors, lawyers, are devouring each other like wild beasts; they have grown so fiendish as to lose

every spark of human feeling. What is science and religion worth after that? There was a time when you could rely upon a professor as on a stone wall; you might feel sure that he would not betray nor hurt, nor kill, because he knew and understood things, now he is just as vicious as the rest, and there is no one left to rely on.

I protest against the popular assertion that we are all (myself included) responsible for the war. It's too absurd for argument. I know that some people think that with my ideas I ought to march continually about the streets, neither eating nor drinking, shouting "Stop the war," and snatching rifles from the hands of the soldiers. But I wonder who would listen to me, except the policeman, or where I should find myself, if I carried out their wishes, if not in prison or in a lunatic asylum?

I deny all responsibility for the war, and my suffering is needless and senseless.

. . . . .

I have a small piece of news. Andrei Vasilevitch, the man who is to read my diary, has been decorated with two St George Crosses. Being a friend of Sashenka's she is very proud and pleased, but I wonder if Andrei Vasilevitch himself is proud and pleased?

15th November.

I must relieve my mind about this, come what may. No matter how many cigarettes I buy nowadays, I never seem to have any. No one besides myself smokes at home, so Sasha takes them to her wounded, no doubt. I can't lock up my drawers from her, can I? At the merest hint to-day, she retorted, "You

can go without smoking yourself, but I will take cigarettes to the wounded!" And she looked at me in such an uncanny way. It was not love, but hate I saw reflected in those dear eyes of hers. I grew cold all over, and a feeling of despair settled on my heart. I might have been sitting in the trenches on a damp day and some confounded German aiming at me. I shall buy two thousand cigarettes to-morrow and put them in every visible place to show her that I'm not mean. She ought to have understood that it was not a question of meanness. Ah, Sashenka, Sashenka!

19th November.

I often visit our hospital. It is now being supported by the town, and occupies two stories in our building. I suffer

needless torments by the sight of the wounded—men who have lost an arm or a leg, or their sight. The effect produced after a couple of hours in their presence is indescribable. You feel perfectly unstrung, particularly after the arrival of a batch of "fresh ones," as the nurses call them. I can't help going, or people would think me a brute, so I suffer and conform to public opinion.

A certain reservist, no longer a young man, made a great impression on me. He told me that when he first went out to the front, he resolved not to take life, and to be on the safe side, in a bayonet attack on a German trench he threw away his rifle as they charged forward—a most excellent thing to do it seemed—but when, together with his fellows, he stepped over the fatal barrier, such a feeling of fury came over him, that he dug his teeth

into some German's throat. Now he rages at night, and digs his teeth into his pillow as if it were a German's throat, and there he lies tearing and screaming.

Great God, supposing such a thing were to have happened to me! I was nearly brought to the condition of digging my teeth into some one the other night, when I lay awake thinking of the war and the Germans who had started it; I grew so terrified at the possibilities in me, at Sashenka's empty bed (Sashenka is on night duty at the hospital), at mother's ghostly face, at the futile destruction, that I dressed hastily and went in to Sashenka. (The hospital being in our own building made it an easy thing to do.) Sashenka was not surprised at this nocturnal visit; she just asked me to be quiet, and brought me a cup of tea from somewhere, and smiled. There was

a gentle moaning; the lamps were low, and feeble voices called "Nurse! Nurse!" Sashenka led me over to the man who bites and tears an imaginary German. The poor man, his head completely bandaged, was squeezing his blanket with both hands, "Strangling some one," Sashenka said. She gave him a drink of water, and he seemed to grow quiet after that, and lay with his hands folded as innocently as a child.

I remained in the hospital until daybreak, but I could not go to sleep for a long time when I got home. I wept aloud from sheer pity. The thought of the man's bandaged head and pale hands depressed me deeply.

I wonder if Sashenka was right, after all? Was it meanness that made me regret the cigarettes? My God! I could have gone down on my knees before that

wounded man, and for the pleasure of having him ask me for a cigarette, I could have torn out my own heart! How short a man's memory is!

17th December.

By the same post we received four letters from Pavel. He is alive and well, and in Prussia once more. Needless to say, both mother and Sashenka and I were beside ourselves with joy. How absurd it seems! Pavel might have been killed a hundred times since his last letter, and yet there we were rejoicing over a piece of crumpled paper and a few faint pencil strokes as though Pavel himself stood before us. Among other things, this is what he writes, "What else can I tell you, my dear Sashenka? Everything here is so interesting. You look

at the moving mass of men in the snow and twilight, and think. . . . Snow . . . fields . . . Germany . . . great events . . . a great war . . . and this is the war, and I am part of it. An officer comes back from the firing lines, soaking wet, his coat and hood covered with snow. He takes off his coat and tries to warm himself with a cup of tea, and you think again, 'This then is the great war, and this is the great Russian army!' In the most trifling little act you see something of the passing greatness. The military operations on our front have been slow. The cold and the snow seems to have made everything heavy to move, especially the men. There is not much life in us, wrapped up as we are, and the hardest time is yet to come! I am having tea in the officers' mess just now, in a real glass with a stand. I am writing

this letter, but the telephone may ring at any moment, and everything will change as in a dream. Our battery may have to be moved half a mile to right or left or forward, and then will come digging in the hard, cold soil to have a dug-out ready by night-fall (it is horribly cold in the trenches now), in which we will lie down to sleep, damp and hungry. This is not fiction, but naked fact. Do you know what blood on snow looks like, Sashenka? Like a red water-melon. Isn't it funny?"

In another letter he tells how the men covered themselves with wet straw one night in a thaw, and had to force their way out of it, so hard had it frozen by morning. Poor Pavel! and we rejoiced over his letter!

31st December.

A blizzard has been blowing all day, drifting the snow into every street. Mountains of it have fallen. Walls and cornices and windows are covered with snow. There might not have been a town at all; the houses seemed to be standing in absurd array in the midst of snowy fields. I happened to pass the Isaac Cathedral. The snow had drifted on to pillars and steps. The pillars were so cold that it made one shudder to look at them. Men and women, muffled up, fought their way against the wind; only those who were compelled to, ventured out of doors, the rest kept within. I began to wonder suddenly what it would be like to have no home to go back to, and to be forced to remain in the streets in weather like this. It would be enough

to drive one mad. What is it like in the trenches now?

I have no time for my diary nowadays. I bring home so much work from the office as to leave me hardly any breathing space. And my health, I am sorry to say, is anything but good; I am always tired and sleepy and cold—so cold that I find it hard to keep warm in bed with my two heavy blankets. Our house is a warm one, fortunately.

It is nearly Christmas, and still there is no end to the war. In the squares, where in former years Christmas-trees used to be sold, soldiers are drilling. They help to make things jolly, though. You can't help being drawn to them. I saw a curious sight in the Palace Square the other day, which amused me very much at a first glance. About fifty men were drilling there, and seen from the distance,

they looked as though the sun were shining full on them. The effect was strange, for it was a dull day and the sun had not been out at all. I laughed when I came closer. Every man of them had a red beard, which gave the effect of sunlight. My silly laughter died away, however, when I came closer still, for though the beards were red, the faces were old and pale and drawn; there was no light in the eyes; dull despair was expressed in them. They were reservists, men who had families, no doubt. I learnt afterwards that men with red beards were chosen for some special regiment.

I am trying to earn as much as I possibly can to be able to take Sasha and the children to Finland for a few days at Christmas, if only to get away from the newspapers for a bit. It would do Sasha good to get a rest from the hospital, and

I, too, am tired. The rooms seem so gloomy, as though we were going blind. We can hardly distinguish each other's pale faces in the gloom. I am very, very tired.

Monday, 4th January.

Pavel has been killed. God help us!

Night.

Pavel, my poor dear! I never made enough of you, not knowing you would die so soon, and now you are no more, and my bitter tears cannot help you! If I could only gaze once more into your dear, grey eyes, hear your hesitating laugh, see your funny little moustache we used to chaff you about so much! But now you are dead. Dead! I can't think that it's true!

My boy, my friend, my defender, my words cannot reach you in the cold earth! If I could only put my arms about you, my poor, lonely boy, and let the warmth of my body pass into yours! And you will never, never know how the war is going to end, and you used to be so keen about it! . . . Pavel, Pavel! . . .

PART II

18th January.

It was Petrov, a volunteer and friend of Pavel's, who informed me about his death. To spare his mother and Sashenka a sudden shock, Pavel must have arranged with his friend to write to my office address in case of need, so that I should be the one to break the terrible news to his nearest and dearest. I shall never forget the awful moment when I tore open the envelope marked "On active service," and addressed in an unfamiliar hand, a fact which in itself foreboded evil, and read the few lines it contained. . . . The men in our office were very sympathetic, but what did their sympathy matter to

me? I went home at once, wondering, in agony, how I was to break the news to mother and Sashenka. When I reached Sashenka's hospital I turned away again, not daring to go in, and for a couple of hours I paced the streets; I even wandered aimlessly into the Philipov Cafe. I can't remember whether it had been snowing hard that day, but everything seemed deadly white. People and tram-cars seemed weird and strange; the sound of a car bell vibrated painfully through the brain; it seemed as though human beings were drowned in silence, and only the car bells rang and rang like mad. I could not cry at the time; my tears were dried by the thought of Sashenka and mother.

Why need I describe a condition that must be so plain to every one? I must say this, however, I would sooner die a

thousand deaths than have to tell any woman that her son has been killed. Rather than go through the experience a second time, to gaze into trusting, innocent eyes, I would sooner lay hands on myself. Grieved as I am over Pavel's death, I can't help rejoicing that the ordeal is behind me and will never have to be repeated again. Death would be easier.

I need hardly say that we did not go to Finland. Sashenka deserted the hospital during those sad days, and, hiding her own grief, she did all she could to console mother. The old lady is neither dead nor alive. I find it hard to understand her condition. For hours at a time she will cry in some corner, or, with Sashenka, she will go to church to have a Mass said for the dead, or she will wander aimlessly about the rooms, and begin to dust some place where not a speck of dust

is to be seen. She brings me my coffee without any sugar, as usual. Yesterday she disappeared. After an hour and a half had gone by we grew anxious and made a search. We found her locked in the lavatory. She couldn't open the door, and wouldn't give a sign of life, even though she must have heard us calling her. It was only after we had banged and banged at the door that she made a feeble sound. The numbers and numbers of times we had shown her how to lock and unlock that door, and still she couldn't do it. In the end I had to fetch a locksmith to get her out.

When Sashenka reproved her for not answering when she was called the old lady burst into tears. She is more sensitive than ever. Now nurse or Lidotchka have to take her to the lavatory; it isn't safe to let her go alone.

What an awful Christmas this is, to be sure! The days are more or less bearable, but when I go to bed at night I lie in dread of hearing either Sashenka begin to sob in her bed, or mother in the adjoining room. They may lie quiet until daybreak sometimes, and then a bed will begin to shake with sobbing, and so it goes on and on. . . .

The last time we saw Pavel was on the fourth of August when we were in the country. Mother happened to be staying with us at the time, too. His regiment was on its way south to the front from some remote part of Finland, and having to wait about an hour and a half for a change of trains, he rushed over to see us. It was getting dark when he came, and his visit was so unexpected that we completely lost our heads at sight of him. He had on his heavy field kit with a kettle

and bag slung over his shoulder, and was grimy and dusty. He had an unfamiliar smell about him, and looked so strange in his uniform with his closely-cropped hair that was just beginning to grow a little. He had been digging and felling timber, and looked more like a peasant than a soldier. "Wish me luck," he managed to whisper, "we are going to Warsaw."

We couldn't talk properly, and said the silliest things that came into our heads. We were so anxious to make him eat, and he was as hungry as only a soldier can be. We sat out on the verandah, I remember. We examined his rifle in turn; it looked pretty and straight; I can't remember the number of it, though he told us. I can't remember even the expression of his face. I know only that there was something peculiar about it. I wanted to lead him from room to room.

I wanted to say, "Bid good-bye to everything, Pavel, for you may never return, and may never see it again."

He, too, had the same thought, no doubt, but neither of us dared to give expression to it, and we sat on the verandah like strangers, and made no attempt to go into the house at all. When he was forced to leave us, we accompanied him to the station, which was quite close, and we gave him a hasty, affectionate kiss and watched him clamber into the goods-waggon filled with his jolly, laughing comrades. Soon the long train started, the soldiers shouted "Hurrah" and then it was over, and all was still. I can still see that receding red lamp at the back of the train. I remember, too, how quiet and dead the house seemed when we got back to it.

And now Pavel is dead, and we do not

even know where he is buried. I cannot picture the place, no matter how hard I try. I am dazed; I don't understand what is happening; I don't understand the war. I feel only that it crushes us, and there is no salvation for any of us, big or small. My thoughts are all broken; my soul seems like a strange house where I cannot find a comfortable spot to rest in. What was I like before the war? I don't remember.

A huge pair of hands seem to hold me in their grasp, moulding me into some fantastic shape, hands that are too strong for resistance.

30th January.

What a scare we've had to-day! Mother disappeared from the house. She went out early in the morning and was not back by the evening. I was at the office

as usual, and Sashenka was at the hospital. Our fool of a nurse couldn't tell us anything, as she never noticed when the old lady first went out, and hadn't the sense to let either of us know when she missed her. I was naturally alarmed; absent-minded as mother is, she might have been run over by a tram or a motor.

I fetched Sashenka and we began to hunt for her. I telephoned to every one of our friends, and to nearly all the police stations when she herself appeared on the scene. It turned out that she had been to see an old friend, who lived at the end of Vasily Island, and had stayed there until the evening. The idea of disappearing like that without a word!

When Sashenka reproved her she was hurt, and burst into tears, and we had the greatest difficulty in soothing her

afterwards. The old lady has grown more sensitive than ever. We shall have to keep a strict eye on her.

2nd February.

The Germans have now taken to sinking ships. What can one do but shrug one's shoulders at such mad goings-on? They have passed human understanding. The very nature of a submarine must be vicious that it must be for ever destroying. Or is it the closeness and darkness that stupefies and poisons the men in them and makes them bestial? The fellows in our office were disgusted and indignant. I only shrugged my shoulders in perplexity. My face must have been as stupid as that of a German who sinks ships. What could I say?

27th February.

I caught a chill, and have been at home with a bad attack of influenza all the week. I might have enjoyed a good rest in spite of my indisposition had I not devoured so many papers, nor thought so much about the horrors of the times. The things they write, the things that go on, are simply unbearable! One fellow made me furious! And he is considered, by some mistaken idea, as one of our leading writers. To my mind his pernicious article is nothing short of criminal, for all that the men in our office are so enthusiastic about it. The man assures us in the most flowering terms, distorting every fact, that the war will bring every possible kind of good to humanity all over the world—future humanity, that is. At present, he says, we must sacrifice

ourselves for the good of posterity. The war is like a disease that destroys separate cells in the body, at the same time regenerating the whole organism. And the "cells" must be consoled by this idea! Who are these "cells," I should like to ask? I suppose he means me, mother, our poor dead Pavel, the millions of killed and wounded, and the rest who will soon lie buried in the cold earth! An excellent idea!

It seems that we "cells" must not only refrain from protesting, rebelling, but we must not even feel pain; we must submerge ourselves with the most wild rejoicing, for the general good, exulting that we have been of some use! But what if we don't want to exult! We are held responsible just the same. The war will take five, ten millions of us, if it deems necessary, and then will come

the process of healing and happiness. According to the worthy writer's words, the broken remnants of humanity will suddenly repent of their sins, understand certain wonderful truths, and begin to love each other—they will turn into angels, in fact. I should like to take the man who preaches this gospel and have him well flogged while there are still rods in the world with which to do it, and we haven't grown wings! It would be awkward to flog an angel!

From now onwards I am no longer Ilya Petrovitch Dementev, but a "cell," with no right even to think for myself for fear of upsetting the whole show! No, sir, I am not a "cell" but Ilya Petrovitch Dementev, as I always was—a man with all a man's rights! You may ask me as much as you like to die exulting, but I refuse to die dancing! If it should

so happen that you drive me to my grave or to the lunatic asylum, I will die in hatred, cursing those who murdered me. I am not a "cell," and I refuse to become an angel after your pattern! I would much rather be Ilya Petrovitch, the sinner that I am, answerable to God alone for my sins!

I refuse to perish for the good of posterity! I haven't the smallest desire to do so! Where is the sense in it all, if the man of yesterday suffered for me, and I must suffer for the man of to-morrow, and the man of to-morrow must suffer for the man of the day after to-morrow? We have had enough of such frauds and deceptions! I want to live and enjoy the good things of life, and not convert myself into manure for the nurture of some delicate person of the future with tender white hands! I detest that future

person and the glories that are to be his!

A "cell" indeed! Pavel, I suppose, must find consolation in the thought in his unknown grave in some Prussian cabbage-field, and mother must dry up her tears and paint her cheeks. It was not her son who was killed, but a "cell" to whom nothing better could have happened! How wicked and presumptious a man must be to compare a human being—sacred as he is—to a "cell." The blackguard! Instead of dancing on my grave if I should die, he ought to shed tears for me. He ought to shed tears for every man who dies, for once dead, no one returns! For all that he is a great writer and I an insignificant little man of whom the world has never heard, he should scatter flowers on my grave, mourn for me with all the tears

he can command, and pity me with all the pity in his heart! This comes of speaking of men in numbers like so much grain! The very look of a figure takes all the sense out of one. Millions, indeed! Man is not so much seed to be measured! Anyone who can speak of a human being in other than the dignified term of man, and can look upon him as no more than a figure in a number, is a servant of Satan. He deceives himself and others. When a man begins to count other men, he loses all values and every sense of pity. Here is an example of my meaning in a few words taken out of my paper, reporting some engagement. "Our losses were insignificant; only two killed and five wounded."

Who considers these losses insignificant, I wonder? Is it the killed? I should like to hear what they had to say on the

subject, if they could rise from their graves! Would they consider the losses insignificant when they recalled their childhood, their kith and kin, the women they had loved, their emotions and terror as they marched along, and how all was cut short by the horror of death. . . . Insignificant losses, indeed! The blackguard ought to be made to realise whom it is that he serves with his clever arithmetic to keep him from his lying statements regarding the welfare of the human race about which he is so ignorant.

Condfound the beggar, how furious he's made me!

The children are well. Lidotchka has lost two milk teeth, making her face look sweeter than ever. It's nice to have a clever child. During my illness she read me fairy tales, spelling out each word.

11*th March.*

Fimotchka has just made an interesting discovery. Just before the war, she says, red was very much in fashion. Women wore red dresses, and hats and ribbons and all the other little requisites peculiar to the sex. As far as I can remember, this seems to be true. I wonder if it was not some presentiment of the bloodshed that was to come? How blind the people were to have considered it an attractive colour! No one wears red now; as a colour it seems to have disappeared, washed out by wind and rain. In what darkness must man grope, when the choice of his garments is not left to his free will!

I am tired, and not drawn to my diary. I have so much to do and so little time. The confounded war simply eats up the

money. No matter how hard you work, you cannot earn enough.

I don't know whether I've grown indifferent to the wholesale murder going on, or that I take a saner view of things, but I can read about twenty thousand killed and calmly light a cigarette. I no longer devour the papers too, as in the early days, when I was always rushing round the corner for the new editions, in all weathers. It doesn't do any good.

Sashenka is at the hospital as usual, and the house just as disorderly as before, but I've got used to that too, and hardly notice what food I eat. Mother is like a shadow in the house; you would hardly know she was there. To drive away my depression, I have taken to teaching Lidotchka, and to read fairy tales to her. She is a dear child! In our gloomiest

moments she lights up our house like a sacred lamp.

I have another confession to make which will not meet with the approval of the serious-minded. I have no need of their approval, thank God. Fimotchka called one day when Sashenka was out, and seeing how depressed I was, taught me to play Patience. It's a silly game for a grown man to play, but if you happen to be in the condition when you can neither take in what you read nor what's being said to you, it's very comforting, and gets so interesting sometimes that you forget about your sleep. I tried to teach Mother the game, but she either couldn't or wouldn't understand; she seemed to look upon it as an attempt on my part to interfere with her legitimate grief.

I came across a curious saying in the calendar: "If you don't learn to play

cards in your youth, you are storing up a sad old age."

It's not a question of playing cards. One would jump at anything at a time like this.

I'm tired.

18th March.

I got a letter from Andrei Vasilevitch. After expressing his sympathy over Pavel's death (he was very fond of Pavel) he asks me to excuse him for writing so seldom, on the plea of being busy and tired. In answer to certain questions of mine, he gives me this unexpected piece of advice, "Learn from the Germans." Here is an extract from his extraordinary letter: "I don't like the Germans, but I think we would do well to learn from them, especially those of you in the rear. Mark how the Germans build up the walls of their state, and how wise they are in their

self-abnegation. Knowing that you can't build a good, steady wall from all sorts of irregularly-shaped materials, every German voluntarily rubs off his corners and projecting parts to make himself into an even brick. From these bricks alone you get a good wall, and when the mortar is added you get the soundest of walls, not, as with us, a ram-shackle affair, full of holes. Don't be afraid, but learn from the Germans, Ilya Petrovitch!"

Excellent! A moment ago I was a "cell" and now I am to turn myself into a brick. And the fact that I am a man I am persistently asked to forget. Ilya Petrovitch is in future to be called brick number so and so.

For the sake of argument I consent to be a brick, but who is to be the architect and the unscrupulous contractor? Must I submit if the architect builds a brothel

instead of a temple or a palace? No, Andrei Vasilevitch, I am not a "cell" nor a "brick," but Ilya Petrovitch, the same as I always was and mean to remain to the end of my days. There are many "bricks" and "cells" in the world of one and the same pattern, but I am the one and only Ilya Petrovitch, and there never will be another man like me. With every ounce of strength I possess I will hold myself apart and not submit to the war. I refuse to have my wings clipped and will not be badgered by your noisy drum!

I regret to have been foolish enough to take my difficulties to a man so wrapped up in the war. He no doubt despises us heroes of the rear.

23rd March.

Hurrah! our troops have captured Przemysl! Petrograd is rejoicing. What a gloriously happy day!

The news was telephoned to our office by one of the newspapers, and when I heard it, such a tremendous feeling of joy came over me, that I snatched up my things and hastened out into the street. Our Nevsky had never looked so festive and beautiful before. The snow fell fast in large flakes and settled on the shoulders of the crowd, but beneath this covering of white, flushed cheeks could be seen and sparkling eyes. For once the citizens of Petrograd had good complexions. Immediately the crowd began to organise itself. The National Anthem was struck up, and a procession started to the palace, I could not take part in that, unfortunately, for I had to return to the office.

What a day of joy this has been! At last I begin to realise why the preceding days and months had been so gloomy and hard to bear. We had got so resigned

to our hopelessness, that we had come to regard it as a natural condition. It seems strange to look back, to think even of yesterday. What long heavy days and nights those were! One did not seem to live by day, nor to rest by night. And when I think of my confused thoughts, my silly Patience playing, Mother, our dirty, untidy house, the despair, the fear of what to-morrow would bring.

I don't know how it is, but for the first time during the war I have realised the meaning of the word "Victory." It is no little thing, it raises a man to heights undreamed of. What a simple word it is! and how many are the times one has heard it spoken! Victory, victory! now I know how wonderful it is. I could rush from room to room shouting it!

I am still excited—with a pleasant excitement, strange to say. When I think

that I am a Russian, that there's a country in the world called Russia, the hot tears come into my eyes. The sight of a soldier's grey uniform in the street fills me with emotion. I smile and wink at the man and make a fool of myself generally. The word Russia stirs my very being. How sweet and agitating it is, for all that it brings the tears to one's eyes!

Visions of rye-fields keep floating before my eyes, and when I shut them, I see wheels going round and round as plainly as on a kinematograph film. I hear larks singing too. I love larks; they always sing in the sky, not on the ground or in trees. Other birds must perch themselves comfortably on a tree, smooth down their feathers before they begin to sing, and then they sing in chorus, but a lark sings alone as it soars in the sky. Dear, dear, how I have wandered off! But what does

it matter, so long as I keep on about something?

Another curious thing has happened to-day. For the first time since Pavel's death Sashenka and I have been able to talk about him, and we talked for quite a long time, too. Our new victory seemed to touch Pavel also, and he had come to take his eternal place at our fireside in invisible form. Sashenka, of course, shed a few tears, but they were not like those terrible, solitary tears that used to shake her bed at nights. We decided to go to church together on the morrow to have a mass said for our dead. Usually I don't like this ritual, but now it seemed not only proper, but a pleasant thing to do.

There is another gratifying event to relate. I was able to give Sashenka my views, very gently expressed, of course,

about her continual absence from home, and to my surprise, she did not flare up, as I had expected her to do, but promised not to be at the hospital so much, and to devote herself more to the children in future. She even complained of feeling tired. The poor thing certainly looks tired; I have only just noticed how thin and pale she has grown. I am quite anxious about her. However, Sashenka looks, if anything, more beautiful than ever. What a blessing beauty must be in the work she is doing! When a dying soldier gazes up at the beautiful face of the nurse bending over him, she must be to him a symbol of love and beauty on earth, and he must carry her image away with him as an eternal dream. There must be many dying soldiers who would have cursed the world that destroyed them, but for the sight of the nurse's

beautiful eyes that made him forgive and forget.

For the first time I do not resent Sashenka's being at the hospital and leaving me alone. There is something to occupy my mind now. I keep on thinking of victory. What a sense of gladness it gives! How many times have I seen the word in novels and histories, and of late, in the papers, yet only now have I realised what an alluring beast it is! Men have hunted it since the creation of the world; all have desired it; all desire it now, and the wonder of it is ours! Victory, victory! I could rush out into the streets and proclaim it with brass trumpets. Victory! victory!

24th March.

Lidotchka is ill. God help us.

27th March.

She is dead.

23rd March.

It is three months since I have touched this diary; I had forgotten about its very existence. When I took it out to-day, I sat for some time staring blankly at the last page containing the words, "She is dead."

"She is dead," only three words on a sheet of ordinary white paper.

God, how wretched man is! How well I remember the day I wrote the words! If instead of the white paper with the few scrawls there had been a mirror to reflect eternally the face of the man who wrote them with all its anguish and despair! What do these words convey?

What a friend this diary is to me! Its pages contain the name of my Lidotchka

which was so much part of her being. She is gone, and now the diary only remains to me.

Lidotchka died on the 27th March, four days after we had taken Przemysl. She became unwell on the very day of rejoicing and her illness lasted only three days and three nights. It was appendicitis she had, in an acute form, only we did not realise it until it was too late to do anything. It was twenty-four hours before we could get a doctor to see her, every man of them being busy at the military hospitals. I fell in with one in the street who turned away as soon as he looked at her, declaring that there was no danger, and we could safely wait. The child was dying, and he asked us to wait, and we waited! I was even fool enough to apologise for having kept him away from his more important duties. We waited with despair in our

hearts ; we did not like to worry any one needlessly. We smiled and tried to keep up our courage, fools that we were ! When at last the surgeon from Sashenka's hospital came he declared it was appendicitis, and too late for an operation.

How could I have believed the first man and waited ! How could I have let her lie parched with fever, moaning and suffering, and do nothing ? There she was, dying and trusting me ! How senseless and wicked it was ! I remember her black, trusting eyes, her parched lips as I touched mine against them lightly, and how I stroked her tangled hair. On one occasion I bathed her face with eau-de-cologne and felt satisfied that I was doing all that was required. And the poor child suffered agonies. It seemed impossible that such a small child should suffer such great pain.

On the third day I ran about like one possessed. I shouted at the doctors, I threw money in their faces. "I will pay! I will pay!" I cried in despair. In one doctor's waiting-room, I can't remember where it was, I struck my head against the lintel of the door in a woman's presence, hoping thereby to arouse pity. . . .

But that is nothing.

For hours I hunted all over the town, and the surgeon had been twice to our house and assured me that an operation was useless and would only torment the child for nothing. I put her into the coffin myself and carried her to the table.

And here am I living as though nothing particular had happened. I go to my office, I acknowledge my friends in the street, I read the papers. We are being defeated on all hands, and driven out of Poland and Galicia. Przemysl has been

retaken. We never got a chance. The gendarme Miasoyedov sold Russia for thirty pieces of silver. Well, well, I don't exactly hate every one, but I'm getting on in that direction. Only I hold my peace.

29th June.

How can I express my grief and despair? They are beyond words and tears, and human understanding. I scrutinise my face carefully in the glass to see if I have changed, but there does not seem any difference. There is one grey-haired fool in the glass and another outside of it. My hair has turned grey.

30th June.

When the great die, the town is steeped in mourning and flags are hung up to inform the population of the fact. Had

I been great and had I possessed the gift of eloquence, I would have raised my voice and made the whole world mourn for my Lidotchka, but I am only an insignificant little man, and can merely cry for her as a cow cries for its lost calf. Even a cow is more effective in her grief, for her cries may be heard by someone in the night, while I have to stifle my sobs for fear that others may hear and object.

How contemptible I am! nothing but a "cell."

I remember a certain day—a day to which I could erect a bronze memorial for the edification of posterity. It was a week after Lidotchka's death, and I, like a conscientious worker, returned to the confounded office. The other fellows are kind-hearted enough; they remarked upon the fact that my hair had turned grey, and expressed their sympathy in the usual

polite way of "Lost a little daughter? Dear, dear, what a pity it is!"

It was a pity, but what did it matter? Wasn't I working and adding up figures? When the band of crêpe caught the eye of the sympathetic, I was greeted with, "Have you lost someone at the war?"

"No, not at the war. I have lost my little daughter Lidia."

"Oh!"

I could see they were disappointed.

Zvoliansky, the Pole, remarked casually —with every degree of politeness and propriety, of course, that no one ought to wear mourning at a time like this, not even for relatives killed at the front. One must consider the public nerves. It stands to reason that when a man dresses himself up in a smart tie and patent shoes he doesn't want to meet the spectacle of a gloomy, grey-haired old man in mourning.

It would spoil his pleasure. Zvoliansky did not dare to say as much, but his remarks implied it plainly. If people had no right to wear mourning for those killed at the front—the only dead that matter now—what right had I to wear it for a six-year-old little girl who died a natural death? Weren't there enough six-year-old little girls in the world?

I was led to understand, though it was gently done, that I had acted inconsiderately in flaunting my grief before the eyes of others. It was as though I had got drunk in the midst of the general sobriety. A casual acquaintance met in the street made me realise this to the full with his exclamation of "A little girl? Oh!"

But do I argue? I have submitted to public opinion and put my band of crêpe in my pocket. I must be careful

of other people's feelings. As a patriot I have no right to hurt anyone. A patriot or a worm, I wonder?

But I hold my tongue.

3rd July.

It was raining and I walked under my umbrella, wondering what was the most important of all things. The most important thing of all is to bury. Killing doesn't matter, it will happen sometimes, but to bury is essential. As soon as things are covered up and nothing is to be seen, all is well. What would it be like if the four or five million who have now been killed had been left unburied? What a stench there would be, and how many torn uniforms!

Despair, and no way to express it. Like a fool I can't say what's in my heart. And how long my legs have grown! I

can feel how long they are as I walk. Am I going mad ?

The same night.

You may call me a heartless blackguard, a criminal or anything you like, but by God, I am not in the least sorry for our killed. I don't care what happens to our men. I didn't order them to be killed. If men will rend and kill each other, let them, by all means ; it has nothing to do with me.

The house seems deserted and full of horrors invisible. Last year, at this time, we were in the country, Lidotchka was with us and no foreboding of ill.

I wonder sometimes when I look at Peter and Jena, my two youngest children, whether it wouldn't be best to tie a piece of cord around their necks and jump off the Troitsky Bridge with them into the

water. No one wants them, they are miserable, neglected little "cells." They keep on crying all the time. Peter nearly cut his head against the table, and came to me to kiss his bump and pity him, but I can't pity. Poor children! Their mother is in the hospital looking after the wounded—doing her duty; their father, like Satan, rummages about the streets for peace of mind, and they are left with a stupid nurse and a half-witted grandmother. What an existence!

What a strange animal man is! I can make my blood flow with one prick of my knife—but I can't wring a single tear. I can't sleep in consequence, and am frightened of my sofa. I sleep in my study now, on the sofa. That is to say, I toss about the live-long white night. The light comes in at window, for there are no curtains over it.

Last night, tired of tossing about, I got up, and from three to five o'clock I sat on my window-sill smoking, and looking out on the dead town. It was as light as day and not a soul to be seen anywhere. Like ours, the house opposite has many windows, both up- and down-stairs. Not a single sign of life was to be seen in any of them.

I had nothing on but my pants and shirt, and I sat there or paced the room, barefoot, wondering whether I had gone mad.

By day my study is an ordinary room, and I an ordinary man, but I wonder what people would think if they saw us at night? I am barefoot at this moment, and have nothing on but my pants.

What makes me write all this?

6th July.

I am a completely changed man. I've no pity or affection for anyone, not even for my children. Pure hatred only inspires me. When I walk through the town and look at the houses and people, I think, and even smile at the thought, "I wish the earth would open and swallow you all up!" A beggar stretched his hand out to me to-day, and I gave him such a look that his tongue stuck, and his hand dropped to his side. What a look it must have been!

I can't cry; I can't remember how it's done. Not only my tears have dried up, altogether I seem to have become dry; on the hottest day I never perspire. A curious thing; I must ask a doctor about it.

Sashenka took notice of me to-day.

She cried to see me like this. But like what? She wondered that I did not read the newspapers, but what can one learn from the papers? That we have Miasoyedovs, that wholesale slaughter is going on, we know without their aid. I don't want to read them.

"How is your digestion?" Sashenka asked.

"My digestion? Why? Have I got a digestion? Oh, yes! It's quite well, thank you. How are your wounded?"

"They are your wounded, too."

"Oh, no, I didn't make them."

"Why are you so hard-hearted, Ilenka?" she asked through her tears.

"How? my kind-hearted Sashenka?"

She was annoyed at that and went back to the hospital, not forgetting to slam the door behind her, like a truly affectionate wife. I don't care, only it's not good for

the children; and one must think of them sometimes.

I can hardly believe I have a wife; we so rarely see each other. She is always at the hospital. A great many wounded arrived on Saturday, so many that there were not enough beds for them all, and some had to be put on the floor. Sasha did not come home that day for the children's bath. This is not the first occasion on which it has happened. Nurse usually bathes them under these circumstances, but that day it came into my head to do Jena myself. The boy has grown awfully thin. I could count all his ribs; he has such small bones. When I rubbed down his poor little body and thin hair, I wondered why I couldn't cry. Even when I scratched the poor child in my clumsiness, and he burst into tears, I still felt no pity. His crying only

annoyed me, and I handed him over to the nurse. What is the matter with me? There was a time, old men tell us, when people in my condition were healed by prayer in church, but who would pray for me? What nonsense I am talking, to be sure!

There is no pity in my heart for Russia even; her groans affect me not. I have no pity for myself, and I think if Sasha were to die this moment, I wouldn't turn a hair. There is a rumour of cholera in town, but what do I care? Let there be cholera or an epidemic of small pox or the plague, it makes no difference to me.

9th July.

There was quite a sensation in our office to-day. Zvoliansky, the Pole, has joined the army as a volunteer. He wants

to defend Warsaw with his own hand, so to speak. At first we thought he was only bragging, but it turned out to be true. Who would have expected it of him? He used to brag so much that no one would have given him the credit of it. The other fellows arranged all sorts of treats for him, of course, but I did not take part in them, saying that I was not well. Let them parade their patriotism without my aid. I am not afraid of their sneers and suspicions!

In the private talks I've had with Zvoliansky, I've always heard him say, in high flown terms, that if he did not take part in the war now his conscience would never give him any peace afterwards. Conscience indeed! One can understand his anxiety about Poland, but the least said about conscience, the better.

Conscience, conscience; you can't get

away from it, no matter how hard you try. Conscientious people are to be seen everywhere. They quite alarm a fool like me. To plunder, to betray, to starve children, is all done in the name of conscience. No one can raise any objections. It's war time, you see, and can't be helped! So the war and the tears only serve to make unscrupulous tradesmen and manufacturers grow fat and to build them big houses and motor-cars that the public admire. They deserve to be hanged, every man of them, but it can't be done because of conscience.

I happened to notice that our poor old mother always conceals her feet under her skirt when she sits down, and I couldn't understand the reason of it, until I discovered that the old lady's shoes were so worn that her toes came through. Poor soul! When I said to her, "Mother,

aren't you ashamed? Why didn't you tell me or Sashenka?" she burst into tears. I couldn't get a word out of her in explanation. Some absurd idea of economy of hers, no doubt, that I had upset. It seems so ridiculous to economise and be careful of every farthing when, sooner or later, a farthing saved is sure to find its way into some contractor's pocket. It is worked like a conjuring trick.

I bought mother a pair of prunella shoes and presented them to her solemnly with the due feelings of a benefactor. She burst into tears again, of course, and as I watched them roll down her cheeks, I thought, "If only she'd give me one of them!

16th July.

Andrei Vasilevitch, the man who was to have read my diary, was badly wounded,

and died in a hospital in Warsaw. All peace to his soul! No one will read my diary now. It is as well, perhaps. I seem to be alone in hell, surrounded by dancing demons and beckoning sinners. What good am I or my diary to anyone? It seems absurd, but my wife has known for a long time that I keep a diary, and has never expressed the smallest desire or curiosity to see it. Writing a diary or cracking sun-flower seeds is all the same to her!

Even a mouse gets more attention; one hurls a boot at it when it makes a noise.

But what right has a little worm like me to attention and sympathy when so many more worthy than I go under daily? It would be a fine thing, indeed, if every little "cell" doomed to perdition were to begin to howl and object like a full-grown organism!

I saw some refugees from Poland in the Morskaya to-day. Pretty figures they make!

17th July.

I can't exist like this! I wasn't made for wicked, vicious thoughts, and can find no others in my wretched soul. Sleep has deserted me. I am consumed inwardly by a white flame like a tree that is drying at the roots. I am afraid to look at my contorted face in the glass. I wander about until I am ready to drop and my legs are as heavy as lead, then I fling myself on my bed, and go to sleep instantly; but at three in the morning I start up, as at the sound of a drum, and go to my window-sill, and there I sit until five or six, staring aimlessly at the Petrograd night, also sleepless. Horrible light! horrible night! Whether it's pour-

ing with rain and the walls of the houses are soaking wet, or the sun is playing among the chimney pots, it is appalling alike in this dead, motionless town. It seems as if the prophecy was fulfilled and mankind was destroyed, and over the scene of destruction shone the useless light of a useless day.

The house opposite is flat and high. If you happened to fall from the top there would be nothing to clutch hold of to stop you. I can't get rid of a tormenting thought that I've fallen from the roof, down, down, to the pavement, past windows and cornices. The sensation is so real as to make me sick. To get away from the sight of that wall I pace the room, but there is little comfort in that. I step cautiously over the creaking floor, bare-foot, in pants only, seeming more and more like a lunatic or a hunted

murderer. And still it is light! And still it is light!

I can't go on like this! In like conditions, I suppose, men write the words, "Accuse no one of my death; I am tired of life."

What rubbish I allow myself to talk! I am simply not well, and must treat myself. I really must be more careful of my health.

Lidotchka, my angel, set me free. Give me tears that I may weep for you! I can't go on as I am. Pray to God for me; you are so near to Him; you can look into His eyes. Ask Him to have mercy on your father, Lidotchka, my darling, my silent angel; remember how I carried you from the bed to the table, and held you close, oh, so close. . . .

21st July.

What a hard time we are going through! God spare Russia! From end to end of the vast land people are praying for Russia's salvation.

I am ashamed to confess in what a vain frame of mind I set out for the Kazan Cathedral, where a public service was to be held. I don't know at what moment I suddenly began to see and understand. I only remember that at first I smiled superciliously and cast my eye about for other clever fellows like myself, with whom to exchange knowing glances. I was horribly annoyed at the pushing and shoving, and stuck out my elbows ostentatiously for the benefit of my neighbours. But when did daylight come?

No words can describe the impressiveness of the sight. From every street

and alley hundreds of thousands of people were streaming to one particular spot to offer up their common prayers to God. It seemed like some practical joke at first, or a showy parade; but when they came and came, and there was no breathing space, and still they kept on coming, the solemnity of it made cold shivers run down my back. "What does it mean?" you asked yourself with a shudder, but no one heard you, and no one replied, and still the people kept on coming and coming. The solemnity and gravity was enhanced by the very fact that no one paid any heed to you, and you paid no heed to them. Your heart began to beat fast. What a vital occasion it must be to bring so many people together so intent for the purposes of prayer! Is it for my small mind to question and criticise?

Men were not ashamed to weep; some even forgot to dry their tears. All restraint was abandoned. "How naïve the people are!" I thought like a fool, as I eyed a robust-looking peasant, a yard-porter, or cabman, no doubt, whose tears were streaming down his cheeks. Suddenly I felt a moistness in my own eyes, dry for so long, and I wept shame-facedly, not yet appreciating the value of my tears, and raising my eyes artfully to heaven, lest some one should see. "God, how far away Thou art, yet how near!" I thought.

All at once a shudder went through me, and I seemed to be pierced by a heavenly fire. On wings invisible I seemed to soar on high to the white clouds, and from that height I looked down on this land we call Russia. I saw that it was she, and no other land, that was menaced by misery

indescribable! It was against her the enemy was marching with fire and bomb! And it was for Russia, for Russia's salvation, we were praying! Once more I looked at the people; they wept, and I wept with them. They did not spurn me, those near me, but leant trustingly against my breast. Lunatic! What had I been thinking of before? An intense love for these people came over me. I could hardly contain myself. I could have cried aloud for love of them. I could cry aloud at this moment when I recall the sensation.

It's difficult to express what I felt. Though only a few hours have gone by since the great moment, I cannot see Russia as I saw her then. She is only a map to me now, yet then I had seen and known so clearly. I do remember, I suppose, but I cannot express it in words.

Oh, God, save Russia! Spare her, foolish as she is!

I ought to leave off now, but the tears will come, and why shouldn't I let them? Yesterday when I got home and saw mother wiping Peter's nose with her trembling hand, I remembered Pavel, and, unable to contain myself, I sobbed aloud like a child. I fell on my knees before mother and kissed her wrinkled, aged hand. Nurse was there, and she, too, could not keep back her tears. How guilty I feel before all decent people! I had good reason to cry!

I must stop now or I shall become unintelligible. My thoughts come so quickly. Let them come.

The same night.

Once more I can't sleep. My heart is filled with anxiety. I am shivering with cold. I am still thinking of Russia.

Man is not slow to utilise his experiences to his advantage. There is something very subtle about it. I had no sooner learned to love Russia than I hastened home to lavish affection on my own children, Peter and Jena. The very desire to love them was wonderful after my coldness and hardness of heart that had made me forget their existence.

I bought them some fruit from a stand: a thing I had not done for a long time. I rather fear now that it may upset their little stomachs. Jena has grown so thin that it makes my heart ache to look at him. His eyes are pensive like Lidotchka's. He used to be such a happy little fellow! Has the trouble affected him too?

A horrible fear has come over me again. I must go to bed, even though I can't sleep; it may prevent horrible thoughts

from entering my head. The children . . . Russia. . . .

I haven't seen Sashenka to-day. She came home when I was at the office, and has not been able to get away again, I suppose. I am sorry I did not see her. I wanted to go to the hospital, but after my long absence I was afraid it might look funny.

Sashenka, Sashenka, my dear!

This, then, is the meaning of Russia!

29th July.

Depression and despair once again. I awoke for a brief moment and got a glimpse of reality, and again I have lapsed into sleep, eternal and restless. The newspapers fill one with horror. A dreadful rumour is abroad, and the office is full of incredible tales. They say Warsaw has fallen, and

a great many other things, about which it would be best to keep silent. I have no faith in the Duma, but I should like to see it convoked.

I am afraid.

1st August.

The town is in a state of depression; the people in the streets look grave. Only some hooligan may be seen to laugh, or a contractor, portly and unscrupulous, who stalks along in sublime indifference. The pig!

As I write these words the Germans may be entering Warsaw. When I close my eyes I see them as plainly as on the film of a kinematograph, with their pointed helmets, marching victoriously through the ruined, deserted streets, past blazing houses. I remember how the men in our office used to joke about Wilhelm's pre-

sumptuousness, the stories they used to tell of his having declared he would dine in Paris and sup in Warsaw, and the like; and while the fools were enjoying the joke, the Germans have come! they are here! What can we do? The disgrace of it!

How could we have been so blind as not to foresee the danger? Again I shut my eyes and see their pointed helmets, the flames, the panic-stricken inhabitants crouching behind the houses. What is the use of their hiding? Supposing it were not Petrograd where I sat writing in the dead of night, but in Warsaw, with the Germans marching across the bridge, entering the town. . . . Horrible thought! A loud knock comes at my door, and a German walks in and looks about him, strutting from room to room as though the place belonged to him. He questions

me with a rifle in his hand, and keeps from shooting me down only out of a feeling of charity. How would I look into his blue Teutonic eyes? Would I smile to him, out of politeness only, of course, but would I? No!

I shall not sleep to-night.

8th August.

The Duma has met, and the sittings are in progress. I pray for fortitude when I read and re-read the reports of the terrible speeches. I devour each sentence with my eyes. There must be some mistake. It can't be that there are no shells! No shells! Shells were promised, but our men were left in the lurch! Our gallant soldiers tried to stay the Germans with their naked hands! To think of it! What is the country coming to?

I don't understand. There must be

something wrong. What about the people who prayed in the Kazan Square? How dared they call upon God when they betrayed our men? But was it the people who betrayed? I heard their prayers, and I prayed with them; I saw their hot tears and their anguish, but there was no sign of the fear and shame the guilty must feel before the all-seeing eyes of God. *Was it then different people who prayed, and different people who betrayed?* I don't know, but I feel sure that the country is not guilty; I could swear to that by the life of my children! Something is wrong somewhere.

I can't convey the impression I got when I first read the speeches of the Duma members. A big German shell seemed to have burst in my brain, deafening, blinding, and shaking me to the very roots of my being. It seemed to deprive

me of human speech ; I could only jabber unintelligibly and look horror-stricken. Every one seemed to be affected in the same way. Even the fellows in the office, who always talked so lightly and decided all questions so easily, were almost speechless with consternation. They couldn't work, and sat about in their shirt sleeves, red as boiled lobsters, devouring the papers, and making the office-boy run for every new edition. When they had had their fill, they set up an uproar, banging their fists on the table and shouting :

" I told you so ! "

" What did I say ? "

" No one would listen to me ! "

" It was you who would not listen, I maintained. . . ."

One and all had maintained and prophesied, and the mischief had come through no one listening to them. And

who had taken Tsar-Grad, and walked through the streets of Berlin, and even bought a tie in some shop on the Freidrich Strasse? They had all forgotten that.

The thing that surprises me most about them is the way they'll say the most horrible things to each other—things one would think that would keep any man awake for a week—and then be as chummy as possible together. It seemed as if they were anxious to show off the good spirit in the office. After the most abusive argument one will begin on "Satirikon," another will collect subscriptions for some choice refreshment, to be consumed in the back room, far removed from the eyes of the chief. It's a good thing they can't get vodka.

Sashenka is another person who surprises me. Filled as I was with a burning desire to communicate my strange, new

impressions about these painful events, I naturally thought of her as some one who would like to share my thoughts, and even pictured the solemn, profound conversation we would have; or perhaps no conversation at all; we might commune in silence, I thought, a silence that would convey more than words, all that was in our hearts. . . . But it turned out differently. When I opened my eyes wide in astonishment and asked, "You've read about it, I suppose?" she looked alarmed at my expression, and said, "What?"

"How what? I'm referring to the speeches in the Duma."

"What speeches? . . . Oh, yes, I just glanced at them. I'm too busy to read. The Lord knows what they are after."

Failing to notice her indifference, I began to expound the situation with

warmth, explaining everything with great detail; but suddenly I realised by the expression of pensiveness on her face, by her downcast eyes, and the strange compression of her lips, that she was not listening to me, but was engrossed in some thoughts of her own. I was hurt and angry. I didn't mind on my own account so much, as that she should ignore a thing so vital for all Russia.

"I don't think much of your patriotic spirit, Sashenka," I said coldly, and impressibly.

She blushed, and a pang went through my heart as I saw the colour spread over her pale, worn features.

"Don't be angry with me, Ilenka dear, for having wandered off and missed part of what you said. It's not so very important, is it?"

"Not important!" I exclaimed angrily.

"You can hardly be aware of what you are saying, Sasha! Surely only a traitor who rejoiced in Russia's downfall could say a thing like that! Don't you understand? We have no shells! Aren't you sorry for our poor, patient, unarmed soldiers whom the well-armed Germans can defeat with a smile on their faces?"

She was impressed by that. Her eyes opened wide, and she said with alarm in her voice, "It is dreadful, but what can we do?"

"That's what everyone is trying to decide, and you say it is not important. It's horribly important, Sashenka! It's so important that it makes you go mad to think of it!"

At that point some one came from the hospital to fetch her to attend to some man who had both arms amputated, and refused to eat unless Sashenka fed him. She

instantly forgot everything, and with a guilty look, she gave me a hasty kiss on the ear, and whispered, "Don't be angry with me, dear; I can't. . . ." And she was gone.

What couldn't she? . . .

11th September.

An unexpected thing has happened. Nikolai, my brother-in-law, who appears to be in Moscow, sent me a polite letter, offering me money. It has taken him a whole year to remember his mother, and now he proposes to take a share in supplying her wants. He never mentioned Sashenka or Pavel, or little Lidotchka.

His letter sent me into a fury, and I wrote a reply that he won't be in a hurry to forget. I didn't want to bother Sashenka, so I never said anything to her

about it. The blackguard! I knew he had been contracting lately, and made about a million. I heard about it from the fellows in my office. A million! We know the things necessary to make such a sum! And this unscrupulous traitor, in the largeness of his heart, offers me one of his thirty pieces of silver! No, Nikolai, I would sooner starve than touch a penny of your money! Your filthy lucre is tainted with blood; you could never wash your hands clean again when you had touched it! It doesn't become your mother to live on your contaminated money! She has lost a dearly-beloved, honest son at the front!

God! Why dost Thou let the weight of Thy anger fall on the weak? Wreak Thy vengeance on men like these, the rich and the strong, the traitors, the liars and the swindlers! How long will they

be permitted to mock at us and show their golden teeth, riding over us in their motor-cars with derisive laughter? They are so shameless in their security that it drives one mad with despair to think of one's own impotence. When you remonstrate with them, they smile; when you try to make them see the disgrace, it amuses them; when you entreat and implore, they laugh in your very face. After robbing and betraying the country, they sleep soundly in their beds as on the softest pillows of eider-down.

It makes one's blood boil to think that no punishment awaits them. It is not right that blackguards should be triumphant in this world! It takes away respect for honesty, it kills justice, it makes life meaningless. It is blackguards like these against whom we ought to declare war, and not break each other's heads because

one man happens to be a German and another a Frenchman. Mild as I am by nature, I would be the first to take up arms in such a war, and would delight in sending a bullet into one of their brazen foreheads!

What's the good of patience? Nikolai's letter has stirred my blood. And why did my Lidotchka die, my poor innocent child, eternally and beloved, divine flower from Thy garden, oh Lord? Was she an ill-gotten million to be snatched from my beggarly? It's horrible, horrible! Many are the people who are cursing in torment as I am! Perish, miserable worm, that's all you're good for! Perish, and then you can rest! Have not enough of you Dementevs perished cursing, to be sure, and crying aloud in the hope that justice might be done, and the golden crown set upon their brows? But who

bothers about them now? They have perished, and there's an end of them.

12th August.

I follow the speeches in the Duma carefully, and each day I seem to ascend higher up a mountain that opens out new visions before me. And what horrible visions they are! The Germans are still in possession of Warsaw and advancing steadily. When is this alarming advance to stop? Our military experts declare that they cannot come beyond the forts of Vilna and Grodno, before whose impregnable walls they will crumple up. Ought not this to reassure us? But I am not reassured; I seem to feel their physical nearness and never turn a street corner without an absurd fear of seeing a German come rushing out. How clearly I see his

German face, and spiked helmet! I can almost hear his insolent Teutonic speech. God forbid that it should come to pass!

Talking of visions, they make one's hair stand on end. Why am I small and insignificant? I am honest enough, how is it I didn't see and understand? Why did I trust as idiotically as a bewitched ass—if one can use the expression—when the country was in danger? The country in danger—what appalling words! What use am I to the country? Any horse is far more useful than I, for all my wretched honesty. Wretched is the very word for it.

God save Russia! The words are heard on all hands, even among the sceptical fellows in the office. Supposing God refuses to save her? Supposing God were to say, "Perish with your Miasoyedovs, since you are so stupid and corrupt!"

Should we have to go under? I shudder at the thought! I can't admit it; I will fight against it with every ounce of strength I possess! And my heart is cold and apprehensive and desperate. What can I do? The country needs Samsons and heroes, and what kind of a hero am I? A sinner stripped I stand at the last judgment, quaking and unable to say a word in my own defence, for earthly subterfuges are over.

This is the case of Ilya Petrovitch Dementev, a clerk, who lived through the great war.

PART III

18th August.

In my excitement of the last few days I have accused myself of many unjust things. Excitement is a poor guide when a man wants to take a sober view of things. I must have been too upset by these unexpected revelations that flowed from the mouths of our Duma Ciceros as freely as abundance from the horn of plenty. If I had been blind, what were our Ciceros doing? Their eyes, at any rate, ought to have been more penetrating.

I don't deny that I am powerless, but unfortunately it is not my fault that I am so. I am what I am. Had I been born a Samson or a Joffre, I should have

been a Samson or a Joffre. No man is fool enough, knowing me to be no mathematician, to set me a problem of integral calculus to solve; in the same way, how can I be expected to solve the problem of the Great War and Russian corruption? I didn't begin the war! I'm not responsible for the filthy mess we have got into, and I don't see why it should be put upon my shoulders! It's both absurd and unjust. To tell a man to clear away a mountain, and not give him so much as a spade to do it with! I should like to see those gentlemen tackling the job!

The office has settled down quietly again, thank God, and I'm glad to say the children are well. Mother had a slight stomach trouble, but is better now. The old lady is very tough, and may outlast the lot of us, I shouldn't wonder. But she has absolutely no memory.

I've thought of having the walls in the nursery and the study repapered at my own expense. The paper in my study reminds me of those terrible white July nights, when, like a madman, I used to sit, almost naked, on my window-sill, or paced the floor, barefoot. I used to count each flower in the pattern, and knew each curve and spot by heart.

I was uncertain at first, whether this was the right time for doing it, but on reflection, I came to the conclusion that this was the very best time indeed. Why should one let circumstances get the better of one, and because there's a war, live like a pig? The war may go on if it likes, but my house and my children are my own.

Jena made me laugh last night when I watched him getting to bed. The little rascal has grown quite fat and rosy of late.

He's a dear boy! When he had finished a prayer I had taught him, in which he prayed for his father and mother and the soldiers at the front, and ended up with the words, "Merciful God, let me wake to-morrow, sinner that I am," he promptly stood on his head, exposing his naked little body, and turned a somersault with huge delight. I wish all sinners could be like him.

Sashenka approved of my letter to her brother. She thought it showed fine feeling. He hasn't replied, but I hardly expected him to.

20th August.

I am putting the house to rights. It has been woefully neglected. The heavy curtains and the couch and chairs in my study are full of moth. Just to make a change, I have shifted the furniture and

converted the dining-room into my study. I am not sure that it looks better, but it is certainly an improvement to get a different view from my window. I come to hate my former view of the smug house opposite with its many windows. They used to depress me and make me feel sick at heart. Many was the time I could see myself falling past them and past the flat, disgusting walls. How strangely man is constituted! I couldn't help reflecting on this as I helped the porter move the furniture. Birds migrate to the south when they feel the winter coming on, while man begins to find a new attraction for his little box of a home, and sets about making it as comfortable as he can for the stormy weather. The moving would have amused and distracted me, had not the face of my darling Lidotchka, that is ever before my eyes, made me recall

former years when she used to help, in her own little way, and sent a pain through my heart. Lidotchka is gone, never to return.

Many other things are gone, too, never to return. Desolation has penetrated even to the heart of our little home. I was obliged to give up all thoughts of re-papering. The cost of living has risen to such a degree as to make a poor man look with apprehension at the future. Bread and fuel. . . . But why should I fill my diary with the prosaic details of every-day life? Dear, dear, the war is proving a monster, indeed!

The Germans continue to advance from Warsaw and are getting nearer and nearer to us. No one speaks about it, and all wait anxiously for new developments. We look askance at each other for any chance of some fresh news, but what fresh news

can there be? Even the Germans, it seems, know nothing, and no one in the whole world knows or understands. . . . The world is turned upside down.

21st August.

Kovno has fallen. Our military experts declared this fortress impregnable, and it was cracked like a nut and consumed instantaneously.

25th August.

Osovetz has fallen.

28th August.

The fortress of Brest has been taken.

It's a lucky thing for me that I have this diary, where I can speak of my fears without any sense of shame. One has to put on a brave countenance before others,

and hide one's horrible fear. It would be a dreadful thing indeed if the whole population of Petrograd were to begin to tremble and to scream with terror, as I feel inclined to do at any moment! And the terror is real, not silly talk calculated to alarm others, that gives the person creating the alarm a secret sense of pleasure. It makes you feel that you want to run away and hide, and you don't know where to go, nor how you'll get the money. You seem like a tree standing at the edge of a wood exposed to a hurricane that is drawing near; you fold the leaves closer about you, while inwardly you quake to the very roots.

I am living in the one hope that our office may be moved. There is a lot of whispering going on about it, and gathering together of books. I only wish it were true!

I no longer try to understand what it is that I fear so much, both for myself and the children. The word "war" no longer conveys any meaning to me. It is a dead word we have grown accustomed to using. Something living is drawing close to us now with a wild roar, something living and immense, and it shakes the earth as it comes. "They are coming!" There are no words terrible enough to equal these. "They are coming! They are coming!"

The white nights after Lidotchka's death with all their torments, would have been preferable to this. You felt safer in the light. What can one do during the dark Autumn nights, terrible enough without any Germans? Last night I couldn't sleep for fear. Horrible pictures floated through my brain. I saw the advancing Germans, I heard their unfamiliar speech, I saw

their strange Teutonic faces and guns and knives, ready for their murderous work. As in a dream I saw them bustling about a baggage-train ; they were shouting at the horses in their own tongue ; they were rumbling in crowds over bridges ; I could hear their voices, so vivid did my vision of them appear.

There were millions of them—pre-occupied, busy men with knives for our throats—and their ruthless faces were turned to us, to Petrograd, to Post Office Street, to me. They marched through country roads and villages ; they scrambled into motor-cars ; railway trains swarmed with them ; they were in aeroplanes dropping bombs from above ; they leapt from hill to hill ; they hid for a while, then rushed out again, coming another mile nearer to us ; they showed their teeth ; they dragged their knives and guns ; they

set fire to houses; and nearer and nearer they came. My hair stood on end. I felt myself in the midst of a lonely wood surrounded by cut-throat robbers creeping up to the house in the darkness of the night.

I was reduced to such a condition in the end that I lay craning for every sound, and the merest rustle made me think that some one had come ready to pounce upon me. It was unbearable! I am truly a coward, I can see that now, but I can't help it. What can I do? It's horrible!

And not so long ago I was idiotic enough to think of repapering my rooms!

29th August.

I have come to myself, somewhat, and take a more reasonable view of our position. The newspapers say, and the fellows in

the office, too, that the Germans will never get to Petrograd. I wonder if they are right? The streets are horribly dull, and if you happen to forget the Germans for a little, they seem the same dull streets as of old. There are the trams and the cabs and the shops, which are open as usual. There is more dust and dirt abroad, and a strong gust of wind nearly blinds you and chokes you with dried horse manure. Houses and palaces seem deserted and dirty too, and like clouds of dust and smoke, a thick fog hangs over the Neva, obscuring the other side of the river.

I read the reports of the speeches in the Duma with great agitation, but a feeling of caution prompts me not to commit my impressions to paper. I still wonder at the utter blindness that made me trust so idiotically, seeing only the

outward form of things. Where was my patriotism? Any self-respecting State would have cast me out, but here I'm no worse than others, a respectable member of society, as things go, a family hen who struts about paying visits to other hens, and sets up a violent cackling over a broken egg. No more than a hen! Splendid idea! I see, now, the meaning of the phrase "chicken-hearted." My Jena is no more than a chicken. Many hens like me are to be seen in the streets with their chickens. . . . Stop!

The clerk Ilya Petrovitch Dementev is but a chicken-hearted fellow.

3rd September.

The greatest misfortune has happened to me. It has taken me four days to pluck up sufficient courage to write it.

I ought to have foreseen that it would happen. I ought to have known by the way business was decreasing, and the general difficulties attending it, that it was bound to come, but my wanton blindness made me trust, and kept me from worrying. Our bank has gone smash, and the office is closed. Our chief died suddenly. They say he killed himself, and that the family are keeping it dark. All the employees were paid off. Those who, like myself, had been with the firm for a long time, were generously treated and received a full month's salary. It was certainly generous, considering the complete failure of the house.

What shall I do now to support myself and the children? The question is more alarming than the coming of the Germans. The Germans may or may not come, we do not know, but here am I faced by this

fact. In a very little time the children and I will be starving.

I haven't told Sashenka yet; I dare not; I can't find the words with which to do it decently. At home no one knows. I leave the house at the usual time in the morning and wander about the streets, dodging acquaintances or sitting in the Taurida Garden. At five I return home as though from the office. I must think of some plan; I must make up my mind what to do.

4th September.

For the first time in my life I find myself out of work, not counting, of course, the few occasions when in my youth, I happened to find myself without a post for two or three weeks, but one took it so lightly then, as one does everything else in youth. I even forget what the

experience was like. Now I am forty-six, and have a family. . . .

What good am I to any one now? What right have I to live? I have no justification other than my willingness to work. So long as I had work and supported my helpless little ones, I was a man with a claim to respect and consideration, but now . . . I'm no better than the lowest ne'er-do-well; I'm the most insignificant person on the face of the earth. I cannot even supply the needs of my own miserable existence, let alone the needs of those depending on me. A sparrow pecking manure on the road has a greater right to live than I!

As long as I worked I was a personality, a visible, tangible quantity; my little efforts helped to make the common wheel go round; now I am dead, as it were. I am no more than a ghost among the liv-

ing, though to outward impressions alive. What a horrible condition to be in! My voice even has changed, and assumed an ingratiating quality it used not to possess; my walk has become slouching and cautious. I seem to be tip-toeing through the house, the only person awake, trying not to disturb the others. If it were not for the fact that most people were a little unlike themselves just now, mother would notice that it was only the ghost of my former self that went and came each day. I act very cleverly in Sashenka's presence not to let her see anything, but we so rarely meet now; I do my best to avoid her as much as I can, on plea of pressing work.

I know that I'm not to blame for what has happened; I'm only the victim of circumstances, but that is small consolation. No self-respecting man could find

consolation and satisfaction in the thought of being a victim. The more I think of it the more I hate myself for my inefficiency and limitations. My life hangs on the merest thread that any casual person can break at his will. What have I accomplished to sit calmly with folded arms. Where are the indelible traces of my personality, the fruits of my labour? Some chairs and tables, a few garments, two children, is the sum total of all my achievements. . . . But what am I saying? I have chests of drawers, down pillows, four hundred roubles in the savings bank, a lottery ticket in my pocket with which I stand the chance of winning two hundred thousand roubles. It would be both interesting and instructive to make a complete inventory of the things I have acquired by my own efforts during the whole of my life.

It's overwhelming and shameful to think what little there is! I can't stay in this flat for more than another month, and then. . . . Poor children, what a wretched father you possess!

7th September.

I have made the round of my acquaintances, entered some two hundred doors with my letters of recommendation, but no one seems to have any use for "an honest, conscientious worker." Many are not slow to give advice. One man advised me, from the height of his patriotic self-satisfaction, to get some war work, and to "mobilise industry" with the millionaire Riabushinsky, those of a more practical turn of mind told me to worm myself in, and to suck the war as a new-born babe its mother's breast, and, judging by my brother-in-law, this seems

to be a very nourishing form of diet.

I would profit by their wise and patriotic councils did not the thought of who would "mobilise" my Peter and Jena have a deterring effect. As for the latter suggestion, I am sorry that I don't know where to find the beneficent breasts into which to dig my teeth.

I'm stupid and unadaptable; I can only do work I'm used to. God! how I envy the rich! With what despair and avarice do I look at their big houses with the plate-glass windows, and their motor-cars and carriages, and showy, loathsome clothes; their gold and diamonds! I hate to think that I can't do what they do! Since all are plundering, why must I starve for some empty word like honour, which people only laugh at, if they think of it at all?

8th September.

I'd die sooner than tell Sashenka that I've lost my work and can't keep the family. If only I hadn't been so overbearing in days gone by! If only I hadn't been so exacting and presumptuous! To think of the way I used to come out with, "You might be more careful about my food! What would happen to you all if I were to fall ill?" or, "Do keep the place quiet! I must get a little rest!" or, "Why is the tea cold? Why isn't my coat brushed? Look at the fluff on the sleeve!" The presumptuousness of it!

I try to economise by going without food as much as I can. I never take any supper at all now, easily excusing myself on account of my precious digestion; however, I very rarely feel hungry.

I was overcome by the alarming thought yesterday that, running about as much as I do, I should wear out my boots, and I promptly went into the Rumiantsev Garden, where I sat for a couple of hours, to spare them. It will come to going about naked soon, to spare my clothes!

How long shall I be able to endure it? My misery knows no bounds. Every sensitive spot in me has been pierced by the thorn. When I try to picture my heart it seems like a lump of stringy sausage made of dog flesh, rather than the keeper of lofty feelings and desires. What have I done to deserve it all? Why must I bear this inhuman pain?

To make sport of a man like this? How long will my patience last? Why must I cringe and scrape? Am I a coward?

As I wandered through the square

yesterday, gazing at the dusty pavement, bestrewn with cigarette ends, at the trembling leaves on the trees, at the houses on the other side of the river, the thought suddenly occurred to me that, did I but choose, I could join my darling Lidotchka in a few moments, my dear, eternally beloved child. Happiness smiled to me at the thought, a heavenly light seemed to descend upon my unfortunate head. I was, for the moment, rich and free, the richest and freest being in the whole world.

Why do I go on struggling against odds? Why am I careful of my boots, like a respectable pauper, when freedom and happiness are so close at hand in the deep, fastly-flowing river?

9th September.

There's nothing to say.

10th September.

On the advice of a former fellow-clerk, who had managed to get himself a job with an army contractor, I set out to a certain café on the Nevsky, where business men were known to gather. Luck would depend entirely on an easy-going self-confident manner. I should have to tell a few lively stories, introduce myself to people, and then worm my way in.

It turned out quite differently, though. I told no stories, nor could I put on a self-confident manner. I merely smiled, in the hope of attracting some sympathetic eye. I ordered some tea and a meat pie in an off-hand way, and when they were brought to me, I lapsed into a stony silence ; I seemed to lose the power of speech. I was stunned by the voices around me, by the alertness of the men to whom they

belonged. It was a sight to see them walk in and roll their eyes about till they settled on the individual approaching them. They would be seated together in a moment, smoking and chatting like veritable old cronies, abusing each other one moment, and ready to fall on each other's necks the next. Though their talk was sufficiently loud and communicative at times, it was difficult to gather what they were driving at. One thing, however, seemed clear—something was being bought and sold, some one was being robbed, ruined, or betrayed. That was the way the money was made.

They hadn't an air of money about them to look at. Most of them were shabby; only two wore real diamonds in scarf-pins, studs and rings, the rest wore imitation ones. Their pocket-books, however, which most took out now and again, were all

fat, and stuffed not with common paper, but with bank-notes. The sordidness may have been a matter of form, the livery essential to these men's service. Disgusting crowd!

I will say frankly that I set out to the café with my mind fully made up, and without any moral scruples. Had one of them said to me, "Look here, Ilya Petrovitch, we want to break open a safe to-night," or, "We want to counterfeit money, will you join us for good pay?" I should have accepted the commission without the smallest hesitation. At any rate, that is what I thought, but when I had been sitting there for an hour in stony silence, looking at their ties and faces, their dirty finger nails and diamond rings, I was filled with a loathing towards these men—not so much to what they stood for—I had no clear knowledge of

that—as to the men themselves, to the infamy in their faces. Horrible crowd!

I was so struck by a certain black-moustached man among them that I forgot, for a time, the hopelessness of my own position. He was not old, robust and strong, and the only one among that rabble who was well-dressed; he held himself with a calmness and dignity that inspired awe. He listened more than he spoke, smiling now and again, and refused to shake hands with a grubby man who approached him. Neither the man nor any one else paid any heed to that; it was taken as a matter of course. Once he let his black eye fall on me, cruel and indifferent; and, knowing him by instinct to be the rogue and swindler he was, I still felt the servile impulse to incline my head in an ingratiating way. I don't suppose he noticed me, or if he did, he

must have soon sized me up at my true value, and turned his attention to some one else. He allowed no one to pay for his tea when he got up to go; but five men followed him to the door, deferential even to his back. I learned afterwards from the remarks of the others, that the man had made several millions. Three or four was the figure mentioned, but even if half had been exaggerated, it still left the sufficient sum of two millions.

I thought of the man for the rest of the day after I had left the café. What had he done to earn two millions? What robberies and treacheries did they represent? What manner of man must he be? What kind of soul must he possess to be so calm, to fear neither the bloodshed, nor God, nor the devil? I found it hard to believe that he was made of the same stuff as myself. I marvelled as I tried to

recall his face, his powerful, robust figure, his calmness. I compared him to mother during dinner—mother who grudged herself every morsel she ate. I tried to recall Pavel, and the awful moment when I informed her of his death, and still more did I marvel at the mysteries of human life.

No amount of reflection on the rights and wrongs of it could have so completely killed the desire to take my share of the plunder as the sight of that man. To be a big rogue, you must be born a big rogue, and I haven't the quickness, the ease of manner, nor lightness of heart to make a small one. It is given to some men to possess millions, to others a conscience—a truly wise division of wealth !

11*th September.*

I've had a fit of extravagance. I enjoyed my supper.

Earlier in the day I went into Eliseyev's and, throwing a rouble on the counter in the lordly way of a man who possessed four millions, I asked for a pound of Moscow sausage of which mother and the children are very fond. Why shouldn't they enjoy a good meal for once, and think kindly of the man who was able to supply it? I bought two pounds of choice sweets, too, and two thousand cigarettes, which I took to Sashenka for her soldiers. I received her tender kiss and thanks without the smallest qualms of conscience. I hadn't courage enough to rob in the café, but didn't mind robbing at home.

Despite the satisfaction of a hearty meal, I am filled with remorse at this

moment, as though I had indeed committed a robbery in the high-way. A full stomach, however, is stronger than remorse and conscience, and I soon began to yawn with the callousness of a millionaire. This is the first time I have felt sleepy since I lost my work.

12th September.

I did not sleep, however, even though I did feel sleepy. I no sooner got to bed than all desire for sleep left me. I lay tossing about or smoking the whole night, trying to think of some honest work I could do. A waiter in a restaurant seemed to me a possible idea, or a tram-conductor, since men were scarce now, but with morning and the sun, I realised the futility of it. How could I do a waiter's difficult task with my poor health and inexperience! Such work was not for me!

14th September.

I am getting to know Petrograd as well as a tourist or a philosopher. I spend hours staring at monuments as though I had never seen them before. I try to understand their symbolic meaning. I inspect the palaces and new buildings. I am quite stirred by good architecture. With the greatest interest did I walk round the new Turkish Mosque near the Troitsky Bridge, to get a good view of it from all sides. I felt as though I were travelling in the Far East. I had my lunch on a bench in the Square, and meditated on the many different religions. I went into the Alexander III. Museum and admired the pictures. Acquaintances, only, I can't bear to meet, and disappear down a side street when I catch sight of one in the distance.

About the doings of the Germans I only learn from the staff bulletins on the public notices; I never buy any newspapers now. To judge by people's countenances, things are going badly with us, and the Germans are still advancing. I don't know how it will end, and I care very little; my own end will come first. It escaped my notice, somehow, that on the 3rd of the month Grodno was taken.

A ghost among the living, I abandon myself for hours together to ghostly reflections. I can see life as an outsider; I seem to get a bird's-eye view of it from above. I philosophise; mentally I arrange the affairs of men and governments. The rumbling motor vehicles, the burdened horses, the tense activity made me realise why there was a war. A man wants to possess more than his fellows, that is why

we have war. And I approved of his desire.

With a curiosity the living would not understand, I study the plan of the town. I like to know why it is laid out in roads and streets and squares. I can see the full importance of the tramway. I like the look of the block of flats and the porters; I like the stone quay. I saw the Ochta Bridge open to let a steamer pass one day, and I liked that, too. I like the bustling crowds at the railway stations; I never miss going to them every day. Nevertheless, I wouldn't mind if the whole thing collapsed. It would be an interesting spectacle to watch. I try to picture the flames and the ruins. The town would look very flat when it was over.

I saw two aeroplanes in the sky to-day from the Krestovsky Island; one made

a circuit round the edge of a large cloud. Mentally I was up there flying with them, not without a sense of pleasure. I take a very lordly view of life, on the whole. I mean this in all seriousness. At times I am in the best of moods. I don't mind how much money I spend, and buy presents and sweets for the children in the most lordly way. I took another basket of fruit to Sashenka, and gave it to her very gallantly.

A lord, indeed!

16th September.

The town is in a ferment like a disturbed ant hill. Voices are raised loudly in altercation. The Duma has been dismissed. Our only hope was in the Duma. How bold the citizens of Petrograd have become all at once! They shout things out in the streets they would have been afraid

to speak of in a whisper in the privacy of their own bedrooms but a short time ago! Trouble is feared. With the murmur of discontented voices in my ears, I think. "It's all very fine, my brave fellows. . . . But what has it to do with me?"

From sheer lack of something else to do, I went to the Taurida Palace. It looked just the same as on any ordinary day. A small crowd of us stood watching the members coming out. There seemed nothing unusual about them too; they were men like other men, only a little grave and satisfied, perhaps, that it had fallen to their lot to participate in such a great historic event. To be dismissed in the hour when "the country was in danger"! They came out with dignity, and sat stiff and upright in their carriages, looking grave, with the air of a specialist who had just finished a patient. When I

smiled and happened to pass some jocular remark, a young man near me said something about the black hundreds. I resolved to get away before I was mobbed, and really, what business had I there at all? I went to the Ochta Bridge afterwards and expended six kopeks to go down the Neva on a steamer as far as the Vasily Island.

The water has a strange attraction for me. I was very soothed to sit on the fore part of the ship, with the wind and spray beating against my face. It gave a pleasantness to my hopelessness and despair.

17*th September.*

I know now what emptiness means. How very weird and strange it is! Emptiness is everywhere; it stretches from the moon, at which I gazed last night, to the

English embankment. The houses are full of it; it clings to walls and ceilings; there is not a room that does not contain it; knock down every wall, and nothing will remain between me and the stars but emptiness.

I realised this very vividly at dawn yesterday. I had been dreaming that Lidotchka had come to see me, and I awoke. I was too restless to go to sleep again afterwards, so I got up and went into my study, where I sat down on the window-sill. It was getting light, but it was raining, and everything seemed grey and monotonous. There was no beginning or end to anything. It was still and quiet around me. A sense of the emptiness shot through me, of the emptiness within, and the emptiness without, the two stretching together throughout eternity. Emptiness was everywhere; within it

was heated, so that people should not perish of the eternal cold. And that thing sitting on the window-sill (I went on thinking) is a man, and the emptiness is all about him. The emptiness that is heated is called a house, and soon I shall have no house. . . .

Then I realised where I was. Like a lunatic, once more I was sitting on my window-sill in my pants. My legs seemed so long and my beard so grey. Your end has come, Ilya Petrovitch !

I would have gone to bed just now, but the moon peeped in at my window, so I think I'll go out and look at it. I don't like having to wake the porter each time I go in and out ; I have only the key of our own flat. I shouldn't like everybody to know if anything happened to me. What a dear boy Jena is !

19th September.

I have seen a horrible nightmare. I strolled casually into the Finland railway station where a crowd had collected to meet a company of wounded expected back from Germany. They had been dealt with and sent back again, for they were no longer terrible. Oh, God! Like a blind and deaf fool, absorbed in my own petty affairs, I did not realise at first why the crowd was there. It seemed a festive occasion; flag, flowers, and band must have leant colour to this thought. A bride and bridegroom might have been expected to arrive. When I heard the truth, I went cold with horror. I stood waiting for the arrival of the train, unable to picture the sight I was to see.

And when they arrived, and men without arms and legs were carried out, and the

blind and the halt hobbled along, and the band struck up in honour of the warriors' return, my heart melted within me, and I wept with the rest of the crowd. When I shut my eyes, I could not hear the sound of voices; I only heard the sound of feet and crutches along the platform, and the strains of the music. . . . I couldn't understand what was happening. I understood no better when I opened my eyes. In bright-coloured shirts of blue and red they came, as gay as bridegrooms, but their arms and legs were gone. . . . Were these, then, the new bridegrooms of Mother Russia? Who was I to look at them?

What a picture they made when they were seated at the table where a meal had been prepared for them! The tears rolled down their cheeks and salted the bread of their native land that they were eating. How weary their faces looked!

They seemed as dear and familiar to me as the face of an old friend. Speeches were made to welcome them home. . . . And as I stood watching a blind little pock-marked man near me, who couldn't carry his spoon to his mouth, I felt that the earth ought to open and swallow me up. At that moment a young officer caught the eye of one of his men, a little fellow who had lost an arm. The officer came up, and the two smiled to each other, and when I saw that smile I could endure it no longer. I turned away, and pushing my way out of the crowd, I walked over to a remote corner of the station, and prostrated myself three times to the ground.

Ah, my bridegrooms in bright-coloured shirts! How heavily do the wedding crowns rest on your brows, and how burning hot are the wedding rings that

will join you for ever to your native land!

Forgive me, a sinner and outcast!

20th September.

Sashenka, my dear friend, from the short letter you will find on the table, you will see that you must seek for the explanation of my death in this diary. Read it carefully, my dear, read it in a friendly spirit, and you will understand, and perhaps approve of my resolve to quit a life where I was so superfluous, and where I suffered so much. I know you love me. I have a sacred belief in your love. I will carry this belief to our dear Lidotchka in her solitude that I am soon to join with so much joy and gladness. Yes, with joy and gladness, Sashenka. Don't worry yourself with the thought

that I died suffering, that I died in terror. I am glad to cast off this wearisome life. I am but a weak creature, Sashenka. For three weeks I have kept from you the knowledge that I have lost my work, and that we were faced with starvation. I was ashamed to confess my inefficiency in the battle of life. Another, a stronger man, would have got out of his difficulties, and found himself some other work, but I couldn't. What was the good of me? To live on public charity I have no right and no desire to do. There are men who have more claim on the public than I. I saw a company of wounded arrive at the station yesterday, and the bitterness of their lot made me weep. These are the men the public must help.

As for you, my sad beauty, my heart of gold, I am no longer a young man, and my person could not have been attractive

to you—it was only your goodness of heart that induced you to love me. When I am gone you will be free; I only stood in your way. I was but a poor husband to you! I did not lead you with a firm hand along the difficult path of life, nor did I illumine the darkness for you with the light of my wisdom. I was unkind, petty and egoistic. I could hide my head with shame when I think of the way I used to blame you for my digestion. It was I, too, who tried to drag you away from your self-denying work at the hospital. I complained of not being able to look after the children, forgetting that you had learned the more difficult task of looking after the wounded. To think of the injured expression I used to put on whenever you came home, or when I visited you at the hospital, and criticised your arrangements! Please, dear, forget one thing—*forget what*

I said to you when Lidotchka died. Wipe out those base words from your memory and the cruel reproaches, or I shall never be able to rest in my grave.

When the children grow up, so that they may have no cause to be ashamed of their father, don't tell them what you know about me. Sashenka, I have been cursed by Mother Russia. I heard her voice plainly yesterday when I saw our blind and maimed heroes as they returned from Germany. They were our defenders, Sashenka, yours and mine; it broke my heart to see their misery. The few useless tears I shed would never have seen the light of day had I not strolled by accident into the railway station. "Be thou accursed, base son!" I heard the voice of Russia say. It was not delusion, Sashenka, it wasn't a dream; I heard it as plainly as could be.

You may think it madness. It would pain me to have you think that. There was a time when I was mad, dear, but that was in the days before I heard Russia's voice, in the days when I used to beat my breast and boast of my righteousness like a Pharisee, and sit in judgment upon those who fought. Had I been a German, Germany too, must have cursed me, for the Germans have their wounded—the blind and maimed, who fought to defend the rest. What have I done for Russia, Sashenka, in her dreadful hour of need? The only thing I have done was not to rob her, but was that enough? I knew the country was in danger; I used to repeat the words like a parrot, but what did I do? Nothing! What damnation is contained in that one word!

Unflinchingly I carry out the sentence

of death with my own hand—spies and traitors must die alike, for there is no room for them on earth. Russia's maternal voice has cursed me, and I cannot, I dare not live. How could I look any one in the face after that? I am so useless, Sashenka, so superfluous that not a void will remain even in the place where I once was. No one will notice my absence, no one will know that I am gone. One thing only fills me with dread. What if our Lidotchka turns from me when I find her among the heavenly angels? But no, they must surely understand better there than here. Perhaps the cruel suffering with which I paid for my insignificance —vain and inglorious as it was—may be counted in my favour. There are no strong and weak there; all are equal; there may be a refuge in the folds of Christ's garments even for me. I have settled my

accounts on earth, and in heaven there will be new reckonings.

I hope you will be happy, my dear, my wonderful wife. May God bless you for the love you gave me, for your gentleness and patience, for every touch of your beloved hand. Don't mourn for me. Have the same Mass said for the three of us—Pavel, warrior fallen in the field, Lidotchka and for me. Make no attempt to find my body; it will be carried far out to sea. Good-bye, my dear, good-bye.

22nd September.

Such wonderful, divine things have happened that I must set them down all in order to avoid confusion.

Three days have now passed. The day I decided to kill myself I spent with the children whom I took for a walk in the

Alexandrov Garden. I bought them some sweets, and tried to let them have as pleasant a time as I could. I took home some special delicacy for mother's dinner. I wrote a letter to her son, Nikolai, by the way, but fortunately I didn't post it.

When the children went to bed I made them say their prayers in my presence, then I settled up all my small cash affairs —it was fortunate that I had no debts— and wrote a letter to the police and another to Sashenka. At about one in the morning I set out for the Troitsky Bridge, from whence I had decided to jump into the river; it was quiet and deserted at that hour. For greater certainty, and to spare myself all the suffering possible, I put two heavy lead weights from the old broken cuckoo clock in the nursery into my great-coat pockets, hoping to add stones and other heavy objects on the

way. I may say with perfect truthfulness that I felt no fear at the prospect of death, nor any particular regrets at parting with life. The few tears I shed when writing to Sashenka were merely formal ones.

I wondered mostly as I went along what my dear ones would do when I was gone, and how they would live. I saw that they might be better off without me, perhaps—fatherless children have more right to expect help. I counted, too, on Sashenka's brother, Nikolai, to whom I could not have appealed personally. With these thoughts I passed Moshkov Street, and was brought face to face with the dark, lonely river. The night was dark and clouded; the Peter-Paul Fortress, on the other side, was hardly discernible; a faint light glimmered dimly, the lantern at the Fortress gates, no doubt, and near there, in the darkness, the river seemed

as broad as the sea. Suspended over the river, to the right, were the steady lights of the Troitsky Bridge, close by; it was still and deserted. "At last!" I thought, hugging the cold weights in my pocket, and my face was bathed by the fresh moistness of the water whirling silently round the stone parapets. "There is no need to hurry; I will stay here for a while."

It was then that the extraordinary thing happened to me. I can hardly explain it in words. I'm not a fool; on the contrary, I have a good deal of common sense. There are some things I do not see, others I do not know, still others I do not understand; there is so little time for the understanding, busy as one usually is, but never in the whole of my experience, have I ever gone in for prolonged, concentrated thought. At that moment, however, a change took place; I seemed to be

transformed, as in a fairy tale ; a thousand eyes and ears seemed to have opened in me, and prolonged concentrated thoughts filled my brain. Motion was impossible. I had to sit or stand, but I couldn't walk. I forgot all words, I forgot the very names of things ; thoughts so big and vast took possession of me that each seemed large enough to have embraced the whole world. I cannot describe the condition. My first realisation was the sense of my manhood. I was the inner meaning of the words, people, mankind, man, such as I stood there with my great-coat, lead weights in my pockets, thinking those thoughts by the flowing river, in the silence of the night. And the other people, where were they ? I thought, and a vision of all the people in the world floated before me. What difference was there between the living and the dead ? Where do the dead

go to? Where do the living come from? And again my thoughts seemed immense, never-ending; and I saw all the living and the dead, and all the people who were to come, and there were numbers and numbers of them; they were floating with the clouds beneath the moon, they came flying through the rays of the sun, they were in the rain and the wind and the river. And then I understood, without knowing how the understanding reached me, that I was immortal, absurdly immortal, and that Petrograd might perish a thousand times, and I should still exist.

I was on the Troitsky Bridge by that time, at the very spot I had chosen for my leap into the water, when the absurdity of suicide struck me so forcibly, that instead of leaping in, I threw the lead weights into the water, so violently that the water never even splashed as they fell.

And again I became absorbed in deep, prolonged thought as I gazed on the water flowing down the river in the light of the lamps. I looked up at the dark, infinite sky, and still vast thoughts came to me, and they were as clear as though I had been a sage who understood the meaning of the whole universe. A few motor-cars passed over the bridge, recalling me to myself; I turned and waited expectantly for others to come, rejoicing when two bright electric lamps appeared at the bend of the bridge. The car hooted as it passed.

I had been humbled. Humility is the only word that describes the sensation that came to me as I stood shivering with cold by the river. Suddenly, I don't know why, I shuddered, and was hurled from the heights of wisdom and understanding to the depths of littleness and

fear. My hands in my pockets clenched convulsively. It seemed as if my fingers had grown dry and drawn as a bird's claws. "Coward!" I thought, and such a feeling of terror for the death I had planned came upon me, that I forgot I had thrown away the weights, and that I had decided not to kill myself before this terror came. I know now that it was real cowardice I experienced—cowardice pure and simple, and that there was no very great harm in it, but at the time my terror was truly awful. Where had my wisdom gone? Where my big thoughts? I stood on the bridge, not daring to look at the water, trembling so violently that my teeth chattered. However, desperate as I was, I still kept on making some attempts, measuring the height of the rail, and clutching it with my hands. "Now!" I thought in despair, feeling the freedom

of my toes; they were in no way fixed to the pavement, and might leave go any moment, now. . . .

And in that awful moment I suddenly recalled our flight from Shuvalov at the beginning of the war, and my Lidotchka, and the flower I had picked for her on the road, and the inexpressible terror I had felt then. . . . So this was what I had feared! This that my heart had foreboded! This, then, explained the flower and the haste, and the dread of looking behind, and the straining to go ahead, to hide, to seek out a refuge for oneself on earth! The soul had known what threatened it and quaked in the frail human frame!

"My God! It's all the war, the war!" I thought, and a vision of the war and its horrors appeared before me. I forgot that I was in Petrograd, forgot that I was

standing on the bridge, forgot everything surrounding me. My consciousness was filled only with the war, and the war was all about me. I can't describe this sensation, this new terror, nor the tears that gushed from my eyes—I could cry now at the very thought of it. Some man passing, fortunately, happened to notice me. He had gone by, but turned back and addressed me. Close as in a mirror could I see his unfamiliar face and eyes that, for some reason, seemed awful to me. I backed away from him with a cry, and fled over the bridge to Sashenka.

I can't remember where I got into a cab, nor how much I paid for my fare, nor how I got to the hospital, I only remember falling on my knees before Sashenka, and trembling in every limb, and swallowing my tears, I blurted out my wild, disjointed confession. . . .

My Sashenka is a saint. I have no right to call her mine. She belongs to God, to all men. I am unworthy to touch her hand; all my life I must weep at her feet and praise God for having created her. Sashenka, my heart of gold, my pure soul, blessed be the day when you were born!

Like a fool, I had expected reproaches, but this is what I heard when I could distinguish her divine words through my sobs and tears, "Never mind about your work, dear; it doesn't matter. I was offered a salary here, but I refused to take it. I will take it now, and we can get along quite well with the children. We shall be together; we must do the best we can. I must take you home now, as though you had been badly wounded. It will do you good to look at the sleeping children and to kiss mother. You

must rest your soul, my poor, dear Ilenka. . . ."

She had it in her heart to call me her "dear Ilenka!" She wept over me, and kissed my grey hair.

"Don't kiss my hair," I muttered, "I haven't been to the baths for a month."

What did that matter to her! Wonderful woman! I can't remember her exact words; they were not at all as I have them here, but I was so weak and faint at the time that I had to lean against the wall to keep myself from falling. She left me for a while to make some arrangement, and, grown calmer, I cast about the room where it had all taken place, wiping away my tears. My eyes fell upon a white overall with a red cross hanging on the wall, and again my tears gushed forth. Henceforth the red cross will be as sacred to me as my Sashenka.

In that condition Sashenka took me home. I turned my face away from the porter as he opened the door—we live up a different staircase. I tried to speak, but my words were unintelligible, and Sashenka stopped me. "Don't talk now," she said, "wait till you are calmer. We can talk to-morrow." She had asked for a few days' leave.

I have no clear recollection, too, of what happened when we got home. The rooms seemed very bright and festive; they might have been prepared for a party. I kissed the sleeping children, each in turn, I kissed mother, whom Sashenka had roused, and we all cried together, smiling happily and foolishly. Then the samovar was prepared, and as I drank the hot tea, the tears fell into my cup. I couldn't stop crying for joy and pity.

Sashenka made me a bed in my study,

thinking I should be quieter there. She put on clean sheets and gave me clean night things, and when I got into the fragrant fresh bed, and lay down on my back with my hands on the coverlet, and Sashenka put a green reading-lamp on a little table by my side, and opened a book to read to me, I did indeed feel as if I had been badly wounded, and was now recovering. How pleasant was the very weakness with which I raised my eyes to the bright patch of light cast by the lamp on the ceiling, to the lamp itself, to Sashenka's chin, which was all I could see of her face !

She was reading something from Gogol, and though I only caught fragments of the story, it was as sweet and soothing as a pleasant dream about strange people, fields, country roads. "Selefan, Petrushka, the trap." I heard the words, I could see the

people, yet there was the dark river, the motor-cars, the man seizing my hand on the bridge, then again came the trap and bells, and a long, winding country road. I fell asleep, but started up with a shudder, and when I saw the patch of light and heard Sashenka's reassuring voice, I dropped into a sound, peaceful sleep at last.

When I awoke in the morning Sashenka was sitting by the little table with tears in her eyes. She had just finished reading this stupid diary, and looked so sweet after her sleepless night spent by my side. Dear, divine Sashenka!

25th September.

We have moved to the house of Sashenka's friend, Fimotchka, with whom we have rented two rooms, inhabited formerly by some refugee. The refugee was ignominiously turned out; we, too, were

refugees. Fimotchka is the jolliest person imaginable; she is always laughing. God knows how I love these two tiny rooms, and Fimotchka's jokes against my sensibility.

I might have moved to a palace for I feel as free as a king. Fimotchka has a canary, and I foolishly stand at its cage watching its antics for half an hour at a time.

I can't talk about important things now, that must come later.

The Germans continue to advance.

26th September.

I find it difficult to see myself as Sashenka describes me, but I have faith in each of my blessed angel's words. What a horrible picture it is of myself, to be sure! No wonder I was such a stranger to Sashenka. Absorbed as I was in my own sorrows, I

failed to notice her tears; to each kind word I answered with a vicious growl—like a dog who had been deprived of a bone. How incredibly vain were my fears and my pride when I had lost my work! Other men might lose their work and have to beg, only I was too exalted for that! Other men might lose their children, only I must cry aloud and beat my breast! Other men might have their houses burnt and their property destroyed, and be subjected to all kinds of misfortunes, only I must be guarded sacredly against any ill wind! Other men might fight and suffer, while I, like a retired school-master, must sit up at night to prepare my lessons, to moralise to unwilling ears, and to set the conduct marks. Here's minus for you, Germany! Go into the corner! All you fools must stand in the corner! I'm the only sensible person among you, and I

will sit in the cathedra and sing my own praises!

I wonder how Sashenka came to see it? What a dear she is! She says it's so plain to anyone. If it is, what made me so blind? The same reason, no doubt, that prompts me to ask these useless questions. I see it all so clearly, yet will put marks of interrogation from force of habit. How stupid of me!

There seems nothing to which I can compare my present lightness of heart. I am afraid of nothing. Nothing in the world is terrible; I created my own terror. If the Germans come, what of it? If we must run away, we will run away; if we must die, we will die. Peter and Jena are dearer to me than ever, but even the thought of their death does not fill me with dread. I should mourn for them bitterly, no doubt, but I refuse to bow

down to death, I refuse to invite her as my guest! Besides, the idea of death is ridiculous; those we love never die, Sashenka says.

Last night Fimotchka kept on calling me old man. It was "Well, old man" here, "well, old man" there, until Sashenka was quite hurt and rebuked her for it. I didn't mind in the least; I knew she was only joking. I had a great desire, nevertheless, to see myself in the glass. Supposing it were true! I don't look so old, really; no one would take me for more than forty-six, but there's a something about the eyes and in my smile, and in my ever-ready tears. . . . But I have a good many years to live yet, and am as strong as most men. Fimotchka says my extensive exercise through the town must have hardened me a lot. I don't mind her chaff.

We are all, except mother, delighted with our new home. It is hard to understand why the old lady was so grieved by the removal. She collapsed completely, and though this is the second day we have been here, she is lying on her bed with her face to the wall, dozing silently. When we burst the news on her suddenly about my having lost my work, little foreseeing how it would affect her, we grew quite alarmed at her condition. She turned pale, and trembled all over like a leaf. When all the furniture had been removed from the house, she still refused to leave her room, and wept when we led her away. Yesterday she summoned Sashenka, and speaking in a whisper, asked her to fetch Pavel. Sashenka said she would, of course, and fortunately, the poor old lady did not repeat her request. I have just looked in to see them. They are all asleep—mother,

Sashenka, and the children. Nurse sleeps in Fimotchka's drawing-room while Sashenka is here.

I managed to sell our spare furniture to advantage, and got that burden off my mind. Sashenka is to remain with us for another day, and then she goes back to the hospital. She offered to look out for some useful occupation for me. Can I ever express the respect I feel for her! She dragged me out from the bottomless pit into which I had fallen. . . .

Fimotchka came back from some friends, and finding me still up, sat with me for an hour talking about the horrors of the German invasion. From her pallor and disjointed womanly words I realised more than from the papers, with what horror and anxiety the German invasion is awaited by our capital and by the whole country. Oh, Lord, spare Russia! Spare her cities,

her people, her houses and cottages ! Spare us, not for what we deserve, oh, Lord, nor for our riches ; have mercy on us for our ignorance and poverty, as you used to be merciful to the ignorant and poor when you walked on earth !

I can't go to sleep. I want to be up and doing. My hands, hanging idly, irritate me. I should like to scrub the floor, if it had not been scrubbed already. I must send Sashenka back to the hospital to-morrow. I am quite well enough now, and we mustn't put it off any longer than can be helped.

Oh, that my chest were thirty versts broad so that I could place it in front of a German gun as a shield for others !

28th September.

I have had two promises of work, as a clerk on a refugee committee with a small

salary, the other at the front in the ambulance service. I should prefer the second, but will take the first, if necessary.

Mother is much worse, and calls continually for Pavel.

1st October.

I go about with a collecting box for the wounded.

3rd October.

I could never have believed what inexpressible happiness can be found in tears. Crying used to make my head ache, bring a bitter taste to my mouth, and a leaden feeling to my heart, but now I find it as pleasant and easy to cry as to love. I realised this particularly during the two days of my wandering through the streets of Petrograd with a collecting box in my hand. Each contribution, every mark of

sympathy for the wounded, filled me with deep emotion. How kind people were! How many hearts of gold passed before my happy eyes!

As an assistant I had a lively little schoolboy, of untiring energy, who made my long legs serve me in good stead. Together we went to the Ochta district, and there, amongst poor workers and labourers, we spent many hours of exultation.

"Don't they give!" Fedia the schoolboy said to me. "Don't they give! All you've got to do is to take it!"

"Yes, Fedia, all you've got to do is to take it!" I laughed at his naïve words with humid eyes. And when I saw an old, long-bearded carter who turned with difficulty to give me his copper, I loved the sight of his hand and his beard, I loved everything about him as the most precious of human realities that no war can eclipse.

I like, too, the way they are not the least ashamed that their contributions are smaller than those on the Nevsky or Morskaya. Some asked me if Fedia was my son.

"No, we are friends," Fedia hastened to assure them. He always seemed hurt on these occasions; he probably felt too big to be anybody's son. He would insist on carrying the heavy box until he was fagged out, making me pin on the badges, and altogether ordering me about in the most dignified way.

Twice the boxful of coins changed hands between us. Carried away by our enthusiasm, we walked until we could scarcely drag ourselves along; Fedia was particularly tired. It was getting dark when we emerged from a little street facing a cotton-mill with smoking chimneys, and sat down on a beam to rest. For a

long time we sat there enjoying the glorious, tranquil evening, the barges and ships on the broad Neva, the sunset's glow on the misty clouds. I shall never forget that evening. Disturbed by a passing tug, the water rippled against the flat bank, the Ochta children paddled quietly in the shadows of the large barges that crept along the bank, playing their evening games; blue lights began to appear on the bank opposite. My soul was as innocent as though I had turned into a little child. It was Fedia who talked; I was silent. He talked about the Germans for a while, then he, too, grew quiet and pensive. Some soldiers passed over the Ochta Bridge, and above the din of the traffic we caught fragments of their song.

"The soldiers are singing," Fedia started. "Where are they?"

"On the bridge. Listen, listen!"

How nice it is that our soldiers sing in their natural voices, unspoiled by training! Their voices speak of their youth, their country, their people, of Russia herself. The song died away; it began to get dark; on the bank opposite lights appeared in windows and streets, and still I thought of our soldiers and Russia. Russia! Wondrous word! As in a dream I could see an Autumn country road, lights twinkling in the peasant cottages, a peasant standing at his cart. The very horse was dear to me. I thought of its eternal toil with gratitude; I thought of other horses, other villages, other towns. . . . I had dozed off, it turned out, and Fedia had fallen fast asleep. It was a good thing the nights were still warm. I picked up his cap that had slipped from his head, and had great difficulty in rousing him; I simply had to force him to open his eyes.

"I can't go on!" he muttered.

"I would carry you if I had the strength. Let's go as far as the steamer, and then we can take a tram."

"Very well," Fedia agreed. My little chum had a great partiality for steamers.

Thus we worked together for two days. It rained yesterday, unfortunately, and we were obliged to stop our collecting, but the feeling of gladness remains as before. Brightly does man illumine the Autumn mud and bad weather.

I am going to get a place at the front, it seems.

7th October.

Mother is dead. For a long time she has only feigned to live, and now she has gone to join her Pavel. Will she find him? But I know that they are in the same place, and that my Lidotchka is

there, too, and that I will be there when my time comes.

So many people are dying! They seem hewn down as by a wood-cutter's axe; each day the familiar forest grows thinner.

There is a stubborn rumour which the newspapers support, that the German advance is over. They have been advancing steadily since the spring, and now they have stopped by Riga and Dvinsk. Nevertheless, as though divided from us by no more than a low wall, we seem to see their ruthless eyes peeping out at us, and the days dwindle in dark incertitude.

13th October.

How sad and pitiful human beings are! How difficult their lot in this world, how trying for their enigmatical souls! What does the human soul grope for? To what

end is it striving through blood and tears ?

Each day I hear tales about the sad procession of refugees from Poland and Volhinia along every road. We have grown so used to the word "refugee," meeting it in print and counting it in figures, that we do not realise its meaning. What woeful pictures they must make along the roads, even now at this moment, with their rumbling carts, their ailing children, crying and coughing, their hungry bellowing cattle ! What large numbers of them there are ! Whole nations moving from place to place, and, like Lot's wife, looking back at the smoke and the flames of the burning towns and villages behind them ! There are not enough carts or horses, and one hears that bullocks and big dogs are harnessed, and sometimes men, too, and they drag their own loads as man

must have dragged his belongings in ancient days when he was first pursued. . . .

How difficult it is to imagine the sights that are to be seen along our roads! The refugees stream down the usually deserted, muddy country roads, making them crowded as the Nevsky on a holiday. How long will this unknown force pursue us?

Another sad piece of news came to-day. The Bulgarians have attacked the Serbians in some place called Kniajevetz. Even this we were not spared. Brothers are to kill brothers. The soul shrinks at the thought that this race is to perish, that this sparsely-grown meadow is not to be spared the mower's scythe. With what feelings of anguish must they be waiting and listening for the advance! "They are coming!" It would not take much to wipe out the Serbs. Didn't the

Turks massacre eight hundred thousand Armenians, as the papers tell us? But why speak of it? I weep and weep; I pity them all; each moment the heart is torn by some fresh disaster. I don't know whether to pray for the chastisement of the Bulgarian traitors or to bow down to the incomprehensible mysteries of the human soul.

An article I happened to come across about the poor Armenians, brought me nearer to cursing than to pity and tears. It took me the whole of a sleepless night to get over it. This is what was seen by an eye-witness: I set it down word for word. "The most awful sights were seen by our unique eye-witness in Bitlis. He had scarcely reached Bitlis when in a wood he came upon a group of newly massacred men, and near them, completely naked, and hanging feet upwards, were three

women. Close to one of the women, with arms outstretched to its mother, was a year-old child. The mother was still alive, her face bloodshot; she, too, stretched out her arms to the child, but they could not reach each other."

How could I sleep with that awful image before my eyes? It was as much as I could do to breathe. The blood rushed to my head as though I had been hanging by my feet, and at moments I nearly choked. I did not shed tears, curiously; my tears were dry for that night. I was filled with a raging fury; I wanted to curse those murderers. I say nothing of the newly massacred men—have we not accustomed ourselves to regard men as sheep, and to be touched only by a conventional emotion in like circumstances? and have we not enough of these "newly slaughtered" in our own slaughter-house?

but the woman and the child! The woman and the child. . . .

She was still living; she might have been hanging like that, head downwards, for half an hour, for an hour, perhaps. What horrible red circles must have danced before her eyes when the blood rushed to her brain? How did she breathe? How did her heart beat? And through the turbid redness, through the dark obscurity of death, she could distinguish the image of her child; she could see only her crawling infant with what remained of her sight, and with all the human force she possessed, she stretched out her purple arms to it, and her purple swollen face. To any other being that horrible purple face would have been terrifying, but the innocent babe strove to get to her, still knowing her to be his mother. "But they could not reach each other."

In the wildest nightmare the whole of that night I tried to unite those outstretched hands. Each moment it seemed that success was mine, that the hands would touch, and that some eternally glorious life would come about with that contact, but some unknown force seemed to drag them asunder, and me with them. I shook myself, to come to my senses (I regretted that I had given up smoking; a smoke would have been very soothing just then) but again the nightmare returned, and it seemed to have neither beginning nor end. Once more I was trying to unite the hands; they seemed so close; but again that unknown, invisible force dragged them apart. The blood that rushed to my head and the despair nearly choked me. The nightmare became truly awful in the end. The hands no longer strove towards each other, but were stretched out

to me, to my throat, and they seemed to grip it like a vice, and there were not four hands only, but numbers and numbers of them. . . .

Fimotchka rushed in when she heard my groans, to find out what was the matter. She gave me some ether and valerian drops, and had a soothing effect on me by the sight of a living person. When she was gone the nightmare returned, but not in its acutest form. The hands were no longer at my throat, but striving vainly to touch each other as at first, and I was holding forth eloquently in our office on the subject, and waving my long arms about. It was not until morning that I fell into a dreamless sleep. To-day I was filled with many strange thoughts and emotions. I stared at every pair of hands I saw, whether busy or idle, and longed for their union. I thought of

Sashenka's mother and of mothers in general. I wonder why a mother doesn't see that in mourning for her own son she is aiming at some other woman's son, and that all are mourning alike? Perhaps they do see it? the thing is so simple. Another force is at work. Who is it strives for union, and who prevents it? "But they could not reach each other," the eye-witness said.

My anger has left me, my sadness returned, and once more the tears flow. Whom can I curse, whom can I judge, when we are all alike unfortunate? Suffering is universal; hands are outstretched to each other, and when they touch, Mother Earth and her Son, the great solution will come. But I will not live to see it. And what have I done to deserve it? As a "cell" I have lived, as a "cell" I must die. The only thing I can ask of fate

is that my suffering and my death should not have been wasted. I accept both submissively. But I cannot quite resign myself to this helplessness. My heart is aglow, and I stretch out my hand and cry, "Come, let us join hands! I love you, I love you. . . ."

And my tears flow fast.

27th January 1916.