

Still another hour passed in pleasant conversation; then I got up again. I said nothing about going. The time was for action, not words. I went and saw about my horse being saddled. I made no further mention of corn, meaning to bring up the subject once I was on my horse, provided she did not do so before that. The horse was saddled and I was in the middle of making my adieux to the various members of the family when she exclaimed, as if by inspiration, although she knew the purpose of my visit as well as I did: '*Un momentito!*' — and disappearing like lightning into the maisal she returned with a huge saddlebag packed full. '*Un regalito para la gringuita, pobrecita, andando en estas tierras tan fieras!*' — A small present for the lady, poor little thing, traveling about in

these wild countries!' she declared as she tied the bag to my saddle. I gave effusive thanks, a more effusive farewell, sprang into the saddle, and departed. I did not need to look into the saddlebag. Well did I know that I carried back the corn she could not possibly sell!

The point is that this has to be gone through with every time one wants to buy, and every little purchase needs as much time and conversation. No wonder these people are poor. No wonder chacras are not well tilled. The time is passed in conversation. But for us poor gringos, who value each hour of our lives, and who, when we would pay fifteen centavos for each *choclo* — ear of green corn — in Lima, get a hundred here as a present, where is the economy? Where?

## THE HOME LIFE OF THE ROMANOV. I.

BY S. R. MINZLOV

[About a year ago, in the issue of April 28, 1923, the Living Age published a note upon the memoirs of Alexander II which, among other things, confirmed the rumor that Tsar Nicholas I committed suicide in despair over Russia's military disasters in Crimea. The following reminiscences, showing the pleasanter side of that monarch's domestic life, while not susceptible of documentary proof, purport to be authentic.]

From *Dni*, March 31

(BERLIN CONSERVATIVE-SOCIALIST RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE DAILY)

HERE in our little Yugoslav town of Novy Sad, among former aristocrats and other fellow-countrymen who have seen better times, I have discovered a few really interesting old ladies and gentlemen who have suffered much, like all our émigrés, but who — unlike most of these unfortunates — have also learned much from their experi-

ence. I often feel, when conversing with one of them, as if I were speaking with an ancient hermit. Last summer we Russian lodgers at a wretched little house would gather evenings in the tiny courtyard and, sitting between the stable and the garbage bin, would chat and drink tea under the starry skies. Our party included former

ladies-in-waiting and dignitaries of the Imperial Court. The particular tale that follows was related by one of these, a Madame Shkinskaia, who spent a lifetime as a tutor in the Tsar's family, and is absolutely trustworthy.

Many years ago all Moscow and the Crimean resorts knew the familiar figure of a tall, gray-haired woman, energetic and erect in spite of her already advanced years, who invariably wore a short skirt and a man's high boots and carried a cane. She was commonly called Masha Fredericks, and, be it said by the way, she could not tolerate Count Fredericks, her namesake and Russia's last Minister of the Imperial Household.

She had been educated at Smolny, the old school of nobles, where she attracted the notice of Emperor Nicholas I at a graduation ball, because she sat by the wall, lonely and unattended. The Tsar promptly led Grand Duke Michael up to her and told him to ask her to dance.

'I don't care to dance with such a homely girl,' the young man muttered.

'Get out of this then, you fool!' said the Emperor sharply, and, removing his sabre, asked the girl for a waltz. At its conclusion he presented her to the Empress, who received her with great kindness.

Before commencement the young girls were naturally all afurry with their plans for the future. The Tsarina often called at the Institute and it did not escape her observing eye that Masha Fredericks usually sat alone during these lively times, and did not take part in all this dreaming aloud of future happiness. She had no place to go after she left Smolny, — at least, no pleasant place, — for she was a poor orphan.

One day the Empress put her arms around the girl and said: 'I'll make

her dreams for her. Masha will stay with us.'

That night hardly anyone slept in the big dormitory. Everyone talked of Masha, envied her, and rejoiced with her.

A few days before commencement, basket-trunks with 'their own things' began to pile into the senior dormitories. They contained the pretty gowns that the girls would wear when they discarded their school uniforms at graduation. Masha, who had no relatives, did not expect a trunk. However, one came for her, labeled 'M. Fredericks' in the Empress's own handwriting. When it was opened, the girls smelled the Tsarina's favorite perfume; obviously she had packed the trunk herself.

On commencement day there was always a grand dinner at Smolny for the senior girls, after which the graduates went up the grand stairway to the great white ballroom on the second floor; this was the only time in their student life that any Smolny girl had that experience. Among the throngs of parents waiting for their daughters, the Empress stood modestly, waiting for Masha. In those days parents never came for their daughters in their own carriages, because that would be considered tactless toward the girls who had no such luxury. Everyone came in a hired carriage and the doorman announced them in the alphabetical order of the girls' names. The Empress, in accordance with this custom, took Masha away in a hired conveyance. The following day, when custom required each mother of a new graduate to make a formal call on the principal of Smolny, the Empress called with her new favorite.

The young orphan's bed was placed in the same chamber with those of the young Grand Duchesses Olga and Maria, who welcomed her most kindly.

In the dining-room she found her napkin in a ring with her own initials, and under the napkin graduation presents from the Imperial couple. Then Nicholas I raised his glass and offered a toast to her as 'our God-sent daughter.'

Masha Fredericks had no property whatsoever of her own, and aristocratic courtiers sometimes slighted her. But the Empress was always on the lookout for such incidents and speedily showed the offenders their place. She herself possessed a remarkably kindly and even disposition. She always wore a large shawl, and when excited betrayed her emotion with a single gesture: she wrapped the shawl more tightly around her shoulders. Nicholas I had great respect for his wife and perfect harmony reigned in the family.

Every day one of the Tsar's daughters sat next to him at table and shared the special meal served him, — usually the plain barracks fare of *shchi* and *kasha*: that is, sour cabbage soup with cream and buckwheat grits, — for he hated to eat anything alone. The girls took turns at this duty. A few days after Masha's arrival, when the family was ready to sit down for dinner, one of the Grand Duchesses ran ahead to take her seat next to her father, but her sister stopped her and the seat remained empty. Thereupon the Tsar turned to Masha Fredericks and said sternly: 'This is not in order. Don't you know, Masha, that it's your turn to-day?'

Masha hastened to take her seat next to Nicholas I and thus made her entry into the daily routine of the royal family.

A few years later, when Nicholas I was walking in Petrograd on a rainy, misty day, he noticed a small boy leading a still younger girl, who followed him like a shadow. He asked the children what they wanted.

'Take us with you,' said the boy.

'Who are you?'

The boy gave the name of a Polish count who had recently been exiled to Siberia and deprived of his title for active participation in the last Polish insurrection. The Tsar frowned and asked: 'Where is your mother?'

'She is dead.'

A few minutes later, while the Empress, her daughters, and Masha were seated in their warm, cosy boudoir, embroidering and talking, they heard the quick steps of the Tsar approaching. The monarch walked in, followed by two strange, wet, shivering children. He said brusquely to his wife: 'There! Do with them what you please' — and, turning sharply on his heel, left the room. He did not speak a word that evening at dinner. But at another dinner, a few days later, the Empress handed him a sheet of paper with the remark: 'I've done it.'

The paper was an order to receive the little Polish girl in the Smolny Institute and the boy in the Pages' School. Nicholas I read it, then raised his eyes and looked steadily at the Empress for a few moments. She bore his gaze firmly. Finally, muttering between his teeth: 'Let it be as you wish,' he signed the paper and kissed his wife's hand.

Thus the little Polish children were placed in the two privileged schools the same day. The Empress never forgot to keep track of them. The girl proved a gloomy, vengeful little soul. The boy died before completing his course. When the girl's graduating-day came, the question arose as to how she was to be named in her diploma, since her parents had been deprived of their title. This was important, since the diplomas were distributed at the commencement exercises and the names would be read aloud in public. The Empress was worried. Finally one day she wrapped her shawl tightly around

her and, taking a liberty that she rarely ventured, entered her husband's study without invitation. A few minutes later she returned with a radiant face. In her hand she held a sheet of paper with the Polish girl's name and the title 'Countess' added in the Emperor's own handwriting. Later the Emperor received her protégée at the Palace and soon arranged for her marriage with a Court official.

A little Swedish countess, Maria Kronhelm, also studied at Smolny about that time. As she was a poor orphan, she was, after her graduation, recommended as a governess to a prominent family. She was a rare red-haired beauty, danced admirably, and was naively open-hearted. Soon after arriving at the strange home, her employers gave a grand ball. Young Maria Kronhelm had scraped together her last pennies to contrive an evening gown for the occasion. When the guests began to arrive she sat in the nursery in her flimsy dress, all excitement and expectation, waiting to be invited to join the party. The mistress of the house walked in to have a look at her little girl.

'What does this performance mean?' she asked, with a chilly stare at the evening gown of the young governess.

'I — there — there's going to be a ball —' she stammered in great embarrassment.

'Your place is with little Betsy,' the lady replied cuttingly, and left the room.

The next day the young countess hastened to the principal of Smolny and tearfully related to her the whole occurrence. The latter told the story to the Empress, who sent a carriage for Maria Kronhelm, with instructions that she was to be given a home again at Smolny. A little later, when a list of those invited to a grand reception in the Imperial Palace was presented to

the Tsar for approval, he crossed out the name of the countess who had employed Maria Kronhelm, and wrote on the margin: 'I have no room in my palace for a lady who has no place for a *Smolianka* at her parties.' As a result, many aristocratic homes closed their doors to the snobbish countess and, naturally, she was never invited again to any function where the Imperial couple were to be present.

The august monarch used to play with his boys in his leisure hours — usually very boisterously. One time they were playing horse and it came the turn of Nicholas I to be the horse. He was put 'into the stall,' — that is, in a corner of the room, — and the boys began to scrub him. When the Empress came in, they were pouring water over the Tsar and brushing him vigorously, saying: 'No, that won't do. Stamp! Stamp! You're the horse — you've got to stamp!' The Tsar, all wet, obediently stamped.

Nicholas I liked to tell stories of his childhood. He remembered with dread his tutor, Count Lamsdorff; a brutal, coarse man who knew nothing about education. When little Nicholas behaved badly, he was put in a corner and his brother Michael was told to play with his toys. Nicholas was extremely orderly and liked to build. Michael was destructive, and the punishment consisted in having Nicholas watch Michael destroy the little structures he had made and break his playthings. Nicholas also had a German nurse who at one time had lived in Poland and constantly impressed on her young charge her opinion of that country as 'the worst place in the world, inhabited by the worst possible people.' Thus her prejudice was so indelibly imprinted on the plastic mind of young Nicholas that he never was able to banish it.

The Tsar would often tell his family about his visit to Queen Victoria. He had stayed for seven days at Windsor Castle, and when he left, a bill was presented him, exactly as is done in a hotel.

One evening during Lent, at the time of the Crimean War, the Imperial family returned from church, where they had been to confession, and sat in a group reading the Bible in preparation for communion the following day. The Tsar withdrew early, and a little later the Empress rose and followed him. They remained together a long time, and when the Empress returned she sat down on the arm of Masha's chair and said in a low voice: 'Nicholas feels very depressed. I am afraid —'

This was the first time that Masha had ever heard the Tsarina use her husband's first name in the presence of others. On other occasions she invariably referred to him as His Majesty. All the family knew that the Emperor was not himself that evening. Finally the Tsarina told the children to leave her and to continue their reading in another room. As they went out, Masha looked back and saw the Empress weeping bitterly in her chair.

About the middle of the night the whole family, including Masha, were awakened and summoned to the Tsar's bedside. In the doorway they met Alexander — the future Alexander II. He sobbed and tore his adjutant's insignia from his shoulders, saying: 'It's over — I'll never be his adjutant again.' On that last evening Nicholas I had exacted from his son a promise to liberate the serfs.

Nicholas I lay on a narrow iron camp-bed, deathly pale. He blessed the children. The Empress drew Masha aside and asked her if she would not call in Nelidova, the former mistress of his father, Paul I, who lived in extreme retirement at the other end of the long corridor and never appeared among the family. Nicholas overheard her. 'No,' he said sharply, 'it is not necessary,' and ordered everyone to leave except the Tsarina herself.

When the family were summoned again, Nicholas I was dead. His face was black, and black spots disfigured his hands. But not a soul in the family spoke of what they all knew: that he had taken poison.

As Masha was walking back along the corridor to her apartment after all had left the death chamber, she saw a shadow-like figure slip noiselessly into the room of the dead sovereign. It was Nelidova.

Madame Shkinskaia, whose father was a near relative of Arndt, the personal physician of Nicholas I, told me the latter's account of that sovereign's last hours. Arndt was called, and Nicholas I, without wasting time in preliminaries, demanded a deadly poison. The physician tried to remonstrate.

'I have no right to live any longer as Tsar,' insisted Nicholas. 'Give me something to put me out of the world.' Arndt continued to protest. Finally the Emperor stamped his foot and gave an imperative order. Many times in his later life the poor man cried bitterly at the home of the Shkinskii, regretting his last act of obedience.

# IN A LITERARY FACTORY

BY DOUGLAS H. STEWART

From the *Outlook*, May 31  
(LONDON MIDDLE-GROUND LIBERAL WEEKLY)

THE other day I had the privilege of being conducted, along with a friend, through the premises of Messrs. Bangham and Barger, Authors. Mr. Barger, who issued the permit, was out of town, and a distinguished member of the staff acted as our cicerone. We were to have called on Mr. Bangham, but as we chanced to learn that he was extremely busy with the spring fiction we did not intrude.

There are two principal classes of writers employed in this interesting establishment: the plottists who design the stories, and the detailists who do the actual writing, or rather typewriting. I am told that a plot should not be longer than can be written on one side of a sheet of foolscap. There were three plottists at work as we entered the plot-room, and these, along with our guide, constitute the complete staff. The plot-room is really nothing but a roomy, well-furnished library. Two of the plottists were engaged in a consultation at a table. The third was sitting with legs crossed in an easy-chair, and with furrowed brow and horn-rimmed spectacles he was reading what looked like a volume of the *Cambridge Modern History*. At a table near him, and apparently working under his orders, was an apprentice of about sixteen. He was making notes out of a ponderous tome entitled *Italy in the Sixteenth Century*; and his countenance wore an expression of boredom, intense and undisguised.

The plottists — as well as the apprentices — seemed not unwilling to

suspend their labors for a while, and to explain the part they played in the organization. They impressed me, indeed, as being extremely witty, genial, and cultivated. They showed us some of their plots, and I noticed that historical plots had marginal references to various authorities. They told us that they had found it necessary to make their stories simple and full of action. The detailists, they said, invariably made a 'hash' of anything subtle or psychological. In answer to my inquiry they informed us that they usually keep a fortnight's supply of plots in reserve in case of a drought of inspiration.

Between the plottists and the detailists there is a class of intermediaries or middlemen technically known as 'arrangers.' The arranging-room is more like an office than a studio. Eight or nine arrangers were busy dictating to typists, or working at desks covered with manuscripts, letters, chits, and memos. The arrangers struck me as being decidedly less literary than the plottists; in fact, they reminded me of people like adjutants, sergeant-majors, and head waiters, who keep those immediately above and below them in a state of continual turmoil and trepidation. As was natural, perhaps, they were rather briefer in their explanations than the plottists. I hope, however, I do not give the impression that they were uncivil.

The duties of the arrangers seem to be very miscellaneous. They refer back unsuitable plots to the plot-room