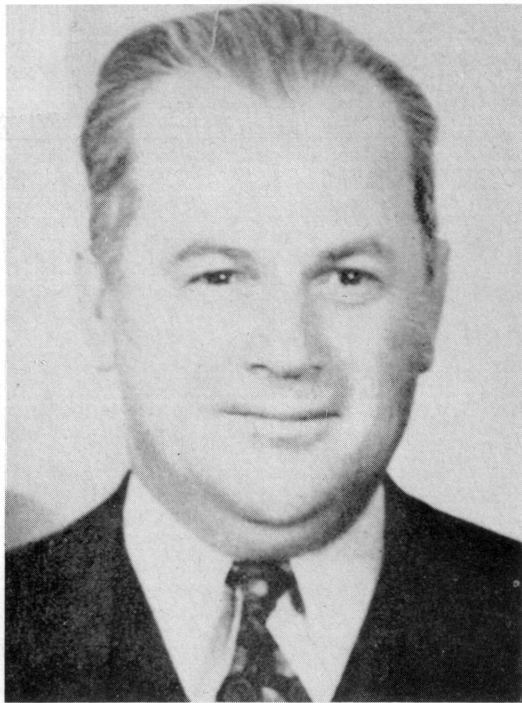


ILLIA KIRIAK

SONS  
*of the*  
SOIL





### *About the Author*

ILLIA KIRIAK, the son of a poor peasant family, was born in the Western Ukraine in 1888, where he received his elementary education. He emigrated to Canada in 1906, but ran into a period of unemployment and depression, during which he tried his hand at work on railroads, in stone quarries and in sawmills, crossing Canada and the northwestern States during his first six years. In 1912 Alberta opened a school for "foreigners" in Vegreville, offering a course leading to a public school teacher's diploma, and Mr. Kiriak was one of the accepted candidates. His subsequent work as a teacher in various Ukrainian districts of northern Alberta left an indelible mark on all who came in contact with him, for his intense love of Canada and her democratic institutions was ardent and inspiring. Several short stories, accepted by the *Ukrainian Voice* were warmly acclaimed, and upon retirement he turned to write his first novel, *SONS OF THE SOIL*. When news of his untimely death was broadcast over northern Alberta, scores of his former pupils braved long miles of winter roads to attend his funeral.



**SONS**  
*of the*  
**SOIL**



**ILLIA KIRIAK**

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**I** Hrehory Workun sat on the threshold of his hut, warming his old bones in the heat of the spring sun. He was clad in a white old-style belted shirt and white pants. His shoulders were covered with an overcoat. Dressed this way, sitting there in listless passivity, he showed no pleasure in the blessed warmth. On the contrary his grey bushy brows, which drooped like a thatch over his deep-sunken eyes, his ashy, bristling moustache which overhung and covered his toothless mouth, his long, unshaven face—these created the illusion of a skeleton which by some miracle had risen from the grave, dressed itself, and sat down on the threshold to enjoy the sun.

In truth, it was not the real Hrehory sitting there. If this spectre had been weighed and measured against the Hrehory of a decade ago, the tragic contrast would have revealed how little remained of his former self, how the rest had wasted away and withered, all his vital energies dissipated like the juices of a dried apple.

Hrehory's present condition was brought about by a prolonged illness which had kept him bedridden for the past several months. It was not a definable disease, but one of those lingering ailments that affect the aged, causing the vague distress and suffering of slow decay. In this dread condition Hrehory had kept to his bed for over five months, every bone and muscle of his body inert and lifeless, all his hope of recovery and of reaching his eightieth birthday drained away. He was completely resigned to his fate, expecting the Grim Reaper to creep up at any moment to cut him down. He went through the ritual of confession and communion every time the priest arrived in the locality, solemnly parting with his neighbours after each visit, writing out numerous divisions of his property, and even making arrangements for a coffin and a burial plot at the cemetery.

Thus he lay bedridden all through the winter; but at the approach of spring an unexpected change took place. As a dying tree touched by the magic of the sun puts out a few green shoots, old Hrehory began to revive. In early May, when the sun had become warmer and its beneficent rays began their ministry of renewal, it did not pass the old man by. Almost imperceptibly Hrehory began to take on new vitality and sufficient interest to test his strength by getting out of bed and trying to take a few steps, holding on to pieces of furniture.

But he did not get very far in his first attempt. He reached the door and stood transfixed, greedily breathing the fresh air which at first intoxicated, then weakened and stupefied him. He felt as if he were dropping into a deep chasm. He saved himself instinctively by holding on to the door jamb and sliding down to the threshold. In that timeless instant it seemed to him that here at last was the long-awaited moment of death. But the more fresh air he breathed into his weakened breast, the more sunlight his body absorbed, the more his weariness receded. He felt a weight lift from his heart and soul and the rebirth of a desire to maintain the spirit of optimism to the end.

After sitting in this position for some time, warming himself in the rejuvenating sunlight, he casually looked down at his hands. Not so long ago, it seemed, these hands were large and sinewy, like a pair of huge mallets. They were strong enough to hold a horse or ox in leash, let alone a human being, though Hrehory was not by nature a man given to the use of brute force. Now his hands were in a pitiful condition; his fingers, crooked and shrivelled, reminded him of dry willow roots. The black, deeply-furrowed palms were like the dark bark of a poplar tree; the blue fingers had a look of rust; the heavy battered joints seemed to be dislocated and only held together by the black skin. Outplayed useless hands, the old man reflected ruefully. Yet these gnarled hands had a tale to tell, a tale of courage and endurance and accomplishment, that had been burned into them.

After a few moments of silent reflection, Hrehory raised his head and looked up at the sun.

"You won't be warming these old hands for long, nor these tired bones of mine," he sighed, and wagged his head in sober emphasis.

"I've brought you some dinner, Grandpa."

The voice of his eighteen-year-old granddaughter interrupted his communion with the sun.

“Dinner?” Hrehory repeated vaguely as he raised his head. “Ah, is that you, Sophia? You’ve brought me something to eat? I didn’t even see you coming. I’ve been sitting here mumbling to the God-created Sun. Look how beautifully it shines down upon me!”

“It is warm, but you should put your cap on,” chided Sophia. “You’ll catch cold this way and be bedridden for another couple of months.”

“Catching cold won’t do me any harm, my child,” he said. “It would only bring death the sooner.”

“It’s a sin to talk like that, Grandpa,” Sophia scolded. “Come inside and sit down to your dinner. You missed breakfast, you know.”

“A sin, you say?” Hrehory echoed in mock fear. But he felt a little ashamed of himself. “All right, all right, Sophia,” he murmured penitently. “Maybe it is a sin to welcome death, for death will come in spite of you when your time is up.”

“So it will,” agreed Sophia petulantly. Grandfather’s constant harping on death annoyed her. “You’d better come along before your dinner gets cold.”

Hrehory tried to rise, then changed his mind. “Bring it to me here,” he said. “It’s so pleasant in the sunshine. I’d rather eat where I am warm and at ease.”

“All right, all right,” Sophia humoured him. “Just the same, I’ll bring your cap too.” And she hurried into the house.

Sophia brought his false teeth as well as his cap and dinner. Hrehory frowned at the teeth, which he always referred to as “that joke of civilization,” but he had to put up with them. Kornylo, the son who had taken over the management of the farm, had modern ideas about everything, including new teeth in his father’s head. Well, that was progress, and who was he to set himself against this miracle of dentistry?

Sophia helped him adjust his teeth, put the cap on his head, patted him playfully on the cheek as if he were a little brother, and went back into the house.

“May the Lord bless you with good fortune for the rest of your life,” he murmured in gratitude to his granddaughter, and resumed the disconnected dialogue with himself.

"It would be a great sin if I complained about them," he reflected, thinking of his children and his grandchildren. "I never heard a mean word from any one of them. . . . They looked after me all winter long. Every night one of them deprived himself of sleep to look after me so that I should not die without a lighted candle. . . . They brought in a doctor several times and wanted to take me to the hospital, but I refused. How could a hospital help an old man like me? Money does not come so easily and you have to pay for hospital care whether you come out dead or alive. . . .

"Why doesn't Pavlo Dub visit me?" he wondered, thinking of the friend who had been his fellow-traveller to Canada. "Pavlo used to be strong as an oak, now he has changed into a dried-up willow. I wonder which one of us will die first? He's older than I am, so that gives him priority. Maybe it's a sin to babble like this. God forgive me. . . .

"Tomko Wakar was buried long ago!" (This was another of Hrehory's old cronies.) "All he got out of life was trouble. Stefan Solowy was a smart Alec. He built a coffin for me out of planks. It is said that he who prepares a coffin for himself will live a long time. Well, who knows? I'm still alive."

"But you will die if you keep going outside bareheaded and barefooted!"

It was his daughter-in-law speaking. She had come for the tray and dishes and had overheard the old man's rambling talk. "You must come inside now," she said, not unkindly. "If Kornylo finds you here we'll all catch the dickens." She picked up the tray.

"Is he home?" asked Hrehory. He tried to get up, but his numb legs refused to respond. "What an oak I've turned out to be," he said, as his daughter-in-law helped him into the house and to his bed. She covered him with a quilt as though he were a child in need of a nap, then hurried away to her household duties.

Hrehory was too restless to be still. He tried to sleep but it was useless. Something within him refused to surrender to oblivion. He got out of bed and stole to the window. The yard looked inviting. He wanted to be out there in the worst way, but he was afraid of his son Kornylo. Kornylo was a stickler for doctor's orders, none of which permitted rambles in the barnyard.



The longer Hrehory looked out of the window the more his desire mounted. He wanted to inspect his property, to find out if everything was in order, whether the land had been sown properly, if the granaries were in good repair and the cattle and pigs doing well. These thoughts finally outweighed his son's warning. Donning his overcoat, he left the room, barefooted and hatless, looking around cautiously before he set foot outside.

Bowing his head and supporting himself with a cane, he went directly to the granary. He wanted to find out if his son had followed his own careful practice of holding over old grain until the new came in. He inspected the bins. Good! There was enough grain for food and seeding to last two years. Feeling elated, he wandered over to the corral where a few spring calves were romping about. They were in fine shape, reddish-white in colour and well-filled out. Hrehory regarded them with loving admiration and then went to look at the swine. "Time to market them," he thought. "If they get any heavier we'll suffer a loss. I'll order them to be shipped tomorrow and save on feed."

Gratified by what he had seen, he turned his steps toward a hillock from the top of which he could survey all his six hundred acres. This hillock, he noted, was already tilled and seeded. That was fine, a rewarding sight; but the way to the top seemed longer than he remembered. He had to rest several times. When he got there it was a moment of triumph. He had only to turn his head this way and that to see the farflung fields that were his farm. In the distance he saw his grandson ploughing. He would have liked to be down there to see if the furrows were deep enough. But he knew he could never make it. As he stood there his bare feet became imbedded in the soft loamy earth; he seemed like an old poplar stump that had been dried up and torn out by the elements and then left in the centre of the field as a reminder to the younger generation that here had once stood an old thick forest.

"This looks to be the last time I'll ever see this land of mine," he whispered, after long reflection. "My role is done. In a few days the land will claim me for its own and give me rest. My sons, grandsons and great-grandsons will take my place. I have loved you and given you the best I had in me. There is not a single piece of you that my foot has not touched or that my hand has not felt. I and my dead Helena have drenched you with our

sweat from one boundary to another. Yet I have no regrets, for you have paid me with peace, with happiness and with pride." Leaning heavily upon his cane, the old man stood there on his sunlit hill, all his memories as rich and rewarding as the land he had made. This was his supreme moment, the crown of a good life.

"Father!" The sharp voice of his son was a shock. "Why are you standing there like a scarecrow?" the young man shouted as he hurried up the hill. "We looked everywhere for you! Why on earth do you take these chances? I told you not to leave the house until I had brought you running shoes and a warm sweater. That's what I went to town for today. Yet here you are bare-footed and bareheaded. What are you trying to do, follow in the footsteps of Pavlo Dub?"

"What's that? Is Pavlo gone?"

"He died this afternoon," Kornlyo said. "We got the message just before we missed you."

The news was too much for Hrehory. He sank to the ground like a felled animal.

Kornlyo, genuinely alarmed, tried to lift him up, but the old man resisted, or so it seemed to his son.

"What's the matter with you, Father? Try to get up, for heaven's sake."

"Nothing is the matter," Hrehory said. "Just my legs. . . . You say Pavlo is dead?"

"Yes," his son said, more gently. "We shall all miss him, Father. . . . Now let me help you."

He got the old man to his feet, and with his arms about him led him back to the house.

Hrehory prayed long and fervently for the soul of Pavlo Dub. By the light of the holy candle and the holier light of the sun, the old man besought the throne of heaven to accept his humble devotion on behalf of his friend, who had been a good man and a good neighbour. . . .

This final service done, Hrehory no longer cared to leave his bed. He was the last of the original settlers. It was time to make ready for the Grim Reaper. But while he waited he could relive the past, recall to life the many people who had travelled the long road with him and with his wife Helena and their children, Maria, Elizaveta, Pavlo and Kornlyo. He saw Pavlo Dub and Kalina

and their children, Wasyl, Olga, Olena, Osyp and Irinka. He saw Toma Wakar and his wife Tetiana and their children, Andrew, Sophia and Semen. He saw Stepan Solowy and Teklia. He saw Diordy Poshtar and his wife Anna and their children, Ivan and Katerina. He saw many others who had played a part in a domestic drama that covered four decades.

He enjoyed this parade of personalities on the stage of his memory. It was a pleasant way to spend the closing hours of his own existence.

**2** Thus it was that the death of Pavlo Dub transported Hrehory Workun to another world, where the past lay open before him as in a long-neglected album. As he turned the pages, the first picture to capture his interest and stir nostalgic memories recalled the long journey across the ocean and Eastern Canada. He dwelt with special interest on these early scenes, for they had bound him for good and ill to Pavlo Dub and his other friends in his newly-adopted country.

There was the long train journey through a seemingly endless Canada. At last the Ontario hills melted away in the distance and the prairie country came into view. But this was still not *their* Canada, for the dusky haze of the hills had not yet been dissipated. It is still far away in the distance. It is more lovely than the present view of long, monotonous uniformity; it is where both ends of the line touch the sky in the distant horizon. Here and there could be seen corrals, herds of cattle; but they were mere dots on this vast expanse.

"What, is this Canada?" asked Pavlo wearily, as he kept glancing listlessly through the car window.

"Just as you are now seeing her," answered Workun. "But she'll likely get better as we go along," he added, trying to comfort himself.

"To tell the truth, I'm sorry I left the Old Homeland," continued Pavlo, sadly. "I should have left well enough alone."

"Don't cry over spilled milk," advised Workun. "It's not so bad here. The people are getting along. So can we, as long as our health holds up."

"Is there no limit to Canada?" Toma Wakar wondered irritably. "This is the fifth day of our trip and as yet there is no end."

"So it seems," said Solowy, who sat beside him on the opposite seat from Hrehory Workun. "I don't see any fences, so I guess we've not reached journey's end."

"Something tells me I'm going to be awfully lonesome for my lord's horses," said Wakar. He had been a coachman on an estate in the Old Land. "At any rate, a man was sure of food and shelter."

"Don't fret, Wakar. This is not our part of Canada," Hrehory assured him. "Our destined place is more attractive."

"In our allotment the fences are made of sausages (*kowbasa*), the roofs of bacon," Solowy jested. "All we need to do is lie back and eat our fill, and when thirsty we shake a birch tree and wait for the beer and wine to fill our cups."

The gloom which had enveloped Pavlo Dub began to lift, and even Wakar brightened at the thought of liquor. For the time being homely jesting revived their spirits and shut out the battering noise of the train.

Across the aisle from the men the women sat with the restless children. The latter alternated boisterous play with squalls of fighting. To this their mothers seemed as indifferent as they were to the vastness of the prairie, which for them had only one meaning—eternities of space separating them from everything they had known and loved in the Homeland.

Workun glanced at his wife and found nothing in her eyes but a blank stare. Her healthy, well-rounded face showed the effects of the journey. She who had once been a gay young lady was now an old, dispirited *baba* (woman). Her black shawl gave her an added appearance of misery. Hrehory blamed himself for the change. It had been difficult to persuade her to leave home for this faraway country. Of course he had not exerted any undue pressure, but he had pictured the better chances they would have in the new world, especially for their growing children. This was the clinching argument which had won her over. Now, in the fourth week of their journey, his fear for her health overshadowed his hopes of the future. She was such a good wife, such an exemplary mother. If she should die. . . . Hrehory shrank from the appalling thought.

But his fears were unfounded. Helena had no wish to die. Her two daughters sat beside her, while her two sons played in a neighbouring seat with some other boys. Maria, the elder girl,

was the very image of her mother, with the same rosy, dimpled cheeks, well-shaped mouth, finely chiselled straight nose, dark fascinating eyes and coal-black luxuriant hair. Sixteen-year-old Elizaveta was as beautiful as her sister, if somewhat dissimilar in temperament.

There was nothing wrong with the sons, either. Fourteen-year-old Pavlo had grown to be a fine young stripling. Eight-year-old Kornyllo, the family favourite, was destined to succeed his father. Helena, mother-like, was worried lest her promising children might not survive the frigid wastes of the New World, largely populated by wild people. Yet she did not blame her husband for this venture. She would have gone to the ends of the earth if so doing would benefit her children.

Kalina Dub sat in the seat next to Helena. Kalina held aloof from the other women, to whom she felt superior. Yet now she showed signs of bursting into tears. Workun glanced at her slyly. He knew it was she, not Pavlo, who had made the decision to emigrate. It was Workun who had told her of the free grants of land to be had in Canada, land on which wheat would grow in abundance and where hundreds of cattle could be fed. Pavlo did not need to emigrate. He owned nearly twenty *morgs*, and much of the land was sublet to tenants in return for a third of the harvest. Workun had been a "one-thirder" on his estate. But Mrs. Dub thought this was not enough. She wanted wealth and the status of a squire's lady.

"If it hadn't been for me, you would have had to beg for a living," was her acid boast, as she prodded Pavlo to leave for Canada. "You would have given everything away to your beggarly tenants who look with envious eyes on our property. There isn't enough here to brag about! When our children grow up they will need a dowry to get married. What can we give them? Do you expect me to work in my old age? It would be a fine thing if Workun and Solowy and that coachman Wakar turned out to be lords in Canada while we lead a wretched life on our diminishing acres, when a little initiative in a new country might get us real riches, a fine house, cattle, horses, hogs—yes, and servants; in fact, a paradise of ease and plenty."

Pavlo had listened to this ambitious outburst and nodded his head in ironical agreement. Kalina won, of course. But on one

thing Pavlo was firm: he refused to sell all his land. One-half he left as security, lest perchance Kalina's paradise should fail.

From the start of the journey Kalina held aloof from the other women. To her they were all "servants." If they wished to approach her for advice, that was all right; but to engage in idle conversation was quite another matter. What possible interest could they share? Tetiana, for instance, the wife of a coachman? Or that working tenant, Helena Workun? Or Teklia Solowy, whose husband was a crazy radical? No, thank you! Kalina preferred her own company and that of her respectable family.

Her children stayed close to her, especially the girls. Eighteen-year-old Olga, a quiet blonde of Madonna-like beauty, whom Kalina thought fit to be courted by a prince, nestled close to her all day long, wholly oblivious of the other occupants of the car. She took turns with her mother in holding her young sister, Irinka, tidying her up and rocking her to sleep. This helped her kill time and broke the monotony of the journey. Olena, two years younger than Olga, also strayed but little from the family group. But she was of a vivacious nature, often teasing or quarrelling with ten-year-old Osyp. Kalina tried to keep twenty-year-old Wasyl also tied to her apron strings, but he had other ideas. He gradually took to spending more time over at Maria's side of the car. This was the first thorn on Kalina's journey to Paradise.

For Wasyl there was no question of thorns. He had discovered a new Maria in the girl he had grown up with in school and on the estate. She was no longer the inferior creature his mother had consigned to the lowest ranks of society. On the journey to a new land he had somehow acquired new ideas. He could not think of Maria as a servant. She was a beautiful girl, and when he wasn't with her his eyes kept straying in her direction.

Kalina's rage at this unseemly behaviour was boundless. "Wasyl, don't disgrace us," she admonished. "We'll be the laughing stock of the whole world when it finds out you've fallen for a servant. Surely you can do better than that. What's wrong with you? You'll ruin all of us if you don't give up that creature, who seems to have bewitched you. Let me remind you we never admitted a servant into our company before!"

With downcast eyes Wasyl listened to those reminders; and when his mother had finished her lecture he sat in silence looking through the car window. This appeased Kalina. She thought she

had brought him to his senses. But one cannot stare through a window indefinitely. His listless eyes strayed over the endless prairie, but his thoughts ranged elsewhere, busy with more and more enchanting reflections on the beauty and wit and desirability of Maria. As the saying goes, the further into the forest the greater the amount of kindling wood. So it was with Wasyl. Notwithstanding all Kalina's efforts to discourage his amorous interest, Wasyl grew fonder of Maria.

There was one occupant of the car who took a lively interest in the budding romance. Teklia Solowy, young herself and married for less than a year, watched the young couple with sly humour and made the most of passing on her observations to her fellow-travellers.

"You'll be getting a sweet son-in-law," she whispered to Helena on one of her visits. "It's evident he doesn't take after his mother; he's more like his father, old man Dub—a fine man. As for you, Maria, I hope to become a match-maker, for I can see Wasyl will not be able to live without you. But don't put him off too long, for it will be hard to find a better match."

Helena met this conversation with the laconic retort, "If God wills it, so let it be!" But Maria, blushing a little, laughed it off, modestly remarking that she was not even interested in marriage.

Teklia made sure that Wasyl's mother should get a good report of Maria. "Such an angelic girl!" Teklia exclaimed, aware that each word cut Kalina to the quick. "So healthy-looking and intelligent! Industrious too! If Wasyl wore his feet out he couldn't find a nicer girl."

"Just get the bread and there'll be enough teeth to bite into it," rasped Kalina, behaving as if she had just sat on a tack. "It will be just as I command," she added as she turned away from her visitor.

Teklia smiled ironically and left her uncivil neighbour with the avowed determination to unite Maria and Wasyl even if she had to use force. She had got this idea out of a book and felt sure she could bring it off.

All through the journey Wakar's wife Tetiana had maintained the same sphinx-like expression she had worn when she boarded the train. She continued to sit in a daze, holding her two-year-old son Semen on her knees, wagging her head rhythmically as if she were counting the seconds. The women, especially Teklia and Maria, tried to cheer her up, but without success. She ate only



when she was forced to do so by her sixteen-year-old daughter Sophia.

"A fine chance I have of getting anywhere, with such a wife," complained the depressed Wakar. "And if she dies, what then?"

"Such nonsense," interrupted Workun. "You'd be well-advised to look after her and comfort her. She's really a good woman, but a man like you would probably overtax any woman."

"What do you expect me to do, carry on a romance with her?" Toma suddenly retorted. "She was just as sluggish when I married her."

"That's not so," reprimanded Hrehory. "If you had treated her properly and given her something to live for, she'd be a different woman. Even cattle react well when they are treated right."

"What should I feed her with?"

"It's not a matter of food, Toma, but of spirit. I've never seen you speak to her in a manner that would make her feel happy."

"Do you think she speaks differently to me? She sure told me plenty. It's because of her talk that I'm riding along with you, the devil only knows where, almost naked and penniless. After paying my passage fare, I have nothing left."

"What sort of possessions did you leave behind you?" laughed Workun, as he knitted his brows quizzically at his over-wrought neighbour.

"I owned my own house and garden and had an income from driving my lord's horses; I didn't exactly starve or go begging."

"But your wife certainly showed foresight when she got you to leave for Canada."

"If you hadn't talked her into it I wouldn't be on this train."

"Perhaps; but you'll thank me for it one of these days."

"If we don't perish in the wilderness."

"You'll even have a servant."

"To help me delouse myself."

"Oh," sighed Workun, as he patted the downcast Toma on the back. "Your talk just doesn't make any sense."

**3** “Thank God this is the end,” said Helena as the train approached the final station.

“Are we home now?” asked Kornylo, whom Maria was getting ready to leave the train.

“We’re home now, we’re home!” Helena assured the boy. The mere mention of home stirred her to tears—tears she tried to hide from the children and her fellow-travellers by drying them hurriedly on the hem of her shawl.

It was close to midnight when the immigrants began to bundle off the train. It wasn’t very comforting to step from the warm carriage into the brisk coolness of the May night. The sharp prairie air cut through the children and old folks alike. And as if this were not enough, the Immigration Agent was in no hurry to take these prospective citizens of Canada to the Immigration Hall where they were to reside until they located a permanent home. They stood in small groups, not knowing what to do or where to go. Finally the Agent arrived. He tried to explain something in sign language, which they finally understood as an order to follow him with their belongings. Their destination was a large room of the Immigration Building, in the centre of which stood a huge stove with a roaring fire in it. They needed no urging to improvise beds beside the fire, and soon fell into deep slumber.

The next morning after breakfast the new “landlords” held a conference. It didn’t proceed very smoothly, because none of them knew where to begin. They were to go out and look for new land; but where, that was the question! Finally Workun, who was the most restless of the lot, suggested they go down town.

“We’ll all go,” he said, “and if we don’t find something, maybe something will find us. If you don’t rap the door won’t open.”

“What a beginning!” grumbled Toma Wakar. “After all your preaching about Canada, now we have to knock for an opening.”

“You will thank me for the chance in a year or two,” Hrehory said.

“Well, go on and stop talking,” said Helena, prodding her husband. “Spring will soon be here. It’s about time we got our gardens in against the coming of winter. And we’ll need to buy bread to feed the children.”

“You’d better buy horses and a wagon and get us out of here,” Kalina Dub advised. “We can’t stay here all year like gypsies.”

“I wish some gypsy would appear and tell our fortunes,” Teklia Solowy jested. “It would be nice to know what we are up against.”

With all this prodding the men were soon on their way to town. It was not much of a town. No one could have dreamed that one day it would be the capital of a province. They promenaded to and fro on the sidewalks, for the stores were still closed, although smoke could be seen curling up from the chimneys of houses here and there. After spending some time in the silent town they returned to the hall, Workun without his bread, Pavlo without his horses and wagon, all of them without the gypsy. They grumbled on the way, Wakar complaining as usual and Hrehory Workun trying to ease the tension. “There isn’t a ‘lord’ here to do your thinking for you, Toma. That’s your trouble. But you might as well get used to it. If we want lands free of lordships we’ve got to take risks. What did you expect anyway, homesteads waiting for us ready-made? We have just got here!”

After this futile promenade they needed a rest, or so they said, since there was nothing to do. But forced rest is not the best cure for men who want to be active. They couldn’t be still, or if they tried to fold their hands in lordly calm, their wives objected.

“Why do you sit there like an owl on its perch?” Kalina scolded Pavlo. “Are you expecting manna from heaven? The day is coming to a close and you sit dreaming.”

“I’m sitting here waiting for your Paradise,” retorted Pavlo, his deep voice full of reproach.

Kalina, in some surprise, noticed the ominous tone, which reminded her of the time she had goaded him to the point of swinging his fist at her. She wanted to give him a piece of her mind, but managed to hold her tongue.

Helena's husband was the next object of wifely ire.

"Stop that whittling," she cried, glaring at Hrehory, who was making whistles from a willow branch for the boys. "Do something useful! We have to stock up with provisions before we go to our farm. We can't do anything empty-handed."

"Sure, sure, buying is easy without money!" Hrehory retorted. "But I'm glad you mentioned it. We'll have to figure out what to buy individually and collectively," he continued, handing over the finished product to the boys. "We'll need horses, oxen, ploughs, harrows—"

"Yes, yes!" Helena interrupted. "We need everything. But with fifty dollars to spend we'll be lucky to get enough to keep body and soul together."

"I'll not leave without horses and a wagon," Kalina declared, "and a few cows of course," she added with pointed emphasis.

"That's as may be," Helena nodded good-naturedly. "You have the money to get off to a good start. We had a hard time in the Old Country and we don't expect a life of milk and honey over here."

"We'll take you in our wagon," Kalina said in a kinder voice.

"I suppose I'll go on foot," Toma Wakar complained. "I haven't the money to buy a dog!"

"Don't worry," Solowy said. "I have a plan. Workun will buy the wagon and I'll buy the horse, and you can string along on Dub's wagon."

"That's not a bad idea," agreed Workun, "but I don't know whether I'll be able to buy a wagon and all the other essentials with the fifty dollars Helena and I have between us."

"Pavlo will lend you the money, and if he refuses I'll lend you as much as I can," Solowy said, glancing at Pavlo's wife to see what effect this proposition had on her.

"If there's any need for help we'll do it," Pavlo assured them. "We are all in the same wagon as far as fate is concerned," and he coughed in the manner of rich people overcome by their own generosity.

Kalina wanted to object but contented herself with the unpleasant observation, "We must offer aid so as not to anger the Lord, who favours aiding the poor; but there's a saying that God helps those who help themselves. We have to act according to our own means and not according to our wishes."

"That's right," Wakar agreed. "Everybody should rely on their own resources and not on help that is offered insincerely." He was thinking of a time he had gone to Pavlo's to borrow a bushel of corn and Kalina had read him the book of virtues while Pavlo measured the corn. Further wrangling was averted by the sudden appearance of the Immigration Agent, who started asking questions in broken Ukrainian. At first it was hard to understand what he was driving at, but with the help of sign language and Solowy's few German words, the Agent finally elicited an inventory of their possessions; and by supertime each family received a bag of bread loaves and a few cans of preserved meat.

Later that evening, just before midnight, it began to rain, and this went on for three days. The immigrants waited for the rain to stop with gloomy impatience.

"God has visited us with his wrath for our sins," Helena observed on the third day of the downpour. "In the spring the days are numbered: you can't put off until tomorrow what you should do today; but here we are losing valuable time."

"Don't take it so much to heart," admonished Teklia. "God knows what he is doing. It's not for us mortal sinners to question his purposes."

"We're not complaining against God," said Helena. "All I'm saying is that spring is passing and we haven't planted a single seed. Your situation is not so bad, for there are only the two of you. But as for us, we've many mouths to feed. If we don't put in a crop soon we'll all die of hunger."

"When your husband urged us to come here it seemed we were to live like lords and be richer than Pavlo Dub," Wakar sneered. "Now it seems we'll be dressed in nothing but the prairie air and eat nothing but the bark of trees. I've always had a premonition that this would be our fate."

But just as Wakar ended his gloomy observations, a ray of light shone through the window and Workun cried excitedly, "The clouds are beginning to thin!" There was a rush to the window to verify the good news. The sun was still hidden, but the sky was clearing. That was a good sign and everyone felt better.

The women began examining their baggage and the seed they had brought with them. All of them, with the exception of

Tetiana Wakar, had a variety of vegetable seeds and Helena had a measure of seed potatoes as well.

"I thought I'd parted company with potatoes," Workun said, "but I suppose my wife has brought them as souvenirs of the past, since people in this country are supposed to eat nothing but meat."

"You'll be glad to eat even the peelings," she told him amiably.

"I wish we were settled!" Teklia exclaimed as she counted off the seeds in her handkerchief. "Then I'd lay out a garden worth seeing."

"The fragrance would help," Wakar declared, "when your stomach begins to wonder if your mouth has lost the knack of eating."

Time passed more rapidly now that their spirits had revived, and their chatter grew more animated. It was interrupted by the appearance of a stranger, who came to see if anyone from his native village was with the immigrants. He was an aggressive individual. It did not take him long to learn everyone's name and all about the newcomers. In turn he told them his name was Diordy Poshtar, that he had arrived in Canada three years before, had a good farm, a team of horses, a span of oxen, a few cows, two sows and several gruntern, and that his wife had a flock of chickens. By immigrant standards he was a rich man on a big scale.

"You're a godsend," said Helena, when the introductory formalities were over. "We're sitting here not knowing how to proceed. And on top of it we had to sit out a storm. No doubt your wife will be able to sell a few hatching hens," she added hopefully.

"She's got dozens of them," Poshtar answered. "So many we can't keep track of them."

"Have you any cows for sale?" Kalina inquired. "We'll need at least two to start with," she added.

"I think I can sell one cow and two calves, if anyone needs them badly," Poshtar said.

"Then don't sell them to anyone else; we'll buy them," Kalina told him.

"What kind of land is there out your way?" asked Pavlo Dub. "It might be a good idea to settle somewhere in your neighbourhood."

"You can come along with me if you like and look over the

land," answered Poshtar. "If you like it, you can settle on it; if not, you can push on and look elsewhere."

"Why should we look elsewhere?" Helena said. "If you are able to do so well in three years on your farm the land must be good."

"It's like this: one can settle where one wants to," said Poshtar. "You can go if you wish to, but it would be better if you didn't."

Poshtar didn't relish the conversation taking such a turn, for he had other plans. He wanted to reserve the nearest homestead sites for his own relatives whom he had been expecting for some time. So far none had arrived, and now it looked as if these strangers wanted to grab the precious claims. He was sorry to have aroused their interest. So he tried to rectify his mistake.

"The land in my vicinity," he began, "is forested and will take a lot of work to clear."

"Forest you say; that's fine," said Dub. "It would be bad without a forest. You know how people suffered in the Old Country without a forest."

"If it were a real forest it wouldn't be so bad, but the trees here are wretched poplars and willows. It's hard to find good wood for building purposes," said Poshtar.

"Whenever poplar and willow trees can be found the land must be good," said Workun, trying to convince Poshtar that he was quite prepared to settle down in his neighbourhood regardless of the quality of the land.

"The land is black loam and fertile, but it would take as much time to clear one acre here as twenty acres elsewhere," Poshtar argued. "And if I were to renew my search for land again, I'd give a wide berth to this locality. When I first came out here I didn't know where to turn; but now I know where there is plenty of land whose virgin soil can be broken without clearing of any kind."

"But that must be in some desolate spot," observed Helena. She was very much afraid that both Workun and Pavlo would heed Poshtar and set out for other parts. "You'd better take us to your village and we'll somehow find a way to get along."

"And how many families are there in your village?" asked Wakar, as he regarded Helena with screwed-up eyes, although his

question was really directed to Poshtar. He wanted to burst out into laughter at her suggestion of a "village!"

"I live in my own village," replied Poshtar with a smile. "There are farmers who settled near this town; but I passed them by and settled in an uninhabited spot."

"When we settle in that place there'll be more of us," Helena mused. "None of us will be lonesome then. Have you any children?"

"Married and without children?" replied Poshtar, smiling. "Can that be? We have two, a boy and a girl."

"Are they grown-up?" Kalina suddenly interjected as she cast a glance at her own children.

"My boy has passed his twentieth birthday and my girl will soon be eighteen," answered Poshtar. "We could even celebrate a wedding," he added, winking merrily in the direction of the young people who were listening to the conversation.

"Listen, old boy, get a move on and take us in their direction," said Kalina to Pavlo in an amiable tone. "It would be a sin to try to find something better than they have near their place." She was envisaging the young Poshtar as her son-in-law and the young Miss Poshtar as her daughter-in-law, either one or the other, both being in the realm of possibility. It would be quite a feather in her cap to be able to mate her youngsters with the children of so rich a man as Poshtar. This notion took such a strong hold of her thoughts that she decided, come what might, to hold fast to it.

"I wouldn't advise you to buy horses," said Poshtar, when Pavlo suggested it. "You'll have to feed them on oats and house them in a warm stable during the winter months, otherwise they'll get mangy and die on you."

"Can oxen be purchased around here?" asked Pavlo.

"Sure; there are plenty of oxen in these parts. If you want to you can look some of them over."

"Well, run down town right now," Kalina prodded. "We had better pull out of here tomorrow morning."

After an hour's conference over what should be purchased, with Diordy Poshtar offering advice, the men folk left for town to make their purchases.



**4** The aged Hrehory Workun, lying in his comfortable bed, on his prosperous farm, turned another page in the book of memory. It took him back forty years to the fateful morning, five days after the immigrants had disembarked from the train. Their purchases made, they were all setting out with high hopes on the great experiment, cheerfully following Diordy Poshtar along a rough Indian trail that led to their final destination.

The rigours of that trail, with its treacherous sloughs where the wagons were mired and goods and gear had to be forded piecemeal and the empty wagons hauled out by a double span of oxen, made unpleasant recollections, and yet there was a humorous aspect to them that he could still enjoy.

The fording had its tragic-comic aspects. All personal goods had to be carried across to avoid damage by seepages. The children also had to be carried on the shoulders of the men. Some of them dreaded the ordeal, but others thought it was great fun splashing about with their feet. When it came to the turn of the girls, that was another matter. Some balked at the idea. Even so audacious a girl as Maria Workun would have none of it. She preferred fording it alone. But when Wasyl Dub, even against his mother's warning, offered his assistance with more gallantry than usual, she felt she could accept it, and would have welcomed it for the rest of the journey as well.

Everything would have gone well had it not been for the stubborn protest of Kalina Dub. Most of the wives took it as a matter of course, allowing their husbands to carry them across. But not so Kalina. Oh, no! She was not going to suffer the indignity of being transported like a bundle on the shoulders of her own husband. But her protest was in vain. Poshtar was in charge. He knew what he should do. First he carried over his

two bags of flour and other purchases. Then he helped Wakar transport his bundles. He even bore Wakar's wife on his shoulders across the stream, for he felt that if the job were left to Wakar he'd flounder in mid-stream with disastrous results to both of them. Workun and Solowy followed Poshtar's example. Pavlo Dub paid no attention to his wife's objections to leaving the wagon. He did not have to. When the cable was attached to it and the oxen on the other side of the stream began to pull it over, she fairly flew out of it in her fear.

Kalina remained alone on the bank, rending the skies with her wailing. And her children on the other side took up the cry in dread of losing their mother. As for Dub, he wasn't in much hurry to get his wife over. Hiding his wrath, he merely went about his task, dressed in nothing but a long white shirt, loading all the transported articles onto a wagon, barefooted and with nobody to aid him but Wasyl. When he finally completed the job he forded the stream, went over to Kalina and, summoning up all his anger in one word, shouted, "Sit!" He indicated his shoulders, and Kalina mounted them quite meekly, winding her arms about his neck and closing her eyes.

"Well, well, *kuma*<sup>1</sup>, you've ridden on wagons, you've travelled on ships and trains and now you're riding the old man," said Workun, in the belief that Kalina would not take him too literally.

But Kalina interpreted his remarks as a barbed insult which stung her to the quick. In her fury she must have tightened her grip around Pavlo's neck for, just as he was ready to climb up on dry land, he lost his balance and dropped his burden into the water. There was wild commotion on the bank. Poshtar stood roaring with laughter, but Workun jumped into the stream and helped Kalina drag herself up onto dry land.

Having dried themselves by the fire which Poshtar had started and unspanned the reloaded wagons, the trekkers were now ready to move on. Three days later, around about noon, they pulled into Poshtar's settlement.

"I've brought you some guests," Poshtar yelled to his wife, Anne, who was standing in mute astonishment on the threshold of the house, nervously smoothing her rumpled clothes and hair. Yet it was plain to see that she was pleased to find visitors at her door, although for the moment she was too astonished to speak.

<sup>1</sup>God-mother to one's child.

“Why don’t you invite our guests into the house?” Poshtar shouted as he started to unhitch the horses. “Tell Ivan to carry the flour into the granary,” he added as he chased the horses into the pasture.

In the meantime the guests didn’t even think of rising. Not only the women and girls but even the boys and men sat as if rooted to the spot. Silent as the mourners at a wake, they sat staring about them. Poshtar’s home, built of roughly hewn logs and topped by a sod roof, with small windows and a huge door, and surrounded by a group of small hay-covered huts was not a sight to stir one’s admiration. What it did was shatter the illusion of Poshtar’s affluence which they had entertained while they were still in town.

Anna understood their reaction, and the sympathy she felt for them freed her from shyness. Hurrying to the wagons she cried, “Come to the house, friends. You’ll all feel better after a bite to eat.” Then in a burst of nostalgia, “I know what it means to leave our homeland with its beautiful orchards and velvet green fields. I know, too, what you have gone through, without sleep or decent food.” And suddenly tears came and all the visitors echoed her grief with sighs and groans and soft weeping.

This emotional outburst, like all sudden showers, cleared the atmosphere and everyone felt better.

It is hard to say whether it was the mention of dinner or Poshtar’s strident orders to the men to unhitch the oxen which spurred them to action, but in short order this duty was done and the women began to take an interest in their surroundings.

“You’ve raised quite a flock of chickens,” observed Helena as she watched the hens dart about the yard.

“Oh, not so many; only eight of them did any real hatching this spring,” replied Anna modestly. “Two of them died while hatching, two of them didn’t want to sit and a sow ate the eggs right out from under two others.”

“That’s too bad,” said Helena.

“Oh, I don’t miss them, I have so many,” was the reply. “I didn’t want to raise so many anyhow. There’s no one to sell them to, so we kill what we need for our own use and the coyotes or the hawks will likely get the rest.”

“Tsk, tsk!” Helena was shocked.

“When you get settled I’ll give you that grey hen over there.”

Anna pointed to the bird. "She hasn't lost a single chick. When I set her on twenty-one eggs she didn't miss a single one. There they are all around her, fat as quails!"

"Eh, you're jesting!" Helena could not believe that a strange woman could be kind enough to give her such a prize. In the Old Country a hen with chicks was valuable property.

"Thank goodness there's enough to give and to keep," Anna assured her. "But do come into the house. I know you're dead tired and hungry."

"As for me, I'll settle for one rooster and two hens," said Teklia Solowy, laughing.

"I'll see that all of you get your share. I know how hard it will be for you at first," said Anna warmly.

To Kalina all this talk was anathema. "Oh," she thought, eyeing Helena and Teklia, "how assertive they are, begging for chickens! They'll be asking for calves next." And so she decided to warn good-hearted Anna that it does not pay to be too generous, that it is easy to give but hard to accumulate riches. She expressed these thoughts for the benefit of all present, but Anna missed the point and purpose of the warning.

"Whoever gives to those who have not will be repaid tenfold by the Lord," was her comment.

These words coming from a simple country woman hurt Kalina's pride; nevertheless she was determined to maintain her rightful superiority. She therefore offered to pay for ten hens and a rooster, even before she entered the house.

But Anna was not so money-minded. She merely went on chatting with the women as she led them to the house. "That's all right," she told Kalina nonchalantly. "And now let's all sit down and partake of what God has given us."

Anna's home was much more pleasant inside than outside. Like all pioneer dwellings it had one small room and one large room. A large stove stood in the northwest corner; a large home-made wooden bed stood in the northeast corner; a large table was near the eastern wall. A beautifully designed rug hung on the north wall, reaching up to the ceiling, and some pictures of the saints, decorated with flowers, hung on the south wall. It was a very neat, albeit primitive, home. But it was the kind of home the guests were used to, and its very familiarity put them in good humour.

Poshtar's table evoked astonishment: two plates of fried bacon, two large bowls of cheese and cream, a large plate of fried eggs, a pitcher of milk, white bread cut into thick slices. This was not the feast of a poor man. It more than justified the legend of Canada as the land of plenty. Their amazement kept growing when they saw Poshtar slap down some cheese on a slice of bread, add bacon and eggs and devour the whole with careless appetite. Kalina watched the gastronomic feat with awe. In the Old Country this bounty would have cost thirty cents.

"What's holding you?" Poshtar inquired, noticing the hesitance of his guests. "In this country if you don't fill up you'll get nowhere." He reached for the milk pitcher and drank noisily, completely ignoring the cup set before him.

Workun never forgot this dinner. It was his first meal in Canada and the most bountiful he had ever eaten. In writing about it to friends back home he may have provided the incentive which drew so many of his countrymen to Canada.

After dinner there was a great deal of activity in Poshtar's house as well as outside in the yard, which resembled a market-place. The men were unpacking their trunks and littering the ground with axes, saws, augers, spades, hoes, scythes and other farm tools they had brought along with them. Wakar had not brought much. All he had was a hoe, an axe and a scythe. But Dub, along with other things, had brought all the parts of a plough, and a whetstone. He had even tried to bring a mortar and a step-ladder, but the railroad had refused to accept these articles as baggage. Solowy, who had some building experience, had brought his carpenter's tools along with him and would have brought the shop as well if that had been possible. Workun, among other things, had a gypsy anvil which subsequently he often referred to humorously as a "most cherished family heirloom."

Nor were the women idle. They unpacked their sacks, taking out clothing and all sorts of vegetable and flower seeds. Helena had even brought a bit of Old Country earth as a remembrance. She flourished it before Anna as if it were a precious thing and Anna could not resist the temptation to take some and keep it, for no rational reason that she could offer.

The young girls meanwhile washed clothes at the creek which flowed nearby. It was while they were so occupied that the young immigrants made the acquaintance of Ivan and Katerina Poshtar.

There was nothing to distinguish Katerina from the usual run of girls. Of average height, slightly on the stocky side, with a well-rounded face, a low brow and black hair combed back in a knot, she would have been quite attractive had she been a little more slender. Her double chin made her look rather older than she really was and created an impression of disproportion. Her eyes were her most arresting and distinctive feature. She was not naturally effusive or over-solicitous towards others; but she sought every opportunity to be near Wasyl Dub, who had just put in an appearance.

Ivan Poshtar differed both by nature and build from his father. He was more like his sister Katerina, dark-haired and full-faced, but keeping his own counsel. He observed people out of the corner of his eye, and this made him look distrustful. The day the guests arrived he had been clearing the land of roots and stumps. He reached home only after the rest of the guests had finished dinner.

"Who are those people?" he asked his mother as he entered the house.

"They're immigrants," she whispered.

"And why did they come to our place?" he inquired.

"Father brought them. They're going to settle near here and be good neighbours."

"They'll take all the land and leave us no pasture," Ivan objected.

"There'll be plenty for us and for them, my boy. Our worry is not pasture, but herds."

"Well, we'll see what will come of this neighbourliness," he said gloomily as he dragged himself into the house.

He gulped down his meal and hurried outside. He looked the guests over, and noticing the girls down at the creek he turned his steps that way. He stopped on the bank and watched them work. He would have left them without a word had it not been for Maria Workun.

"Who's that man?" she whispered to Katerina.

"My brother, Ivan."

"Oh!" exclaimed Maria.

Ivan looked extremely dishevelled. A rumpled cap perched on his wild disordered hair, his dirty black shirt barely covered his chest and shoulders, his faded trousers were torn and his feet were shod in old Indian moccasins.

"You sure are a fine swain coming here without so much as a howdy-do," laughed Maria.

Ivan was silent.

"You stand there like a lump when you might be helping your sister fill the tub with water," she went on.

Still no response from Ivan.

"At least get an axe and chop us some wood for the fire," she cried, now thoroughly impatient.

Ivan stood speechless, gazing stubbornly at this strange girl who dared to order him about.

Maria grabbed a pail, dipped it into the creek and flung half its contents in Ivan's face.

The girls were amused; but Ivan, working himself into a rage, shouted, "I'll never forgive you for this," and turned to leave.

But Maria wouldn't let him go. She ran to where he stood and started pulling him by the arm. Ivan resisted, but with a strength almost equal to his own she managed to drag him over to the fire.

"Just stand here for a while and dry out," she said, patting him on the shoulder. "Don't be so stubborn! Such a nice boy and so awkward!" It was as if she were scolding a young brother.

Ivan said nothing, but it was quite evident that his anger was beginning to ebb. He even started to smile. Maria was quick to notice the change and took full advantage of it. She handed him the empty pails. "Now be good and bring some water," she said, giving him another friendly pat.

Then the miracle happened. Without a word Ivan took the pails and started for the creek. On his fourth trip Maria stopped him.

"Thank you," she said sweetly. "I think we have enough water now. Chop some wood instead. What we have is too green to make a good fire."

Ivan obeyed. He grabbed an axe, hastened into the forest, and was soon back with both arms full of dry wood. He cut it down to the right size and threw it on the fire. Then, more amazing still, he asked, "Is there anything else?"

"Yes, tighten the clothesline," said Maria.

Ivan tightened the clothesline. "What else?" Now he was eager to help the pretty tyrant.

Maria had no difficulty finding chores, and Ivan obeyed each order in submissive silence. Even when the washing was finished and the girls returned to the house she found things for him to do.

His mother was amazed when Ivan, without complaint, brought wood for the stove and water for the house. What a change! As a rule he paid no heed either to her or his sister. The only one he obeyed was his father. Now he ran back and forth at the bidding of Maria Workun!

Less pleased, Poshtar also noticed the change in his son, and observed that he spent his noon rest in the house. He knew Ivan was a good worker, but that evening he decided it might be wise to remind his son where duty and authority lay.

“Did you sow that piece of land by the lake in oats?” he asked.

“Not yet,” replied Ivan quietly.

“And why not?”

“Because I didn’t finish up all the roots.”

“If you didn’t finish that, why are you hanging around the house? Do you think the roots will be gathered of their own accord?”

“I’ll gather them tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” shouted Poshtar angrily. “What are you doing today? Girl chasing? You know that in spring the days are numbered, that you can’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today. Get on with the job at once or I’ll use the cane on you.”

“Why are you raising such a row?” cried Anna, ashamed of this public castigation of her son. “Ivan worked so hard he could hardly stand. Rain or no rain he kept digging at those roots.”

“You’d better look to your own work,” shouted Poshtar. “You’re always looking for some excuse to defend him. Just keep quiet, woman!”

“My goodness, Uncle, why so mad?” asked Maria, slyly.

“What business is it of yours?” Poshtar growled.

“He’s so willing and obedient, yet you treat him like a servant.”

“Obedient? He never moves unless he’s prodded.”

“I don’t think anyone likes to be prodded. Would you like it if you were in his place?”

“And how do you know what I’d like?” asked Poshtar, screwing up his face; but there were signs of humour under his grimace.

“Because no one, not even cattle, likes to be bullied and yelled at!”



“Well, what do you know?” grinned Poshtar. “I suppose you have the answer?”

“Why not? We’ll all go and gather the roots.”

“I’d like to see you manage that.”

“You’ll see,” said Maria.

Poshtar shook his head in bewilderment. He saw Maria leave arm in arm with Ivan, and like recruits in training the other young people followed them to the strip of land Poshtar wanted cleared.

“Your girl would make a good officer,” he said to Workun, who was setting a wedge in his axe-handle.

“The Lord intended her for a boy, but somehow or other she turned up as a girl,” Workun gave his usual answer. He was pre-occupied and in any case he had not been following the doings of the young folks.

But Kalina Dub took in everything. She followed every move made by Ivan and didn’t let Maria out of her sight. She was so set against the girl that on several occasions she was on the point of scolding Maria for being so forward, but something always held her back. The truth is she would have liked her own daughter Olga to show some enterprise and boldness. Ivan was an only son and with excellent prospects. . . . No, Kalina realized she could not urge her daughter to emulate Maria and in the same breath criticize the girl.

Kalina’s worries were not only centred on Olga and Ivan; her own son Wasyl did not show the slightest interest in Katerina. Like Ivan he had eyes for no one but Maria!

The sun had already set when the young people returned from the field. Invigorated by their work, they filled the house with laughter, like children returning from school. They washed up, joked and laughed, and because the democracy of youth is outgoing they now seemed the best of friends. Even the Dub girls caught some of the spirit and lost some of their restraint.

“Have you concrete proof of any work done?” asked Poshtar from his bed, addressing no one in particular.

“I lighted the piles of dry roots and saw them blaze into the air,” bragged little Pavlo Workun.

“But did you grub all the roots?”

“Not only that, we burned them as well,” added Pavlo

proudly. "Why even Ivan's cap caught fire in the great blaze." He laughed.

Maria jabbed him quickly in the side. She was afraid he'd blab that she had thrown it into the fire.

"Fine! Glad to hear none of you got burned," Poshtar mumbled, only half awake.

Soon the whole household was fast asleep. Whatever beds there were had been given to the women. The men slept on the earthen floor in the hall. Ivan and Wasyl took to the barn.

"She's a devil and not a girl," whispered Ivan to Wasyl, after they had both dug down in the hay. "And as strong as an ox," he added with a laugh.

"And dangerous," amended Wasyl, dissatisfied with Ivan's analysis. "She'll beat her husband," he added. "She's worse than a witch."

"Even a witch is better than the drivelling kind who are afraid to go out in the dark," argued Ivan. "I'd much rather marry her than Olga, who looks as if she had been dunked in pickles."

"No one knows what one's fate will be," answered Wasyl angrily, beginning to dislike his friend Ivan.

"I know," said Ivan with assurance.

"If you're so sure, then go to sleep!" Wasyl retorted as he turned his back on Ivan.

**5** The next day before sun-up plans were laid, and under Poshtar's leadership the men set off in search of homesteads. They had agreed to reimburse him for his time and trouble by grubbing on his farm. Each man carried an axe on his shoulder and of necessity they marched single file, for they were the first to break the trail in these parts.

It was not an easy undertaking in virgin country. They had to bypass sloughs, plod through tall dry matted grass, cross wind-falls and stumps, watch out for beaver ditches, pot holes and other dangerous pitfalls lying in wait for the unwary stranger. The country was thickly forested, so that much of the time they had to hew their way through with axes. It was easier going where there was less growth, but these areas were few and far between. As for the low wooded places, a man might lose his bearings unless he left a marked trail behind him.

Poshtar was aware of this danger. He hardly took a step without chopping down a poplar tree and driving a high stake into the ground to mark their route.

"Where are you leading us?" Toma Wakar complained every time they stopped for a rest. He was not built for this kind of pioneer wayfaring, physically or mentally. Every time he sat down he felt as if he couldn't get up again.

"Giving up so early?" chided Poshtar in mock pity. "Why, we haven't even done a mile yet."

"But why do we need to go any further?" Wakar demanded. "This is unclaimed land right here—anyone can see that."

"This is not homestead land; it belongs to the C.P.R.," explained Poshtar. "You can buy it, however, at three dollars an acre."

"Don't be so impatient, Toma, for every half mile you're travelling you're making four hundred and seventy dollars."

"How's that?"

"The homestead claim costs ten dollars. Figure out the difference for yourself—ten dollars against four hundred and seventy."

"Well, if that's the case, let's go on," said Toma. "I might as well earn the money I never had and never will have."

Some hours later they came to a clearing made by government engineers who had concluded their survey and subsequent marking of the area. This made travelling easier for the immigrants, for now they could follow the section lines. On the other hand it lengthened the distance they had to travel, so it was high noon before they halted at an iron stake and four small holes in the form of a quadrangle.

"Here are the two sections you're allowed to settle on," said Poshtar, pointing to the holes. "Here, by this stake, is where the corners of four sections touch each other; they meet at the corners," he explained. "And now let's have a snack. Then you can examine any one of these sections for yourselves," he added, untying the package containing the lunch.

"Without looking any farther I'll settle on this section," said Toma, as Poshtar handed him a thick slice of bread, a piece of bacon and an egg. "Nobody will get me out of here," he added, sitting in a pile of brush which the engineers had left by the holes.

"That's the best thing to do," Poshtar simulated agreement. "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth."

The meal finished, the men left Wakar to his brush-pile and set out for the opposite section.

So far as the immigrants could estimate, all the land seemed equally good, which made their choice simple, without argument or animosity. They would all be neighbours, and this was the first test of neighbourly co-operation. All had gone well. Yet it was late in the afternoon before they started back.

Suddenly they were startled by a wild cry in the distance.

"Why, that's Wakar!" Workun exclaimed. "The poor devil has got frightened alone in the forest!"

By one accord they all started shouting "Hop, hop! hop, hop!" But there was no response from Wakar, only the echo of their own voices. The sun had begun to set and Poshtar, who had no desire to roam the woods at night, insisted that they keep to the blazed trail and hurry on. But Workun plunged through the thickets yelling "Hop, hop!! at the top of his lungs.

The others followed his example, regardless of Poshtar's disapproval. Wakar was an awful pest but they couldn't abandon him to the gathering dusk, the poor fellow would lose his senses. Poshtar left them to their search and started home.

Finally, when the men had lost hope and had yelled themselves hoarse, Wakar made his presence known. "Here I am," said he, crawling out of a willow thicket at Pavlo Dub's feet.

"What demon carried you off?" Dub began angrily, but was stopped by the little man's appearance. Wet with perspiration, his clothes torn and dishevelled, Wakar looked half mad. So all Poshtar said was, "What happened to you, Wakar?"

"The devil take this Canada!" Wakar sat down on a fallen log.

"Why didn't you answer our call?"

"I just couldn't!" he replied.

Pavlo didn't question him further. It was getting dark and they had a long way to go. By unspoken agreement they took turns helping the "lost sheep" home, where their anxious wives awaited them.

The problem of lands settled, the first task was to link their homesteads by some kind of road. The men did the hewing and the boys and girls hauled the trees and bushes from the clearing. Dub, who took upon himself the duties of engineer, directed the job according to his own interests. Circling the thicker woods and holding to the hills and Poshtar's trail-marks, the new road eventually made it possible to drive up a small hillock on his homestead where he had decided to build his house.

When Pavlo started building the work was done on a co-operative basis. Solowy was chosen as carpenter. Workun, Wasyl and Wakar selected the poplars, cut them down, lopped off the branches, smoothed the trunks and hauled them to the desired site with oxen. There the logs were dressed, the ends notched and fitted by Solowy and Dub, who were experts at raising a snug dwelling.

The women and the girls were not idle either. Some were mowing dry grass, some searching for straight slender poplar poles as an under-base for the sod-covered roof and the ceiling inside. Others were cutting uniform squares of sod. The work went ahead so successfully that within three weeks Dub, Workun and Solowy slept under their own roof-trees.

These houses had neither doors nor windows, nor were they as yet plastered with clay; but each family now had a place of its own. Helena dug up some cleared spots for a garden, cultivated it, and planted vegetables and flower seeds. Kalina and Teklia followed suit.

But Wakar neither built nor planted anything. His wife still seemed to be suffering from shock and was forever complaining about a headache. And in addition her boy Semen was still ailing. Even on the ship he had showed no signs of improvement. The child's sickness oppressed her more than her own illness. All day long the poor woman held him in her arms, seemingly oblivious of her surroundings, not caring whether her own house got finished or her garden planted. Yet when mention was made of other completed houses she would quietly wipe the tears from her eyes, because others had what she did not have and in all probability never would have.

Anna understood Tetiana's state of mind and did what she could to console her. "Don't worry, my dear," she would say encouragingly whenever she was alone with the children at Poshtar's place. "Everything will come out all right. Your boy will get well; see how rosy his cheeks are getting already; things will look bright again. Even if Toma had finished your house I wouldn't allow you to move. I can't let you leave this place with a sick child on your hands. You had better spend the winter with us and when spring comes you can move into your own home. You'll recover and your boy will get well, your house will be finished and your troubles will be over."

"May God repay you with happiness and health for your kind words, but it seems as if we are foredoomed to lead a life of misery," Tetiana replied sadly.

"For some reason we are not like other people; without help we cannot even take one step forward. You people are helping us; but it is hard to accept aid. It cannot take the place of self-reliance and getting things by your own efforts. I now repent of inveigling Toma into emigrating to Canada. I had my own house and garden over there, and he had a job as the lord's coachman with good pay. We had enough to live on. But I thought the children would have a better opportunity to get ahead in Canada."

Tetiana recited all this in such a hopeless voice that Anna, listening to her, broke down and wept.

"You are imagining things," she persisted, determined to cheer her friend somehow. "Time works miracles, Tetiana. We had it hard too in the beginning. I had to sit in the Immigration Building with the children for a whole month. My Diordy used to go out for days at a time and I was alone with my brood, crying my eyes out until I thought I'd go crazy.

"Finally, after an absence of two weeks, he came back with a wagon and took us into the forest. When I got here our only shelter was that hovel by the stable. We had to use it because it was too late in the season to build a house. The only other building was the mud hut where I keep the chickens. And there the four of us were left while Diordy went off again, this time for two months. We had two bags of flour, some bacon and four bags of potatoes. I thought Diordy was lost or had died, and I wept day and night. I used to hide myself from the children so that I would not frighten them with my misery. On top of all this the weather was bad. Hardly a day passed when it didn't rain. The rain seeped through the sod roof. It was so damp it was almost impossible to sleep. I had no stove, and you can imagine what it was like trying to cook on a fireplace outside. I baked unleavened bread on that piece of tin you see over there.

"But on clear days the children helped me clear bits of land here and there. We cut grass among the bushes, some of which we managed to dry and pile up in two stacks, enough to feed the cow and horses through the winter. It helped to keep busy. And we were busy enough when our supplies began to run short and we had to take up hunting! We lived on rabbits and prairie chickens for some time. But we had just about got to the end of our tether when Diordy came back. By that time we had no matches and the nights were getting frosty."

This gloomy recitation had the required effect on Tetiana. She was ready to believe that others beside herself suffered the blows of fate. There might be hope of better things after all.

But something still bothered Tetiana. "You, thank the Lord, are established in a position to help others, but I have a feeling we won't get very far in life. Toma has been a servant from boyhood. He can't make decisions for himself. He has to take orders from some one in authority, and he only did what he was ordered to do. I knew from the very beginning of our journey it was a mistake to

force him to come to this new country. He showed so little initiative and seemed so lost.

"I don't know what would have happened if it had not been for Workun's encouragement. He is a good man, God bless him! How it will be from here on I don't know."

"It will be as God wills," Anna said firmly. "Among good people no one will be allowed to perish. You have children, thank the Lord; they'll help you get along."

From that time on Anna and Tetiana became the most intimate of friends, just like two sisters who had been parted a long time.

The house building proceeded according to plan. The settlers used such material as the land provided, supplemented by such things as nails, boards, glass and so forth. With these Solowy constructed windows and doors so swiftly that by the Green Holidays (Whitsuntide) every family, with the exception of the Wakars, started to dig their roots into the ground and begin a life of genuine husbandry.

Of all the people Anna Poshtar was most gratified at having neighbours. This was shown by her readiness to help anyone in need. Along with Tetiana and her daughter Katerina, she helped to bake bread for the meals she sent to the workers in the fields.

"Who can work hard on dry bread?" she said to Tetiana as she was preparing lunches for her neighbours. So she kept sending them soups, warm milk, bacon and eggs at least once a week. And on Sundays her meals were real feasts.

When Green Sunday was near, Mrs. Poshtar sent her daughter to invite the Dubs, the Workuns and the Solowys to dinner.

Katerina liked nothing better than the thought of such an errand. Pleasant anticipation lent wings to her feet. There were girls of her own age to be seen—and there was Wasyl Dub. She hurried away, leaving Anna and Tetiana busy plucking chickens, making cheese dumplings (*pyrohi*) and baking dough rolls (*kolachi*). These were traditional delicacies dedicated to high festivals, and Green Sunday was almost as great a holiday as Easter Sunday. In honour of the day and her guests Anna white-washed the house inside and outside and put Ivan to work decorating the place with poplar branches. In the evening Katerina dressed the holy pictures with wild flowers and trimmed the windows with crosses



made from the leaves of the lovage plant, a task made easy by dreams of Wasyl Dub.

About noon of this memorable day the guests began to arrive. What a pleasure it was for Anna to greet them from the threshold and invite them into the house! Dressed in a white embroidered blouse and a colourful shawl and skirt, and looking rather like a colourful Easter egg, she radiated goodness and open-hearted generosity. She had got her husband and Ivan to dress up in holiday clothes, and Katerina fairly blazed with red ribbons and embroidery. Even Tetiana, Wakar and the children were spruced up for the occasion.

Greetings over, Anna placed her guests at table, first presenting each with a roll which held a small candle. When these were lit the guests rose as one to pray for the souls of the dead and wish good health to the living.

The prayers ended, all save Anna turned to the feast. It consisted of chicken broth, boiled creamed chicken, rich stuffing, *holubtsi* and boiled prunes, all appetizing and plentiful. But the guests, according to the old custom, ate slowly. They helped themselves from a common bowl, and after each serving they laid down their spoons, waiting for the hostess to urge them to another helping. Anna, carefully watching the progress of the spoons, kept up a constant solicitation. "Please help yourself! Don't be backward! Although the food is not of the best, please make the most of it."

The women observed the custom with inflexible propriety. But the men and the young folks didn't need much prodding. The alluring odour of the food was sufficient invitation to healthy appetites. Nevertheless, even they were careful not to offend their hostess by an exhibition of gluttony.

"Thank you very much for your generosity and the manner in which you entertained us," said Helena politely, as she wiped her lips with a handkerchief. "I don't know when we'll be able to repay you for your kindness."

"Let God accept your thanks!" Anna replied modestly. "I'm sorry that I couldn't invite you to partake of something really worthwhile."

"Oh, my dear neighbour, don't incur God's wrath!" said Helena. "Why, we don't know how we'd be able to thank him if we were in your circumstances and if we were able to entertain you as you have entertained us. For, I repeat, that if it had not

been for you I don't know whether we would have been able to exist."

"You must have been well off in the Old Country," Kalina Dub interjected, "It is quite evident that you didn't need any outside help when you came here, as many others did." The words "others did" were purposely emphasized by her so that all present could hear.

"We weren't so badly off," Anna said earnestly. "We didn't need for bread and we had some money. But money will circulate only where there are people; where there are no people it is useless."

"I brought a few hundred dollars," Poshtar explained. "But I had to buy horses, a set of harness, a wagon and bits of this and that, intending to succeed from the start. I soon found out that it is only with help of others that one can succeed. The more people there are around you, the easier it is to hire somebody to help you. In the Old Country I did a lot of draying. Added to this I had several *morgs* of land, a house and a garden. The land was cultivated by others; I kept a servant and spent my time hauling goods.

"During the winter I made enough to pay for the labour of cultivating my land, so that I never had any occasion to use a hoe, scythe or flail. But not so in Canada. When I bought a team of horses I thought things would be the same as in the Old Country. I planned to set up in business in town, and wasted a month there in futile effort without earning a penny. With my money running out I had to settle on the farm. But, as the old saying goes, the ox roars for the thing he has been accustomed to! I no sooner looked at horses and a wagon than I wanted to buy them. I fought against the temptation. I stayed home a few days and then set out for town. I loafed around for a week and was on the point of returning home when a German advised me to try my luck twenty miles out of town where the settlers were better established. So I went there, saw a farmer and by signs and shouting managed to make him understand I was looking for work. I worked for him and for others nearly two months. I set up sheaves, hauled them to the stacks and helped with the threshing. The pay wasn't bad; for my own work one dollar a day, when I used my team three dollars. I earned enough that year to buy a cow and a calf, a couple of pigs and some chickens, and I was given a lot of vegetables. Those people paid well. But what of it? I didn't have anyone to leave at home, and there was no one around that I could hire."

"We had to do and we will have to do our own work," interrupted Anna, deciding to relate the remainder of the story. "And so I've dug up some land and now we have enough grain for the chickens, the pigs and the horses and about twenty bags of wheat for ourselves."

"I guess we had better look around for work also," said Workun, who had listened very attentively to Poshtar's story. "Our money has already gone and we can't face the winter without a thing in the larder. We are quite indebted to you, Poshtar, for the help and advice you have given us."

"Oh, that's all right; you can work off your debt to me anytime," said Poshtar, "and you should find outside work in the haymaking season."

"Find me a job too," Maria Workun cried eagerly. "There's nothing to do at home now."

"I'll take you to town tomorrow if you wish," said Poshtar, winking at Maria. "There's more opportunity for girls than for men."

"Girls are better workers," boasted Maria, laughing.

"With their tongues," said Poshtar.

"And with their hands!" Maria retorted.

"Take me along too," begged Katerina, encouraged by Maria's boldness. "I want to earn money of my own."

"I'll take all of you to town and let you run loose like a litter of kittens; that'll give you a chance to meow before every doorstep," teased Poshtar.

"I won't allow my children to go with you," Kalina Dub protested, just as if Poshtar really meant to take the girls. "We have enough work around the house. I never worked for others and I don't expect my children to work for strangers either."

With so much to talk about the dinner went on for two hours. Finally the guests arose, joined in a prayer, and divided into groups according to age and sex. The men went out and sat down on the *prispá* by the shady side of the house; the women remained inside, sitting on the benches and on the bed, exchanging pleasantries and bits of chatter with Anna while the girls washed the dishes! Wasył and Ivan sought repose on the hay in the stable. And everywhere, except among the children, there was discussion of the ways and means of getting rich.

“Do you also intend looking for work?” Ivan asked Wasyl, with half-closed eyes.

“I don’t know whether my father will let me go,” said Wasyl.

“I know without asking that they won’t let us go,” said Ivan. “I have an idea our fathers want to use us to get rich themselves, since our work won’t cost them anything.”

“Anyway, what difference does it make whether I’m working for my father or for myself; it all goes into the one pile,” explained Wasyl.

“There is a big difference! If I worked for a stranger, I’d be able to put my savings into my own farm, but working at home means I’ll be handing everything to my father;” Ivan said. “Here a father doesn’t have to pass his land to his son, as he would do in the Old Country.”

Wasyl became thoughtful. Ivan’s arguments made sense. Why should he work for the whole family when he might be working for himself on his own farm? But . . .

“Up till now the old man hasn’t even bought me decent shoes or clothes,” complained Ivan. “Yet I manage the place alone because he’s always away somewhere.”

“Do you really intend hiring out?” asked Wasyl curiously. Of course it was the thought of Maria which prompted this question; nothing would please him more than to see Ivan go away and stay out of competition.

“If my father’ll promise to set me up on my own quarter I’ll build a house and stay; if not, I’ll look for a job,” said Ivan.

“You intend to get married?” asked Wasyl, apprehension and jealousy making his voice shaky.

“Of course I do,” said Ivan. “I should have got married a long time ago if there had been any girls around here. Until now there was no point in making an effort in my own behalf.”

Wasyl was disheartened. He realized that Ivan had a better chance of marrying Maria. Both Anna and Poshtar favoured her as their future daughter-in-law, whereas his mother Kalina would have drowned her in a spoonful of water. He left Ivan to his dream and wandered into the yard. Here he met Maria on her way to the pig trough with a bucket of slops.

“Why the long face?” she called. “Where are you off to?” she inquired when she saw he made no effort to stop.

“Home!” he curtly replied. He suspected she was making

fun of him. He was burning up, but whether from anger or some other ailment, it was hard to tell. So without even looking back, he made a beeline for the forest. Maria stood watching him for a moment, biting her lower lip, and then went into the house.

"Where was Wasyl heading?" Katerina asked Maria quietly. She had seen him through the window.

"Run after him and find out!" replied Maria lightly; but she was oddly disturbed by Katerina's interest in Wasyl and by the strange look on her face.

The men, sitting in the shade, discussed their problems, how much they owed Poshtar in labour for his services, and how to discharge the debt equitably. It was finally agreed that Workun should give five days of his time grubbing, Dub and Solowy five days and Wakar ten days. It was also decided that before they went seeking work they should build some sort of a house for Wakar, for it seemed an imposition to leave his family any longer on Anna's hands.

Wakar listened to all this as though they were discussing someone else. All he feared was that Poshtar might demand money for his help. He was relieved when he knew he could pay in labour, but still he thought, "So this is how rich fellows make their pile. By hook or by crook he'd manage to inveigle twenty-five days of work out of us!"

The women did their share of talking. They recalled the Old Country and those they had left behind; and as they watched their daughters they were reminded of their own youth. More than one tear was shed among them; and if Anna had been able to she would have gathered all of them under her wing. Helena put on a show of jollity; but she was unable to hide her fears of the near future which did not portend any good nor offer any security against the winter.

Kalina was her usual proud, prim self. She gave more than one hint of her willingness to join her family with that of Anna, either by the marriage of Wasyl with Katerina or of Olga with Ivan.

Teklia Solowy, as the saying goes, was playing a game of opportunity with the girls; doing a bit of fortune-telling; conjuring up the picture of Wasyl for Maria and Ivan for Olga; mentioning no names of course, but using terms which could not be mistaken.

And for Katerina's benefit she wove the tale of some prince coming to meet her from beyond the hills and the ocean.

Tetiana alone kept silent. She was still anxiously nursing her sick child, though Semen looked somewhat better. In her heart his mother resented not having a home of her own and being a burden on other people. This explained her reticence to join in the general merriment. Who was she to converse with such rich women?

They talked until late in the evening. And when the guests rose to leave, Anna made them sit down for another snack. When they finally did get up to depart she presented each lady with a small parcel, and made them promise to visit her as often as possible.

The sun had sunk below the treetops when the guests said good-bye and the wagons started on their way along the newly-beaten trail that led homeward.

**6** “Faster, just a little faster, Toma,” Workun urged Wakar, as they tramped along bare-footed on the way to town, accompanied by Solowy and Wasyl Dub, to look for work. It was more than three weeks after the Green Holidays.

“If you keep creeping along it’ll be a week before we get to town,” said Workun, waiting for his companion to catch up with him. Three days of tramping had played Toma out completely

“I’m all in,” he complained with a whimper. “My head tells me to go, but my accursed legs won’t carry me.” He began to look around for a place to rest

“Don’t sit down, it’ll only be worse for you,” warned Workun. “Try walking a little farther, at least to that dip in the road.”

“Is it very much farther to that town?” asked Toma, as he gazed beyond the dip in the road.

“If you put on more speed we’ll get there before dark. We should have reached it yesterday but for the drag of your heels,” said Workun. “It’s too late to try to make it tonight. We might as well rest in the woods and wait until sunrise to finish the trip.”

“Do what you think best. I can’t go any farther,” said Toma resignedly. He obviously had lost all interest in the venture. They could all see that his one desire was to flop down and fall asleep. But Workun wouldn’t let him alone.

“What are we standing here for?” he asked, taking Wakar under the arm. “Left-right, left-right, one-two, one-two,” he ordered, accompanying his command with an alternate whistle and bark and almost dragging Wakar along.

“Why are you dragging your feet like old men?” asked Solowy with a smile as he waited for them.

“We’re not old men,” replied Workun. “We’re just practising

how to walk when we get into town. Raise your feet, Toma, or you'll knock your toenails off."

At first Wakar did a lot of moaning but the continual encouragement of his companions was not without results. After taking a few steps forward he began to revive, and calling on his last reserves of energy he followed them into the hollow without further complaint.

It was an ideal resting-place, level and surrounded on all sides by spruce, pine and poplar trees and with a running brook nearby. In short order the men had a blazing fire started on a low, level spot near the creek. Hunched beside the comforting fire the tired wayfarers ate their meagre supper of dry bread and bits of bacon, their thoughts on their wives and children.

"I don't know how our families will manage through the winter," said Workun. He tied up his two loaves of bread and lay down on the grass bed. "I left mine two bags of potatoes and two of flour, but what is that for five people?"

"I didn't leave my family even that much," said Wakar. "I entrusted Poshtar with four dollars that I borrowed from Dub, asking him to buy what he thought was necessary. If he fails me I'll find nothing but lifeless skeletons when I return."

"It won't come to that," said Workun. "Poshtar isn't the kind of man to let anyone die of hunger. Furthermore, Wasyl's father has been left behind. He will not allow a neighbour to come to such dire straits."

"Poshtar's all right so long as he's getting something out of you; so is Pavlo. . . ." Here Wakar bit his tongue: he wanted to say a word about Kalina but hesitated because of Wasyl's presence. "They're all good people but you can't expect them to look after a whole family of strangers."

"Nobody ever died of hunger among the people unless he was the kind who looks on everyone as an enemy and acts accordingly," said Hrehory Workun.

Wakar laughed in disbelief. "According to you, anyone dying from hunger has no one to blame but himself."

"Well, whom else can you blame?" retorted Workun. "If I found myself in dire need and instead of looking around for some way to save myself sat down among the bushes to perish, whose blame would it be?"



“Oh pshaw!” said Wakar disdainfully. “The whole world is screaming with offers to help people, but it is just a gesture.”

“It seems like a gesture to ungrateful people,” interjected Solowy from his grass pallet. “Decent people help each other so long as each does his best to help himself and doesn’t just sit around pretending the world owes him a living.”

“Well, advice won’t help me! I am trouble personified,” said Wakar, as if in jest. “I’ve come this far with you and I’ll string along a bit farther, provided you don’t get rid of me.” And he curled up and closed his eyes.

Soon the older men were all fast asleep. But young Wasyl lay beside the flickering fire thinking of Maria. He could see her enticing image clearly, but unfortunately Ivan always appeared close beside her, an angry dangerous Ivan. And this was no illusion; Ivan Poshtar was a formidable rival. If he had any sense, Wasyl told himself, he would forget all about Maria. It was obvious that she preferred Ivan, who had beaten a path to her door. In all probability she had promised to marry him. And why not? Poshtar would give Ivan everything he needed to start farming. Wasyl could offer her nothing. Furthermore, his mother kept insisting that Maria was no match for a boy of his station. Then, too, Maria herself did not seem to regard him in a favourable light; her manner towards Ivan was franker and more friendly.

To increase Wasyl’s misery he now recalled the day when the young folks were helping to “clay” Wakar’s house, and Maria at dinner time acted as if she and Ivan were an engaged couple.

“When you build your house, build a real big one, not like this one here,” she said to Ivan.

“When I build you a house it’ll be finer than any in this settlement,” said Ivan. “It’ll be a real house with more than two rooms in it.”

“And what will your father give you, oxen or horses?” she asked him, looking slyly askance at Wasyl.

“What do you prefer?”

“I’d rather have horses.”

“It would more likely be oxen, but I’ll prevail on him to give us horses,” promised Ivan.

“How many cows will he give us?”

“He said one, but I’m really entitled to two.”

“Your wife will live well with you because she’ll have everything she wants,” said Maria in a proud tone of voice.

It was this behaviour on Maria’s part which had decided Wasyl to join the men in search of work. Somehow he had to show Maria that he was not the nonentity she considered him to be. He had intended to leave without a word to the cruel creature, but as usual she drew him like a magnet. Now he did not know what to make of that last meeting. Maria had seemed chastened and subdued.

“I hear you’re going to look for work,” she said after a long silence.

“That’s right,” said Wasyl.

“Does your mother object?”

“Of course! I’m going just the same; I want to earn some money of my own.”

“And what will you do with this money?”

“I’ll decide when I get the money.”

“Will you build a house?”

“I don’t know; what would I do with a house?”

Maria, less sure of herself than usual, suggested a walk. It was a fine evening and seemed a happy suggestion. They wandered on in silence until they came to a small creek, spanned by a foot-bridge of two tree trunks.

“Let’s see who can jump over this creek,” said Maria, her normal mood reviving.

“Why jump when there’s a bridge?” Wasyl asked.

“Bridges are for timid people,” she retorted, and like a wild thing she leaped over the stream with ease. Then, to Wasyl’s amazement, she sat down and began to cry with pain.

In a second Wasyl was by her side.

“What happened?” he asked in consternation.

“My leg hurts.”

“Did you break it?”

“I don’t know, but it hurts. I landed on that,” she said, pointing to a small root jutting out of the ground.

“Why did you jump?”

“Well, I did it, didn’t I?” she boasted with a wry face.

“Fool!” Wasyl blurted, as he rubbed the back of his head. “What now?”

“I’ll go home.”

“How?”

“Crawl on my knees; but I’ll not sit here.”

“Try walking, I’ll support you.”

“I can make it alone.”

“Don’t be a fool,” said Wasyl angrily, as he took her under the arm and lifted her up. “Hold on to my shoulders,” he commanded as he thrust her arm around his neck. “Try hobbling on one leg.”

After a few limping steps, Maria halted. Both of them were in a sweat. The narrow trail made progress difficult, and Maria’s face was contorted with pain. Realizing there was no other way, Wasyl took her in his arms like a child and started up the path. She didn’t protest. She wound her arms around his neck and pressed up against his chest.

“You’d better rest a little,” she whispered when she felt that he was beginning to tire.

They sat down on a fallen log.

“Does it hurt?” he whispered.

“It hurts, but not quite so much,” she said.

“Broken or dislocated?”

“Dislocated, I think, for when I move it hurts very much.”

“Let’s get going,” said Wasyl.

“No, let’s sit a bit longer. The pain may go away,” she said.

“So you’re really leaving tomorrow?”

“I’m leaving.”

“Someone will be very sorry,” Maria said softly.

“That doesn’t worry me.”

“Don’t you love her?”

“Who?”

“Katerina.”

“Ah, shucks! You’re always sticking her under my nose. I’m not in love with her.”

“Whom do you love?”

“Nobody.”

“But your mother loves her; and I heard that she had already asked for Katerina in marriage for you.”

“Let her ask; there’ll be no bread from that bag of flour; nothing will ever come of it.”

“But what will happen?”

“Nothing. There is still plenty of time to get married. But I hear you’re engaged to Ivan.”

“Who told you that?”

“Ivan.”

“H-m,” Maria smiled, and although her leg pained her she could not resist the temptation to tease Wasyl a little. “What else could I do?” she said. “Whom was I to wait for? You know that we are poor and that to marry a man like Ivan will mean security for me. And he’s not a bad fellow; who else around here is any better? He visits us almost every day, bringing wild ducks, chickens and rabbits. He says he’s going to build a house of his own in the fall and his father is going to give him everything he’ll need for a good start. I’d be laughed at by the people if I refused him.”

“Let’s go; it’s getting dark.” Wasyl spoke sharply. “It isn’t proper to wander about the woods at night.”

He picked her up again and plodded on in bitter silence.

“Why are you so quiet?” she whispered into his ear.

Wasyl said nothing and accelerated his pace. She could hear the hard beating of his heart as he plunged along.

“When you leave, don’t forget about me,” she said so gently that he involuntarily pressed his cheek against hers a little more tightly. “I’ll be waiting for you. . . .” Suddenly she burst into tears.

“What happened?” he asked in shocked bewilderment, as he tried to sit down and learn the reason for her tears. But she hugged him so tightly that it was impossible for him to pry her away.

“You won’t leave me, will you—not really leave me?” she asked.

Wasyl was completely bewildered. He didn’t know whether to believe her or not. But her tears and her gentleness momentarily erased his doubts. She was so dear to him, and so light a burden that he felt prepared to carry her forever!

Then, suddenly and mysteriously, Ivan appeared before them as though from thin air.

“Why are you carrying Maria like a cripple?” he demanded harshly.

“She sprained her foot,” Wasyl said in an equally unfriendly voice.

“Just one foot?” Ivan goaded.

Wasył didn't answer. He brushed past Ivan and pressed on.

Just before he reached Workun's home, Wasył looked back. There was no sign of Ivan Poshtar. At the door Maria said, “You'd better go.” Then, reconsidering as she gazed back at the forest, “No, stay with us tonight.”

“I'm not afraid of Ivan,” Wasył said, looking down at the girl, torn between faith and doubt.

“Do you see that bright star up there?” she whispered, directing his gaze towards the eastern sky. “That will be our star, yours and mine. Every evening I'll look at it and think of you. And you must do the same.”

“That I will,” whispered Wasył, drawing her close and kissing her upturned mouth.

Then he turned quickly and hurried home.

Wasył's sleeping companions were ready to turn over, as the saying goes, when Wasył finally fell asleep. But not for long. They were all awakened by the sound of rain, gentle at first, but settling down to a steady deluge.

“Of course, we had to have this!” grumbled Workun. “Now, boys, better get up or you'll drown like mice in a waterhole.”

Feeling their way single-file they retreated into the forest for greater protection. They stood in the lee of a thick clump of trees in their bare feet, teeth chattering from the cold which grew steadily worse and seemed to freeze their very bones. There was scarcely a break in the relentless downpour.

Finally the dawn broke through the massive clouds, slowly lighting up the forest. While this eased the general tension, the rain, though less torrential, still continued.

“Well, fellows, it's time to get going!” Workun decided. “We've had our sleep and our shower bath, and we had better have our ‘constitutional’ before breakfast.”

Wet and bedraggled, their tempers badly frayed, the wayfarers finally reached their destination: the main street of a prairie village where they did not know a single soul, where the language was a bar to understanding, yet where they must somehow find shelter and work to sustain them. They had one hope, which fortunately did not fail them. They found temporary shelter

in the Immigration Hall, where they were soon huddled round the stove drying their clothes. The good-natured supervisor even treated them to hot tea.

"Well, Toma, how do you feel now?" asked Workun, cheered by the warm drink, as he stretched out on the floor for a nap. "Do you still feel like jumping into the river?"

"Oh, let well enough alone!" Toma muttered. "Right now I'd like to sleep for a week."

"You'll make a good husband yet," laughed Workun.

"Perhaps you're right. If I don't get soaked too often and don't hang myself, there may be an outside chance."

"Your wife is too good for you."

"I know that."

"If I were in her place, I'd horsewhip you several times a day."

"That wouldn't help very much," Toma muttered sleepily.

"Why not?"

Wakar didn't reply. Warm and momentarily secure, he was fast asleep.

By the next day the skies had cleared and the men set out looking for work. They wandered hither and thither in a wearying and fruitless quest. They spoke to no one and nobody spoke to them. Having made an attempt which got them nowhere, they returned tired and dispirited to the Hall to consider their situation.

In those days it was not so easy to find work in a typical Western town which had sprung up around a Hudson's Bay Post. There were no large industries. The needs of the two thousand citizens were met by a few small businesses which required little outside help. It was a primitive town of retail stores on streets that angled away into the surrounding forest.

Five days after their arrival the job hunters were still jobless and on the point of despair.

"It looks as if we'll have to return empty-handed," said Workun. "It's hopeless looking for work when we can't make ourselves understood. How do they know we're even looking for work? However, let's keep our heads. Things could be worse!"

"Worse, you say?" Wakar growled. "How could it be worse? We're dead tired, jobless, hungry; and yet you say things could be worse!"

"Well we are not dead yet," Hrehory Workun said, "and I still

have seventy-five cents left. Not much, but something against an evil hour. How much money have you?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"So what're you grumbling about? You've got money jingling in your pocket and still talk failure."

"I too am holding it against an evil hour!"

"Well, then, things are not as bad as they seem. We still have the jump on hunger."

"It's about time to buy bread," said Solowy, as he crumpled the two-dollar bill in his pocket.

They located a bakery by following the smell of fresh bread. It was a small place tucked on to the general store. They entered to the sound of a bell which brought a woman from the back to serve them. She launched into rapid speech which might as well have been bird-talk.

"What does she say?" asked Wakar, forgetting that none of them knew English.

"She asked why you didn't shave," said Workun, watching Solowy who had approached the counter and was pointing to a loaf of bread for which he asked in courteous Ukrainian.

The good-natured woman looked at Solowy, then at the bread to which he pointed, chattering in friendly fashion as she wrapped up his purchase. He gave her a dollar and she gave him the change, then turned to Wasyl. Wasyl also pointed at the bread and pulled out a dollar. Wakar did the same. Workun, happy that the sale had gone so well, approached the counter and put a quarter down. The woman, now laughing merrily, threw the coin in a drawer and set three loaves before Workun.

"That's too much for me," said Workun, "I only wanted one loaf." But at that moment a customer came into the store and the clerk immediately engaged her in conversation, paying no further attention to Workun or his outlandish companions.

On the way home Wakar started to make fun of Workun, but Solowy put a stop to it by saying that he too should have bought three loaves since they were cheaper at that price.

The bread was good. For a day or two they were safe, but the prospects were dreary. On the eighth day in town Workun rose very early and without waking his dozing friends went into town. This time he did not maintain his customary brisk walk. He started out swiftly but soon checked himself, thinking, "Why all

this haste? What'll I find there anyway? If anyone needed workmen he would have hired us a long time ago. We've been tramping for days, just wasting time, when we might have been doing something useful on the farm. . . . I'll give it another try. If I fail I'll return home. . . . But what'll I return with and to what? to watch the children die of slow starvation? They'll be needing milk and I can't even buy a cow. There won't be any bread either, for flour costs money too."

He had spent the night trying to figure out some plan for the future. He had promised to bring a cow and other necessities as well. He was not resigned to going home empty-handed. At this point in his mental turmoil he suddenly remembered the piles of uncut wood he had seen at the houses of the townspeople, and the thought came to him that these woodpiles might be the solution.

It was in response to this idea that he had risen so early and was now exploring the town. No one was afoot, which made Hrehory feel like a thief when he finally jumped over a fence and made for a pile of logs in the back yard of a prosperous looking house. There was a sawhorse with a saw hanging from its corner and an axe nearby.

Workun stood contemplating the closed door of the house for a while, then made the sign of the cross, spat on his hands, took up the saw and started cutting the unfinished piece of log which lay on the sawhorse. His muscles responded admirably in proportion to his desire to work, and so the saw went through the log like a knife through butter. After each fallen piece of log, he would glance anxiously up at the door of the house and then redouble his efforts. After each log was finished he'd put on another and saw until that one was completed. On a sudden he began to feel a feverish spasm creep over his body, accompanied by a terrifying weakness. Without other warning he fell to the ground as if felled by a bullet.

When he recovered consciousness he was still weak and sweating profusely, but such was his relief on being able to rise that his strength began to flow back into his over-strained body. He leaned against the log for a few minutes, then resumed his sawing.

Suddenly someone spoke to him. He looked around in fright and saw a man standing on the porch before the door, a big, powerful-looking man dressed in a nightgown. He was saying something which Hrehory Workun failed to understand, but the man did not seem displeased. On the contrary he seemed satisfied,



and gestures indicated that the work should proceed. The man re-entered the house, and Workun felt like a person who has found a pot of gold.

Meanwhile Solowy, Wakar and Wasyl, having risen early, began to prepare for the journey back home. At first they paid little attention to Workun's absence, for he had always been in the habit of getting up with the birds; but on this day of departure they soon missed him and thought his absence strange. They waited and waited while the hours dragged by. The sun had risen high in the sky and still there was no sign of Workun.

"We'll all go to town," they decided, "and make a thorough search."

"If we don't find him, we'll hit the road without him," said Solowy somewhat harshly.

"I won't leave here without him," Wakar protested. "If he has hanged or drowned himself I want to do the same."

"Don't talk nonsense," said Wasyl angrily; and without another word he turned on his heel and started for the town.

Solowy and Wakar soon followed.

As for Workun, it seemed as if he had forgotten his friends. He worked like a beaver, his one thought being to satisfy his unknown employer. To his relief the man re-appeared about nine o'clock in the morning. This time he was dressed in clothes which to the immigrant seemed elegant holiday attire. He came straight to the woodpile talking and smiling, and Workun talked and smiled too. The man pointed to the pile of sawed wood and then at the unsawed logs, and this had but one meaning to Workun: that he was to chop what he had sawed and then start sawing again.

Finally the man looked at his watch and then at Workun, trying to explain something to him by placing his hand on his lips and on his stomach. These movements spoke eloquently to Workun, who placed both hands on his stomach and left them there. The man was satisfied. He threw another smile in Workun's direction and returned to the house.

Within twenty minutes Workun was seated behind the table of his new employer, eating with great relish oatmeal porridge, hot buns and honey, some thin slices of fried bacon, bread and butter, topped off with coffee and cream!

After breakfast, Workun was hard at work again. It was a hot sunshiny day. He perspired freely, but this did not stop him.

And while he sawed he began to think of his friends and of how to get news of his luck to them. At dinnertime he decided to go down town and look for them. There he finally met them near the bakery.

"Where do you think you are going?" he asked, noticing the bundles they were carrying with them.

"We were looking for you, and since we couldn't find you I bought two loaves for the road," explained Solowy.

"Where the devil were you?" asked Wakar crossly.

"We thought you had abandoned us and gone home alone," said Wasyl.

"I got a job," said Workun, ignoring their questions and herding them before him.

"What are you pushing us into now?" asked Solowy, trying to hold back.

"Don't ask questions; just march ahead," commanded Workun in a gay voice.

He led them to his place of employment, his face shining with happiness. "Well, this is where I work now," he said, "and if you wish you can pitch in with me."

"Do you think the man who owns this wood will want to take us all on?" asked Solowy.

"Why not? It should be all the same to him whether one man does this whole job in eight days or four men finish it in two days," explained Workun. "Anyway, it's better working together than singly. But wait awhile, I'll look around."

He went into a small shack near a clump of trees. In a few minutes he returned empty-handed. "No saw; what'll we do now?" he asked.

It was in such a state of mind that he was accosted by the owner of the house. After more pointing of the fingers and frantic gestures the man was made to understand that they wanted another saw. He nodded, left for town, and in a short time returned. He spoke a few encouraging words as he handed the eager men the saw, said good-bye, and turned back to town.

"Now, fellows, you better get started," ordered Workun. "You, Stepan, and you, Wasyl, take the big saw; I'll use the small one. Toma can do the chopping. If he gets tired, I'll do the chopping and he can do the sawing."

Thus the work proceeded in jig time. The lady of the house kept glancing through the window every once in a while, pleased with their progress and their zeal, as she busied herself with preparations for their supper.

After supper Wakar stretched himself out in the shade of the house.

“I’m beginning to believe a little in your high hopes,” he told Workun with something very like a pleased giggle.

7 On the same river bank on which the town nestled, there stood, in a grove of trees, a cabin. It was built of poles driven into the ground and interwoven with sedge grass, and had a roof of dry grass. Inside were two beds improvised from poles and covered with gunny sacks, and two wooden chairs. The door was made from willow branches. By day it could be fastened from the outside and by night from the inside. This primitive dwelling was protected from the heat and wind by the surrounding trees. From the doorway could be seen the slow-moving river. In the words of Solowy, this was the quartet's summer villa!

This shelter was dictated by necessity. Now that the four men were working they were not entitled to free lodging in the Immigration Hall. They had to go elsewhere. The town hotel was too expensive. Obviously, their only alternative was the forest. Here in the secluded woods the men were happy. They were free and independent and, best of all, their shelter did not eat into their earnings. Their money could be saved for more useful purposes.

It was Sunday. Sitting before the cabin on a fallen tree trunk, Workun, Wakar, Solowy and Wasył chatted and allowed their eyes to rove over the muddy waters of the river, which had risen almost to the top of the bank. They were all dressed in freshly washed shirts—not exactly white, for Workun had thrown them into a tub along with the coloured clothing. Their white pants were not only discoloured, but had shrunk almost to the knees. The men had bathed, but they needed a haircut and shave. In their bare feet they looked more like wandering Bedouins than simple peasants. Hanging over an improvised stove made from stones was a black kettle. From time to time, one or another of the quartet would go

over to this kettle, lift the lid, stir the contents with a whittled willow stick, shake his head in dissatisfaction, put the lid on again and return to his companions.

"This ox must have come across the ocean along with Columbus," Solowy said, as he sampled the meat in the kettle. "It's been cooking since morning and is still as tough as horsehide."

"Who was Columbus?" asked Wakar curiously. He had heard this name before.

"He's the man who discovered America."

"He must have been riding oxen when he found this place," said Solowy.

"Oh, well, we can dispose of Columbus' friend with our teeth," said Wakar, as he got up from the log. "Let's eat it as it is. My insides are empty as a drum."

Wakar's suggestion met with approval. Armed with a sharp-ended stick of willow, each of them dipped into the kettle to spit a chunk for himself. Back on their log seat they blew on the hot meat; if not exactly choice, it was at least filling. In subsequent helpings they improved the taste by adding salt, and wrapped the meat in slices of bread.

"A little on the tough side, but tasty just the same," said Workun, as he bit off the more tender parts.

"Not bad for what this meat cost us," said Solowy, trying to decide from what angle to attack his chunk.

The men had soon discovered they could not work from dawn to dusk on bread alone. Solowy had first bought some pork for twenty-five cents, which they roasted over the fire and ate without salt, for they had not then learned the English word for it. The results were unsatisfactory.

Then they tried beef. It wasn't bad—better than pork but, like the latter, too expensive for their pockets.

One day the butcher had filled their pot with bones to which bits of meat adhered. Solowy radiated happiness. His gaze suddenly turned to a large piece of salted bacon. Encouraged by the friendly smile of the butcher, he scraped some salt off with a knife and then offered to pay for it. Understanding how badly his odd customer needed salt, the butcher filled a bag and handed it to Solowy for the sum of a few cents.

After that life began to take on a new look for the immigrants.

They had a store of bones, some pigs' feet, liver, pork fat; products which well-to-do people of those days regarded as fit only for dogs.

Strange as it may seem, Sunday for the men was not only the longest, but also the most monotonous of days. Work days went by rapidly. They rose with the sun, washed in the river and dried themselves with their shirt sleeves. After offering up a short prayer, they immediately set off for work.

No one ever mentioned breakfast, because they had formed the habit of waiting for the sun to rise one-fourth of the way in the sky, which meant one-fourth of the day's work was done, before touching their meal. On cloudy days their empty stomachs told them when the first quarter was up. They ate dinner midday, then rested a little; after which the work continued until the sun set.

After work they would shop, when necessary; otherwise they went straight back to their cabin about a mile away, where supper was prepared and eaten by the light of the fire. Then they said their prayers and hopped into bed.

But Sunday was always dull, and this particular one was no exception. While the others were "sleeping off the gluttony" of the dinner meal, Wasyl remained outside. He felt too restless for sleep. He sat on the log for a while, then wandered down to the river's edge, where he marked the level with a stick so that he would be able to tell later on whether the water had risen or fallen and by how much.

Finally the feeling of being exiled from his own age group became too much for Wasyl. He decided to walk to town where he could at least watch the promenade of other young people. He was not completely without acquaintance among them. While he was working, the boys and girls often stood watching; and when he encountered them in town they would greet him with a pleasant smile or an occasional "Hello" And the pretty young daughter of the first man they had worked for never passed him without waving a friendly greeting.

For Wasyl was a well set-up, handsome young man of medium height, straight as an arrow, with blond hair which fell down on the nape of his neck and curled up into ringlets. His straight nose and steady grey eyes wide-spaced in a serious face made him look like a Viking. The narrow pants which clung tightly to his straight legs, the jacket which he kept buttoned up to the chin, and the Tyrolean-style hat all conspired to make him look much

thinner and taller than he actually was. He would have presented quite a figure if it hadn't been for the short pants, which hardly reached to his boot tops, and the short sleeves of his jacket, which seemed to have been cut off at the elbows.

Notwithstanding the strangeness of his attire, Wasyl strode along with steady, even steps. The main street was deserted, but from a side street issued sounds of merriment. Wasyl turned in that direction, and hard by a huge red stable he came upon a large crowd of people and in a wide, fenced-in space a man on horseback. As Wasyl approached, the horse arched its back, came down on all fours, then bucked in a wild effort to unseat its rider.

This comedy, many times repeated, lasted an hour; then the watchers, tired of the sport, began to disperse. Wasyl, not knowing where to go next, stood watching the departing crowd, envying their gaiety and laughter.

Suddenly he heard a familiar voice. He looked around and saw the pretty, prim young lady who always waved her hand when she saw him. Now she was greeting him from a little group of people which included her father, mother and two other young women. She was beckoning him to come over. They were all in very good spirits. The strange girls were evidently asking her questions, occasionally glancing in his direction, roguishly or else in pity. And now her father was making inviting gestures. But Wasyl hesitated. He was afraid they might want to poke fun at him.

Among the group was a young boy about ten years of age. He was a lively and talkative youngster, who had often "talked the head off" Wasyl while he was at work. He now came over to Wasyl and pulled him towards the group. Then, to Wasyl's surprise, he was conducted to their home.

It was a strange and rather terrifying experience for Wasyl to find himself seated as a guest in what to him was a mansion. Although everyone seemed friendly, he had a feeling that these people looked upon him as a human curiosity. But when the girls sat down beside him to show him a photograph album, certainly not a hostile gesture, then played on the organ, Wasyl began to lose his nervous apprehension. These people were really kind!

A little later one of the girls produced a reader and began pointing out letters and words, which he tried to repeat after her. Seeing his interest, everybody joined in, quite as if they were resolved to teach him English in one sitting.

Meanwhile, after the usual Sunday nap, Workun, Solowy and Wakar sat about enjoying a chat.

"It's time we wrote home," said Workun, when the conversation turned to their families. "Our wives will think we are lost or dead if we don't get word to them."

"I was thinking about that myself. But where are we going to get the writing paper?" asked Solowy. "Furthermore, even if we had the paper, where would we address letters? Our district hasn't been named yet. Perhaps we could address the letters to Poshtar. He receives letters from the Old Country and picks them up here. I heard him say so himself."

"That's not a bad idea," agreed Workun. "We can write to him and tell him to forward our letters to our wives."

"Where will we buy paper and a pencil?" asked Solowy worriedly.

"Where else but in town?"

"But today is Sunday! The stores are closed."

"Well then we'll buy them tomorrow. Our wives won't run away from the farms," said Workun.

Suddenly they missed young Wasyl. "Where could the boy have gone?" Solowy wondered.

"He's just gone to look around a bit. As soon as he gets hungry he'll come back home," said Workun. "The young lad is lonesome, I expect."

"He needed outside work as much as I need a laurel wreath," said Wakar. "His old man has enough money; and yet he's chased his son out to drift for himself, the old miser!"

"The more they have, the more they want. That's human nature," said Workun appeasingly.

"It's the greed of the rich that causes the misery of the poor."

"You'll be in that category pretty soon, too."

"That'll be the day!" said Wakar. "What I now throw in the pot will be shot during the winter; by spring there'll be nothing to show for it."

"In the spring you'll go to work," said Workun. "You'll earn more and there'll be a margin left over; every year there should be a margin above expenses. But let's look for Wasyl. There's still plenty of time before the sun goes down."

Wearing their shabby shrunken clothes and cracked newly-greased shoes, the friends set out for town. Mosquitoes and other



insects were a frightful nuisance, and the men were thankful to reach the less infested streets of the town.

"There must have been a celebration here today to have drawn so many people," said Workun, as they finally came out on the main street.

"And without inviting us!" said Solowy, with mock irritation. "Notice how they are dressed; just like the gentry back home. Look at those high hats and tail coats and fancy vests, the gents are wearing. And the ladies—did you ever see finer feathers anywhere?"

They came to the end of the street where the two stables were located. A big man was hitching horses to a wagon near one of the stables. Workun stopped to admire the animals.

"What a fine pair of horses!" he said with fervour; and it was all he could do to stop himself from going over to pat them on the back.

"One of these days I'll buy a pair like that," said Solowy, "unless I'm dead before I get the money."

"So you like horses?" asked the man hitching up the horses, in broken Ukrainian, as he adjusted the harness to the collar.

These words had the effect of an electric current upon Workun and his friends. They stood there stupefied, looking at each other and then at the stranger.

"You're new arrivals from the Old Country?" he questioned further, looking them over from head to foot.

"Three months ago," said Workun, undecided whether to go over and shake hands with the stranger or not.

"Have you wives and children?" asked the stranger.

"Yes, we have children and wives; they're on the farm," they answered in concert.

"Are your farms far from here?"

"Over yonder," said Workun, indicating the direction of their farms. "Three days of good walking from here."

"Did you come to town to do some trading?"

"We haven't the money to do any trading. We're employed cutting wood for the townspeople."

"If you're interested you can come and work for me," said the stranger.

"You mean right away?" asked Workun, excited but conscious

of his undischarged duties. "We would like to come," he said, "but we have a job to finish. Tomorrow is our last day."

"I'll be here on Wednesday," said the stranger, as he got up on the wagon where his wife and children were already waiting for him. Then with a wave of his hand he moved on.

"Oh, my!" said Workun, slapping himself on the thighs, "I forgot to tell him there are four of us and not just three."

"Take it easy!" said Solowy. "He didn't tell us how many men he wanted. Perhaps he won't take even three of us."

"I had all of us in mind when I spoke to him."

"Perhaps you had, but he may have other ideas."

"I will not go without you," said Hrehory Workun.

They wandered about the streets for a time, then started for home. After supper they didn't get to bed as early as usual. Their meeting with the stranger, the absence of Wasyl, all these things coming at one time were too exciting to allow sleep. They just sat on the log, throwing dry twigs and green leaves in the fire to create a smudge against the mosquitoes and talking of this and that, mainly in an effort to keep from worrying about Wasyl.

It was midnight and still no sign of him. Suddenly Solowy said, "Let's do a little yelling. If he's hurt in the woods he may hear us and call back."

"All right," Workun agreed, letting out a yell to rouse the dead. In a moment Wasyl's response echoed through the bush.

"He's safe!" cried Workun and rushed to meet the lost sheep. But he fell back at Wasyl's approach.

"Holy smoke!" he cried. "Where did you pick up a skunk?"

"Darned if I know. I was walking quietly when I heard your yell and started to run. Suddenly something hit me."

"Something did!" said Workun. "Take your clothes off and go to the river for a bath. Otherwise, you'll kill us all with that smell. Better sleep in the nude to-night."

"Hey, fellows! Get up!" Workun called out at dawn on Monday morning. "There is a lot to be done before Wednesday, so let's get at it before it gets too hot."

They worked hard all day, and when they received their pay they went to town for writing material. They had difficulty in making their needs known, but eventually the clerk in the bakery

realized what they wanted and showed them where to get it in the general store.

Now they were back in their villa preparing for the feat of writing home. The pencil was cut in two; one part was given to Solowy, the other to Wasyl. Solowy wrote to his wife, Wasyl wrote to his parents. And while they were writing, Workun and Wakar lay in bed trying to figure out what they would put in their letters, until the thoughts began to come so fast and to bear down so hard on their minds that the process finally ended in a duet of lusty snores.

But Solowy and Wasyl just kept on writing. Wasyl wrote two letters: one to his parents and the other on the sly, so that Solowy wouldn't notice to whom it was addressed.

Solowy woke up the sleepers. He promised to write a letter for Workun, who knew some of the alphabet but was unable to write. They both sat on the log, with Workun dictating and Solowy doing the writing.

"Tell them that I've made a pillow out of my money and that I sleep on it" (for that is what he actually used to do; roll the bills up and then put them under the pillow). "Tell them that I don't eat anything else but bread and meat; that I live in a burgh, built near the river in a large park, far from the madding crowd. Tell them not to worry, to do a little bit of grubbing and to make some hay, because I intend to bring home some cattle. . . ."

"Under your arm, I suppose," quipped Solowy. "That's ribbing your wife a bit too much," he added more seriously.

"Write what I dictate," said Workun with pretended sternness. "You see for yourself that I'm not lying. I might be sugar-coating it a little, but I'm telling the truth. What good will it do them to know that we're living like a band of gypsies? If I were writing myself, that wouldn't be all I'd write. But since it's not my handwriting, just send them my best regards. That's all."

In the meantime, Wasyl was writing his letters. "I guess I'd better let them know I'm still in good health; and that if the cholera doesn't get me I'll be back home for the winter. What little I earned I had to work for like an ox. I guess this will have to do," he soliloquized as he entered the cabin.

On Wednesday afternoon the "lord" arrived in town. His visit was of the greatest importance to our quartet, who had waited for him since sunrise and were about to give up hope of seeing him

at all. So great was their joy when he finally did arrive that Workun just couldn't restrain himself from running to meet him.

They saw him coming out of the last store. He told them to pile into the wagon, and before they knew what had happened they were on the road. Just before sunset the wagon pulled up before the manor of their Canadian "lord."

Mr. Meyer was indeed a rich man by the standards of his time. But his real wealth could not be discerned from his buildings and their surroundings. His small home and huge stable, built out of hewn logs and covered with shingles, did not of themselves give any inkling of the wealth possessed by this man, which included many herds of horses and cattle grazing out in the fields and in the marsh lands. Neither could they judge very well the amount of land seeded from the glimpses they got through the trees around the house and stable.

Mr. Meyer's prosperity was fully revealed to them the next day when the Ukrainians caught sight of his herds. The fifty fine cows and more than a hundred head of horned cattle alone would require several men to look after them. In summer the animals browsed for themselves. But there was hay and feed to provide against the winter. The hay came from the tall grass that grew everywhere in the low places. It was to cut and garner this kind of feed that they had been hired.

With Mr. Meyer's knowledge of the Ukrainian language the men found it easy to adapt themselves to the new work. Mr. Meyer did the cutting with a pair of horses. He taught Wasyl how to operate the rake that gathered up the hay after it was cut, how to step on the "dump" pedal when enough hay had been collected. Workun and Wakar were told to pile up the hay into small stacks. It was pleasant work, the kind that they could do with a will. Even Wakar the grumbler began to think better of life and considerably better of himself.

**8** “And where are you going?” asked Kalina Dub, as she stood at her door watching Anna Poshtar coming along the road with her daughter Katerina.

“We are on the way to Tetiana’s,” answered Anna. One hand held a willow-branch with which she chased off the mosquitoes; the other clutched a cloth-covered pot.

“How can you pass us by without stepping in?” said Kalina, looking at Anna and then at what she was carrying. “I was just thinking about you a few moments ago and was on the point of visiting you along with Olga. Don’t you know that today is the Assumption of the Holy Virgin and that on a holiday like that it’s hard to stay at home? And what about Tetiana, is she sick or something?”

“Her daughter Sophia called on us early this morning before we were out of bed and told us that their Semen was very sick and that Tetiana was quite ill too,” replied Anna, as she followed Kalina into the house. “Illness is a dreadful thing,” she added, as she sat down on a bench.

“I saw the girl when she left your place, but I didn’t ask her and she didn’t tell me what was wrong at home,” said Kalina as she sat down on the bed.

“She’s a good girl but still a little on the bashful side,” explained Anna. “Even the most capable of persons living in their wretched circumstances would lose their sense of proportion. I begged Tetiana to stay with us until Wakar returned from work, or even the whole winter for that matter, but she stubbornly refused and moved away. ‘I’ll do some work on the farm,’ she said, ‘for it’s a sin to sit around doing nothing and eating someone else’s bread.’ As for the work she does on the farm, she isn’t living, she’s merely suffering, like one doing a penance for one’s sins.”

"Let's go to Tetiana's too, Mother," Olga whispered to Kalina. "That'll make her feel better."

"I'd like to but it's a bit too far for my weak legs," Kalina protested as she rubbed her hands against her hips.

"It isn't any further than from our home to Poshtar's," argued Olga. "You visit them almost every day and don't say that your legs hurt."

"They hurt all right, although I don't talk about it all the time" Kalina gave her daughter a dirty look.

"Oh, we can take our time," said Anna, overhearing her protest. "My legs ache at night too, but in the daytime I don't feel anything; they just grow numb like sticks of wood."

"That's exactly how mine feel. . . . Well, if you go, I'll go too," she said, glancing at Anna's bundle. She took a plate from the cupboard and scooped into it something from a large bowl, added a loaf of bread, and wrapped a kerchief round them. "I don't know whether to put my shoes on or go barefoot," she said, as she looked at Anna's bare feet.

"I'm glad I can walk barefoot without having to drag any shoes along," Anna said.

"But I'm not used to walking barefoot. I'd better put them on," said Kalina, getting out a yellow pair of shoes from a chest. With these on her feet and a long linen towel around her head, she felt equal to the call of mercy.

Tetiana Wakar had refused Anna's invitation to remain with the Poshtar's until Wakar came back from work because she was determined to do something towards improving the homestead. She wasn't skilled in husbandry like her neighbours and, what was worse, had no faith in herself, but she did her best. She rose before sunrise and went to bed when twilight began to fall. Along with her children, she'd pile up the brush, cut down the bushes, hew a poplar tree here and there, until now some clear spots could be seen. In the evening, before the sun went down, she would send her daughter Sophia back to the house to prepare some supper before it got dark; and in the meantime she would cut down an extra bush, tree, or bit of brush and add it to the pile before the shadows of the night covered the land in darkness.

After supper she would kneel, kiss the earth, bow down in obeisance and pray fervently that God would take care of her

children and look after her husband. Then she would quietly pull the covers over her children, who were sleeping on some strewn grass on the bare floor, blessing them and bestowing a motherly kiss on their foreheads. Finally she would make the sign of the cross over herself, saying, "Cross at my head, cross at my feet, I shall lie down with a cross and I shall cover myself with a cross. Help me, O Lord, to get through this night without any sickness, that I may rise on the morrow in peace, happiness, joy and health."

A week before the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, Tetiana was working as usual, chopping down willow bushes and thin poplar trees. She dug deep around the roots with a shovel, then chopped away with an axe, and with the help of Sophia at last got the piece of ground satisfactorily cleared.

But in the course of this constant hacking, her axe glanced off a heavy root and caught her on the foot somewhere between the large and the small toes. In the urgency of her work and the humidity of the day, she did not feel much pain at first. Without sitting down to look the wound over, she merely grabbed a handful of moist earth, spat on it several times, mixed it up a bit and applied it to the wound in the hope that it would stop the flow of blood. Then she went on with the grubbing. There was no time to bother with the foot; the bleeding would cease in time and the wound heal.

Who knows what would have happened if Teklia Solowy had not come along to ask that Sophia spend the night with her, as she was getting to be frightened of sleeping all alone. As Teklia greeted Tetiana with the familiar, "God be with you!" she noticed the trail of blood at her feet.

"What's the reason for this bloody trail?" Teklia asked in alarm.

"I cut my foot a little," replied Tetiana, wiping the perspiration from her face with her sleeve. She was beginning to feel faint around the heart, and sat down suddenly on a pile of cleared brush.

"Let's see your foot," said Teklia. Without waiting for an answer she lifted Tetiana's foot, and almost fainted at what she saw. "For the love of God!" she exclaimed. "This is not a mere cut. You are bleeding like a stuck pig." She winced, hesitated a moment, then pulled out a handkerchief and bound up the wound. "Better come into the house," she said. "I'll wash the wound to stop it from festering."

Teklia used up all the water cleaning the dirt-encrusted wound.

Then she bandaged the foot as best she could. "Now get in bed and keep your foot as high as you can," she said. "It won't be comfortable but it will stop the bleeding."

"Thank you," whispered Tetiana faintly, beginning to feel very tired and sleepy.

Fortunately Tetiana's wound did not fester, as was expected; for every morning and evening Teklia came to dress the wound with chestnut leaves. Soon the swelling began to subside and the wound to heal. And it is possible Tetiana would have recovered much sooner had she not met with another accident.

Sophia had been out mushroom picking. It was not the first time; for mushrooms had become an essential part of their diet. Indeed, more than a bagful had been set out for the winter's supply. And on this occasion a meal composed of fried mushrooms had been prepared for breakfast.

Sometime in the afternoon of the next day they were all found half-dead by Maria Workun. She was going out fishing for suckers in the pond with her brother Pavlo, and was calling at Wakar's to take Sophia along.

As she opened the door, a frightful sight greeted her. There they all lay, pale, bloated and dishevelled; Tetiana with Semen on the grass, Andrew near the chest which served as a table, and Sophia all doubled up with her head between her legs lying near the door, scarcely breathing.

"Run home and bring mother," Maria yelled at Pavlo in fright. "Run! What are you standing there for?" she repeated; for the boy stood rooted to the spot. He was momentarily dumb-founded; and then all of a sudden he leaped up, opened the door and ran home for dear life.

Maria, having withstood the first shock, ran into the house. She wanted to do something; but what? She didn't know; so she just stood there doing nothing. Finally she bent over Tetiana, feeling her nervously with her fingers.

"What happened?" she asked, dreading an impending catastrophe.

"O-h, oh, o-h!" groaned Tetiana in a voice that was weak from exhaustion and pain. She opened her eyes momentarily, looked at Maria, and then lapsed into her former semi-conscious condition.

The glazed stare in Tetiana's eyes frightened Maria. "She



must be dying," she concluded as she ran over to her, helped her to a sitting position and put her arms around her shoulder.

"O-h, o-h, Maria, we . . . ate . . . those mushrooms," the woman murmured with difficulty. "Bring the children . . . and sit down . . . by me." She was barely able to speak.

Maria jumped up, laid Sophia and Andrew on the bed near Tetiana, then made a fire in the stove for what reason she did not really know. She set a kettle on it to warm up some water, then went over to look through the window to see if her mother was coming.

It was not a long distance from Wakar's to Workun's, perhaps a little over a half mile by pathway. It took Pavlo but a few minutes to reach home and let Helena know that Tetiana and her two children had been attacked by Indians, for that is the conclusion he came to from listening to some of Poshtar's tales about how the whites were tomahawked and then scalped by the natives. Helena stood rooted to the spot. She dropped a large kettle which she had just filled with newly-dug potatoes and looked with alarm at the boy.

Teklia appeared at that moment. "Wh . . . at's happened?" she asked, out of breath. She had heard Pavlo mention Indians and then Helena's cry and she ran over like an alarmed doe.

"We're lost!" said Helena. "At least the poor Wakars are lost," she lamented and then the two women set off at a run for the scene of anticipated slaughter.

Helena paused on the threshold, gazing with frightened eyes into the corner where the sick persons lay on the hay-strewn floor. Behind her Teklia was making the sign of the cross, too terrified to move.

"Why are you crossing yourself?" asked Maria irritably. "Nobody has died in here!"

"They haven't died? But Pavlo said the Indians had slaughtered them!"

"They've been eating toadstools," said Maria, pointing to a heap of raw mushrooms on the floor in the corner.

"What should we do?" asked Helena.

"The crisis has passed; they've been vomiting," said Teklia. "I think fresh milk would be of help."

"But where would you get it? Perhaps at Anna's, if someone would run for it. But it's so far. These people could die before

you got someone to look for a cow and milk it. But let Pavlo go anyway."

Pavlo didn't wait to be told twice. He lit out like a shot; while the women washed up the sick ones with warm water, rubbed their hands, legs and chests and settled them in more comfortable positions. Helena asked Maria to run home and bring a few lumps of sugar, which she kept for special occasions. Maria hurried back with the sugar and Helena was soon feeding the patients with sweet water. Tetiana tried to speak a little; but the children lay as if they were dead. But towards evening all of them were better. Helena prepared a wheat gruel and waited for the milk; but Pavlo didn't arrive until it got dark and then without the milk. He had spilled the precious liquid when he tripped on a root.

Helena fed her patients the gruel, made palatable by a little sugar, then tired but thankful she and Teklia and a subdued Pavlo went home.

"Would you allow your Elizaveta to stay over with me?" Teklia begged Helena when they arrived at Workun's place. All this talk of marauding Indians had frightened her. Indeed she was prepared to meet a savage behind every tree.

"Elizaveta can go if she wants to," said Helena. "Tomorrow is a holiday and she doesn't have to get up early. But you'd better watch out for those lurking savages," she added, frowning at Pavlo. "This rascal gave me such a fright that my heart is still thumping with terror."

"Oh, please don't mention Indians at this time of night," begged Teklia, her eye on the darkening forest.

"Don't worry!" said Elizaveta. "This stick can handle Pavlo's Indians."

"Is that so?" laughed Pavlo, "and who was it shinned up a tree to avoid a garter snake? Indians are bigger than a garter snake and don't forget they love long scalps."

"Oh, go to bed, you madcap!" said Helena, "and stop making up stories. Do you want me to lose another night's sleep?" She gave him a slight cuff on the nape of the neck and shoved him towards the door, where he stood watching Teklia leave with a "Good-night" and disappear with Elizaveta around the bend in the path leading into the forest.

Teklia, it might truly be said, lived a life free from anxiety. She had not reached the age of conscious responsibility for household duties, for she was not quite twenty years of age. And she was of a lively, pleasant nature and was continually busy at something, leaving herself no time for pessimistic reflections. On dull days when she had to wait on the weather she would divert herself by singing songs which she knew by the dozen, or by reading the books which Solowy had brought along with him. By now she knew these books practically word for word. Besides, she had a hen and twelve chicks to look after. And what she didn't do with those chicks! She gave each one a name, and she made a habit of singing to them. They got so used to her that they came to her to be petted. On Sundays or on holidays there never was a dull moment for her because of the chicks. "I guess I'll have to go now," was her stock phrase for excusing herself when on a visit. "The birds will be waiting for me."

On week days she cleared the land round her cabin of trees and bushes to give it a "park-like" atmosphere. Then she worked in the garden or cut grass with the scythe and spread it to dry. This gave her deep satisfaction when she thought of the cow Stephen had promised to buy. The precious animal would not go hungry. Teklia baked *pyrohi* with berries, bun biscuits, rolls and cookies from wheat flour, which she would take to those she visited or give to those who visited her.

Needless to say, Teklia was the type to attract young people. They loved her for her genial nature; and there never was a Sunday or a holiday that they didn't visit her, if not in a body, then in pairs or trios or quartets, to hear her sing or talk or for mutual bantering and fun. They seldom went berry-picking without Teklia, whose presence always enlivened any gathering.

Thus on a Sunday or a holiday Katerina Poshtar would hurry through her household chores so that she could ask Anna, "Mother, I'd like to go to Teklia's today. She must be feeling very lonely without company and I'm a bit lonely myself."

To which Anna would reply, "Am I holding you back? Run along, but don't tarry all day. There are cows to milk and supper to prepare, you know." And she'd give Katerina a bundle and say, "You give this to Teklia. With their small means this'll come in handy."

And on the way Katerina would call at Pavlo's for Olga and

Olena and finally at Workun's for Maria and Elizaveta. Then they'd all go visiting Teklia.

Ivan Poshtar didn't need to be told where the girls would meet. It was his custom to pick up Osyp Dub, Pavlo Dub, Pavlo Workun and Andrew Wakar on the way. He needed their help for the usual teasing contest that would follow and which he could not carry on alone.

And Teklia somehow knew they would be coming. She'd weave some wild-flower wreaths and decorate the holy pictures, the windows and the door with them, and place a large bouquet of flowers in the middle of the table. Then she'd go outside and listen intently for any sign or sound of the anticipated visitors. When she saw the girls coming single-file along the path, dressed in their white blouses and blue and red skirts with the embroidered belts, she knew that the young men would not be far behind.

She was never wrong. And when her young guests had arrived, out came the cookies, the buns and the *pyrohi*. When gossip languished, Teklia would sing for the company or spin prophetic and sometimes mischievous yarns for the eager young women.

Eventually one of the girls would beg, "Get the cards and tell our fortune, Teklia." And knowing the girls and what they wanted, she read the cards accordingly.

She would turn from card-reading to book-reading, or tell them stories about the king's son and the king's daughter, or the dragon who devoured twenty young maidens all at the same time, or the golden apples and the golden fleece. It was all very pleasant, even though some of the tales were a bit tall or exaggerated.

9 Ivan Poshtar never missed any of these feminine gatherings that took place at Teklia Solowy's or one of the other homes. He'd come either alone or accompanied by the smaller boys, who were attracted because he owned a rifle or because he told them tales about Indians or bears. He'd flop down in a corner and watch the girls, especially Maria Workun. But Maria, ever since she sprained her foot, had not taken much interest in him. She was afraid someone might write to Wasyl about it and he might decide to leave her for good.

Ivan was not slow to notice this change. He had always felt happy in her company. He loved her racy expressions, her merry disposition. He never had any inclination to oppose her, although his temper was often ruffled; when she looked at him he'd melt completely, wondering at his own docility. He never really resented the way she badgered him.

He had been a happy man until the time he saw Wasyl carrying Maria on his shoulders and, of all things, kissing her! The horizon of his dreams had now begun to darken. And when she began to ignore him, it was blotted out almost completely. He would mope by himself at the parties, eyeing her longingly, but receiving no glance in return; and his heart would throb with pain.

But it did not take Maria long to fathom his predicament, and she felt sorry for him. Why should she steer so clear of him, especially at a party? She was not malicious by nature; so she thought up such games as blind-man's-buff or cat-and-mouse in order to drag Ivan into them and put him in good humour. And when the whole crowd of boys and girls got in the ring, she'd give him the role of cat, reserving the mouse's role for herself.

It was not only at such times, but on all other occasions that Maria tried to be nice to Ivan. She did her utmost to amuse him, to engage him in jocular conversation and to raise his spirits; but

the expression on Ivan's face was so forbidding as to evoke misgivings in Maria's mind. Nevertheless, she kept on being friendly towards him, at the same time hiding her rising fears; for she still thought that he was not a bad fellow at heart.

Hardly a day passed that Ivan did not visit the Workuns. He'd work all day on the farm and in the evening he'd find some excuse to go out hunting. He'd shoot some prairie chickens or ducks and leave them with Helena, offering the excuse, "These are too heavy to carry home; and I can shoot something for myself when I return." Then he'd sit down and watch the women at work.

"Hey, Ivan, let's try chopping down trees and see who'll finish first," Maria would call and Ivan would respond by seizing an axe and making the chips fly in all directions, glancing over at Maria from time to time to note her progress. And there was Maria, lips compressed, whacking away for all she was worth and sneaking a glance at Ivan to see whether he was beating her or not.

And then they'd sit down, arguing over each other's respective merits as tree-choppers. "The trouble is our axes are so dull you could throw them at people without cutting them," said Helena. "I've never been able to give them a proper edge on the grindstone."

"Let Pavlo come along with me and we'll sharpen them," said Ivan. "He can spend the night with us. We'll fix them up so you'll be able to chop trees as easy as lopping off cabbage heads."

Ivan was as good as his word. The next day the axes were as sharp as razor blades. "Fine boy, that Ivan," said Helena, as she noticed the ease with which she was now able to cut down the poplars.

Helena cleared two pieces of land which she intended to plough up before the end of summer. Diordy Poshtar had told her that virgin soil should be ploughed while things were still green and during the time of greatest rainfall. "If ploughing is too long delayed a proper job is impossible," he had told her.

"Run along, Maria, and ask Diordy Poshtar for the loan of his plough," she said on the morning of Christ's Transfiguration holiday. "If the Lord gives us strength we'll start ploughing tomorrow. And don't tarry, for we still have to catch the oxen and tie them up for the night so that they'll be in readiness in the morning."

"Don't you think it would be better to hitch the oxen now and

ride over for the plough?" Maria asked. "You know I can't carry that plough on my shoulders."

"Why, yes, that's true," agreed Helena; "I didn't think about that!"

They went to look for the oxen, which hadn't been hitched since the time when Workun transferred Wakar from Poshtar's to Toma's own place. With no one to work them they had just browsed in the pasture. Now they had to hunt for the beasts, and when found they were restive; but at last they were hitched, and the family piled into the wagon. Helena walked, leading the oxen. She wasn't sure of herself and less sure of the lumbering animals.

Travelling in this fashion, they passed Dub's place. Kalina came running out of the house and slapped her thighs with amusement at the sight. "Where do you think you're going, to market perhaps?" she asked.

Helena in her hurry didn't answer. However, she did try to stop the oxen, but they just trudged along past the house. There was no holding Pavlo either; he had to say something; so he yelled: "We're on the way to Uncle Diordy's place to borrow the plough."

The wagon rumbled on, leaving Kalina in a rage at what she considered an attempt to ignore her.

"What a snob! Thinks she's too good for me! What have I done to her to make her so angry?" Tortured by this apparent slight, she continued to mutter. "What's wrong with *my* plough? I could have loaned it to her!" Then she went back into the house, weeping with unfounded rage.

Helena kept trudging on. There was really no malice in her mind towards anyone.

"Hi, neighbour, what's the idea? Trying out a new kind of polka?" asked Poshtar, meeting her on the road not far from his own place as he was on the way to Pavlo Dub's, and watching her jumping from one side of the road to the other.

"Stop poking fun at me," Helena begged, as Poshtar brought her team of oxen to a halt.

"You don't happen to be going back to the Old Country?" asked Poshtar in jest, as he looked the oxen over.

"I came to borrow a plough," said Helena. "I cleared a few pieces of land and want to plough them as soon as possible."

"Sure, why not; but my ploughshare is quite dull; I'll have to take it to the blacksmith to have it sharpened," said Poshtar.

"We'll take the plough the way it is; there isn't much to plough."

"In that case, come right along," agreed Diordy and returned to the house with her.

As usual, Anna was pleased to have company and instantly prepared a snack for the visitors. But this time Helena was in too much of a hurry to enjoy gossip. She was grateful when Ivan offered to drive the family home. Oxen, he explained, need not be led. They could be driven like horses.

As they approached the Dub house again, Helena attempted to undo her former mistake. But no one responded to her call.

When they finally arrived home, Ivan showed Maria how to hitch the oxen to the plough. And on the following day the chore of ploughing started in dead earnest.

"I wonder how those women are getting along with their ploughing," Diordy said to Anna at dinnertime. "I wanted to tell her that Ivan and I could have done the job with our oxen, and that she could work off her indebtedness to us, but I was afraid she might think I was too insistent or that I was trying to cheat her."

"I hope they don't meet with some accident," Anna worried. "I thought of sending Ivan over to see what they were doing."

"If he wants to see how they are bungling things, he can go if he wishes," said Diordy. But Ivan didn't need any persuasion. After dinner he picked up his gun and was off. He ran like a deer, jumping over fallen logs, paying but scant attention to a mother bear and her cub which he had roused from a siesta.

When he reached the field, he got up on a large stump to watch Helena plough. Maria was holding on to the grips of the plough. Helena was following her with an axe in her hand, Elizaveta was leading the oxen, while Pavlo and Kornylo were switching the oxen with poplar branches and chasing the mosquitoes away at the same time. This went on for a while. Then the plough stuck. Maria started rocking it backwards and forwards with Helena's help, but to no avail; the plough wouldn't budge out of the snag. Helena whacked away with her axe, and presently the oxen began to move again at a snail's pace.

To the experienced Ivan, Helena's progress was too painfully slow. And when they stopped to extricate the plough from a tangle of roots he could stand it no longer. Without a word he took the plough over from Maria, yelled authoritatively at the oxen,



sank the plough into the soil, and away he went, turning over a long undulating furrow.

"This is the way the job should be done," he said. "The way you were doing it, it'd take you over a month to plough up this cleared part of your farm, especially if you stopped every few paces to cut the plough out of the roots. Oxen are lazy beasts, but they are strong; and with a little prodding they'll go through these roots like nothing."

But he had hardly finished his boastful eulogy when the oxen halted as if rooted to the spot. Ivan yelled a couple of times, threw some lumps of earth at the oxen, making them exert their full strength. And then it happened: the mould board broke with a loud snap.

"Oh, my poor head! What'll I do now?" exclaimed Helena, looking at the broken mould board as if it were a child who had broken his leg.

Ivan merely scratched his head. He wasn't showing up very well before Helena, and particularly before Maria. The mould board was brand-new and bound with iron. He didn't know what to do next.

"I'll run right home and bring my own," he said.

But Diordy wouldn't give him a mould board. "You broke it," he said, "and so you'll have to find one yourself." But he figured out a plan of repair. "Get me a piece of dry birch; whittle it down to the form and size of a mould board. Run along and bring the broken board. We'll take off the iron reinforcement and put it on the new one."

Ivan continued to help the Workuns plough their land, and rather made himself at home there. His visits became more habitual; and he began to feel that it was now a matter of course that Maria would marry him and that she was merely waiting for him to pop the question. He was on the point of doing so many times; but neither did he know how to go about it nor did he get the proper opportunity. Everywhere that Maria went she seemed always to have one of her family with her. Nevertheless, he decided that on the last Saturday of the month of September he would carry out his plan.

He knew Maria was in the habit of visiting Wakar's pond every Saturday to examine the weir-basket which she and her brother Pavlo had woven out of willow twigs to see whether any fish could

be trapped or not. Saturday afternoons were usually free from work in the fields. Helena took the day to bake bread, while Maria and Elizaveta washed clothes. Maria took the opportunity to visit the weir-basket. Ivan knew their timetable. So he set off on a hunting expedition, following a route which would lead to the pond.

He killed two prairie chickens on the way, and when he arrived at the pond he sat down behind a bush and awaited Maria's arrival. He was about to take a shot at a flock of wild ducks in the pond when Maria stepped out from the woods and waded into the water to where the weir-basket was fastened. She lifted it up, but set it down again when she saw that no fish had been trapped. She stood looking over the pond, which was covered with wild ducks and geese. She glanced at the opposite bank and saw, as in a painting on green paper, a deer with marvellous horns. But when she turned around and saw Ivan on the bank with a gun slung over his shoulder, she almost cried out with fright. She wanted to run away. Ivan had never appeared so menacing. For a moment she was too startled to move, but then, rather ashamed of herself, she started back to the pond.

"What, no fish?" asked Ivan in a deliberately pleasant voice. He blocked her path and showed no intention of getting out of the way.

But his quiet voice dispelled her fear. "No fish," she said. "The wind was too high. It keeps the fish away from the shallow water."

"You'll have to transfer the weir-basket to deeper water," he said. "In the fall the fish stay as far away from the banks as possible."

"I'm afraid to wade into deep water; there's too much danger of sinking down in the mud," she said.

"If you like I'll do it for you," he said, waving the hand that held the prairie chickens.

"It wouldn't do any good. I haven't the courage to go that far to inspect the basket."

"Why should you have to do it? I can keep an eye on it. It would be a pleasure, especially now in the pre-Lent period."

"What has the pre-Lent period to do with the weir-basket?" she asked, biting her lower lip. The conversation had taken on an unpleasant turn.

"You pretend you don't know what I'm driving at."

"How do I know what you have in mind when you speak in riddles. I think we had better go home," she said angrily, and started to move.

"Wait a minute. What's your hurry?" he asked. "I've been waiting a long time to tell you it would be better for you to live with me than at home. We are both working for nothing. Wouldn't it be more sensible to join forces and work for ourselves?"

Maria stared at him in silent consternation.

"Well, why don't you say something?" he insisted, as he lowered the gun from his shoulder and placed it under his arm, with the barrel pointing directly at Maria's breast.

Maria retreated a few paces, looked at the trees and felt an overwhelming urge to flee like a deer into their shelter. But something held her spell-bound.

"We can ride to town tomorrow and get married," Ivan went on, drawing nearer.

"Take your gun away," she cried suddenly, and without thinking struck down the barrel.

"Don't do that," he shouted. "The gun might go off. It's loaded." The gun was pointing her way once more. "Now tell me, will you marry me?"

Maria flew into a rage. "Take that gun away from under my nose or I'll . . ."

"What? You think I'm afraid of you? You think I'm always going to be your cat's paw? Do you think I'm too dumb to see through your tricks? I'll knock them out of your system! You're just kidding me when you're with me. With others it's a different story! You think I don't know?" He emphasized this outburst by jabbing her in the chest with his gun.

Maria grabbed the gun with both hands, trying to pull it out of his hands and fling it in the pond. But Ivan, prepared for some such move, dropped the chickens and seized the gun by the stock. In the mad scuffle that followed, neither one nor the other giving way an inch, the gun went off with a stunning explosion, and dropped to the ground, striking Maria's foot. The shock and sudden pain made her think she had been shot, and with a cry she collapsed.

Panic seized Ivan. Seeing Maria fall, and thinking she was about to die, he took to his heels. Leaping over fallen logs, bending low to avoid overhanging branches, he rushed headlong through

the trees, unconscious of his direction. Not until his clothes were ripped and torn and sheer fatigue made him stop to think what he was doing and what he had done did it occur to him that he should return to the scene of the struggle and find out whether Maria was dead or merely injured.

Meanwhile Maria had come to her senses and found that her foot was not badly injured. But she was still too upset to think clearly, and the sight of the shotgun and the chickens were no comfort. Finally she pulled herself together and started for home. Ivan saw her coming, and fled in the opposite direction.

Thenceforth Ivan avoided Maria like the plague.

Kalina was exceedingly pleased when Ivan began to visit their house more frequently. At first he would step in for only a few minutes on his way to the Workuns', but after a time Kalina's constant cajolery and flattering attentions began to take effect. Ivan no longer hurried away. That was enough. It did not matter to Kalina that for the most part he sat in scowling silence following Olga's every movement with cold, calculating eyes. These sinister attentions frightened Olga, and this in turn angered Kalina. She would prod the girl sharply and say in a sweet voice, "Take it easy, daughter." And when Ivan was looking elsewhere she would shove the unwilling girl towards him. But Olga usually took refuge in flight, rushing out on some errand to the poultry yard or the well—behaviour which Kalina hopefully interpreted as the shyness of a young girl in love.

Kalina was not a woman to be easily discouraged. She had always believed that a rich man's son would have better sense than to marry an inferior creature like Maria and she had been right. Ivan was done with the Workun temptress. Now Kalina was free to point up the difference between her family and the common Workuns.

She seldom let pass an opportunity to air these views. She made the most of it the day she and Dub went to the Poshtars' to buy a cow. While the men dickered about the price, Kalina regaled Anna with tales of past prosperity. She told how she had given curds and whey on many occasions to the impoverished Workuns, feeding greedy, dirty little Maria when she worked for them—a nasty lousy creature; how on Easter Day she sent the Workuns cheese and butter and something besides for Helena to put in the

basket for the priest's blessing. Oh, but those were good days! She had gone to market with tubs of cheese, pots of butter and eggs by the *kopa* (in sixty-lot cases). She rattled on about the fine herd of swine they had kept, the largest of which was always slaughtered for winter. "And *that* old Workun can't deny, since he helped Pavlo with the killing and curing of the beast and was glad to be paid in bits of liver and the intestines. Furthermore, that worthless Wakar will bear it out that we had the finest horses in the village, and so much land we could not work it without hired help."

Kalina was astonished and irritated that Anna seemed so little impressed. For Anna merely sat on the edge of the bed, holding one hand under her arm and the other under her chin, swaying from side to side in obvious boredom. Luckily Ivan and Katerina were too busy patching up a quarrel to pay any attention to what was being discussed. Since she herself had always admired the Poshtars' enterprise, it was difficult to believe that their opinion of the Dubs was less flattering than hers. So she continued: "Thank God, we still have plenty of unsold land left in the Old Country, so we shall be able to give our first son-in-law a dowry. That is as it should be, provided he's of good stock; for we won't allow our daughter to marry a ne'er-do-well, nor would we let our son bring home some servant girl."

Kalina couldn't see any better way of enlightening the Poshtars than the method she was using. Even the deaf and the blind could have recognized that everything she had said was the truth. Still, she had to admit that at the moment they did not evince any particular interest, which was strange and galling and could only be attributed to malicious gossip. No doubt Helena had been peddling lies to get herself into the good graces of the wealthy Poshtars.

Some time later she put the question to Pavlo. "I paid Anna two and a half *shustki* for each of the ten chickens I bought; but Helena got her hen and chicks for nothing. I purposely asked Katerina about this and she said that Helena had promised to pay it off in labour! I know what that means. The longer it's put off, the sooner it's forgotten." But Pavlo, as usual, had nothing to say.

Kalina had other grievances against her husband. She was enraged when she first heard that Helena had ploughed a considerable piece of land. And when she rushed into the house to tell Pavlo about it, he was sleeping.

“Did you see how much land our neighbour has ploughed?” she demanded, shaking Pavlo awake.

“No, I didn’t! I’ve never had time to poke my nose into other people’s affairs,” Pavlo retorted crossly.

“That old woman, along with her girls, has cultivated more land than you have, my grand husband,” rasped Kalina, glaring at the indifferent Pavlo.

“Well, then, that’s her business,” said Pavlo. “She and her children are looking after their own affairs and not running around like you, making a walking post-office of themselves!”

“Well, of all things! Running around, am I? Do you call an occasional visit to Anna running around? Do you expect me to stay home all the time? Haven’t you the sense to see why I cultivate the Poshtars? Or would you rather keep me rooting in the ground like that sloppy Helena Workun? Do you expect me to torture my children with work as she does? That would be the day!”

Pavlo coughed so loudly and then kept it up so long that Kalina was silenced and slightly alarmed. When she resumed her harangue it was in a modified voice. “I do my share of work inside and outside the house; but as for grubbing, that’s not a respectable woman’s duty. Why didn’t you use your head when you chose our homestead? You could have picked the one Hrehory Workun claimed. It’s much better than ours and easier to clear. Helena wouldn’t have got far clearing and grubbing on this place.”

Pavlo rose up in his bed and gave Kalina a dirty look, as much as to say, “Keep on wagging and I’ll give you a dressing down you won’t forget.” Kalina recognized the threatening expression and retreated to her household chores. Pavlo was changing. She had first noticed it a day or two before Wasyl left for town. She had been pointing out what a shame it was to let her son hire out as a common labourer, when suddenly Pavlo had flown into such a rage that he threw his boot, narrowly missing her head. Yes, Pavlo had changed, and the wise course was to keep an eye on him while at the same time holding fast to her ambition.

By nature and outward appearance, Pavlo Dub was a serious man, tall and strongly built, with thoughtful brow and steady wide-spaced eyes. He wasn’t talkative, but when he spoke it was to the point, neither more nor less than need be said. He was a good

man and his word was never questioned. He had enjoyed esteem and modest prosperity in the Old Country; and he sometimes wondered how it had come about that Kalina's familiar nagging should suddenly have undermined his better judgment and laid him open to this mad trek to a primitive backwoods existence. The truth was that Pavlo did not like the untamed prairie and had begun to dream of returning to the land of his fathers. He still had a few hundred dollars put away for emergencies, and of course he had some land in the Old Country, which he secretly thought of as a future asylum. But for the time being he had to put up with Kalina's shrewish tongue. He could not desert his family until they were secure, or at least safe from actual privation.

As a matter of fact, the only thing about Kalina's nagging that really galled him was her eternal references to laziness and lack of interest on his part. How was it possible to get on as fast as Helena, whose brood helped in the field, whereas Kalina refused to let her daughters lend a hand with the lightest toil. They would be laughed at if the girls worked like common labourers. That was Kalina's contention, to which she invariably added, "Serves you right if you have to work alone, when you didn't have the sense to keep Wasyl at home." To be sure little Osyp helped with the grubbing, and when their mother was hot-footing it to the neighbours the daughters lent an eager hand clearing and piling the brush. But in the long run neither this occasional help nor Osyp's efforts amounted to much.

As for his consent to Wasyl's departure, it was readily given, for he had surmized the cause of the young man's unrest, although they both chose to stress another reason.

"I think the idea of earning your own money is a good one," Pavlo had agreed. "You have your own farm and the money will come in handy. I can't help you very much. I have a little money which I'm holding in case something happens to any of us. Furthermore, I don't know how long I'll remain over here."

"You mean go back to the Old Country?" asked Wasyl, as if such an idea were incomprehensible.

"It's this way! I want to go and I don't want to go. But if I had enough money I'd pack all of you on a wagon and set out forthwith," Pavlo had said, gloomily surveying the fence posts he and Wasyl were trimming.

"Of course this is all conjecture; I couldn't leave your mother

and the children here all alone. But you are as free as a bird, you can earn and use the money as you please. Stay here, or join us if and when we decide to leave."

Wasył, listening to this unexpected confidence, looked into the grave thoughtful face and felt that he was gazing at a stranger. Never before had his father talked to him so earnestly, as though he were an elder person of reasonable judgment. It was a strange yet flattering experience.

"If you return to the Old Country, I will go with you," Wasył said. "I am fed up with this place and everyone in it."

"That's wholly up to you," said Pavlo. "There is something to be said on both sides. It takes money to make such a journey and there won't be much to live on when we get there. The land I reserved won't support many souls. Then, too, you'd be liable to three years' military service without pay. Here the prospects may improve for a young man. Your homestead is good, and close to the Workuns, who are good people."

At the mention of the Workuns Wasył blushed. It was strange that his father should have mentioned them. Perhaps he had guessed that he was in love with Maria.

"When do you intend to leave here?" asked Wasył.

"Next spring, probably."

"Have you spoken to mother about this?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"The less she knows the better for our peace of mind," said Pavlo. And there the matter ended for the time being.

Although his mother considered him a helpless child, his father's words nourished within Wasył a budding consciousness that he was a grown-up young man; and this in time gave rise to a myriad thoughts concerning his future. At first these thoughts fled like sheep into his father's corral; then they were herded into his own fold; and finally, his conception of family co-operation became dimmer and more blurred, and was overshadowed by a clearer understanding of his own needs. Of course, this understanding did not coincide with his mother's, and thus arose a conflict of opinions which ultimately ended in his somewhat stubborn decision to leave home and seek work.

But Kalina was not free from mental agitation, which caused



her many sleepless nights. She tried to restore some semblance of order out of her chaotic thoughts, having a premonition that all was not well. She could not reconcile Wasyl's mention of Workun, of his farm, of the Old Country, with his contemplated marriage. Nor could she equate it with her own preconceived ideas. "What did he have in mind?" she asked herself. "Does he really intend to marry Maria and settle down on his farm?" The uncertainty made shivers run up and down her spine. Why, she had planned everything so well. . . .

Ivan was to marry Olga, Wasyl was to marry Katerina; and she pictured herself as a mother, and then as a grandmother, visiting her daughter, then her daughter-in-law, aiding, advising, comforting. And they would listen to her advice willingly and gladly. And on Sundays and holidays her daughter and her daughter-in-law would visit her with their children. She would give them presents and let them play, and then she and her *swacha*, Anna, mother of her son's wife, would sit together on the bed chatting and watching their offspring lovingly and solicitously. And who would be so gross as to dissipate this fond dream, unless it were some mortal enemy?

And whenever Wasyl entered the house she'd glance over at him suspiciously; for in her heart she was crying out for him to reveal himself so that she could deduce whether he was her dear child or . . .

On the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, when Anna and Kalina came to visit Tetiana, she was lying on her bed hardly able to breathe. Sitting close by was Teklia who had been intermittently applying a towel to her forehead. Weakened by poisoning, Tetiana was now suffering from a headache and fever. She had been dozing and now started up in fright. "Don't let Semen outside! Don't let him go into the woods or the wolves will tear him to pieces," she cried, unaware that the little boy lay on Helena's lap, a very sick child, but safe as loving care could make it. Teklia's eyes filled with tears. "He is here, Tetiana, perfectly safe and sound asleep."

"He is still a little tot, he needs attention. I have no time to look after him." Tetiana's mind began to wander. "The land takes so much time. . . . His father is bringing a cow. . . . Why

was Anna so angry with me? I meant no offence! Oh, why doesn't she come?"

Grief filled the house. The women wept silently. Sophia sat at her mother's feet looking up at her sickly face with frightened young eyes; Andrew sat in the corner by the stove bewildered and too little to understand what had happened.

"How long has Tetiana been so ill?" whispered Anna.

"Since yesterday," answered Helena. "They ate some of those accursed toadstools and might have died. Sophia and Andrew were the least affected. They recovered quickly, thanks be to God. But Tetiana should have stayed in bed. This fever is the consequence of rushing outside. . . . As for the little fellow, he hasn't opened his eyes since yesterday; perhaps he'll never open them again."

"Why was I not told about this misfortune?" Anna demanded.

"I was so shocked, I forgot about everything," said Helena, wiping her eyes. "We didn't know where to begin or what to do. We tried massage and compresses, anything and everything we could think of and gradually they began to revive. When I thought they were out of danger I went home. Maria stayed to look after them. Just before dawn, Maria came bursting into the house calling, 'You'd better come back! Tetiana's mind is beginning to wander. The way she keeps mumbling frightens me. And take a candle along, for hers is burned out completely.'"

Helena ended her recital with a sigh. And then they all began to cry. But Anna restrained her emotions and, bending over the sick woman, said gently, "Tetiana, my dear, I asked you not to leave our place. You were more than welcome to stay. All that talk of eating idle bread was foolishness. We are your friends, dear Tetiana."

Then, having quieted the sick woman and tidied her bed, Anna turned to other matters. She had brought fried chicken and a pot of soup, so now she said, "Please, Sophia, find some spoons and bowls for this *borsch* and feed yourself and Andrew. There's nothing left of you but skin and bones! When you have eaten you can go with Katerina to our place for the night. I would take your mother with us also, but she is too sick to be moved."

The children ate the food without much appetite, and the women nibbled bits of meat and bread. Anna ate nothing. She had a premonition of further disaster to come. Yet, she was

relieved when the others left and she could devote herself to Tetiana and the child. Tetiana was finally able to swallow a little soup and then fell asleep. For this mercy Anna was forever grateful. Little Semen died in the night.

“Now what shall I do?” asked Pavlo Dub, as he left Tetiana’s house where he had performed his Christian duty, prayed for the soul of little Semen and worried about how and where he should bury him. He had sought the advice of the women in the house, but as they sat by the sick Tetiana they were as helpless as he was. Meanwhile Semen lay on two benches set together and covered by a white cloth. A wax candle which Helena had brought from the Old Country stood at the child’s head.

“If only Diordy were home,” said Helena, who followed Pavlo outside. “He’s been gone a week now. If he were here he would know what to do. We’ve neither a church nor a priest nor a way to report his death, nor a cemetery, nor the boards to construct a coffin. We’ve no alternative but to bury a christened body like a dog under some poplar tree.”

“The church and the priest are out of the question; but we simply have to get a coffin and make a cemetery. We just can’t dig a hole in the woods and drop the body in it,” said Pavlo.

“Where can we get boards for a coffin?” asked Helena, trying to recall whether she had seen any at Poshtar’s or Solowy’s.

“And how should I know?” answered Pavlo. “I don’t have any.”

“Poshtar might have some at his place.”

“Let’s ask Anna; she may know.”

“She’s so fagged out I doubt whether she’s even thought of a coffin. But Ivan will soon be home. I’ll send someone to tell him to come here and dig a grave and to inquire about the boards.”

“Where do you intend digging the grave?” Pavlo asked, considering that a bigger problem than the boards.

“How should I know?” said Helena, lifting her shoulders, “All I know is that we’ll have to bury the child.”

“We’ll have to pick out a site for the cemetery, too, and for a church also,” said Pavlo.

“Yes, a church, too. But at the moment the cemetery is an immediate necessity. None of us is immortal. We don’t know who may be next. What site should we choose?”

"It can't be anywhere but on one of the farms. We have no right to bury our dead elsewhere," said Pavlo, beginning to see some light on the matter. "Perhaps it will have to be on the corner where all our farms meet. That would be fair to all of us."

"What difference does it make where the corners join?" Helena asked. "Just as long as the cemetery isn't too near your house and my house and the land is even." They argued back and forth as they started on their search for a burial ground. They talked to keep their bitter thoughts in leash, not because they differed on the main issue. They stopped where the land lay between small trees. "I don't think we'll find a better spot than this," said Helena. "It's level and nice and all we have to do is clear a place for the grave."

Thus it came about that little Semen found a grave in the virgin plain, a resting-place marked by a large cross set firmly in alien soil, no longer alien by reason of his death. And the ancient symbol, which was like a challenge to the empty land, seemed to say that this child and those of his blood were now dedicated to the task of transforming the wilderness into a Christian civilization.

The next day Diordy Poshtar returned from his trip. He turned in near the house and by habit started yelling for someone to come out and help him unpack the goods from the wagon and for Ivan to unhitch the horses. But to his great surprise nobody came out and there wasn't a single soul in sight. "Hey, there, where in the devil have you all gone?" he called, a bit perturbed. "Perhaps they're asleep," he said as he opened the door, making enough noise to waken the dead. But still there was no answer. He didn't know what to think. He went outside, cupped his hands, shouted with all his might; but the silence now struck him as ominous, and he decided to go to the Workuns who must know if anything unusual had taken place.

Before he had gone far, he happened to glance over his shoulder and caught sight of the new cross above the freshly excavated earth. Diordy, feeling faint, reined in the horses, took off his hat, crossed himself, leaped off the wagon and hurried towards the cross. Then he made the sign of the cross once more and rode off without his hat. A few moments later he saw the mourners, led by his own son, Ivan, carrying a cross made of poplar splices. Pavlo drove the wagon in which the women folk and small children sat around a

small chest. Following them were the young boys and girls in single file. Nobody said a word to him as they passed by, but their grieved looks spoke more eloquently than words. Poshtar moved further ahead to find a better place to turn around in; and thus to join the others. When he got to the grave, he found them all in a quandary. Pavlo had forgotten to bring the rope with which to lower the coffin. When Diordy was reminded of this by the funeral group, he immediately took the reins off his horses and applied himself at once to the job on hand. Helena sprinkled the grave with holy water which she had brought from the Old Country. Then the coffin was lowered into the grave and the group knelt down in prayer. Teklia and Maria sang the customary *Wichnaya Pamiat* (Eternal Memory). The whole congregation then joined in "Our Father which art in Heaven" and "Blessed Virgin," while Ivan and Pavlo were filling in the grave. As each person passed the grave, he threw in a handful of earth and then went over to Uncle Diordy, surrounding him on all sides.

"Where is your mother?" he asked Katerina, noticing that Anna wasn't among the women.

"Mother remained with Tetiana because she's very sick and couldn't attend the funeral," answered Katerina.

"If that's the case, I'll have to get her," said Diordy, on the way to his wagon.

"She says she'll have to spend another night over there, and that if you hadn't come along, Uncle Pavlo was to bring all of them, together with Tetiana, to our place," Katerina explained.

"But have they anything to eat over there?" he asked as he looked towards the wagon. "I brought something for everyone of you; now's your chance to pick out your share and take it home with you."

"Just the same, you had better take us to Tetiana," begged Helena. "It's only proper that we spend another night there because of the funeral. Pavlo and Kalina can come along with us also. The children can all go home, but we old folks should do what we can to comfort her. She certainly needs it in her present condition."

Diordy helped fill in the grave; and when Pavlo was levelling off the surface, Diordy suddenly recollected that he had brought

some mail for Teklia, Helena, Tetiana, Pavlo and—well, he didn't want to say for whom, but he winked meaningly at Maria.

As the old saying goes, "She went to the grave in grief and worry; but left it singing in a hurry." So it was in this case. Mention of the letters chased away the funeral gloom as swiftly as the wind would dispel a thick cloud of choking smoke. All those who had surrounded Diordy now waited impatiently for the distribution of the letters. They were all hungry for news and information, which all hoped would be pleasant and comforting. For no one wanted to believe it would be otherwise: they had had enough grief and gloom at the funeral. And Maria, her heart fluttering as if it had wings, felt a warm exhilarating feeling go through her, lifting her spirits.

Diordy handed out the letters. They were accepted gently and handled with careful fingers. They looked at the addresses with expectant smiles, and held the envelopes up to the sun as if to discover on which side the letter was to be opened.

"Here, Mariko, read what your father has written," said Helena, handing her the unsealed letter. "I hope there is no bad news there," she remarked as she looked at the white paper, covered with the rows of dark writing. And Maria, in a subdued voice, read how her father was getting along, how he was living and what sort of riches he was going to bring home. And Helena listened with pretended sadness and dignity, trying to steel herself against her husband's exaggerations, but, nevertheless, secretly unwilling to disbelieve Hrehory's blandishments and tall stories of riches and happiness.

"Father will bring along horses," yelled Pavlo Workun gleefully to the other boys, while young Kornylo parroted him. "And I'm going to ride with father." And with this remark he ran around Pavlo in a wide circle. Joy, peace and happiness prevailed throughout the group; so that even the large cross and Semen's grave were shorn of their gloomy solemnity.

Teklia read her letter, too. It was evident from her expression that it radiated optimism. He was in good health, was making money and was certain to bring home a cow. She passed on this information to the listening crowd, which shared her joy.

And Olga, reading Wasyl's letter to his parents, did everything but worry them. For Olga, Olena and for his mother he would

bring shawls as presents, the biggest for Kalina. Nothing could have pleased Kalina more than to know that her son held her in such remembrance, even more than anyone else. Nevertheless, she was rather peeved that he made no mention of horses, as did Workun's letter. This would have given her the status of equality with the Poshtars.

But the contents of two letters for the time being remained a secret. Maria hid her letter under her arm. Once in a while she would feel to know if it was still there or not; and after she had read her father's letter, she sought an opportunity to slip away from the group unnoticed and run home so that she could read her letter undisturbed. Sophia delayed opening her father's letter from fear that it would contain no good news; so she took it to her mother still unopened.

"Let our children go home alone and we old fogies will revisit Tetiana and try to cheer her up," said Helena, after all the correspondence had been read and discussed. "This is the decent thing to do, although I can hardly breathe myself," she added, as she begged Diordy with her eyes to give her a lift in his wagon because it was too hard walking on foot.

None of the oldsters refused to go along; for that was the custom and the right thing to do. Pavlo left his oxen in charge of Ivan Poshtar for him to drive home, since he couldn't trust Olga with them, and he, Kalina and all the rest drove on to Tetiana's.

After the funeral, as was the age-old custom, there had to be a feast. On such occasions the tables were set with drinks and food and the mourners were asked to partake of what was there. And then a prayer was offered in memory of the deceased. But Tetiana never had a table nor food to speak of; so Helena made the best of it by offering the guests some pieces of bread and bits of bacon which Diordy had bought and brought with him from town.

But the guests ate this with as much relish as if they were the finest titbits, and they spent the whole evening chatting, so that it was after midnight when they decided to disperse. The last candle (which Helena had moulded and which was set to burn near a cup, out of which Semen's soul was to drink water for the last time before rising to Heaven) was just about down to its last flicker and no one wanted to sit in the dark. Anna finally convinced Tetiana that she should go with them; and so Diordy packed all her belongings,

transferred them to the wagon which was littered with hay, lifted Tetiana gently up onto the wagon, and drove away from the empty house.

And now Hrehory Workun recalled all the bad times that he and the other settlers lived through during the first year of their life in the new land. Like a dense fog they had hung heavily over their daily lives, shutting out any sign of hope, which had shone, flickered and disappeared in the illusory heaven of their dreams. But he could never forget the moment when, returning home from work, he had noticed by the roadside a large poplar cross and the newly-dug grave of Semen Wakar and he had halted, doffed his cap, crossed himself and addressed Solowy and Wakar thus: "Well, friends, Canada now for a certainty is becoming our eternal motherland."



**10** On St. Dimitri's Day Helena Workun decided to celebrate with a festival, because the village from which she came recognized St. Dimitri as its patron saint. On this holiday they put on a *khram* or a patron saint's feast. To this *khram* they would invite the people from another village. It was the custom that no one present in the village on that day was allowed to be hungry; and so the *hospodari* (husbandmen) would greet anyone who came out of the church and see to it that he got an invitation to the feast. And they kept watch for any stranger who might be around, the purpose being to obtain as many unknown guests as possible, so that it could not be said of the *hospodar* or the village that they were remiss in entertaining or welcoming anyone. Reputation entered into this custom also, and was a motivating force. Thus all the *hospodari* would make preparations ahead of time to feed as many as possible; and nothing could give them more pleasure than to spend the whole day, down to the early hours of the following morning, finding a place behind the table for guest after guest. It was a *khram* of this kind that Helena wanted to hold in her newly-adopted homeland; so she conferred with Teklia Solowy about it, and they decided on a combined preparation for the forthcoming holiday.

"Perhaps it would be a good idea to send our boys into the woods with some rattles to make a lot of noise and then announce the date of our *khram* as of tomorrow," Workun advised Helena jestingly. "For the bears, wild cats, coyotes and Indians have never been at a *khram*, and they may do as your grandfather used to do. He'd go off on St. Yuri's Day and never return until St. Dimitri's, which was the date set for his own *khram*."

"If you'd talk less and set out for the Dubs and Wakars and invite them, you'd do better," said Helena as she poured steaming hot water over some cabbage leaves out of which she was going to

make *holubtsi* or cabbage rolls. "I've already sent Elizaveta and Pavlo to invite them, but it would be more fitting for the *hospodar* himself to do the inviting."

"I'll invite them at church tomorrow," said Workun with assumed dignity, as he measured off some boards out of which, on Helena's orders, he was to make a damper for the stove. For it was her desire that all the food be well cooked in a hot oven over night. Workun was pleased that his wife wanted to retain the Old Country custom of the *khram*, so he helped her in every way possible; but nevertheless he took an impish delight in reminding her that a real *khram* was not practical without a church, a priest and outside people. "And besides, you know that Anna and Kalina may be preparing their own *khram*," he said as he marked the board with a nail where he was to round the end.

"What does it concern me or you whether they're preparing or not?" she said, angry at his apparent indifference. "Have you forgotten that Anna's *khram* won't take place until the Green Holidays? She is not from our village; and Kalina has as much right to one as you or I."

"Oh, in that case I'll go to the *khram* at Kalina's place and Pavlo can come to your *khram*, and we'll have a real carousal," he said, chuckling to himself.

"You just hurry up with that damper and then run along with that tongue of yours or I'll . . ."

Helena was about to make some caustic remark when Kornlyo came bursting into the house all out of breath, saying that Wakar's cow had been killed by a bear. He had been over there with Pavlo to borrow a pot and had heard Tetiana say that the cow had strayed during the night and that Andrew and Sophia had been looking for it since early morning without success. He had also heard her hint about bears and wolves; and so, without waiting for Pavlo who reluctantly had to tarry until the pot was cleaned, he ran home posthaste to spread the news. "Well, what do you know! There was just one tail and that had to be lost!" said Helena in consternation. She looked at the boy apprehensively, then through the window; and it almost seemed to her that she was hearing and seeing the bears and the wolves tearing her own cow to pieces—the precious cow Workun had brought with him from town. She was on the verge of chasing everybody out of the house and going out herself to confirm whether her cow was alive or not.

But Pavlo returned and gave a revised version of the news: Tetiana had only imagined that her cow was being torn to pieces by the bears; but as for him he was willing to bet that this was what had happened, because he had seen not one but dozens of bears and wolves in the woods, especially near the road used by the women in their trips to and from the neighbours.

"It looks as though the bears have made a *khram* out of Wakar's cow," said Workun as he listened to the youthful chatter; and in order to cloak his apparent indifference to what was so exciting a matter to the boys and so shocking to the women he started hammering lightly on a nail that had already been driven in. He recalled that Mr. Meyer, for whom he and his friends had been working, had advised keeping their cows in a corral or stable for a few weeks to get them used to their new surroundings, and not to let them wander on their own; otherwise they'd seek out their own kind and get lost in the woods. But as for bears, Meyer couldn't remember any attacks on cattle. Furthermore, they were a rarity on the prairie; and if any ever did show up, they were of the small black variety and not the big brown type whose habitat is in the mountain regions. Workun was aware of all this, so he did not put much stock in the fear that the "Wakar's tail," as Helena put it, had been destroyed somewhere in the woods.

"Stop fooling around with that hammer like a small child and get going," scolded Helena, irritated by her husband's easy ways and by her own lack of decision about whether to keep on making cabbage rolls or go looking for the cow.

"All right, I'm going," said Workun as he thrust the unfinished damper and the axe under the oven. "I'll find her in a jiffy," he added as he pulled on his jacket.

"As for you, stop plucking those roosters and go looking for the cow," Helena told the girls. "I'll finish them myself. And you, Pavlo, run along and tell Solowy to help also. What a situation! A man sets his heart on buying a cow and this has to happen!"

"If you're going to Solowy's you might just as well take a peek into our corral to see whether some wolf has bitten our cow's tail off," said Workun, winking impishly at the boys as he started off for the Wakars' to ask about the loss and at the same time to invite them to the *khram* as his wife had suggested.

But Wakar's house was empty, and there was a lot of "hop, hopping" down by the pond, a sign that the cow had not yet been

found. "Now, if the cow is not so foolish as to crawl to the place where they are looking for her, it is equally silly for me to be crawling through those thickets," thought Workun, as he looked about to see if he could discover any cattle trail.

With eyes bent on the ground, Workun trudged slowly along the path to Pavlo Dub's. A little further on he saw some grass that had recently been nibbled, and the trail was beginning to look a bit more beaten down as if by the hooves of a cow. "If she's not at Dub's or Poshtar's, then she may have strayed back to her owner," he reasoned as he quickened his pace. "She's a nice cow, but her owner is not up to the *hospodar* standard," he thought as he recalled that Wakar didn't even know how to choose a cow at Meyer's. Meyer himself had allowed them to pick any cow that took their fancy so as to avoid any dissatisfaction afterwards; for he had over thirty cows of various colours and temperaments and wasn't worried very much over any selection they might make. Mrs. Meyer kept two or three of the more gentle ones around for milking, and the rest of them just roamed about at all seasons in a half-wild state. In the summer one hardly ever saw them near the house, unless they strayed back by chance, announcing their presence by their moos; but in the winter they were more gentle. That thing on two feet called a human being would feed them with succulent hay and would dig ice-holes so that they could drink water out of the pond. This tamed them a bit, especially the older ones that had lived through many winters. These could be tamed and domesticated, first through their calves, which had to be enclosed in corrals, and to which the mothers were allowed entry two or three times a day, and secondly by enticing them to the milking stool or the stable by offers of oats, fodder, flour and salt. Meyer had a dozen or so of these semi-domesticated cows. But Wakar had to go and pick one out that acted like a goat, as if it had a general grudge against the world, running about snorting and leaping. Solowy poked fun at him, telling him that everything that had a tail and horns looked like a cow to him. With all this in mind, Hrehory passed the new cemetery. A short distance from the Wakar place he stepped into a fresh pile of bovine droppings. "This must be her doing," he laughed as he wiped his shoe on the grass. "Perhaps this cow enticed Wasyl's cow for a romp and they both wandered off to their own family," he thought with a chuckle.

There was no one at home except the girls when Workun reached the Dubs'. "The old folks are fixing up a corral," said Olga when Workun asked her about her parents. He didn't tarry very long. He invited the girls to the festival and left. When he got outside, he looked around, but seeing and hearing no one he went off to Poshtar's, intending to call on the Dubs again on the way back. Somewhere in the distance he heard yelling and hallooing. It turned out to be Ivan and Katerina, herding some cattle out of the woods and trying to steer them into the road.

"We'll separate Tetiana's cow from the rest of the herd," said the perspiring Ivan. "She wandered into our place this morning. We recognized her at once and mother asked me to get her away from the others and drive her back to Wakar's. I've been chasing her all morning, but she keeps sticking to the herd. Father suggested separating the cow along with some of the younger cattle. But these devils don't want to follow the road; they keep stampeding into the woods."

"Just look!" he shrieked as he pointed to the tails of the animals almost hidden behind the bushes.

"Stop throwing sticks at them," Workun admonished the hot-headed youth, who was hurling any stick within reach after the stampeding herd. "You can't teach cattle to follow the road that way."

"I've already told him that, but he almost broke my back in two with a switch," complained Katerina, as she wiped her lacerated legs, torn by bushes and brambles.

"Lower your voices a bit and don't pelt them so much; you're scaring them out of control," advised Workun.

"Oh, yes!" blurted Ivan angrily. "If you don't beat them with a club they'll never learn anything."

"That's what you think," said Workun. "Suppose somebody kept whacking you on the head. Would that make you more gentle?"

"Well, I'm not an ox!" said Ivan sharply; but he dropped the knobby cane with which he had meant to beat the unruly cattle.

"Well then, make haste slowly and stop quarrelling," said Workun, winking at both of them. "And don't forget to come to our *khram*. You'll enjoy a nice dance." He reminded them of how in the Old Country the young people of the whole countryside

would gather together at a *khram* to dance and get acquainted, starting romances that very often ended in marriage.

"We'll sure be there," Katerina called out happily as she chased after a young steer that had broken away from Ivan's side and run over to her side of the woods.

Workun stood for a moment looking on as they came out from their respective sides trying hard, as Ivan put it, not to let the devils run back into the woods. Ivan had ceased throwing sticks, and when Workun saw that they had finally succeeded in herding most of the cattle back onto the road, he went on to Poshtar's.

"Tetiana must be worried to death by now over the cow," lamented Anna as Workun entered the house with Diordy and shook hands with her.

"I haven't seen her, so I don't know, but the cow is still wandering around somewhere in the woods," said Workun, as he sat down on a bench near the table.

"But I hope that Tetiana doesn't do any wandering," cried Anna. "I told Ivan to go and tell her not to worry, but he was stubborn. He said he'd chase the cow back and that there was no reason to make two trips when one would do. You can see for yourself what a lot of driving there'll be. And now, how are all the folks at your place?"

"As well as could be expected," answered Workun as he took the tobacco pouch which Diordy offered him. "Helena's case is something like the story of the old woman who hadn't any trouble until she bought herself a small pig. She's making preparations for the *khram* and running the rest of us ragged with work and errands."

"I've had it in mind to go and help them out a bit, but this darned cow has been on my mind so much that I've forgotten what day it is. Katerina has gone out and here the bread is rising."

"Now, just don't worry about that; there's plenty of help down there," Workun said appeasingly as he took a long delicious puff at his cigarette. "And don't you two forget to come to our place tomorrow for the *khram*. It won't be like it was in the Old Country, but you'll enjoy yourself just the same."

"If it's God's will to let us live until tomorrow we'll be there," said Anna as she lit the fire in the stove. "And as for you, old man, you'd better shave today. You can't go to a *khram* looking like an old beaver." This to Diordy, who was leaning on the table with his elbows and blowing rings into the air.

"It's just as well you suggested that; it looks as if a little scraping would do me some good, too," said Workun as he felt his beard. "You know what, neighbour? I'll shave you and you can shave me, for I've got a razor that can't even cut through butter, let alone hair."

"So let it be!" agreed Poshtar. "But we'll sit around a bit and smoke before that ordeal." He wiped his beard with the palm of his hand, as in anticipation of a rough shave.

Diordy had a fairly good razor. Workun went through the motions of honing it on the palm of his hand and then set to work on Poshtar. "If you survive this operation you'll live a hundred years," jested Workun as he applied a piece of cigarette paper to a small cut on his neighbour's chin. He had wielded the razor a little too energetically.

But Workun's ordeal was even worse than Poshtar's, for when he left the house his face looked as if it had been peppered by shot, with small bits of paper hanging from scores of cuts. However, Anna told him that he looked ten years younger, he straightened up, holding his head high and feeling very fine as the wind cooled his lacerated face.

He called in on the Dubs on his way home, and found that they had just settled down to dinner.

"Please sit down with us," invited Pavlo, according to the old custom.

"Eat well, my friends," replied Workun, not knowing whether to accept their invitation and stay for a chat or obey his wife's order to return home forthwith.

"Perhaps you've already had dinner," Kalina said. "We're a little late with our meals. There was so much to do."

"Yes, that's right. Diordy and I downed a whole bowl of *pyrohi* together," Workun boasted. "You know Anna; she wouldn't let anyone get away without first having fed him." He wasn't averse to rubbing it into Kalina for her stinginess. "My wife and I invite both of you to our *khram* tomorrow," he said as he turned to leave.

"You folks must be quite anxious to put on a *khram*," said Kalina with a touch of sarcasm.

"We've done it in the Old Country and I don't see why we can't do it here," said Workun.

"And for whom?"

“Why, for our neighbours, of course.”

“Just as if I didn’t have anything to do . . .”

“Perhaps that’s right: What one has a mind to do one does,” replied Pavlo, interrupting his wife’s tactless remarks for fear she’d say something insulting.

“You just tell that Wakar to tether his cow,” said Kalina, dropping the matter of the *khram*. “She broke through the fence at night time and joined our herd. I chased her away this morning.”

“Why didn’t you let Wakar know? He could have come and taken her away,” asked Workun with asperity.

“We haven’t been hired to herd someone else’s cattle,” retorted Kalina.

“Why, I didn’t even know she was here,” interrupted Pavlo, giving his wife a nasty look, “not until Diordy’s children came here and told me she had spent the night with our cattle.”

“Well, it’s good that she’s been found,” said Workun, attempting to restore peace.

“Yes, yes, but you’ve got to remember we also have cattle, and as we do unto others, others will do unto us,” said Pavlo, expressing his displeasure at his wife’s behaviour.

“I don’t know whether we’ll be able to come to your *khram*,” Kalina said, in an attempt to change Pavlo’s trend of thought. “I’ve had such a bad headache all week that I don’t know what to do with myself.”

“Well, just come along and it’ll pass away in no time,” exhorted Workun. And with this remark he departed.

Helena was overjoyed at the success of her *khram*. All the neighbours were there, even the Dubs. Kalina was reluctant, but when Pavlo went into the old coughing routine she quietly dressed and went along. Helena’s culinary efforts were quite successful: the jellied meat from the pig’s head—the one Workun had brought from town—was so appetizing that Poshtar ate a whole bowlful by himself; cabbage rolls stuffed with bits of fried bacon; chicken; borsch with beans and beets. And to top it all off, Workun and Solowy had collaborated in the purchase of a certain liquid, ostensibly for medicinal purposes but really for the occasion of the *khram*. Solowy fixed it up with a concoction of sugar, water and raspberry juice, making such an appetizing drink that Workun,



after the first glassful, licked his lips, and his face flushed as if someone were tickling him with a feather.

"Now, neighbours," said Workun, holding a well-filled glass in his hand, "may the Lord bless you with good health for not being too proud to attend our festival. It is said Dimitri locks up the land and keeps the keys until the following spring, when St. Yuri comes on the scene riding on a white horse, asking for the keys so that he can unlock the earth and let men plough it in peace and then sow it with good seeds. But in this deed there will be little benefit to those saints from us, insofar as Dimitri will have nothing to lock with nor Yuri to unlock with. Keys are just wasted on land that has been cleared by women, because they've never seen any grain. But things happen in many ways on this earth. If troubles gnaw at our vitals we must not succumb; if they get us down we've got to fight back as a group, just as we're all here today."

He gulped down his drink, filled the glass again, and handed it to Pavlo.

"And that is the way it should be," said Pavlo gravely. "All we have is the chance to get together, talk together and enjoy ourselves together in peace. May the good Lord bless you with health for entertaining us so well, and may he bless you with everything that is good and bountiful. Fate has thrown us all together at this turning point in our lives; it has hurled us into these jungles and each one of us must work out his destiny in his own way." He downed his drink and poured another one for Wakar.

"No one wants to welcome adversity or pat it on the back," philosophized Workun as his spirits rose higher and his voice became more resonant. "Grab it by the horns and hurl it to the ground; for if we let it get the best of us we might just as well say good-bye to this world; it'll stomp on us with its hooves like a cow and leave us lying there with bulging eyes.

"Hey, Toma, what are you waiting for? Drink and pass the glass on to Diordy. Help yourself to the food and excuse us if the party has not been on a grand scale."

"Oh, don't talk like that, Hrehory; don't bring down the wrath of God!" admonished Wakar. "In all my living days I've never seen a *khram* like this. And as for you Hrehory and you Helena, may the good Lord increase your length of life! And may the same joy and happiness be extended to your children. And may

your good fortune be so great that your doorway will not be wide enough to allow it to enter."

"Whoa! Just a minute! Don't say that, Toma! For if it will not get through the door, how will it get into the house?" observed Workun jestingly. "Fortune will have to find some practical way of squeezing through, otherwise it will die prematurely."

"Ah, shucks, you know very well what I wanted to say," said Wakar in defence. "You must know, Hrehory, the important thing is not what we eat or drink on such occasions as this, but the spirit with which we do it." He watched to see what effect his conclusion was having. "And I shall tell the whole world that you and your wife—that is you, Helena—know how to entertain guests. Diordy!" he suddenly turned to Poshtar as if in anger. "The Lord bless you with health!" He waved his hand at Workun and Helena and drank from the glass at the same time. "A beverage like this is drunk in the Old Country only by the lords," he said as he poured out a drink for Diordy.

"Don't mention those lords," said Poshtar disdainfully. "It was because of them that we had to leave our native land and seek our fortunes here in these woods."

"My, oh my, the forests over there were the real thing, not wretched bushes like these we have here," interjected Wakar as he held a chicken leg in one hand. "But what was the good of it when every step you took was on some manorial property, while the poor peasant didn't have enough land to turn around on with a wagon. And the lucky one that did have a few *morgs* would swell up with unbecoming pride."

"He had to swell up," said Workun, catching the last part of Wakar's remarks. He was afraid that Kalina might interpret Wakar's speech wrongly. "Yes, swell up, because it was hard to hold on to what he had. Taxes would rise like mushrooms after a rain, taxes for the school, the church, the windows, the burial home and goodness only knows what else. And so anyone who owned more would have to come in for more tax burdens."

"Burdens is right," agreed Pavlo as he scooped up some more *holubtsi*.

"Let by-gones be by-gones!" said Diordy as he filled a glass for Tetiana. "Here you are, neighbour. Drink heartily to your own health and that of the others. And don't worry about the past or pull skeletons out of the closet."

"Hey there, Tetiana, what's the matter?" urged Helena, noticing her reluctance and grimaces as she poured another drink for Kalina.

"Oh, no, thank you very much," said Tetiana, excusing herself because of a weak heart.

"My wife is as allergic to drink as a Jew to a flail," Wakar jested. "I have yet to see her get drunk."

"When a woman gets drunk—excuse the comparison—she's like a pig dressed in a wreath," roared Workun with a loud belly laugh.

"Well, of all things to say!" scolded Helena, but more in jest than in anger. "Don't pay any attention to him, Tetiana. Just drink it down as behooves a good *hospodina*. We might as well drink down our troubles and forget them for a while."

"That's right," agreed Anna. "What's a *khram* for? Surely you deserve a little bit of fun and relaxation after the troubles you've been through."

"Hey, you people over there, don't start giving my wife ideas," exhorted Workun with assumed gravity, just as Kalina was sipping her drink and handing over her glass to Helena, who in turn drank and then passed a drink on to Teklia.

But Teklia made no bones about it. She swallowed the drink in one gulp and commented on its fine taste. She then passed a full glass to Olga Dub, who poured it down with equal dispatch. Olga passed to Katerina, who drank with timidity and passed it in turn to Wasyl.

"Come now, Wasyl, throw it down the hatch and show them you're a man, not a girl," encouraged Workun. "When I was your age it was nothing for me to gulp ten of them one after another."

"Oh, sure! Empty ones," said Wasyl, showing no inclination to partake.

"Empty ones, you say! Why back in the village I was known as the biggest souse of them all! What are you waiting for? Just close your eyes and lift her, bottoms up! Can't you see Ivan licking his lips waiting for his turn?"

"Ah, stop your boasting, Hrehory," interjected Wakar. "If anyone had drunk as much as you did, the Jews would have gone to Jerusalem a long time ago."

"Drink, Wasyl, drink!" invited Helena. "It won't hurt you."

Drink and mop it down with food. I know you've worked all summer long down in that town."

"Thank you very much," said Wasyl, blushing over Helena's exhortation. "I've had enough. Let Ivan drink." And with this laconic remark he passed the glass to Ivan.

"Well, what do you know; our new generation is degenerating," said Workun in jest. "They pretend to be men, but fear strong drinks like shrinking females. How about you, Ivan? Drink and save your fellow swains from extinction!"

Ivan lifted the glass up to his mouth, emptied it and then handed it to Solowy, who hoisted it high above his head as if he were going to move a toast. But instead he launched into a song: "He who drinks give him another, but he who won't just let him smother." The rest of the song was an embellishment of the topic. Teklia joined her voice to Solowy's, and the whole assembly took up the chorus, fairly raising the roof, with Workun going through the motions of a director, using a spoon as a baton. In this capacity he had opposition from Wakar, who kept time with the leg of a chicken.

The guests had hardly finished their singing and Workun his search for more beverage when Irinka, the five-year-old daughter of Kalina, came rushing into the house to report that the boys had stolen Poshtar's horses and ridden off into the woods with them.

"What do you mean by stealing?" asked Workun as he listened to the excited little girl standing in the doorway.

"They unhitched the horses from the wagon," she continued, "and Pavlo and Kornylo rode one horse and Osyp and Andrew rode the other." She had wanted to go along too, but Pavlo had told her it wasn't proper for girls to ride horseback. Ivan and Wasyl didn't wait for the rest of the tale, but ran outside, followed by the rest of the girls.

"Perhaps the boys have led them to the water for a drink," said Poshtar, coming from behind the table. "My boy Ivan is the only one who is capable of handling the horses; they're afraid of him. But he's also liable to give the boys a good switching."

"Those frivolous rascals don't deserve any better treatment," Helena scolded; but in her heart she dreaded what really might happen to them if Ivan went through with the anticipated punishment. It was this feeling that prompted her to run outside and follow Ivan's movements.

The rest of the guests followed suit. It seemed that the youngsters had put a crimp in the festivities.

"What were those snot-noses thinking about?" muttered Workun, angrily. "Couldn't they have watered the horses at the well?"

"Why, it was your Pavlo who thought of this nonsense," said Kalina. "He's a bad example to my son. They chum around together and worry me to death. Some time ago I scolded them for scaring Irinka with a snake, and instead of learning a lesson from that they brought a whole bunch of snakes into the house. I was so scared that even now I'm afraid to walk on the floor in my bare feet."

"Ah, boys will be boys," observed Poshtar. "A boy without mischief is like food without salt. And as for your Pavlo, he likes horses so much I wouldn't be afraid to let him drive them even to town."

"I'll confirm that," said Helena. "Why, when he heard that Hritsko was going to bring some horses from town he couldn't sleep at nights from anticipation. He used to climb up on the highest treetop to see if Hrehory was coming, and Kornylo would ask in his lisping voice, 'What do you see up there?' and the answer would be, 'I see Father coming along with horses. Their heads are bent down low and their legs are moving rhythmically on the ground.' And that little rascal, Kornylo, would jump with glee, clapping his hands and asking more questions. 'And do you see any small colts?' 'Maybe, but the horses have stirred up so much dust I can't see them.' In this way both of them would give vent to their imaginations; and whenever Andrew and Osyp joined them the talk usually revolved around the horses."

"It looks as if we'll have to organize some kind of a school around here, otherwise our children will run wild," said Workun as he sat down beside Poshtar. "What they've learned they'll soon forget and they won't acquire any new knowledge."

"Why, they've been measuring the horses, hooves, legs and all, to see who owned the largest ones," said Diordy as he passed his tobacco pouch to Pavlo Dub, inviting him to smoke and then sitting down on the *prispá*. "Let's relax and stop worrying."

"So now you're thinking about organizing a school," muttered Kalina. "Haven't you paid enough taxes to that school in the Old Country? And penalties as well? Let a child stay away from

school twice a week and you'll soon have an official serve you with a notice."

"I never paid any fine," said Workun as he blew a cloud of smoke. "I'd go to school myself if they'd accept me. It's pretty tough for anyone without an education." He was thinking how much easier it was for the literate to secure jobs. "Meyer drives his children eight miles to school in the morning and brings them back again at night, and in the winter he boards them somewhere near the school."

"You speak about a school, but we can't do without a church any longer," interjected Helena. She brought a blanket outside, spread it on the ground and invited the women to sit down and enjoy the sunshine.

"And who's going to officiate in it?" asked Dub. "We didn't bring a priest along with us and any priest foolish enough to abandon his life of ease in the Old Land and come out here into this jungle would be a fool indeed. What would he do here?"

"Oh, he could take out a homestead and on week days he'd do some grubbing and on Sundays he'd root out our sins," said Poshtar, laughing.

"Well, you can talk as you like, but we'll at least have to construct a small chapel, for the time will come when we'll be needing the services of a clergyman," she argued obstinately. "When Semenko died we had to bury him without benefit of clergy. And who's going to marry our children when they grow up?"

"I too would like to know who'll perform the marriage ceremony," said Kalina, without ever having given the matter a thought before.

"When that time comes, we'll have the young couples driven into town and find someone there to do it for us," Poshtar said.

"Some one! Some one!" Kalina repeated in anger. "But I want that some one to perform the ceremony in a language I understand, so that I'll be able to hear how the bridegroom and the bride take the oath of faithfulness to each other."

"Don't worry! When this district gets settled, the priests and other exploiters will flock here in droves," mumbled Wakar from his reclining position on the *pruſpa*. "They'll fleece us here as they did in the Old Country where they worked hand-in-hand with the *pany* (lords). I regard them as I would a wart on the nose."

"What utter nonsense!" Tetiana scolded Wakar. "Everybody

isn't a disbeliever like you. You go to church only at Christmas and Easter, and even then one has to pull you out of bed and actually chase you out of the house."

"And when did I ever have time to go to church? Every Sunday that damn-fool landlord would send us into the forest to gather wood or haul grain to the mill," Toma said in defence of himself. "And when I asked the priest to bury our first girl, what did he say? 'You drunkard, you never come to church on Sundays and yet you expect me to bury your child for nothing.' I tried to give him the reason, but do you think he accepted it? He lambasted me verbally and I only came to church to save face."

"Well, a priest's a priest and a church is a church, but to be a Christian without a church is like being without a mother," said Workun, trying to smooth over Wakar's talk. "The priest, like the rest of us, will have to answer for all his deeds."

"There must be quite a mass in the church at home: lots of priests around the altar and an overflowing congregation of people. And what a *khram* they must be having at the various homes!"

"It will be after midnight there now," said Solowy.

"What did you say?" asked Helena curiously. "You mean it's a different time over there from what it is here?"

"Meyer told us the sun rises eight hours earlier over there than it does here."

"What a funny world this is," she said, looking up at the sun as if she wanted to confirm that it was the same one she had known in the Old Country. "It's wonderfully pleasant outside today," she said in a half whisper. "Over there sometimes it never stops raining, but look how clear it is here!"

In truth, the day was very beautiful. Only a few days back the sun had shone down on the earth in a blaze of glory in a seeming attempt to complete nature's handiwork on the hoar-frosted grass, the outlying marshes and the nearby freshly ploughed virginal soil. And all the while the southeast wind had kept gently blowing through the trees as if to sever the few remaining leaves but leaving them nevertheless intact. This was the Grandmother Summer Season, *babske lito*, Indian summer, when the heavens gave the earth a short respite from the usual coolness of late fall. It was a sort of glorified autumn's best cheer, which the guests enjoyed to the full as they sat there before Workun's home on the blanketed ground. It was a real festival, both in and outside the house, for which a

special prayer might have been offered up to St. Dimitri in gratitude for this extra benevolence.

"There's no sign of the children yet," said Helena as she gazed in the direction they had gone. "And Teklia has also disappeared somewhere."

"She's gone off with the girls," said Anna. "She's young herself and naturally is attracted to young people. Most likely she invited them to her home to enliven the place."

"That was a nice gesture, Pavlo, to allow us a spot for a cemetery on your farm," said Poshtar, oblivious to Anna's remarks. "It's in a very central position between our two farms. Perhaps that also would be a good site for a church, and later on for a school."

"Why, that's the site Helena and I chose because of its evenness, without realizing that it was on my farm," explained Pavlo.

"We'll have to pay for it."

"Who would ask payment for such a small plot of land?" replied Pavlo.

"Perhaps that's so, but once you've given the land, it's no longer yours but ours," explained Workun. "What's your position in respect to that, Diordy?"

"That's about right," agreed Poshtar. "Now that it has happened, we'll have to give our church congregation a name, and draw up a description of the land, indicating the location of the cemetery. This will have to be entered in a deed which will have to be registered. Otherwise we'll have no legal right to the property. Later on our congregation will grow with the advent of new settlers."

"And how will we name it?" asked Workun with a worried look.

"Since we're celebrating a holiday we might call it after our patron saint, St. Dimitri," suggested Solowy. "But what'll we call our new District?" he asked as he scratched his head in perplexity.

"Perhaps by the name of your old village, since you came here first," said Workun to Poshtar.

"I have no objection; just as you wish. You are in a majority here. However, the more suitable the name, the better I'll be pleased, irrespective of whose village it is."

And thus after some deliberation they christened the new parish



after Poshtar's native village, because it had an easy and smooth sounding name. Pavlo Dub was named head of the newly-formed parish. Solowy was elected secretary, and promised to keep an accurate record of the meetings for everyone to sign.

Ivan caught up with the "horse thieves" near the foot bridge where Maria Workun had sprained her ankle. It was apparent that the horses had enjoyed the romp as much as the boys, and needed no prodding to send them scampering down to the bank to drink greedily of the fresh water. And just like the boys, they pricked up their ears at the loud shouts of the angry Ivan.

The boys scurried into the woods like a pack of frightened rabbits—all except Kornylo, who sat motionless and apprehensive astride a horse's back, his short legs barely spanning it.

"I'll fix you," Ivan threatened. "You'll get it for all the rest of the rascals!"

Suddenly the horse swerved sideways and little Kornylo tumbled off. He scrambled to his feet, and started to run away.

But Ivan dashed after him, grabbed him by the ear and shook him as a large dog would a small cat. Just then something struck Ivan in the back, making him relinquish his hold of Kornylo. It was Pavlo, who had come running out of the woods and rammed into him headfirst.

"Run!" Pavlo exhorted Kornylo, doubling his fists and daring Ivan to engage him in combat.

But Kornylo didn't run. Assured of help now, he started flailing Ivan with his puny fists. Ivan, who was on the point of going for Pavlo, was taken by surprise. He just stood there, comically warding off Kornylo's futile blows directed at his stomach, chest and face. He was about to kick the young lad aside as one would a small pup, when he became aware that Wasyl and the girls were watching him.

"What a fine swain you are to be fighting with a couple of kids!" said Wasyl derisively, as he seized Kornylo by the hand and pulled him away.

"He almost tore my ear off," cried Kornylo as he tried to wriggle out of Wasyl's grasp and vent his spleen on Ivan.

"That was a foolish bit of rough play! Look at the blood flowing from his ear!" said Maria in disgust as she examined the injury.

"Let him stay away from other people's horses!" replied Ivan.

He was in an ugly mood, and his rage was intensified by the knowledge that he was now regarded by Wasyl and the girls with obvious contempt. Surely, he thought, a man has a right to punish anyone who runs off with his horses!

"Your father said I could water the horses," said Pavlo as he ran to Wasyl for protection, "and you chase after me as if I were a dog."

"Perhaps; but he didn't tell you to ride over to the creek," countered Ivan, giving Pavlo a black look. "He thought you'd water them from the well."

"What difference does it make whether it was at the creek or at the well?" Pavlo retorted.

"And where are the horses?" said Wasyl.

"They ran in that direction," said Pavlo, pointing with his forefinger.

"Run along and catch them then."

"Let Ivan catch them; they're his horses."

"You drove them here and you'll drive them back," Wasyl ordered sternly.

"If you won't do that you needn't come back home," threatened Maria, "or you'll get a good thrashing. You know father: when he is good, he's very good, but when he's angry, he's very angry."

"What's all the quarrel about?" asked Teklia, who had just come on the scene with the younger girls, Olena, Sophia and Elizaveta. "Stop quarrelling and come down to my place. Perhaps I'll put on some *khram* of my own. And you, Pavlo," she said gently, "run along and catch the horses before they get lost in the woods. Hey, Ivan," she said, as she took the angry young man under the arm. "Don't be so ornery! You were a young boy once and you too liked riding horses. So why begrudge them a little ride?"

Pavlo looked at Wasyl and Maria a little angrily, gave Teklia a wink, and went off with Kornyllo. They found the horses quietly grazing not more than two hundred yards away from the scene of battle. Andrew and Ospy were there, too, looking somewhat worried over their escapade and the possible consequences. Andrew grabbed hold of one horse and asked Ospy to look after it while he tried to catch the other one.

"Well, what are you standing there for?" he asked, seeing that Ospy made no move to come forward.

"I don't want to ride any more," muttered Osyp as he moved still further away.

"Why not?" asked Pavlo curiously.

"Father will give us a whipping."

"Whipping, you say? It'll be worse than that if we leave the horses here."

"Drive them yourself!" mumbled Osyp.

"Well, you rode too!"

"Oh, what a fool you are. Uncle Diordy won't even say a thing. He told us we could water them," said Pavlo. "You told him."

It was in the midst of this refractory talk that Teklia's guests came upon them. The girls thought they'd have a little fun at the boys' expense, teasing them about the switching they'd get; but Pavlo countered by calling them cowardly goats and magpies, and when Wasyl lifted him up on the horse with Kornylo in front of him he poured out a stream of abuse at all of them, especially at Elizaveta, who was the chief instigator of the gibes.

Wasyl forced Andrew and Osyp to mount the other horses; but Teklia, in order to console them, begged them to hitch the horses back into the wagon with the promise that if they did so she would give them something good. And when they finally departed Kornylo yelled back at Ivan, "You just wait! I'm going to tell your father that you almost tore my ear off."

Teklia Solowy led the guests into the house and treated them to some warm cheese rolls and poppy buns, enlivening the repast with chit-chat and at the same time watching Wasyl to see where his attention was focused. She knew that Maria had been worrying herself sick over not knowing what Wasyl thought of her and about his reticence since he came back from town.

"What's happened to him?" Maria asked herself and then Teklia, who was her confidante in these matters.

Teklia could not withhold what her husband had told her about Wasyl's father, Pavlo Dub, not liking Canada and wanting to return to the Old Country as soon as Wasyl had earned enough money to add to the family pot for the journey back home. The disclosure worried Maria more than she liked to admit.

"I did not question Wasyl and he did not tell me any more," said Teklia. "But don't worry, Maria, all will be well."

Yet she had pondered just how the young couple could be reconciled, and the only thing she could think of was to bring them together at one of her little parties. Now that she had improvised this *khram* she seated the guests round the table and dealt the cards first to Katerina, then to Maria and finally to Wasyl.

"Oh, Wasyl," she exclaimed as she brooded over the upturned cards, "you're harbouring bad thoughts in your heart. You induced a beautiful dark-browed girl to fall in love with you. The cards don't say when, but they do show that you left her without cause. That is inviting misfortune."

Teklia wagged her head, looking extremely sad. "I'm going to burn those cards! I'll tell no more fortunes! I don't want to be a party to such unpleasant prophecy." And she gathered up the crumpled cards.

A dead silence fell over the group. The merrymaking ceased, and some of the girls looked uneasy. To Olga, Teklia's dour pretence brought a feeling of dread, but Katerina, though momentarily depressed by the shadow cast by the prophetess, rallied at the thought that no new sweetheart was mentioned as having captured Wasyl's affections. And Ivan hoped this prediction would frighten Maria away from Wasyl.

Teklia had not expected this overwhelming reaction, and she was pleased to note the ardent glance Wasyl had turned upon Maria. It was time to strike up a tune, something sad and sentimental; that always appealed to the lovelorn. So she lifted her fine voice and sang the saddest verse she remembered:

Fondly think and then recall this our love so grand!  
In the orchards and the vineyards, walking hand in hand.  
I picked the berries that tasted so fine;  
I gathered the grapes, and you took the wine,  
And went away and left me to pine.

"Ah well, that's how it goes," said Teklia, sighing deeply; and at that moment a partridge flew through the open door and banged against the window. The girls jumped with fright, and the youngsters outside burst out laughing. This must be Pavlo's doing, Teklia guessed, and rushed out to administer a tongue-lashing. As usual, Pavlo assumed his most angelic expression, crossing his heart in affirmation of his innocence. And in order to

avoid trouble he shouted that his mother wanted them all to come to her place.

"You're lucky the foolish partridge didn't smash a window!" Teklia said crossly. But in the next breath she added, "Run along Pavlo and fill the water bucket for the cow. I'll milk her right away and then we'll all go to your place."

And so they all returned to Workun's to finish the *khram*, which lasted past midnight. Solowy tried to get up a dance to the accompaniment of an improvised instrument, but his musical talent was more mirth-provoking than efficient. The young folks enjoyed it just the same, making up for lack of rhythm with a little goodnatured horseplay. And when this came to an end the happy guests all departed to their homes.

"Well, didn't I tell you to stay at home and keep away from that Workun's *khram*?" yelled Kalina at her husband, who sat on a bench by the stove stitching a rip in his boots the morning after St. Dimitri Day. "But you just had to go and take dirt from that bow-legged Wakar."

"What do you mean by dirt?" asked Dub, without even lifting up his head.

"Just as if you don't know! Didn't you notice how he was rubbing it in about our puffing up so much in the Old Country?"

"And do you think he was referring to me in that remark?" asked Pavlo as he examined his shoe.

"No one else," she answered angrily.

"I should let that worry me," said Pavlo indifferently as he tried to pull the needle through the stiff leather. "If he meant it for me, so what? No wreath fell from your head."

"Oh, no, it didn't hit the mark; but just the same I sat there as if on red-hot coals ready to flare up from sheer shame," she stormed as she watched her husband's clumsy efforts. "Do be careful, that's the only needle in the house! Wakar has his nerve calling us puffed up. He spent most of his life at other people's troughs, and now he tries to pass himself off as a landlord. . . . Say! You haven't broken the needle?" She had heard something snap in Pavlo's hands. "Oh, what a man! You'll be the death of me yet! If it weren't for me you'd . . ."

At that moment Ospy entered the house with an armful of

wood, which he slammed down on the floor between Pavlo and the stove.

“Easy there, young man! You’ve been spoilt by that nitwit, Pavlo Workun. I don’t want you to set foot in their place again. Do you hear?” Kalina shouted.

“Run along to Uncle Hrehory’s and ask for the loan of an awl, a needle, some beeswax and some cobbler’s thread,” Pavlo told Osyp calmly.

“What did you say? To Workun’s?” asked Kalina in surprise and anger. “Is that the way to bring up a child?” But she stopped suddenly. Pavlo had started that ominous cough again.

“Run along, boy. What are you waiting for?” he said.

Osyp was undecided which parent he should obey; but finally he turned around, grabbed a crust of bread and rushed away on his errand.

“Don’t mention the needle, you understand? Because if the rest of the folks find out that I haven’t even got a needle it won’t look so nice,” Kalina shouted after the boy. Then to her husband, “I’ll find you another needle, and if you break it you’d better leave the house.” She rummaged in a small bag that contained odds and ends of sewing materials. “Here you are, and if it’s possible, be careful!” Pavlo took the needle, but did no more sewing. Instead he went to the window and lit a cigarette.

“Why aren’t you sewing instead of standing there?” she demanded after a short pause, gazing at his bare feet.

“I’m waiting for the awl. The leather’s too hard to pull the needle through,” he replied without turning around.

“What’s the matter with you, my dear man? Can’t I speak a decent word to you any more?” asked Kalina with unusual mildness. “I talk to you gently and you just snort back at me. Haven’t I told you the truth about Workun? Do you think I’m just a blind foolish woman who doesn’t know what’s going on? If you had my eyes and my brain you wouldn’t even look his way. But oh, no! You treat him like an equal and he laughs up his sleeve at you. Take yesterday’s affair. He purposely sat Wakar next to you in an honourable position under the holy pictures and put me beside that slobbery Tetiana. And both of you were chatting about how one common fate united you in this new land. You drank to his health, but he answered, ‘You’re all puffed up!’ Can’t you see they’re fooling you? Take that cemetery, for instance. ‘Helena

chose the place,' you said. Why couldn't you have done it? She knew very well where her farm ended, but you didn't know where yours began, and so you let her pick a spot next to your doorstep. One of these days she'll talk you right out of your farm with her smooth tongue. With that cemetery so near I'm afraid to go out at night. And that Hritsko (Hrehory)! Now he wants to build a school so that he can get that brood of children out of the house. They've been spoiled so much by Helena that now they've turned into horse-thieves. And did he punish that nitwit son, Pavlo, because of the horses? No, instead of whipping him as he deserved, he said, 'Learn how to ride on other people's horses until I'm able to bring my own home.' That was a fine lesson! Now you're encouraging your own son to follow his example. Isn't that right?"

Kalina cut herself short at this point, for Pavlo had put on that crooked smile of his. It was unpleasant to listen to his wife's incessant nagging; but there was some truth in the talk about the cemetery being too near the house. And there would be another sacrifice of land for a church site and also for a school. Well . . .

Pavlo took a drink of water, sat down on the bench, and began twisting the cobbler's thread.

"Did you ask whether Workun really had any horses?" asked Kalina curiously. "There's a rumour going round that he had a pair somewhere. I intended asking Wakar about it, but it keeps slipping my mind."

"Wasył did mention something about Hritsko having bargained for a pair of mares at Meyer's, but it was mere talk since he didn't have the money at the time."

"We had better sell our land in the Old Country and buy a pair of horses ourselves," said Kalina with some heat, "before Hritsko stables the ones he's bought."

"The land doesn't need to be fed, and we can do without horses for a while," mumbled Pavlo as he twisted the thread in the palm of his hand. "Anyway, who knows how long we'll remain here?"

"What are you saying?" Kalina burst out, gazing in bewilderment at her husband, who had dropped the thread through his fingers.

"You heard me!"

"Heard what?" said Kalina obstinately.

"The Old Country. A small plot of land over there is worth our whole farm here."

"Well, what of it?"

"Life is better over there."

"Are you thinking of returning?"

"Even tomorrow."

"You're drunk, aren't you?"

"No, but I'm a damn fool for listening to you."

"Yes, you're a damn fool! What would we have to make a living with over there?"

"Enough for me."

"And the children?"

"They can do as they please: either go along or stay here."

"Good Lord! You're really going out of your mind!" said Kalina. She was about to adopt a more conciliatory attitude, when Diordy appeared on the threshold.

"Well, what do you know, we've got guests!" she announced brightly. "Please have a seat," she said, with astonishing cordiality.

Diordy greeted them with his usual "Glory be to Christ."

Pavlo rose from his seat and exclaimed, "Glory forever!" begging the guest to be seated.

"Sorry, but I really haven't got the time. I just dropped in to see how you're feeling after yesterday's *khram*."

"And where are you going in such a hurry?" asked Kalina as she wiped the table. "A few minutes won't matter that much."

"I'm going to Hritsko's to finish up the *khram*. Then we're all going to Wakar's place to the *toloka* (mutual help gathering) to set up a stable for Toma. How about you people coming along?"

"Nobody ever told me about it," said Pavlo, knitting his brows. It didn't seem right to him that a distant neighbour should have been invited and one so much closer should not even know about it.

"Pavlo was not invited!" cried Kalina with an "I told you so" inflection.

"I wasn't invited either," Diordy hastened to explain. "I got wind of it by hearsay. My wife heard that Hritsko and Stepan were on the way to help Wakar build a stable so they'd have a shelter for the cow in winter. But why are you running around barefoot?" he asked Pavlo.

"I ripped my boot and had to sew it up," Pavlo answered



shortly. "Wasył and the girls have gone to the pond to cut reed-grass. I had intended to go there to tie sheaves for a roof."

"What kind of a roof could you make from reed-grass?" asked Poshtar in surprise. "It won't last like rye stalks."

"What are your family doing today?" asked Kalina.

"Busy with their usual antics and full of praise for Workun's *khram*. Anna said she was going to visit them today."

"I don't blame her," Kalina admitted. "The day is too beautiful to stay cooped up inside."

"The *khram* certainly was a great success," Diordy said, little thinking how the praise would irritate Kalina.

"She sure knows how to cook and that Hritsko is really an excellent host," said Pavlo, cutting his wife to the quick.

"I intended putting on a *khram* myself," she said quickly, "but I had such a headache I just had to put it off."

"How about celebrating one on St. Michael's Day?" suggested Poshtar. "Tetiana can have hers on St. Michael's Day. Teklia can choose her own date. If we go on like that we'll have *khram* the year round. . . . Well, I must be off on my neighbourly duties. When you have finished that boot, Pavlo, bring your wife and visit with us."

**11** That first winter may not have been the coldest on record but to the new settlers it was to live in memory as the coldest, the worst and the longest they had had to endure. According to Ukrainian reckoning the winter season begins around *Pokrova* Day (The Feast of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin), or the middle of October. It ends with St. Yuri Day, in early May. One barometer that served in the early days to foretell the severity or mildness of the coming winter was a hog's spleen. If it happened to be thick at one end and thin at the other the winter would be severe in the beginning and end with mild weather. If it was thin at one end there might be no snow until St. Uvedenya Day (The Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady); and if thin at the other end, the snow might fall any time after mid-October and start melting before *Blahovischenya* (The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady), March the twenty-fifth. Finally, if the spleen were thick in the middle, with thin ends, it meant that midwinter would be very severe, the beginning and the end mild.

Usually winter starts around Uvedenya Day and ends around Stritenya Day (the time when winter and summer are supposed to meet)—that is to say in February, month of bitter winds and blizzards and a frostbound earth.

There are times when the winds are razor-sharp. And the frosts, what can one compare with them? They lie so heavily upon the land that one can hear the boards and the trees crack like a shot from a gun, and to venture forth is a hazard to life and limb.

While the sun shines the cold lessens by a few degrees, but when it sets the cold moves in. For weeks on end temperature drops—thirty, forty, fifty, and at times sixty degrees below zero. At such times it is calm outside, so calm that even the smoke from the

chimney hangs motionless, congealed in the air, as if it were turned into an icicle.

To go about in such frosty weather without proper clothes or with bare hands is as foolhardy as to put one's hand in the flame of a fiercely burning fire. If one survives at all, one is likely to remember it for the rest of his life.

Thus it was only natural that our settlers should not forget their first winter in Canada. They were poorly housed and their scanty clothing was not designed for such extremes of wind and weather. Their patched, unlined boots, tight-fitting trousers and skimpy overcoats were as ineffectual against the deadly cold as are the shrouds of the dead against decay. They survived by sheer fortitude and faith, which from time immemorial had sustained their race.

"Damn this cold weather!" cursed Toma Wakar as he burst in on the Workuns one wild winter day, bound in rags from head to foot.

"Whatever brought you out in such weather?" asked Workun in amazement as he quickly shut the door and filled the crevices with bits of rag.

"Ah, let me be. I have enough to try me as it is," Wakar grumbled through a small aperture in the cloth that covered his face. "Troubles, troubles, they never end." He turned to Helena. "You're a woman. You should be able to guess why I've come. You'd better hurry. Someone has to act as midwife."

"Oh," sighed Helena as she hurriedly sought out her boots from under the bed. "If it's a girl, please call it Barbara, and if it's a boy call it Nicholas." She recalled that yesterday was St. Barbara's Day and tomorrow would be St. Nicholas' Day.

"Is it very cold out there?" she asked as she shoved her feet into the clumsy foot gear.

"I'll say it is, bitterly cold!"

"You had better dress as warmly as you can," Workun advised. "There would be no sense in cancelling out a new birth by your own demise. Look at Wakar, he is rigged out in the family's entire wardrobe."

"Ah, go on!" Wakar protested. "I still feel as if I'm freezing to death."

"It must be cold outside," observed Workun as he glanced at

the thick layer of frost on the windowpane. "It's lasted two weeks now and is getting worse."

"Remember to keep the fire burning and don't fall asleep. I've mixed some dough, and I don't know whether it'll rise or not, and I'm afraid the potatoes will freeze. Tell Maria to knead the bread in the morning."

"All right, all right; but get a move on. Even Barbara and Nicholas want you to get going," Workun jested, as he opened the door and almost pushed them into the raging blizzard.

Workun closed the door behind them and went over to fix the fire. Then he went outside to get more wood.

He had hardly gotten over the threshold and looked up at the Big Dipper to reckon the time of day, when he fell down in a faint.

"What's this? Why am I here?" he mused when he came to a few minutes later and realized he was lying in the snow. Jumping up, still half dazed, he ran to the wood pile, gathered an armful and stumbled back into the house.

He blew the lamp out to save coal-oil, sat down by the fire and pondered the dangers of venturing outside without covering one's hands and face. If he had fallen on some hard projection, like a stump or a stone, he might have lain there and been frozen to death.

"Father, why did mother go to Tetiana's?" asked Kornylo from the shadows of his bed.

"She's very sick," was Workun's cautious answer.

"What made her sick?"

"I don't know."

"Did she eat mushrooms?"

"What kind of mushrooms?"

"The kind she ate last summer, the kind that made Semen die."

"Not all mushrooms are fit to eat," said Workun.

"I'll never eat them any more," the boy said, and burrowed deeper in the bed.

Workun sighed to himself. The Wakars certainly seemed to be prone to troubles, accidents and illness. Now this had happened. How was a newborn infant to survive such a winter? Yet why not? The gypsies bathed their babies in cold water or snow the moment they were born to accustom them to the cold, temper them as a blacksmith would a red-hot piece of iron. If *they* can stand such an initiation, well . . .

"Father," called Kornylo in a scarcely audible voice.

"Well, what is it?"

"I died once too; but I didn't tell mother."

"And why didn't you?"

"Because mother told me never to climb that tall poplar tree if I didn't want to get killed; but I did climb up to the very top and fell down and died."

"If you died why aren't you asleep?" asked Workun suppressing his amusement. "Now close your eyes; it's a long time to daylight."

"Pavlo told me to close my eyes, too, when I fell off the tree," he said. "He also lit a candle. But when mother came along she gave us the dickens. Oh, Pavlo pinched me!"

Pavlo had pinched his brother to keep him quiet. He didn't want his father to know why he had made Kornylo climb the tree or why, when he had recovered from his fright, he had dragged his brother into the house, laid him on the bed and sprinkled him with water. When Kornylo came to Pavlo had wanted to play funeral. He made him believe he was dead and lit a candle as was done when Semen died. The game might have gone on nicely but for the sudden arrival of Helena. Pavlo had told him to keep quiet about it, but now it seemed he couldn't be trusted and had to be silenced with pinches.

"Father?"

"What now?"

"Do you think mother will take me to church to join in the singing?"

"What church?"

"To the one far away from here, where there used to be so many people, so many burning candles, where they had a choir-loft with people singing in it, the one in which I used to see Aunt Teklia and Maria with only their heads showing, and where the priest used to stand in front with nice-smelling smoke rising up all around him. Mamma told me we'll drive there some time when we get horses. I'll go singing carols to Uncle Onufry, and he'll give me a bun with poppy in it. But do you know, father, Pavlo, told me I wouldn't eat any bun at all but a fig and some poppy (colloquially meaning nothing at all)."

"Just calm down! You'll get two of them!" consoled Workun, surprised at the boy's keen observation. Who would have thought

so small a child would remember so much? It appeared that when one emigrates one must take along the churches, the customs, rites and holidays of the Old Land, perhaps as a protection against degeneration.

He remembered now that Teklia had intended putting on a party on St. Andrew's Day (the equivalent of Hallowe'en), December 13th. At first thought this seemed a silly kind of party and untimely, for the night was bitterly cold. Besides, what was there to do but sit and stare at one another? It was St. Andrew's Eve all right, but there was no cat to seize the buttered rolls, there were no wet towels to snap at the boys, no fence, no palings on which to hang hats bound with ribbons so the girls could find out who and what manner of man their future suitors would be—straight, hump-backed, or widowers. There were no dogs to answer with loud barks the sharp clanging of the spoons knocking together, indicating whence the suitors would come. Nor were there enough young men to trip with cords, nor could one go outside barefoot and hurl one's boots across the threshold to see, by the way the toes pointed whence the *starostas* (match-makers) would arrive.

But Teklia was not the type to be discouraged easily. She knew how to improvise in any set of circumstances, drawing upon the fund of tricks she had learned as a servant girl at the village priest's house. She invented all kinds of guessing games and fortune telling, with the help of knives and forks, cleaned grains and silly songs. All nonsense, Workun mused, superstitious if you like, but if it helped make life less dreary it served a purpose.

"Father, Pavlo says that I don't know how to carol," Kornylo called from the bed. "He's pinching me, too!"

"Be still, or I'll throw you out like a pair of kittens," threatened Workun.

"Can I or can't I?" Kornylo insisted.

"You can, you can; but just be quiet!"

"You see? And you told me I can't," said Kornylo to his brother.

"If you can, why don't you sing a carol now?" Pavlo goaded him.

"I can't do it alone. I'd have to sing with mother and Maria."

"Maria can, but you can't," teased Pavlo.

“Yes, he can,” said Maria, silent until now. “I’ll start, Kornylo, and you join in; it’s not difficult.” Soon not only Kornylo but Elizaveta took up the song.

Pavlo was so annoyed he wanted to smother his carolling bed-fellow with a pillow, but the sight of their father quickly restrained the impulse.

Hrehory was a stern parent, but he was also indulgent at times and always understanding. His children did not fear him, but they respected him and seldom wilfully overstepped the limits of indulgence.

The children continued singing the songs that had come down to them from many, many generations: immortal songs, composed by no one knows whom, but springing from the hearts of the people down through countless centuries. As Workun listened to those songs, his soul was momentarily transported across the broad expanse of Canada and of the wide ocean to his native land. Yes and to the humble birthplace of our Saviour, to the manger where the Holy Virgin laid him gently to rest. And he could see in his mind’s eye the angels among the white clouds announcing, just as the carolers do as they carry a large star before them, the coming of Christ the Lord to save us from our sins.

And he could picture his mother as she washed clothes down by the river, singing gaily. He remembered how she would snugly cover him up, how from his bed he could hear the last melodious warblings of the birds on the treetops before they retired to their nests, how his father used to shell corn as he sat by the trough, telling stories as he worked, stories which he, Hrehory, would pass on to his own children.

Ah yes, it was good for the soul to recall these things! He raked the fire from time to time, and in his thoughts he gloried in his children, whom he described as “my sources of peace, contentment and joy, like crystal-pure water from an ever-flowing spring.”

“And what drove you outdoors today? Your wife?” Workun called out to Solowy as he came running up to the house with the collar of his sheepskin coat drawn over his head. In his hurry he had failed to notice Workun down by the stable door.

“And what are you doing walking around the yard?” replied Solowy.

“Watering the cattle and harnessing the oxen.”

“In such weather? Why?”

“To haul wood from the forest.”

“When you have such a large pile right here ready for chopping?” asked Solowy, pointing to the cordwood in the yard.

“Not for me, but for Wakar. You run along into the house and take those boots off; they’re a little too tight for you.” Workun had noticed Solowy limping badly.

“Damn this cold anyway!” said Solowy as he entered the house, slapping his hands against his sides to restore circulation and stamping his feet on the floor like an ox on the rampage or a horse before a race.

“Stop prancing and take your boots off. Pull up to the fire and warm your feet. This weather is no joke,” Workun admonished.

“I didn’t get very far before I began to feel a numbness in my fingers and my heels,” mumbled Solowy as he sat down on the bench and held a leg out for Pavlo to pull the boot off.

“Where were you heading?”

“Diordy’s place.”

“What for? A dry piece of birch wood?” asked Workun, more in jest than earnest.

“Well, I do need dry birch wood to finish up a job,” replied Solowy, lifting his feet up onto the stove rest.

“You are not planning to make a violin, are you?” Workun laughed. “Why bother? If the cold lasts much longer the frost will play tunes on your bones.”

“I can’t sit around the house doing nothing! You keep busy yourself I see.” Solowy pointed to two pitchfork handles near by. “Have you got the forks to go with the handles?”

“Not yet. I started to burn holes in the handles, but it smoked up the house too much.”

“Why didn’t you borrow my auger? I’ve got one just the right size.”

“How did I know you had any tools? Why then don’t you make a sleigh? You know how handy that would be for hauling wood.”

“And why didn’t you mention it sooner?”

“Ask Diordy whether he has any material for making sleighs. We can repay him in labour. You make the sleigh and we’ll share both the cost and the benefits.”



"Well, all right," Solowy agreed affably, and reached for his boots.

"Where is Aunt Helena?" he asked, suddenly realizing that only the girls were present.

"Oh, Auntie's got herself a high-ranking position now. She left around midnight for Tetiana's place"—Workun winked at Solowy—"and she hasn't come back yet. So on your return stop in and tell us how things turned out. And don't forget to let the Dubs know about it. Auntie Kalina will jump for joy when she hears the glad tidings."

"So that's why you are so anxious to haul wood for the Wakars," said Solowy as the truth dawned on him. "In that case we'll all have to chip in and help them. You know how Wakar is. He'll bring in a few pieces of wood at a time, and before he knows it they will burn out and the house will be stone cold. The poor fellow hasn't even banked the place against the wind and frost. He spent so much time paying Diordy off in labour that he never got down to doing much around the house. As for baking bread, Tetiana would never get it to rise in that cold place."

"They both have their share of misery in this world," said Solowy as he donned his gloves. "When this weather breaks we'll help him bank his house with hay. For 'where a child doth rest, a warm house is best!'"

"Sure, sure, a warm house! But when this weather changes there'll be no need for banking. It's now or never," said Workun. "Tell Wasyl and Ivan to come too. We'll bank up the house immediately and fix them up with plenty of wood; otherwise there will be death in that house."

"I'll tell them," promised Solowy as he grabbed hold of the door-latch. But Workun had something more to tell him.

"Don't forget to ask Diordy if he still intends making that trip to town before Christmas. It's already around the corner and we're not only running short of the small necessities but of the essentials, such as flour."

On the first Sunday following St. Nicholas' Day, Poshtar had some unexpected guests: Solowy, the Workuns, Wakar, Pavlo Dub and Kalina. They had come to find out for sure whether he was going to town next week or not.

"If Poshtar doesn't go, we'll have to tell the children that

there is no Christmas in Canada and that we'll export from the Old Country next year," Workun told himself. But this didn't quite satisfy him. The picture of his children silently crying on a cheerless Christmas Day made him more determined that they should have a real Christmas, come what might.

The neighbours had reached a similar solution, so here they all were at Poshtar's with their Christmas lists.

"Here's my list: ten cents' worth of prunes; sugar, ten cents; rice, ten cents; olive oil, ten cents; dried herring, twenty cents; ten cents' worth of . . . well, what do you know, I had it on the tip of my tongue and forgot," said Helena.

"Tobacco, perhaps?" Workun intervened mischievously.

"You and your tobacco! Ah, I've got it, ten cents' worth of candles. What would Christmas be without a candle?"

"Haven't you forgotten something?" asked Workun.

"What?" asked Helena. "Come to think about it, I'll need a dime's worth of honey and some incense for ten cents. How many dimes does that come to?"

"Ten," replied Poshtar.

"Good gracious me, that's a lot of money! After buying two bags of flour we'll be cleaned out completely. Well it can't be helped. Give him the money," she ordered Workun as she sat down alongside Anna. "And don't forget to add some salt, pepper and a few roots. *That'll make more dimes.*"

"Thirty cents closer to bankruptcy," laughed Workun. He knew Helena was underestimating her purchases and that very little could be bought for the sum she mentioned. He was about to tell her this when Kalina intervened with her list of items, so he kept quiet.

"Just order the same things as Helena, but thirty cents' worth of each article," she said proudly.

"The same for me, only five cents' worth of each article," said Wakar from behind the table. "Here's the money. Buy anything you think best, but don't forget the two bags of flour."

Solowy gave his order, Katerina prepared some tea, and Anna invited the guests to a snack, while Workun and Solowy retired to a corner near the stove for a conference.

"What do you think? Will one suffice?" Workun whispered softly.

"Yes, but it's got to be larger than the one we had on St.

Dimitri's Day," Solowy whispered cautiously, and then coughed aloud.

"Watch out, or you'll singe that pretty moustache of yours," warned Workun with simulated solicitude, so all could hear; and then, aside, "But what will it cost?"

Solowy showed one finger and a half finger.

A dollar and a half for whisky seemed too much to Workun.

"But I'll pay half of that," whispered Solowy.

This offer pleased Workun, and he showed his pleasure by a poke of his elbow in Solowy's side.

"What's the conspiracy about over there?" asked Helena, not too harshly.

"Let's get going; it's getting late," said Workun casually.

When they got outside Workun slapped himself on the thighs, saying, "What do you know, I left my mitts on the stove!" And before Helena knew it he flew into the house to whisper to Poshtar about the bottle of whisky and some pig's heads to boot, and fifty cents' worth of sugar, with a "you know why" twinkle in his eye. And before Helena could get wind of his motive, he hurriedly left the house, wishing Poshtar a successful journey to town and home again.

While the older folks were down at Poshtar's making the necessary arrangements for the Christmas purchases, Wasyl Dub spruced up and made a beeline for Maria's house. He was proud of his well-fitting shoes, his Tyrolean hat and his coat, the collar of which hardly reached up to his ears. The farther he got away from home, the faster he strode. But his hat kept playing tricks on him. First he'd push it down over his eyes, then back onto the nape of his neck, then to one side, then to the other, freezing his hands in the process. After fifteen minutes of these gymnastics, he arrived at Workun's doorstep nearly frozen to death. Maria on that particular day had had an intuitive feeling that an important guest would arrive. Ever since the party on St. Andrew's Day Wasoyl had telegraphed, as it were, by the expression in his eyes that there would come a day when he would visit her and unburden his mind. Her parents weren't home, and Elizaveta and the boys could be inveigled out of the house by suggesting to them that they could go to Wakars to see the infant Barbara. Maria had milked the cow earlier than usual, tidied up the house, preened

herself with exceptional care, got rid of the children, and now sat listening for the crunch of approaching footsteps.

But in a case like this any short wait is a long wait; and so to calm her nerves she resorted to the old game of prophecy by pairing-off grains of wheat. When she threw the seeds on the table crying "Pair, pair, pair!" and had separated the grains, the last two seeds remained in a pair. This meant that Wasyl would be sure to come. To make sure, she repeated the procedure three times, with the same gratifying result.

At last there was a knock on the door, and Maria, the blood racing hotly through her veins, her heart thumping in her breast, had no need to cry "Come in!" For Wasyl stumbled in looking as if he were ready to fall in a heap. Maria stared at him speechless.

Neither one seemed able to speak. Wasyl, his teeth chattering, glanced at the warm stove, then at Maria, who seemed to be rooted where she stood. Finally she saw how frost-bitten he was and cried, "Don't touch your ears! they are frozen," then "Oh, your poor hands! Sit down by the fire while I get some snow. How are your feet?" She grabbed a towel, rushed outside and returned with snow to thaw his frost-bite. "Whoever heard of anyone going out in such weather without his mitts and wearing a hat like that?" she scolded as she held his head with one hand and applied the snow to his ears while he thrust his hands in the basin. "I asked you about your feet; how are they?"

"They're all numb," he said.

"Take your shoes off! Hurry!" But Wasyl lacked the strength and so she pulled them off for him. "I don't see any white spots, but it was a close call," she said as she tried to warm his feet with her hands.

Thus, instead of getting the lover's greeting she had expected, it was Maria who made the first advance. She examined his face for any further evidence of frost-bite and for signs of improvement. She lifted his hands and started to blow on them as she had seen her mother do. This was a pleasant gesture, giving her the opportunity and the excuse to pet him and to aid him at the same time until it was difficult to know which motive actuated her behaviour.

"I'll never get myself into a mess like this again," said Wasyl as he pressed his head against her breast. The frozen spots now began to tingle with pain, while his whole body seemed on fire from

the heat of the stove, his own fever, and perhaps most of all from Maria's close proximity.

"Serves you right," scolded Maria. "You can't wear summer clothes in winter weather."

"I always wore a hat in the Old Country, but I never froze my ears or face; and when my hands felt cold, rubbing them with snow would soon send the warm blood circulating through them again."

"That was in the Old Country, but this is Canada. You really have to dress properly for the winter over here."

"I don't want to acclimatize myself to this kind of weather."

"Well, what's your alternative?"

"Return to the Old Country."

"The Old Land?" she asked in surprised disbelief. "When?"

"Next winter," he answered morosely.

Wasył's petulance and lack of spirit were galling to Maria. The pretty castles in the air that she had built up over this prospective visit suddenly began to collapse. She sat down in despair, for it seemed as if her feelings for Wasył were turning to hatred. "What's the matter?" asked Wasył when the silence and the change in her attitude penetrated his dazed mind. Surely she didn't think he would leave without her?

"Nothing," she answered, not even looking his way.

"You're angry at me?" he said in alarm.

"No," she said.

"Well, then, why this . . .?" he asked, at a loss for a right word.

"I've got a headache," she said.

"Because I froze my ears? They will mend. Just the same, we were better off over there. Just think of it; Christmas will soon be here and all we'll be doing is just sitting around with nothing to cheer us up."

Maria remained silent. So far the conversation had not improved her state of mind. The "we," which she understood to mean Wasył and his family, was no comfort.

"Over there," he continued, "I wouldn't have to hire myself out. Here, there's no alternative. The money I earned I had to turn over to my mother. I see no future for myself. And this accursed weather! Look what happened to me today!"

Perhaps he's right after all, thought Maria to herself. Then

she began to recall the scenes of her childhood, the crooked streets, the Dubs' place with its granary and large stable, the village common where the young folks used to make merry, the girls that Wasyl used to dance with. Paraska, for instance; she felt suffocated at the very thought of that girl. Over in the Old Country this had not bothered her at all. Now the situation was different, and the jealousy rose accordingly.

"Here the mosquitoes make life a perpetual misery. Over there you could sleep peacefully in an orchard. Here you can't do that without being bitten or catching cold. In winter I used to sleep in the granary, but in Canada, even in the house, you're risking your life without a blazing fire the whole night through. And who would be crazy enough to dance on the snow here from noon till evening on any fall or winter holiday?"

Maria kept quiet, her jealousy mounting still higher, her fondest dreams fading as fast as smoke in the blue.

But Wasyl, unaware of her distress, continued his grumbling. "What good is all this free land? By the time we've cleared it for cultivation we'll be ready for the grave. Nobody can beat the hazards of drought, hail and frost. I tell you it's hopeless."

Maria listened to this harangue with distaste and foreboding. Her nerves were so frayed that she was on the point of rushing out of the house, when she heard the voices of Pavlo, Kornylo and Elizaveta returning home. "It's a good thing you came," she said to Elizaveta. "My head ached so much I could have cried, but it's better now. I think it would do me good to run over to Teklia's place."

Wasyl, astonished at this turn of events, wondered what to do. Maria now seemed as unconcerned about him as she had formerly been solicitous. One thing was clear, apparently he was not wanted; so he hobbled to the pail, scooped himself a drink, and shrugged into his coat, making for the door. "Well, good-bye!" he said as he seized the latch.

"Don't go like that," Maria cried sharply. "Here, take this shawl and wrap it around your head. You can't afford to freeze your ears again. Put my woollen mitts on too." She was angry at herself for making a fuss, and angrier still at him.

"I'll get along without them," he said, catching her mood. "This time I'll be going with the wind and not against it."

“Cover your ears, I tell you. Nobody’s going to love you without them.”

Wasył took the shawl, wrapping it around his neck in a clumsy knot.

“Come here, I’ll do it for you,” Maria said. She folded the shawl in a triangle, told him to sit down on the bench and then fitted the shawl around his face. “Mind you,” she warned, “don’t tell Paraska that I fixed you up for her. . . . Now what are you waiting for?” After glancing around at the children to see whether they were watching, she pulled aside the shawl and kissed him full on the lips. “This is something for you to remember me by,” she whispered.

When he was gone Maria left the house, burning to explain these strange happenings to her friend and adviser.

“Well,” said Teklia when the tale was told, “you haven’t done yourself much good, my girl. No man enjoys a mystery when it comes to love making. And tantrums are poison. Consider Kalina. . . .”

Maria got the point. All she asked was that her foolishness be kept secret. She didn’t want to join Kalina as the shrew and laughing-stock of the community. And Teklia in turn promised not only to keep the secret but to do her utmost to win Wasył back for her friend.

**12** “Father, will our oxen and cow talk tonight?” asked young Kornlyo, as he watched his father lather and then shave his beard.

“Yes, they will,” said Workun as he wiped the razor on the palm of his hand.

“Pavlo told me,” said the boy. “Why don’t they speak the whole year round?”

“It was ordained that way. All the year round they are dumb, but on Christmas Eve they’re allowed to talk a bit.”

“And why just at Christmas?” the boy asked.

“The Lord gave them the gift because they warmed the infant Jesus when he was born.”

“How did they warm him?”

“By breathing on him as he lay in the manger. Don’t you know even that?”

“Well, that’s what it says in the carols; but I was curious just the same. What do they talk about?”

“They converse about their owners, about the way they are treated, fed, watered, looked after, and about whether the stable is clean and warm.”

“Why do they talk about these things?”

“So that Jesus can hear and reward the people who treat them right and punish those who do not.”

“Did you ever hear them speaking to each other?” asked Kornlyo.

Workun felt rather stumped by this question. “I never heard them talk because we never had oxen,” he answered as he wiped his itching face. “And the ones who listen might die.”

“Why die? Because they beat the cattle?”

“Hm,” muttered Workun, glad to be spared an answer.



"I haven't yet beaten our oxen," said the boy happily, as he glanced through the window to see if the oxen were near the stable.

"Well, what do you know? That's a rare conversation," remarked Helena as she rolled out dough for *pyrohi*. "You'd better finish scraping that beard before the sun goes down. There's still plenty of work to do."

"I've caught up with all my chores," said Workun; "and now if you'll give me some warm water, I'll wash up and get ready for the holiday."

"Have you chopped enough wood?"

"I think there's enough."

"You'd better be sure; there's three days of celebrating and I won't let you use an axe at such a time, it would be a sin. Get your father some hot water, Maria. As for you, *hospodar*, don't splash up the whole place. Dear me, where did that gabber Kornylo disappear to?"

"He went outside," Workun said as he stuck his head in the basin.

"Run and look for him, Maria! See if he's dressed well."

"He put on an overcoat. It's warmer now, anyway. He is in no danger of frostbite."

It was indeed warmer outside. One of those strange chinook winds had blown over the land, melting the snow, loosening the layers of frost on the windowpanes and bringing about a welcome respite.

"What a lovely change of weather!" Helena said as she peeked outside. The children were scraping up the refuse and having a great time. "Button up, Kornylo," she shouted.

"Why, you could run about naked in this kind of weather," observed Workun as he started wiping himself with a towel.

"Perhaps you'd like to take a swim in Wakar's Pond," Helena laughed. "Never mind showing off like a bridegroom at a wedding. Fetch some water. I want to prepare a bath for the children."

"I'll do that in the twinkle of an eye," said Workun as he drew on his coat.

It is hard to conceive of a true Christian spending Christmas without an all-pervading spirit of peace and good-will. It is a time when even invalids on their sick beds turn their thoughts to friend-

ship and charity and for the time being forget their sufferings in a renewed faith in our Lord and Saviour.

"Today even our cattle feel happier than usual," commented Helena, as she scooped some *kutia* from a bowl for Workun to take out to the oxen and the cow so that they too should know that this day was a great holiday.

And, in truth, the blessing of the Lord rested on Workun's home. Somewhere around five o'clock Helena had everything in readiness for the Christmas supper, and had made sure that all members of the household were dressed for the occasion.

Kornylo, who had been watching the sky for the appearance of the evening star, suddenly shouted with glee, "The Star, mother; the Star, father! It has just come out from behind a cloud!" In his excitement he hugged Pavlo so violently that they both rolled off the bench.

"Quiet, children! Don't you know it is a sin to make so much noise on Christmas Eve?" said Helena as she laid a new tablecloth with a bit of hay underneath on the table. Workun lit a candle and set it on one of the three loaves which Helena placed in the centre of the table along with the other foods.

Then suddenly there was complete silence in the house. Kornylo looked over at his mother, whose face seemed to take on a glorified look, and it was with difficulty that he withheld himself from running over to her and kissing her. Workun meanwhile was fiddling around with some hot coals he placed on a pan, into which he dropped some incense when all the dishes of food were on the table.

He crossed himself and began to repeat the fiftieth Psalm, raising the pan with the incense over the table three times. He then spread the sweet-smelling fumes all over the room, even making a trip around the house and into the stable with the pan. Meanwhile Helena knelt down with the children, leading them in prayer to Christ the Saviour, asking that her children and her relatives beyond the ocean be blessed with good health.

"Christ is born!" said Workun as he entered from the yard. He placed the pan on the table, seated the children, then took his own seat. Holding up a spoonful of wheat grains, he greeted his family in these words: "I wish you, my dear wife, and you, my dear children, on this Christmas Day good fortune and good health;

and I wish that we all shall be able to enjoy another such day as this. And may the Infant Christ bless us and our cattle, that we may prosper during the forthcoming year." Then he threw the wheat grains up to the ceiling as an indication of his wish for a fine crop.

"Mother, why did you set these two spoons on the table? For whom?" he asked.

"They're for your deceased brothers, Fedko and Nicholas," replied Helena sadly. "On every Christmas Eve their souls return to see whether they are forgotten or not. And the souls of our dead forefathers do the same thing. Therefore it is a sin to take the food set out for them away from the table after Christmas Eve supper."

Having fasted for twenty-four hours, for that was the time-honoured custom, they all partook of *kutia*, jellied fish, beans, plums, dumplings stuffed with cabbage or mushrooms, poppy seed cakes, and buckwheat meal. And although these were Lenten foods, the whole family found them appetizing.

When they had eaten to their hearts' content, Workun asked them to sing carols. "Sing," he encouraged; "let the welkin ring with the glad tidings that Christ is born."

And so six voices united as one in joyful caroling; Workun leading with his deep bass voice and Kornylo trailing with his bell-like soprano. They sang with zest and fervour, so that the candle began to flicker from the vibration of their vigorous voices.

"Make a wish, Kornylo, and mother'll give us something for our caroling," said Workun when the singing ended.

"With this carol," said Kornylo, "I wish you happiness and health; and as we have been spared to sing this one for you, I hope we shall be able to sing another one next year."

"Thanks for the carol," said Helena, smiling as she got up from the bench and produced a bag of nuts and candies from behind the stove. "This is from St. Nicholas for your carol. Please share it with the rest of the children." And she poured the contents into a bowl.

The children needed no prompting. They attacked the nuts and candy heartily. Then there were more carols. Helena lit the lamp, gathered up some of the food into bowls, wrapped them up with white cloth, and set them down in a row on the bench to be delivered to Teklia, Tetiana, Kalina and Anna. "I want every-

body to share this Christmas Eve supper for the benefit of our children's souls and the souls of our deceased ancestors," she said piously.

The children were making ready for the errand when the merry voice of Solowy rang out under the window.

"Oho, one of the carolers has already put in an appearance," said Workun.

Solowy finished two verses of a carol and then went through the usual ceremony of wishing everybody happiness, good health, full cattle corrals, large herds of sheep, and fine suitors. He ended up by yelling, "Come across with a gift or I'll tear the house apart!"

In order to appease this "dangerous" caroler, Workun thanked him from behind the window and invited him inside.

"Christ is born!" was his greeting as he entered the house.

"Praise him!" Workun replied.

Solowy expressed a lot of other wishes, then handed Helena a small bundle. "This is for the soul of my mother-in-law," he added as he kissed Helena's hand. She accepted the gift and kissed Solowy on the forehead. Then she opened up the parcel, made the sign of the cross, ate some of the food, and marched out of the house with her children.

"Have a seat and we'll do a little caroling on our own," suggested Workun. "Have a smoke." He pulled out a tobacco pouch which he had bought without Helena's knowledge. "Why the big bulge under your coat?" he asked Solowy.

"That's the thing we agreed upon, remember?" whispered Solowy as he looked around to make sure there was no one to overhear him.

"Sh!" warned Workun as he shoved Solowy over into the corner behind the table, pulling the bottle out from under the latter's coat—two of them, as a matter of fact, well-sugared—and depositing it in the corner with some hay, happy in the thought that this was going to be a real Christmas celebration.

"Where's the spoon?" asked Solowy, laughing slyly at Workun's deceptive act of secretion. "What do you mean by inviting a guest into the house without offering him a little nip?" he said as he extracted a small bottle from his pocket, handing it to Workun and lauding the merits of its contents as the greatest of all medicines.

"Well, well, I guess I'll try some myself," Workun commented as he poured himself a small glass. "Well, Stepan, here's to your health and a merry Christmas to you." He downed the drink with zest. "That sure is a fine snort."

There was sadness and gloom in the house of Wakar. When Helena entered, there was no sign of the usual Christmas Eve preparation. Wakar sat on a bench, unkempt and unshaven, showing little interest in the holiday. Tetiana, in the dull glow of the light, presented a still more pitiful picture as she sat on the bed, pale and haggard, holding little Barbara on her knees, looking dully into space. Sophia sat beside her mother with her head against her shoulder, showing little signs of life. The scene was so depressing that Helena actually forgot to extend the usual greeting as she entered the room.

After glancing around for a few moments, she greeted them with "Christ is born!" and the rest of the ceremonial words, then went over to the bed to hand her present of food to Tetiana. She kissed her and took a candle out of her pocket to set on the table.

"How in the world did you ever allow yourself to sink to a state like this? It's Christmas Eve and not even a cloth on the table!" she said in dismay.

"There was nothing to put on the table anyway," cried Tetiana.

"Didn't you prepare any food at all?" asked Helena in alarm.

"Sophia boiled some wheat. But what can she do alone?" answered Tetiana as she drew her child to her breast. Both of them were sobbing. Tetiana was obviously too weak to make the least effort.

"Have you baked any bread?"

"The girl did, but it turned out too heavy."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Helena as she looked for something to set the candle in. "Have you a cup handy anywhere?"

Sophia found a cup for her and Helena scooped some flour out of the bag.

"Now please set the table and have some of this food," she ordered as she opened her bundle. It contained fried fish, cabbage rolls, cheese and plum dumplings, and a round loaf of bread. "Now hand me a bowl for the *kutia*," she added as she got ready to wait on the lot of them.

Andrew and Sophia ate the *kutia* with relish. "Why don't you take your place at the table?" Helen asked Wakar, who just sat on his bench moping.

"Thank you, I'll just sit where I am," he said. "It was nice of you to help cheer up this house of ours which, otherwise, would have been as gloomy as the grave."

Helena felt a mixture of pity and disgust for him, and was just on the point of scolding him when in came Katerina Poshtar and Olga Dub with their bundle of food. Helena placed the contents on the table; they were generous in quantity, especially the one from Anna. She took a spoonful of *kutia* and some of the other dishes over to Tetiana, imploring her to partake of the food which was freely given and would restore her to health.

It was in the midst of this admonition that the voice of Solowy was heard outside the window, caroling and going through the ceremonial greetings. He then entered the house, greeted the owners, deposited his food parcel and struck up a conversation.

"Why are you sitting there like a turkey-gobbler with a broken wing?" he asked Wakar. "Come over here and I'll give you some medicine to cure all that." He pulled a small bottle out of his pocket. "I made it out of a variety of roots."

Wakar rose from his seat as if he wanted to run away from the shame of his own improvidence, but Solowy shoved him behind the table and then looked around for a small whisky glass to pour out some of the "medicine." Helena located one and the two men drank to each other's health.

Then a general caroling began, turning the whole household from one of gloom to one of joy and gladness. Everyone but the baby joined in the singing. Even Wakar mumbled some of the words in an undertone, wondering the while how he was going to thank his guests for their welcome food.

"My heart was really bleeding when you sang those carols," he said. "You must not think that my sentiments about Christmas Eve are dead. You don't know how hard it was to bear the thought that other people were celebrating while we were sitting here as if we were accursed. Thank you very much."

"I'll tell Uncle Hrehory to send over a razor," yelled Solowy from the doorway.

"Don't tell him to come with a razor, but with a good cudgel," replied Wakar, "for that's what I need to straighten me out."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Father and mother invite all of you to come to our place tomorrow for a feast," said Katerina.

"And to our place the day after that," invited Olga.

"Thank your mothers for me. May the Lord preserve their lives for a long, long time!" said Tetiana. "But don't expect us, for you can see how things are with us."

"Come with us, Andrew," begged Katerina. "You can go along with Pavlo and Osyf caroling."

"Yes, my son, run along and mix with people. There's nothing for you to do here," said Tetiana. "It's nice outside and the fresh air will do you good."

The girls left, but Helena remained to console Tetiana. As for Wakar, he already felt better, got more talkative and even began to sing some carols to himself by the stove.

Workun was asleep when Helena came home, but she found young Kornylo still awake. He had been waiting for Pavlo so that they both could sneak out into the stable and listen to the cattle whisper to each other. She finally forced him into his bed, and then lay down to sleep herself, when suddenly . . .

"Hey, what is this?" she said as she woke up. "They're caroling outside."

The noise wakened Workun also.

"What's all this about? Ha, I see. Wake Kornylo up. He'll be angry if he finds out the carolers were here and he didn't even hear them," said Workun.

When the caroling ended Helena lit a candle, looked over at the table to see if there would be enough food for all the carolers, then asked Workun to call them into the house. They all filed in: Ivan and Katerina Poshtar, Olga and Wasyl Dub, Andrew Wakar and all three Workuns. Tailing the lot was Teklia, who did all the ceremonial greeting, calling Workun a bright sun, Helena a round-faced moon, and all the children small stars; adding the prophecy that their home would be visited by a fine young swain bringing a ring and a comb and a wreath, and that this ring would slip on someone's finger, the comb would smooth someone's tresses and the wreath would fit someone's head.

"Thank you," said the hosts in unison, and Helena said, "Take your coats off and sit down around the table so that your presence

may bring luck to this household. You must be hungry after all this tramping around."

"Well now, where were you and what did you hear?" asked Workun after they had all taken their places behind the table. For a moment he felt like treating all the boys with a bit of the medicine he had hidden, but he was afraid of Helena scolding him for improvidence or setting a bad example.

"We visited the whole locality and feasted well at every place," answered Teklia with spirit. "And everywhere we went we heard that Christ is born."

"Let him be praised!" said Helena piously.

The guests attacked the food with a will, caroling between bites.

They sat thus for an hour and then departed to fill Teklia's home with the same joy and laughter.

"Our children are just children; but as regards caroling, they're an earnest lot," said Workun as the footsteps of the carolers died out in the distance.

After Christmas Eve came Christmas Day. The whole community spent the day at Poshtar's. Even Tetiana was brought in by Diordy, according to Anna's orders. She stayed one day at the Poshtars', another at the Dubs' and a third at the Workuns'. And she began to change inwardly and outwardly, gaining strength and reviving spiritually.

There followed a series of feasts in the community.

Teklia put on a New Year's feast; Tetiana held hers with the help of Helena and Maria on Jordan Day; and on each occasion the topic of conversation was the first year of caroling in Canada.

Indeed, as old Workun felt the approach of imminent death, this was one of his fondest memories. And many were the times when he had told how, notwithstanding the difficulties, the people had taken root in this new land, without ever forgetting the old custom of the Holy Supper, of Christmas, and the singing of carols in their new community.



**13** Ever since the time Maria had treated Wasyl for frostbite, she had gone about like one in a daze. Even Teklia's optimistic promises failed to revive her drooping spirits. She was alternately glum or garrulous, moody and nervous, her customary zest for life a thing of the past.

Helena at first regarded this behaviour as merely another example of juvenile petulance; but as Maria began to retreat more and more into her own shell, she became anxious about her daughter.

"What's come over you?" she asked Maria a week before Christmas. "You don't act like yourself any more. What are you looking for, running from window to window like a captive bird?"

"Nothing," Maria shrugged.

"Nothing, you say! Yet your nerves are all on edge. That's no answer, my girl."

"You are just imagining things, Mother," Maria replied irritably. "I feel all right. It's just a mood. I'll soon get over it."

"Get over what?" asked her mother suspiciously.

"This cold weather!" she cried. "I can't stand it! It's so depressing."

"The winter will pass, and summer come in its own season. What's the good of worrying about the ways of nature?"

"I'm just bored, Mother. It's so dull!"

"Why not visit Teklia or one of the other girls? That should cheer you up and be a nice change."

At that moment Maria caught sight of a sleigh driving up the trail. "Uncle Diordy is coming!" she exclaimed, her gloom lifting and her face wreathed in smiles.

Soon the crunching sound of the sleigh runners could be heard, the stamping of the hooves, the hallooing of a voice, and finally the visitor bustled into the house. Poshtar had just come from town and was on a tour of parcel-delivery to the various households.

He greeted all inside, then paced backwards and forwards until Workun came in with two bags of flour from the sleigh.

"Have a smoke of this Old Chum tobacco," said Diordy, handing a package to his friend.

"Take your coat off and get the chill out of your bones," Helena urged as she counted the parcels to see if they were all there. "Besides, we want to hear the latest news from town."

"I haven't got time for that just now," said Diordy. "I still have to get on to Solowy's."

"Can I go with you?" begged Pavlo.

"I'd like to go too, Uncle Diordy," said Kornylo.

"And I'd like to visit Teklia," Maria added.

"As far as I'm concerned you can all come along," replied Poshtar. "The more the merrier."

Before Poshtar got outside, the children had climbed into the sleigh. Pavlo had the reins in his hands and Kornylo was standing beside him, bursting with excitement over the prospective ride.

"All right, start driving!" said Poshtar, sitting down by Maria in the bottom of the sleigh. "But be careful you don't upset us."

"One of the townsmen asked me if I knew a girl who would like to do housework," Diordy told Maria. "How would you like to take the job?"

"Oh, I would!" Maria exclaimed, thrilled by the possibility of escape. "But I don't know whether my parents would let me go."

"Why not?" asked Diordy. "There's nothing important to do at home. The money would come in handy."

"How much will he pay?" she asked.

"Eight dollars a month."

"I'll go, I'll go!" she said excitedly. "But don't tell anybody. I want to be sure before anyone knows about it."

When Maria finally reached Teklia's house and the two were alone, Maria forgot all about secrecy. After pouring out all her troubles, real and imaginary, she mentioned the job in town.

"I want to go," she said, "but how can I tell mother? She's likely to get sick over the thought of my leaving."

"Don't take the job," said Teklia. "It's not worth it. People

will start gossiping. They'll say you're fast. In the Old Country girls who worked in the towns were the soldiers' mistresses!"

"There aren't any soldiers here!" Maria snapped. "Anyway, there's nothing to do on the farm and I'm sick of the place."

"Oh, come now, cheer up!" Teklia laughed at her. "Things are never as bad as they seem. Let's play a game of cards and say no more about it."

Nothing more was said of Maria's prospective job until the day Helena visited Anna Poshtar. It was *Stritenya*, the Day of the Purification of the Holy Virgin Mary. The women had been lamenting the bad effects of idleness, because they had neither weaving nor spinning to do, the customary winter employment in the Old Country. And they agreed that flax should be sown and looms and flails constructed so that next winter would be less depressing.

"The children are all restless," Helena sighed, "especially Maria. Ever since Diordy told her about that job in town she thinks of nothing else."

"And will you let her go?" asked Anna.

"I'm not sure. What would you advise?"

"I'm having the same trouble with my own daughter," Anna told her. "I'm afraid if I let her go I'll never see her again."

"That's the way I feel about it. But what can I do when Hrehory favours the idea? They sit around figuring out how long she would have to work to buy a cow, while I look on and worry. At night I lie awake wondering what to do about it."

"My Diordy is no better. If he had his way he'd send the whole lot of us to work for the winter months."

After they had agreed about the dangers facing a young girl alone in a strange town, conversation flagged for a time, and it was obvious that Anna was deeply preoccupied with a more difficult matter. Finally she leaned towards Helena and said: "Working in town is not the only way to get ahead. I have an idea, but you might laugh at it."

"No, no! Any idea is welcome. What have you in mind?"

"Our children could get married. Ivan is always nagging us to set him up on his own place. Katerina and I have already decided that she should marry Wasyl. Why shouldn't we come to a similar agreement about Maria and Ivan? They would make

a fine couple. He will inherit everything we have, which is worth consideration."

"That is true," Helena answered hesitantly. "But I couldn't make such a decision without consulting her father. Besides, shouldn't the young people have something to say about it? Forced marriages often end in disaster."

"Very true!" Anna hastily agreed. "Just the same, it is our duty as parents to guide our children. A pretty face and a handsome figure are poor substitutes for security."

"You are right, of course, but I will have to discuss it with Hrehory. He is very fond of Maria and would do nothing against her wishes. I'll talk to him this evening."

Helena introduced the subject that evening while she was cleaning a string of fish Hrehory had caught in Wakar's pond and he was resting on the bed. The work had been hard. He and Stepan had had to cut through the thick ice and do their fishing like natives, which was tedious and tiring. They had kept at it with grim determination. Most households were short of supplies by this time and the Wakars in particular would be able to use a good catch of fish.

Content with his day's work, Workun was enjoying his well-earned rest and looking forward to a nice plate of fresh fish, when he heard his wife's voice saying, "Anna wants Maria to marry Ivan. She thinks it would be a more sensible thing to do than to work in town."

"And what did you tell her?" Workun asked, sitting up abruptly.

"Nothing!"

"You are lucky it was nothing! I don't fancy Ivan."

"Who else is there to wait for?" Helena wanted to know, secretly relieved yet cross with her husband.

"Maria won't go begging. She's a fine-looking girl."

"Maybe so." Helena frowned. "But she will lose a rich husband in Ivan. Anna told me that Kalina is willing to give Olga a good dowry if Ivan asks for her."

"Why then, let him! If she's foolish enough to have him."

"Who is foolish?"

"Why, Olga, of course; if she married that blockhead."

"The Poshtars would never forgive us if they heard you speak that way. They are neighbours, you know."

"Neighbours in everything else but this. As regards our children, that's another matter," said Workun. "I refuse to barter Maria like a piece of goods!"

Just then Maria entered the room. She was a changed girl, glowing with happiness and excitement.

"So you have seen Uncle Diordy?" Workun greeted her. "Is he going to town shortly?"

"Yes, and he's going to take me along," she said. "We're leaving tomorrow."

"Take care, my child. Gladness often turns to sadness," warned Helena.

"What nonsense!" said Maria, as she hugged Helena fondly. "Sitting at home moping seems to me a poor way of inviting good fortune. In town I can at least earn enough money to buy some clothes, which we all need badly."

"That would be no comfort if luck passed you by!" her mother said glumly. "It only comes once in a lifetime."

"Why don't you tell her outright that Anna wants her to marry Ivan?" Workun spoke up seriously. "That's what all this luck chatter amounts to."

"I wouldn't have him if he were the last man on earth!" said Maria.

"That's my girl!" Workun laughed. "Don't let anyone change your mind."

"Just a minute, old man! Think before you speak! A girl can't be too choosy, otherwise she may end up an old maid and spend the rest of her life cursing her fate. There is little to choose from around here, and Ivan has his good points."

"Too bad you are not a girl. Ivan would have no difficulty getting you as his bride," Workun teased her.

"He will get a bride! Kalina is willing to give half of her property as a dowry if Ivan marries Olga," Helena answered angrily.

"Then why is Anna going against fortune by looking in poor quarters?"

"Because she likes Maria better than Olga. She wants her children settled. She has made arrangements for Katerina to marry Wasyl in the spring."

"Who told you that, Mother?" asked Maria.

"Anna," answered Helena. "Hasn't Katerina told you yet?"

"No," replied Maria. "She said she'd like to go along and find a job in town."

"She must be holding it back as a surprise. Most likely she wants to go to town to buy the material for a wedding dress. Or perhaps Wasyl will go with her and insist on marriage then and there."

"I'm sorry for the boy," muttered Workun.

"Sorry or not, what can you do about it?" asked Helena. "It's no joking matter. Even here, it seems, the wealthy marry into each other's families."

Fortunately for Maria nothing more was said at the time, for the boys came rushing into the house, filling it with noise and clatter.

Meanwhile Wasyl was having his own troubles. He had meant to ask Maria to marry him that fateful Sunday when frostbite, shyness and Maria's contradictory behaviour had completely defeated him. Since then he had wandered about in perplexity and doubt.

His father had surmised what his trouble was, and one day when they were in the stable Pavlo began: "What bothers you, son? Does the farm bore you or is it something else?"

"Yes, it does. I wish I were a thousand miles away!" Wasyl answered fiercely.

"I don't blame you," Pavlo said humbly. "I should have had the character to stand up against your mother. Whatever you do, don't marry a purse-proud contentious woman."

This unexpected revelation of his father's own conflicts was an opening Wasyl could not resist. He confessed his love for Maria. "There is nobody like her and I shall always love her."

"Unfortunately we can't live on love," Pavlo smiled.

"Maria is not afraid of work. She would be a help to us if we go back to the Old Country."

"I should not advise that," said Pavlo. "Here both of you can start from scratch and whatever you acquire will be yours. Here you have opportunity; but over there it is too congested. Where would you be able to get so much land and free at that? Maria would be right for you here, but not in the Old Country where a wife to be respected must bring her husband a dowry."

"I see what you mean," said Wasyl.

"Well then, use your own judgment."

“That’s exactly what I will do,” said Wasył, although at the moment he could not see what judgment had to do with it. But he was happy in the knowledge that his father had understood the reason for his erstwhile unhappiness.

There was now an understanding between Wasył and his father. The same could not be said of his mother. She was set against Maria, and ridiculed Pavlo’s suggestions of returning to the Old Country.

“Don’t be foolish, and do as I tell you!” was the theme of her nagging. Then she would launch into praise of Katerina and her sizable dowry, and reaffirm her intention to marry Olga to Ivan, a double investment in good fortune.

“Why don’t you see the girl?” she urged. “Do you want me to do your courting for you? Haven’t you the backbone of a man?”

“I’ll go!” Wasył would promise just to silence her. “I’ll go next summer when the words won’t freeze on my tongue.” That should hold her, he thought, more determined than ever to get to town and freedom from eternal wrangles.

In the small hours of the following morning Helena stood by Poshtar’s sleigh, weeping as she tucked blankets around Maria, who sat next to Katerina.

**14** The Easter season passed, but as far as the settlers were concerned it was just a date in the calendar for all the celebrating they did that year. Easter or no Easter and in spite of unseasonable weather, the work of ploughing and seeding had to be done. Cultivating the land was not an easy task with the makeshift tools at Workun's command and the power of a pair of oxen. There were unexpected difficulties also. Workun had assumed that the action of sun and winds would have prepared the soil for the harrow, but he was quickly disillusioned. The harrow could not penetrate the stubborn lumps in the field. When he realized what was wrong he shouted at Helena to stop the oxen. "We must have weight. Kornylo, sit on the harrow. We'll see if that makes any difference."

But this measure had no other results than bumps and bruises for Kornylo.

"Whoever heard of setting a boy on a harrow? Have you lost your mind?" scolded Helena. "If you must have a weight, get a large stone; that'll keep it from jumping around."

When he had found a big enough stone to suit his purpose, Workun set it on the harrow and drove on again; but the stone rolled off a few moments later, breaking several teeth off the harrow.

"Find a piece of rope, Pavlo," suggested Helena. "This time we'll tie it down firmly." That worked. The stone remained in place.

At dinnertime they unhitched the oxen. Workun sharpened the hoes. Then they hoed the whole cultivated surface, piece by piece, until they reduced it all to a fine powder. It was not an easy job for there were still many small roots left in the ground, some so deeply imbedded it took the combined strength of Workun, Helena and Elizaveta to tear them out of the ground. And when



the field was finally ready for seeding it seemed a very small piece of land to have cost so much toil and trouble.

"If the Lord repays us tenfold for the seed we planted, how many bags would that make?" asked Helena.

"Fifty," said Workun. "Enough to feed the family and the chickens!"

Helena, not quite convinced, exclaimed, "Fifty bags of grain! Merciful Lord, what a treasure! Is this the truth or just a dream?"

Dream or not, Helena blessed the land and prayed for a good harvest, night and morning. And Hrehory Workun with this job behind him began to consider a return to town.

When Workun spoke of hunting jobs in town, he was astonished to find Stepan Solowy undecided. He made mysterious references to Teklia. It was impossible to leave her alone in her present state of health. It was not right to expect her to take care of the house, the cow and fifty chickens. Besides, Stepan had plenty to do on the farm.

"The farm won't run away from you," interrupted Workun. "Furthermore, you know that the land could not produce enough to carry you through the winter, no matter how hard you worked. Without a bit of money for necessities, you would find yourself forced to eat the cow to keep you and her from starving."

They were still arguing when Helena entered the room demanding to know what all the fuss was about.

"We were talking of Teklia," answered Workun. "I'm trying to induce Stepan to go to town with me, but he's afraid his wife can't live without him."

"Nonsense, Teklia will get along without you just as well as she did last year. Anyway, I will keep an eye on her, you may be sure. In repayment you can make me your *kuma* (godmother)."

"There now! See how cheaply you're getting away with it," laughed Workun, winking at the blushing young *hospodar*. "There's nothing more to be said. Sow your plot of ploughed land and then get ready for the march to town. How about you, Toma? Want to come along?"

"Not this year," said Wakar dejectedly. "It'll take more than one summer to pay off the debt I owe Diordy. And how am I to pay it and support the family between now and harvest-time? I only have thirty cents to my name. My wife is a sick woman.

If I leave her alone with the children there will be others to bury beside Semen."

"Have you finished hoeing your field?" asked Workun as he considered the thin, frail figure before him.

"I started, but I didn't finish," replied Wakar glumly. "I haven't got the strength to tug at those accursed roots. I'd exchange places with the devil any time."

"The devil drives a hard bargain, my friend," laughed Workun. "In the end he'd get not only your goods and gear, but your soul as well."

"I'd give him my soul gladly to get out of this place. The rest is junk too!" retorted Wakar, heatedly.

"What a foolish way to talk." Helena, busy slicing bread, flung the men a reproachful glance. "It is Sunday, remember? Now," she said as she placed a bowl of jellied fish on the table, "thank God there is a lot of fish to be had, otherwise we'd all go hungry."

Then she lectured Wakar on the sins of despair. "You've got to believe in yourself and look ahead if you want to amount to anything. And that includes finding a job in town," she said. "If you don't, you won't live through another winter. You need money for food and clothing—for everything, in fact." Then, turning to her husband, "Take the oxen and harrow to Wakar's tomorrow and level off his field."

Wakar accepted Helena's castigation in good part. She was right in everything she said. He had to develop a little self-confidence. Yes, and he would make a start by joining Workun and Stepan when they went job-hunting in town.

"Why such a large garden?" asked Kalina Dub, who had come to visit Helena to pry out information in regard to the new arrivals who were expected to settle in the vicinity.

"What do you mean large?" asked Helena as she patted the soil down with her hand. "We have plenty of land, thank goodness. If only I had more seed, I'd really plant a large garden."

Kalina listened to further garden plans for a few moments, then burst out impatiently, "Yes, yes, a garden is an excellent thing. But tell me, is it true that Workun received a letter from his brother telling him that another group of immigrants are coming to the settlement?"

"It's true, Kalina; but I'm afraid that they won't get here in time for spring seeding," said Helena, and in the next breath reverted to cucumbers. Frost had ruined last summer's crop, but she meant to try again. She also pointed to a rise of land which she thought suitable for a show of sunflowers, and of course she would plant cabbage and a little hemp. Elizaveta was doing her part by hauling manure from the stable.

"My girls have done some seeding," said Kalina. Then she asked, "Are the Pidhirnys coming with their families?"

"Yes, I think so; there'll be quite a crowd of children when they arrive," said Helena. "I already look upon my seed beds as a future supply of vegetables which will not only supply my table but help the newcomers too."

Kalina had no interest in these neighbourly designs, but when Helena referred to her chickens, a flock of seventy, her boredom vanished.

"Seventy!" she cried. "What do you need that many for?"

"Well, we have to extend a helping hand to the new arrivals when they come," said Helena, "and our own children need proper nourishment. You can't live on cabbage soup in this climate."

Just before the "Green Holidays" the new immigrants arrived, and with Poshtar's help were duly settled on homestead sites, thus increasing the number of families from five to ten, the number of individuals to forty. All this was a direct result of Workun's letter to his brother Peter.

Then, shortly after St. Peter's Day, a lusty voice challenged the new world from Teklia Solowy's lap. It was the healthy voice of Boris Solowy announcing that he and he alone had the right to call Canada his native land—a right which tiny Barbara Wakar was to dispute some years later.

Meanwhile, as the new settlers started building their own homes, Kalina Dub, fearful that Paraska Pidhirny, a new arrival, was turning Ivan Poshtar's head, renewed her efforts to win Olga to a more practical state of mind where Ivan was concerned.

"How else do you expect to earn two farms, a pair of horses and loads of other good things and find a mother-in-law who will worship you? You won't find another such opportunity, my girl. And you had better make up your mind fast. Maria may be out of the picture, but Paraska has eyes in her head."

There was some reason for Kalina's assumption that Ivan had an interest in Olga. Ever since his sister Katerina had gone to work in town, he had been bored at home. He disliked Olga, possibly because she was afraid of him, but she was better than no company at all and she didn't expect to be entertained. Most of the time he sat in the kitchen, whittling a stick, humming to himself, or sitting in glum silence.

"What you need is a wife," Kalina said, "a helpmate not only to you but for your mother as well. When you're out in the field, she can help your mother. It would work well all around. What do you think of it, Ivan?"

"Nothing at all," said Ivan.

"That's bad. Time waits for no man! When it's wasted it can't be recalled."

"I should worry about that!" Ivan sneered.

"If that's your attitude the girls will leave you in the lurch. You'll find yourself the laughingstock of the community."

"Devil take all girls and your prediction," Ivan taunted his would-be mother-in-law.

"I know you're joking," she said, trying to excuse his surly behaviour before the girls, who were giggling at his bad manners.

"Joke or no joke," countered Ivan, "I'm fed up with all this match-making you and my mother carry on so endlessly. Can't you find another topic of conversation? I can get married without help from either of you."

"What do you intend to do?" asked Kalina, holding back her anger.

"I'll do as I please," he answered. "I don't want any old women to do my courting for me. If you hadn't stuck your nose into my affairs I might have married Olga last winter."

"Do you mean that?" asked Kalina hopefully. "Why didn't you say so? A word or two would have settled everything. But you said nothing. You didn't even discuss the possibilities with Olga."

"Do I have to discuss it with Olga? If she wants to marry me, that's all right; but if she doesn't, she can go to the devil. I'll find myself another girl. She's not the only one around here."

"Yes, but not all girls make good wives, Ivan!"

"They have to be taught, that's all. If Olga wants to listen to me, well and good; if not, I'll tan her hide."

“That’s just talk. I know you’re a good boy,” Kalina said. “You are too young to appreciate the worth of a good wife. When you get married you’ll want to carry her around in your arms.”

Ivan muttered something with a sly smile, rose from his bench, went over to Olga, pinched her hard on the arm, laughed at her wince of pain, and left the house.

Kalina was puzzled by Ivan’s behaviour, but she still felt there was a chance for a successful marriage. However, Ivan’s brutality had a result that upset Kalina so much she had to remain in bed for a week. Olga, hitherto subservient to her mother, rose in revolt. After listening to Ivan’s belittling remarks on women and experiencing his cruelty, she refused even to consider the marriage, although Ivan had finally asked her to marry him and Kalina had started preparations for the wedding.

Her father was quick to divine Olga’s true feelings. “Kalina, don’t destroy your own child or you’ll be sorry,” he advised.

“She’s a fool and so are you,” Kalina sneered. “You don’t know when a good thing comes your way. I’m not her enemy! Ivan may be a bit uncouth, but we’ll knock that out of him once he has married Olga.”

# 15

Maria Workun had secured work at the Fraser's, for whom her father once did some wood-chopping. It came about by accident. Diordy had been unsuccessful in finding her a job although he had searched for two days. The two of them were returning home when the unexpected happened. Diordy stopped at the Fraser lumber yard to buy boards for doors and windows, a long and difficult process because of the language barrier. But Mr. Fraser, an amiable and kindly man, not only had patience with his foreign customer but saw him load the lumber onto his sleigh.

"Who is that sitting on the sleigh?" he asked, noticing the huddled and heavily-clad figure of Maria.

"Me bring girl . . . here to work. No work . . . me take girl home," answered Poshtar in his broken English.

Mr. Fraser looked at Maria and then at Poshtar. Then he went over to the sleigh to greet the young girl. "Good-morning, Miss, aren't you cold?" he asked as he shook hands with a genial smile.

Maria was indifferent to his approach at first; but when she perceived that he was really trying to be friendly and had besides the look and demeanour of a kind, understanding man, her tired face broke into smiles.

Mr. Fraser regarded the bedraggled figure in silence for a moment and decided that he liked her frank young countenance. "Work? You want work?" he asked and made his meaning clear by pointing to her, to the house and to himself.

The upshot was that they all went to the Fraser house, where Mrs. Fraser took charge of Maria and Poshtar enjoyed respite and refreshment beside the fire. When he set out on the long trip back to the farm, Maria remained behind.

Mr. Fraser had engaged Maria for an indefinite period. He was not a poor man; but the maintenance of two children in school was a big enough expense and, furthermore, Mrs. Fraser was inclined to be parsimonious. But she had been ill, and her husband decided that household help would hasten her recovery.

Mrs. Fraser was doubtful that the dishevelled, dirty, tousled-haired girl her husband introduced into her neat home would be any help worth having, especially since she obviously did not understand a word of English. But her opinion changed when Maria had been given the opportunity to wash away the dirt and dust of the long trip and new hope had transformed her tired face. It was not many days before Mrs. Fraser realized that in Maria she had not only a willing worker, but one who was quick-minded and intelligent.

"This young girl doesn't know the meaning of idleness," she informed her husband. "She's a bundle of energy! And she's very quick to learn. When she's finished with her housework she runs outside and wields an axe like an expert. I tried to stop her but she only chopped the harder. As for the washing, I doubt if there's a single garment in the place that hasn't been washed and ironed and neatly put away."

"By the look of her she could do with some clothes," said Mr. Fraser. "We might give her some of Margaret's dresses when she leaves instead of money."

"I should be ashamed to do that," Mrs. Fraser protested. "She works barefoot in the house because she refused a pair of my old shoes, and saves her own ragged pair for outside tasks. She is proud and independent and wants to make her own way. Why, I had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to accept an old sweater, although she had nothing but a cotton blouse to wear on the coldest day."

This was the beginning of a strange attachment between Maria and her mistress. Maria was eager to learn and Mrs. Fraser was proud of her own ability to transform an ignorant peasant girl into a capable and pleasant young woman. Some time later she expressed her feelings in the matter to Mr. Fraser. "It seems a pity to send Maria back to the drudgery of the farm. She is a clever girl. By now she has taken over the housework entirely. If

she agrees to work for ten dollars a month, I think we should keep her."

"I think so, too. When John and Margaret come home for the holidays, we could slip away ourselves for a few days. The girls could look after the house and John can handle the lumber yard."

The matter of wages was settled in a more dramatic manner than is customary. One morning Maria caught sight of a farm wagon driving into the yard, and recognized her father. Even more astonishing, she saw that Wasyl sat beside him.

"That's father!" Maria cried, and rushed outside. The Frasers were pleased to find that the sturdy wood-chopper was Maria's father, and that the boy with him was the blond giant Margaret and her friends had brought to the house last summer. These discoveries made it easier for Wasyl and Maria to ignore one another. Besides, she was hungry for news from home.

That evening Mr. Fraser gave Maria twenty dollars for two months' wages. It was the first time she had ever had money she could call her own.

"Perhaps you want to go home now?" he asked, meaning that ten dollars a month was all he was prepared to pay.

"No go home," she answered. "Me here work . . . month . . . one, two, three, four, five, six, seven . . ." She counted on her fingers. "Dot money . . . me buy cow . . . you know."

"So you want to buy a cow for your father, is that it?" Mr. Fraser asked.

"Yes, yes, cow, big cow," she cried. "You give a lot of money, no sixteen . . . you twenty give," she said, trying to explain that that was all she had expected, the eight dollars a month that Poshtar had mentioned.

"I paid you for two months," said Fraser, lifting two fingers.

"You . . . two . . . months?" asked Maria, incredulous of such good fortune.

"Yes," he said, not quite certain she approved.

"Good!" she cried. "No tell . . . father . . . now," she added, making a sign that this should be kept from him so that she might surprise him later.

Workun was indeed surprised when Maria spent sixteen dollars on essential purchases which she piled on his wagon. It left him spellbound, but happy with thoughts of the future.



Maria and Katerina saw little of each other, largely because of the distance between them. Katerina worked for a dairyman on the outskirts of the town. The work was hard, for there were eleven people in the household and she was expected to do most of the cooking and help with the outside chores besides. As for the *hospodari*, Mr. and Mrs. Griffin, they were not the sociable type. Except at mealtimes Mr. Griffin was seldom in the house during the day. He was too busy directing the farm labours and delivering milk. His wife was a stooped, restless woman whose incessant toil had soured her disposition so that she was prone to nagging. In reality she was a good-hearted person, but very strict with the hired help. She worked hard herself and expected everyone else to do the same.

Katerina did not mind working from dawn to dark, which she realized was inevitable in such a big household, but she was lonely and depressed with no one to talk to in a language she fully understood.

Katerina did not know that Maria had a permanent job with the Frasers, and although Maria knew that her friend was working on a farm near the town she was too busy proving her ability to the Frasers to go in search of Katerina.

Some weeks later, however, Maria surprised her friend by a sudden appearance. Katerina was drawing water from the well and could hardly believe her eyes or ears when Maria hurried towards her—a very happy Maria, dressed in clothes which to Katerina seemed the height of elegance. Whether it was this transformation or the effect of seeing a friend who spoke her native tongue, it was hard to say, but Katerina broke into tears.

“Why, Katerina! Whatever is the matter?” Maria gasped as she hugged the weeping girl.

“Oh, nothing! I was so glad to see you,” whispered Katerina.

“Do you have to work all day Sunday too?” asked Maria, grieved to see Katerina so dispirited and so poorly dressed.

“Sunday or weekday, it’s all the same here,” said Katerina. “But it’s easy to see you found a better place. Tell me about it.”

While they were talking, one of the Griffin girls came out to invite Maria inside. She had seen her at the Frasers when she had helped her father deliver milk.

Maria was at a loss what to do; she had come to see Katerina, not her employers.

But Katerina said, "They're inviting you in—go ahead!" and went on drawing more water.

"I won't go without you," said Maria. "It's five weeks since I've had a chance to talk to anybody from home. I'll help you fill the trough, then we'll go to your room."

Maria didn't wait for Katerina's assent; she took hold of the rope and started hauling up the pail. But Mrs. Griffin came to the door and asked the girls to come in.

It seemed that Mrs. Griffin was curious about the Frasers, and Maria did her best to explain what nice people they were and what a fine house they kept.

It was obvious that everyone liked Maria, for whenever she was stuck for a word the children rushed to her assistance, and even Mrs. Griffin seemed to be enjoying the whole affair.

Katerina, completely ignored, was on the point of running away, when Maria excused herself and with a smile at Mrs. Griffin took Katerina's arm as much as to say, "Now we talk!"

Mrs. Griffin made no objection when the girls retired to Katerina's room, where they chatted uninterrupted until evening.

When they reappeared, Katerina was a changed girl. She had dressed with care and was resolved to learn English like Maria.

The result of all this was that Mrs. Griffin began to like Katerina and treat her as one of the family.

In the spring Maria worked like a beaver in the garden, planting vegetables and flowers. Mrs. Fraser wondered how a young girl could have the energy to add this hard work to the household chores, which had included spring cleaning, painting, polishing and waxing. It seemed wrong somehow, and gave Mrs. Fraser an uneasy conscience. But Maria laughed at protests and worked the harder, sometimes singing at the top of her voice.

Maria's industry did not go unrewarded. Mrs. Fraser bought her clothes of good quality, a pair of shoes, a fancy blouse and a hat. These gifts overwhelmed the girl, but when she saw herself in the mirror she said to her employer, "This cost lots of money. At home the family has very little, just enough to eat. I promised them a cow in the fall."

"Don't worry, you'll buy your cow," said Mrs. Fraser, patting her cheek.

"For the money you paid for these clothes I could have dressed

my whole family," said Maria. Nevertheless she was pleased by her image in the mirror. She did look nice!

"Don't worry, it'll be all right," said Mrs. Fraser as she shared Maria's joy.

In June Margaret and John returned from school for the summer holidays. Mrs. Fraser had mentioned "our Maria" in her letters, so they accepted Maria as a friend rather than as a servant. Margaret wouldn't let her take a room in the attic, but insisted they should share the same bedroom.

Both girls were good looking and of an amiable, cheerful disposition. When they were seen together it was hard to say which of the two was more attractive. After all, they were both transplanted immigrant stock, one from the Ukraine, the other from Scotland. And both thrived well in the new soil.

At first Maria was very shy in John's presence and inclined to run if he spoke to her. But as time went on she got used to his polite, attentive ways, and even started conversations herself. And when he was in a teasing mood it reminded her of home, and that put an end to shyness and fear. But when Mr. and Mrs. Fraser came back from their vacation they were not altogether pleased by the easy relationship which had sprung up between John and Maria.

"It doesn't look good to me," said Mrs. Fraser. "I like Maria. She is a good girl, but she's not for him. She's of a different race and a lower social level. A romantic attachment must not be encouraged."

"I have nothing against a fusion of races," said Mr. Fraser. "It's a good thing generally. If Maria had an education and could rid herself of peasant crudity, I should not ask for a better daughter-in-law. She is good looking, intelligent and energetic. What more could one ask?"

"I know all that. Outwardly she might easily acquire the manners of polite society, but you can't change her inner character. She would remain a peasant, and our way of life would be strange and difficult for her. Besides, she is not the docile type. She would be a hindrance not a help to our son. She wouldn't know how to behave in professional circles. She is outspoken and domineering by nature, and the niceties of life really mean nothing to her. Work is her whole existence."

"Do as you think best," said Mr. Fraser. "You'll have your

own way anyway.” He smiled, recalling that she herself came from a “lower stratum” and was by nature not unlike Maria. “Speak to John and explain the matter to him before it gets beyond control. He’s an intelligent young man.”

“Direct interference would be fatal,” Mrs. Fraser declared emphatically. “John almost came to blows with a friend who taunted him for running around with a ‘Galician.’ Margaret told me about it.”

“In that case I congratulate him. I should have done the same in his place. But if advice is useless, what do you propose doing?”

“I’ll send Maria home,” said Mrs. Fraser. “She can stay there until John goes back to school. She would like that. As a matter of fact, I may not need her any longer. I am quite capable of running the house now that I feel so well.”

“She’s always thinking about a cow,” said Fraser, recalling with amusement how often Maria had gone to admire his neighbours’ cattle as they grazed in the field.

“Well, then, buy her a cow and give her some money to buy a dress for her mother.”

The Frasers agreed that this course was both sensible and just. So Maria left the Frasers’ laden with gifts, her precious cow and a calf for good measure. The only one not entirely happy was John. He secretly gave Maria a necklace, which he clasped around her smooth, white neck and then hastily kissed her. Maria tore herself away, wept a tear or two, and then sensibly and happily started for home.

Maria’s welcome home was quite an occasion. The neighbours all flocked to the Workuns’ to examine the cow, the calf and the presents; and to wonder how a young girl could have earned so much money in so short a time. Her success aroused jealous feelings in the other girls, all of whom ached to emulate Maria’s success.

Still, they were all genuinely happy about her good fortune. Kalina alone was sceptical. “You’d better go to town and bring Olga home,” she told her husband. “I am convinced Maria has come home to catch Ivan. She is a sly minx and likely to get what she wants. The Poshtars are bubbling with praise of the ‘adventuress.’”

Pavlo Dub might have ignored his wife's demands had not Maria told him how miserable Olga was in her situation. She had found a job washing dishes in a restaurant. The work was not hard, but the monotony was depressing and her hands had begun to crack and peel and caused considerable pain. Then, too, she had no gift for friendship. The other help ignored her. She was so unhappy that even the prospect of marrying Ivan seemed bright in comparison with toiling in a hot kitchen like a slave, despised and rejected by everyone.

Pavlo brought her back home and left her in the care of her mother. Kalina lost no time in bringing about the wedding. Olga and Ivan were hastily married by a strange cleric in a mission somewhere beyond the river. Pavlo and Kalina did the best they could to make the wedding a joyous occasion in accordance to Old World custom, but the atmosphere was charged with gloom. Even Teklia's gay songs had little effect. The women sat around with pity in their eyes for the apprehensive bride and dislike for the callous, indifferent groom. The simple women concluded, quite rightly, that this was no marriage of the heart but a sentence of life imprisonment.

Maria, without realizing that her arrival had hastened this unhappy event, remained at home for a couple of months, helping her mother make hay, clear the land and cultivate the garden, before returning to town to earn the money for another cow. And this time her sister Elizaveta and Paraska Pidhirny went with her.

**16** Meanwhile the four companions had returned to town and found work cutting wood. When these jobs were finished they met a man who offered them work on the railroad. This man, who spoke several languages and might have explained what they must face, merely said: "You'll get a dollar a day and free transportation to the place of employment."

It was midnight and raining when they arrived at their destination. What were they to do? No one knew. It was a dark moonless night, and it was difficult to see anything clearly. The train pulled out and they were left alone. They saw no one moving about nor any light to guide them.

"Well, this is our dollar a day!" said Wakar, sarcastically. "I was afraid something like this would happen."

"Oh, dry up!" scolded Workun. He was angry at his neighbour for making matters worse by grumbling.

They stood there in bleak silence for a few moments, wondering what to do or where to turn. Then, "I see the outline of something over there," said Workun. "Let's go. We have to try something." It had begun to rain, and they would soon be wet through.

The "outline" turned out to be a typical water-tank station which served as a waiting-room for occasional passengers and more often as shelter for the section gangs as they waited for a train to be flagged to a stop. It was not an inviting place, since all it contained was a bench to accommodate three people, but the men were glad to find any shelter from the steady downpour.

At dawn Workun rose and went outside. All around him was a wide expanse of level prairie, underneath his feet a platform, and running parallel with that the railway track. Further down

the platform there was the usual cattle-yard, and not far away a red-painted house which, in all this solitude, intrigued him. "Someone must live in that place," he said to himself as he made his way there.

As he approached the place he was greeted from an open window. So the place was inhabited after all! He went back to tell his friends about it. Then they all went to the house and waited for someone to make an appearance.

Finally, after a long wait, a man came out with a dinner pail in his hand. He was joined by two others, who had just emerged from an adjacent boxcar which had been converted into a barrack.

Workun handed the man whom he rightly thought to be the boss his yellow piece of paper, and the others followed suit. The foreman stuffed the pieces of paper in his pocket, unlocked a shed and pulled a handcar onto the tracks. Then he ordered the newcomers to hop on the car, and soon they were pumping it away from the station.

In this manner the four friends commenced their new job. They were satisfied with the work, but since they had forgotten to bring any food they went hungry the whole day.

"We have earned our dollar today," Workun said cheerfully when they returned to the station.

"Yes, but my eyes almost bulged from their sockets carrying that damned jack around and hoisting those heavy rails," complained Wakar.

"You'll get used to it. A dollar a day amounts to five crowns. That's a lot of money. Thirty dollars for one month, sixty dollars for two months, ninety dollars for three months, one hundred and twenty dollars for four months . . ."

"I'm as hungry as a wolf just the same. A hundred dollars four months from now doesn't fill my stomach tonight."

While they were eating their bread, the foreman of the gang told them to pack up and follow him. He led them to the boxcar. It was divided into two parts; one part was for the new labourers. They cleaned the place as best they could, then lay down to sleep, Workun with Wakar in the lower bunk and Solowy with Wasyl in the upper.

The extra-gang boss was not a bad fellow. He got angry at them once in a while because they couldn't speak English; but

they more than made up for that deficiency by the quality and quantity of their work. Wakar was the only one that lagged; but since the others made up for him the foreman let him stay.

Every week they purchased their food in a neighbouring town. Workun acted as cook, baking bread and making *pirohi* with potatoes. Meat was a problem in hot weather, but an occasional slice of bacon to vary the diet of bread and potatoes settled the food question.

They stayed with the job until November, then set out on foot to save expenses. No one had told them they were entitled to a return fare on the railway. They "hoofed it" for about a hundred miles, and then the journey began to tell on them. They tried walking barefoot, a risky mode of travel over hot ties and sharp gravel. When this became intolerable, they decided to finish the rest of the journey by train.

When Workun recalled this job and the subsequent trip home—the heat, the hard work, the hunger—he always contended that he had experienced more satisfaction from the trials and challenge of that experience than from any subsequent hardship, a greater sense of achievement than when he loaded boxcars with thousands of bushels of his own wheat. He recalled with pride the November day when he arrived home with a chopper, a harrow, two breeding sows and two pigs for slaughter.

He also recalled how Wakar had finally reversed his attitude to life and had begun to make plans on his own, sensible plans for a better future for himself and his family.

He remembered this was the time that Wasyl Dub renounced all thoughts of returning to the Old Country, and instead found a job in Fraser's lumber yard.

He remembered too how his brother Peter and the Pidhirnys had reproved him for enticing them to Canada, saying, "You fooled us in your letter, Hrehory, when you lured us to this jungle, but . . ." They didn't finish what they wanted to say for Workun had shown them that during the past year and a half he had added to his possessions five head of cattle and four pigs, and that Helena had set up three large stacks of wheat. He had acquired so much wealth in such a short time that he was astonished at himself.

He recalled how much grain he had threshed by flail, and how



he and Peter had gazed in wonder at the great pile of golden wheat and white oats in the granary.

He recalled that the following winter was not nearly so bitter as the one before, although the youngster Kornylo still told tall tales about how he would spit and his saliva would freeze in mid-air and hang down from his chin in icicles.

And he remembered how the Old Country slowly faded from his memory and his thoughts, and how his plans for the future in Canada had gradually taken their place in his heart.



## ***Book Two***



**L**A wagon loaded with provisions was making its way along the old Indian Trail described in the first part of this story. It was in the spring of the fourth year after Hrehory Workun, Pavlo Dub, Toma Wakar and Stepan Solowy came to Canada and settled near Diordy Poshtar's farm. Sitting in the front of the wagon, on a litter of hay, were two persons. One of them was dressed in a grey coat made of the skin of coyotes and a cap of muskrat skins. This was Diordy Poshtar, now well known to all the inhabitants along the road. This time, however, there were no delaying stops for talk with this or that farmer; Diordy just drove along as fast as he could make his team of horses trot.

On this trip he was in a hurry to get back to the settlement. He had even cut short his visit in town so as to get home earlier. Sitting next to him was a priest, whose name was Father Dimitri. He had come to Canada on the suggestion of the Old Country Consistory to visit the small Ukrainian communities. Poshtar had run across him by mere chance at the post office, where the priest had been making inquiries about Stepan Solowy, secretary of the St. Dimitri Parish.

"You can come along with me, Father," said Poshtar. "Solowy is a neighbour of mine. I'll pick you up tomorrow morning." And he went off on his own business.

Poshtar hurried with his purchases and next day, at the designated time, the two men started on the long journey to the settlement.

The first day had been pleasant enough. Improvements had been made on part of the road and bridges had been constructed over the creeks; and Father Dimitri had enjoyed his trip so far. Camping out for the night by a river and sleeping on a bed of hay under the wagon had their romantic aspects, recalling as they did

the *chumaks* or old Ukrainian carters who used to drive down to the Black Sea to bring back salt and other goods from the Crimea.

But the rigours of the next day's journey soon dispelled any nostalgic thoughts of *chumak* days.

"Is it still very far to your settlement?" the worthy Father kept asking as the team threshed through pool after pool, threatening to upset the wagon and its passengers into the water.

But all this was a matter of course to Poshtar, who by now had become inured to the hardships of travel. Looking back at the sun, which was about to sink below the horizon, he said, "If we're lucky enough not to upset this wagon two or three times, we'll probably reach home by midnight."

"May God forbid!" answered Father Dimitri. "I'm almost paralyzed from sitting here in this huddled position as it is; and if this wagon turns over, I'll never reach your settlement alive."

"Oh, you'll get over it. You just feel like that because this happens to be your first trip."

"Why did our people have to wander so far away from the civilized world and settle in such a jungle?" asked Father Dimitri in evident disgust. "Look at all the land we passed as we left town. Why couldn't they have settled nearer to that town?"

"Ha!" mumbled Poshtar, not knowing what to say. "Our people wanted to live together as a group. They had to take whatever land was available and there was no homestead land near town."

"So they settled in jungles and reverted to the primitive," said the Father. "Why don't they go into the trades and industries in the cities, instead of hiding in the forests like wild animals?"

"Our peasants are about as adaptable to town life and to industrial pursuits as a Jew is to a flail," laughed Poshtar.

"That's a prejudiced point of view with no basis in fact," replied Father Dimitri angrily. "It comes from their inferiority complex because they've never taken a chance in any other walk of life but farming. The only way to learn is by doing. But what have our peasants done but hide their talents in the woods, in the soil, letting other nationalities take over our cities, our trade, our industry, forcing the rest of us into financial bondage to them, to become nothing but work animals for their exploitation? And when they've sucked the last bit of gain out of us, what then do we do? Emigrate. To what? The same old thing again."

“Well, that happens to be our nature,” said Poshtar. “What are you going to do about it when the Jews are so peculiarly adapted to town life and to trade? Take me, for instance. They call me a Jew now because I’ve started up a store for their convenience. But let that ride for a while. What brings you into these parts?”

“I’ve already told you about the letter we received from Stepan asking us to send you a priest. It was a difficult matter because our Consistory is without funds; and there are many such settlements like yours in Western Canada that suffer without benefit of clergy. They wrote me in America to pay you this visit.”

“In that case you’re a brave man, Father,” said Poshtar with a smile. “For to tell the truth I thought you were a refugee from justice. At first I was a bit leery about taking you along. You know the old saying: ‘On a long journey it’s a great risk to take a Jew or a priest with you.’”

“How do you make that out?” asked Father Dimitri curiously.

“Because there are very few righteous men among the priests and still fewer among the Jews,” replied Poshtar. “Take either of them along with you and you’re bound to run into some kind of trouble, such as upsetting and smashing your wagon, wounding your horses and ripping your harness.”

“Pure superstition!” replied Father Dimitri. “We’ve been riding for two days and nothing has happened.” He smiled.

“We’ll see what happens from now on,” said Poshtar shortly. “And now hold on tight,” he commanded, reining in his horses as he drove down a steep hill onto a level tract of land. “If we get by those sloughs over yonder without a mishap and reach the next hill, we’ll conduct an evening service on top of it.”

Father Dimitri wanted to jump off the wagon and circle the pools; but before he could tell Poshtar to stop the team, the wagon had already mired down in the first pool. The horses got set, gave a lurch forward and pulled the wagon out of the mud, only to get stuck in another pool further on. The horses pulled them out successfully, and out of a third one, too. Father Dimitri was ready to cross himself and thank the Lord for preserving him. But at that moment two wild deer leaped suddenly out of the woods. The frightened horses veered sideways, pulling the front wheel up on a stump and upsetting the wagon into the mire.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” swore Poshtar as he lay in the mud holding on to the reins.

But Poshtar's oath did not appease the horses. They struggled fiercely in the water, then leaped violently to one side, snapping the wagon tongue.

"What'll we do now?" asked Father Dimitri as he sat in the mud alongside Poshtar. Neither one of them showed any urgent desire to get up from their soft seats.

"We'll spend the night right here," said Poshtar as he glanced at Father Dimitri. "Your own mother wouldn't recognize you now. A few more spills like this and they'll make a Metropolitan out of you."

"All you think of is joking," growled Father Dimitri as he rose to his feet. "The sun has already set and here we are still . . ."

"Measuring the mud with our noses," said Poshtar, ending the priest's sentence.

"Thanks for the undeserved praise," replied Father Dimitri. "Next time you can take as your passengers only . . ."

"Priests and Jews," added Poshtar with a smile. "But all joking aside, you'll have something to talk about when you get back to the Old Country."

"I'll give a complete account of the visit to the newspapers," retorted Father Dimitri.

Father Dimitri was one of those Ukrainian priests who had originally come to this continent to serve the more numerous parishes in the United States. It was easier to organize church committees there, since the immigrants had settled in the manufacturing and coal-mining towns where workers had more security and were therefore able to support a priest and a church.

But in Canada there was no such concentrated urban settlement. There, the Ukrainian immigrants had settled without leadership, plan or aid, on free homestead land a thousand miles wide through which a railroad was being built from Winnipeg through Dauphin, Canora and North Battleford to Edmonton. Regardless of the distance from this railroad or from other well-established settlements, people from the same village or districts in the Old Country would settle in small communities and throw down their roots in the new land. Naturally the first years of pioneer life were extremely difficult ones, especially for the Ukrainian immigrants who came out with little more than a homestead filing-fee. The percentage of settlers able to commence farming without



supplementing their labours by outside work was negligible. Periodic absences of the men, combined with the general poverty of the settlement, were not conducive to the establishment of organized religious or cultural life. Nevertheless, the settlers needed spiritual leadership, and yearned for the day when that necessity would be fulfilled. Thus when the news of the arrival of the first priest in the community was spread around, Poshtar's home was filled with people eager to celebrate the blessed event.

"Thank God that you've come at last," said Workun humbly as he kissed Father Dimitri's hand. "According to my calculation there must be at least a dozen unbaptized children around here."

"And how do you know so much about newly-born children?" asked Father Dimitri mischievously.

"It's my wife, Helena, who knows all about them, not I," explained Workun a little shamefacedly. "My wife drifted into the role of midwife in this community and so she is in a position to know all about newly-born children."

"She must have carved each birth on a stick," laughed Toma from his corner.

"And are those whose names she carved still alive?" asked the priest with a smile.

"I think two or three of them died, but I'm not quite sure. I counted seven graves in the cemetery as I came here. That isn't so much for the three years we've been here. These graves should be blessed, for our wives are afraid to go out at night, and even in the daytime they won't go near the cemetery."

"We'll do this on Sunday," promised Father Dimitri. "Did the children die unbaptized?" he asked in wonder.

"And who was to baptize them?" replied Workun. "It's true that Helena sprinkled them with holy water when they were born, but that is not the same as if it had been done by a priest. That was just to scare the evil spirit away. But she hasn't any holy water left. She brought a small bottle of it with her from the Old Country."

"What do you do about marriages?" asked the priest.

"Let Diordy tell you about that," said Workun.

"In case of need, we had to pick up the first man with a turned-up collar we came across," said Poshtar. "There are a few like that in town and also along the river banks, who'll perform all these services when asked to do so."

"Our trouble with them, however, is that we can't communicate with them in the English language," said Pavlo Dub as he recalled how his daughter Olga and Ivan Poshtar were married. "And their ceremony is short, not like ours: no oath, no wreaths or other incidentals of the ceremony."

"Too bad we didn't know you were coming, or we'd have paired off all those of marriageable age ahead of your visit," said Workun. "We'd have married them and then had peace for several years."

As he asked questions, Father Dimitri made notes in his little book. He was quick to observe that unless the Consistory did something soon about the matter, it would not be long before the community would be divided into many small sects because of the lack of spiritual guidance from a resident clergyman.

"How many families are there in this locality?" asked Father Dimitri.

"The Lord only knows," answered Workun, scratching his head. "Ask Diordy; he should know with all the transporting he does around here."

"More than twenty," answered Diordy. "I didn't bring them all here; and of those that I did I haven't kept a written record."

The men then began to calculate among themselves, and they decided there were at least thirty thereabouts.

"Well, let them all know we're holding service on Sunday," said Father Dimitri.

"Don't worry about that, Father," said Workun. "Even the dead will know about it before Sunday. But where will the service be held?"

"In the biggest house you have around here; and if that's not big enough, we'll carry on the service outside." Father Dimitri cast his eye around Poshtar's house. "This one's too small," he said.

"I think your house, Hrehory, will be just right," interjected Pavlo Dub, turning to Workun. "Your house is not only the largest, but it's right in the middle of our district."

"All right with me; but I don't want anyone to complain that my house was picked and not someone else's," replied Workun.

"That's right; there are some people in this community who won't come to church if the service is not held in their home," Wakar observed, having Kalina in mind.

Solowy nudged Toma in the ribs to make him keep quiet, since he did not think it wise to disclose any personal matters before the priest. But Father Dimitri merely waved his hand casually.

"Is there any one here who can help in the service?" he asked.

"Yes, Solowy here knows all the services by heart," said Workun. "I've always maintained that the only thing needed to make a priest out of him is the official ordination. He's a good carpenter and a good farmer as well. His wife Teklia could serve as choir-master, for she's got the voice and the memory."

"That pleases me very much," said Father Dimitri as he glanced over at the blushing Solowy, who was somewhat upset by Workun's exaggeration. "I'll give you my breviary, Mr. Solowy," said the priest. "Read it through, especially tomorrow morning's matins, the Liturgy, the vespers, the requiem, the blessing of the water and the cemetery." He pulled a thick book out of his valise.

They kept Father Dimitri up late, asking all kinds of questions, seeking advice on many things, inquiring about the Old Country, about America, and about other communities in Canada that he had visited. It was as if they were trying to squeeze every bit of information out of him in one night, and his answers were accepted as the whole truth.

On Sunday, from early dawn, Workun's yard was crowded with people.

"What a beautiful day! And how it suits the occasion!" said one of the women sitting on the *prishpa*.

"Now, if we only had a large bell and three small ones, that would just be perfect on this day of peace and grandeur," said another, shaking her head sorrowfully.

"You remember how the big bell used to resound with a 'bam-bam-bam! bam-bim-bam! bam-bim-bem!'" said young Kornyllo, who sat near the threshold with some other little boys listening to the chatter of the older women. He went through the motions of ringing a bell, followed by the other youngsters in unison.

This was the kind of congregation that met Father Dimitri as he got out of Poshtar's wagon. They made a path for him, but at the same time leaned over to kiss his hand. The women tried to get their children out of the way by sending them on ahead, but this merely blocked the passage to the house for the priest.

But Father Dimitri was not the kind to tolerate this hand kissing, this gesture of humility that peasant folk made before officialdom. He tried his best to get his hand away from the pressing throng, and when this failed he fairly flew toward the house, leaving the people gaping and amazed.

But here another surprise awaited him. Pavlo Dub stood in the doorway with the traditional two loaves of bread and a pinch of salt, and before he realized what was going to happen, Father Dimitri was greeted like a bishop.

"In the name of this community I greet you, dear Father, according to the old custom, with bread and salt. I welcome you," he said, with the tears rolling down his cheeks, "and I am very glad that you have taken the opportunity to visit us in these jungles. We left the Old Country and came here to live . . . to live . . . to live . . ."

Pavlo ended his speech with the word "live" sticking in his throat, so deeply was he moved by the occasion. Even Father Dimitri found it hard to control himself, as the tears welled up in his eyes. He hurriedly kissed the loaves of bread, squeezed past Pavlo into the house to hide his feelings, and prepared himself to accept the confessions of the people.

It is hard to describe the mood of these people as they prayed at Workun's place on this unique occasion. Their faces expressed gladness or sorrow, peace or contentment, pride or humility. But everything indicated a God-fearing congregation with no hint of disbelief in these rites and ceremonies. They were all hungry for this kind of ministration, like the wayfarer who, after weary miles, halts to refresh himself with a drink of clear, cold water. And when Father Dimitri started to swing his censer toward them and offer up silent prayers, the atmosphere seemed charged with some powerful force.

Its power was manifest when the priest pronounced the opening words of the Liturgy: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The choir-master, Stepan Solowy, rigid under the pressure of the solemn occasion, almost choked on the answering word, "Amen!" His wife Teklia however came to the rescue with her clear soprano, and she was joined by the full voices of the congregation. But when Father

Dimitri began to chant "Christ is risen!", the voices of the choir died away, and they listened in awe to the heaven-inspired message.

Then the tears began to flow, the soft, warm tears of the pious. All joined in singing the Easter song, and sang as if they would never cease.

Father Dimitri's sermon was short. He had intended to preach a long one, but as he went on there was so much shedding of tears that he decided to bring it to a close. He merely read a passage from the Gospel and explained its meaning.

The rest of the service proceeded smoothly. Before receiving the Holy Communion, the people renewed friendships, kissing each other warmly. After the service dinner was served outside on the grass. Then they all went to the cemetery, where Father Dimitri offered up a prayer for the dead, sealing the graves and blessing the new church site. At vespers he delivered a long sermon.

Thus ended this great and memorable day in the life of the community.

But Father Dimitri did not leave them until four days later. In the meantime he held services for the dead, taught the youngsters their catechism, and talked seriously with the settlers. And these talks were badly needed. He knew something of the moral decline that could follow such migrations, the disruptions they caused, the religious chaos.

Father Dimitri's talks did not fall on barren ground. Soon after he left, the community built a church, where the members gathered every Sunday to hear matins by Solowy. Sometimes, during the week, they met at Workun's or at Solowy's, where the latter would read the newspapers and periodicals that Father Dimitri sent them from time to time.

**2** Not all the people of the St. Dimitri parish were happy about the first mass in the district. In that sparsely-settled community it was immediately noticeable that Anna Poshtar, her daughter Katerina, Maria and Elizaveta Workun, Wasyl Dub, Ivan and Olga Poshtar were not present. Everybody knew why the first five couldn't come: Anna was about to have another child and the others were working in town. But as for Ivan and Olga, no one seemed to know, and when Kalina was asked about it she said nothing. It would have been humiliating to admit that the marriage she had worked so hard to bring about was a failure.

Ivan Poshtar's disposition was sadistic, and marriage had not brought about any noticeable improvement. In fact, it worsened when he found that Kalina's promises of cattle and money as Olga's dowry were not forthcoming and that he was expected to remain on his father's farm as before, the only change being the presence of a wife whom he hated enough to beat and hated the more when she offered no resistance.

Weeks and months went by and no one mentioned Olga's unpaid dowry. Ivan nagged Olga incessantly about it, while Anna, who was sorry for the girl, tried to appease him. Pavlo was willing to hand over a cow at any time, but Kalina wanted to wait until they were able to fulfil the whole promise at one time. She counted upon the sale of their land in the Old Country. "As soon as we get the money, we'll put on a feast, invite all the neighbours and hand over the two hundred dollars before all the people," she promised.

But Pavlo was not in a hurry to sell his land. He purposely set the price so high as to discourage any buyers. Olga was married

for better or worse, and Pavlo surmised that pouring more money into the already overflowing Poshtar barrel would not help her.

In the meantime an event occurred which was to have disastrous results. A week before St. Yuri's Day Anna gave birth to a second son. This changed Ivan's prospects drastically; he was no longer sole heir. So embittered did his relations with his parents become that he refused to have his meals in the house; Olga had to serve him in the granary. At first Anna attributed his attitude to shyness, and Diordy was far too busy to give it any consideration.

Ivan now began to look after himself in earnest. He worked all day sowing the field and at night he stole off to his own farm with wagon loads of grain and vegetables. In the fourth week following the birth of Peter, he was ready to move into his own quarters, taking his reluctant wife with him. Anna had always tried to shield Olga against Ivan's irritability; now the girl was deprived of her mother-in-law's kindness and companionship.

"I--van!" yelled old man Poshtar as was his custom when he returned from town. He was astonished when Sophia Wakar came out of the house and told him that Ivan was not home.

"Where is he then?" he asked angrily as he started unloading the wagon.

Sophia wisely left the explanation to Anna. "He just left, that's all," she said. "If it had not been for Sophia Wakar we might have starved to death. Ill as I am I could never have managed to care for the child, let alone anything else."

Diordy was too angry to ask further questions at the moment. Later, when he had washed and eaten supper, he returned to the subject.

"I haven't had a decent word from him since the baby was born," mumbled Anna through her tears. "He never even came into the house."

"The son of a bitch!" growled Diordy, bolting a last bit of cheese and pushing up from the table in angry haste.

"Where are you going?" Anna asked as he headed for the door. She was terrified at the thought of a violent clash between father and son.

But Diordy didn't answer. He left the house on a tour of inspection, looking over the yard, examining the granary, the

stable, the pig sty and the corral; and noting what was missing, he spat in disgust and returned to the house.

To Anna's anxious look of inquiry he snapped, "He has almost stripped us of everything! The wagon, plough, harrow and mower are gone; so are the oxen, two cows, some calves, as well as the old sow with her litter. The granary has been almost cleaned out! We're lucky he didn't cut the house in two and take one-half with him. But I'll bring him to account, I promise you."

Early next morning Diordy started for his son's place. He carried a stout willow cane with which he intended to drive sense into Ivan's mulish head. But as he walked along, his ire cooled down, merely expressing itself in vicious slashes at the bushes which stood in his way. It rose again to fever heat when he came to the boundary line separating his farm from that of his son. Ivan had constructed a fence, but had left no gate at the point where the road entered his farm. "Why, he's fenced me off like a bitter enemy, the damned rogue!" swore Poshtar with rising vehemence.

He squirmed through the fence and made for Ivan's house. He recognized the house with its moss-covered roof because he had helped Ivan build it; but the stable with its reed roof and the chicken coop near by were a revelation to him. It showed how long and how surreptitiously Ivan had been planning this move. Then, as Diordy got nearer to the buildings, he saw the wagon, the harrow and the pigs squealed their recognition of the old master. Aside from that he saw nothing nor heard anything.

As he approached the silent house he felt apprehensive, not quite sure what attitude he should adopt with his rebellious son. Still undecided, he tried the door, but it was locked. He looked through the window but couldn't see anybody inside. He was relieved and at the same time angry.

He went to the stable, opened the door, and looked about him cautiously. There stood his cows, his calf and a very frightened Olga with a milk pail in her hand.

"Where's Ivan?" yelled Poshtar, straddling the doorway so as not to let anyone out.

"He's ploughing some new land," whispered Olga in fright, looking about for a way of escape.

"You needn't be afraid of me; I won't hurt you," said Diordy less harshly. "Where is he ploughing?"



"Over beyond the hay-land," she answered, nodding towards the northwest.

"Now, my girl, get the cow and those pigs out of this stable and herd them back home," ordered Poshtar. "Mother's hardly alive, yet you two walked out on her and turned thieves besides."

"Don't blame me. It was Ivan . . ."

"I know you were not to blame," muttered Diordy. "The truth is, Anna and you have spoiled him completely. You are both afraid of him, and so let him do whatever pops into his head. But I'll teach him a lesson he will remember to his dying day."

With this threat he dashed off into the forest.

Olga carried the milk into the house and set it down on the floor. She was about to follow Diordy, when she heard furious yelling and swearing and the sound of a maddened creature threshing about in the bush. Finally Poshtar emerged as from battle, his shirt torn and dirty, his head bare and his hair almost standing on end. He was fairly frothing at the mouth.

"I'll send that son of mine to jail for the rest of his life," he shouted, without so much as glancing at Olga, who just stood there dumbly watching him disappear from sight.

"Did you hear what happened?" asked Kalina as she came running up to where Pavlo and his son Osyp were clearing a piece of land. "The world is turning upside down."

"Well, what happened to make it do that?" asked Pavlo, blinking, prepared for the deluge.

"Stop blinking like a child and do something about it if you don't want the whole community to laugh at us and our children."

"Then stop your damned nonsense and come to the point! What has happened to bring on this sudden concern? Is it for our child, or is it Ivan your heart bleeds for?"

"It is indeed," she snapped. "Old man Poshtar is going to town tomorrow to have Ivan arrested."

Then in a spate of words Kalina reported what Sophia had told her, that Ivan had not only refused to return the cattle and gear he had stolen from his father, but had beaten him as well.

"You sure picked yourself a fine son-in-law," Pavlo said coldly. "I warned you that nothing good would come out of such a miserable union."

"Nothing will if you don't do something about it," she retorted.

“Why don’t you try to make peace between them, pointing out the fault on both sides. Ivan only took what belongs to him. It was he, not Diordy, who built up the farm. If you ask me, Anna needed another baby as much as I need a wreath on my head!”

Pavlo doubted that a stubborn man like Diordy would listen to anyone’s counsel. Nor could he blame him. If sons got away with beating their fathers, what would happen to parental authority? Nevertheless he thought he would give it a try.

“You go to Ivan’s place,” he told Kalina, “and try to get him to ask Diordy’s forgiveness. Explain to him that it’s a sin for a son to lay his hands on his father. You and he live on better terms, and he’ll listen to you sooner than he will to me. In the meantime I’ll talk to Diordy and see what I can do to stop him from taking any drastic action.”

“Ah, I’m glad you see I was right,” said Kalina happily. “Just let your work stand and go and see Poshtar. Be diplomatic with him; don’t rub him the wrong way,” she advised.

She herself set out on the path that led to Ivan’s place.

No power of divination was needed to interpret the result of Kalina’s conference with Ivan. Anyone watching her fleeing from that mission, glancing back as if she were pursued by a bear and yelling as if the world indeed were being turned upside down, would have seen at once that Kalina’s persuasive ability had met with drastic defeat.

“Your ‘diplomacy’ must have caught on a snag somewhere,” commented Pavlo in bitter jest, eyeing his wife with thinly veiled disdain.

“You’re to blame!” she cried. “You should have gone to talk to that bandit instead of sending a poor weak woman like me. I found both the children ploughing new land. They were at the far end of the field, so I waited for them to come nearer. But they were in no hurry, so I dragged myself down to their part of the field.

“I greeted them with the usual ‘God be with you!’ But Ivan just bared his teeth and asked, ‘What the hell do you want here?’ It took me some time to get over the shock, but I was determined to state the case clearly without fear or favour. Do you suppose he would listen? Not he! He yelled at Olga to hurry the oxen and acted as if I didn’t exist at all. But I wasn’t going to give up

so easily. I followed them along the furrow, explaining what a sin it was to strike one's father, and that it was the law of God for a son to obey his father. Up to that point Ivan didn't say much, only gave a snarl or two; but when I said how shameful it had been to leave his mother alone with an infant, he turned on me like an angry bear. 'What in hell are you following me for?' he yelled. 'I could hang you all on the same branch. When I married this sour-puss here you promised me oxen, cows and money. And that old scoundrel my father promised me all his property. So what have I been working for? A squalling brat who makes a fool of my old mother and this coward you gave me to wife? Now get the hell out of here before I kill you.' "

Kalina almost choked on her next words. "I had cause to be frightened. Hurling insults was not enough for Ivan. He began pelting me with sticks, like a madman. I was lucky to get away alive."

For once Pavlo was sorry for his wife. "Now that he is on his own, maybe Ivan will realize the importance of good neighbours and will come to his senses," he said.

"If God wills it," Kalina said, obviously grateful for a crumb of hope. "If only Poshtar will have the sense not to drag the affair to court. How did you get along with him?"

"He just kept quiet and said nothing," answered Pavlo. "But I'm sure he'll never forgive Ivan for his contemptible behaviour. If it weren't for Olga, I'd never visit them again. But for her sake, we'll have to overlook a lot of things."

**3** Gossip is no respecter of persons. The fight between father and son was soon a household topic everywhere.

Teklia added further details when she visited Helena. "Pavlo can take care of himself," she said. "It's Olga I am worried about. Kalina Dub went to the house the other night and swears he beats her. She also learned that Ivan plans to drive Wasyl from his homestead."

"Drive him off? How?" asked Helena.

"He intends to send a report to the inspector that Wasyl is not making the required improvements. He has not put up a building or done any ploughing for two years. That could lose him the land."

"That would be a dirty trick on Ivan's part," said Helena as she involuntarily looked in the direction of Wasyl's farm. "What did Wasyl ever do to rouse his animosity?"

"Ivan would drown Wasyl in a spoonful of water if he could, because of Maria."

"Why because of Maria? Ivan's married now."

"He's married; but everywhere he goes he talks about her."

"He was never fated to marry Maria," said Helena as she wiped her perspiring face. "It is predestined who is to marry whom. Therefore I do not interfere with the fate of my girls."

"Because you know that Wasyl is fated to marry Maria?"

"The Lord alone knows about that," replied Helena. "Maria does as she likes in town. Who can tell what her fate will be?"

"I can say this much. If Maria can't make up her mind about Wasyl, she might at least warn him about the farm. It's good land and some other girl might be happy to share it with him."

"Oh, you gabber," scolded Helena in pretended anger. "As if I did not know that you write to Maria, doubtless trying to get

her to set a date for the wedding. To be frank, I am beginning to worry about it. When a girl gets beyond the flowering stage, she might be regarded as an old maid. If I knew how to write I'd remind her of it. Workun doesn't give it a thought. He is perfectly content to have Maria earning money for us. Now, tell me what does she say in her letters?"

"She doesn't write anything of a secret nature," Teklia said. "Wasył comes to visit her at the Frasers'. But she has other boy friends. She also mentioned a fellow called Bill who seems interested in Elizaveta. He is a rancher and has a large herd of cattle and horses. . . ."

"What's that?" interrupted Helena. "What kind of person is this Bill?"

"How should I know? Some Englishman, I guess."

"Oh, so we have to have that too!" cried Helena in alarm. "An Englishman and doubtless a heretic. My dear Teklia, tell her to be sensible and not bring home someone I won't be able to understand. But there it is, the girls tell me nothing. I shall have to take a trip to town and find out the truth for myself. Please come back on Sunday and we can decide what to do. I can see that neither sleep nor peace of mind will be my portion for a long time to come."

And so it turned out: Helena really could not sleep at nights. The troubles of the Dub family bothered her as well as the fate of her daughters. It really seemed that everything was topsy-turvy in Canada. Yet Workun slept soundly, completely oblivious of her forebodings. It wasn't until long past sunrise that her husband showed signs of waking.

"You've been snoring hard enough to rattle the window-panes," she greeted him. "Apparently you don't give a thought to the children or the disaster which may destroy Wasył's future. You have always pretended to like him, but now it means nothing to you if he loses his land."

"Well, what should I do?" asked Workun peevishly.

"Figure something out; think of something to say."

"Well, I'm thinking," he said.

"What are you thinking?" she asked.

"I think that if you stopped trying to make a mountain out of a molehill you'd be able to sleep and not disturb anyone else. But

you can't sleep and won't let anyone else sleep. Whatever is going to happen will happen, no matter how you try to stop it. I've heard you say this yourself many times."

"But you're a man and a father and should have better judgment," she said.

"Such as what—chase after female fates?"

"Go to town. Have a serious talk with the girls. Warn them about their flirtations and persuade them to come home. I am beginning to feel the work hard and help would be welcome. Tell Wasyl about the danger of losing his farm, and that his father can't do much work without the oxen that Ivan took from him."

**4** While Maria was enjoying her work at the Frasers', her sister Elizaveta was finding it much harder at the Griffins'. She had replaced Katerina Poshtar, who had found another job in town. Elizaveta was less energetic and ambitious than Maria, but she was adaptable and quickly mastered the routine of the household, although she preferred outside chores. This was agreeable to Mrs. Griffin, who suspected that the boys were not too particular in their care of the chickens and pigs.

Elizaveta was glad to escape from the house. In short order she had the boys doing their full share of the work and, what was more important, doing it cheerfully. In consequence she began to like her job and the Griffins to like their new hired girl. But it is doubtful whether at this time Elizaveta could have dreamed what fate had in store for her.

Mrs. Griffin had a brother in his early thirties who was rumoured to be a wealthy rancher. When Bill came to town to dispose of his cattle, he rode a large, powerful horse called Jim. The horse looked gentle enough, but turned into a tornado if anyone but his master tried to ride him. Bill could do anything with him, even to leaving him untethered while he and the boys burned up the town.

Bill seldom visited his sister, Mrs. Griffin. Her place was too far from town and she kept harping on marriage. "You live like a hermit," she would declaim. "What good is the money you deposit in the bank unless you share it with someone else? You're not a young man any more. You'll die without having experienced the joys of family life." Bill would listen in amused silence, unimpressed by the marital bliss of the Griffins.

But Bill could not avoid occasional visits. There were too

many Griffins and one or another was sure to be in town. Then, too, he was fond of the younger children, who liked to hear his stories of hunting and Indian lore. What finally made Bill a frequent visitor was Elizaveta, and it was the horse, Jim, which brought about this sudden interest and change of heart.

One evening Jim was wandering about from trough to trough, licking up particles of grain here and there. It was then that Elizaveta first noticed the "piebald cayuse," as she called him. She ran into the stable, scooped up some oats in a small container, and went over to feed him. After she had done this several times, Jim condescended to allow her to pat him. He did not even prick up his ears when she put her foot in the stirrup and swung into the saddle.

"Well, what do you know about that!" exclaimed Griffin, catching sight of the performance from the back porch.

"For the love of God!" yelled Bill fearfully, jumping up from his chair. "He'll stamp her to death and chew her to pieces!"

But he made no attempt to stop the horse. There was no need to do so. Jim allowed Elizaveta to ride him, and she did so as if to the manner born. She drove him to the gate and back, then easily jumped from the saddle, slapped the horse on the rump and patted his sleek withers, completely unaware of the astonishment she had caused. She did not even notice that Bill was hurrying towards her until she heard him shout: "Have a care! He'll bite and trample you with his hooves."

"Oh, nonsense! He's a pet. He knows I'm not afraid of him," Elizaveta laughed. "See for yourself," and she thrust her shoulder under Jim's head, patting him fondly.

Bill was too astonished to speak, but not too dazed to notice that Elizaveta was a very pretty girl. And the longer he looked at her the more he liked what he saw. In fact, he came to the conclusion that this was the girl he had been waiting for, although he had not realized before the qualities he wanted in a wife.

Thereafter, Mr. Bill Pickle spent the weekends at the Griffins'. At first his sister ascribed this to a sudden desire for a closer family relationship. But when he brought a saddle horse for Elizaveta and took her riding out on the prairie, she decided it was time to tell him a few home truths.

"Looks as if you are falling in love with Elizaveta," she said one



afternoon, as she busied herself with the baking. "Or am I mistaken?"

"She is a nice girl," said Bill.

"And so different!" Mrs. Griffin shot her brother a mischievous look. "She is a nice girl, of course, industrious and intelligent; but . . ."

"But what?" asked Bill.

"Didn't you know she was a Galician?"

"What difference does that make?"

"Perhaps none. But these foreigners stick together like bees in a hive. Her sister Maria has worked for the Frasers a long time, but all her money goes into the family pot. And now that they speak a little English they drive a hard bargain. Elizaveta's father came here one day last fall, picked out one of our best cows and told us to charge it to Elizaveta."

"That's interesting," said Bill laconically.

"Very interesting," agreed Mrs. Griffin with a laugh. "You'd better watch out, or he'll take your mare and charge it to Elizaveta."

"We'll make an exchange," laughed Bill.

"For Elizaveta? I think he'll expect quite a bit more to boot."

"If he does, he'll get it."

"Have you gone mad? She's much younger than you are, uneducated, and a Galician."

"Well, Mrs. Fraser isn't ashamed of Maria's company."

"The Frasers are in business. They sell a lot of lumber to those people."

"I can only try my luck," said Bill.

"You haven't spoken to her yet?"

"No."

"Well then, don't; I'll do the talking for you and feel her out. I won't have you shamed, even if you deserve it."

One Sunday not long after this, Maria came to visit Elizaveta and was immediately struck by her sister's mysterious air.

"What has happened to you?" she asked when the girls were alone in Elizaveta's room.

"I'm ashamed to tell you. I've got a suitor now," she replied with a smile.

"What kind of a suitor?" asked Maria tartly. "Why, mother

will pull your hair out by the roots if she hears you are chasing after a man."

"I'm not chasing him; he's chasing me."

"Who is he?"

"The fellow who rides that piebald. You saw him last Sunday when we were both out riding."

"Well, what do you know! You don't mean that bow-legged fellow who shaves once a year?" said Maria with a teasing laugh.

"Maybe he doesn't shave, but he is rich. He has more cattle and horses than all the farmers around here put together and thousands of dollars in the bank."

"Where does this great lord live?" Maria wanted to know.

"About twenty miles from here. He has lots of farms."

"Has he mentioned marriage to you?"

"I told him I am too young to have given marriage a thought. I also said he would have to ride up to our place and ask mother about it. If she gave her permission it would be all right with me."

"What do you mean—all right? Do you love him?"

"I don't know. It was such a surprise to me I couldn't think. He said he'd go to our place the next time father comes to town."

"What a situation! You don't know whether you love him, but you're sending him home to ask for your hand. That doesn't make sense."

"Well, what should I do?" cried Elizaveta, on a sudden feeling irritable and bored with the whole thing. "Bill has been very nice to me, but I never thought of him as a suitor, he seemed so old."

"Does Mrs. Griffin know about this?"

"Yes, she talked to me about it. She said Bill had fallen in love with me," Elizaveta said, and started to cry.

"Oh, stop that!" Maria scolded. "There is nothing to cry about. If you want to go home, just ask Mr. Griffin for your wages and go. But before you decide anything I'd better talk with Bill myself and see what he is like."

**5** Hrehory Workun had several reasons for going to town in midsummer. He needed supplies and he wanted to ask Maria what kind of a man this Bill was whom her mother felt so worried about whenever his name was mentioned in a letter. And then he wanted to talk with Wasyl, who ought to be improving his homestead, not working in town.

Maria overwhelmed him with affection, dragged him into the Fraser kitchen and asked him a thousand questions before he could get his mental bearings.

"Now, hold on!" he laughed. "Why all the excitement? Yes, yes, everyone is well. Your mother worries a little. She's afraid you'll get so used to living in town you will forget all about the farm."

"Is that so?" said Maria. "Then tell her to stop fussing. When Elizaveta and I come back for Christmas we will bring a pair of horses."

On hearing this Workun decided he would say nothing of Helena's wanting the girls to come home, unless Maria broached the subject herself.

"Mother must be up to her neck in work," she said, as if she had read his mind.

"Yes, she could do with help," he answered reluctantly. "There is a lot of work all right, but not enough for three grown women. Not that I'm trying to influence you, one way or the other. Just use your own judgment. Money is money; it's all right if you have it; but if you don't, well . . . And now tell me, what about that character, Bill, you wrote about? Ever since your mother heard of him she's had no peace of mind."

"Sh!" cautioned Maria, putting her fingers to her mouth. "Tell her it is still in the doubtful stage."

"Be that as it may, you must make sure it does not put us to shame," warned Workun. "Do you know him?"

"He's Mrs. Griffin's brother," whispered Maria. "He's a rich man, has all kinds of cattle and horses and a bank full of money, so they say."

"You have to be careful of such people; you can't trust them. How does Elizaveta feel about it?"

"Well, neither here nor there. She says he hasn't got the nature of a young man. He's an old bachelor who doesn't know how to talk to a young girl."

"An old grand-daddy?" asked Workun with a laugh. "Did you speak to him?"

"Yes, I asked him if he had any horses for sale and he answered, 'Come out to my farm and take your pick.'"

Workun looked at her curiously. "And did you go?" he asked.

"No; I persuaded him to drive the horses into town. He said he would bring them with the next lot of cattle."

"Don't do anything without my advice; otherwise people will think we're only too willing to trade Elizaveta for a pair of horses."

"Don't worry, Father," she assured him. "We'll not bring shame on the family. If Bill wants to sell horses cheaply, well and good; if not, then we'll call the deal off. As for Elizaveta, it's up to her. Let her make her own decision. I'll send someone to tell her to come here today or tomorrow. When she arrives we'll talk things over."

That evening Workun ran across Wasyl Dub on the street. "You're just the man I want to see," said Workun. Then he related the current rumours about Ivan Poshtar's plan to drive him off the homestead. "If you want to keep the farm, you had better work it and qualify for a patent, otherwise someone is sure to report you to the land office."

"I would have complied with the law a long time ago if everything had gone according to plan," Wasyl said, thinking of Maria. "But now that I've become used to town life, I think I'll remain here. Or do you think Ivan might change for the better if I returned to the farm?"

"Better or not better, that's his business," said Workun. "But you shouldn't relinquish that farm. You'll never be able to make

the kind of living in town that you can on the farm nor have the same kind of security."

"That is true; but I haven't enough money to establish myself properly on the farm," Wasył replied.

"You helped us all once. We will do the same for you. With all the neighbours pitching in you will have a house and a well and a shelter for a cow or two. Before you know it you'll have your own husbandry and be searching for a wife."

"Not so fast! You make my head reel," Wasył laughed, but there was no joy in his heart. Every word Workun spoke added to his secret bitterness. But how was the old man to know that at a single hopeful sign from Maria he would fly back to the farm.

Workun noticed the young man's bitter expression and said, "I talk too much. But after all a man is his own boss on a farm; master of his own fate. You're a son of the soil, Wasył. That's the way you should remain and in time pass on your heritage to your children and children's children. But it's up to you to decide."

The following evening a little group of Maria's friends was gathered in the Frasers' yard gossiping with Workun while they waited for Elizaveta and Bill Pickle to appear. They had not long to wait.

"There they are!" Maria cried excitedly, pointing to a couple of riders in the distance.

Workun was so taken with his daughter, now dressed in brand-new Western clothes, that he scarcely noticed the man beside her. "I can't believe my eyes," he said as she dismounted and flew to greet him. "Your mother won't believe me when I tell her what a fancy cowgirl you make."

"Don't tell her," Elizaveta giggled. "She'd think I had lost my mind and renounced our religion. I dressed to please Bill. Come and meet him."

"Glad to meet you," said Bill as he extended his hand.

Workun didn't understand the words, but the gesture and the quiet smile that went with it were clear enough. They shook hands firmly.

"It's a nice day today," added Bill.

"What did he say?" Workun asked the girls.

"He said it's a nice day."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes," Workun nodded. "Very good day

today. No rain, nice weather for making hay. Look, I have mower and raker." He pointed to these new purchases, stacked in his wagon. "Make hay when I get home. How about you?"

"What did he say?" asked Bill.

"Father asked whether you're making hay," Maria explained.

"My hands have already cut and raked one hundred hayracks full of hay," said Bill quietly.

"What did he say?" asked Workun, blinking his eyes.

"He says he's got one hundred hayracks of hay already stacked away."

"One hundred! Whew!" whistled Workun in astonishment.

"You must have a large herd to feed."

"Yes, yes," said Bill, "but I need three hundred hayracks of hay to get them through the winter."

Workun wished that he could carry on an intelligent conversation. He really was anxious to talk things over with this man.

"Would you sell me a pair of horses? You know, me money and you horse," he asked, pointing to the horses and his pocket.

"Why not?" said Bill, getting his meaning. "Do you see this mare?" he asked, pointing to Elizaveta's mount. "She's young and has a good pedigree. I have another just like her. They would make a fine pair."

This was translated by the girls and Workun thereupon looked the animal over with care, examined her teeth, pulled her by the tail, withdrew a few paces and considered her lines. "What do you want for such a pair?" he asked.

"Two hundred dollars."

"Two hundred dollars!" repeated Workun. "What a price! But I'd pay it if I had the money. Two dollars is all I have to my name."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Workun," Bill replied with a smile. "I can wait until you have the money. In the meantime I'll break them in for you. Right now they're too young for work on the farm or for hauling such heavy loads as you have here. Well, I wish you a lucky trip back home and I hope we shall meet again soon. Good-bye, all."

"Well, how did you like him?" asked Maria when Bill was out of hearing.

"If he could speak Ukrainian he'd be all right," Workun

affirmed, seating himself on the doorstep and lighting his pipe. "Money has not made him stuck up."

Meanwhile Wasyl and the girls began to tease Elizaveta about her suitor. But instead of being angry at their remarks, she turned the table on them by boasting of the good life she would have in future, sleeping as long as she liked, eating fine food and with servants to wait on her hand and foot.

"Do not be too sure of yourself," Workun cautioned. "If he comes our way and sees how poorly we live he may not want you. And who could blame him? A man like that should marry in his own class."

"Elizaveta might change her mind too," Maria interjected lightly, to save her sister from an uneasy reply. "We aren't going anywhere until we have earned the money to buy the horses. Then we can all go home and live happily ever after."

"Don't include me in your plans," Wasyl spoke up, looking at Maria intently. "I am leaving with your father in the morning. So is Paraska Pidhirny. She has had enough of town living."

Maria did not like the sound of that, nor the way her heart sank on a sudden, but she said, too sweetly, "We can't all like the same things. Now, how about a cup of tea to celebrate the occasion?"

Wasyl lost no time starting work on the farm when he got back home. The neighbours helped him build a house, dig a well; and he did some clearing himself. He tried hard to come to an understanding with Ivan Poshtar about his father's oxen, which had been kept in Ivan's corral and which were badly needed for the heavy work on the land. Pavlo Dub made an attempt to get them back; but Ivan had hidden them somewhere in the woods, telling Olga he'd cut the old man with an axe if he ever tried to get possession of them again. Pavlo admitted that he could do nothing with his obstinate son-in-law.

"I won't go to him," he told Wasyl. "I wouldn't advise you to see him either. But if you do, take Workun with you. If anyone can talk Ivan out of his perversity it is old Hrehory."

Workun agreed to go on the following Sunday. They found Ivan wielding an axe. He and Olga were mending an enclosure for the pigs.

"Good-day, you infidel," yelled Workun as they came closer.

“Aren’t there enough week days that you have to use an axe on Sunday?”

“I have to,” muttered Ivan, looking at his guests from the corner of his eye. “Sunday makes no difference to this cursed sow. She breaks through every fence.”

“You have worked wonders here, Ivan,” Workun said heartily. “You have good buildings and you couldn’t have found a nicer spot for the house. You deserve a lot of credit.”

“Sure, but do I get it?” mumbled Ivan. Then he shouted at Olga, “Hold the pole firmly!” He struck a final blow, then roared, “Get back to the house. I don’t need you here.” Without daring to say a word, Olga fled.

“You are a bit short-tempered,” observed Workun, feeling sorry for the brow-beaten wife.

“How can you be otherwise when everything goes wrong?” Ivan grumbled as he shook the poles to test their stability. “What has brought you anyway?” And then, as if seeing Wasyl for the first time, he added, “So it’s you. I didn’t recognize you.”

“If you saw more of your neighbours,” Workun said, “you wouldn’t have trouble recognizing your friends.”

“I can manage without the kind of neighbours that clutter up this place. That goes for fathers, mothers-in-law and the whole devil’s crew.”

“Forget about devils for a moment, Ivan. Neighbours are sometimes a trial and never perfect, but we can’t live by ourselves. The good Lord has ordained that we should help each other and bear each other’s burdens. Use your head, my boy. Do you really think Wasyl and I have come here to bedevil you?”

“Maybe not,” said Ivan, glaring from one to the other. “But you did not come just to admire the pigsty. You want something! What is it?”

“We want a lot of things!” Workun answered calmly. “Wasyl wants the use of the oxen you have hidden away. And I want you to make peace with your families and to live in harmony with your neighbours.”

“If only it could be done,” said Ivan in milder tones, “but it’s too late for that now.”

“Not if you will give in a little, Ivan.”

“How give in?”

“Return your father-in-law’s cattle.”



“What did you say? Return his cattle? I’m no fool! Let him give me what he promised!” Ivan shouted.

“Hey, hey, keep your head, Ivan. A promise does not always mean immediate fulfilment. You know darned well that if your father-in-law did that he’d have to go to the poorhouse. They’ve barely started up their own husbandry. You must give them time: let them give you a little this year, a little more the next. They have other children to think of too. Nobody wants to take advantage of anyone in this business. You must see that, surely. Now what do you say, Ivan? Isn’t it time to stop this quarrel?”

“What do you want me to do?” Ivan asked bluntly.

“First of all I want you to shake hands with your friend, Wasyl, and give a cheer like you used to do when you were boys together.”

The two young men clasped hands, but there was no cheer. They tried to warm to each other, but felt too foolish to show it. But a step towards better understanding had been made and Workun was satisfied. “And now run along to the house, put on your best clothes, tell Olga to do the same, and the four of us will drive the misplaced cattle to your father-in-law’s farm.”

Pavlo and Kalina were grateful to Workun for his successful mediation on their behalf. Kalina went so far as to tell Hrehory he was as good a peacemaker as any priest and it was true that for a time a new spirit prevailed in the Dub household. Kalina began to revive, to be less quarrelsome and critical, but unfortunately, she also recovered her unhappy gift for charting other people’s lives.

“We must prepare for the inevitable,” she announced one day when she and Pavlo were alone in the house. “One of these days Wasyl will come to tell us he wants to get married. That is as it should be. Paraska is a fine girl. You must have noticed how often she comes here and how useful she makes herself. I could not ask for a better daughter-in-law. That being so, I think you should go to town and buy supplies for a real wedding. I should not want the Pidhirnys to think us behindhand in our social duties.”

There was some justification for Kalina’s rising hopes. Paraska was obviously taken with Wasyl, often helped him in the fields, was always gay and attentive. Consequently, he in turn began to spend his evenings at the Pidhirnys’ where he met none of Maria’s off-hand indifference. Paraska was just as good looking as Maria, he

decided. And yet he never quite got to the point of proposing marriage.

It was this indecision as to which girl he should marry that finally impelled Wasyl to seek out Maria once more and find out where he stood. Perhaps when he saw her again she might seem less attractive than Paraska. In any case if she refused him he was free to marry Paraska Pidhirny without regret or qualms of conscience. All that troubled him was how to go about it. And once again fate took a hand. They met in the street. And by some magic of eye and heart they understood each other perfectly.

Three days later they were married by a priest who happened to be in town on an explorative mission.

But if the lovers were happy the same could not be said of Kalina, who raised such a rumpus Wasyl moved at once to his own house. Workun gave the wedding feast which, except for Kalina's ill humour, was a day to remember.

There was plenty to eat for the guests and even a bit to drink; there was merriment and laughter. But disillusioned Kalina laid it all to witchcraft; nothing else could explain her son's unspeakable behaviour. She even blamed Hrehory, who must, she insisted, possess unholy power. She then refused to accept him as her *swat*, or in-law.

6 After Wasyl's wedding life went on as usual. The fall season had set in and people were gathering in the products of the gardens, threshing grain with their flails and repairing their outbuildings. Additions had to be made, for the cattle and the hogs and the chickens were no longer being counted on one's hands. And all this work had to be done quickly so as to avoid the downpours of rain, flurries of snow and the cold of early winter.

Although life outwardly took on an aspect of beehive activity, nevertheless it also resembled a peat-bogged field which had caught fire during dry weather and continued to smoulder here and there. It cannot be seen burning from afar, but the nearer one comes to it the more noticeable is the grey smoke rising therefrom. It looks like an innocent fire to the naked eye, for there are no yellow flames; but, nevertheless the peat is burning.

Thus it is among these people. The settlement appeared to be normal and natural, but the hidden fires of hatred were there. There was animosity between Poshtar and his son; between Kalina and the Workuns; and the Pidhirnys resented Workun's influence on Wasyl.

While the animosities were smouldering, more or less unnoticed by the stable element of the community, new problems and innovations claimed public interest. The time had come to consider a school.

"In the Old Country," said Workun to Wakar, "everything was in the hands of the emperor. We paid taxes to him; and out of these taxes he allocated so much to the priests, so much to the teachers and other officials. But here we have to do everything ourselves; and that is why we find it hard to get used to this new system. It's a good thing Poshtar is our neighbour, for without him we'd be lost."

'That was no exaggeration. The draying business, which took him everywhere in all kinds of weather, had given Diordy an insight into human nature and the growing needs of the settlers. He learned many things and taught himself many more. He developed an accurate bookkeeping system and kept strict accounts of goods and services. He knew the language better than any of the other older people, which made him the recognized advisor. He had also become the official mail-carrier. This made him a valuable link between the primitive settlement and civilization. And as was natural to a people who had been accustomed to seek counsel of some authority in their Old Country villages, Poshtar's house became a news and trading centre, where the whole locality would convene on Sundays and holidays.

On the second Sunday after Wasył's wedding, Poshtar's house was filled with people, come to inquire about the postal service and discuss the possibilities of a school.

"It's all very simple," said Diordy, with respect to the mail, "except for the carrier, who has to travel the back roads in all kinds of weather." He opened a tin box with a flourish to reveal sheets of postage stamps. "From now on I'll sell you these stamps; and when I go to town, I throw your letters into this big bag with the lock on it and deliver them to the Englishman who lives by Beaver Creek where they built the bridge last year. He takes the outgoing mail to the next post and gives me the incoming mail to deliver."

"And how does the *guberman* (government) know that we live here?" asked Wakar.

"We're registered in his books."

"Who registered us?" Wakar asked suspiciously.

"You registered yourselves when you took out your homesteads."

"Oh, that!" said Wakar. "I thought you might be registering us."

"The postmaster in town has been after me for a long time to apply for a new post office. They asked me to pick out a name and I chose Lipa because most of us came from the village of Lipiwtsi. This name was accepted by the authorities and so all my seals are made out accordingly."

"Oh, so now you're in His Majesty's service as a postmaster," said Wakar with a drawl.

"Postmasters don't earn very much. I took the job more for your convenience than anything else," Poshtar informed them a trifle smugly.

"Aren't you just too good!" laughed Wakar. "You may yet turn out to be a great philanthropist and divide your property among the poor, or leave it to the church."

"The church can wait. We need a schoolhouse," Workun said. "And nobody can look after that matter better than Diordy."

"Well, I do know something about it," Poshtar agreed. "I met a gentleman who has something to do with schools. He asked me how many children of school age there were in this community."

"And what did you tell him?" asked Wakar.

"I told him we have more children than chickens "

"And what did he say to that?"

"He said he'd come out this way, check the number of children and organize a school."

"Another yoke around our necks," muttered Wakar.

"Yoke nothing!" Workun contradicted him. "School never hurt any one. Our children are growing up ignorant and will become dunces like ourselves."

"I'd like to know where the money's coming from and who's going to pay the teachers," said Wakar as he puffed violently on his pipe.

"There are enough trees in the forest; we'll chop them down and every one of us will rough-hew a couple dozen logs and then start building."

"How about the shingles, the windows, the benches?"

"As long as we get the framework up the rest will take care of itself," Workun said with finality.

"Well, I've got to be shown!" Wakar retorted. "And who will teach in our school, can you tell us that?"

"That won't be our worry. In any case, as a last resort, we'll saddle Solowy with the job. He'll construct the building, then we'll hand him a switch and the work of education will go on. If my Maria could teach me how to read, then with his superior knowledge he can teach the children."

"But the lessons will have to be in English," replied Solowy. "I have no knowledge of that language."

"Let them learn in their own language first and English will

come later on," argued Workun. "If you know one language, it's easier to learn another one."

"It's absolutely essential to know English and to read and write it," said Poshtar. "You can't get very far here without it. Take me, for instance. They made a postmaster out of me, but I'm scared stiff about whether I'll be able to do what is required of me. I know the letters and can speak the language a bit; but I find it hard to read and write because the words are not phonetic like ours. Here you have to know spelling and that alone is some job. They also gave me a book to register all births and deaths in the district. That is an order from the government."

"So now the penalties begin," groaned Wakar. "Wherever there is an order there is also a penalty."

"Do you think that Diordy makes all those trips to town for nothing?" intervened Wakar. "Pretty soon he'll bring along so many regulations that we'll have to look around for another Canada to escape from them. What business is it of these officials how many deaths and births there are in our community? They'll expect a fee or payment in labour."

"Oh, come now, it's not that bad," Poshtar appeased Toma. "Births and deaths don't occur every day or week; and if you're called on to pay me fifty cents a year, that won't break you. The *guberman* wants to know how many people there are in this country."

"Sure, sure," said Wakar, waving his hand. "There's no sense objecting; once a regulation is made it's there to stay and you can't get away from it. How about a little tobacco for my pipe?" he asked as he scraped the ashes out of it and then approached Diordy. "I know you smoke a special kind of tobacco now with a fine aroma. All I know is that the less you ride to town and mix with those high muck-a-mucks, the better it will be for you and for us."

"There are no high muck-a-mucks in Canada; we are all equal here," said Solowy, smiling at his gabby neighbour.

"Well, who gives all the orders?" asked Wakar as he lit his pipe. "A government official is worse than a lord. Once a man gets a government job, he loses all his human qualities. That's the way it was in the Old Country. Just let him get his snout into the government trough and he soon becomes as big as the rest of them."

"There aren't any like that around here," said Solowy as if to tease him.

"There aren't? How do you know there aren't? Why, one

has been hatched out right under our noses," said Wakar as he looked at Poshtar, causing the crowd to burst into laughter. Even Diordy laughed at this sally.

Attention was now drawn to the conversation of the women in the kitchen, where Helena was chiding the men for talking nonsense when they should be discussing such matters as the building of a church.

"Do you want your children to get married as my Maria did," she asked, "without a Bible, a cross, candles, wreaths and the presence of the parents? How could they swear an oath of faithfulness to each other without first confessing their sins and going through the ritual of communion? What kind of a wedding was that?"

"Well, we can't talk about everything at the same time," said Workun in defence of the men. "We have a church but where are we going to get the priest?"

"Father Dimitri informed me that they'll soon be sending out missionaries to this place," said Solowy. "He wanted us to have quarters ready for them when they came."

"Do they speak our language?" asked Helena. "We want the kind of priest we had in the Old Country: one that we'd understand and who'd understand us, and no other."

"We'll write to the Bishop to send us a young priest who won't be afraid to come into this primitive place," said Workun.

"If Father Dimitri ever lets them know what the conditions are here the only kind of priest who would venture to come would be an outcast of no help to any of us," observed Wakar.

"We should insist on a married priest," Teklia Solowy said with thoughtful emphasis. "His wife would teach us how to sew and bake and prepare meals and be a source of wisdom and advice to us in the time of trouble."

"We've exhausted every point but one: where are the funds to come from? In the Old Country the state supported the priest and even then he was always complaining of being underpaid," said Wakar.

"The people will support their priest," Helena spoke up. "We'll build him a house, clear a garden plot for him, sow it with vegetables I myself am prepared to give him a hen with chicks every spring and a pitcher of milk every day. He won't starve, I assure you."

"Quite so, but a priest is a priest. We'll have to maintain him according to the dignity of his position," said Pavlo Dub.

The argument might have continued indefinitely had it not been for a sudden mocking outcry from Wakar. "What did I tell you! Trouble is never far behind government orders. Just take a look, my friends."

The trouble took the form of two mounted policemen who were now approaching Poshtar's gate. The women rushed to the windows, sudden fear in their faces. The men tried to look unconcerned, but they too wondered what had brought these officers of the law to the Lipa District. An ancient fear stirred in their minds. Only Poshtar seemed capable of action, and when he ran to the gate his friends were further disturbed when the officers hailed him as if he were a familiar acquaintance.

"You see!" whispered Wakar. "They have an understanding between them. This is no accidental meeting."

Whatever it was, the guests were now resolved to know the worst. They marched out and lined up along the *prisha* as if for military review. Meanwhile Poshtar had opened the gate for the horsemen, and now led them to the house, talking at the top of his voice and pointing in all directions as if the whole locality belonged to him.

When they reached the *prisha* Poshtar introduced each guest by name and the officers shook hands all round. This was such an astonishing departure from the practice of police as they had known them in the old world that no one could think of a word to say. And then the officers were gone, as unpretentiously as they had come.

"The mounted police ride from place to place to find out if the people have any serious grievances or troubles to report," Poshtar explained to the relieved audience. "But why was Toma squirming as if someone had branded him with a red-hot poker?"

"You would have squirmed too if your pipe had fallen down your shirt and burned your chest," retorted Wakar.

"How did that happen?"

"That rascal Solowy whispered to me to hide my pipe and in my hurry I stuffed it under my shirt. I had to drop the thing when the officer wanted to shake hands with me."

A roar of laughter went up from the crowd at this explanation;



but Wakar took it in his stride. "Laugh if it pleases you," he said thoughtfully. "Those policemen are all right, not scoundrels like our Old Country gendarmes. They don't ride around puffed-up like turkey gobblers, officious to the point of absurdity. If I had held my hand out to one of our gendarmes he would have smacked me in the face for displaying discourtesy to an officer."

"Even the well-to-do *pany* here are courteous," Poshtar added.

"I don't know about that," Wakar returned. "But these mounties are decent fellows. It would be a sin to register a complaint against them."

"That's right; they are gentlemen," Teklia Solowy declared with a rapt smile on her face. "And what lovely uniforms they wear—the hats, the red coats, the blue trousers with the yellow stripes! Imagine how they must look on parade."

"They treat ordinary people like human beings. That's more important than uniforms." Helena Workun had the final word.

"Do you know why these policemen came to Lipa today?" asked Pavlo worriedly, on the way home with Workun.

"According to Poshtar it was just a routine duty. Why should there be a special reason?"

"Because Poshtar kept pointing in the direction of Ivan's place when they were talking at the gate."

"It hardly seems possible a man would inform against his own son. Besides, they were reconciled after I brought them together."

"This is something new. Ivan took two loads of grain to his place. I saw him do it. I was looking for my cattle and met him on the way. I said nothing about it but that must be why the police were called."

"That's very bad," said Workun. "Once the courts get hold of a domestic brawl that's the end of peace in a community. People take sides, everything is magnified twice over, and not even a saint could bring about a truce."

"The plain truth is that Poshtar's success has made him money-mad. He can't bear the thought of losing a little profit. After all, Ivan sowed and harvested that grain. But that won't count with Poshtar. Everyone exists for his benefit. He sells us goods at prices set by himself, prices which are doubled if you can't pay cash. That's business, he says. Now that he's become our

postmaster and registrar of births and deaths, we won't be able to sell our chickens without his permission."

"Well, he won't be able to exploit us much longer," Workun told his neighbour. "Thirty miles south of here the land is being surveyed for a railway. That will bring other towns nearer to us where we can trade without help from Diordy. And those who learn English in the community can keep check on his post office and registration duties."

"To tell the truth, Workun, what really worries me is Ivan. I think someone should go to the police and explain why Ivan left his father and then helped himself to his grain. Think about it. You might find a solution."

Ivan Poshtar was sitting in Dub's house, fearful of the future and seeking the advice of the Dubs. The police had been at his place, calling him to come out, but he and Olga had remained in hiding. Ivan knew why they were there and had no intention of submitting to their questioning.

"I won't go home tonight," Ivan protested, "for if I do they'll get me out of bed and take me along with them."

"It doesn't make any difference where you sleep, my son; in any case you'll have to return your father's grain and cattle," advised Dub. "Otherwise they'll arrest you and that'll bring shame upon all of us. You'll be branded as a criminal."

"The grain doesn't belong to Diordy," Kalina said. "It was Ivan who did the ploughing and the seeding. Our *swat* should take that into account."

"*Swat* Poshtar takes everything into account," replied Dub with vehemence. "If you did less talking, there'd be less trouble around here. Everybody knows what belongs to Ivan, but that has to be proven in court. Taking it without the court's approval makes it plain stealing."

"And who wound you up to follow your *swat's* line of reasoning?" asked Kalina, angrily.

"Just plain common sense!"

"Didn't that ogre, Workun, fill you with that kind of sense?"

"Don't listen to the woman, Ivan. Tomorrow Workun has promised to come here and the three of us will visit your father."

"Can't you do without Workun?" asked Kalina.

"I like it when he talks," Ivan admitted sullenly.

“So you’re on his side too?” Kalina exploded.

“Everybody but you knows that Hrehory is a good man,” Dub spoke sharply. “It is time you got that bee out of your bonnet and straightened out your thinking.”

“I shall think as I please, old man. Because I live with a fool doesn’t mean I have to think like one.”

“I think you should go home, Ivan,” said Dub, ignoring his wife’s sally. “Olga may be afraid to stay alone.”

“Olga has plenty of company,” Ivan mumbled. “Maria comes to the house almost every other day.”

“Then you better watch out she doesn’t ruin your life,” Kalina warned him. “That hussy makes trouble wherever she goes.”

“You better go, my boy, before Kalina gets started on her special brand of witchcraft. If not you’ll be scared to cross the threshold.” Dub’s voice was sarcastic, the glance he gave Kalina bitter and resentful.

“She bewitched our son!” Kalina snapped. “Now he follows her around like a dog on a leash. And from what I hear, Elizaveta is no better; has her claws into a rich man, I’m told. Nothing good can come of associating with such witches. You tell Olga to come and see me if she needs advice. I can’t go to see her with Maria haunting the place.”

“My good wife, slander is a sin before God. Try to keep a guard on that malicious tongue of yours lest you stir up mischief we shall all regret.”

“So I’m a slanderer, am I?” Kalina wailed. “Because I wish to warn the innocent you insult me before my own son-in-law!”

“Oh, shut up!” roared Dub. “If you don’t, I’ll give you a beating you’ll never forget.”

At this point Ivan rushed out of the house without bidding the angry couple good-night, a discourtesy which reduced Kalina to tears of wild self-pity.

Dub stared at her with contempt. “I hope you are bawling for the right reason,” he said coldly. “You haven’t a friend in the community. Your acid tongue has cut you off from decent people as completely as the bars of a prison. You’re so full of hateful notions you can’t see good in anyone or anything.”

Kalina listened and for once kept quiet.

“What have you against Maria, for instance? Is she a bastard or social outcast, or do you hate her because she’s young and pretty,

intelligent and ambitious? Wasyl fell in love with her, you say! That's his affair, say I. Yes, and if she's ten times a witch he, not you or I, has to live with her."

Kalina let out a screech as if he had struck her, flung herself on the bed and buried her head in the pillow. Pavlo grinned wryly. There were many ways of winning peace. For the moment the house was quiet.

On Monday morning court was held at Poshtar's place. The complainant and the defendant, Poshtar and Ivan, were both there, heads bent down listening as Workun pointed out the right of the one and of the other.

"We all know you are an upright, intelligent man, Diordy," Workun began. "Therefore we must consider your accusations against Ivan with care. You say that he took certain goods and livestock without your leave. In a word, that he stole these things. But is that the whole truth? Was he not entitled to wages of some kind for years of hard, honest toil? And as your son was he not entitled to the goods and equipment a good father, from time immemorial, has delighted to give as the marriage portion of his child? I do not uphold Ivan's action. It was mean and cowardly. He should have come to you and asked for his inheritance. If he had done so I am sure you would have responded, like the generous man you are, Diordy Poshtar. For who among us has not benefited from the kindness of yourself and your good wife, Anna?"

"Nobody is perfect, that is why problems arise, but problems can be solved. Why should this be an exception? Sending Ivan to jail would not punish him alone. The stigma would reflect on you too, Diordy. Can a government official benefit from such an action? Very likely it would cost you your job, and it would certainly earn you Ivan's hatred and possible vengeance."

"God preserve us from such misfortune," Anna whispered through her tears.

"Well, what should I do?" asked Poshtar in a flustered voice.

"Nothing," said Workun. "Live and let live and forget the whole thing. Ivan is your son. However badly he has behaved it does not behoove a *hospodar* of your standing to send his own flesh and blood to jail."

"But he is forcing me to do just that by his mad behaviour," Poshtar insisted, looking daggers at his son.

“He won’t force you to do anything,” Workun said, and turning to Ivan, “Now, Ivan, tell us before the holy pictures whether you will force your father in any way whatever!”

“No, I will not!” Ivan blurted, hanging his head.

“Well then, the matter’s settled,” Workun patted the truculent young man’s shoulder. “The saints are your witness. Keep your oath and all will be well.”

“I don’t know about that,” Poshtar grumbled. “I still say Ivan took too much. He might at least return one cow and the oxen.”

“That may be true. But peace never comes cheap. You have his word not to repeat his foolishness. That makes us all happy and, most important of all, it will restore his own self-respect. That means more than cows and oxen.”

“That’s right, Diordy,” Anna said with relief. “There has been enough bitterness in the household. Remember the Lord’s prayer: ‘Forgive as you would be forgiven.’”

“Enough of your preaching!” Poshtar shouted. “I give up! I agree!” Then, turning on Ivan, he roared, “As for you, I too swear before all these people that if you ever again reach out for anything on my farm, either you or I will swing for murder. Do you understand?”

“Well, I declare,” laughed Workun, “I thought that both of you would embrace each other and this is all I get for my pains.”

“It’s hard to understand the old boy,” said Dub as he and Workun wended their way homewards.

“That’s right, but he can be managed if you know how.”

“Well, you sure managed him today.”

“I think that the ice has been broken between father and son. Everything will be better from now on.”

7 “I don’t know whether it was ordained by the Lord or arranged by someone else that when one worry is cast aside, another soon takes its place,” said Helena Workun, as she ran a head of cabbage over a culler. “First I worried about Maria because she tarried too long in getting married; and now I’m in constant dread of Elizaveta marrying that—the Lord forgive me—Calvinist!”

“What’s a Calvinist, Mother?” asked Kornylo as he munched on a piece of cabbage.

“A Calvinist?” repeated Helena as she thought of a definition in her mind. “A Calvinist, son, is the kind of man who never prays, never crosses himself nor keeps any holidays, works on Sundays, hauling wood and even manure, and does not speak our language.”

“Well, now, who knows whether Bill does not pray at home and make obeisance not once but two or three times a day,” said Workun as he examined the rolling pin which he was whittling, smiling enigmatically.

“Elizaveta says he has so many cattle and horses you can’t count them all,” said Kornylo, happy that his father took Bill’s side. “He promised to give me a little colt so that I could have something to ride when they build our school.”

“All you two think of are horses,” Helena scolded. “It won’t worry you a bit if Elizaveta leaves us to go to some distant place among strange people where she and her children, if she ever has any, will become pagans. Think what it would be like for me if I couldn’t understand the language of my own grandchildren!”

“She’ll teach her children to speak our language,” promised Workun, trying to appease his good wife.

“And what kind of education will that be? She’ll teach them one way and he’ll teach them another way, with the result that

they'll be equally ignorant of both. Anyway, if they turn out to be boys they won't even listen to Elizaveta."

"Our Elizaveta will be the *hospodina* (mistress) in her own house and will see to it that things are run according to her plans," said Workun cheerfully. "Meanwhile our conversation has as much meaning as swishing a stick over the water. In any case, they are not married yet."

Meanwhile the object of this discussion was having her own bewildering problems. Elizaveta missed her sister and felt lost without her. Furthermore, Bill had both charmed and shocked her when he turned up at Wasyl's wedding clean shaven, smartly dressed, looking years younger, and very handsome. And when, perhaps overcome by the romantic mood of the hour, Bill Pickle suddenly caught her in his arms and kissed her violently, Elizaveta was so astonished by this change in a staid character that her response was far from romantic. She slapped the ardent wooer in the face. Fortunately this monstrous crime was committed in the deserted Griffin yard, when Bill was seeing her home. So she had no difficulty in escaping to the solitude of her own room where she immediately burst into tears and cried herself to sleep.

Next morning, Elizaveta woke with a start, glanced at the clock and leaped out of bed, as if her life were in danger. Breakfast must be over, she realized in consternation as she dressed. Mrs. Griffin would be furious, and rightly so. But when Elizaveta timidly entered the kitchen, there was no sign of anger.

"Did you sleep well?" Mrs. Griffin looked up with a smile from the dishes she was washing. Then seeing how pale and uneasy the girl appeared, she asked in sudden alarm: "Are you ill, Elizaveta? You don't look yourself this morning."

"I'm all right," Elizaveta replied, hastily seizing a broom and beginning to sweep the floor. "I had a headache all night. Too much excitement I guess."

Mrs. Griffin wondered whether Bill had had some part in this upsetting excitement, but all she said was, "In that case have some breakfast, then change into something presentable and ride to the store for me. The air will clear your head."

Elizaveta rode slowly down the main street until she came to the store. Having made her purchases, she packed them in the

saddlebags, untied the reins from the hitching post, and was all set to mount the mare.

"Just a minute; let me help you," she heard a familiar voice call out. It was Bill, who had just stepped out from the Chinese res aurant.

His attitude was a surprise to Elizaveta, for she had expected resentment of her ridiculous behaviour.

"You're not angry with me, are you?" he asked, smiling. "I guess weddings go to a fellow's head. Here, let me help you."

Avoiding his hands, Elizaveta swung to the saddle. She didn't want him to touch her, but she was relieved and secretly elated to find herself forgiven.

"I'm not angry," she said, smiling shyly. "I wouldn't know how to be angry with you," she added over her shoulder as she spurred the mare to a gallop.

Elizaveta wrote to Maria for advice. She loved Bill. She wanted to marry him, but she was afraid that another hasty marriage performed without "bell or book" would drive their mother into an early grave. Maria's reply was not encouraging. If Elizaveta felt that way, the only thing to do was to reconcile Helena to her prospective son-in-law. In a word, Bill would have to visit the Workuns and win the mother as he had won the daughter.

Bill stayed with the Workuns for a whole week. He slept at Wasy's place, but spent most of his time at the home of his future father-in-law, where, in the words of Helena, he and Hrehory thrashed through a lot of nonsense with the help of Elizaveta as interpreter. He accepted everything as it was, without comment or apparent disdain, and he showed a keen interest in the farm. Maria tried treating him in the manner to which she thought he was accustomed, but his curiosity caused her no end of anxiety.

The first evening, while Maria was busy preparing a Canadian meal for her visitor, Bill slipped away and headed for the Workun house. His arrival did not create the usual atmosphere of good-fellowship usually accorded a visitor. Hrehory was momentarily tongue-tied and Helena seemed rooted to the spot by the stove. Even Elizaveta stared at her suitor as if she beheld a strange spectre.

The usually imperturbable Bill had the impulse to flee from these peculiar, inhospitable people, but then common sense came to the rescue. This wall of chilling silence was nothing more than



the language barrier. He turned to the young boys and said lightly, "Well, and how are you boys getting along in the country?"

"Tell him you are just fine," prompted Elizaveta, suddenly released from her apprehensions. "Speak English and let him see we aren't all dumb."

"I'm fine," Kornylo said, "everything's fine."

"Good, but why aren't you in school?" Bill wanted to know.

"Tell him there are no schools here," Elizaveta prompted, and smiled at Bill.

"There . . . no . . . school," Kornylo repeated.

From this inauspicious beginning, Bill finally had everyone talking and asking a thousand questions, until Elizaveta, as translator, felt like a weather-vane battered by a gale.

Helena was the sole exception, and Hrehory began to feel annoyed at her unfriendly silence. But then, to his astonishment, he saw that Helena was laying a new tablecloth and setting the table for supper. Workun meant to appeal to Elizaveta, but to his further consternation she had slipped away. As a matter of fact, she was racing to Maria, to borrow a dinner service.

That first meal at Workun's was an ordeal for Bill Pickle. Peasant custom was strange to him. He did not realize that the inmates of the house did not sit down with their guests, that the *hospodinia* served the women and the *hospodar* did the same for the men. He did not know that a polite guest was to pause after each spoonful, until invited to take another; that after each bite and swallow it was customary to remark on the excellence of the food and the admirable qualities of the host and hostess.

Seated at the table, confronted by a huge bowl of stewed chicken and a mound of sliced bread, Bill had no idea how to proceed.

"Ask him to eat," Helena whispered on her way to the kitchen. "Perhaps he is bashful."

"Please help yourself." Workun pointed to the food; then, seeing Bill's honest bewilderment, he came to the table, took a slice of bread, dipped it in the sauce, pulled out a piece of meat with his fingers and slapped it on the bread. "See? Not bad," he said, biting into his hefty open-face sandwich.

Workun's practical demonstration encouraged Bill. He pulled out a piece of meat with his spoon, placed it on a slice of bread, cut it up with his knife, spearing each piece with the blade point, outdoing even Workun's method of feeding himself.

When Maria arrived with dishes and cutlery she almost cried from shame to see Bill finish his meal from the common bowl. She threatened to starve him three days running if he ever did such a thing again. Elizaveta was so cross that her mother was moved to defend the "Calvinist." Was it a crime for a hungry man to enjoy a decent meal, she wanted to know. "Let me warn you, daughter, a pretty face does not make up for a nagging tongue," she concluded.

Thereafter things went more smoothly. Bill went hunting with Hrehory, pitched into the farm work, and gave ample proof of his genuine liking for these simple people. In fact, the entire neighbourhood agreed that Mr. Bill Pickle was an agreeable man, though a little odd, perhaps, in not seeking a bride in his own circle and of his own religion.

Elizaveta was indifferent to these opinions. It was only her mother's attitude that worried her.

"I haven't anything against him, my dear child," Helena told her. "He seems to be a nice person, but since we don't speak the same language how can I be sure that he will respect your faith and customs? According to the old customs we should see his place. But with whom would we talk there? Whom would we visit? He has no parents. We're strangers, my child, by reason of language and religion."

"That's nonsense," said Elizaveta. "Bill has promised not to interfere with my religion. But if you feel so badly about it we can put off the wedding until next summer."

Bill, without knowing anything about the reasons for the delay of his marriage, accepted the postponement amicably; but in order to ingratiate himself still further with the Workun family, he asked that he be allowed to take Pavlo along with him to his home. Helena would not agree to this at first. But when he guaranteed that nothing would happen to the boy, that he would be sent to school, and that he would bring him back if he didn't like it at his place, Helena gave her permission. She would have done so in any case, since Pavlo was ready to turn the house upside down if she refused.

**8** As was mentioned in the first part of this story, Pavlo Dub was never able to acclimatize himself to the New World. And for one reason or other he was dogged by more misfortune than his neighbours. His son-in-law brought him premature grey hair, added to Kalina's constant nagging. And now there was Olga's untimely death.

"Something burst right here," he said in a voice full of pain and grief, as he pointed to his breast. "For I'm solely responsible for it."

Olga's death became an obsession with him, and if it hadn't been for Wasyl and Workun, he would have spent the night on his daughter's grave.

On top of all this, Kalina seemed on the verge of losing her mind. She had become obsessed with the idea that her house was bewitched and she herself was being pursued by demons who were bent on destroying her. She even suspected her own immediate family of being in league with the evil spirits.

And so, upon the receipt of some money from the sale of his land in the Old Country, Pavlo made up his mind to return there. He still had a piece of meadow-land where he could eke out a modest living. He would build himself a small house and live out the rest of his life in peace. This new thought buoyed up his hope, and his spirits rose accordingly. But not for long.

When Kalina heard about Pavlo's plan, she became hysterical. "I'd rather rot here alive than return home to face the derision of the people," she cried. "We've sold our property, lost our children; now let the worms finish us off!"

Pavlo never again mentioned the matter, but his thoughts kept wandering back to his native village, which to him represented heaven and peace.

That summer as usual Pavlo ploughed some virgin land; for no matter what one's thoughts were, one had to live and thus to plough, which in turn meant to sweat, to labour and to suffer the strains and knocks incidental to turning up newly-cleared soil.

It was a beautiful day in July, and up until noon Pavlo did a fair amount of ploughing; but in the afternoon the intense heat of the blazing sun bore so heavily down on man, beast and field that it seemed everything would boil like oatmeal in a pot.

But the heat itself was not unbearable. It was the added torment of swarms of mosquitoes. Pavlo tried every ruse he could think of to get rid of them. He built fires at different points in the field and covered them with grass to make a smudge. Kalina carried a pail of burning sticks covered over with wet moss as she drove the oxen. The oxen kept butting each other and bellowing with discomfort. When they came to the end of a cleared field which bordered on a small pond their patient endurance ended. The maddened animals plunged into the pool, dragging the plough and the women with them. Kalina scrambled out, screaming at her husband, but Olena waist-deep in water just stood there staring into space.

"This is your Canadian paradise," Pavlo yelled back. "Get yourself out of the mess. I've had enough."

Kalina, flapping her wet shirt, wondered whether to pull the oxen out of the pond or to chase after her husband. Apparently the matter was of no consequence to Pavlo. He kept right on running, heading straight for the quiet woods.

When night fell and Pavlo had not returned, Kalina was really frightened. Perhaps he had gone for good, as he had so often threatened to do, or perhaps the devil had prompted him to commit suicide. This terrifying thought set off wails of loud lamentation and weeping.

"What are you raising such a racket about, *swacha*?" asked Workun in surprise as he approached the distracted woman. He had been in search of a straying cow and his way led past Pavlo's.

Kalina did not answer his question. Since she had not noticed his approach, his voice frightened her. She stopped wailing and rushed into the house.

Workun was sorely puzzled. He could not enter the house

uninvited. Yet to turn back home without knowing what was wrong did not seem decent. He decided that the sensible thing to do was to go to Wasyl's place and ask him what was wrong. But this, it soon appeared, was unnecessary. Apparently Olena had gone for her brother. The three young people now rushed up in anxious haste.

"Have you all gone crazy?" Hrehory asked. A wild voice from the house answered the question.

"He's orphaned us all, that's what he's done," shrieked Kalina. "I'll never have a moment's peace on earth again."

"But what happened, Mother?" Wasyl asked. "Olena scared Maria and me with some crazy tale about accidents and flight."

"It's all Workun's fault!" screamed Kalina. "He and his witches have put a spell on you both. Take a look in the barn and see the latest handiwork."

They dashed for the barn, while Kalina hovered on the threshold like some scrawny bird of evil omen. When the young people tramped back and had neither suicide nor mayhem to report, Kalina tacked to a fresh wind. "Then he has gone. The wretch has gone!" she shrieked and ran back into the house to verify her worst suspicion by a search of her treasure chest. A moment later she was back in the doorway yelling at the top of her lungs, "He has taken the money . . . robbed me of all the money! Do you hear me? Stolen the money and skipped!"

"What's that, woman? Have you lost your senses?" Workun tried to speak lightly. "Where would he go on the spur of the moment? Calm down, *swacha*."

"To the Old Country, you fool," Kalina cried.

"But, Mother, you have the money in your hands," Wasyl said, bewildered and shocked.

"One package is missing, I don't know which," she wailed, "the two hundred or the three hundred."

Wasyl took the package and counted the money. "Three hundred," he said dryly. "You've still got the lion's share."

There was no comforting Kalina. She was all for hunting down the thief, threatening to pull every hair out of his head. Fortunately for all concerned, young Osyp now appeared and volunteered the information that Pavlo had gone to Diordy's to buy tobacco.

While all this hullabaloo was going on, old Pavlo was sitting in Poshtar's store, smoking and trying to come to an agreement with Diordy about his property. He was so fed up with mosquitoes and ornery oxen that he had decided to sell out and return to the Old Country. Poshtar said nothing to dissuade him.

"If you've made up your mind, Pavlo Dub, I'll give you four dollars an acre for your land and three hundred dollars for your cattle."

Pavlo did some calculating on his own account, including the cost of travelling to and from the accursed country. Six dollars an acre for the farm and four hundred dollars for the cattle was the least he would take. "That won't equal the money I brought," he said. "It will help to make ends meet, that's all."

"I really don't need your farm," Poshtar said. "I have troubles enough with my own. But in order to help you I'll take it off your hands for the sum already mentioned. To tell you the truth, your farm isn't worth that much. Take it or leave it, that's my last word."

"Then I'll leave it for the time being," Pavlo said; for although he was tempted to escape at any price, he had suddenly thought of Wasyl. It did not seem right to sell the farm to someone else when Wasyl really had first claim to it. With the exception of one cow, Wasyl had received nothing from his parents when he was married. Nor had he asked for anything. The right thing would be to offer the land to Wasyl for whatever he could pay. But Wasyl had no money.

Plodding homeward, tired, depressed and undecided, Pavlo tried to take comfort from the thought that Wasyl was a good son and married to a good girl. Maybe the New World would offer them better fortune in time to come. It was a young country in need of strong young people. He thought of his other children with nostalgic affection. They had all been promising children, before Kalina twisted them this way and that with her foolish notions. Poor woman, he thought with pity, and was suddenly ashamed to have left her and Olena to struggle with the ornery oxen. But he might have spared his pity.

He had hardly reached the house when he was blasted with all the vituperation Kalina could think of. He remained silent, although every word she said fanned the banked fires of his resentment. He dipped himself a drink of water and lay down on the

bed. Let her have this final satisfaction, he told himself grimly. Let her have it to remember. When the house slept, Pavlo quietly slipped away. A few days later, Kalina received the following letter:

Dear Wife:

I was struck with a foolish thought, and so to save my soul I've taken two hundred dollars to cover my trip to the Old Country. And you are welcome to follow if you wish. Sell the cattle and leave the farm to Wasyl. He can pay us in instalments. Do what you think best; but as for me, Canada does not agree with me.

Pavlo Dub.

9 “Don’t cram the bags too full! You won’t be able to grab hold of them. They’ll be too heavy to carry,” Poshtar told Workun, who was packing the grain, bumping the bags on the ground.

Workun understood the reason behind Poshtar’s admonition. It meant five cents less profit per bag if the grain were packed too well.

“If this bag is to be filled, then let it be filled properly so that it won’t sag in the middle when I am carrying it,” he laughed slyly. “If I sprain a muscle it’ll be worth it with grain like this.”

This was the first time in Canada that Workun hadn’t threshed with a flail. He had grown weary of the slow method and had decided to try Poshtar’s machine for a change. It took three days to thresh all his grain—three hundred bags of wheat, three hundred of oats and one hundred and fifty of barley. His joy knew no bounds; it was greater by far than in days to come when his yield ran into thousands of bushels, all threshed by his own machine. The first threshing remained one of his happiest memories. It filled him with pride that he who in the Old Country never knew where his next meal was coming from could now boast of so much grain that he had to hire threshers to help finish the job for him.

Many years later he used to tell his grandchildren about this, but it didn’t mean a thing to them. What were three hundred bags compared with the countless loads their fathers kept hauling to the big elevators?

How could they understand? They knew nothing of the hardships of pioneering. “We had to do everything by hand, clearing, sowing, reaping, and almost every year there was frost to contend with. If it struck the grain while it was still in the milky stage it would turn black and be useless for flour or feed. Then



too there was the transportation problem. Even if we had good grain it scarcely paid us to haul it over bad roads to the elevator. We were lucky if we got a dollar a bag!

“That year we had a bumper crop. The heads were filled and there had been no frost. We tried reaping the crop by hand, but it was too much for us. So we hired Poshtar’s mower and horses and finished the job. We set up so many stooks that there was no room for a wagon to wind through. No, we couldn’t take chances on that crop. Poshtar’s threshing machine was not the kind you now see. It was a small thresher which he bought second-hand from the Germans. He tightened it up with nuts and bolts and it did the job all right. He threshed with a *kirat*.”

“And what’s a *kirat*?”

“It was a kind of improvised mechanism,” explained Workun. “At that time two pairs of horses and two pairs of oxen turned the shaft; and to this shaft four tongues were attached, to which the harnesses were hitched; and the horses and oxen just went around and around turning the shaft. At the bottom of this shaft there was a large wheel with gears, and this large wheel turned another small wheel with gears. This small wheel had an axle which stood a little above the ground but which did not interfere with the revolution of the shaft. At the end of this axle there was a wheel without gears around which there was a belt. This belt also was fitted over another wheel at the other end of the machine, and this is what made the machine function as a thresher. Kornylo was the driver; in other words, the machinist.”

“But didn’t the horses and oxen get giddy in going around so much?” asked the children.

“Of course; but so did we all at first,” explained Workun. “But we wrapped bags around their heads so that they wouldn’t be able to hear or see anything or get scared of the incessant rattle and pounding of the machine. In time even they got used to it all.”

“Did the machine thresh with any speed?” someone asked.

“For those times it did the work with considerable speed, much faster than flails. There were nine of us working at the threshing. Solowy stood by the feeder, feeding carefully strewn sheaves into it so as not to choke the machine. On either side of Solowy were Sophia Wakar and Olena Dub, with sickles in their hands. Osyp Dub pitched a sheaf to Sophia and your father, Wasyl, did the

same for Olena. They would then hand the sheaves over to Solowy with heads facing the opening of the feeder. Solowy in turn fed the machine skilfully so that it did not choke or clog. And thus the work would go on all day, with a bit of chatter and a song or two thrown in for good cheer.

“Wakar tended the chaff and refuse as it was blasted out of the machine so that it would not block the exit as it flew out. Even now I can see him, all covered with dust, yelling, ‘Most powerful Sir, Landlord *kum* Hrehory, how is the grain shelling out?’ This was his way of jesting at me for becoming so great a landlord that I could afford to thresh my grain with a thresher. But he was against Poshtar threshing his own grain. ‘I’ll thresh my own grain with a flail,’ he said belligerently. ‘I won’t give that chiseler Poshtar five cents a bag for threshing. As it is, I’ve been slaving at his place night and day to work off my debts in labour, and when to that he adds his charges for threshing I’ll end up by giving him all my grain and keeping the chaff myself.’ ”

In this manner Workun had related to his grandchildren the story of the first threshing by machine at his place. There were many inconveniences, but he felt great just the same. The times changed almost imperceptibly: the harvester displaced the scythe and the sickle, and the thresher the flail. The machine did the work of many hands, finding its way even to the house and causing the use of many more pots, according to Helena.

When the new machine began to thresh at Poshtar’s, Anna was visited by many women who were curious about how and what she was boiling and frying for the workmen, so that they would know what to do when the machine came to their respective places.

“With all this preparation for the machine hands, one could put on a wedding cheaply at the same time,” Workun jested as he sat down to supper at Poshtar’s. “For instance, the bride and bridegroom could pitch sheaves all day long; the bridesmaids could stand by the feeder, handing him the sheaves; the best man could keep blowing the chaff away, while the *starostas* could carry the bags full of grain to the granary. Indeed, some job could be found for each one of the guests and thus the wedding would pay for itself. And in the evening they could dance to their hearts’ content.”

“Oh, all you think of is jokes,” answered Helena as she poured out some borsch into the bowls. “Anna and I can hardly walk

because of all this frying and baking. You'll get your wedding when they bring the machine to our place. Maria is expecting; Teklia can't leave her children; Tetiana can hardly crawl and Anna can barely stand on her feet. We'll both rest threshing out, in bed, and you'll do the frying and baking yourself."

"What of it? I'll fry and bake at night and we'll eat during the day," teased Workun, although he actually was afraid that what Helena had said would come true. And he knew why she scolded him for his jesting: she didn't want the machine to come to their place. But Workun was not disturbed by her arguments. According to his line of reasoning, threshing by machine would not be too costly.

"The workmen won't cost us anything," he said, "for Kornylo and I will earn enough at Poshtar's to pay off the workmen and still have some left over."

"Whatever Kornylo will earn doesn't interest me. I want to know where you are going to rustle up food for the threshing gang?" Helena said in decisive tones.

"Wasył, Solowy and I will buy an old ox from Poshtar on a mutual payment basis. We'll slaughter it and divide it three ways. You can boil it and dole it out sparingly so that it will last two or three days. You don't have to imitate Anna, who sets a table in lordly style."

Helena didn't know what else to say and so let it go at that. Her husband was determined to hire the thresher; but he had also made certain that Kornylo had work at every place the machine threshed. This would help with expenses. And she was somewhat reconciled to feeding the threshers when Workun bought a whole hog instead of an old ox. Anna might not be the only one after all to set a decent table for the workmen.

While Maria was looking after the threshing crew, Helena was wondering whether her bread would turn out right and would meet with the approval of the threshers. And she racked her brains to decide which was the best way to prepare pork. Maria had told her that underdone pork might cause sickness. Such a calamity would ruin her reputation as a cook, not to mention the sin it would bring upon her soul.

In the end she decided to cook everything in the oven. Baked foods were always safe and much more elegant than stews or plain

boiled meat. There were plenty of vegetables and enough cookies to feed an army. Breakfast was no problem. She could serve bacon and eggs and cheese. Indeed, now she thought the matter over calmly, there was nothing to worry about. Maria was her right hand in everything, and Teklia and Tetiana would also help with the lighter chores.

“In fact, it wouldn’t surprise me,” she confided to Maria a little smugly, “if our dinner turned out to be as good as a wedding feast.”

After each threshing season, as after an exciting holiday, it is very quiet in the community. But that year there was happiness and contentment in the quiet. For it turned out that not a single family was beholden to another and hardly anyone owed money to Poshtar. Wakar’s crop was the only one not threshed. But he had worked off his debt to Poshtar and earned twenty bags of grain by working for his neighbours. He did not have to worry about speeding his own threshing.

The epochal first threshing by machine was long remembered in the community. And, as she recalled it, Helena could not help smiling at her apprehension regarding the cooking, the many pots and the food.

**10** It was in the summer, about the time that Bill had visited the Workuns. A school organizer had called to organize a school district. He convened the community, took a list of the landowners, recorded all the prospective schoolchildren and asked that a school board be appointed. As might be expected, Poshtar did the nominating. Wakar, Solowy and Workun were elected. The organizer named Poshtar as the secretary-treasurer and Poshtar, in turn, named Workun as the chairman of the board. The District was called Lipiwtsi and was duly registered by that name. There was no objection to the appointments. Workun was the natural leader in the community. And the people knew that Solowy was held in esteem. Whatever he decided would be done on the *sharwarok* plan. He had some education and was besides an excellent carpenter. Wakar's appointment was in the nature of a jest, but he could be depended upon to raise objections when needed.

The job facing these inexperienced men was formidable. Finding the best site and raising a suitable building, buying essential equipment, digging a well and assessing taxes, all these things were fraught with tension. Workun eased the situation by postponing the project. "We'll wait until the spring," he said. "In the winter we can haul in enough logs; and in the spring after we've seeded our land we can start building in earnest."

The only immediate task before the school board was to choose a site for the building and set the tax-rate.

"The school will have to be built across the road from the cemetery and the tax must not exceed three dollars from each farm," Workun announced at the first board meeting. "Please record this in the minutes, Diordy, and tell the gentlemen that this is our decision. We'll pay the taxes when our men return from

outside work. All those in favour please raise their hands." The vote was unanimous.

This happy state of affairs was short-lived. At the final yearly meeting, when Poshtar presented a financial report, sharp dissension broke out. He had collected taxes from twenty tax-payers, but three others had failed to pay their dues. Worse, Poshtar charged twenty-five dollars for his work as secretary and ten dollars for his trip to town about the purchase of a site, a seal and other items, so that from the original sixty dollars collected as taxes there remained only eleven dollars.

Workun was enraged. "I never thought you would skin us like that. We had to work hard to scrape up the taxes, now it seems you've pocketed most of it for yourself. Yet it was understood no payments were to be made without my consent. Isn't that right?"

"That's right, that's right!" some of them assented uneasily. They were not quite prepared to criticize Poshtar too harshly, for most of the immigrants were in his debt.

"You see, Diordy, I'm not the only one who's dissatisfied. Community money is trust money; you can't do what you please with it. If you wanted to be paid for your trip to town you should have discussed the matter beforehand."

Poshtar was unmoved. "I didn't ask for the secretaryship. The job was given to me by the *guberman* who was here, because he could see that no one else could handle it. If you do not like my methods you are free to choose another secretary."

"Well, why all the silence?" he continued smugly. "If you don't understand the situation, I'll explain it. Workun's term of office has expired. Solowy has one more year to go, and Wakar two years. So before proceeding any farther with these discussions you better nominate someone to fill Workun's place."

"I nominate Workun. He has courage," Wakar shouted.

Poshtar smiled sarcastically.

"Someone will have to second your motion, Toma, then we'll call for a show of hands. That's the law. But first, I nominate Michail Wolos."

All this was strange to the newcomers. However, goaded by Poshtar's amused smile, Solowy supported Wakar's nomination, and Peter Drozd who came from Poshtar's village, seconded his nomination of Wolos.

When it came to the voting, however, Poshtar was in for a rude awakening. Everyone, including Wolos and Drozd, voted for Hrehory Workun.

Workun left the meeting in a troubled mood. Poshtar had rubbed him on a sore spot, causing a reaction of which even he was not aware.

"I'll never give in to him!" said Workun as he walked homewards with Solowy and Wakar. "He's sure getting a swelled head; but we shall see. . . ."

"We'll have to be very cautious with him," he resumed thoughtfully. "He's full of double talk, none of it in our favour. He knows the law and we don't. We can learn a lot from him by listening. You heard him say that no member of the board can accept pay. That means that Solowy would not be able to build the school for wages; and you and I couldn't be paid for digging the well."

"But he has the right to do it?"

"That's right; he was hired and not elected."

"Why should a hired man do what he pleases and an elected man only what the law allows? There's something crooked somewhere."

"If there is I'll find it somehow."

Workun's search for information led him to Mr. Fraser who, with Elizaveta's help as interpreter, had strange things to relate.

"Mr. Poshtar is right," he began. "Solowy cannot accept payment for building the school unless he resigns as a trustee. But . . ." here Mr. Fraser grinned at Workun, "you have the right to make a contract with some other person, say, Wasyl for instance, and then Wasyl could then employ any of the trustees. In which case they would be working for Wasyl, not for the community."

Workun listened with astonishment. "So you think that would be possible?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But we have no money to pay Wasyl."

"The ratepayers can pay off their taxes in labour."

"How?"

"The workmen can demand their money from Wasyl and Wasyl can demand it from the board," explained Fraser, smiling. "But the board has no money and so in order to settle the matter,

it will take from Wasyl the names of the people who helped build the school. The number of days each man worked are counted, his wages recorded in the tax receipts, just as if the money were handed to Wasyl. And Wasyl writes a receipt to the community for money received in payment of his work as a contractor.”

“But there won’t be any money,” said Workun, still hazy about all this.

“The tax receipts are money,” explained Fraser.

“Oh,” sighed Workun. “Now I understand. Will we be able to get our logs that way too?”

“Yes, all the labour and all the material. It’s the same thing as money.”

“If someone doesn’t want to work off the school tax, what then?”

“He’ll have to pay in cash.”

“But if someone works overtime, or supplies more than his share of material?”

“He’ll have to be paid in cash.”

“Why, that agrees with what I have thought myself. The *sharwarok* plan can be applied here.” Workun could have embraced his adviser, he was so pleased.

Then, as if he had not done enough, Mr. Fraser added: “You will be needing some material for finishing purposes. Have your carpenter bring me his estimate. I’ll treat you fairly.”

“And will you accept tax receipts in payment?” Workun laughed.

“Yes, if your board will sign and put its seal on them.”

Poshtar naturally was displeased with this new turn of affairs. In order to hurt Workun he began all sorts of trifling agitations amongst the settlers, playing on the lazy for being overworked, referring to tyrants and favouritism, all of which they had hoped to escape in Canada. As if this were not enough, Poshtar wrote to the school organizers hinting at alleged irregularities. But this noble gesture misfired. The only irregularities discovered were found in his own books. Furthermore when Workun understood what had transpired he notified Poshtar that if anything of this kind were repeated he would have to pay the cost of summoning the organizer. The settlers, to a man, were solidly behind him. Moreover the organizer freely admitted that Workun had broken no law, that



whatever minor irregularities had arisen, or might arise, must be attributed to the language barrier.

And so out of this competitive struggle between two personalities there rose a new schoolhouse in double-quick time. Each tax-payer, in fear of having to pay cash unless work were rendered, did his best to supply his quota of material and work. As Helena put it, Workun was more like a guest at home. In the daytime he supervised the work and in the evening he saw to it that they all performed their part of the *sharwarok*. And Wakar, happy in the knowledge that Workun had clipped Poshtar's wings, bored holes in all the logs, thus working off his own tax. Many were the times in later life, when passing by the schoolhouse, Workun was wont to say to himself with a smile, "Well, you're here; but what a time you gave me!"

**11** One day during the first week of June a carriage drove into Workun's yard. Two men were in it. The driver, who was in fact the school organizer, drove the tired horses right up to the very threshold

of the house.

"Ho, there!" he yelled. "Anybody home?"

But nobody came out of the house or answered the call. They heard a loud stamping in the distance as if someone were driving posts into the ground with a large mallet. They were about to walk in that direction when Helena appeared on the threshold.

"Good Lord!" she yelled as if she were shot. Then to the amazement of the two men, she ran back into the house.

"Are they all as dirty and wild as that?" the passenger asked the organizer.

"As far as I know there is no difference between them," he said disdainfully. "But let's not waste any time in talking. I've got to leave you with these barbarians so that I can catch the mail at the post office near the river before the sun sets, for there's no place around here either to eat or spend the night."

He turned the horses around and drove along the path to the forest, whence the sound of voices could be heard. At the fringe of the wood-lot, he got out and went in search of Workun. Then they returned to the house. "The teacher has come!" yelled Workun, but Helena was still in hiding. She was ashamed to have been seen dirty and dishevelled from plastering the stove. "Nobody home," muttered Workun. "We might as well go on to the school."

On the way to the schoolhouse, the carriage stopped at Wakar's. Workun dragged him out to witness the signing of the teacher's contract. He didn't want to go, but when Workun mentioned that Poshtar might try to put one over he went along willingly.

Poshtar awaited them in the schoolhouse. The teacher, Mr. Goodwin, quickly filled out the contract, which was signed by Workun and also by Wakar, who made a cross; then the contract was sealed. The school organizer ordered the board to supply the teacher with what he needed in the teacherage and to see to it that all the children from seven to fifteen years of age were present in school the day after next. After extending his best wishes to the teacher, he left him to his fate among the "barbarians."

But Mr. Goodwin was not the kind to lose heart easily. It is true that Helena's appearance had made an unfortunate impression, but on the other hand, there was the schoolhouse, which could not have been built by barbarians. There was Poshtar, with whom he could carry on a conversation, and Workun who, in spite of his bare feet and outlandish garments, certainly did not seem unintelligent.

"Here is where you will live and teach our children," said Workun. "You'll feel a little lonesome at first, but you'll soon get used to it. When we first came here, we had to put up with something far worse than this. We'll give you what you need so long as you teach the children, for you know how hard it is without education today. Excuse me, I forgot you don't speak Ukrainian."

"That's no loss," said Poshtar, viciously. "You've stuck to that man like a pup to a root so that no one else could get a word in edgewise."

"I was elected to talk and bring order into this community," countered Workun. "If you don't like it, don't listen."

The conversation continued in very sketchy English, with highly elaborate gestures. Mr. Goodwin gathered that it all had to do with his comforts—kitchen utensils, wash basin, and the chest which obviously served as a bed and wardrobe.

That he was right in the latter instance was proved when Workun rushed outside and returned with a bundle of hay which he strewed on the chest. Not to be outdone, Goodwin thereupon opened his own trunk, pulled out two woollen blankets, two sheets, a pillow, and began to make his own bed.

Poshtar nodded approval, but before he could add something portentous to the conversation, Workun slapped his sides and laughed. "I see you have come prepared, like a bridegroom on his honeymoon. You'll make out fine!"

When the members of the board departed, Goodwin made a systematic check of his lodgings. It was constructed of rough-hewn

logs, twelve feet wide and fourteen feet long, mud-plastered, without a ceiling. It was flat-roofed, with a door and two windows. It still smelt of raw wood and fresh mud. It contained a stove which was to serve the dual purpose of cooking and heating. And then there was Goodwin's own trunk which would have to serve as a table temporarily.

The schoolhouse was thirty by forty feet. It was built on a stone foundation and had three windows on each side. There were ten benches capable of seating four pupils each, all handmade, a table and bench for the teacher, and a blackboard set on a tripod.

The schoolyard consisted of two acres of wooded ground, where at least a quarter of the logs which had gone into the construction of the school had been hewn. It was enclosed by a fence made from poplar posts strung with willow stems. Just across the road was the cemetery, which could be seen through the trees and bushes, marked by a small, metal-covered cupola out of which rose a crucifix with two crosspieces.

Goodwin could not resist the temptation to see what was under the cupola and around it. He made his way through the trees to the church. It was a very primitive structure with high walls and two windows on each side. Four triangular-shaped roofs covered the top of the church, which met together in a cupola topped by the three-piece cross. It struck him as strange that the church was built with the back facing the road. He wanted to have a look inside; but there was no way to climb up to the sills of the windows and peek in.

The large poplar cross was of special interest to him. It had flower beds on all four sides, and a large wreath of dried wild flowers hung from it, and covering some sort of inscription. He lifted the wreath with a long pole and saw a date, 1899. He took out a note-book and jotted this date down.

He was equally interested in the small crosses standing among the weeds, eight of them in all, two large and six small ones. He tried to decipher the carvings on them, but couldn't make them out. There were just two large graves. On one of the graves at the extreme end of the cemetery a small poplar cross had tilted over so far that the end of one crosspiece touched the ground. When Goodwin tried to set it up again, it came to pieces in his hands. The latest date, so far as he could discover, was 1899.

He returned to his shack to prepare supper, but found that he

lacked matches, oil and a lamp. He had started out for Poshtar's when he met Workun with a bundle in his hand.

"Where do you think you are going?" asked Workun. "See this." He extended the parcel. "Helena prepared something for you, since we knew that you'd not have time to do it yourself."

Goodwin was taken aback, not at all sure that he would relish Helena's food. But he had to pretend gratitude. The contents of Workun's parcel were a surprise—a loaf of fine-looking bread, a bowl of chicken meat, and a pot of milk.

"Sit down," Workun urged, "and help yourself. Sorry we haven't anything better. Perhaps the Lord will provide us with something better in the future."

Goodwin looked at the food, glanced uncertainly at Workun, then pulled out some silver coins.

"Good Lord, no!" protested Workun. "It would be a sin to accept payment for food, especially from you. You forget about money and sit down and eat."

Goodwin, still hesitant, poured a cup of milk, tasted it, and smiled approval. It was cold and of good quality. Then, as he picked at his food, he explained the lack of fuel oil and matches. Hrehory nodded and hurried away to remedy the oversight.

School started on the third day after the teacher arrived. Workun made the rounds of all the houses where there were children, telling them to appear for registration and warning them about the penalty for non-compliance.

Not only did the children arrive on time, but all the parents as well, everyone dressed in holiday attire. Goodwin had never seen the like before.

The three trustees approached the school in march step and all the people followed. Workun stepped onto the porch, glanced around, waited for a few moments, and then started to speak.

"Honourable husbandmen and husbandwomen! *Gazdy* and *Gazdini!* Please move closer and listen to what I have to say. When the teacher appears, don't pile into the schoolroom pell-mell. Let each family come in separately. Tell your children not to be afraid nor to cry. The teacher doesn't know our language, but he is a good man. After the registration, all the parents can go home; the children will remain with the teacher."

Then all eyes were turned toward the teacherage.

After a few seconds Goodwin came out, holding a register in his hands. Wondering what it was all about, he greeted them with a good-morning as he approached the school. They seemed shy and submissive, but he sensed that for some reason they resented his presence. His apprehension was soon dispelled when Workun met him at the door, inviting him to step inside with all the courtesy due a bishop. And these strange amenities over, they were soon sitting together registering the bewildered children.

When the registration was concluded, Goodwin went outside to call in the children. Some of the older boys and girls had fled into the woods, while the younger ones were holding on to their mothers, terrified of this new "education." Of the twenty-eight children that had registered, only fourteen remained. They were lined up in twos and threes until the school board and the secretary returned to the schoolroom to see for themselves whether the teacher was going "to eat his bread for nothing."

Goodwin made a hurried classification of the children, assigned them to their seats, and then asked them to join in prayer. But they remained stubbornly silent and refused to rise. He had literally to pull each one of them up before he could start the prayer.

"He must be a Calvinist; I didn't see him cross himself," whispered Solowy.

"Sh!" warned Workun as he gave him a threatening look.

"Sit down," commanded Goodwin again, taking a seat himself. Some of the children sat down; others did not know what to do.

"Sit down; why are you waiting?" cried Kornylo Workun in Ukrainian. The children all sat down.

"Stand up!" cried Goodwin, standing.

The children looked uncertainly at Kornylo and, seeing that he stood up, they also rose.

"Sit down!" cried the teacher.

Kornylo again saved the situation. He sat down and so did the whole class.

"Stand up! Sit down! Stand up! Sit down!" Goodwin commanded several times; and the children, caught up in the rhythm of the thing, responded with great relish. They had taken a fancy to this kind of "learning."

"Stand up!" called Goodwin. The children stood up.

"Stand up!" he repeated. All the children sat down except

Kornylo. This bright lad called out at the top of his voice, "You didn't fool me!" and chuckled because he had gotten the better of his teacher.

Goodwin, too, smiled, although he didn't understand the Ukrainian words. He was happy that he had discovered a method of teaching children who didn't understand a word of his language.

This drill was followed by similar exercises, with Kornylo only too glad to act as a guide to the others.

And the school board, lined up along the wall, watched the proceedings and wondered when the real work of teaching would begin; that is, the learning of the alphabet. To them the drill seemed a waste of time, and when Goodwin finally lined up the children for orderly departure they too left, feeling very disappointed with the first lesson.

Parents still remained around the gate and on the road at lunchtime.

"Let's wait until the chairman comes out and find out about the lesson; for what kind of education will that be when the teacher and the children don't understand each other? It looks as if we're just wasting our money for nothing and the children are idling when they could be doing something useful on the farm, gathering roots and piling brush."

"The Lord only knows what to think about it," said one. "Children are of little use for work on the farm. It's clothing that worries me. You can't let them go to school in rags. I've tried to sow some hemp seeds; but the crop is always destroyed by frost so that it's useless for making cloth. It looks as if we'll have to make our clothing out of skins or else go around naked."

"There's another problem besides clothing," said Wolos. "My children will have to walk four miles to school. It's all right for Poshtar; but if he were in my place and had children of school age, he'd sing another song. As the crow flies, it's more than four miles; but following the winding path it would be about eight miles. Just imagine a child making a journey like that every morning. It couldn't learn a thing after such a journey."

"Added to all that," said Drozd, "We'll have a problem supplying them with lunches. What'll we do about that? Have them carry their own lunches or let their mothers go along with them and prepare their meals on the grounds?"

"Oh, sure; let the parents bring along the lunches, while we get a hired man to do all the work," laughed Pidhirny ironically. "I also think that this new school will be nothing but a headache."

"And what will we do when winter arrives?" interjected another neighbour.

"Oho! As for winter, we old folks will have to take the place of the youngsters," said Pidhirny. "Who'd risk the lives of the children during those cold months? I'll not let my children attend school in the winter, even if I have to pay a penalty."

The more the farmers discussed the school, the more they hated the thought of it. But this feeling was partially dissipated when the children marched out of school in orderly fashion in the afternoon. This at least pleased Pidhirny.

"It's evident that the teacher is disciplining the pupils right from the start," he observed. "And what did the teacher teach?" he asked as Workun came towards him.

"He taught the Cossack dance with an up-and-down movement," answered Wakar. "It's too bad there was such a to-do about building the school," he added angrily.

"How can the blind teach the blind?" another critic observed.

"Be reasonable, give the man a chance," said Workun. "This is just the beginning, and already the tongues are wagging."

"Why not?" said Poshtar. "I myself wouldn't give five cents for that kind of education."

"You wouldn't give a penny for any kind of education! What was so wrong with teaching the children when to rise and when to sit down?"

"He sure taught your boy," chided Poshtar; "and why shouldn't he with what you gave him the day before yesterday? Your boy was the only one who shone in the classroom; the others didn't bring any chicken."

"Would you like to have seen the teacher die of hunger?" roared Workun. "You're not begrudging the pieces of bread and the spoonful of milk that I gave him yesterday? You ought to be ashamed of that kind of thought."

"Why should we be ashamed to tell the truth?" said Poshtar stubbornly. "You're been leading us by the nose a little too long."

"Who? How?"

"All of us," answered Drozd. "You wanted a school and now you've got it."



“And who chose the site for the school but you?” interjected Wolos. “You took great care that it would be near your place. But as for me, it’ll take my children a half a day to get there.”

Tempers flared hotly, and the argument against the teacher and the school became a personal attack upon Workun. It might have got out of hand completely had not Solowy put a stop to it by remarking mildly, “The school has been built. It’s here to stay. So why quarrel about it?”

While the older folk were arguing on the road, the youngsters were making merry in the schoolyard. Goodwin had been organizing some games. The children had taken to them enthusiastically, for nothing else could have dispelled so effectively the impression their parents had given them of school as a kind of prison-house where the slightest mistakes were sure to bring swift and humiliating punishment. Indeed some of the boys had come prepared for this eventuality by padding the seats of their pants.

These preparations had proved to be wholly unnecessary. As time went on, Goodwin showed himself a born teacher. He liked children and soon gained their confidence. This was shown by the way they lagged behind after school was over, and by the way they kept repeating the lessons as they slowly wended their way home.

Writing to a friend in the East, Goodwin spoke of the school in these words:

According to the information which I received when I was sent out West to teach, the people amongst whom I now live were called Ruthenians from Austria, but they speak Ukrainian and refer to themselves as Ukrainians. They live in primitive simplicity, but they have their own traditions, and they must have an inner drive towards a better way of life or they would not have sacrificed so much to establish a school. They are a courageous people, and unlike so many temporary exploiters of our country they have come to stay. They are building homes in the wilderness. They have buried their dead in their own consecrated cemetery, where the cross of their ancient faith bears witness to their sacrifice and firm intention to make Canada their country.

# 12

Goodwin spent five months at the Lipiwtsi School, but it seemed like five days. And when it was time to leave he couldn't resist shedding a few tears at parting with the children and parents who gave him a sendoff as if he were some important relation. There was sincere regret at his departure. This regret was an elegant testimony to the changed attitude of the community, which his friendly intercourse had brought about.

In the beginning his visits were resented. The people looked upon it as an invasion of their privacy and an officious attempt to keep them on their best behaviour. But when they got used to one another, this touchiness died out. On his part, Goodwin was interested in seeing how these transplanted people lived. He found that in some of the huts there was no floor, that the stove took up one-fourth of the single room, which served all purposes, usually slept from three to eight persons and where the chickens darted in and out, or roosted under the benches. Piglets romping round the floor further complicated the visitor's progress.

The eternal struggle against the vicissitudes and exigencies of life took all the time of the settlers. Nobody counted the hours, for nobody had watches or clocks except Poshtar. They reckoned time by the sun and the stars. And when they returned from work, they had no other thought but to finish their meals and to lie down to sleep.

Goodwin had made it his practice to visit one or another household each evening. He brought little treats for the children and on occasion, when someone was ill, he brought simple medicines and salves. But the home he visited for personal pleasure was that of Wasyl and Maria. Here he felt at ease, in an atmosphere which, thanks to Maria's training in service, was less alien and depressive.

"I have often wondered how your parents, without money or a knowledge of English, and illiterate, had the courage to emigrate to this wilderness and, with small children on their hands," he once said to the young couple.

"It was a case of necessity," replied Maria. "Poverty was the driving force."

"And after you arrived here you found even greater poverty," laughed Goodwin.

"That's right," she said. "But there was free land to be had; and land with willing hands to work it gives hope and the promise of a better future."

This simple assertion gave Goodwin a new insight into the character and constant toil of the people. It also cemented a firm friendship with the young Dubs. Maria reciprocated his friendship, baked bread for him, washed his clothes and in every way tried to make life more bearable for him.

"You're ready to match-make Goodwin with one of our girls," Teklia charged Maria one day.

"And why not? Isn't he a fine catch?" Maria asked humorously. "If Elizaveta were home I'd steer her in his direction."

"Since she's not here why not steer Olena his way?" suggested Teklia.

"That'll be a hard proposition with Olena being so bashful and backward," said Maria casually; she was not thinking of match-making Goodwin; but as an afterthought she said, "We'll marry him when he comes back next summer."

As a matter of fact, Goodwin missed the company of young people; but as for marriage, it had never occurred to him. There were only three eligible girls in the community but they did not measure up in compatibility. They kept out of his way when he visited their homes.

"Mother, I would like to start going to school," Olena told her mother one day. "The professor told me it was not too late to teach me to read and write English."

"What's wrong with you?" demanded Kalina, angrily. "Whoever heard of a big girl like you going to school? You ought to be ashamed even to suggest such a thing!"

"Well, I'm going anyway, Mother," said Olena. "I'm ashamed that I don't know English."

Kalina measured Olena with her eyes.

“And where were you today?” she asked caustically.

“At Wasyl’s place.”

“So that’s where all this nonsense has started. I’ve told you a hundred times not to go there.” Then, struck by a happy thought, she relented. “Go to school if you must—but keep away from Maria.”

An odd companionship sprung up between the young teacher and the lonely girl who, obviously, found him attractive and wanted to be friendly. He formed the habit of seeing her home and frequently went with her when she stole out to see the Dubs.

Goodwin really liked her company, her clear blue eyes, light golden hair. She was compatible, he thought, and perhaps something more than that . . .

They were always greeted gaily by Maria, who was pleased to see them together.

“So you are late for dinner again?” Maria would chide them mischievously. “The beauty of the country must have improved since I saw it.”

But when the meal was finished, Maria would set Goodwin the practical task of teaching Olena to read and write English. “It won’t be wasted—whatever happens,” she said.

Some time later Wakar came to Workun with strange news: “Hey there, neighbour! That new school of ours is responsible for a lot of trouble.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“Well, that professor has lured all the girls to school. First it was Olena Dub, then Parasina Pidhirny and now my Sophia. They’ve all gone school crazy.”

“Don’t worry! Girls will have their fling. The craze will pass when they realize the professor isn’t interested in any of them.”

“That’s what you think. Who’s been leading Olena along the cow path in the woods? You think we’re all blind around here, do you? What’s got into that man, anyway?”

“She’s a fine-looking girl,” said Workun, winking mischievously at Wakar. “If you were a young swain and a teacher to boot, you wouldn’t be able to resist her charms either. To tell the truth, Wakar, I’d go myself if the professor would have me.”

"You would," Wakar snorted.

"Why not? Poshtar goes to the teacher for lessons at night."

"What, you knew this and did not tell me? By golly, now I will go and I'll take Tetiana along with me, too."

But as for Goodwin it made no difference to him; he taught everyone who came to the school. A born pedagogue, he took no account of time or health in his eagerness to impart education, adopting whatever method he thought practical under the circumstances. If he thought he could do better by taking all the pupils outdoors, he did so, teaching them the names of everything living or dead that was visible. And he was surprised at his own success, both with the young and the old pupils who, one and all, competed with each other for the praise of the teacher.

"A little more nutritious food, more soap and water, better clothes and, at least an elementary education and these girls would be a fine lot," thought Goodwin to himself many a time. But when his gaze fell on Olena his opinion rose somewhat higher.

On many a night when the rain prevented him making his round of visits Goodwin would sit at home contemplating this girl. And then he would wish to be near Olena and look into those large, clear blue eyes so full of mystery that only the heart could fathom. But could he trust his heart to explore their depth?

"There is too wide a distance between our ways of life," Goodwin wrote in his diary. "But what a strange distance, so near and yet so far. I see her near me, feel her presence and hear her heart beat and yet she is very far away from me. . . ."

"To uproot her from her natural surroundings and transplant her in foreign soil would probably be disastrous. Where would I go with her? Our ways of life are too different, centuries of tradition, a vastly different heritage, alien customs and religion, have set us too far apart to make normal adjustments, much less happiness, possible."

Having arrived at this conclusion, Goodwin made a point of treating all his pupils alike. He succeeded fairly well, although from time to time he lent a hand when Olena and her mother were making hay.

But happiness and joy, like the weather, are changeable things. They warm you for a while, light up your life, give rise to many

other hopes and then, like a crop after a severe frost, they fade away and die.

Something akin to this feeling arose after Goodwin's departure. A void was created. "He was like one of us," said Workun. "He never ignored us, never cast any reflections about our lack of order or poverty, ate with us from the same bowl and did everything he could to ease our misfortunes and to make life more bearable amid the grim harshness of pioneer existence."

**13** Two weeks before Goodwin's departure a wagon rumbled along the road towards the school. It was some time before noon and Goodwin did not even try to stop the children from gazing out the windows to see who it was that drove so noisy a vehicle. For it was an unusual rumble that they heard, much louder than that made by the local wagons. Even Goodwin was intrigued by it.

But he had hardly looked through the window when Kornylo let out a loud cry.

"Hey there, hey!" he yelled as he leaped over the benches towards the door. "It's Bill and Elizaveta coming!" And before Goodwin knew what it was all about, he had already leaped up on the approaching wagon and into the arms of Elizaveta.

Goodwin had heard about the two from Maria and so went out to greet them. Kornylo in his childish way introduced him to Bill and Elizaveta and Bill acquainted him with the other passengers and with Pavlo Workun. Katerina Poshtar had come along too; but she had got off at her father's place.

"I think we shall meet more than once again," said Bill as he gathered the reins and started off again. "If it's no trouble to you, I'd like to visit you this evening."

"I'll welcome you with the greatest of pleasure," said Goodwin, happily, as he kept staring at Elizaveta who, in turn, was measuring him.

The wagon pulled out and Goodwin just stood there gazing after it, noticing that Elizaveta was waving a friendly hand in his direction. He would have lingered there much longer had it not been for Kornylo. The latter refused to jump off the wagon and return back to school. He was so glad to see his sister and the guests and especially the piebald horse tied behind the wagon; but

Elizaveta almost forcibly ejected him and then took the reins herself and drove the horses at a run.

"You think I care about you?" he yelled angrily after the wagon. "I didn't want to ride. If I had wanted to ride I would have. . . ." Here he halted, not knowing how to express the tragedy of his recent debasement; but when he came nearer to Goodwin, he used a different tack. "She's getting to be very conceited because she's going to marry Bill. He's got all kinds of cattle and horses, one of which, a small horse, he promised to give me so that I could ride to school on him. I think that was the one behind the wagon. I know, but . . ."

The boy would have burst into tears had it not been for Goodwin and the other children. He had rapidly gone through the gamut of great joy and great sorrow and now he wanted to come out of this predicament as a hero before his fellow pupils.

"Don't worry! Everything will be all right," said Goodwin in consolation, without knowing what Kornyo said. He had learned quite a smattering of words from the pupils and Maria, but was not able to fully understand them in their various conjugations and cases. And, thus, he could only guess what was being said; but in this case he guessed right. "After school," he said, "We'll both go horseback riding," as he turned back to the schoolhouse.

The unexpected guests caused quite a furore in the community by their arrival. From noon to four o'clock Goodwin found it hard to rivet the attention of the pupils; and when he finally let them out, they rushed pell-mell to their homes to tell their parents about this latest bit of important news.

Workun and Helena were making hay when they heard the loud rumble of the wagon in the yard, the view of which was obstructed by the forest and the stable.

"Now you're in for it, old girl," said Workun. "This smells of trouble. It must have been Poshtar's work," he added as he began to pitch sheaves viciously on the stack.

"Stop chucking them on my head," yelled Helena, who had been setting the sheaves in order on the stack. "Why don't you resign from that chairmanship?" she asked. "You'd have some peace," she added. "Well, now, Mr. Chairman, go and show yourself in those tattered garments."

"No, you go and tell them I'm not home," pleaded Workun



as he contemplated his sorry rags. "Can't you see I'm more naked than attired?"

"Am I in any better condition?" hissed Helena angrily. "If I show up, they'll say a scarecrow escaped from the garden. Oh, no, not me!"

"In that case I'll not go either; they'll mill around for a while and then leave."

But suddenly Elizaveta's voice could be heard. "Mother!" she yelled quite loudly.

"Hey, that's Elizaveta's voice," said Helena, happily.

"Well, then, tell her to come this way," admonished Workun. "And if she's alone or with one of our settlers, then it won't be necessary to quit working."

"Oho there! Is that you, Elizaveta?" yelled Helena. "Come on over here!"

Helena's voice had hardly echoed from the forest when the wagon began to rumble again until it finally arrived at the hay stack. When the new guests appeared, Workun grew numb with surprise. He sank down to his neck in the sheaves, while Helena flopped down like a hen over her chicks.

The guests did not understand the cool and flustered greeting of the two oldsters; and so, to ease the strain, Elizaveta grabbed a ladder that was propped up against another completed stack, placed it against the one Workun and Helena were working on, climbed up on top and soon she and her mother were embracing each other so affectionately that they both tumbled down among the sheaves. Meanwhile Bill got in a bit of horseplay of his own by aiming a gun at Workun, yelling: "Come down before I shoot you!"

And so Workun climbed down and for good reason. His oxen, balking at the presence of strangers, started running away. Bill, too, jumped down from his own wagon, but before he could catch up to the oxen Workun had already caught them and tied them to a poplar tree.

"I'm sorry I caused you so much trouble," said Bill, offering his hand to Workun.

Workun didn't understand his expression of sorrow, but he extended his hand also. Bill grasped it firmly.

Meanwhile Elizaveta was dragging her mother down from the stack.

"My child!" whispered Helena out of sheer joy, but still aware

of her tattered clothes. "I can't show myself anywhere with these rags. Why didn't you let me know you were coming? Look at me! What a scarecrow! The guests are liable to think that this is the way we always dress."

"Oh, forget it! Nobody is going to laugh at you," consoled her daughter. "You just come along and we'll dress you up like a doll."

Thus they both climbed down from the stack. Workun and Bill were waiting for them.

"Too bad we haven't got a camera," said one of Bill's friends from the wagon. "We'd take a few snapshots on the sly and then show Bill what a strange father-in-law and mother-in-law he's going to have."

"That's a queer costume old man Workun's wearing. He looks like a Mexican."

"Here in these jungles one can go around naked and not even be noticed," said one of them.

"They must be very economical," said another. "Look at Mrs. Workun; she's hardly got any clothes on her; and to think that a woman has to pitch sheaves!"

"Strange that a mother like that could have given birth to a fine girl like Elizaveta," observed another.

The third guest was about to make some remarks when Workun and Bill approached the wagon and broke in on the conversation. Introductions followed. Helena hid behind Elizaveta from shame; but Workun, forgetting his own predicament, shook hands all around, winking mischievously and inviting everybody into the house.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that you found us like this. Who expected that you would be coming all this distance into this wilderness? Good people never come this way; only those who are driven mad because of their wealth."

"Hey, hey, listen to him gab!" said Helena, afraid that the guests might take her husband at his word. "Take him into the house while I search around for some eggs. We'll have to treat them with something, for I know they must be as hungry as wolves."

But before Bill could turn around with the horses and ride towards the house Pavlo came trotting in, riding on the piebald.

"Why, you young rascal, where did you come from?" asked Workun.

"I was at Maria's," said the young lad. And then he boasted, "Watch me jump over that fence." He bent low down over the horse, dug into his sides with his heels and then raced him towards the fence. But Jim, after two days of a long journey, had no intention of jumping over the fence. He merely ran through the open gate against the will of his rider and did not stop running until he came to the haystacks.

"That sure was a fine jump," laughed Workun, when Pavlo returned.

"Stop laughing but use a switch on him," said Helena, sternly; and then in a more motherly fashion she said, "My dear little Pavlo! Why do you scare me so? You say you were at Maria's? When did you arrive? Get off that horse! Can't you see him shooting daggers out of his eyes? I'm afraid he'll start biting all of us."

"Don't be alarmed, Mother," said Elizaveta, appeasingly, as she went over to Jim and grabbed him around the head. "He doesn't bite good people, see!" she added as she patted him on the head.

But Helena had no faith in horses; so she backed away, only to find herself right under the heads of the white horses that were hitched to the rumbling wagon. When she realized where she was, she immediately swerved to the side, while Workun just stood there laughing at her predicament. Pavlo ran over to her, telling her to have no fear and that as matters stood now it was as if he had already bought the two horses from Bill.

"That's right," confirmed Bill. "Pavlo will give me a deposit and you can give me two young steers and the two mares are yours."

"I'll give him not two but three steers," Workun cried, elated.

"Sure, sure," said Helena. "You've enough trouble with the steers, let alone taking on those horses. So don't try to make any deal with Bill for this team."

Thus, instead of entertaining the guests, there arose a disagreement among the Workuns as to whether they should buy the mares or not; Helena arguing that they were not in a position to make so large an outlay of money or to put on a false display of pride.

"And suppose they get hurt? Horses are not as hardy as oxen. All kinds of accidents and sickness happen to them. . . ."

Helena was working up to a final irrefutable argument when Elizaveta stopped her by saying: "Oh, Mother, don't you want to hear why I've come and what I have to tell you?"

What Elizaveta told her father and mother did not evoke the joy she had expected. She thought that Bill's friendliness and prosperity which anyone would have considered a good catch should have aroused enthusiasm in her parents when she announced her prospective marriage to the rancher.

"You speak of a wedding, but you don't say where and what kind," said Workun, a bit angrily. "You know yourself that it has to be done according to custom, such as sending the match-makers and so forth, so that we won't have the same trouble that existed between Ivan Poshtar and *swat* Dub."

"And who will perform the marriage ceremony?" asked Helena, tearfully. "I can't let her get married without the customary vows in the presence of people."

"Bill took out a license which allows you to get married. He's got it in his pocket," said Elizaveta, pursing her lips in annoyance.

"In the Old Country you take out a paper for cattle when you want to sell them, but not for girls," scolded Workun. "Engaged couples go to the priests to prove that they know their prayers; if they didn't, the priest wouldn't announce the banns in church. Without that announcement they couldn't get married."

"Who announced your banns?" interrupted Helena. "From what altar, who heard it? You say he has a paper. But who has read it? Perhaps this is not the first time this Bill of yours has taken out such papers and got married, then torn the paper up and left one girl after another, leaving behind him a lot of illegitimate children."

"He looks like a fellow who's eaten bread out of more than one oven and you've got to be careful of that kind," continued Workun in support of Helena. "Yet here you are, without giving any thought to it, asking us to prepare a wedding."

"Wasył and Maria got married without any banns being published and nothing has happened to them," said Elizaveta in self-defence.

"Wasył, Wasył," Helena repeated. "We've known him since he was a child. But who knows Bill? and as for Maria and Wasył,

there were none of our kind of priests around when they got married."

"Poshtar says there are some priests about thirty miles from here where they have a mission; and if you still have the marriage fever, we'll pay them a visit," said Workun.

"But when will that be?" whimpered Elizaveta. "This is Wednesday and Bill can't stay here any longer than Sunday."

"Well, if Bill waited for you longer than two years then the devil won't take him if he waits a few days longer."

"We didn't invite him to come here," said Helena. She was about to say something more, but Pavlo came running into the house, announcing that Wasyl and Bill's friends were coming to haul the sheaves while the family discussed Elizaveta's wedding.

"Listen to the song he's singing!" said Helena. "They've made the plans without consulting us. We sure should be proud of our children!" she added.

"It won't happen as they think," said Workun deliberately. "I'm not the pliable fellow I used to be. Poshtar taught me that lesson; and if they want to have their own way, I'll grab a stick and disperse the whole lot of them."

Workun locked his hands behind his back and began to pace backwards and forwards, while Helena and Elizaveta sat on the bed in miserable dejection.

"Of all things! Every wedding should be an occasion of honour to the father and mother. But what have we got here? My daughter brings along a suitor and says, 'I want to get married.' Just as if it were nothing at all. Without knowing the depth of the stream, she wants to jump into it head first."

"Bill wanted to have the ceremony performed in town and then to come here," said Elizaveta in resentful tones. "But I didn't want to agree with that."

"Why not?" Workun asked, curiously.

"I was afraid you'd be angry if I got married without your permission."

"Oh, so that's it," laughed Workun. "And when did you intend to have the marriage performed?"

"After the wedding."

"That's like putting the horse before the wagon. Whoever heard of celebrating a wedding first and then getting married afterwards?"

"I thought that would be the best thing to do to avoid your anger."

"And if we didn't allow you to marry Bill, what would you have done in that case?"

"I would have hidden in the woods until Bill went back home," replied Elizaveta.

At that moment Maria and Bill entered the house.

"What are you all so upset about?" asked Maria as she cast a sharp glance at the ruffled family.

"Fortune has entered this room and we don't know where to set it up," said Workun as he handed Bill a small bench.

"You won't be able to chase it out of here either," said Maria as she sat down on the bed beside her mother. "Now what do you plan to do about it?"

"God only knows what we should do," said Helena. "It wouldn't be so bad if I could only talk to him, but I might as well be deaf and dumb . . ."

"You tell him if he wants to get married he'll have to do it in our church, otherwise I won't agree to the wedding," said Workun, firmly.

"That's what I say, too," agreed Helena, happy that Workun had made the matter so plain.

"But where will he find one of our priests?" asked Maria curiously.

"Well, that's up to him. He's getting married and not I. Let him find out for himself."

"But I'm ashamed to tell him the way you put it," said Maria in sudden exasperation, and then she proceeded to explain as best she could her parents' wishes.

"Well, that should be easy enough," said Bill, calmly. "Tomorrow we'll take the wagon and look for a priest. But why are they crying?" he asked as he looked at Helena and Elizaveta, locked in tearful embrace.

"It's customary among us to cry before a marriage," explained Maria, resolved to hide the real reason. "Mothers cry for their daughters and the daughters cry because they don't know what fate awaits them in a new life away from their mothers."

Bill smiled crookedly at this reply.

"It seems to me that Mrs. Workun is displeased with my proposed marriage with Elizaveta," he said.

"It'd be worth while for you to speak to her personally," said Maria. "Perhaps she'd feel differently about it then."

"I'd like to do that, but how? I only know a few words of the language, but not enough to make myself understood."

"Well, use the words you already know," Maria suggested. "Tell her you love Elizaveta and want to marry her and that you are begging for her daughter's hand. That's the way every suitor does it among my people. Go ahead, bow down before her and do the best you can. I'll stand by to prompt you."

This was no burden to Bill. He would have climbed up on the roof if the occasion had demanded it. And so he went over to Helena, bowed low and started to sue for the hand of Elizaveta. Maria could hardly contain herself from laughter at his attempts to make himself clear.

"Now ask them whether they agree or not," said Maria after Bill had given his promise to treat Elizaveta well, to visit the Workuns, to build a home in town, to ask Mrs. Workun to spend some time there with them and so forth.

According to the old custom, Helena didn't answer his question herself. She asked Workun what he thought about it and he said he would agree to whatever she said. Then she asked Elizaveta whether she was willing to marry the suitor, to which Elizaveta replied that she would not have dragged him all that distance if she were not agreeable. Helena then said that she would give her final answer tomorrow, for too much hurry would end in a flurry. Herewith, the "conference" ended, Bill and Workun going to their sheaves and the women remaining to prepare supper.

It was an endless night for the Workuns and a memorable one, wondering as they did what answer to give Bill.

"The Lord only knows what answer to give Bill," muttered Workun. "Elizaveta caught us in a trap and now we don't know what to do about it."

"I told you to watch the girls; but all you did was to joke about it," Helena reminded him.

"Who would have expected that such an inexperienced youngster could attract a rich Englishman," said Workun in self-defence. "It never occurred to me anything serious would come of it."

“What you thought wasn’t worth anything. Why do you suppose he paid us that visit last summer?”

“I thought he was looking over our property and that when he saw how little we possessed, he’d give Elizaveta up as a bad bargain.”

“Oh, he’s cunning,” Helena sniffed. “He won’t ask for any dowry now, but after the wedding he’ll give you a list of things he thinks are coming to him, and he’ll demand every cent of the money she earned and then gave to you. Then you’ll have something real to think about!”

“The Lord only knows . . .”

“Yes, the Lord knows! that atheist without a father or mother, living alone with his cattle and like his cattle! Misfortune had no other place to cast him but on our doorstep! So he gets out a paper for a wife!”

“Perhaps that’s the way things are done in his class.”

“What a fine class! Imagine taking out a license for a wife, then tearing it up and saying, ‘I don’t know you.’ Who will be a witness that he was married? What priest married him? Why that would make her just a common-law wife, living in adultery with him. And what of the children. They would be born to eternal shame, without honour and respect among the people.”

“You sure have outdone yourself in crowing . . .”

“I’m crowing because my heart bleeds for my daughter.”

“But Elizaveta said that Bill insisted on a marriage.”

“What kind of a marriage and where?”

“I think . . .”

“Oh, you’re always thinking! Why not do something for a change. Why not go to Poshtar or Solowy for advice? Perhaps they might put you on the right track.”

“Maybe you might keep quiet for a change. Tomorrow morning I’ll go and see the professor. Perhaps he may have a solution. I’ll take Maria along with me as an interpreter.”

“So the professor is better than Poshtar? You’d rather seek advice from a stranger? What does he know about our faith and customs? And then, who is he? Perhaps he is of the same breed as Bill? No good person would come into these jungles of his own free-will. He infatuated our girls and drives them mad, chases after Kalina’s girl and yet you’d seek him out for advice?”

“Kalina’s girl does the chasing . . .”



“Oh, sure; you think someone’s blind! Who grinds her corn for her? If it were just the girls he was infatuating, it wouldn’t be so bad; but he’s taken a shine to Maria. You think the people aren’t noticing that? Would to God he went away from here, then perhaps the tongues would stop wagging! You better go and see Poshtar. He has experience and maybe he’ll know a way out. Or else I’ll go myself, for there has been too much trouble between the two of you about the school.”

“It seems that no advice will help in this case,” said Workun. “Even if we try to separate them, she’d only follow him to town and get married just as Maria did.”

“I’d disown her as my child if she ever did anything like that.”

“That’s just a lot of nonsense. This is not the Old Country where a child simply has to obey father and mother. Over there they just could not go anywhere at all and so they had to listen. But you can see how it is here. She left our place, found a job and then lived in a world of her own creation. This is a different world, different people; and even we will not for long be able to remain as we were; we’ll be neither this nor that.”

“Maybe you’ll change but I won’t,” whispered Helena, angrily. “I know that you say one thing and think another and are ready to change to another way of life. That’s why you don’t want to give up those horses.”

“You’re blabbering as in a dream. Do you think I want the horses now, tongues would start wagging that I exchanged my daughter for a pair of horses.”

“I’ll see what you have to say tomorrow,” said Helena, but Workun didn’t answer. He was angry at her for mentioning the horses.

In this manner the Workuns threshed the matter over all through the night, with but few intervals of sleep and without arriving at a conclusion.

Bill did not waste much time that evening. After supper at Workun’s, he and Goodwin went off to the schoolhouse where they spent many hours talking things over.

“What do you think of my marriage with Elizaveta?” he asked as soon as they got out on the road.

“She’s a fine girl,” answered Goodwin. “If she’s anything

like her sister Maria, then you'll have a good industrious wife," he added seriously.

"Which means that I wouldn't be making a mistake by marrying her?"

"That's right, if she has the same qualities as Maria."

"And just what virtues has Maria?" asked Bill, curiously.

"Beauty, health, industry, judgment, neatness, economy, example, faithfulness, sincerity, perseverance and patience. Count them on your fingers."

"Whoa! I haven't enough fingers," said Bill, laughing. Then serious again, he said, "As far as I know Elizaveta is industrious and patient and she's certainly both healthy and beautiful. That's as far as I can be sure of anything, especially after meeting her family."

"What about the family?"

"They seem to possess most of the virtues you enumerated. But they don't appear overjoyed at my proposal. I can't make them understand that I love her for the same qualities they prize so highly."

"You're not as big a fool as I thought you were when I first met you," said Goodwin as he tapped Bill lightly on the shoulder. "But who will be in control, you or she?"

"To tell you the truth, I won't have any objections even if she does want to run the household."

"Well, it looks as if she has already taken command," said Goodwin, laughing. "If she's anything like Maria, you'll be under the dictatorship of a woman for life."

"But tell me sincerely, would you marry Elizaveta if you were in my place?"

"In your circumstances I'd do what you already have in mind to do."

"What would you do in your own circumstances?"

"I'd not get married."

"Why?" asked Bill, looking curiously at Goodwin.

"She wouldn't be accepted in my sphere of life."

"You mean that beyond her primitive surroundings she wouldn't fit in?"

"It's as old as the hills, my friend," said Goodwin. "The only reason the French fur-traders married Indian women was that

there were no white women around. To them their redskin wives were not companions in our sense of the word, but simply women."

"Perhaps that is the way the old folks were thinking," Bill said ruefully. "They certainly showed little evidence of joy or approval. In fact, both Mrs. Workun and Elizaveta were crying as if some dire tragedy had struck the family."

"You're not going to give up, are you?" asked Goodwin with a smile. "For you won't find a better wife than Elizaveta. She's unselfish and will bring you happiness. Like her sister Maria, and her father Hrehory, she believes in the greatest good of the greatest number. She won't bleed you to satisfy her own ego or make unreasonable demands on your resources. She is a thoroughly nice girl, cheerful and very practical too."

"I know. That's what I liked about her from the beginning. She made the best of things at my sister's, which is not the easiest place to work."

"Well, then, don't be put off by a few ceremonies, however strange they may seem. I like these people. They will add something valuable to our culture."

"I am glad to hear you say that," Bill smiled, "but at the moment I'm only interested in my personal problem. Tell me honestly what you think of mixed marriages. Some of my friends, as well as my sister, object to me marrying a Galician."

"I don't know what to think," Goodwin said. "In eastern Canada intermarriage between the French and English peoples is not very popular. The religious angle usually makes for the difficulties. Here, where the church is not as firmly established, you may escape that sort of thing."

"Perhaps, as the Galicians say among themselves, where there is dearth of fish, even a crab can pass as a fish," laughed Bill.

"But mixed marriages sometimes have unfortunate results," added Goodwin, gravely.

"Such as what?" Bill asked.

"A spiritual vacuum in family and community life," replied Goodwin.

"And what kind of vacuum would that be?"

"If those mixed marriages result in a negation of racial and religious feelings, suppressed for the sake of peace in the family, both partners in the union will reside in a sort of traditionless

no-man's-land with nothing to look back to or forward to. That is not a healthy atmosphere at any time."

"What you say is not very encouraging. If no happy compromise is possible perhaps I should look for a girl of my own race."

"I had no such thought in mind. Your marriage may turn out very well. The character of the Workun family is reason enough. They are sensible people, kind and considerate of others. I don't think for a moment that Elizaveta would disregard your opinions in the larger affairs of the household, so long as she is free to observe her own religious duties. The house and the children are their domain. They are quite content to leave all the rest to the men."

"That makes me feel better," Bill grinned sheepishly. "To be honest, my mind was made up anyway. If my friends won't accept my wife we shall do without them."

**14** In spite of all the arguments of Hrehory and Helena, the wedding could not be put off. Bill and Elizaveta had set the date for Thursday evening.

“But,” said Workun at the morning session of the family conclave, “if we are going to put on a wedding, let’s do it as it should be done. Let the young couple have reason to remember that a wedding is not a mere social gesture, but a sacred and solemn occasion. Bill will have to go through our ceremonies with patience. If he won’t, well, as the saying goes, one woman less on the wagon makes it easier on the horses. I won’t accept any other attitude.”

Of course there was no appeal from this ruling, and by Thursday evening the ceremonies began. Elizaveta was seated behind the table, which displayed three loaves of bread (*kolachi*), with the pale light of the candle casting a strange glow over her face.

Meanwhile Goodwin, Bill, and Bill’s friends stood outside, looking in through the open window. It was the custom that the prospective bridegroom was not to be present while the bride-to-be was being prepared for the marriage. But after the marriage he was to accompany her in the subsequent procession.

As she sat there, Elizaveta resembled a painting. Circling her loosely hanging hair was an embroidered coronet from which hung many long varicoloured ribbons that almost covered the back of her jacket. About her neck she wore strings of coral, silver and coloured beads which glistened under the glimmering candlelight. The blazing gold and silver sequins and the lavish embroidery of her jacket and blouse enhanced the splendour of her appearance.

“She is beautiful,” whispered Goodwin, smiling at the bridegroom.

“Yes, but I’d be happier if I were in there, or even if we could see better,” Bill complained.

There were too many guests obscuring their vision, and no one gave any thought to the bridegroom. But now and then they caught a clearer glimpse of Elizaveta. Olena Dub, as first bridesmaid, sat on her left, then came the Pidhirnys (wedding parents), Mr. and Mrs. Workun, Teklia and Maria, and the younger women and girls who were the singers for the occasion. On the bride's right sat Sophia Wakar, as the second bridesmaid, and just next to her were the *swachy* and other near relatives. The rest of the guests remained standing, waiting for the wreath-waving procedure. In anticipation the musicians started to tune their instruments. Then the wedding music began.

One song followed another to the weeping of the violin and the tinkling of the cymbals, signifying the transition from innocent girlhood to responsible womanhood. And while the music developed the familiar theme, Teklia plaited the wedding wreaths, adding a bit of colour here, another there, and finally held it aloft for all to see. Then the singers responded. "The cranberry bud will come out white, Our little wreath will shine so bright, Come this way, oh mother dear, Lift up this wreath that we have here, Set it down upon the head, Of this maiden who will wed . . ."

Helena and Teklia embraced each other; then Helena with unsteady hands took the wreath, climbed on a bench and placed it on Elizaveta's head as a sign of her virginity. This done, the guests burst into a song about the mother picking the wreath up and holding it on high over her daughter who, with genuine modesty and a clear conscience, waited for it to be placed upon her head.

Helena blessed Elizaveta three times with the wreath and placed it on her head. Elizaveta then kissed her mother's hands. Thus ended the first episode of the wedding "operetta." The wedding supper followed, after which Plishka with his violin and Nikifor with his cymbals kept up a steady round of dance music. For these were people who knew how to work hard and how to play hard.

"Well, what did you think of it?" asked Bill as he and Goodwin walked back home.

"My evening certainly wasn't wasted," Goodwin replied. "I'm sorry I couldn't understand the gist of their songs. But I could tell by the mood of the gathering that the affair was no theatrical mummery, but a genuine expression of racial tradition.

Those simple songs had a deep significance for everybody taking part. Why, even that thorny little Wakar joined in the singing."

"You talk as if you were giving your pupils a lesson," laughed Bill. "How did you feel about Mrs. Workun and Elizaveta crying so much at the ceremony?"

"I think you and I would have cried if we had been in their places," replied Goodwin soberly. "As I saw it, their ceremony has something to do with preparing the mind of the bride for the transition from girlhood to womanhood, by dramatizing the event in a sequence of acts; and as Elizaveta saw the drama unfolding before her, she could not help crying. Mrs. Workun, as you saw, played the leading part in this drama. The role of course gave her no pleasure, because the transition meant parting with her daughter and handing her over to the tender mercies of a stranger like you, you vagabond, and with her blessing. Therein lies the reason for all those tears."

"Yes, but one could do without these tearful ceremonies; a bit melodramatic, don't you think?"

"Perhaps, but they've been a part of their culture for centuries. They can't be done away with until something equally dear has replaced them."

"That may be true, and I'll admit the symbolic crown is a pleasant reminder that virtue is a woman's chief treasure. But why the piece of garlic in Elizaveta's coronet?"

"I don't know. Possibly to suggest that earth and heaven are co-partners in married happiness. Now let's get some rest. Tomorrow will be a busy day, my friend."

When the sun rose the following morning, Helena had already started preparing Elizaveta for the marriage ceremony, while the bridesmaids helped her to dress for the occasion. Then began the second act of the drama, in which the bride must say farewell to her home, her parents and her friends.

Elizaveta knelt before her parents, while Plishka the violinist made the farewell speech. "This child," he said, "appears before the Lord God, before Jesus Christ, and before the Holy Mother, before her father and mother, sisters and brothers, her aunts and uncles, her kinsmen and neighbours, and before the whole Christian world, begging all of them to forgive her and to bless her on her long

journey into the distant world to God's home, once, twice and a third time."

And to this the guests responded three times, "May God forgive her!"

Then Plishka continued: "Just before you leave this place, Cross the threshold with good grace; You must thank your mother dear, And obey your father here. And if you do wish to wed, Let them put sense in your head. . . . Now you leave us for the church, at the altar to be wed, there to swear before the Lord, vowed to live in accord; and all your sins he will forgive. May God bless you!"

The guests echoed the blessing. Then Elizaveta, kneeling on a white cloth before her parents, bowed her head and kissed the hands of her father and mother. Helena hugged her tightly, her eyes filling with sudden tears. Even Workun was deeply moved. He wanted to say something, but the lump in his throat made speech impossible. He could only clasp his daughter in a tight embrace.

Elizaveta then bade farewell to the guests, and before the marriage procession started the doors were blessed three times by brother Pavlo, who was to lead the procession, followed by his sister, father and mother, the match-makers and the older bridesmaid. Elizaveta kissed the doorpost, as did the lesser bridesmaid and the *swachy*, who formed the bride's retinue and were supposed to protect her from jilted suitors. Helena blessed the retinue, and then as a caution sang: "To the church her daughter went, With a wreath upon her brow, All dressed up for the event, And prepared to make a vow: 'I must leave this home of mine, where you treated me so fine; though you did lay down the law, now I hear another's saw.' "

In a few moments the wagons began to roll, and the procession was on its way to the church. Poshtar took the bride and the bridesmaids and the in-laws. Bill and Goodwin drove the men. The guests accompanied the party to the main highway, their songs and laughter making a joyful sound in the still air.

The wedding party did not anticipate any unusual difficulty in reaching the monastery which was its destination. No one knew its exact location, but Poshtar was sure he could find it, for he had received detailed information from an acquaintance. He was to drive to Beaver Creek where, his informant told him, he must turn



northeast and watch for landmarks which would guide him in the right direction. One of these landmarks was the home of a rancher who had a large stable and a windmill by his well; the second was another prosperous ranch, easily distinguished by its sheep coral, situated to the northeast of Beaver Creek. Once these places were reached, the way to the monastery was easy to find.

But Poshtar thought he could save time by taking a short cut. This had disastrous results, for hours later he had to admit to being lost on an expanse of prairie as bare and inhospitable as Moses' wilderness. At long last the dispirited party came in sight of a primitive hut. The occupants, a ragged woman and five dirty barefoot children, were not particularly helpful. The woman had never heard of any road or any monastery, but after Maria had made the hungry crew a gift of bread the woman directed them to another homestead, where the man of the house was at home looking after a wife with an injured foot.

At this second place the tired wedding party had better luck so far as directions were concerned, but Maria and Goodwin insisted on dressing the sick woman's wound, while Poshtar, never loathe to gossip, related the news of his community.

All this took time. They were further delayed by having to cut their way through underbrush and windfalls on the Indian trail the homesteader had recommended. Consequently it was high noon before they reached the creek and finally located the sheep-corral Poshtar had been told to watch for as a landmark. At the ranch house they received intelligent directions and the welcome assurance that the monastery was only two hours' distant.

But now the night was drawing in, and no one felt inclined to invite further mishap by continuing the journey over an unknown trail in complete darkness. They turned into a low-lying field, made camp, built a smudge to lessen the torment of the mosquitoes, and lay down to sleep.

All the inmates of the monastery had been awake and about their duties for some time when the wedding party arrived in the yard. The Father Superior was notified. He greeted the visitors courteously, asking the reason for their unexpected visit. He listened to the explanation in silence, then with a brief nod to the bridal couple, told them to prepare for confession.

"And what's delaying the bridegroom?" the priest asked when Elizaveta had left the confessional, and Bill did not come forward.

"He can't speak our language," Maria said nervously.

"What is he, then?" asked the Father in surprise.

"English," said Maria.

"English! But of what faith?"

"We don't really know. Calvinist, I think," Maria replied.

"Well, what a situation! You've been only a short time in Canada, yet here you are ready to marry anyone who comes along, irrespective of race or creed. I haven't the right to marry any one who is not of our religion. If this man wants to get married he'll have to renounce his own religion and accept ours."

This threw the whole wedding party into a state bordering on panic.

"Maybe he'll accept our religion if you ask him," said Maria, trying to save the situation. "It won't make any difference to him; he'll become a Mahommedan if necessary. He loves my sister."

"Not an unusual recommendation," said the Father dryly. "Does he know any other language, Latin or German, for instance?" He looked curiously at Bill.

No, the bewildered bridegroom could not accommodate the Father in this or any other matter of conformity.

"You see," said the Father Superior. "How can I rechristen him and marry him if he doesn't understand our prayers or commandments or vows? What good would come of such a marriage? Couldn't the bride find one of our own boys for a husband? She's brought along an unbeliever and expects me to marry her to him!"

The Father Superior was in a predicament. How could he marry this couple without incurring sin? There was no one in authority who could advise him on the matter. What was he to do?

"Just marry them, that's all," Poshtar spoke up indignantly. "What business is it of yours whether he is of this or that faith? If he wants to marry the girl like a decent Christian that's good enough. If he doesn't understand what you're reading, what of it? Do any of the young people you marry understand the Latin rigamarole anyway? One thing is sure, this man is so earnest in his intentions he was fool enough to come all this distance just to conform to our customs. If I had been in his boots, I would have found a simpler way."

"And what would that be?" asked the priest.

"There are men with turned-back collars nearer home and more reasonable than you are."

"For God's sake, Mr. . . . Mr. . . ., what are you saying?" cried the scandalized priest. "Have you lost all faith? Become a barbarian?"

"This is not the Old Country where everything is under rigid control. Here you have to make your own decisions and do the best you can in any emergency. If that's being barbarian, then that's what we are, and not ashamed of it either."

The Father Superior did not answer at once. He sat down at the table, thumbing over a heavy thick volume, while Poshtar continued.

"And if the bridegroom happens to be of another race, that too will soon be meaningless in this country. Our young people will be making their own choices irrespective of race or religion. You can't coerce people here like you did in the Old Country. If you don't want to marry them, then good-bye! For five dollars any clergyman will perform the ceremony."

"But that would be a sin!" The priest almost shouted the words.

"Sin! Well, so be it!" retorted Poshtar sarcastically.

The priest finally realized he was dealing with one of those stubborn, realistic newcomers who were a law unto themselves, taking life as it came without trying to give it a moral foundation.

"What is your occupation?" he asked Poshtar.

"I run a farm and a store and do some draying on the side."

"You're what they call a man of parts."

"In Canada it's hard to make a fortune just by sitting still. You've got to get around, to mix with people; for the only person who's recognized here is the man with money."

"Which means one doesn't have to know who he is or what his faith is?" asked the priest ironically.

"Around here nobody questions anyone about that. If you have money, you're a good man. That's all there is to it."

"Well, I guess there may be something in that," the priest said casually. "And now, although the bridegroom abstains from confession, I hope the rest of you don't refuse the offices of the church."

This about-face of the Father Superior surprised and delighted

the wedding party. The Father Superior had accepted the lesser of two evils, compromise rather than alienation. The marriage ceremony was conducted in orthodox fashion to everyone's satisfaction, and the happy party departed for home.

To those who had witnessed these ceremonies, from the engagement to the marriage, many times before, they were a matter of course. But to Goodwin's logical mind there had to be a reason for everything, and he wished to find it. But no one had any clear explanations to offer. That would have to wait for the proper time and place.

They were not done with mishaps and delay. Poshtar had failed to explain that he meant to camp by Beaver Creek, and in his haste to get there his wagon was soon out of sight. Consequently, Bill's team took a wrong turning at the crossroads, and it was not until the following morning that his party found the right trail.

As for Poshtar, he spent the night near the creek, and by noon of the next day he had brought the bride to her home. Workun and Helena inquired about the bridegroom, but Diordy just shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know where he is," he replied casually. "I merely looked after my own team and passengers. But don't worry; he won't desert the bride."

The parents had to be content with this, and as custom dictated they had to lead the bride to the house. The guests and musicians, who had been waiting at the gate, began to sing, "Oh dear mother, come and greet us; Darling mother, come and meet us. Ask us if we had our fill, Or what happened to your Bill."

There was more in this vein, impromptu jingles designed to reassure the mother that Bill would appear to claim his bride, and rhapsodies about the beauties of the marriage ceremony where rings and vows were exchanged in the sight of God and the blessed saints.

Now the parade formed up as on Friday when they had all left for church. Pavlo led with his cane. Helena spread a white cloth from the threshold into the house. Then she greeted the bride, holding the *kolachi* in her hands. Elizaveta knelt down at the threshold. Helena blessed and kissed her, and invited her to enter the house. They marched around the table three times, then sat

down to dinner. After dinner the dance began. Elizaveta, now Mrs. Pickle, and her brother Pavlo were the first couple on the floor. Then everyone joined in the fun.

Bill and his party did not arrive until evening. The guests and the musicians purposely blocked the gateway, singing, "Wait, young man, among the gorse And the yellow bracken-fern; Check your coal-black trotting horse And your *boyars* young and stern. Let them blow their trumpets loudly, Let the best men's voices grate; So the bride will haste to greet him At the open gate."

But it was Workun who came to the gate with great dignity and courtesy to welcome his son-in-law home. Offering him the traditional bread and salt, he invited him into the house. Maria, divining the fatigue and mental stress of the groom, begged that Bill and his party might be led to the table without further ceremony. But it was of no use.

"He'll only get married once in his lifetime, so let him remember every single item of the wedding," said Workun firmly. He re-entered the house and returned with two bowls of food: a roast, *holubtsi* and some thick slices of bread. He approached the groom, handed him some food, and excused himself for not offering wine and honey for his refreshment. The guests didn't need coaxing. They had had nothing to eat on the return trip.

While the guests were eating, Elizaveta was being covered with a silk shawl so that the bridegroom wouldn't be able to see her. Pavlo cut himself two willow sticks, placed a shawl on them, made the sign of the cross over Elizaveta's head three times, and held the shawl over her so that the fringe hung down to her nose. Then he took the sticks outside and threw them over the roof. The best man now went through the rite of buying the bridesmaids, first filling a bowl half full of money. They drew out the bridesmaids, twirled them around several times, and then Pavlo led in the bridegroom and his party, who had just arrived. He made them circle the table three times. Three times the bride and bridegroom bent their heads low for Helena's blessing, and then they sat down at the table.

Bill and Elizaveta ate from the same bowl, then were escorted from the room. Workun wanted the best men to bring out the dowry but, as Bill was not leaving for home yet, that act was reserved for a later period. Instead, Plishka and Nikifor tuned their instruments and played until the bride and groom rose for the

*propee*, when the guests expected to file up to the bride and groom, drink to their health, and deposit either a present or some money before they left.

During the *propee* Bill and his friends stood behind the table with the bridesmaids. There was no beer or spirits to serve guests, so they were offered a fruit drink which Teklia had prepared from wild plums, "spiked" with a dash of schnapps which Bill had brought from town. But this concoction proved potent enough to enliven the singing.

Workun and Helena were the first to come forward for the *chastowanna*, the regaling. Plishka tucked his violin under his chin and played an appropriate tune, while the guests sang with zest: "Two berries stood upon the vine, All the rest were changed to wine. Come up forward, father dear, Drink to me with hearty cheer; With your glass full to the brim, Pour it down with zest and vim. Let us wish each other health And a pocket full of wealth."

They were starting another song, when Workun raised his glass and said, "They mowed the periwinkle And so in a twinkle I'll drink to you and sing, Wishing you the best of everything." And as Workun drank to his children, the guests shouted a vociferous "*vivat*."

Helena received the same kind of ovation, but could not maintain a dignified mien like Workun, and started to cry so violently that she had to be led from the table.

The guests presented Elizaveta with whatever they could afford: towels, shawls, or money. After the *propee* everybody was invited to sit down and eat.

Thus ended the third act of the wedding. But there was more dancing, in which even Wakar excelled himself, twirling the women around in grand style and boasting about his ability as a dancer.

After it was all over, Bill accompanied Goodwin to his teacher-age. The latter couldn't help teasing the groom about the whole affair. "Well, my friend, you'll remember that wedding until your dying day; and bequeath the memory of it to your children."

"Oh, come now, Goodwin, cut it out," begged Bill good-naturedly. "If I had known beforehand that I would have to go through such a frenzied whirl of ceremonies in order to get a wife, I'd have shot my piebald."

Then Bill told him that it was through the piebald he had

fallen in love with Elizaveta. Goodwin listened, and said, "You were lucky. You found a girl with common interests; it wasn't a mere chance acquaintance, not a passing fancy."

"No, it wasn't a passing fancy," Bill said seriously, "and all this fuss and ceremony isn't too big a price to pay for Elizaveta."

"No, it is not," Goodwin said. "It may be tiresome, and doubtless it will be discarded in this country, but it has deep roots and historic significance. Our own wedding service seems empty beside it."

"You seem to be obsessed with the subject," Bill laughed. "You'll have further opportunity to satisfy your curiosity very soon. For I've been told Ivan Poshtar wants to marry Wakar's daughter Sophia."

"And how does the matter stand?"

"It looks as if she's interested, and that he reciprocates the feeling. I noticed that he put a lot of money into her bowl. But the women of the community are not very happy about it. Nobody seems to know which side to take."

"Which side do you support?" asked Bill.

"I'm neutral like Mrs. Workun. She believes that if it's Sophia's fate to marry a widower, then she'll do so, just as it was Elizaveta's fate to marry you. But you'll know how it turns out sooner than I will. I won't be here, unfortunately. So write me when you get the truth of the matter."

**15** Everybody in the community was aware that Ivan Poshtar was “setting his cap” for Sophia Wakar. This was interpreted in several ways. One was that Ivan “had a screw loose,” although no one said so openly.

Ivan had lived through some very hard times since the death of Olga. While she was alive, he had gradually become more sociable, encouraged by the friendly help of the Workun family. He had improved to such an extent that the settlers had reason to believe that in time he would become perfectly normal. But Olga’s death changed all that.

It had been evident from the day of her wedding that Olga was failing. At first Ivan refused to believe that she was seriously ill. He accused her of wilful deception, designed to ruin him. But when he noticed her spitting blood his manner softened. Kalina wanted to take Olga home, to try and nurse her back to health; but Ivan refused to let her go. Nor would he allow her to be transferred to Anna’s home. To the amazement of all the settlers he really tried his best to bring her back to health, nursing her night and day, even to the point of neglecting his husbandry. He would carry her about in his arms like a child.

One day he took her outside and set her down on the *prispa* so that she could warm herself in the spring sun. But there, to his shock and horror, she died in his arms. He sat there like one in a daze, holding the dead girl for hours. And when Maria arrived with a pitcher of warm milk she had brought for the patient, he paid no heed to her startled greeting. He just sat there looking at Olga’s face and smoothing her hair.

“Ivan, can’t you see she is dead?” Maria cried in alarm. “Go and let Kalina and Anna know about it. I’ll see to Olga.” But



his response was to motion her away with an impatient wave of his hand.

Maria saw it was useless to argue with him, so she took it upon herself to notify the families concerned and the other settlers. When she returned to Ivan's place, two or three women were pleading with him to carry Olga into the house. He pushed them angrily aside for making so much noise that it would waken his sleeping wife.

It required the combined efforts of Workun and Wasyl to pry the dead woman out of his arms, so that her family and friends might prepare her for her final resting-place.

The people came and went, paying their last respects to the dead Olga. The grave was dug. Solowy prepared the coffin, burning a three-piece cross at the head and foot and on the lid. He made a large cross to stand at the head of the coffin and placed a small one in Olga's hands. And throughout the two-night vigil Solowy read from the Book of Psalms. The funeral took place on the morning of the third day. Solowy did all the singing incidental to the funeral service. The coffin lid was then nailed down. But Ivan refused to have it moved. "Leave it here," he shouted. "Leave it or I'll tear it apart!"

The demented man had to be forcibly restrained before the last offices could be conducted. But when he was finally appeased, the coffin was carried out in ritual fashion, three knocks being given against the threshold. Then a chicken was passed over the coffin and Solowy asked for the remission of Olga's sins. Then, to the wailing of the women, the coffin was lifted into the wagon and the funeral party marched towards the cemetery.

At the cemetery the coffin was carried into the little church and the lid reopened to permit a last farewell to the assembled friends and relatives. Solowy sang the dirges. Then the lid was nailed fast and the coffin carried to the grave. As it sank to its last resting-place, each person flung a handful of earth into the grave in token of man's mortality.

The funeral dinner was given by the Poshtars, and all the relatives and the mourners were invited. Everyone partook of the food as a gesture of respect to the dead. All save Ivan who, now that his frenzy had passed, seemed scarcely conscious of his surroundings. He was led back in his own place by a few friends, and there a candle was lit and a pitcher of water set beside it as

refreshment for the soul of the departed should it reappear. The friends kept vigil throughout the night, but Ivan was neither comforted nor roused from his deep lethargy by this gesture.

It was soon apparent that he could not be left alone in the house. His parents took charge of him, but neither Anna nor anyone else could penetrate his strange cataleptic mood. He sat in stony silence, nor would he eat unless his mother fed him like a child. Then one day when no one was about he left the house and disappeared. Poshtar found him sitting on the *prispa* where Olga died. He was led back easily enough, only to escape again at the first opportunity. This became such a habit that no one paid further attention to his wandering. He could always be found on the *prispa*.

Anna, in her desperation, tried every possible remedy, even the magic of fortune tellers, but without success. Oddly enough it was Kalina who suggested that Workun might find some way of bringing Ivan back to his senses. Workun was not too hopeful about it. If Ivan had lost his reason, what could anyone do about it? Nevertheless he resolved to try.

One day in the harvest season he had an idea. He pulled a few stalks of grain from Ivan's field and hurried to his house. Ivan as usual was dozing on the *prispa*.

"Oho, there, husbandman," Workun called, swishing Ivan with the wheat stalks. "Wake up! Can't you see that your grain is ripe and ready for cutting? Just look at it: pure gold in the sunlight! Sixty bushels to the acre, or I miss my guess."

Ivan looked up queerly at Workun and then at the wheat stalks, as if intelligence were stirring in his mind.

"Get up, get up! The past is not our concern, but the future. I'll come around with Wasyl tomorrow to give you a hand. It's more fun working together."

But Ivan did not answer.

"We'd better hurry up with the harvest. Any day now it might rain, or there might be a frost. It would be a pity to lose all that fine wheat. I see you haven't even finished with your hay. What'll you feed your cattle with? If you leave it like that, your hay will rot. If you don't hurry your father will come along, cut all your hay and wheat and cart it away."

"He wouldn't dare," Ivan shouted, jumping to his feet so suddenly that Workun was frightened, thinking that his prodding

had provoked the poor fellow to violence. But on second thought he decided that resentment was at least a live reaction. So he thrust Ivan back onto the *prispa* and continued as if nothing had happened. "Your father will certainly take your grain, as he had to take your livestock to keep it from starving to death," he persisted.

"Let him take it then; I don't need it," Ivan said in a shaky voice. "Olga died and I want to die too. I brought her out here so that the sun could shine on her, but she died. Now she's happy and I want to be happy too."

"So you want to die? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Olga died because she was too weak to live; life is too hard for an ailing person. But you're not sick! You are punishing yourself because no one brought you to account for the cruel things you did. But if you haven't the courage to live, I haven't got time to argue about it," Workun said in assumed anger, and made as if to turn away.

"No, no, don't leave me!" Ivan cried, clutching Workun's arm. "I can't stay here. Let me go with you."

"No, you can't stay here alone. Pull yourself together, my boy. Start a new life and act like a man. Come and see the field Olga helped you to plant. That is the best way to remember her, as part of the living world."

Workun talked in this vein all the way to the wheat field.

"See how lovely it looks! It's all yours—your handiwork. This place was nothing but trees and brush and you cleared it. Have you ever seen such golden wheat? Five acres of it! Olga must be looking at us and saying, 'This is my Ivan's wheat? He'll reap it, stook it and make stacks of it and then thresh it so there may be flour for making some bread.'"

Ivan gazed over his field of undulating wheat, a new light of understanding breaking in his face. "If only I could see her," he muttered. "If I were sure she understands."

"She understands," Workun said gently. "But she would be happier to see you looking like a human being, not a scarecrow. Come along to my place. I'll give you a haircut and you can spruce up a bit."

They were now near the cemetery. Workun took his hat off, made the sign of the cross and uttered a prayer. Ivan did the same, his eyes on Olga's grave. Then they walked in silence to Workun's home.

Workun convinced Ivan that he would have to live with his father, where his mother would look after his meals and keep him in clean clothes. He told Diordy that with kindly treatment Ivan could be restored to mental and physical health.

This was borne out very quickly. As long as Diordy refrained from his usual bickering and angry contentiousness, Ivan responded by doing everything possible to help his parents, cutting trees, grubbing, fencing, or any other kind of chore. This change delighted Anna, who began to hope that husband and son were at last beginning to understand one another. She was further encouraged in this belief when Diordy bought his son some new clothes, an astonishing gesture from a man who hated to spend a cent on his family.

But this happy state of affairs was short-lived. When Ivan showed signs of outside interests, wasting precious time on visits to the neighbours, Diordy not only objected but became so abusive that once again Ivan fled to his own house, taking his swine and cattle with him.

Poshtar, beside himself with rage, rushed after Ivan and in the midst of a violent quarrel struck him in the face. Instead of returning the blow, Ivan shrank back, staring at his father with a shocked, bewildered expression and then, to Diordy's horror, began to cry.

Now, thoroughly alarmed and ashamed of himself, Diordy went home to consult Anna. "Wretched man!" she cried. "Now you've driven him out of his senses." And so it seemed. Ivan either locked himself in the house or rushed into the woods at their approach, refusing to listen alike to Anna's pleading or Diordy's mumbled explanation.

Once again Hrehory Workun was called upon to mend matters. This time he did not spare Poshtar.

"What's the matter with you, Diordy? Can't you get it through your head that beatings never taught obedience. Even a horse can't be managed that way. The trouble with you, Diordy, is that you are all anger and no heart! And except in business matters you haven't a particle of sense. Ivan was on the mend, but that did not satisfy you. You thought he might slip out of your clutches again, so you strike him down with your wicked temper. Why should I try to mend the damage you have done? I might be

willing to help Ivan if I thought you would let him live his own life. Otherwise, no!"

With Anna's firm backing Hrehory finally persuaded Poshtar to transfer all Ivan's goods and livestock to his son's farm. And Hrehory, on his part, promised to keep a paternal eye on the badly disturbed young man.

For some time Ivan lived the life of a hermit, all his time devoted to the farm. He was withdrawn and uncommunicative, but not hostile, to the few friends who sought to cheer his lonely existence.

When these visits became less strained and Ivan seemed to enjoy a little bantering, Maria began to poke fun at the way he lived. "You know, Ivan, if you made the effort, you'd make a fine husband for some nice girl. It's a shame to waste all this land on a man who doesn't know the difference between a house and a pigsty. With a wife you'd really get somewhere. . . . And there are plenty of girls who would jump at the chance of owning such land, if only the husband that went with it didn't look so much like a tramp."

This and other exhortations took effect. Ivan took a look at himself in Olga's mirror and decided that Maria was right. His appearance was a disgrace. He shaved, changed into fairly decent clothes and went to Workun's for a haircut. Helena looked him over when the job was done, patted his shoulder and smiled at her barber-husband.

"He looks fine. If I were a young girl I'd set my cap for him."

"He won't have to look far."

Ivan was pleased, and on the way home he stopped at Wakar's. Sophia Wakar had worked at his home when she was a young girl. They had bickered and wrangled but she had never been afraid of him. Indeed she had laughed in his face when he had threatened to bear her for some childish insolence. She had spirit and gave as good as she got. Sophia was the kind of girl he needed for a wife.

The Wakars were surprised by his visit, but received him with kindness. He had come, he said, with a proposition for Sophia. His house had been neglected since Olga died. Maria was always scolding him about it. So now he wondered whether Sophia would undertake to put the house in order. "I'll give you a six-months-old sow if you clean up my place," he told her.

It took Sophia more than a week to bring order out of the chaos in Ivan's abode. She took everything out for an airing, patched and whitewashed the walls and ceiling, and then suggested that a board flooring should complete the renovations. Ivan not only laid the floor, but made new benches and a table besides.

"Now this place is worth sitting in!" exclaimed Maria, who had come to inspect the job. "All the place needs is a wife to keep it in order."

"Yes, and he doesn't have far to go for one either," said Solowy, who had been helping with the carpentry. Whereupon, to everyone's surprise, Sophia snatched up her shawl and ran from the house as if she were pursued by devils.

Ivan, now determined to marry Sophia if she would have him, was completely nonplussed by her sudden change of face. When he called at the house she retired to a corner, whence she watched him uneasily in obvious apprehension. This was so unlike her that Ivan could only hope it was a passing phase peculiar to a spirited girl who prized her freedom above marriage.

What frightened Sophia was much more serious than the ordinary prospects and problems of marriage. It was the gossip about Ivan's unstable mentality. She remembered Teklia holding forth one day: "Say what you like, a man who has lost his mind is like a broken pot. Besides he was always a bit off. He didn't appreciate Olga until she died."

Other voices had chimed in with this and that. Olga might have fared better if she had stood up to her husband. Men got above themselves with that kind of woman. That was true, Mrs. Workun had agreed. Men didn't realize how small they were until they lost their wives. Ivan was no worse than the common run of men.

"But Ivan's case is different," Teklia had objected. "It's his mind, not his character, that worries me. What kind of children would a feeble man father? There should be a law against the marriage of such people."

It was the vivid recollection of this vicious gossip that prompted Sophia's flight when she suddenly realized that Ivan loved her and meant to ask her to marry him.

Sophia did not have long to wait for Ivan's declaration of love. He wanted a *toloka* at his home, and invited the women to plaster

the outside of his house and asked Sophia to do the cooking. When the work was finished, Sophia remained to wash up.

Ivan, bringing in an armful of wood, stooped in the doorway.

"You look nice there, Sophia," he said; then hesitantly: "If you want this house it can be yours."

This was it, Sophia thought. He's come around to it at last. She wanted to escape, but managed to speak lightly, "Why should I need your house when I have a home of my own?"

"You know what I mean. You can live in this house. It would be yours."

"And where would you go?" she asked.

"I'll live here too . . . with you . . . we'll both live here," Ivan replied, putting the wood beside the stove and leaning against the wall. "It would be nice for both of us. I would see to the wood and water and you would do the cooking and the housework; just as you have been doing now."

"Listen, Ivan," she said with mingled fear and pleading. "I know you want to marry me. But I can't do it. I'm sorry, Ivan, but I can't be the wife of a fool. You've already had one wife. And what happened to her?"

"Now you're talking like a fool yourself!" Ivan retorted in a bitter voice. "Olga never was a wife to me nor I a husband to her. We were never in love with each other; that is why we never had any children. I was foolish and she was foolish. We were both united by force and fooled into marriage by a promise of a large dowry."

Sophia knew there was some truth in what he said, and consequently felt more tolerant towards him. But she said: "Olga was not to blame. You drove her to her grave through sheer revenge."

"That's a lie!" Ivan shouted with rising anger. "I am *not* to blame for her death. Although I never loved I never really abused her. I used to roar at her when people came poking around the farm. I knew what they were saying and gave them something to chew on. Devil take all gossips!"

"Even before you married Olga you went around with a perpetual frown. You can't expect people to understand that kind of thing."

"My temper was always on edge because no one liked me," Ivan replied with feeling. "Everywhere I went, people made fun

of me or else ignored me completely. I liked Maria because she wasn't afraid of me and I like Workun because he treats me like a human being."

"You're to blame for all that yourself," Sophia said.

"That's not true," Ivan protested. "My father made a block-head of me! Since I was a child I never heard a kind word from him. He never played with me as Workun did with Kornlyo and Pavlo. He never encouraged me in anything nor bought anything for me. If it hadn't been for my good mother, I would have left home a long time ago, just as Katerina did."

Sophia returned to the problem of immediate concern. "If you didn't like Olga why did you go crazy after she died?" she asked curtly.

"I didn't go crazy; I just didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't like Olga when she was alive; but when she got sick I began to feel sorry for her. I only wanted to avenge myself on those who had forced us into this marriage. When I took her outside, she hugged me around the neck and then started to cry. That's when I began to lose control of myself. I was so angry I could have killed her foolish mother and my greedy father. And when Olga asked me to forgive her for not loving me at the start because she loved me now, I couldn't have left her for anything on earth, because I realized I loved her too."

This confession was too much for Ivan; he started to cry in helpless grief, and as Sophia watched him she started to cry also.

"I don't know what happened to me after she died," continued Ivan, wiping his face with his sleeve. "Workun finally snapped me out of it. I believed him when he said Olga's soul was watching over me, because he always tells the truth. It makes me mad when people say I sent Olga to her grave. She knows I wanted her to get better; and I also know she wants me to live a decent life and be happy. You and I, Sophia, could make a good life together. No one is trying to force us to marry. I won't tell anyone I have asked you, if you'd rather not. I don't want to do anything against your wishes. And I certainly don't want an unwilling wife."

Sophia listened intently. This man may be crazy, she thought, but he talks sense.

"You better wait and see whether I'll be good for you; and I'll consider whether you'll be good for me," she said as she got



ready to go home. "In a matter like this we mustn't be too hasty."

"I'll always be good to you," replied Ivan as she was leaving the house.

"That's what you say now; but I'm not quite sure of it. I'll let you know later on."

Sophia went home with her head full of conflicting thoughts. She was twenty years of age, past the spring of youth, and it was high time she gave thought to her future. Her future with whom? With a widower, and a halfwit at that? But then, who was she to be choosy? A girl with just one skirt and blouse. She was not ugly, just an ordinary girl who might expect to marry some old bachelor or widower with several children. Indeed, she had begun to give up hope of ever having a bridal wreath sewn for her. Now here was Ivan . . .

She told her mother about this tearfully. But all Tetiana did was shrug her shoulders. "I don't know what to say to you, my child, for I don't want you to hold it against me later on." That was all the advice she offered.

But this wasn't enough for Sophia. She turned to Auntie Helena.

"As for his being out of his mind," said Helena, "Who can say? Many a time we've had so-called insane people. Then too a man may be driven to violence by injustice or parental indifference. If Ivan had grown up in a sympathetic atmosphere, he would have turned out to be a sympathetic person. But he was browbeaten from childhood, overworked and imposed upon. Keep that in mind, Sophia, before you judge him too harshly. In any case, my child, if it's your fate to marry him, then you'll marry him; that's all there is to be said."

Sophia felt so relieved after this talk with Helena that she might have married Ivan then and there, had not Diordy Poshtar got wind of it. A union with the Wakar family was the last thing he wanted.

He let Ivan know of his disapproval by charging up to him the costs of Olga's funeral, the provisions Ivan took from the store after Olga's death, the boards and nails he took for the floor, the clothes and shoes he bought for him.

But Ivan made no great effort to pay off his debt, and his visits

to Wakar's became more frequent. During his absence Poshtar seized two steers; but Ivan got them back again, seizing an extra calf and claiming it was from his own cow. Poshtar came back again when Ivan wasn't home, seized the steers and calf, and then sold them. Ivan remained quiet for a long time without retaliation, and Poshtar thought that he had learned his lesson.

But Poshtar was not satisfied with what he had done; he wanted to separate Ivan and Sophia. So he made friends with Sophia, praising her for her looks, her industry and her good sense, and suggested it was time she made use of these talents in town.

This appealed to Sophia. Where was she getting, sitting at home? She never had a penny she could call her own. Even the sow which she earned by working at Ivan's place was sold by her father to some farmer for breeding purposes and she saw nothing of the money. And if she married Ivan, it would be the same story; all work and no money for herself.

The result of these misgivings and Diordy's prodding was that one day, without a word to Ivan or her own family, Sophia left for town with Poshtar in search of work and a life of her own.

# 16

As soon as they arrived in town, Poshtar drove Sophia to a farmer acquaintance and left her there as a servant girl, telling him not to let her go into town for a month or two until she got used to the place. He thought his plan would succeed, and that Sophia would remain there through the winter. He hoped in the meantime to find a wife with a lot of property for Ivan.

Poshtar then returned to town, made his purchases, and on the following day asked Pavlo Workun whether he had seen Sophia or not. "I brought her into town and she's disappeared somewhere. Have you seen Katerina? Perhaps they both have gone away together?"

"I saw Katerina a few days ago," Pavlo said. "She told me she was going somewhere far away from here. I haven't seen Sophia at all."

"What was the place that Katerina went to?" Poshtar asked brusquely.

"The place where she worked before; but she didn't mention it by name. She told me she made four times as much there in a day as she did here and that she had brought five hundred dollars with her."

"What did you say, young man?" Poshtar asked excitedly. "Do you know where she lives? Lead me to her. Someone is bound to steal the money from her! And to think she never mentioned anything about it when she was home! The brat!"

"Stop pulling me, Uncle!" said Pavlo with irritation. "I don't know where she lives; I didn't ask her and she didn't tell me."

"Why didn't she tell you?" persisted Poshtar. "Isn't she going to marry Bill's best man?"

"The best man found out that you wouldn't give her any dowry, and so he's called it off."

“Didn’t he know she had all that money?”

“How could he? She didn’t tell him.”

“She’s a good girl, yes, sir, a good girl! What a fool I’ve been to let five hundred dollars slip out of my hands,” said Diordy as he departed.

There were other surprises in store for him. He had just gone around the corner of a building when the missing Pavlo Dub appeared from the other end.

“It’s lucky I met you,” Pavlo hailed the astonished man. “I’ve been looking for someone to go home with.”

“Is it really you, Pavlo?” asked Diordy with disbelief.

“Yes, it’s me all right,” laughed Pavlo a bit crookedly. He had lost weight, gone grey, and seemed much older.

There followed a series of questions about where he had been and what he had been doing. He had been in the Old Country, but found that conditions had changed since he had lived there; and so he had returned and found a job in Eastern Canada. Now he was looking for a pair of good horses that were strong, enduring and steady.

Poshtar forgot about Katerina, and began figuring how he could unload two old horses on Pavlo and buy a pair of young ones for himself. With that in mind he advised Pavlo to come home where he could look over the lay of the land and then buy according to his need.

“And now if you could only lend me a few dollars I’d kiss your hand. That store of mine is getting to be a burden. I’m doing the people a favour by giving them credit and letting them work off their debts, and so I never have enough cash to buy new goods. Take Sophia Wakar, for instance, I sold her some clothing on credit so she would have something decent to wear at Elizaveta’s wedding as her bridesmaid. She was to work off the debt. But do you know what she did? I brought her to town for a little excursion—the poor creature has never left the farm—and the moment my back was turned she took off somewhere and found herself a job. Of course I have no objection to her working if she’ll remember to pay off her debts with her wages. But who can be sure of children today? My Katerina behaves like a fool. She’s been carrying hundreds of dollars on her person. But do you think she ever gave me a single cent of it? Not on your life. Somebody else will get it from her, leaving nothing for her father who clothed and fed her.

You can understand how it happens I am short of cash, everything going out and nothing coming in. If you can lend me a few dollars I'd be grateful for the rest of my life."

Dub believed Poshtar's story and was about to comply with his request, when he thought better of it. He had over a thousand dollars sewn under his shirt and did not want to extract money from under his clothes in public.

"I'll give it to you later, Diordy. I don't want to attract thieves by handing over money in the street," he said.

Pavlo Dub's unexpected return caused so much excitement in the community that Sophia's disappearance passed unnoticed for the time being. Her mother thought she was still working at Poshtar's, and since the threshing season was at hand she attributed her absence to extra duties. But when a week had passed with no word or sign of her daughter, she sent Andrew to the Poshtars' to find out if anything were wrong.

Andrew returned with Diordy's version of Sophia's unprincipled behaviour. She had taken a job against his counsel and refused to come home. Tetiana broke into tears, and Wakar flew into a rage, instantly suspecting there was more to this tale than Poshtar proposed to reveal. He lost no time in confronting the high-handed merchant with his suspicions.

"What did you do with my girl, Diordy? You've chased all your own children away, and now you're scattering other people's children all over the world."

But Poshtar stood there, a picture of innocence and gentleness. "What should I have done, Toma?" he asked sweetly. "I'm responsible for taking her to town. I thought she'd see a bit of the world, buy what she needed, and come back with me. But she fooled me. It looked as if she wanted to follow the example of the Workun girls and my own Katerina to try and make good in town. I don't blame her. You haven't the means to help her. When she needed anything she came to me. For instance, who supplied her with clothes when she acted as Elizaveta's bridesmaid? She charged all that and then ran away."

"How much did she charge?" Wakar asked angrily.

"Seven dollars; she worked off two dollars and still owes me five."

"Whew!" whistled Wakar. "What in the devi did she buy?"

"That's the kind of father you are! You don't even know what she bought for herself," said Poshtar acidly. "Where do you think she got the clothes she wore at Elizaveta's wedding?"

"But she worked for you a long time," argued Wakar, shaking with anger.

"I offered her four dollars a month and kept my promise."

"In that case let her pay you," said Wakar with some heat, intending to end the conversation. But Poshtar didn't let him get off so easily.

"I anticipated that answer, and that's why I didn't ask you to pay me. What could I ever get out of you? But the girl will work and pay me out of her wages. She doesn't want a handout. If other girls can earn money, dress themselves and even help their parents, why shouldn't your girl do the same? But she will! don't worry! It's no kindness to let children forget their obligations. But there now, let's cheer up, Toma. Who can tell how these things work out. Sophia may bring back a rich husband and you will thank me for it. Don't forget it was I who made it possible for the Workun girls to better themselves. It all began when I took Maria to town."

Wakar wanted to tell Poshtar that the reason he took Maria to town was to get her out of the way so that Ivan would marry Olga and get the rich dowry her mother was always bragging about. But for once he curbed his tongue. There *might* be a possibility of Sophia's finding a rich husband, or at least earning money to keep the family.

So Wakar stopped badgering Poshtar, for such is the nature of hope that it sometimes transcends our baser inclinations.

When Ivan heard that Sophia had remained in town, he drew back into his shell and stopped going anywhere. His work became slipshod and his interest in life began to wane. He went back to his old habit of moping on the *prispá*. Except for Anna, nobody came to visit him. Anna only added to his melancholy by mentioning Sophia. She really meant no harm, for she really thought Sophia would make a good daughter-in-law.

"Why did he take her to town?" Ivan asked angrily. "He never offered to take me with him, but he took her."

"I don't know what happened, son," replied Anna. "For some reason or other he suddenly became her good friend and took

her with him without telling her mother or me about it. I just just can't understand it. He chased Katerina away from home, and now he's taken Sophia."

"I hate him! He is a bad man! I was always afraid of him, even as a child," Ivan confessed. "All I ever got from him were blows and curses. Now he has taken Sophia away just to spite me."

"If you are fated to marry Sophia, well then you'll marry her," Anna said, quoting Helena. "All things are in God's hands, my son. Take heart; get your house in order for the winter. Harvest the crops and get the feed under cover." She paused, for what she was about to say amounted to marital treason. "Then hitch up the oxen and drive to town. It should not be too difficult to find Sophia. You can ask Andrew Wakar to look after your farm for you."

Ivan was elated by Anna's suggestion. That evening he hurried over to Wasyl's place to ask him to go with him, for he had never been in town before and didn't know the language. Wasyl could not leave until after the threshing, but told Ivan that he and Workun had planned a trip to town after the work was finished, which would make the tedious journey more pleasant for all of them.

For a time Diordy was proud of the way he had got rid of Sophia, but now on a sudden he began to dread what would happen if Ivan ever got wind of his trickery. Ivan had been acting very strangely of late, doubtless plotting vengeance of some kind, very likely of a drastic and violent nature. These fears increased with each passing day, for Ivan had dropped out of sight and Anna turned aside his cautious inquiries with maddening indifference.

There followed many sleepless nights for Diordy, when any movement or relaxation of movement was interpreted variously by his sick mind. He began to hear noises and imagine things. He would pick up an axe, tiptoe over to the door, open it cautiously, then listen carefully for any suspicious noises. Then he would slink outside, look into each corner for a possible prowler, misconstrue any sound that came from the yard or stable, then run backwards into the house and lock the door. Then he would walk stealthily over to the window and peek outside.

Meanwhile, Ivan wasn't even thinking of stealing anything from his father or waylaying him on the road. He merely waited patiently for the threshers to finish so that he could get started on

the trip to town. He would have continued to refrain from committing any trespass or "sin" had it not been for an unforeseen event. Some cattle buyers wandered into the settlement for the first time. They bought cattle on the hoof, paid cash on the spot, and then drove the animals into Poshtar's pasture.

When Ivan heard about these dealers, he could not resist the impulse to play a trick on his father. He removed three steers from the pasture, drove them to his own farm and sold them with his own cattle. Ivan knew nothing about prices and was prepared to be fleeced by the dealers. But Poshtar senior was too well known in the district for these or any other traders to cheat his son. Ivan received a fair price: three hundred dollars for eight head—three of them the old man's property!

Ivan had never seen so much money in his life. That it should be his was so staggering that he could think of nothing else. This was a greater thrill than he had expected from his trickery. He had a treasure on his hands and didn't know what to do with it. Should he keep it in his pockets, hide it under his pillow, secrete it somewhere in the house? Since none of these alternatives seemed safe, he solved the problem by keeping the money under his shirt and locking himself in the house. It was a relief when Wasyl finally arrived to tell him to get ready for the trip to town.

There were several wagons in the caravan under the leadership of Workun. The riding conditions were good and everything was going well. At dinnertime they halted near a small lake, an ideal place to water the oxen. In the evening they camped near a creek. They started out again before dawn; this part of the journey was not so easy and occasionally they had to stop for repairs.

On the third day the caravan moved at a snail's pace. Workun had warned his party to pare the overgrown hooves of the oxen, would which impede their progress if they were not cut to their normal size. They neglected to do so, and now the tired oxen showed a disposition to lie down in the middle of the road.

They finally reached town on the morning of the fourth day, after seventy-three hours on the road. They camped in the marketplace, which the townsfolk had nicknamed "The Galician Hotel." Here the farmers from surrounding districts congregated to eat and sleep and drink. It was general practice for the men to chip in a nickel apiece and send to the nearby hotel for a pail of beer.



After a drink or two they would discuss the best means of disposing of their products: wheat, hogs, chickens, cheese and butter. They expected that the people would flock to the marketplace. But nothing of the kind happened.

On the day in question, when Workun arrived to unload his goods he looked at the dejected group foregathered there and laughed. "Brothers, this is not the Old Country where you can sit and wait for the customers to come to you. You've got to be aggressive. Take your grain to the mill, your hogs to the butcher's and the stands where they sell meat. I've brought an interpreter for you."

"Why do you haul your wheat and hogs all this way to town when it would have been more practical for you to unload at one of the points on the railway that runs nearer your settlement?" asked the interpreter.

"We heard that a railway had been built, but no one knew how to get to it," said Pidhirny.

"Poshtar drove a wedding party in that direction once and swore he'd never go that way again," said Wakar. "Although it may be closer as the crow flies, it's nearer this way in the long run with all its eighty miles."

"But there must be some small villages between here and your settlement," said the interpreter.

"Of course there are; but what can you buy or sell in those places?" replied one of the group.

After this talk was over they all took their wheat to the mill. They exchanged two bags of wheat for one of flour, and the rest of the wheat was sold at ninety cents a bag. They left their pigs with one of the butchers, who promised to hold them until the next day and buy a few of them if the price was right.

After Wakar and Ivan had sold their grain they set off in search of Sophia. They watched the passersby in the hope that Sophia might be among the pedestrians; but as for making inquiries, their task was rendered almost hopeless by their ignorance of English.

"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack," muttered Wakar peevishly, angry that Ivan had dragged him away from the beer-drinking.

"But I'll find her, even if I have to look for her under the ground," said Ivan stubbornly.

"You had her once; why didn't you keep her? Now it's like

looking for the wind in an open field," blurted out Wakar as he came puffing along behind Ivan. "Why didn't you tell me you wanted to marry her? I'd have driven you without delay to the priest. An old widower like you can't afford to procrastinate. Only the young can afford dilly-dally."

Whether Ivan understood this philosophy or not it was hard to say; but it was evident that Wakar's remarks were beginning to irritate him.

"Stop talking in riddles and watch the street on both sides," he said sharply.

"You don't think she's foolish enough to be walking up and down these streets after a hard day's work, do you?" said Wakar, falling back a few steps.

Ivan halted. "It looks as if you're not anxious to look for her."

"And why should I be? Who the devil could find anybody at night? Let's wait until tomorrow. Workun will turn up and tell us what to do."

Ivan accepted this advice, since there seemed to be no alternative. It was getting dark, and the town was strange to him. They returned to the "Galician Hotel." There was still some beer left which, if no consolation to Ivan, was a comfort to Wakar. Then they bedded down in the wagon for the night.

The next morning the party made a house-to-house canvas, and called as well at the stores until they had sold all of their provisions. In the evening they made purchases of their own: pails, pitchforks, spades, clothing, and a long list of groceries.

"Even if we had had a bag full of money it wouldn't have lasted," sighed Wakar as he counted what cash he had left. "I thought I'd buy a wagon; but there isn't enough here to buy the front wheels."

They stored their purchases in the wagons; but as some of the men wanted to buy machinery and others wanted to trade in their oxen for horses they decided to wait for Workun before attempting any such deal. Horse traders were notorious for swindling foreigners.

But Workun did not show up. Pavlo had driven him and Wasyl to Elizaveta's place and left them there. Pavlo returned and said that Workun would come back that evening. But he

didn't. Ivan Poshtar began to swear, but Wakar was indifferent. He knew Workun was looking for Sophia.

At the moment Workun was buying a team of horses from his son-in-law, Bill, who was giving him instructions on how to handle them. They were fine horses, not very large but in excellent condition and obviously spirited, for it seemed to Hrehory that they were laughing at him from the safety of their stalls.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Bill. "Just go and talk to them. Don't shout. Don't go in the stall just yet. Pat them gently."

Workun spoke to the horses and patted them, with no visible effect. He was afraid they might bite him.

"Untie the chains from the troughs and lead them out," ordered Bill. "Now crawl under their necks so that they can get a good smell of you."

Workun did as he was told, with the help of Wasyl as interpreter.

"But that's not the way!" yelled Bill, seeing that Workun had hold of both mares. "Can't you see that two horses can't turn around at the same time? Back the one out and then lead the other. There's less trouble that way and they won't bang against the stall."

Workun did as he was told and was relieved that he managed it so easily.

"Now to the harnessing," Bill resumed. "You'll have to get the hang of that before you leave."

Workun had seen many harnessed horses, but it had never occurred to him to find out how they were harnessed. He was worried; but Bill was a patient instructor and Wasyl an equally patient interpreter. So the intricate business of collar and hames and straps and reins was eventually made clear to Workun.

Then came the process of hitching up the team, and when this was done they jumped into the wagon. Workun handed Bill the reins, but Bill wouldn't let him off so easily. "You're not through yet by a long shot," he said. "You've still got to learn to drive. Get up on the seat!" he added, secretly enjoying a sense of revenge for the tedious ceremony he had endured at the wedding.

Workun got into the seat with the desperate resignation of a condemned man. "Now then," Bill said. "Watch how I hold the reins if you want both horses to run together properly. It's not a

good policy to make them go fast right off; it's better to let them go easily so that their excitement will wear off; otherwise they'll get balky and ungovernable. And always hold the reins so that they'll know that you have them in your hands and that you're the boss and not they."

They drove past the hay fields, taking turns in driving, looking over the herds of cattle and horses down by the pond. Wasyl picked out a pair for himself, another for Pavlo Dub and a third for Ivan Poshtar. Then they returned to the house, and the routine of unharnessing was gone over with meticulous care.

Three times that day Workun had to harness and unharness the mares until Bill was satisfied with the performance. Bill and Wasyl got a great kick out of his discomfiture, while Elizaveta teased him about his all-round knowledge of harnessing. Workun took it all goodnaturedly. "That's all right, my children, but perhaps there'll come a time when I'll be able to laugh at you, too."

While all this was going on Hrehory had forgotten that his neighbours were waiting for him in town; but during suppertime the conversation turned to them and so to Sophia Wakar.

"I know where Sophia works," said Bill. "It's at that dairy-man's who lives three miles north of town. He said she's a good worker, but not strong enough to milk twelve cows morning and evening and do the housework too. She doesn't know much English; but she'll learn in time."

The next day Workun drove into town with his own horses, casting glances on both sides of the street to see whether he was being noticed. He drove right up to the hostelry. The manager came out, unhitched the horses and took them into a stall, while Workun looked on as proud as a lord. Soon Bill and Wasyl came along with several horses for sale.

Workun hastened to the "Galician Hotel" to announce the arrival of his son-in-law with a herd of horses. The animals could be seen at the stable-lot.

There was a commotion in the "hotel" when the farmers learned that Workun had exchanged his oxen for a team of horses. Naturally they all wanted to follow his example. But two oxen for one horse seemed an excessive price. Ivan Poshtar alone did not question the cost. He wanted the horses to impress Sophia. He picked out the finest pair and paid two hundred dollars with a show of pride. Bill helped him choose the harness at the saddlery.

Ivan had no difficulty in harnessing the team. He had had plenty of practice at home. But the habit of brutality still clung to him. He was hitting the horses with his fist when Workun ran up and stopped him. "Don't be such a fool, Ivan! Treat them gently and they'll behave gently."

Ivan was honestly surprised at the results of the gentle treatment and Workun's praise was just as surprising. "That's the thing, my boy. Kindness is never wasted. Now we can go and find Sophia. When she sees you with those fine horses she'll jump up on the wagon and won't get off."

Sophia didn't expect visitors. Indeed she had seldom had an opportunity to talk to anyone. She was so overcome at the appearance of the three men that she dropped the two pails of water she was carrying and stared at them in trembling silence.

"Why you so-and-so!" cried Wakar, not too harshly. He merely wished to make a show of parental authority. But Workun interrupted with a hearty shout, "Hey, my girl! Get your clothes, we've come to take you away. Even a fool can see you've been worked to death in this miserable place."

"As you like," she said, beginning to cry. "I didn't know what to do. Uncle Diordy got me to leave home and this is where he left me."

"Never mind, stop crying," said Workun. "We know what happened. Maybe Diordy thought he was doing the right thing. It's not always easy to be sure. It's hard to be always in the right, Sophia."

"If my old man were here right now I'd tear him to pieces," Ivan shouted angrily.

"Now, don't be so foolish," said Workun. "Just tell Sophia that those are your own horses, your own harness and wagon and that you are a capable householder in your own right. That's all that matters now. What do you say to that, Sophia?"

"I'll leave here gladly . . . if I can," she said, hanging down her head.

"They'll let you go; don't worry about that. You're not married to the job, you know. Is your employer home?"

"He's gone to town. You must have met him on the way here; he was riding in a one-horse carriage."

"In that case we'll all leave too," said Workun. "Do you think my Pavlo would know him?" he asked.

"Of course he knows him," replied Sophia. "Pavlo comes this way every Sunday with some girls. But I always stay hidden when he's around."

"Aren't there any girls in this family?" asked Workun.

"Never mind that!" Ivan interrupted impatiently. "Let's get out of this place fast."

The party finished its purchases on the following morning and was ready to start for home at noon.

Workun led the caravan. He was itching to show off as he left town, driving away in grand style, but he heeded Bill's warning that the horses were not used to long drives and that it was necessary to go slowly. He felt very proud of his horses. He had exchanged a pair of oxen, a cow and twenty dollars for this pair, and was a little afraid that Helena might complain. He had also spent eighty dollars on three sets of harness. But fortunately for his peace of mind, Elizaveta had sent her mother several costly gifts: a fine sweater, a pair of felt shoes and a pair of woollen gloves. That would pacify the old lady.

Next in the caravan was Ivan Poshtar, trying to imitate the grand manner of Workun. But as they got farther away from town his thoughts reverted to his father, wondering what he would do when he discovered that he had been outsmarted by his own son. And there was Sophia to consider. Would she want to marry him when they got home?

Wakar followed Ivan with his ox-team and wagon. Sophia rode with him. Solowy followed in the wake of Wakar. He also had a pair of horses for which he had handed over a pair of oxen and a couple of ten spots. He really didn't need any horses; but it was the old story of keeping up with the Joneses. His children were still quite small and didn't need many clothes. And his wife Teklia was very economical. She had sent with him to town two pails of butter, twenty roosters and about five dozen eggs. He sold them all; eggs at ten cents a dozen; butter at twenty-five cents a pound; roosters at thirty cents a bird. This added up to eighteen dollars. Out of this he had bought some goods for his wife and children, and still had some money left. He subscribed to two

newspapers published in Canada and the United States respectively, both in the Ukrainian language. He had given Father Dimitri one dollar when he was in the settlement, and the American paper had been coming to him ever since.

He had run across the priest in town, and had made arrangements for him to visit the settlement church in another two weeks, promising to send a team to the nearest station to pick him up. He told Workun and all the other settlers about this, and they were delighted with the news. And Wakar began to weave thoughts of the marriage of his daughter Sophia and Ivan when the priest arrived.

Next in the caravan was Wasyl Dub. He had done fairly well on the farm. Both he and Maria had saved money before they were married. Thus, to begin with, they had four cows. And now he had sold six head in town. They had two oxen which were given to them as a dowry by their parents, and also two calves. He and Solowy had constructed a sleigh, and now he had purchased a pair of horses for his father, if he wanted them, and if not he'd keep them for himself. He'd sell his oxen and pay off his debt, since he had paid but little on account. Maria wasn't keen on buying horses right now, saying that when the time came for that she'd pay for them out of her own earnings from the sale of chickens and eggs. On this trip alone, Wasyl got forty dollars for them, and with this money purchased household goods, including some presents for little Bohdan, who would have a little brother or sister to play with soon.

Wasyl was followed by one of Pidhirny's neighbours. His mare had gorged on wheat that had spilled out of a bag, and had died. He had to return with only one horse, and he had to help the horse pull the wagon uphill himself. And there was something to pull, for he had bought forty dollars' worth of goods for his family of eight children and his wife, and the load included several bags of flour and other goods for his neighbours. In spite of the loss of the mare, he was happy in the thought that his children would now have some decent clothes.

Pidhirny followed his neighbour, and after him came others. They all brought back loads of goods, and with the money they had received from the dealers who had come into the settlement to buy cattle, they were now well on the road to prosperity.

It wasn't bad driving the first day. The weather was good and the sloughs had all dried up. That first night they all slept well. It had been hard getting to sleep in the "Galician Hotel," what with the howling of the dogs and the spitting fury of the alley cats. But here in their secluded glen there was nothing to disturb them but the occasional howl of a coyote.

Alone of all the group, Ivan Poshtar could not sleep. He didn't even lie down to rest, but sat up watching the fire, throwing in armfuls of brush which he had gathered in the woods. For the first time in his life he had been taking note of a romantic setting, and he felt elated as he watched the flames lick into the air and the shadowy reflections of the fire dance against the background of trees. He cast a stealthy look at the wagon where Sophia was dimly visible. She had been on his mind the whole trip. He was very much inclined to go over and declare his love, but he didn't want to break the peace of the night. He felt that if she were asleep, she might set up a commotion at having been awakened.

But Sophia was not asleep. She sat huddled on the wagon, covered with a coat to keep off the chill of the night, and she never let her gaze waver from Ivan. Somehow he always filled her heart with a strange dread; not so much when he was sitting down quietly, but when he was walking about. He was built on squat lines, round-faced, with a thick, short nose, a sprouting moustache and a dark growth of beard, all of which gave him the look of a story-book bandit. This was a false impression, as she well knew, having seen him bowed in child-like grief. But all the same if he had approached her at this moment she would have screamed in fear.

But Ivan did not move. He glanced her way, then added a few sticks to the fire, and raked the embers from time to time to make the flame blaze brightly. Watching him repeat this performance a dozen times had a curious effect on Sophia. She was less frightened of Ivan, and yet she wanted to annoy him.

"Why don't you lie down and get some sleep?" she asked in a throaty whisper.

Ivan jumped to his feet. "Aren't you asleep?" he asked in a startled voice.

"How can I sleep when you keep poking at the fire," she whispered angrily. "There's no need for any more fire."

"I have a dread of darkness," he answered simply.



“Why should you be afraid of anything? You’re a man and should fear nothing.”

“I’m not afraid of anything in particular, but I can’t sleep and it’s not pleasant in the dark.”

“Why can’t you sleep?” asked Sophia.

“Because I have something on my mind I want to ask you.”

“Well, what is it? Why don’t you ask me?”

“I want to know whether you’ll have me or not.”

“Oh, that’s a foolish question.”

“Will you?”

“What?”

“Have me?”

“Just as if I had nothing else to do but have you! Go to sleep!”

“You won’t have me?”

“No.”

Ivan said nothing more. He stood there for a moment, letting the sticks he was holding fall to the ground. Then he sat down on a stump with his elbows propped on his knees, and holding his head between the palms of his hands, watched the fire burn down to ashes.

In another hour the fire had died down completely. It became pitch dark. A patch of the sky, which could be seen through an opening in the forest and until lately had glittered with myriads of stars, was now covered over with black clouds. In addition, a violent wind was blowing through the treetops. It kept Sophia awake and frightened. She was afraid not only of the elements, but of Ivan, lest he take a notion to come to her wagon and do her some injury because she had refused his proposal. He was right about the dark. It was not very pleasant without a fire. She should have known that he had no sense of humour, that he took everything literally, that teasing him would only arouse his worst instincts, or drive him back into dumb passivity. She knew in her heart that sooner or later she would marry him. If not, why was she so glad to return to the settlement?

And then she began to think about Ivan’s house. What a fine job she had made of cleaning and whitewashing it! That house could be hers for the asking or without the asking. She’d made it like Maria’s place: clean, pleasant and livable, decorating it with periwinkle and mint. She’d make Ivan build a stove like the one

Helena had, so that she could bake the same kind of sweet-smelling bread.

She'd milk her own cows—three of them: two that Ivan now owned and one that would be given her at her marriage. She'd have her own butter and cheese, which she'd preserve in a barrel for winter.

And her yard would be a thing to be proud of! Plenty of chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, calves and cows! And her garden would be a thing to see, just like Maria's and Teklia's, full of beautiful flowers arranged in neat colourful beds. Her dress would be like Maria's and Teklia's. She would exchange eggs for cloth at Poshtar's, and Maria would make dresses for her.

Once a year she would put on a dinner, a *pominky*, in remembrance of the dead Olga, so that people would not say she was usurping Olga's place in the household.

All day her thoughts had been of Ivan, just as if his absence were felt more than his presence. When he sat quietly or spoke quietly to her she wasn't afraid of him. Yet there was something in his voice that spoke of inner conflict, as if he were being persecuted. He seemed so naive and innocent at such times that it aroused her sympathy; and she recalled how pleased he had been when the women were plastering his house. Aunt Helena was right. In a sense they were both children of misfortune, hers the the extremes of poverty and his the brutality of a grasping father.

“Are you asleep, Ivan?” she called to him.

There was no answer.

“Ivan, are you sleeping?” she called again as she looked intently at the spot where she thought Ivan should be sitting. Suddenly she sat up in alarm. It was snowing! And the spot where she had last seen Ivan was completely obliterated!

Sophia could stand it no longer. She jumped off the wagon and rushed to the terrifying mound in the snow. She reached down and grasped a limp shoulder. “Ivan!” she whimpered. “Ivan! Get up! Do you want to freeze?”

“Leave me alone! Get away from here! Can't a fellow sleep?”

“But you're not sleeping!” She shook him harder, happy yet still a little afraid of his voice.

"You woke me," he said, shaking himself like a bear and blinking foolishly at the strange landscape.

"Let's build another fire," Sophia said, poking about to see if there were any embers left.

"Why another fire? You said you didn't like it."

"I was wrong. The dark is terrifying when you are alone. There is something warm and homey about a fire."

Ivan stared at her with mixed emotion as she stirred the embers in a futile attempt to revive the fire. What had come over her, or was he just imagining a new friendliness?

"Get some dry hay from the wagon," he ventured finally. "I'll find some brushwood."

When the fire was blazing high again, he reached for her hand.

"Why did you say that foolish thing, Sophia?"

"What foolish thing?"

"That you would not have me."

"I said it because I wanted to say it. But it wasn't what I really thought."

"What did you mean by that?"

"Not to have you."

"But you will have me?"

"Yes, I'll have you."

Ivan was suddenly galvanized into action. He grabbed up an axe, went into the woods and started chopping wood like one possessed.

"Who the devil's chopping down the forest?" muttered Workun, sticking his head out from under the cover. "Hey, what's this? Winter is upon us," he added, noticing that his coat was covered with snow. He rose to his feet, shook the snow off his coat and then, turning around, saw Sophia by the fire. "So you've been playing round the fire and never told us about this snow," he said. "If it keeps on snowing like this, we'll have a fine time getting back home."

Ivan brought a pile of wood and threw it all on the fire. "Shall we set out now or wait for the dawn?" he asked in a purposeful voice. Sophia flushed with pleasure and Workun slapped Ivan's shoulder affectionately.

"What have you been drinking to pep you up like this?" he laughed as he tightened the belt of his coat. "What do you think yourself? Start now or wait for daybreak?"

“Father told me there is nothing worse than to be caught with a wagon in a heavy snowstorm,” answered Ivan with unusual decisiveness. “I think it would be better to start at once and get over the long haul before the snow gets too deep.”

“Wisely said, my son,” agreed Workun. “Now let’s waken all these bandits and get started.”

Workun lit a lantern and in remarkably quick time camp was struck, the fire extinguished, and the little caravan was on its way.

That was a journey Workun never forgot. To his grandchildren it was a familiar story.

“We started off in fine shape (he would say). I let Wakar drive my horses, while Sophia drove his oxen. Wakar had been a coachman in the Old Country and knew how to get the most out of horses. I went ahead on foot with the lantern. It wasn’t too bad while we had the protection of the forest on either side, but whenever we got into the open prairie it was almost beyond human endurance.

“We rumbled on for endless hours, when suddenly one of the wagons hit a stump and upset. I heard the noise and returned with the lantern. Luckily the driver was unhurt, but his horse had taken fright and run away. We set the wagon upright and piled the goods onto it, but we couldn’t catch the horse. So we transferred the man’s goods to another wagon. The caravan then moved on again. It was rough going, and we were beginning to feel the cold very much. As soon as we hit the next stand of timber we decided to halt, make a fire and rest.

“We soon had a large fire blazing and nearly scorched ourselves trying to thaw our poor bones. The neighbour who had lost his horse couldn’t get over it, but we tried to tell him that the animal would likely rove around for a while and then stray back to the caravan. We had no sooner said this than the horse showed up. He had lost his harness in the woods, but I found a spare set and we fitted it on him. The collar was a little tight, but it served the purpose fairly well, although it made him fidgety at first.

“Day began to dawn at last and we set out again. The snow kept falling in thick, heavy flakes but we pressed on. Towards evening I began looking for the farmstead with a large stable that I remembered, where we might rest for the night. We spoke to four farmers before we found one who would take us in. The men

slept in the stable with the animals. Sophia, the only woman in the party, was given quarters in the house.

“Early the next morning we were off again. It had stopped snowing, but the wind was razor-sharp. The wheels made a creaking sound as we forged on mile after mile. Most of us walked behind the wagons to spare the draft animals. The neighbour with one horse helped the animal drag the wagon by pulling on the wagon-tongue. Wakar did a fine job of driving, but complained loud and long of his cold feet.

“At one point in the journey, Pidhirny’s ox got sick, so I did a little blood-letting by snipping off a piece of his ear. I decided he’d either have to get better or be left behind to die. He pulled through and finally made it home, but it was a long time before he fully recovered.

“On the fourth day we finally reached the settlement. But after that none of us ever attempted that trip to town, even in summer. New towns had started to grow up along the new railway much nearer to our homes. To these we started building new roads. It was soon possible to start out at daybreak and reach the nearest town by evening of the next day. This was a great relief, not so much for the people as for our horses and cattle.”

Thus began a new era in the life of the settlers, an era which Workun humorously termed the “horse phase,” when oxen soon becoming a thing of the past and horses were taking their place.



## Epilogue

The old man stirred on his bed. He had travelled far on his mental journey. Now he was tired. He had seen so many beloved faces, heard so many beloved voices. He had seen the new land in all its arrogant untamed beauty; and from the hillock of his own land he had beheld the fertile fields his gnarled old hands had wrested from the wilderness. Good earth . . . good black soil . . . Now he was tired, pleasantly tired and ready for sleep.

The funeral of Hrehory Workun was no ordinary affair. First of all there was no copious shedding of tears. A solemn and dignified atmosphere prevailed throughout the household and the whole community. The Workun place swarmed with people, who maintained an unusual peace and quiet, as if they were afraid to waken the old patriarch from his eternal slumber.

The funeral lasted all day. There was Holy Liturgy in the morning and requiem service after that. This was followed by a series of speeches over the grave, the finest of which was delivered by Mr. Andrew T. Wakar—that is, Tetiana's Andrew—who was now a graduate in agriculture, an *agronom*.

“We have gathered here today,” he said, “to bury the earthly remains of Uncle Workun, the last of those pioneers who settled in this district, who dared the rigours, the dangers, the vicissitudes and the uncertainties of a new land and finally emerged victorious after transforming the wilderness in which they lived into the fertile expanse you see about you. Here in this coffin lies one of the strongest and noblest pioneers of them all, whose protective strength and wisdom upheld this community through many hard and troublesome times. Uncle Workun lived a useful and honourable

life, as did all the other departed pioneers whose graves dot this cemetery. In rain or shine, in poverty or in wealth, they maintained their equanimity and sense of proportion, thinking not of themselves but of their children for whom they were building their homes in the wilderness. Their physical remains are buried here; but their good deeds will be treasured forevermore in the memories of succeeding generations. For they were genuine Sons of the Soil who blazed a trail that we who came after might find a less onerous and a fuller life."



## Glossary of Ukrainian Words

- Boyar*—Ukrainian nobleman; groom's man, bestman.
- Chumak*—waggoner or carrier in the Ukrainian steppe.
- Gazda* (pl. *gazdy*)—Master of the house; householder.
- Green Holidays*—Whitsuntide, including Whitsunday (Pentecost) and the following two days.
- Holubtsi*—cabbage rolls filled with rice or buckwheat.
- Hospodar* (pl. *hospodari*)—husbandman.
- Hospodinia*—housewife.
- Kolach* (pl. *kolachi*)—twisted (braided, plaited) bread.
- Kuma*—god-mother to one's child.
- Kutia*—boiled wheat with honey and ground poppy seeds; eaten at Christmas Eve supper.
- Morg*—land measure, equivalent to 1.43 acres.
- Pan* (pl. *pany*)—lord.
- Paska*—Easter bread; saffron-coloured, decorated loaf, filled with raisins.
- Prispa*—earth embankment along a wall of a Ukrainian peasant home (used for sitting).
- Pyrohi*—cheese dumpling.
- Sharwarok*—statute labour for keeping roads and bridges in good repair; arrangement whereby a tax-payer is allowed to work off taxes by labour.
- Shustka* (pl. *shustki*)—six-cent piece in old Austrian currency.
- Starosta*—go-between in marriage matters; master of ceremonies at a wedding.
- Swacha* (pl. *swachy*)—name by which respective mothers of a married couple call themselves; also match-maker.
- Swat* (pl. *swaty*)—masculine of *swacha*.
- Toloka*—a “bee”; as sewing bee, plastering bee, etc.