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Title: Nelka

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Release date: September 17, 2007 [eBook #22655]

Language: English

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E-text prepared by John Young Le Bourgeois

# NELKA

(Mrs. Helen de Smirnoff Moukhanoff.)

1878-1963

A Biographical Sketch.

by Michael Moukhanoff

1964

## FOREWARD.

In attempting this biographical sketch of Nelka I am using the memories of 45 years together and also a great number of letters as material. Her Aunt, Miss Susan Blow, had the habit of keeping Nelka's letters over the years. There are some as early as when Nelka was only five years old and then up to the year 1916, the year her aunt died. These letters reflect very vividly the personality, the ideas, the aspirations, the disappointments and the hopes of a person over a period of a long life. They paint a very real picture of her personality and for this reason I am using quotations from these letters very extensively.

Nelka de Smirnoff was born on August 19, 1878 in Paris, France.

Her father was Theodor Smirnoff, of the Russian nobility. Her grandmother had tartar blood in her veins and was born Princess Tischinina. Nelka's father was a brilliant man, finishing the Imperial Alexander Lyceum at the head of his class. A versatile linguist, he joined the Russian diplomatic service

and occupied several diplomatic posts in various countries, but died young, when Nelka was only four years old, and was buried in Berlin. Nelka therefore hardly knew him, though she remembered him and throughout her life had a great veneration for him and loyalty for his memory.

Nelka's mother was Nellie Blow, the daughter of Henry T. Blow of St. Louis, Missouri. The Blow family, of old southern aristocratic stock, moved from Virginia to St. Louis in 1830. Henry T. Blow was then about fifteen years old and had several brothers and sisters. He was a successful business man who became very wealthy and was also a prominent public and political figure, both in St. Louis and nationally. He was a friend of both Abraham Lincoln and of President Grant and received appointments from them. He was minister to Venezuela and later Ambassador to Brazil. He was active in politics from 1850 on. Though his brothers were southern democrats, Henry Blow took a stand against slavery and upheld the free-soil movement. During the Civil War he was the only one of the family to take the side of the Union and spent much of his time getting his brothers out of prison camps. For a time he was state senator and for two terms was Congressman in Washington. He also served as one of the three Commissioners for the District of Columbia.

He was married to Minerva Grimsley and had ten children. His daughter Nellie Blow, while in Brazil with her father, met Theodor Smirnoff who was then secretary at the Russian Embassy there. She married him in Carondelet, part of St. Louis, where the family lived, in 1872. They had three children, a boy and a girl, who died in infancy in St. Petersburg, Russia, and another girl, Nelka, who was born in 1878 and was therefore the only living child.

Henry T. Blow's oldest daughter (and Nelka's aunt) Miss Susan Blow was a prominent figure in the American educational movement, writing and lecturing on education, and the one who introduced the Froebel kindergarten system in the United States. The youngest daughter, Martha, married Herbert Wadsworth of Geneseo, N.Y. She was a very talented musician and painter and later became a very known horsewoman.

After Nelka's father died in Europe, her mother returned to America and it was the first time that Nelka came here. As a daughter of a Russian, Nelka was also a Russian subject and remained a Russian that way to the end. After the Russian Revolution, having no allegiance to the Soviet Government, she became what is known as "stateless," a position which in later years she liked, for she always said that she belonged to the World, not just one country.

But as a child her mother wanted to bring her up as a Russian even though in many ways this was difficult, for there were no relatives and few connections left in Russia, her mother did not speak the language and all ties and connections were in America.

Because of this conflict of attachments, Nelka's mother and she traveled many times back and forth between Europe and America. Her mother gave her a very complete and broad education both in America and in Europe. In Europe she attended a very exclusive and rather advanced school in Brussels. Because of this Nelka spoke not only perfect French and English, but German as well.

When she was ten years old she went to a school in Washington. She then already showed interest and love for animals which later became a dominant feature in her life.

Writing to her aunt Susie from Washington 1888:

"At Uncle Charles Drake the boys have a little pet squirrel; it don't bite them but it bites strangers if you give it a chance to. They have some little guinea pigs that are very cute."

She also at that age showed intellectual interests:

Washington 1888.

"I read very much now whenever I get a chance to. I think it is splendid and always amusing. I can play lots of little duets on the piano with Mama. I love it."

Her stay in the school in Brussels was very profitable for her studies and development and also showed in her letters how much interest she took in everything.

Brussels 1893.

"I know what you mean about my getting older. You think that at every different age I would be content to be that age if I did not get any older. So I was. When I was ten I thought it would be dreadful to be eleven, but when I was eleven I was quite satisfied if I did not have to be twelve, and so on. But ever since I have been fourteen I have thought it was awful and have never become reconciled to it."

Brussels 1894.

"I was first in grammar, literature and physics. Do you know the 'Melee' of Victor Hugo? I have just read it and I like it so much. I would like to see some persons who have lived and who live. It makes me crazy to see people vegetate."

Brussels 1893.

"We went to Waterloo. We went by carriage all the way, first through the Bois de la Cambre and then on through the most perfect woods imaginable. We went to a sort of little mound in the middle of the battlefield with a huge lion on top as the emblem of victory. One thing, although of no importance, I like so much, that was three little birds nests one in the lion's mouth and one in each ear. Wasn't it nice? We then went to the museum at the foot of the hill. I got a photograph of Napoleon and one of Wellington. I have such a contempt for Napoleon and I just take pleasure in comparing it with the frank, open face of the Duke of Wellington."

Already at that age she was seeking answers to moral questions and showed her philosophical mind:

Brussels 1894.

"'Une injustice qu'on voit et qu'on tait: on la commet soi meme.' (An injustice one sees and keeps quiet about: one commits it oneself.) I wish more persons could or would recognize that truth."

As a child Nelka did not speak Russian, because there was no one around using this language. After her school in Brussels, her mother took her to Russia to St. Petersburg. She was then seventeen.

St. Petersburg 1895.

"For the last few days I have been most blissfully absorbed in Taine's 'Ideal dans l'Art.' I never knew it was in a separate volume. It is splendid. Of course you know 'Character' of Smiles. I don't care for it much, so sermony. I am going to the Hermitage tomorrow just to see the Dutch and Flemish schools."

The same year her mother took her to Paris and entered her to attend lectures at the College de France while living at the Convent of the Assumption.

Paris 1895.

"I have just come back from the College de France. I enjoyed the lecture very much; it was on Stendhal. You will be perhaps surprised to learn that my educational career has taken a sudden turn. I am going into the Convent of the Assumption next week. Now don't be horrified. The Assumption is an exception to all the convents; besides the regular studies they have professors from the Sorbonne, Lycee Henry IV and other colleges to come in and give lectures on foreign literature, history, art, etc. Besides this unheard of privilege they have an atelier for drawing with Ducet to correct, and living models, men, women and children. Of course Mama never imagined such a thing possible in a convent, the general idea of convents not going beyond wax flowers. Here are the privileges I will have:

1) Clock-like life and no time lost. 2) No risk of disagreeable associations as they are most particular who they take. 3) I will see Mama almost every day.

"I shall have to go to bed at eight! Just fancy that!!! But then I have an astonishing capacity for sleeping and eating just now."

While in Paris, in addition to the general subjects and the lectures at the Sorbonne, Nelka also studied music, in particular the violin, and at a time was quite proficient in it, though she did not keep it up, as she did with painting, which she continued for a number of years.

Nelka's mother tried to bring her up in the Russian spirit with a great veneration for the memory of her father. Nelka grew up with a burning nationalistic feeling for Russia and a veneration for the Russian Emperor. Her mother kept up relations with such Russians as she knew or who were with the Russian Embassy when in Washington. And later, when she grew up, Nelka continually kept up with her Russian friends.

I think characteristic of Nelka was her highly emotional expressions of loyalty and devotion, an emotion which dominated all of her life and all of her actions. Anything she did or undertook was primarily motivated by emotion or feeling rather than reason, but once decided upon was carried out with determination and a great deal of will power.

But because the difference of national attachments and the resulting conflict there was always a tearing apart and a division, a duality of attachments both to Russia and to America, and this seems to have been an emotional disturbance which lasted with her for a great many years.

Her first, overwhelming emotional feeling was a patriotic nationalistic devotion to Russia and a mystic devotion to the Emperor and the Russian Orthodox Church. Then her next emotional feelings embraced the devotion and loyalty for her family and her kin.

But in Russia she had no relatives and all her family was in America. Because of that there seemed always a conflict of emotions, attachments and loyalties which dominated as a disturbance throughout her life, at least through the first half of it. This conflict of feelings was upsetting and painful and she suffered a great deal from the frustrations that these emotions often brought about.

The Russian education of feelings for Russia which her mother tried to install in her succeeded, for throughout life Nelka remained a faithful Russian in all of her feelings and while having so many ties in America, and being herself half American, she was constantly in conflict with the 'American way of life.'

From her early childhood Nelka had a tremendous love and devotion not only to her mother but also to her two aunts, Miss Blow and Mrs. Wadsworth. When in America she and her mother would stay either in Ashantee with the Wadsworths or in Cazenovia where Miss Blow had her home.

Early in life she was seeking and trying to think things out. She was never satisfied, never ready to accept something but always tried to analyze it through her own thinking. At the age of twenty she wrote in 1898:

"I have absolutely no facility for expression; that is what is the matter. I see persons so clever, so talented, and genuine in their line and with absolutely distorted points of view. How aggravating. I feel that in due time I may get to see something clearly (at least thus far, if I do not see things clearly, I have not been pleased to see any other way), and I am craving a means of giving out. You will say I need the persistence to educate myself in the technique of some mode of rendering my impressions. I suppose it is so. That is what I have always meant with this desire to 'exhaust' myself. I need to work. I need to give out or I shall have such a mental indigestion that I shall no longer be able to form a single thought. As it is, so many things are fleeting through me in incompleteness, in mere suggestion and so simultaneously at that, that I am bewildered. O, for complete cessation of consciousness, since this consciousness is but that of an amalgamation quantity of incomprehensible suggestions, or else, for a vent for some of this shapeless, immature acquisition, so that something at least can complete itself."

Was this just a disturbance of youth, of any youth, not completely empty-headed, frivolous or superficial, or was this the result of a distinct inheritance of two very different and opposing personalities, of so different nationalities and with an addition of even tartar blood? I don't know. The fact remains that she was constantly emotionally disturbed and constantly seeking the answers of life, that so many have done and so few have found.

In the same year, not long before her mother died, she wrote from Narragansett Pier 1898:

"I am very much puzzled still on individuality, that is, on its everlasting existence. I do not see at all how it can be, but I am waiting. Perhaps I can see soon. I have been trying to get a definition for art and for beauty. I have nothing that satisfies me yet. Art and beauty: I do not connect them at all in my mind. Art is based on significance first and this does not depend on beauty. Beauty is much more difficult to define than art. We have somehow got the idea that only the beautiful pleases. Can beautiful be applied to whatever pleases? I don't think so. Beauty is truthfulness of what? Of the original intention I suppose. Is beautiful something or is it not? Anyway I detach it from that which pleases. If beauty is something distinct that which pleases is not always beautiful. Is beauty independent of taste? It is so hard to think out. However, I never think anything without knowing it, and I know very few things, needless to say."

Washington 1898.

"It is terrible to be twenty! But I proved myself still young in being able to shed a tear over my departed teens. Mama and all of our little Russian colony drank my health wishing me each in turn to find myself each year one year younger, till I had to stop them lest they eclipse me altogether. I think my nineteenth was the fullest year I have ever had—crammed."

When she was twenty, Nelka went with her mother to Narragansett Bay for the summer. Here a very tragic event took place which left an imprint on Nelka, if not for life, then certainly for many years. One afternoon, while sitting and talking with her mother, the latter suddenly collapsed and died instantly. Nelka was there all alone with her. The blow was terrible. For a very long time, being highly emotional, she could not get over this tragic end of a person with whom she had always been so close and so intimate. She went into deep mourning and remained in a state of frozen sorrow. Writing to her aunt Susie she expressed so vividly the tragic feeling of complete sorrow which gripped her:

St. Louis 1898.

"No one could offer more generously what unfortunately I feel that I may never have. Don't misunderstand me, dear Poodie, but my 'home' was forever lost when Mama left me and I can never find it except with her. I am Mama's own and my 'home' such as you mean it can only exist in memory and anticipation."

"I am thankful to God that I am left on earth with such aunts as you and Pats. Not many in my situation are so blessed. I shall always feel alone. But perhaps I have had more of Mama than many have in twice the time."

It is true that by circumstances she had always lived very much together with her mother, who as a widow had nothing but her. Even when Nelka was in school, her mother lived in the same city and saw her constantly, and their closeness was very complete.

Again she writes:

"In all events I have had more in life than I deserve, more than one should dare hope for."

"I was sorry to disappoint you yesterday, but I cried all the afternoon."

A year later—Washington 1899.

"Try as I will I do not see how I can ever take up any interest again. I have so little desire to go on with anything and I am so satisfied with what I have had."

Washington 1899.

"I went to church this morning and I was surprised to realize how heathenish and unchristian the sermon sounded to me. It was painful to feel that I did not believe one word of what a Christian minister said. What a network man seems to have made of the simplest things, wherein to be everlastingly confounded. Might one just look up and reach out overhead, instead of looking around one and trying to grope at one's level. Truths made intangible by the impenetrable meshes of faulty creeds and imperfect reasoning."

Ashantee 1899.

"Please do not worry about me. I told you that I was peaceful and content, which I am. I want nothing which I cannot get and my mind is reposeful. I do not care to understand anything. That I have got to accept whatever may come is manifest and the wherefore has ceased to trouble me, if it ever did. In the instances that have thus far come up in my life, what I should do has always been palpable enough and has required more determination or will. My inclination is to do as little as I can to maintain my peace of conscience. While I have no feeling of lassitude, I also feel no incentive, and while without this one need not fail utterly, one will not probably accomplish much."

"I don't believe there are many happy lives. Mama gave me more happiness in the given number of years than I shall ever have again, though doubtless, if I live long enough, I shall have some more happy moments. This is to be supposed. But all this matters so very, very little."

"I don't think that out of what is anything better is going to be."

"The external situation in general is not bad and as far as I can see, the trouble lies in the natures of the individuals and is more or less beyond remedy. The tragedy arising from trying to unite in action and purpose where in mind and heart and soul there is no union, no mutual illumination, no mutual comprehension of the point of view, will be everlasting. 'Constater et acceptor' and the sooner to 'constater' correctly, the sooner futile struggle ends."

"Goodnight. I neither weep nor laugh and I am glad to go to bed; might be a good deal worse off, if I had no bed."

Ashantee 1899.

"I have lots of things to talk to you about but I don't know where to begin. I want to say one thing that I think, which is that I think it is very difficult to judge practically when a too analytical definition of a condition or state is substituted for the ordinary and worldly vernacular. I think one must often fall into error from too great an attempt of metaphysical accuracy (precision), for whatever the thing in essence, the reaction thereof upon the multitude is made more forcible and more lucid to the mind by the term applied to it at large. For instance a crank is not a person of peculiar fancies."

Ashantee 1899.

"Great griefs are beyond all expression, but the stillness of agonizing moments is worse. Why, oh, why anything?"

"I cannot feel anything. That makes variety but it is being alone in interests, the feeling unchanged, the purposes conceived and striven for singly that makes the struggle seem hard and the achievement futile."

A girl of twenty or twenty-one, she was always questioning, always, seeking, always disturbed.

Ashantee, December 1899.

"You see I am making use of the divine right of the individual which you are ever proclaiming and you must not mistake this for unniecelike freedom of speech. I can only live and learn and perhaps learn to see how often I am mistaken. I am still in that pitiful state of youthful consciousness and have with it the confidence to act upon what I think. And to me almost every general rule becomes transformed under the allowances one must make for the modifications of the issue at hand. I think that often all that is most vital in life may be lost by adhering to formulated precepts and I think that every occasion calls for special and particular consideration for its solution."

After staying a while in America, after her mother's death, Nelka decided to go to Europe in order to change her ideas and get away from memories. This was a wise move and gave her a great deal of comfort, and helped build up her morale. She first went to Paris where she once again went to the Convent of the Assumption and took up the study of painting in earnest at the Julien studios. From Paris she also went to visit her friends the Count Moltke and his wife in Denmark and then later went for four months to Bulgaria where she stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Bakhmeteff, my uncle who was Russian ambassador in Sofia and Madame Bakhmeteff who was Nelka's godmother. These two years in Europe were a very happy, steadying and pleasant time for Nelka and she regained a hold of herself. Especially she loved Paris as she always did. She told me once that when in Paris at the time she was so exhilarated that she felt like walking on air. But her observations of life and its questions continued as always, something that never left her. She wrote a great deal to her aunt Susie and there are many interesting observations made during that period.

Paris 1899.

"I don't believe there is any use trying to understand things until an issue comes up and I believe that anyone who has heretofore responded to the flagrant necessities and requirements of life will be able to solve and meet more readily, more justly and more normally any problem which may arise. More is there to be learned and more balance and judgment gained in attending to one's most minute duties than in hours of mental anticipation of possible events and questions, conjured up in necessary incompleteness. What beauty there is here! The intellectual and emotional stimulus would make a cow tingle, and yet not some people I know."

Paris 1899.

"I am disgusted with the ending of the century with two wars, it is a disgrace. I think the whole world is very horrible anyhow and I don't believe in worldly goods and possessions, or countries, or governments and I don't see why everyone by inhabiting tropical climes couldn't dispense with clothes and even the lazy could find food where the vegetation is luxuriant. I think it is artificial to live in a place where one's own skin is not sufficient protection against the weather. I think the whole organization of everything is abominable and I don't believe it is a necessary stage of development. Most ordinary lives are the quintessence of artificiality and the grossest waste of time. I am more than ever against the 'me' in myself. It is the source of all evil."

Paris 1900.

"I have read some illuminating bits and I think I will finish by finally building myself a scant but solid creed for I have cast all preconceived notions from me, rooted out all expressions of habit and influence, and cleared, though perhaps still warped dwelling of my former tentative suppositions will contain henceforth but the jewels of certain convictions, or remain empty evermore!"

Paris 1900.

"The stimulating effect of this place is wonderful. I don't know what it is, but it is just life to everything in one. I have absolute peace of mind and I have no mental worries or torments. Nothing seems complicated, nothing seems involved and everything that I can help is satisfactory. I want to lose myself in my work and I have every advantage for doing so. Paris is wonderful, I never so appreciated it before."

"I am so busy, I have my whole week planned ahead for almost every second. You see I am at the studio every morning including Saturday and have several lessons a week in the afternoon. New Years I dined at the La Beaumes. There was just the immediate family and we were twenty-three at table." (These were part of a French branch of the relatives of Nelka on her mother's side.)

Paris 1900.

"I can understand people with no sentiment, but I will not tolerate people who scoff at it."

"I am so glad to have the Russian church here. I go every Sunday."

Paris 1900.

"I don't have a minute to spare. This is what I wanted and the life though very full is easy and tranquil. The free reality of thought is delightful and wonderful. I do not include freedom of expression. I wonder how much I fool myself? It is not an intolerance which wishes to promote self but which is limited and dead to a variation of its own species because it lacks the consciousness of its own incompleteness. A man who does not wish to dominate and emphasize his will upon his surroundings, including people, is not a whole man. My Russian is getting on. I will be very glad when I have mastered the language, then I am going to begin Italian."

As a child Nelka did not speak Russian and only started studying it when grown up. When she later went to Russia she still was very weak in the language and only gradually picked it up with practice, but eventually knew it very well.

Paris 1900.

"How madly busy all the little people are, bussing over the planet, and for what? How nice it is to go to sleep. I am going to bed. P.S. I think it is an intellectual crime to wear long skirts in the streets."

Paris 1900.

"One must be earnest or else laugh at everything and end in despair. I am so satisfied with my present condition that I think it would be foolish to upset it all after so short a time. I am just beginning to feel the peaceful reaction of it all and I dread the idea of getting roused again before having fully got hold of myself. The total change I felt necessary proved a salvation and that complete absence of all reminders of the past year is the only thing wherein I can get quiet. I do not want to go over what I have felt. Suffice it to say that I want to stay just as I am until after next winter when I will feel like going back to America without regret. I do not feel equal to any more emotions."

Paris 1900.

"I do not understand the 'variety of perfection.' I think it is impossible and therefore absurd to try to preface for this life, well up on our own inheritance, as you say. There has been too much practical research and study and not enough character building, the result: total lack of balance and maniacs. Anything better that would admit of more possibility of collectedness of peaceful contemplation of the possibility of perfecting the least act with the whole of oneself. The least act is worth it. How does one live now? Scattered over the universe, over the time. There are no whole people except a few who keep their entirety within the arbitrary limitations of prejudice and habitual notions of which they are possessed. The other: they are fragments, cranks and nonentities. One more thing, I do not think that a nation can be judged by its great men. Great men belong to humanity, to the century, to anything but not to their country. I think intelligence and capacity is never local, and it is the average and the habit of life that determines the country."

Paris 1900.

"I do not think that anything is likely to happen to me except perhaps softening of the brain and that would happen anywhere. I have seen no one to whom it is likely that I will lose my heart, so I am quite safe."

Paris 1900.

"I do find everything so funny, and people so funny, not individuals, but as a whole, by funny I mean queer. The senseless mode of existence, the superfluous education: these artificial restrictions. It is especially the artificiality of so many things. Who is going to do away with it all? I don't understand anything and I know there is no use trying to build up an understanding on rules."

That summer Nelka went for a month's visit to Denmark to her friends Count and Countess Moltke.

Glorupvej, Denmark 1900.

"We were still two days on the steamer getting to Bremen and then we changed trains and boats about fifteen times in 24 hours getting here. But once here it is beyond all words in delight. The place is perfectly beautiful. I cannot describe it to you. It is so quiet, so far away from everything. Beautiful forests that we drive through, deer all over, swans, fountains and all so old. I lead a most regular of lives. Everyone is exact to the minute, for meals and everything. I feel that it is a very great opportunity I am having to be here in Denmark and see all this new country. It is so interesting and I enjoy it so much. It was very sweet of Louissette to ask me."

Glorupvej, Denmark 1900.

"What you write in answer to my saying that I like 'whole soulness': it is precisely the whole soulness which is not a conscious conquest that I like. I appreciate the merit of the last but it is not that which attracts me, which also reminds me that I want to tell you that I have come to the firm, clear and definite conclusion that a person that loves is not necessarily loving, nor a person that gives necessarily generous. A loving person may never love and a generous person may never give, and the practice of either quality does not indicate an impulse. One can conceive, accept and appropriate the idea of generosity, lovingness, etc., etc., and act it, but that is not the thing. I hate all effort which has for its aim the creation of self, the conscious creation. I like the self to become through slavery to the best natural impulses and through sacrifice brought in one's affections. Seeing that we do depend on each other, it seems to me admissible that the surrender of self, which continues to be with me the highest of everything, should allow of a direct object as its means. I used to have a holy respect of the majority. Now, when I see how many imbeciles go to make up that majority I am no longer afraid to throw over any precept that has filtered into my head, and if ever there was a revolutionist in thought, it is I. Foolish beliefs and hobbies have become adorned with so much that appeals to the sense of the beautiful that one clings even to that, but then that is another element which can envelop rational things as well. Of course all cannot help but be well, but then I am sure that the present condition is quite off the track and I have no respect for anything but pain, joy and sacrifice which are the only realities. Life makes standards and standards don't make life."

Glorupvej 1900.

"I can tolerate wrong and weakness and everything else but that search for self and above all that pompous blowing of a horn before such empty things, such big sounding ambitions, that mock glory, that swelling in noble pride upon such fictitious hallucinations, that poor mesquin grandness. It is exasperating. I hate ambition to achieve. However, I suppose I am very foolish. I am a mass of vanity and self-seeking in my own way, but it is a great pleasure to cry down. I get roused sometimes on things that are not my business and I have felt very much inclined to express my opinion about some thing, but I suppose I had better not."

"My life I think is molded on circumstance and on the best of my instinct and judgment which may be faulty but which in every special instance seems the safest to me. To remind oneself constantly that one's life is made up of days prevents one from taking most things 'au tragique' and makes existence passable enough."

Paris 1900.

"Life is so short. The only peace is in remembering how short life is. I work so hard at my painting. My efforts alone deserve some results, but it is slow in forthcoming. This week however there is an improvement. I get up before seven every day and go to bed at nine and drink eight glasses of milk a day. I hope you are pleased. Some emotion, more extremeness, some craziness, some feeling, really I think it is necessary. I do not see any satisfaction in anything but intense feeling. Intense feeling which may come even in the quietest of lives and which does not depend upon external events. It is astonishing how easy it is to be tolerant of people's personalities, however unsympathetic to one, and how very easy also to be intolerant of their point of view."

"There is nothing so disastrous as to be fooled by the appreciation where it is not deserved. How I wish I could do any one thing well."

Paris 1900.

"I hope it is a satisfaction to you to know how well pleased I am here and that I am absolutely content. I think I will indulge myself and get a jewel with your Xmas present. 'The Perfect One' loves to deck out in gems! I have been reading an essay on Tolstoi and I am took with an attack of asceticism, unequalled by any heretofore. This, following my last sentence, is charmingly typical of my character, is it not? There is one girl here who really might be very nice. She is eyed as being somewhat



emancipated by the household I think, but I think it is only Youthful freshness of a first departure and inexperience in calculating the impression she makes on the style of her audience."

At the end of the same year Nelka went for four months to Sofia, Bulgaria where she stayed with the Russian Minister Mr. Bakhmeteff, my uncle and Madame Bakhmeteff who was an American and Nelka's godmother.

She enjoyed very much that stay in Bulgaria and had a very interesting and pleasant time and great success. From Sofia she wrote a number of letters which reflect both the interest of her stay there as well as the continued constant searching so typical of her youth, and perhaps of her whole life.

Sofia 1900.

"How can I tell you how I feel at being here. It is an entirely new world. So interesting and so beautiful! No one could be lovelier to me than Madame Bakhmeteff. She comes in to my room every two minutes and asks me if I have anything under the sun and seems so pleased to have me here. It is really delightful. I have a sitting room next to my bedroom all to myself, filled with every book that I have been longing to get hold of. Everything is so picturesque. I was delighted with Denmark but how different this is. There is something I respond to in that orderly, cold atmosphere, but I think there is more that I respond to in the Orient. How much more simple and less complicated the life is here. I was almost stopped at the Hungarian and Servian frontier because I had no passport. By the merest chance I had a very old one in my bag which was absolutely invalid but which, added to my absolute refusal to leave the train, got me by the three frontiers in the end. I called a Turk and a Servian who were in the same compartment to my rescue and for an hour or more carried on a heated discussion in every language. I am going to ride every day much to my delight. The diplomatic corps have to depend almost entirely on each other and it is very interesting being thrown with people of so many different nationalities. I have been living so fully it seems to me for the last three or four years and still always a crescendo. I don't know why I always write so much about myself—egotistical youth—but how I realize my youth. Even while youth itself makes my head whirl, I stand back within myself and say almost sadly—it is youth. It is sad in a way because I know that the reaction of great interest upon me is youth, and not the interest."

Sofia 1900.

"You speak of danger; I don't see where danger is. The worst evil is prejudice. Without prejudice and without too much drive for worldly attainments, I don't see much danger. I am satisfied as far as I myself am concerned. Every moment is exciting and the regret or irritation I feel against many existing conditions is not wholly disagreeable. This is youth, and when I am older I will jog along at a slower rate. I am not like you, or like almost anyone I know, but I admire and respect those most whom I resemble the least. I am one mass of contradictions to myself, perhaps, supremely self-centered."

Sofia 1900.

"The freedom I have, good or bad, does not depend on the external conditions of one's life. I have enough sense of what is practical to keep in certain lines. No conditions on earth would hamper me mentally and I want to get life-proof through living."

"How I hate business! More and more I am beginning to think less and less of what one accomplishes materially in this life. What does it matter? I think it is less help to be able to help those about one a little materially and be more or less a nonentity as an individual than to be able to mean something as a person with a heart and comprehension. There are some beautiful things in this life that everything organized tries to make hideous and monstrous and I would always say 'gather ye roses while ye may.' I think that every one has almost a right to some happiness and a certain indulgence and the 'droit de temperament,' means something and need not always be selfish. If you do not think this, then there is only the other extreme of austere abnegation of self for any cause however trivial. Nature is the only guide and I don't believe Nature is bad. Of course the curse of freedom will allow one for a long time to distort and vilely modify natural instincts, but at least one can fly from the too palpable artificial. Dear Poodie, don't sigh. I only let off steam in words—that is safe. I am still a slave to this disgusting civilization and always your very devoted 'Perfect One', that is to be, or might have been, Nelka."

Sofia 1900.

"I really ought not to talk because I don't give myself the trouble to put my thoughts on general things in order and in every comment I always have the desire to embrace everything. I follow my own thoughts but love the immediate point and my brain is not in the proper condition to command its own vagaries."

Sofia 1900.

"What a delightful and full summer I have had. I can only reiterate that I am satisfied. I have had so much. Given my nature and my life, more than anyone I know. I may be mistaken in everything but I never doubt my application when I am about to act. Perhaps I will some day, but I don't think so. I have learned a certain 'science de la vie,' meaning this time the artificial, irrational life that is practiced and that I despise. Apart from this I have my own notion of real life and that is my own luxury. When I write so it sounds so big and so out of place for a girl, I always regret saying anything. If what I think means anything it will be shown in my life and so far my life is only a selfish, soft existence, so perhaps that is all I mean. I don't know that I love many things with conviction, but I know I have a contempt with conviction for many things."

"I have stopped looking at life as written with a big L. Regarding it only as an indefinite term of years is much less appalling; it does not lessen the joys and does lessen the sorrows and disappointments. The method now is to catch every minute and stretch it for all it is worth."

"You say I am not adaptive. It is difficult to s'entendre on what that means. Many sides I am, to my detriment. Too many sides for it seems to me I can fit into almost any opening with equal interest. And I find very few environments wholly uncongenial. I am not conscious of exacting in my nature any particular strain or line but what irritates and antagonizes me in any environment is the presumption on the part of the creator of that environment that theirs is the only world-view. I suppose the really strongest thing in me is an instinctive spirit of contradiction, for I always rise spontaneously against anything and everything that is proclaimed to me as being so. This is perhaps rather sweeping but it is more or less so. People influence me never by what they tell me but by the general impression they make on me and that I see them make on other people. I believe what I just wrote is nonsense. I only mean to say that I am only intolerant of intolerance. I think the ordinary rules of good behavior demand a certain amount of tolerance and with that any milieu is possible. I am sure of a few things but these few things are very firmly fixed in my mind. Nothing surprises me."

Sofia, 1900.

"I know there is a certain fundamental something in me that will make me apply the same reasoning to everything and I am never worried about any question. In fact I don't know what it is to have a question in mind—that which might be one is simply left out. I cannot say I know myself of course, but I know more of myself than anyone else does and I am certainly more severe. I do not recognize a good thing in me. I believe I am level headed and more or less reasonable, but that is not my merit. Any sanity of judgment I have comes from Mama. Whatever good there may be is due entirely to her. I am not afraid of anything. I am ready for anything. The truth is the only thing worth caring about. Not the great universal truths that one can search and cherish while living in a mass of lies but just the truthfulness of one's life and everyday actions. Try to call things what they are and it is a perfect realm of ever increasing delight, for everything around us is lies from beginning to end. But in general everything is lies and the ambitions are all false and the education is no better than the shoes that are put on Chinese female feet to stunt and deform them. What a sweet and perfect simile. How did I happen to fall on it?"

Sofia 1900.

"I am thinking seriously of working just about twice as much as I did last winter. If one would do anything the least in art one must give oneself to it 24 hours and live these 24 hours double. There is no art but good art and what is not best is not art at all. I hate pretense. It only exists among people who know nothing. I know nothing in any line but I would rather remain a nullity studying with serious intentions than profit of or repose upon some meaningless accidental achievement. Of all traits presumption is the most insufferable. Oh, how one is anxious to put one's finger in pies one is completely incapable of understanding."

After her stay in Bulgaria, Nelka return to Paris to finish her studies before returning to America.

Paris 1901.

"Oh how stimulating this place is and how much study and achievement there is. What a lecture I heard. It was more helpful to me than anything I can remember for a long while. And what a book I have got! A complete resignation without losing energy on one's work at hand that is what one may strive for. Energy and conviction and élan are not usually resigned to all obstacles and resignation is often lassitude. I feel resignation so necessary and at the same time I have such infinite faith in the power of 'il faut' (one must). The worst thing I am afraid of is to become tired in the way I mean. I think it is more hopeless than disgust and disillusion."

Paris 1900.

"Where can I read something holding your point of view which would be more within my range of understanding than Hegel? I can't understand free will as independent of our physical being and I don't see how will can be something different from a kind of complicated reflex. I am afraid there is no help for it. I will have to inform myself somehow. Anyway my head always seems clearer over here. I wish I could be so in America. You would not believe how waked up I can get. I believe it is in the air. There is something both stimulating and relaxing in the moral atmosphere that I feel only here."

After her stay in Paris and Bulgaria, Nelka returned to America and stayed either with her aunt Miss Blow or with her aunt Mrs. Wadsworth: in the summer in Cazenovia or Ashantee, in winter in Washington where her Aunt Martha had a large house which had just been built and occupied for the first time in 1900. Her aunt kept up a very active social life and while Nelka stayed through all this social activity she never liked it. She kept in close contact with the varied European embassies and especially the Russian embassy, where she enjoyed the influence of the European atmosphere.

Ashantee, November 1901.

"I do not want to complicate the interpretations of my condition and I want above all things to cease dwelling so selfishly upon it. There is no need of looking for unaccountable voids, longings and the like. I have been unhappy and shattered ever since Mama died. My own nature gives me much to contend with and I want to get away from it all. I am unfit for anything but concentration, and I am not made for the world I live in. If I am not married by the time I am twenty-seven, I am determined to go into a convent or our Red Cross. I may change my mind many times but this is my last word for the present. I have a contempt, when not pity, for the lives of most of the people I see around me and mine is among the most selfish and aimless. I do not wish to read or think or study. And as for 'consciously living for a true world view,' I want to run away from every form of consciousness."

Ashantee 1901.

"You speak in your letter of forming an unconscious totality of feeling and tendency out of their necessarily limited experiences, and of not living independently of the deposit of human struggle and thump. Certainly one should perhaps profit by the last but I cannot imagine acquiring anything: conviction, principle, or any attitude of mind except by simple experience. I think we may experience in an ordinary life all that is necessary to build a sufficient and adequate world view. And what I read means nothing to me except where I can compare it with my own experience or consider it in relation to my own experience. I do not think that I can have a proper world view until I am old enough to have had time to experience life and I don't want to go ahead of my experience in reading."

Ashantee, November 1901.

"Kitty and I have just come in from a long disagreeable day in Rochester where we are having clothes made. It is extremely painful to me, but all this kind of thing just pushes me more in the opposite direction and makes me firmer in my fast maturing resolution. I am exceedingly blue. In fact, it is only occasionally that I am not so, and, as in the light of the world I have an unusual amount of things to make me the contrary, it must mean surely that I am not of the world and I wish, wish, wish that I were out of it."

Ashantee, December 1901.

"I am going to try and be reasonable and as mildly satisfactory as I may be and avoid extremes and keep hold of myself, as the only possible justification of my points of view and ideas, for no one will agree with them, and one cannot claim any merit in these, when the result offered is not better than anyone else."

"I will never be influenced by anyone until I see someone who masters intelligently, calmly and practically situations as they occur. I have a great deal in myself to fight and the powerful helping influence has been Mama and the warnings I have had from witnessing things that went wrong. I think the more one lives and the more one thinks, the simpler things get. The greatest of all dangers seems to me to fool oneself. Really this seems to me to be the only hopeless plight and there comes to a certain fascination in trying to say things plainly to oneself. Nothing is as strong as plain truth about a thing, and the moment one shirks it one is lost."

One can see that back in America she was again distressed, discontented and uncertain. She had lost the tranquility and the assurance which she had while in Europe. It seems to me that for some reason or other this feeling of unsatisfaction was always much greater in America than in Europe and here she was always disturbed.

A heavy test to her feelings of loyalty for Russia came with the advent of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904. America was in those days very pro-Japanese and Nelka suffered in her feelings while living in

Washington. Finally, in a feeling of exasperation, she left Washington in 1904 and returned to Paris. Here she studied at the French Red Cross to qualify as a nurse. She also resumed her painting studies. For medical practice she worked at a children's dispensary.

Denmark 1903.

"The trip is such a complicated one (back to Paris) with such indefinite changes and waits that I feel sure it would not be right to go alone despite my mature years, and so there is nothing to do."

(She was 25 years old.)

Paris 1904.

"I have painted a portrait of myself, grinning from ear to ear, which you probably would not like, but it is the best I think I have done. It was for the Salon with Julien's great approval but it was refused with eight thousand other masterpieces. It is a fearful blow to me but salutary for my soul no doubt and this being my holy week I am going to try to benefit from the disappointment and chagrin. I must go and study now. I am doing 5 hours a day of concentrated study."

"I am having an attack of 'anti.' I am getting to feel further and further away. I like Denmark. I am very much interested in the country, the people, the language. I think the difference between countries, the national characteristics so curious. This is such a beautiful place. It grows upon me more and more. The park is lovely with deer, hares and pheasants all around."

Paris, 1904.

"I go to the dispensaire every morning. I have got so much into it that I cannot get out. I enjoy it so much that I only remember once in a great while that I am be doing a little good in it as well. This war makes me feel terribly unhappy for many reasons, I cannot explain. I have an unreasoning longing to be in Russia and doing something. It seems such a useless ridiculous war and so much loss. I cannot understand the way people view things. The loss of life and suffering just make me sick. I see no dignity or sense in anything but quiet and peace. The more importance one attaches to a question, the more pitiful and absurd it seems. What matters externally?"

Paris 1904.

"I feel old and addled. I am still dispensing with rage and interest. I was given a number of girls to give an illustration lesson in bandaging this morning. We have had a number of interesting cases lately. I shall be sorry to leave them."

(She was 26 years old, working at the French dispensary.)

Paris 1904.

"I have always before undertaken too much and accomplished less. I do not think it is what one studies but the way one studies anything which amounts to anything. As I have often said before, I have more faith in what I think in spite of myself, in the preferences that I discover in myself, than in those things which I consciously investigate. About the affections, I don't know. The affections I have seem stable enough to me and I feel an ultimate capacity for a larger order."

After completing her Red Cross studies in Paris and receiving a diploma which granted her the status of an apprentice nurse, Nelka made arrangements to go to Russia. This was not an easy undertaking. Nelka had few connections in Russia; her knowledge of the language was limited, her knowledge as a nurse likewise limited, and it took a great deal of determination to carry her plan through.

The war at the moment was coming to an end with the defeat of Russia and a revolutionary movement was afoot. The front thousands of miles away made transportation of the wounded lengthy and difficult, and, long after the hostilities had come to an end, a steady stream of wounded continued to arrive in the capital.

It was a trying and difficult time for Nelka. She was deeply upset by the tragic events of the lost war and the grumblings of the revolution.

She got in touch with some friends in Russia to help make necessary arrangements. A friend of her mother's, Mr. Pletnioff, made all preliminary arrangements to have her accepted in the Kaufman community of sisters under the leadership of Baroness Ixkull, a very cultivated and capable person.

Also the Bakhmeteffs were at that time in St. Petersburg and they too helped make arrangements. Despite the fact that Nelka was then 26 years old, she did not feel that she should travel alone and was

trying to find someone who was going to Russia from Paris. A friend who was to go had to put off her trip and so recommended Nelka to a friend of hers, a Madame Sivers, with whom she went and with whom later she became quite a friend.

When she arrived she went at first to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Bakhmeteff.

Early in 1905 she wrote from St. Petersburg, upon her arrival:

"Yesterday already I saw Madame Hitrovo, Veta, Rurik and Veta's son" (my grandmother, my mother and my uncle).

This was the first time that I saw Nelka. The Bakhmeteffs gave a luncheon at the Hotel de France where they were staying to meet Nelka. As it was a family affair with no outsiders, my mother took me along. I was then about seven years old. A child of seven is not generally impressed by a grown up person, but Nelka made a tremendous impression on me when I first saw her: an impression which never left me throughout life. From that day on she meant something to me, and that something grew and grew in my feelings for her with time and years.

The Russian Red Cross had a number of sister "Communities" who were managed by ladies of the Russian society. The one Nelka joined was the Kaufman community under the able management of Baroness Ixkull.

Nelka wrote from St. Petersburg in 1905:

"Baroness Ixkull seems an awfully clever, energetic and altogether charming person. I think although the Bakhmeteffs highly approve, they are afraid she is just on the edge of being a little 'advanced,' which to such arch conservatives as they, seems all wrong. The extremes are very great. You see Pletnioff is somewhat liberal, but nothing in the sense that the word is used abroad and Mr. Bakhmeteff is for the strictest adherence to middle age regime. Between the two I must find the just milieu. Anyway everyone is in a certain sense conservative just now. For the moment I can only tell you of my delight at being here. I suppose the Constitution had to come but surely autocracy is the only ideal Government and I am sorry that the nation was not equal to it."

Here we see this very distinct adherence to the principles of the Russian government of the autocratic regime, the adherence to which seemed only natural and acceptable to Nelka in her idea of a patriotic Russian.

St. Petersburg 1905.

"Tomorrow it will be one week that I am in the hospital and I am getting quite accustomed to it. It is certainly a very complete change of habits in every way, but the essentials are all right. Over and above everything is the joy of at last being able to do, if only a little, for the poor soldiers who have suffered so much and who are so good and patient. I shall never cease to regret that I did not get here at the beginning of the war. This is a perfectly beautiful hospital, quite large and everything perfect. The soldiers are so well provided for that I should think that some of them would almost hate to leave; but oh, Poodie, it is so terrible to see them, many so young, without arms or legs and one whose head was almost blown off, so grateful to have a new glass eye put in him the other day. Soon they are going to make him a nose. On Thursday there was the opening of a new ward and the service and benediction were very impressive. The Queen of Greece came and I was presented to her."

"There are four sisters in a room but the rooms are large with two big windows and they are very nice. Sister Belskaya speaks every language and has helped me a great deal. I am managing to get on somehow with Russian but the other night when I had a conversation with a Sister Swetlova on subjects that were not absolutely elementary it was awfully funny. While the ward is being settled, 5 of us are being sent to the big city hospital where all the sisters have been for a time to learn all kinds of things, but it is to be, I think, only for a few days. O, Poodie, I cannot describe it to you. The hospital itself is all right enough, but the poor people! There are 3,000 there. We are in the surgical section for women. It is very various and valuable experience as you learn everything in a short while, but I would not care to prolong it."

During the summer of 1906 Nelka went with some of the wounded to Finland where the convalescents were sent to recuperate in the country. She was then in her second year working with the wounded and was hoping to be able to return to America before too long.

Politics were very much of importance at that time in Russia which had just emerged from an attempted revolution and certain political changes had taken place. A new parliamentary system had been formed but did not last and was breaking up. Nelka wrote in 1906 from Finland:

"I cannot say what a feeling of relief and thankfulness I had when the Duma (Parliament) was dispersed. I cannot see that any solution is anywhere in view. No one seems to have the least assurance of what will happen. I feel so stirred up I really almost wish I was a man and could enter into the question and do something."

"Poodie, Poodie, do you realize that I am almost an old lady of 28. It seems so funny for that is really honorable—60 is young beside it. I wish you could see the sky here. Such sunsets I have never seen—every day different and the colors on the lake unimaginable. I simply go flying to the roof, I don't know how many times and look and look and look."

Finland 1906.

"But believe me liberalism abroad is quite different from here and there is so much bad in it here. I don't think there is much hope for Russia. I don't believe we have that in the character to maintain a nation."

"What a terrible thing the attempt to kill Stolypin. The people here really are out of their minds. The ones that think that these murders are for an 'idea.' O, Poodie, I have learned so much since I have been here."

"One sister, Sister Pavlova, is very nice—an aristocrat of correct views and a great satisfaction. She was two years at the War in a contagious hospital."

Finland 1906.

"I have the apothecary now and put up ten or fifteen prescriptions a day. I find it quite agitating for a novice and am simply calculating and recalculating over and over again. I am also in charge now of the operating room and surgical dressings, and do massage and night duty as before. This is just while we are here. When we go back to Petersburg I will have the ward duty alone as before."

"I am on night duty after a very strenuous day—assisted the doctor with the instruments and material for 25 dressings, put up eight prescriptions myself, dressed the wounds of five Finns, spent some time in the ward, went over the soldier's money accounts, did an hour massage, slept one hour and tomorrow morning I am going to take the temperatures at 6 A.M., at seven put up a bottle of digitalis, at eight get into clean clothes, prepare the surgical dressing room for two dressings, give the instruments and material, and at half past eight or quarter to nine start with two soldiers for Petersburg—one who is to be operated and the other who has been so ill for a week that they think it best to take him back as quickly as possible. Neither of them can sit up. Don't you think that is an undertaking? I am going to take the train back immediately after delivering them at the hospital and hope to get back by 5 or 6 o'clock and have a grand rest up for Monday."

"Is life so full of resource or is the resource all in one's imagination and state of mind. It seems to me there is so much, so much, and yet the most sometimes seems just to suffer being 'suffered out' by the effect of certain moral efforts."

Finland 1906.

"This whole life is something so complete and so different and I feel now so much at home in it. Had I been different I might not have needed what this experience has given me, but as it is, you will find a great deal more of me and have a great deal more of me than before I left. I know myself too well and know too well the unstableness of my moral interior to say that I may not need again some time."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"I often wonder now, since this life here in the hospital is so different from everything which has opened such new vistas, if there are an indefinite number of experiences which each would offer new points of view. For there it would seem that one must abstain from any general conclusions upon the things of the world, owing to one's limited experience. I am awfully glad to be thrown in this association with the soldiers. This is quite a revelation. They are in comparison with other people just like charts for little children to read, as compared with some hazy book. Then there are all degrees of awakening. It is most interesting. I sometimes think that human beings are as different from each other as things of a different species."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"I told her (Baroness Ixkull) that I thought of leaving in August, if possible. She is so urgent about my staying altogether in the community that it makes it very hard to leave. At last I seem to have found something where I am thought to be very useful and I have fitting qualities, but alas so far from Poodie

and Pats that it is not possible. At least it is a thing I know I am prepared for now and that is always open to me as a vent for energy, an occasion for helping and regulator of the nervous system. If there is war again I think nothing will hold me, but otherwise I am going to try to make my character a possible one so that it will be a more peaceful member of the family with you and Pats."

"No matter what I do later this year will have a lasting benefit. I don't know what it is. I never seem to get enough of life. I know the feeling that satisfies for I have had it a few times. Perhaps it is youth, perhaps it is egotism, but anyway it is something that makes one wish one had five lives to live at once. I am laboring through a very interesting book on the Evolution of matter which demands a great deal of concentration of a brain as uninformed in matters of science as mine. I refuse to think and accept things in 'terms' which when it gets to the point of the disassociation of atoms becomes difficult not to do. I wish I had a really active brain that would give me the results I want without requiring such an immense amount of will which I can't command."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"My plans seem unable to take any definite shape for the moment. I cannot leave my soldiers that I have had from the beginning and it is uncertain yet when they will be in a condition to leave. I wish I were a few years younger. I want to do so much."

(She was then 28 years old.)

St. Petersburg 1906.

"It is now seven A.M. I am just finishing night service but I feel quite lively just because I know it is ending. Yesterday the 'sidelkas' (apprentices) received the cross. After they graduate they can take cases and be paid about \$20 a month. This course is only one year. The sisters' course is two years but of course their work is always free."

In Russia all nursing was considered to be a vocation and as such could therefore not be paid. All sisters received their maintenance and clothing from the community but no pay.

St. Petersburg 1906.

"I have just received your letter telling me of Trenar's death." (Trenar was a borsoi dog which Nelka had and left in Cazenovia. This was before she had her poodle Tibi.) "Mrs. Lockman wrote me some time ago that he was very sick with distemper but had not written me since. Useless to say how I feel. Everyone does not feel the appeal of a dog's affection in the same degree, and with me it is as strong as anything I know. Trenar in his devotion was exceptional, and not to have been with him when he was sick—I simply can't think of it. I didn't do anything that I should have with him. It was wrong to leave him. I love dogs and Trenar was something very special. I didn't do what I should with him and in every way I am perfectly miserable about it, but it is useless of it—that is all. I know you feel sorry for the way I feel, but how I feel you can't know and it must seem out of place to you. Anyway I feel it and I reproach myself. I just wish I could have been with him. I will never forget his attachment—dear little Trenar."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"But I don't suppose you can conceive how I feel the autocracy, the Emperor. I don't care what I think; I feel autocracy and the Emperor simply not a human being to me. I read this and thought you would like it: 'Sow an act and you reap habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.'"

St. Petersburg 1906.

"For the last two weeks I have been all the time on duty with the operated cases. This last week I was on night duty every night except last night when I had to sleep to be on duty today. I am so tired of fussing with myself; it makes me so angry not to be a perfect machine. The things to do are all the same—the way to be is the same, and yet there is so much thinking, choosing, deciding, worrying. So few things matter, and so much should not have a moment's consideration. Nine tenths of all the shackling considerations should simply never rise to consciousness."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"On Xmas there was a big tree for all the soldiers who could walk and then there were a lot of little trees all arranged with presents for each room where the soldiers could not leave their beds. It was said in the morning that nothing would be done on Xmas—no dressings, nothing, and I never worked so hard! As there were no dressings in the operating room I had to do quite a number somehow or other in

bed, and then it was my day to keep the ward in the afternoon."

St. Petersburg 1906.

"I am beginning to think that the 'esprit' of the sisters here, that is most of them, is far too liberal. I get perfectly outdone with the papers some of the sisters bring into the ward, and I quickly lay hands upon everyone I find. There is no stemming the tide but I shall do what I can wherever I am, for it is too stupid. The soldiers are too uneducated."

"You say in your letter that you understand that my father's country should be dear to me and yet you think that my mother's country might also mean something. What I feel, understand and see in America does not mean anything. I cannot feel as they do. What I care for most in the world is you and Pats—that does not need to be said. As a country, for ideas, general point of view, etc. etc., Russia and Russians are more sympathetic and comprehensible. It is so different. But that is as far as country goes. The real tie, as I said before, is you and Pats."

Finally after a stay of over two years in Russia, Nelka started back for America. But she took a round about way this time traveling first through Russia to the Crimea and from there by boat.

Written on the train between Kharkoff and Sebastopol 1907.

"I am on my way to the Crimea—and then continue by boat to Naples. I expect to get to Paris by the 12th or 15th and to sail at the end of the month. What a place Moscow is. O, it is so beautiful—so old and real Russia, so solid and so unforeign. It was fearfully cold but I was out all the time and only had my nose frozen once. I hate, loath and detest every foreign influence in Russia and every evidence that there is a world outside. The Kremlin is certainly thorough in itself and I love it. I am palpitating at the thought of seeing you so soon. It seems to me I am just living in gulps. I feel somehow that the privileges I have had ought to be put to something now. How will I even put my whole self into one thing? Everything has splendid possibilities but it is always the fearful alternative and its possibilities. Anyway I have stopped waiting. I know there is nothing to wait for. I can hardly believe that I have had this year—that I have been in Russia and that it is done. Baroness Ixkull tried to keep me to send me to the famine—but the famine will have to wait. I shall be so glad to get to Yalta. My head is so tired and I shall be able to clear up my thoughts—I can hardly write. My head is popping off and my hand is cold and the train shakes. Always your old Nelka."

(29 years old)

But back in America she once again was restless. Social life had no appeal for her. There was something much more genuine in Russia or even in Europe—something much more alive, much less artificial. Her aunt Martha Wadsworth tried to interest her in other things, take her mind off the brooding dissatisfaction which Nelka was showing.

In 1910 General Oliver, then Secretary of War, and a personal friend of Mrs. Wadsworth, decided to undertake a reconnaissance trip through New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, partly to do some surveying and mapping of the area and partly to test a compressed fodder for horses invented by Captain Shiverick, also a friend of Mrs. Wadsworth.

General Oliver invited Mrs. Wadsworth to take the trip with him and she in turn asked Nelka to come along.

This was a most unusual, interesting and difficult trip, especially for women. It lasted six weeks. The first three weeks General Oliver took part in the trip with a whole squadron of cavalry. Then he left and the rest of the three weeks only a small party continued through the Navajo Indian Reservation to the Rainbow Bridge in Utah. This party consisted of only two officers, several enlisted men, one Indian guide, Nelka and her aunt. All on horseback and pack mules carrying supplies. They covered unmapped territory over the most rough and difficult terrain, which often was dangerous. Even one horse was lost when it fell over a cliff and had to be shot because of injuries. They slept on the ground, froze during the cold nights while the heat of the day was always around a hundred, and on one occasion reached 139 degrees. A great many very interesting pictures were taken during this trip. Nelka always remained under the spell of this trip and the beauty of the untouched wilderness, but at the same time had some unpleasant impressions of the awesome country. Also it lasted longer than she had expected and she was anxious to get home. Only that year her aunt Martha had given Nelka a poodle puppy, Tibi, which Nelka left with her aunt Susie in Cazenovia. She was worried about the puppy all during her trip.

Incidentally, this Tibi played a very important, and sad role in the life of Nelka. The dog, because she was always with Nelka and because of this close relationship, developed a very high degree of understanding and companionship with Nelka. This mutual understanding resulted in a very deep



attachment between Nelka and Tibi, and Nelka certainly developed a very unusual love for this Tibi, whom she always took with her back and forth between Europe and America and kept always with her—except on the occasions when she was obliged to leave her for short periods. I knew Tibi for she also had been left by Nelka with me and my mother in the country on one or two occasions when I took care of her.

Here are some of the impressions that Nelka gathered from this western trip and which she gave in her letters to her aunt Susie:

Utah 1910.

"The Navajo Mountains and the Natural Bridge were, to me, terrible. I can never give you a complete description of it, but, aside from the other difficulties and trials, it impressed one as the most godless place conceivable. I don't see how anyone can keep any religion in the canyon in which the bridge is—such a mass of turbulent, ruthless rock, all dark red—hopeless, shapeless chaos. It all looked just as if there had been a smash up yesterday. No beyond, no nothing, nothing alive, nothing dead, every step of the way almost impassable and the feeling that every minute more rock could come smashing down. On the way there Mr. Whiterill, our guide, fell over with his horse when it was impossible to keep balance. He got loose, the horse fell over backwards several times, broke its neck, slid down sheer rock and fell about 50 feet over a cliff, the sound was awful."

"Mr. Heidekooper and I went down to the bottom of the canyon and lay back on the rocks with our feet in a pool. I closed my eyes and tried to forget these crushing walls."

"There was a question of moving the sleeping blankets to get out of a scorpion patch, but we finally stayed where we were. I refused to mount my horse firmly and flatly until we got out of the worst part of the canyon, so I walked 12 miles when I had to pick every step on sharp stones. On the way back, Pat's horse went head over heels down another steep place but was not killed. Still a few miles further my horse slipped going over a huge mass of rock as smooth as an egg and about the same shape and everyone thought he was about to be hurled to instant death, when by a miracle he screwed around, got himself up and caught his footing again. My mental agony had been so great that I had not a bodily sensation. I took my blanket, rolled up in it and went to sleep by some trees under some branches and a log. We came over the rocks where one misstep would have sent the horses to the bottom. No place even to spread his four feet before the next step. My heart was in my mouth most of the time. I don't know what impression you might get from my letter. I have seen the most beautiful sunsets, but there are more essential elements than these to live in peace and the limits of what I can do now are very marked. I am wound up to the last degree. There are lovely Indians here."

Kianis Canyon 1910.

"We arrived here in the rain; the pack train with the lunch miles behind and a waste of thistles to sit on, but it cleared up soon after and everything got settled. There are two very nice dogs along—Kobis and Terry. Terry belongs to Mr. S. and has his ears cut to the roots. I need not insist upon what I feel for both the dog and the man."

Canion de Chelley, August 1910.

"This country is too wonderful for words. It is the place—the only way to live. I wish you could see it and I wish you loved it as I do. Won't you bring Tibi and the boys and stay here? Oh, Oh, there is nothing to say."

Gonado 1910.

"I get up at 5 and see the sunrise and generally take the things in before everything gets astir. We have breakfast at 6, 6:30 and start our marches at 7. It was so cold one night I got up at 4:30 and made up the camp fire. My face is dark brick and painful but I think I had too much cold cream fry and I have stopped. The heat of the sun is great. Wednesday we crossed the 'Painted Desert' which was even more beautiful than the canion and camped at a kind of oasis on a little lake and were able to have a swim—though the desert was full of rattle snakes and the lake full of lizards."

"I walked off and got lost almost 4 hours. They had the whole troop out looking for me, and the trumpeters blowing for over an hour. There was no moon and I had decided to spend the night where I was by a cactus, when I saw a light in the dim distance and finally Captain McCoy found me. It gave me a vivid sense of how misleading the flatness of the desert can be. When Captain McCoy found me he could not see me ten feet away and I think it was chiefly the white dog he had with him that found me. I had had to take off both shoes and stockings about two hours before as the mud was so heavy I could not raise my feet and it was raining part of the time. Every place where the Indians live in their natural mud huts it is clean and inoffensive. As soon as there is a sign of a real house, or what you call

civilization, there is dirt, smells, refuse heaps and flies—and of all the sights in my life, bar none, the washstand in Mr. Hubble's store, with wet newspaper, stagnant slop jar, dirty tooth brush, filthy basin, sloppy soap—all humming with flies—is the worst I have ever seen and the most stomach turning. There is some freak from Boston in a checkered suit and goggles who walks around with some ideas for Indian betterment. I think they have reached the highest pitch in the fact that they do not scalp him! I had coffee, oatmeal and bacon all out of one bowl. I drink water that looks like bean soup and never use a fork and a spoon at the same meal. Sand and cinders or charcoal flavor everything, and I have fished olives out of the sand where they had fallen and eaten them with perfect satisfaction. Materially this certainly is the way to live. Spiritually some shifting might improve it."

Back from the trip and into civilization, Nelka again was restless and discontented with her surroundings. Again she longed for Europe and especially Russia.

Her little dog Tibi became of primary importance in Nelka's life. Despite her love for animals, Nelka admits that up to that time she had no special attachment or deep affection for dogs. Dogs were just something you had around you; they were part of everyday life, but that was about all. But with Tibi, Nelka's affection for her grew and grew, and they became unusually attached to each other. Like all dogs who are constantly with a person, they develop a great maturity and intelligence. Tibi did just that. She was a very highly developed animal, as I remember her well.

The winter of 1910-1911 Nelka spent again with her aunt Martha in Washington. Her aunt had a large house and was in the social whirl of the capital. Dinners, balls, the White House, the Embassies—but all this meant little to Nelka and she felt the futility of all that activity, its artificiality and uselessness. Irritated and longing for a change she once again returned to Russia, and once again went back to the Kaufman community.

Her feeling for dogs and animals in general was becoming more and more pronounced—thanks in part to her close association with Tibi. In one of her letters to her aunt Susie written in 1911, she writes:

St. Petersburg 1911.

"I do not love humanity in the mass. I don't admire it. I feel sorry for the unenlightened and suffering but I think there are only a few in the world who 'vindicate,' as Uncle Herbert says, their right to exist. If there was for one moment in my heart what I feel for dogs, cats, horses and animals in general, I would be a real sister of charity. It is a perfectly distinct expansion and impulse and a real longing to help and joy in it that I do not feel in the face of suffering humanity. You can explain it any way. If all these crippled numberless that I have seen all these days had been maimed dogs, I don't know what I would have done. There is something in human nature that is so contemptible and poor that I can't feel the same way."

St. Petersburg 1911.

"How can you keep your faith in humanity? I think it is all so weak and not beautiful, and life as it goes somehow such an outrageous fizzle. Why are there such beautiful things, conceptions, possibilities only to be ruined by fatal microbes this human nature puts into it? Life only in yearning; Death to crown realization; peace only in oblivion. What for? And even the power of renunciation has to be fought for."

She was working at that time in the Kaufman community but was to go to Montenegro for a hospital reorganization. This did not come about. She wrote:

St. Petersburg 1911.

"I am undergoing the greatest disappointment at this moment. I was to be sent to Montenegro to establish a Red Cross sisterhood and overhaul the hospital, and to be given five sisters to take with me I as the head—so interesting—and in the part of the world which has always attracted me to the utmost, ever since I was in Sofia. And after it was all arranged and I was simply reveling in every detail, Baroness Ixkull decided that it was simply impossible to take Tibi."

St. Petersburg 1911.

"One doesn't love anything any more, religion, country, art. The only thing is to have one's interest outside of oneself—and to be very busy. I can hardly believe, at least I wonder, at myself being able to do so many things I dislike—getting up every day so early, no walks with Tibi, sleeping between five and six hours, often only four, and yet I enjoy everything—ice cream is a festival, a moment to sew a treat, and bed heaven."

"But oh, all these sick people—so depressing and gives one such an impression of superfluity of the human species. Everything, everything so beautiful except humanity—and not only man himself—dirty and unenchanted—but the instrument of hideousness all around."

Again Nelka was showing the restlessness because of the attachments to the two sides of the ocean—Russia and America—and the impossibility to satisfy entirely one or the other, or both. From Russia she wrote:

St. Petersburg 1911.

"I wish I could be in America and eliminate from my personal horizon the people and things which make me boil over in spite of myself. Dear Poodie, I wish you could really know what I feel and mean. I think if in recent years you had been in contact with the peace and simplicity of Europe in general, you would see what makes me shrivel with most Americans, because I am not above and beyond it as you are. America may stand for freedom, but it has an unimancipated soul and there is a perpetual affectation, a caution, a suspicion, a lack of independence that does simply petrify life and crush feeling. You may say it is a small world, I don't know, but it is everywhere I meet."

St. Petersburg 1911.

"I have at last decided that my life must remain unsettled, undecided; it is too late to settle it except by sheer will, and that is too stupid. Real ties exist in different centers—one must obey both; it is utterly indifferent to me what external aspect my life takes, because it is also too late."

(She was then 32 years old)

St. Petersburg 1911.

"I hope to be in America at intervals and often. You and Pats are more to me than anything else and I have the greatest love for Poodihaven (Cazenovia), but I cannot associate with outsiders sufficiently to fill my life. I want to beat them all and I don't want to hear them talk."

At this time, I think, she was going through a very difficult period of uncertainty in her life, which is reflected in her letters written at that time:

"If I did not care for Americans and if I did not have a great deal of sentiment and associations, ties and memories in America, it would be so easy to leave it alone and not think about it. But I know I am both. I know how strongly attached I am to both sides and I only deplore the difference among people in the world. But when I think of even those others that I care for, I know that we are strangers. My heart does not beat with any puritanical sentiment—so there. If I am attracted to some puritanical offspring—some representative of the progressing (?) new world, it is like being in love with a marble statue."

"I don't know why I write all this, but how impossible life is. I think it really is a most devilish arrangement. No peace except in utter renunciation. And must one struggle through a peppery sequence of years just to know this?"

"Baroness Ixkull is going to give me perfectly new sisters to train and I am going to make them march like pokers, copy every record each time they make a spot and count all the linen every two weeks. As they will not have been in any other ward, they cannot make any comparisons or complain."

"I know, Poodie, that you would like some things here very much—the simplicity of everything and the independence of people. I think it is only possible with a recognized aristocracy when people do not have to explain themselves and are established. I have met a few such nice people, of course to hardly know them, but one feels one knows them at once because there is a recognition of being of one world and one knows beforehand that one shares the same feelings towards most things. For instance, they may not know me personally but the fact that Papa was in the service, was Gentillomme de la Chambre (Court title), was educated at the Lycee, defines a type, defines in a certain manner his daughter, if only externally. Then knowing that Mama was American, the whole thing is clear in a natural way. My wanting to be here is understood—my attachment to America is understood."

St. Petersburg 1911.

"My life here is so full in one sense that it seems much more than a few months since I was in America. Life seems very, very short in comparison with the wide conception of possibilities which gives the zest to youth. Everything seems so partial and the total is so hard to realize. To keep tranquility with the increase of perception and understanding means renunciation as far as I can see. It must be a great privilege to work and pursue one's greatest convictions—to act what one feels sure

of—this is in many ways adjustment to circumstances. Please God that there may be some good in it."

"The spirit is everything—nothing else matters. I can never leave the ward on their hands (new sisters) and I mean every day from 8 until 9 at night and often part of the night, if it is very serious. I am very well, sleep little, eat little and am flourishing."

So after this additional stage in Russia at the Community, Nelka returned once again to America, but not for very long. Early in 1912 she was again getting ready to go back to Europe. Writing from Ashantee in 1912 she said:

"I know it is unrest—I know it all—yet the true picture is that of going thousands of miles to where I am not needed, and leaving my two best friends. I long for the work and can't wait. Between now and it, just think what bumps and jolts and frights and moans. Oh, what is it all about?"

Nelka spent that winter with her aunt Martha in Washington. It had been a winter entirely filled with social activities—balls, dinners, the White House, the Embassies—and Nelka could not stand it any longer and was seeking some contrast. She certainly achieved the contrast all right, for as soon as she returned to Russia she was sent to the outskirts of the Oural Mountains. In that region a famine had been quite severe and the Government sent out feeding stations and Red Cross units to take care of the stricken people. Sisters were established in different villages, sometimes entirely isolated, where they issued provisions and gave medical care to the peasants. Nelka spent a whole winter in one of these villages, living in a one-room hut with a peasant family and sleeping on a wooden bench. What a contrast after the social life of Washington!

Here is a descriptive letter written from Kalakshinovka, District of Samara, in 1912:

"I am in a desert of snow, in quiet and peace, and feeding three villages. I lie on my bed which consists of two wooden benches side by side—one a little higher than the other. Only thing is that it is almost inaccessible. Even with the snow it is more roily and bumpy than the worst sea ever dreamed of being, and all one can do is to lie with one's eyes closed on some straw in the kind of low sleigh that bumps along hour after hour over these steppes. I first went to Sapieva, a tartar village in the District of Bougulma. Now I am settled and hope to stay here. I was busy last night late giving out provisions and weighing flour and today I have been trying to straighten out grievances and see that all receive justly—sometimes very complicated. Some brother of the official writer of the village, quarreled with the son of a poor woman when that woman's cow came too near his premises, and he made his son beat her off. My position in the matter is whatever the pro's and con's—how dare anyone hurt a poor famished cow and I am settling it on that line."

"I don't know what I would not do to feed all the poor cows and horses and sheep that are left. A number of friends in Petersburg gave me some money to distribute—a little over a hundred dollars. I gave about 50 in Sapieva and the rest I am going to use to save the animals. Aside from my pity for them, it will be terrible for the peasants not to have a horse to work in the fields as soon as the warm weather comes. Where will they be next year? I can help at least two or three families. One poor woman when I bought some feed for her horse and cow simply fell on her knees on the ground. Poodie, really how far people live from each other and how little one can dream of this life if one has not been in it. Perhaps other people understand things more or realize more, but with all I have seen and heard and read, that is simply being born to something entirely unknown—besides all the feelings one experiences oneself in being thus shut off from everything. I have at last attained my own bowl and spoon. I drink coffee and eat a piece of black bread in the morning. At 12 a bowl of buckwheat or some kind of grain with a wooden spoon—a glass of tea and at night a glass of cocoa and black bread, or as a treat a dish of sour milk. I cook and iron and do everything myself, but it is very simple."

"This is part of 'Little Russia' and is much cleaner than 'Great Russia.' I brought with me a few fleas from Great Russia and have the greatest sympathy for Tibi for the time she was exposed to flea companionship. How they bite and jump."

"The Tartars were so clean—the very poorest and none of the disorder that one sees in Great Russia. There is something absolutely distinctive about the Tartars and one feels a certain civilization and settledness that is different from all the other villages I have seen. Did I tell you how we all slept in a row with the old tartar and his wife and child?"

"Though I was doing my best to master the tartar tongue, I can converse more readily here. The Little Russian dialect is very different from Russian but one can get a long. The Red Cross will probably be stationed here throughout the famine—until the 'New Bread,' that is about the end of July—but Baroness Ixkull promised to replace me as soon as she could get another sister. I hope to get back to America in July."

Kalakshinovka 1912.

"A peasant walked in today and brought me a present—an apple about the size of a plum. I wanted to keep it until Easter but we consulted and decided it would dry up, so I ate it. It is getting late—8 o'clock and the candle is burning low."

Kalakshinovka 1912.

"The days have fallen into a routine. I distribute provisions, go to see the peasants and they come to see me—sew, mend, scrape mud off of boots and at last have a little time to write a few letters. In about a week I hope to go to Alekseievka, a village about 9 miles off, which is quite a center. There is a fair there every week and I shall buy some sugar and a little white flour and perhaps if it can be found, a piece of ham. I am getting awfully hungry. People will never get anywhere while taste is undeveloped and perception so dull and imagination so weak. I don't think all people can be taught to understand, but I do believe that the eye can be trained and the imagination led into paths which will make them revolt from ugliness, and that is a tremendous step towards salvation. It seems to me that 'conditional immortality' is the only possible and plausible doctrine. So much of humanity, whatever it looks like or however cannily it has devised to exist, has not begun, and why have such a respect for numbers? I should like to weed out acquaintances just as I attack occasionally the linen closet—with fire, and have a chance to breathe. It is all the unborn who sit around and choke the atmosphere."

Kalakshinovka 1912.

"All the horror of the famine is being realized right now. I will not write you about it for it is too terrible and heartbreaking—it is the horses, camels, cows and sheep—worst of all the horses. I will never forget yesterday as long as I live. I cried all day, I could not sleep all night. It is simply horrible. I have never so much realized the problem of existence as here. Everything is so foreign and so striking, one is simply faced by the question of how to live and to what end. What I feel more strongly than anything is that the product of the best education and civilization should be good and zealous—more near the saint—than that the masses should read or write. I have faith enough that all will attain in the end if the type that leads is worthwhile, but the type that leads is not."

Kalaskshinovka 1912.

"I have a whole little house now. The owner comes and cleans up; I bolt my door and I have a place to keep provisions for almost 900 people. The whole thing is just as interesting as it can be. I went not long ago to a village of Bashkirs to verify scorbutous and typhoid—about 15 miles from here; it is strange how entirely different they are. The Tartars seem the most settled and grown up and independent, and the Little Russians have more traditions. The Great Russians are more individual and less distinctive. You can't imagine the nice feeling of riding right out over the steppes, no fuss, no get up, with a purpose. The feeling that at the same time with the wild freedom of it that one is accomplishing something and working. I can't wait to see you. When I get my Tibi and start again across the seas, I shall be even glad to see that awful Liberty lady!"

Kalaskshinovka 1912.

"Your letter enclosing Pata's and the picture of Lutie was the reward of a walk of six to seven miles with a ton of mud on each boot, a night on the floor and a return at dawn on a rickety horse horseback. Everything is flourishing here, plenty of occasion for meditation and consideration. I enjoy tremendously the peasants' bath house. One can climb higher and higher and lie on shelves in different stages of heat. I got so steamed up I wanted at one moment to open the door and just fly out into the field without a stitch. When I look out on the plains here and then think of New York and the subway, my brain simply stops. This is about as small and poor a village as exists, yet there is a teacher and all the younger generation read and write, and the Tartars are really wise owls. I have no more desire to go to Persia. I am afraid that country is done for. I think Arizona is as safe as anywhere if they don't irrigate. Still those mission teachers are a pest. There is something fundamentally wrong with everything I know!"

Hardly had this episode of the famine finished, that the Red Cross sent units to Belgorod in the Ukrania where there was a great concentration of pilgrims for the canonization of St. Josephat. The Government once again set up feeding stations and hospital units to take care of the sick and aged and all emergencies arising from the concentration of many thousands of pilgrims. Once again Nelka was there and it was of great interest to her.

During all of these absences Nelka kept her little dog Tibi either with us in the country or with friends in Kasan, the Krapotkins. She went to pick up Tibi in Kasan from where she wrote in 1913.

"I caught some horrible microbe just before I arrived and had a terrible grippy cold which kept me in

the house and in bed—but it is over now. I feel rejuvenated 15 years and full of energy. I almost believe it is climatic. The feeling is so different. Isn't it awful about the priest being hung in Adrianople? I don't see how the whole of Europe doesn't stand together to drive the Turks out of Christian countries."

(This was written just before the start of the Balkan war.)

Nelka returned to St. Petersburg and made preparations to leave for the Balkans. The Russian Red Cross was sending out units to the Bulgarian Army. After returning from Kasan, Nelka stayed for a while at my mother's place in the country. This was a time when I was preparing for my entry examinations to the Lycee and she wrote about that to her aunt, who was interested in everything pertaining to education.

Writing from Poustinka (our country estate) in 1913:

"I am very much hopped up and stirred up and feel very full of life. I had a very pleasant short stay in Kasan. Enjoyed seeing people very much—so much youth I have not seen for ages—young people, young officers, young marriages, and then such delightful old people. The young officers were just simply waiting for mobilization. About war, everything is most uncertain. Half the people say it will be immediately, the other half that it will be avoided—no one can tell anything. I am going to Adrianople Tuesday. Baroness Ixkull is there with a large division and I think that just now there will be more to do than ever. I go first to Sofia."

"Yesterday I went with Veta (my mother) and Max to town. We came back in the evening and after dinner I had a most delicious sleep on the sofa by the fire—Max waking me up every few minutes."

"This afternoon I had a fine nap and then gave Max an English dictation. He is preparing for his examinations for the Lycee. Really it seems a great deal. Besides all the usual subjects, he has to take Grammar and Composition in Russian, Latin, German, French, and English. Ancient History, European History and Russian History separately, besides Religion. An awful lot, and all the other things. None of the languages are optional and in two years he has to be examined in the literature of each."

"He is such a nice boy, 15 years, so boyish and yet so developed and such a lot of casual culture, just from association with cultured people—and yet a real country boy, loving the affairs of the estate and everything to do with the place, and full of fun and mischief. I am all for education at home until the final years for boys, and altogether for girls—I think it is more developing."

After this stay with us, she left for Sofia and the war.

Sofia 1913.

"General Tirtoff sent me a 'laissez passee' and a certificate so that I can't be taken prisoner, and I expect to arrive to where we have the tents in 2 or 3 days. General Tirtoff, under whose orders I am, proposed yesterday to send me as head of a hospital which is now stationed in Servia, but which has to be sent to Duratzo where there has been a big battle. It will be a tremendous lot of transportation and, though very interesting, I don't know if I should like it as much as a small field hospital like Adrianople. Any way it all depends on what happens at Adrianople."

Sofia 1912.

"I have just come from the Queen. She was ill and could not receive me before. She was very, very nice—much nicer than I expected and better looking than her pictures. It is now 3 A.M., and I am to get up at six."

Nelka joined the division of sisters at Adrianople and took part in the fighting to take that city. This probably was much the most difficult and dangerous time she ever encountered. They were working in the very front lines, in the mud and dirt and under heavy shell fire. At one time when the shells were falling both in front and behind their tents, and it was impossible to move the wounded, Nelka realized that perhaps she would not come out alive. She wrote several short goodbye notes, one of which was written to my mother, which I reproduce here. I am grateful to think that at that critical moment she remembered me.

Kara Youssouff. 29 February 1913.

"Dearest Veta: We are under fire—the projectiles are going over our heads, one just fell on the other side of our tents, and the ground is torn up before our eyes. Perhaps we may miraculously escape—if not, goodbye. Perhaps some one may pick this up and send it. I send you much, much love—give my love to my friends in Petersburg, it is terrible for the poor wounded. Love to Max. Nelka."

Here is a letter from Aunt Susie Blow to Nelka in 1913:

"Nothing I can say suggests what I feel. The picture of you with those awful bombs bursting above you, before you, to right and left of you and the other picture of you plunging knee deep in mud and battling with mud and rain, as you made your way from tent to tent will never leave me. And what pictures of horror must move in ghastly procession in your mind. You have always wanted first hand experience. Now you have had such experience of famine, of war, of religious enthusiasm, of patriotic devotion. How will it all affect the necessary routine of life?"

Sofia 1913.

"I know I have written since the fall of Adrianople and I think I sent you a word from there. Did I tell you that the Consulate was in several places shattered by shells? What I noticed the most was the air of proprietorship of the soldiers in the town and how one felt the immediate transformation of the Turkish town into a Bulgarian one."

Sofia 1913.

"I do not know what I think about the Turks. I only know that I abhor the 'Young Turks' (political party). In general I suppose they are more civilized than the Bulgars. I do not care for them as a nation, but I wish nevertheless that the war would continue until they get to the very door of Constantinople. About occupying the city itself I do not know, because it is so complicated. Of course I wish it might belong to one of the Balkan states and I simply can't endure the mixing in of 'powers.' Powers—by what I would like to know, except size and force alone. I wish they would fight it out and take Constantinople and be done with it and the whole Balkan peninsula as well. I hate threats and tyranny based on the power to destroy if they want. Either gobble it up or leave it alone, but not dictate!!!"

"It is very strange, but it seems to me that everything that makes for terrestrial power makes for spiritual defeat."

"I am crazy to go to Tchatalja but a definite attack does not seem imminent."

"I am well and, as result of feeding on air and no sleep, had to move the buttons of my apron which had become tight. I can speak quite a little Bulgarian."

"I understand fully what is meant by 'A la Guerre, comme a La Guerre.' It is extraordinary how every preconceived notion and habit is thrown to the winds. I like it very much. Everyone acts as the immediate occasion seems to necessitate and it is so much more simple. Everything is changed and I see that it is just so everywhere in time of war because one thing is so very much more important than all the rest. It is when nothing is supremely important that life is simply impossible and that you are baffled at every step."

"It was terrible in many ways. Those first days at Kara Youssouff, but I feel it was the greatest privilege to be there. One felt helpless before such a demand but it was all so real and every breath meant so much."

Once finished with the Balkan war, Nelka returned to America and joined her aunts.

Before leaving she spent several days with my mother and me in our country place. After she left my mother wrote to Nelka:

"Max and I miss you very much. I was so happy to have you with us for a time; your visits are always so nice and cheerful. I always remember them with so much pleasure. We had a long talk with Max about you and decided you were a real friend for us and Max said: 'we must always be real friends to her.' He is very fond of you."

(I was then 16 years old and very much in love with Nelka.)

Once finished with the Balkan war, Nelka returned again to America and joined her aunt Martha in Washington.

She brought Tibi back with her and here a tragic event took place which had a decisive influence on both Nelka's and my life.

While in Washington Tibi somehow got hold of rat poison and despite the help of the best veterinarian and also the help of two human doctors who were friends of Nelka, Tibi died.

Nelka took the death of her mother in a most tragic and painful way, but the death of Tibi affected her to a much greater degree. Her grief was beyond all comprehension and she went into a state of utter despair, verging on the frantic. Her Aunt Susie and a few friends tried to help her as much as they could but absolutely nothing seemed to help.

Just before she had left Russia, Princess Wasilchikoff had asked her to assume the reorganization of a sister community and hospital in Kovno, a fortress-town near the German border. Nelka did not accept the offer though it was of considerable interest to her, because she was then returning to America and had plans to stay with her aunts. But when her little dog died, she quickly changed her mind and telegraphed Princess Wasilchikoff that she was ready to accept her proposition. This she did primarily to try and get her mind focused on something and to get it off the brooding about Tibi. Her grief and despair can be judged from the various letters which she wrote to her aunt at that time, and for a long time to come.

Ashantee 1913.

"If that cannot be done I want to be buried in unconsecrated ground with Tibi and shall arrange for it. I cannot leave Tibi where she is buried and not know what will happen later."

"I hope when I die to know that it will be alright but I cannot get any nearer to being reconciled now, and it just comes over me with a fresh feeling all the time, that I cannot accept it. I have never felt so about anything. I am glad that you miss darling little Tibi. I feel estranged from everyone except those who knew and cared for Tibi."

During her trip back to Europe, she wrote from Rotterdam 1913.

"It just seems some times more than I can bear. I don't know how to get reconciled—that is the worst. I don't accept it and I have an outraged sense all the time of the fearful crime to that happy little life, and so many constant torments come up afresh all the time, that I just feel crazy. I tried to face it all and wear it out of my head in the beginning, but that did not work and now this willful keeping from thinking as much as I can does not help either. Why couldn't anything have happened to me that would not have hurt Tibi? I suffer because that little face is just always before me. If I could just have her for an hour and know that she was all right, I would die the happiest person in the world."

Paris 1913.

"I can't keep up my spirits all the time. I am terribly tired, look a perfect sight, but I don't care. Paris has not changed much. It will always be the most beautiful city in the world, I think, and the most civilized. Church was such a delight this morning. I like this Paris one better than anyone I know, but it all now seems simply a past and I know it will always be so."

Poustinka 1913.

"It seems to me almost superfluous to comment any more on the sadness and pain of what occurred—it is also just more and more and everywhere. The more one sees of life, the more frightened one is of being happy. I think life is just totally and absolutely inexplicable."

"Veta has got a little apartment opposite the Lycee and Max hopes to get in January. I am giving him English dictations and he is studying all day. Veta thinks of nothing else and wants to get him safely married at 21, which she thinks is the best thing for Russian men."

Well, I was safely married at 21 but not with the approval of my mother who opposed my marriage to Nelka because of our age difference.

Poustinka 1913.

"I have not yet seen about the cemetery here but I think I will arrange to be buried there if it is allowed, or else to find some piece of land somewhere. I just hope, hope, hope in something beyond as I never have before. I simply can't stand the injustice of Tibi, of her death and I can never get reconciled to it for a minute."

And a year later she wrote from Kovno in 1914:

"The approach of this anniversary has been taking me, despite of myself, over every minute of those dreadful, dreadful days a year ago. I don't want to speak of it all to you or make you feel any more than I have already the weight of a grief that will never leave me—but I do want to tell you that I shall also never forget how good you were to me and how you helped me through that simply fearful night. I don't know how anything could be any worse but still if you had not been there I don't know what I would have done—and I shall always remember and be glad that Tibi died not far from you."

I think unquestionably the loss of Tibi was the greatest suffering that Nelka ever experienced in her life, even though the loss of her mother and of her aunts was a great shock each time and deep grief which held on for a long time. But there was something about the death of this little dog which hurt Nelka more than anything else. While in later years she never hardly spoke about it, I think the pain



always remained.

Nelka was a great believer in 'circumstances' in life. The death of Tibi was a 'circumstance' which affected Nelka's life and mine as well. Had Tibi not died as she did then, Nelka would not have returned that year to Russia. By returning to Russia in 1913 and then the war breaking out the next year, she was prevented from returning to America and thus never again saw her Aunt Susie, who died without her in 1916, while Nelka was at the front. She then stayed on through the war and then the Revolution, and we were married in 1918. Had Tibi not died, all the conditions would have been different and very likely we would not have been married, at least this is possible. I think both she and I have been believers in 'circumstances.' I know that I am. Circumstances which affect all our life. Sometimes one small event, something so insignificant that it is hardly noticed, can bring about a chain of events which entirely and basically change the whole course of one's life. This is what I think the death of Tibi did to the lives of both Nelka and me.

When Nelka came back to Russia in 1913 she undertook the reorganization job offered by Princess Wasilchikoff. Nelka felt it would help her forget and would act as a relief valve for her feelings. Princess Wasilchikoff offered Nelka complete freedom and independence of action and decision in all concerning the sister community and the hospital. She could act and do as she wished and desired. So Nelka agreed with the stipulation that she would undertake this job for one year, and having made her arrangements left for Kovno. The whole picture of the Kovno enterprise is very vividly seen from a number of letters written by Nelka during 1914.

Kovno 1913.

"I think life is a great mystery and thus far renunciation seems to me the only achievement."

Kovno 1914.

"Kovno is a little different from what I expected. It is much more of a hospital than I thought but it is to be completely made over. It is now for 50 beds and a separate house for eye illnesses with two wards in it. There are 40 sisters and 18 servants."

"Two hours after I arrived I attacked their hair (the sisters), and now it is as flat as paper on the wall. I also berated a doctor within the first 24 hours for not appearing for his lecture. I thought I better acquire the habit of discipline at once for the position is rather appalling and I am trying my best to impose terror. When I feel the terror getting rooted, I will try for a little affection and good will."

"I am now racking my brains how to get 180 dresses and aprons made by Easter and keep within the limit for cost."

"I am preparing different and complete charts for all the wards and a laboratory is to be opened in a month. The planning is not the most difficult; it is arranging things within given conditions and in a certain sense in a margin, and appeasing demands and complaints from all sides. The new division of the work was very complicated, too. In one ward, every sister, who was ordered to it either wept, flatly refused or prepared to lose everything and leave on account of the nature of the sister at the head of it. Of course I had to insist on acceptance of the distribution of service, on principle, but I am glad to have found good reason to get rid of the said sister, in time. Finally the young sister who has to go there now, and who reiterated for days that she would rather wash dishes for the rest of her days than go there, after a frank talk of half an hour, said she would, and that I wouldn't hear another word from her. I was reduced to real tears of gratitude and admiration for the effort."

Kovno 1914.

"My head I know is not as strong and clear as it was."

"I have a very nice room which is in the most immaculate order imaginable—I am never in it. Next to it I have what is called my 'chancellery' which has an immense big writing table, another table, three chairs, bells and excellent light and telephone. I spend most of the time in it when I am not going the rounds on a rampage. I like to know that my food costs only 15 cents a day."

During some time in 1914 I was very ill in Petersburg. My mother was at the same time in bed with the flu and unable to take care of me, so in desperation she telegraphed to Nelka in Kovno and Nelka arrived immediately.

Kovno 1914.

"I spent three days in Petersburg, arriving there finding both Veta and Max very ill. Max with fever of 104 or more. Max had all kinds of complications afterwards ending in an abscess in the ear. I looked

after him for three days and nights and then Veta got up."

Kovno 1914.

"Every day I live the more insoluble everything seems and the more convinced I am of the insolubility of everything. There are lovely things and tracks in life and humanity, but as a whole the latter is so loathsome and life so sad and dreadful. I feel a terrible fatigue of life and it seems to me that all my energy is simply restless, except the energy to denounce. If I live a hundred years ten times over I think my feeling of indignation for some things will never diminish."

Always still feeling the loss of Tibi, Nelka did not seem to be able to get reconciled. She wrote to her aunt:

Kovno 1914.

"I have just the interest of having begun the thing and wishing to see it permanently established, as I have started it, but at bottom I don't care what happens to anything, and I am only thankful I have had my thoughts arrested momentarily. I had no right to complain of anything or wish for anything as long as Tibi was alive, and what torments me most is not my grief but that Tibi should have suffered. I don't understand anything and I only live in hope and helplessness. I can bear the grief of Tibi's death but I cannot get reconciled to the conditions of it."

During that winter my mother moved from the country where we were living to Petersburg, and Nelka happened to be with us when this took place and took part in the moving. Here is some of the description of the event:

Kovno 1914.

"We followed the next day with a dog and a cat. Veta, Max and I with all the baggage, a parrot 'Tommy' and two small birds in separate cages. I tried to look out for all three and froze my fingers off holding one cage and another that I wrapped up in my shawl. And so we started off in immediate danger of upsetting every minute. A day or two before the sleigh with Veta and Max and her sister-in-law and the driver upset completely in a ditch, horse on his back and toes in the air."

"Max's examinations were to be in two days so of course we tried to beat him into a cold corner to study in the midst of the confusion."

"Of course I took a sympathetic part in all this and did my share by scolding Max almost unremittantly from morning till night. He is a very bright and attractive boy, but easy going."

(Exactly four years later Nelka married the "easy going boy.")

Kovno 1914.

"I would give anything to spend a few hours with you and see how you are and have a nice talk. You don't know how much I realize what a rock you are of effective support and comprehension."

(Nelka never again saw her aunt who died in 1916 while Nelka was at the front.)

Kovno 1914.

"I ought never to move from Cazenovia if I had any character. I shall have learned a lot of things when I die—and all for what?"

Kovno 1914.

"I suppose I shall die a hopeless procrastinator but if I make small progress I also have no peace. It torments me dreadfully to have things undone. I wish I had passed beyond this world, in my soul."

Kovno 1914.

"I realize tremendously how an institution of this kind depends on the managing head. So much has to be looked after and such constant questions come up that no system or plan suffices by itself. It is very hard to get things done quickly without being somewhat impetuous and one cannot preserve control over everything without a great deal of calm. I think more than ever that institutional life is perfectly anti-human. It cannot be run without a certain amount of injustice—that is the innocent suffering for the guilty, that is if one attempts to have rules. It would be far more just to have no rules and exact of each one according to my own judgment. I think that regulations are only made in support of idiotic administrations."

Kovno 1914.

"Max wrote me such a nice, vivid letter."

"Politics are certainly very interesting now. I feel dreadfully sorry for Serbia and I hope if there is war with Austria that the last Servian will die on the battlefield."

In May, June and early July of 1914, Nelka was writing to her Aunt Susie about her plans of returning to America. Finally she had made arrangements to sail the first week of August. But then the war broke out and she never got off.

Kovno 1914.

"I have written to the Russian Line and got special permission to sail from Copenhagen. If nothing unforeseen happens, I will leave here on the 4th of August for Stockholm. I had hardly finished this when the town was put under martial law. Everything is upside down. The inhabitants are all ordered to leave. The bank is packing up, people streaming all day there. Everyone ordered off the streets at night. The streets are occupied with soldiers and cannons moving to the front, and the aspect seems serious. No one can tell anything. I have already signed a paper not to leave without the permission of the fort. If we have war I am ready to stay to the end. I have the greatest sympathy for Serbia and would like to work in the Red Cross there if not here. I shall try to write you again before being shut up for good, if the town is besieged. We are only a few hours from the frontier."

Kovno 1914.

"Since last night the town is under martial law. Everything is upside down. Cannons hustling to the front. Cavalry going off. All the inhabitants are ordered to leave. We are in the very seat of war. If we have war I am ready to stay to the end if need be. I only hope you won't feel too terribly uneasy. The lack of communications will be the worst. I feel great sympathy for Serbia and hope this war will help them. All the big buildings are to be turned into hospitals. The new bank will be splendid—tile floors and water. It can hold at least a thousand, I think. All kinds of specimens are turning up to be enrolled as sisters, but I am relentless and shall take no adventuresses if I can help it."

Kovno 1914.

"I am glad it is for Serbia, but O what a horror. I had none of this impression at Adrianople—the panic of a whole town before the war. Mobilization was begun last night, but the inhabitants were ordered to leave six days ago. I cannot describe it. It is just everything that one has ever read about war and a great deal besides. I am glad I have a good lot of sisters. I hope they will all do their duty. Communication will be cut off any minute. I shall be so anxious about my family if we are shut up for long. Well, goodbye. I pray for the best. One must be ready for anything."

Kovno 1914.

"Everything is cut off from Europe and I am dreadfully worried and unhappy to have no news from you and all the family. The whole fortress was put in a state of defense in no time, and the whole town has been ordered out from one station. You can't imagine the scenes. Prince Wasilchikoff has helped me very much in the place of his wife who had to go to Petersburg, and now he is going to join his regiment. I hope he can take this letter to send through Sweden. My consolation is that the war was started in behalf of Serbia—it alleviates the horror of all that is going on. Prince Wasilchikoff came in for a moment and said that the political situation was very good and that England has declared war. Everyone is going to the war with enthusiasm. Don't worry too much. This section of the Army will not give in till the last. The Commander Grigorieff is splendid and General Rennenkamph is a real fighting man. I have 56 sisters ready in Kovno. My heart and head are full of anxiety and love for you, for you all. I may be able to get letters to you still, but if not, look out for Tibi's little grave whatever happens."

The absorbing work in Kovno, the excitement and the patriotic fervor were all beneficial to Nelka's state of mind in that it took it off her constant thinking about the death of her little dog.

While Nelka had her own sisters and hospital, the Army decided to consolidate the services under their jurisdiction and turned their own Army sisters over to Nelka and she found herself at the head of some 300 sisters. This was a large complicated administrative job but she handled it with great efficiency. Most of the time the fortress was under fire and it soon became obvious that it would not hold out.

The commanding general did not prove to be as good and efficient as Nelka supposed and he also lost his nerve. Under the increasing pressure of the Germans, he ordered the complete evacuation of the fortress, of the troops and material, while this was still possible. However, this was accomplished in a

very poor manner and the commander himself left the fortress 17 hours before Nelka did. He also lost a great deal of his equipment.

Nelka in turn completed a full evacuation of her whole hospital and saved all of her material. Everything in the hospital building which could not be moved was destroyed and she went even that far to have all brass knobs removed from the doors and thrown into the river so that the Germans would not get the metal.

So Kovno fell, but the war went on and Nelka's hospital was reestablished some 40 or 50 miles to the rear as a rear unit taking care of the evacuated wounded. They were settled in a large agricultural school building in very fine surroundings. I managed to visit Nelka at that hospital for a few days.

Soon, however, the fighting resumed and the Germans resumed their advance. The hospital once again had to be moved. At that moment Nelka came down with a very severe case of scarlet fever. The doctor said that she could not be moved, just as the hospital was getting under way. The head doctor had her arranged in bed in a tent, leaving her one nurse. At the last moment when leaving, he slipped a revolver under her pillow! But Nelka recovered. The Germans did not reach that point and ultimately she was able to rejoin her unit.

Soon after that she was sent to the rear to a town called Novgorod, to organize a new unit. There she spent most of the winter and once again I managed to visit her there, as it was not very far from Petersburg.

All during the war, at different intervals, Nelka came back to Petersburg, mostly for just a few days and because of some business for her hospital or unit. Each time when she came to Petersburg she stayed at my mother's and thus I was able to see her occasionally.

The impression she had made on me when I first saw her as a small boy never changed. The only difference was that growing up I came more and more under her spell and was more and more deeply attached and devoted to her. I was then 17 years old and very much in love with her. But she was fully grown and I was but a boy yet, so that any hopes would seem rather futile for me. Futile because of the difference of age and because I could hardly expect that she could be interested in me. Also because of her great charm and personality she always had great success with men everywhere and it was more than possible that some fortunate man would be able to win her.

Both in Russia and in America and also while she was in Bulgaria and in Paris she had a great number of admirers and had over thirty proposals from men of different nationalities. She even had a Japanese suitor. But she never was interested in any of these suitors and once told my mother that she would never marry unless she had a complete and all consuming feeling for the man she chose.

But for the moment the war was on and everyone had other thoughts and jobs on hand than romance.

But I was growing up and so was my feelings for her. Every time Nelka would come to Petersburg, I would see her off to the train, taking her back to the front. On one such an occasion I gave her a box of white cream caramels. It was nothing, but for some reason or other it touched her very much and she always said that to her it was measure of my devotion.

On these departures to the front, she was always in a hurry—having so much to do and attend to. On these occasions the determination of her character manifested itself at different times. Once she failed to secure the necessary permit to board a train going to the front—there just wasn't the time for it. At the entrance to the platforms armed guards stood and one had to show one's pass to get through. I warned Nelka that she probably would have trouble, but she said there was no time for this now and that she would find a way to get through. Of course we arrived just about the time the train was pulling out and dashed towards the platform. A soldier stood at the entrance with his rifle and when Nelka plunged headlong towards him, he thrust his rifle horizontally in front of her to stop her. Without a moments hesitation she ducked low and slipped under the extended rifle, and was on the moving train before the sentry knew what it was all about!

On another occasion we arrived at the station just a little too late, even though she had her pass. When we dashed out on the platform we just could see the two receding red lights of the departing train. To this day I do not know what happened, but Nelka raised such fireworks that that train backed into the station. Nelka got on and the train pulled out again!

I have often said that it took courage to be in love with a woman of such determination!

After her winter in Novgorod, Nelka decided to form and organize a unit of her own to serve with the cavalry. She proceeded to raise the necessary money and to select the personnel. As the head of the unit she chose my uncle, my mother's brother, and as assistant a friend of his. She also chose some of

the doctors she knew in Kovno as well as some of the sisters. The regular men orderlies and the horses were being supplied by the Red Cross. This unit was attached to the First Guard Cavalry Division. The doctors, the orderlies, the nurses were all on horseback; the stretchers for the wounded likewise were on long poles between two horses. When the whole unit was strung out Indian file it was a very long unit.

Once attached to the Cavalry Division, the unit moved right along with it. Often this was very rough going. Often they would be called out at night, had to saddle and be on the move. Nelka rode a horse named 'Vive la France.' If they were to move any distance they were loaded into trains. She always remembered a dark autumn night unloading the horses from the train in the dark, in the woods, and right next to the position of artillery batteries, firing steadily—the difficulty of controlling and trying to keep the horses reasonably quiet. She had a great deal of trouble with her frightened horse, trembling and scared, because of the noise and flashing guns. The fighting was going on a short distance ahead and hardly had they unloaded as the wounded started to be brought in. They worked on them in muddy dugouts. Between moments of respite Nelka would run out into the dark and try to soothe her horse which was tied in the woods. The guns kept on firing all night.

This was the kind of life which went on. In July 1916 my uncle, the head of the unit, was killed by shell fire, at a moment of some very heavy fighting. The work they were carrying on was right near the firing lines.

At one time, during 1916 Nelka came for a few days to our country estate and one day I went with her to Petrograd. There she received a letter from her Aunt Martha Wadsworth. I was coming back to the country with Nelka on the train. She had the letter in her hand but would not open it for she said she felt it was bad news and she was afraid. She had a premonition of something wrong. We traveled all the way in silence and I could see how very anxious and upset she was. Feeling as I did for her, it was painful for me to see her in that state but there was nothing I could do. She did not open the letter until we reached home and she went alone into her room. It was what she had expected—the news that her beloved Aunt Susie Blow had died in New York.

Another terrible, painful shock, Nelka took it in a very hard way but with great calm and fortitude. She felt that she had failed her aunt, that she should have been with her, instead of at the war. She blames herself. She felt that being at the war was a form of selfishness of self-indulgence, when her duty should have been to remain with her aunt.

Once again a tragic and very hard blow, a blow so hard to accept because of her special devotion to that aunt.

But the war was on—she could not even indulge in her sorrow and she had to return to the front. Fighting was heavy that summer and her cavalry division was engaged and on the move. The unit was always up front, close to the fighting lines and the work was hard.

That summer I entered Officers Training School and did not see Nelka for a very long time.

On the first of February 1917, I received my commission as second lieutenant in the First Infantry Guard Regiment. This was the last promotion done by the Emperor. I was assigned to the Reserve Battalion stationed in Petrograd.

Less than a month later the Revolution broke out and I had a week of street fighting. Then chaos ensued.

Through most of the summer of 1917, I was at the front in Galicia. Nelka was somewhere at the front near the Rumanian border. We did not know where each of us was and had no communications.

Gradually the discipline in the Army, under the impact of the Revolution, broke down and the front started to disintegrate.

While my regiment was coming apart on the Galician front, Nelka's unit was doing the same on the Rumanian border. Some time towards the end of the summer the remnants of her unit were in Rumania and finally came apart. She was left with but a few sisters and her assistant chief, a friend of hers, a Finnish gentleman, Baron Wrede.

At a certain moment she sent him with some of the personnel and equipment from Rumania over the border back into Russia. However, she herself remained behind to take care of the local priest who was desperately ill. A few days later, the priest died and she was ready to follow the unit back over the border. Just before leaving she found and picked up a poor, small abandoned kitten. Tying the kitten up in her shawl and hanging it from her neck, she rode away from Rumania back to Russia. One soldier was riding back with her. At night time they arrived at a small village and for some reason or other, the

soldier disappeared. After waiting for a while, there was nothing to do but to continue. And so in the night, Nelka rode alone through the woods and over the mountains over the border from Rumania into Russia. A woman, riding alone, in the night in the midst of the Revolution! She rode all night, the kitten dangling in front of her. By morning she reached a Russian village and soon located the unit. She said she would never forget that ride in the night. The next day the lost soldier turned up very much upset at having lost her on the way.

The revolution was taking its toll and everything was rapidly coming apart, disintegrating and in a state of anarchy. There was no choice but to drop everything and try to get back to Petrograd if possible. But this was not easy to do. Everything was in complete turmoil, no regular train service and the revolutionary soldiers in complete control of everything. The greatest danger was for the Finnish Baron who as an officer was in danger from the soldiers. So a stratagem had to be invented. Nelka went and declared that the Baron was desperately ill and had to be sent to Petrograd without delay, and that for that she needed a special permit. This she managed to secure and was assigned a compartment in the overfilled train. The perfectly healthy Baron was brought in and arranged lying down all the trip of several days, while Nelka had to take care of him, bring him food and look after the 'invalid.' He said afterwards that he had a 'very pleasant trip.' While lying in his berth he kept with him the kitten. Finally they arrived in Petrograd. The Baron then returned to Finland taking with him the kitten where it lived on their estate to a ripe old age.

Nelka, upon her arrival, stopped as usual at my mother's. Soon after that I returned from the front. Now we were all together once more and all together tried to survive in the Revolution, which was not an easy matter. I then joined the British Military Mission with the offices at the British Embassy.

About that time the Kerensky Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks and a lot of fighting took place in the city. Nelka used to say how pretty the city looked with the streets completely empty, when she would be returning home, sometimes skirting the walls of the buildings when some shooting would start along the street. We all soon got used to that kind of existence, which became a normal way of life.

But the Revolution was going on and things were getting worse from day to day. The Bolsheviks were killing right and left and the Red terror was in full swing. My work with the British Mission was at that time of some protection for the Bolsheviks were not yet sure of themselves to the extent of daring to molest the foreign missions. My work with the Mission took me away on various trips accompanying British officers.

In the spring of 1918, one of these trips took me to Mourmansk on the Arctic Ocean and where fighting was in progress between White Russians and other foreign units and the Bolsheviks.

All that area was not exactly a very healthy place to be in and after quite a few adventures I managed to return to Petrograd. I brought back with me 75 cases of what the British call 'Iron Rations,' a mixture of all kinds of food to be used in emergencies.

Food was more than scarce by that time and I was given a couple of cases. It was a God send for all of us. We all subsisted on it.

But the Bolsheviks were getting bolder by the day and were raiding houses, arresting former officers and executing them every night.

One evening about ten, a knock came on the door. I opened. Three men with rifles came in with a commissar. They asked for me by name and said they had an order to search the place. They asked if I had any arms and I said I had a service revolver, which had been given to me by the British. I also had another revolver of mine which lay on the mantelpiece. Nelka, who was there in the room, did at that moment a most risky thing. Unobtrusively she slipped my revolver into the pocket of her dress. I noticed this, but the men did not. I produced the other gun which they dutifully registered and took. They then proceeded to search the place and after examining my papers, announced that I would not be arrested in view of my service with the British. Upon that they left. Nelka had done a most risky thing, for had the pistol been discovered in her pocket, it probably would have been the end of all of us.

However, things were getting very acute and very dangerous. It was obvious that a similar raid might happen again any day and might not finish as well. Should I be arrested and taken away the chances would be of my being shot. So far my service with the British had served as a protection, but with the relations with the foreigners fast getting worse, this could mean just the opposite for me and the connection would be detrimental instead of helpful. So it soon proved to be.

We all had a general consultation and decided to try and get out of the country if only possible. My

father went to Moscow where he knew a prominent Jew who was procuring exit permits, for a price, and was helping that way people to get abroad. Then we all began to move about trying to stay in different places, different nights.

In the midst of all this, I declared my love to Nelka and asked her to marry me. She refused because she said she did not think it was fair to me on account of our age difference. I was then twenty-one and she was forty. I kept insisting. She admitted that she loved me and would not hesitate had it not been because of the age difference.

On a certain Friday morning something kept me from going as usual to the British Embassy where our offices were located. This proved to be my salvation for that same morning the Embassy was raided by the Bolsheviks. They invaded the Embassy, arrested all the British officers and killed Commander Crombie right on the entrance steps when he tried to stop them from entering. They hung his body head down out of one of the windows.

All the Russian officers who worked with the Mission were also arrested and promptly shot. Of 16 such officers, only three including myself ultimately got away. Thirteen were shot.

After the Embassy raid my position became extremely precarious, for I was now on the black list and being searched for. While previously my connection with the Mission had been a protection, now it was just the opposite. I could not very well remain in our apartment and we all scattered, except my mother who remained. My father was still in Moscow. Nelka went to some friends. I spent some time in the country where I hid for some time in our empty house.

It is to be noted that food was practically unavailable and that there was no money to buy it with if there was any. So we all had a pretty desperate time, but so did everyone else.

In the midst of all this, Nelka finally agreed to marry me. Perhaps the Revolution, the circumstances, the constant danger which we were all facing all of the time, helped her make her decision. But decide she did and so one day early in September 1918 we went to Tsarskoe Selo, an hour by train from Petrograd where an old aunt of mine lived. We were married in a church there with just a handful of friends in attendance. Nelka wore a white sister's uniform for her wedding dress. My old aunt who was very fond of Nelka took off a gold bracelet she wore and put it on Nelka's arm. Nelka never took it off throughout her life.

Some friends of ours let us use their empty apartment for our honeymoon. We had a 5 pound can of British bully beef and subsisted on that until it was used up. We then returned to Petrograd and moved into one room of a tiny flat where a Polish woman, Mrs. Kelpsh, lived who had worked in Nelka's hospital in Kovno. This was in a back yard of a small side street. She registered Nelka under her maiden name and me not at all. If seen, I was just supposed to be a boy-friend visiting.

However, things were getting more and more dangerous, and we had to invent something if we were to save ourselves.

Earlier, before our marriage, when things were not so bad and we were all seeking ways of getting out of Russia, I had applied for a foreign passport to go abroad. At first some people were being let out before the Bolsheviks clamped down on everybody.

Now, this application at the Foreign Office or Commissariat was a dangerous identity of myself and a disclosure, especially when I was being searched for because of my connection with the British Mission.

Nelka knew this situation and one day unknown to me she went to the Commissariat. There she very naively inquired about the application of Michael Moukhanoff. The girl looked up and brought out my file, looked it over and said that no decision had been made yet. Nelka then asked when one could hope to have an answer. The girl said she did not know but could go and find out. If Nelka would wait she would go and inquire. She left the room and Nelka then did a very desperate thing. She picked up the file from the table, walked quickly out of the room, down the corridor and then faster down the steps and into the street where she mixed into the crowd. A dangerous thing to do, but my file was gone, even though my position became that way only more illegal and perhaps even more dangerous. But Nelka as usual did the decided thing with courage and determination.

Like many others we were now trying to escape. Like always in such cases, there are people who for a price were getting people out of town and over the Finish border. It was very dangerous work for them—dangerous for the people trying to leave and also expensive. We established contact with one such person who turned out to be a very decent fellow, and he agreed to try and get us out. He had peasants along the border whom he knew and who were helping him. These he had to pay and quite highly for it was all dangerous work for them also. He warned us that he could not tell when he would be ready to move us and that we should be ready to go on a moment's notice. Therefore, we prepared

what we thought we could take with us and waited.

In the meantime my father had succeeded to get some false papers through his Jewish friend in Moscow and with these he and my mother managed to get over the Finnish border into Finland by train. They were by now in Stockholm and getting ready to sail to America.

By this time also, Nelka and I were living in another house, in a closed apartment in a house where some very close friends of ours lived. Nelka was registered there under a false passport in the name of Emilia Sarapp. I was not known, unless as a boy friend.

The food situation had become absolutely desperate. There just was none. Some mornings I would go to the outskirts of the city where peasants would come in their sleighs selling milk. People fought to get a quart of this watery stuff.

We also had some frozen potatoes. When frozen, potatoes are pink and sweet and slimy. These we ate without butter or even salt which was not available. The watery milk sometimes helped. Once in a while we got a loaf of black bread with a mixture of straw. I saw people cut off chunks of meat from a dead horse lying in the street and carry it home for their dinner.

So we packed some clothes and valuables and waited. Before leaving, we wanted once more to see my old aunt in Tsarskoe and we went there to say goodbye. We spent the day with her and were returning to Petrograd before dark, for a curfew was sometimes imposed and it was not safe to be around in the dark.

As we were hurrying through the crowded station, someone slipped up to the side of Nelka. It was our friend from the house we lived in. She whispered to Nelka: "Do not return home. A raid took place and they have an ambush waiting for you." Having said that, she slipped away into the crowd.

Now we were in a desperate fix, and we knew it. The first thing was to get off the streets. We quickly thought it over and then called the apartment of some friends of mine, who we knew were not there, but where an old governess was still remaining. We just said we would come over. People understood and asked no questions. We went there, explained what had happened and spent the night.

We were in a critical situation. We had no money, except a little on hand, no belongings of any kind, except the clothes on us, and in greater danger of getting caught. So first of all, we went to the man who was to take us over the border and explained the situation. He especially understood how very dangerous it was particularly for me, with all the points which were against me. He said he had nothing arranged for the moment, except one possibility which was not too certain and not too safe. He had a peasant coming to see him that day and that he could send me with him, but not both, for this was not to sure a way. He suggested that we better accept this proposition that I be got out of the way at once and over the border and that with the next safer possibility he could move Nelka, I to be waiting just over the border. Nelka explained that we had no money but that she thought that she could get some from some one she knew. We all discussed the situation together for a while, but saw that there was not much choice. In the meantime, the peasant arrived and the man went to talk to him. Finally, it was decided that Nelka remain with our friends under the name of Emilia Sarapp and that I go with the peasant, and wait at the border.

It was all very bad. Finally we had to say goodbye, both realizing the danger but having little choice. It was quite a heartbreaking separation—I leaving into the unknown with a bandit looking individual, of whom we knew nothing, Nelka remaining in the city with the uncertainty of finding any money.

I will not go into the details of my trip, except to say that it was not easy nor safe, but I finally late that night reached the Finnish border and crossing the stream separating the two countries in the woods and deep snow, arrived at a small Finnish peasant hut.

I explained the situation to him and that I would like to stay with him for a few days until my wife could join me. He readily agreed for he knew and participated in this business of people escaping and was receiving a number of them at all times. He was also engaged in contraband dealings and a number of his agents kept coming and going through his hut, moving goods over the border. I had just a little money and arranged to have him keep me. I gave a note to the peasant who brought me over and he promised to get it to Nelka when he returned to Petrograd. Then I waited. Practically every night people came over the border and most of them stopped at the hut. It was quite an active spot. One or two of the parties who were all coming through the services of the same man, brought me notes from Nelka. Once or twice I crossed the border back into Russia and went about five miles to the nearest village hoping that perhaps Nelka was coming through with the next party as she wrote she hoped to. This perhaps was dangerous and risky on my part, but nervousness just kept me from sitting still.



Then the unforeseen happened. At that time the Finnish people were having a revolution of their own. There were Red Finns and White Finns fighting each other all over the country. The front was fluid with small units moving back and forth, here and there, occupying this or that area or this or that village. There is where misfortune struck me. A Red Finnish patrol took possession of the area and I was caught by the Red patrol.

This has nothing to do with this story I am now writing about Nelka, so I will not go into this complicated and lengthy matter of how I managed to escape from the Finnish Reds. This is a long story. Suffice it to say, that I managed to get away.

But it was not possible any more for me to remain on Finnish ground and I crossed in the night back into Russia. Having no money I was obliged to walk and walked about 30 miles to Petrograd. I finally made it, but I did not know where to look for Nelka so I went to our man. He told me that Nelka was to come and see him that morning at about eleven, and so I waited. Nelka arrived on time. When she saw me she went into an absolute fury, for my having come back. I always said that she was in such a fury with me that for about 48 hours I never even had a chance to try to tell her why I was back.

Finally I got it over to her, and while we were happy to be together again, our position was just as desperate, if not worse, and we were back where we had started. We knew that we better do something fast. However, while Nelka had managed to get some money, there was not enough to pay the man to get us over.

So I made a suggestion. In as much as I had crossed the border twice and knew the way pretty well, I suggested that we go on our own without any guide or assistance. We explained this to our man who was very nice about it and said that if we wanted to take the risk it was up to us.

However, there was little choice so we decided. We paid him for my first trip and had a little money left. Through some black market dealer we managed to get a loaf of black bread and with nothing else but the clothes on our backs, we started out. Nelka wore a sisters uniform black dress, a heavy cloth coat, a fur cap and black leather high boots—like riding boots. I wore a military field uniform without insignia, like most of all the population wore at that time. While adequate, none of this was too warm for long stays in the cold, but we had nothing else. It was the end of December.

Early in the morning we took a train in the direction of the Finnish border. Trains ran as far as the border, but we got off two stations earlier, at the same one I used the first time. From that station we proceeded on foot down a country road towards a village I knew some five miles away. We reached there in the early afternoon and stopped at a hut where I also had been on my first trip. The peasant woman gave us some soup and we were resting and warming up, when suddenly a bunch of red soldiers entered the yard. The woman whisked us quickly into an empty room in the back of the house and told us to remain quiet. We could hear the men come in and ask her if she had seen any refugees around. (It is to be noted that there were constantly people trying to escape all along the border and the Reds were always searching them out. At one time as many as 100 to 150 were getting over the border daily. All along the border within five miles people were shot on sight.)

We heard the woman say she had seen no one. One of the men asked about her house and asked what was in that room, meaning the one we were in. The woman answered, "Oh, I keep my chicken there." The men did not insist and left. It was a close call. After the men left, the woman suggested that we better leave too, for it was too risky for her to have us there. We got by once, but it might not happen again so we also decided that we better leave. The soldiers had gone in the direction of the station, and, as we were to continue further, we got out on to the road and started for the next village, a distance of nearly seven miles through the woods. I also knew that village and some of the peasants. From there the path through the woods led to the Finnish border, some five miles away.

It was getting late and was not a good time to be out at dark for at night the Reds put out patrols. I hoped however to reach the village before nightfall and so we hurried along. The road was well rolled down—the going was not hard and we made good time.

It was just getting dark but a moon was coming up when we reached the village. The first hut was the one I had been to before and I knew the peasants there, who were some of the peasants working for our man. We entered and a woman rushed up to us crying and urging us to get out. She was weeping and finally managed to explain that her husband had just been arrested by the Reds and taken away on suspicion that he was helping the refugees. She practically pushed us out of the house.

So here we were, out on the road facing a dilemma. Any moment now the night Red patrol would be out on the road. Another one would be out at the village we came from. Before us lay the path towards the Finnish border, but it crossed a wide field before entering the woods. I knew the way well but with the full moon out you could see a great distance, like in the day, on the bright snow and I was afraid to

be spotted crossing that field.

I told Nelka I was afraid to risk this trip towards the border as it was so light. But we had little choice, for the patrols would be out any minute now and we could not remain on the road. With no other choice left we retreated into the woods, off the road and settled under some thick pine trees for the night, right in the snow. It was Xmas eve.

We survived the night and even slept a little. It was also evident that Nelka was developing some kind of flu and was running a temperature. I used to joke that she melted the snow around us because of that. Luckily there was no wind. The snow was deep and we dug out a hollow. The temperature was probably about ten or fifteen above. Remember we had no covers—just our clothes. We ate some of our remaining black bread. We were tired from so much walking and so we slept.

By morning it was obvious that Nelka was ill and had a temperature. We had to act quick and invent something, so we went back to the village and I entered the same hut again. The woman had quieted down and did not push us out. We also found there another couple who turned out to be an officer with his wife trying to get out as we did, so we decided to stick together. The woman suggested that we go by sleigh to the next village and try to cross from there. So we hired a sleigh and started out—this time the four of us with the driver. It was now fairly safe to move along the roads by day with the night patrols off.

We drove to the next village about ten miles away. When we came to the village, our driver said he wanted to stop at the tavern which was located at the entrance to the village. He went in while we waited in the sleigh. When he came out a soldier followed him onto the porch. He looked at us suspiciously and then asked the peasant where we were coming from. The peasant named a village to the east. The soldier then suddenly said: "Why your horse is turned the wrong way, wait a minute," and he stepped back into the tavern.

Our driver whipped up his horse and we went down the road as fast as we could. Looking back we saw several soldiers run out on the porch. One of them lifted his rifle and a shot came over us, but we were well on our way. They had no horses available to follow us so did not pursue and we got away. After a ride of some two miles, we turned sharply to the left and down a narrow lane into the woods. Here the peasant stopped and said the border was only about two miles away and that he would lead us for so much. We agreed. He hid his sleigh and horse in an empty barn and we started out. Soon the lane ended and we were in thick woods. The snow was waste deep and with the fallen logs, the going was extremely difficult. We had to haul the women over the logs and pull them out of the deep snow. Both the women and especially Nelka who was ill, were completely exhausted. It was a painful procession. Finally we came to a clearing in the woods and the peasant turning around, said very calmly, "This is Finland." A very strange feeling of elation and apprehension and a strange feeling of leaving in such a manner one's native land.

We were now not at all sure what kind of Finns we would encounter, but soon we saw two Finnish soldiers and much to my relief I recognized them as being White Finns. They stopped us and then took us to the village to their officer. A young lieutenant was sitting at a table in a small hut. We reported to him and when I mentioned that I was an officer and named my regiment, he rose and saluted. The Finns were very decent and helpful in every way. Despite their own difficulties, they extended help to the numerous refugees coming over, established receiving camps and medical units for the sick. We were taken by sleigh to Terrioky. Nelka as having temperature was taken to the hospital and I to the camp. As soon as possible we communicated with our friends the Wredes in Helsingfors and they immediately took steps to get us out of camp and into their own home. So in a few days we were on our way to Helsingfors where we received the warmest hospitality from the Wredes and remained with them for about six weeks.

We then proceeded by way of Stockholm and Oslo to the United States sailing on the Stavangerfiord for New York early in February of 1919.

Upon our arrival in America we went to Washington where we stayed with Nelka's Aunt and Uncle. Later in the spring we went to Cazenovia to the little house which Nelka's Aunt Susie had left her and spent finally a restful and quiet summer, which was our honeymoon time. We were also regaining our health, which had suffered from the starvation period. Nelka put on some forty pounds and I came back to normal after having been bloated from hunger, like some starved Hindu child.

However, we soon felt that this easy and restful life was not right morally. The Bolsheviks were still in power, wrecking Russia and a civil war was raging between the Bolsheviks and the White Russians: We decided that it was our duty to go back and help. So I went to Washington and offered my services at the Russian mission to join one of the volunteer armies. We first planned to go to Siberia but then decided we would join the army of General Denikin in the South of Russia, and I was given an

assignment there.

Before sailing for Europe we went to New Orleans to visit Nelka's cousin and then sailed from there for Liverpool, and then to London and Paris. Once in Paris we were advised that things were not going well in the south with the army of General Denikin and that we better wait before going on. So we stayed in France and I joined the French airplane factory of Louis Breguet near Paris where I worked for about 8 months. Then things got better in the Southern Army and we once again decided to go on to the Army reorganized now by General Wrangel.

Just at that time the Breguet factory received an order for night bombers for the Russian Army and it was arranged that I escort that shipment to the Crimea. So once again I put on the uniform of a Russian lieutenant, Nelka put on the uniform of a Russian Red Cross nurse and we set out.

The planes were boxed and sent to Marseilles where they were loaded on a French freighter, the Saint Basil, and we left for Constantinople. As the planes were bulky but light, the boat was light and high in the water. Because of that the propeller was but halfway in the water and our progress was very slow. It took us 17 days to get to Constantinople. Hardly had we dropped anchor in the Bosphorus as a launch drew up and a French officer came aboard and asked who was in charge of the shipment. He informed me that we could not proceed any further because news had just been received that the Army of General Wrangel had started the evacuation of the Crimea.

So we had to go ashore. The planes, having come from France, were unloaded and left with the French Army of occupation. So, came to an end our trip and our efforts to join the White Russian Army. We landed in Constantinople and in the next few days the evacuated Army of Wrangel started to arrive. Over 140,000 people arrived including the remnants of the army and between 6 and 7 thousand wounded. The plight of these people was terrible. While the wounded were landed and taken care of by the American and British Red Cross, most of the rest were not allowed ashore and were kept on board the ships in the harbour. One boat had 12,000 people aboard.

The day after we had arrived, I accidentally met in the street Robert Imbrie, whom I had known when he was American Consul in Petrograd. It turned out that he also had just arrived and like ourselves was also on his way to the Crimea, appointed from the State Department. He asked me what I was going to do and I explained that probably for the moment we would return to France. He said that he was waiting for instructions from Washington to know what to do. Next day he contacted me saying that he was assigned to form a Russian Section at the American Embassy in Constantinople and offered me a job to work with him. I gladly accepted and so we stayed in Constantinople for the next 8 months.

It was a very interesting period. My work was varied. I acted as interpreter at the American Embassy with the Russians and with the French. Nelka joined the organization of the French Admiral's wife, Madame Dumesnil, doing refugee relief work.

It was an interesting and exhilarating time in Constantinople. We saw and knew a number of very interesting people. We saw unusual situations and we were both very busy.

Mr. Imbrie, with whom I worked, had as his assignment to undertake inspection tours. For this he often used the American destroyers which were anchored in the Bosphorus. Thus, we went to Gallipoli, to Lemnos, to Salonica, etc.

On a certain day we took off for Varna in Bulgaria and from there to Batum in the Caucasus.

Nelka remained in Constantinople and had with her a little companion, a dog Djedda. Djedda influenced a great deal of our future existence, and as you will see there was quite a story attached to this little dog.

One day we were visiting the bazaar of Constantinople, a colorful, typical oriental spot, crowded and noisy, with oriental smells and sounds. In one of the passages we came across a small, brown dog, which was running around frightened and miserable. We spoke to her and, while she was timid, she was friendly and came to us. We decided to pick her up and that we could give her to the little daughter of the man in whose house we had a room. The little girl Offy was living with her father who had recently lost his wife and we thought that the little dog would fit in nicely as a playmate for the little girl. Offy was very pleased and we showed her how to take care of the dog. The first thing to do was to wash the dog and get some of the grime off. When this was done we were surprised to find out that she was white not brown, the size of a small fox terrier, with lovely eyes and a vivacious disposition. So all was well for the dog, for Offy and for us—at least for the moment. A few days later Offy announced that the dog seemed ill. We examined her and found that she was running a temperature, would not move

and certainly was not well. We arranged her in a small box and took her to our room for she needed better care than the little girl could give her. As she did not improve, we took her to the veterinary and he found that she was suffering from inflammatory rheumatism of the joints. He gave her some medicine and told us to keep her quiet. This was not difficult to do for she was very ill and did not move. In this critical condition she must have stayed for about two weeks, possibly more. Then she began to show some signs of recovery, but even this was very gradual. Gradually she began to regain strength and finally we tried to have her get out of her box and walk about. When we tried this, we found to our surprise that she could not stand up and we discovered that her two front legs had stiffened in the joints, which would not move. Those joints had actually grown together and the dog would never be able to move them again. However, with time Djedda adapted herself wonderfully to this situation and learned to hobble about just on her hind legs supporting herself by holding her left front leg against her hip. The right front leg was bent up below her chin against her chest. Naturally in that condition the dog could not remain with the little girl so she stayed with us. And despite her crippled condition, Djedda was a most wonderful and lovable dog. She adapted herself so well that she could even go up the steps.

Like all invalids, Djedda adapted herself wonderfully and was quite proficient in her movements, though she always remained a cripple. The only thing she could not do was come down the stairs. So, if she found herself at the head of the stairs, she would start barking until someone came to carry her down. She was a very wonderful pet to us for about 12 years. This poor little cripple was the most gay and joyful little dog, a wonderful and devoted companion and we never regretted for a moment having had the good luck of finding her. She gave us a great deal of joy and comfort.

So when I left with Imbrie for Batum, Nelka remained with Djedda. When leaving I told Nelka that I was to be back a certain Monday. Well, things did not go exactly on schedule. When we got to Batum, we found that the city, which was occupied by the Turks, was being besieged by the Georgians. We went ashore, looked the situation over and saw that it was not good. We remained anchored in the harbor. The next morning the Georgians attacked and hot fighting resulted. Most of it was with small arms only, but when the bullets began to spatter against our destroyer, the captain decided that we better get out, which we did, and we steamed back to Constantinople. With this delay, we were off schedule and instead of arriving on Monday it was Wednesday. When I returned home I found that Nelka was gone, with a note left for me. The note said that as I had not returned on Monday and as news had reached Constantinople that heavy fighting was on in Batum, that she was leaving to look for me. I was furious, because it was so utterly useless.

Upon inquiry I found that she had boarded a small Italian freighter plying the coast of Asiatic Turkey. The boat named San Georgio had left on Tuesday and had no wireless. The boat's company explained that she was due back in about three weeks.

I went to explain the situation to Admiral Bristol at the American Embassy. He said that he knew about Nelka having gone, for while disapproving of it and advising her against it, he had helped her get the Interallied visas which were necessary to be able to leave the city. Normally it took about a week to get these visas, British, French, Italian and United States. Nelka got them in 3 hours.

While the Embassy reassured her and told her there was nothing to worry about, her main objective of getting on a boat was to try to communicate with me on the destroyer by wireless. It later developed that, after she had left on the San Georgio and they were out at sea, then only did she discover that the boat carried no wireless. Therefore her main objective of communicating with me was not possible but this she discovered too late.

She had booked passage first class and upon arriving found out that that entitled her to a chair in the salon. Others sat on the deck on the floor. The decks were crowded with Turkish men who were traveling from one small port to the next along the coast. Each night they brought out their small prayer rugs and turning towards the setting sun, prayed kneeling in rows on deck.

Once aboard, Nelka also found out that first class tickets did not include meals. Having very little money with her, she found that she was not able to afford to buy much. She had a bag of apples with her. Not having anyone to leave Djedda with, Nelka took her along and carried her under her arm all the time. While they did not feed Nelka, the steward was very kind and Djedda was fed. And so they traveled.

I, in the meantime, was desperately trying to find a way to contact Nelka on the San Georgio. The admiral and the Embassy were very cooperative and the admiral issued orders to all the destroyers to keep an eye for the San Georgio and intercept her if spotted.

Having traveled most of the length of the southern coast of the Black Sea, the Italian captain announced that he was going into Batum. Batum in the meantime had been occupied by the Bolshevik

forces and therefore Nelka's position became very precarious. She argued with the captain but he said he had a cargo to pick up and that he was going in. The first thing Nelka did was to hide her identification papers, her passport and visas. Better to have nothing than to be found out as a White Russian. She remained in the cabin while in Batum. On the second morning a bunch of Bolshevik soldiers arrived and announced that they were going to search the ship. This was a very dangerous situation for Nelka. However after a while, and while they had been half through the boat, another party arrived and started an argument with the first bunch as to who had the right to make this search. They pretty nearly came to blows in this argument, but finally still arguing all left without finishing the search. This was a close call for Nelka. Next morning the San Georgio pulled out on her way back to Constantinople. She was grateful, but by now was becoming pretty hungry and what food she managed to get was very scarce.

A few days later, just as they were pulling into Samsun, the American destroyer John D. Edwards spotted the San Georgio, hailed her and inquired about Nelka. When told that she was aboard, they lowered a boat and came to fetch her, and took her and the dog aboard upon specific orders from Admiral Bristol. The commanding officer, Captain Sharp was most helpful and kind. He gave Nelka his cabin and, also as she had run out of everything, offered her his underclothes. Two sailors were assigned to take care of Djedda.

They steamed back towards Constantinople, but had to delay the return for they had to go out to sea for gunnery practice. Thus, Nelka must have remained on the destroyer for four or five days before returning. This was a very harrowing and needless expedition which could have very easily ended in a tragic manner.

By summer the work of the Russian section of the Embassy was coming to an end. My chief, Mr. Imbrie, received a new assignment to go to Rumania, and we decided to return to France. The Embassy hearing this, offered to give us a permit to travel to Marseilles on an American Shipping Board vessel, which normally did not carry passengers. They advised that it would be convenient for us and inexpensive, the rate being only \$5 per day for each of us, for a trip of about five days.

We accepted with pleasure. It was also convenient for the transportation of our animals, for by this time, in addition to Djedda we had a small black dog and two young cats. One, Nuri, was a small kitten which I picked up out of the gutter where it was nearly drowned in the rain. That was a very wonderful cat who lived with us for 18 years.

Late one evening we boarded the Lake Farley. The captain assigned to us our cabin and we were underway. It was late July and when we entered the cabin we found that the temperature must have been well over a hundred. It was so hot that the floor was too hot for the cats to walk on and they kept jumping back and forth from one bunk to the other. The dogs we had left on deck.

So we went to the Captain and complained about the heat. He said he was sorry he had nothing better but that the whole boat was at our disposal and we could arrange ourselves wherever we wished. So after looking everything over, we finally decided to sleep on top of the chartroom. We climbed up there with a couple of blankets and settled for the night under the stars. This was not bad but only the sparks from the funnel kept raining down on us most of the time. But we got used to this and stayed that way most of the trip. The captain was American as well as the mate but the crew was of all nationalities, the cook being a Turk. However it did not look as though the trip would last only five days as the boat was very slow. We stopped on our way at Biserta on the African coast and had a day ashore. The day after we left Biserta at lunch time, I smelled smoke, so I told Nelka I would go and investigate. The moment I came out on deck the alarm bells started off and I saw the middle of the ship aflame.

While I went on deck, Nelka had gone to our cabin, and when she entered she also heard the alarm. So picking up the two cats and a life belt, she hurried on deck. I likewise picked up the two dogs and a life belt.

The captain was hollering from the bridge to lower the boats as the ship would blow up because of the oil. In a few minutes one of the boats was already bobbing on the water and the cook in his white cap was in it. However, all who were available were fighting the fire, mostly with sand and finally we got it under control. All was fine, only the fire did some damage in the engine room and for more than a day we drifted while they were making repairs.

Then we resumed our way to Barcelona where we were to unload some of the wheat we were carrying. When we got there the Spanish authorities would not allow us to go ashore for, as we were Russians, they decided that we may be communists. So they even posted a policeman to see that we would not sneak off. This might not have been so bad, but in the unloading a mistake was made. The forward hull was emptied and as a result the ship sank by the stern and got stuck in the mud bottom. It

took us a whole week to extricate ourselves and all that time we had to just sit on that boat.

By the time we finally got to Marseille we had been traveling for three weeks.

We settled in Menton where we remained for several years. I worked in a French Real Estate office. We also played at Monte Carlo and were quite proficient. Nelka used to say that this was the only honest and "above board" business.

In the summer of 1927 we received the news that Nelka's Uncle Herbert Wadsworth had died suddenly from a heart attack. Once again Nelka had a severe blow and sorrow and once more she had lost a close person without having seen him. That fall we finally sailed for America with our friends Count and Countess Pushkin. We all settled in Cazenovia where Count Pushkin and I started a furniture carving business which we kept up for about three years, until the start of the depression.

While living on the Riviera our animal family had grown to 8 dogs and 5 cats, all picked up or abandoned. The little crippled Djedda was still with us and the most cherished of our pets. We brought the whole menagerie with us to America.

In 1930 when the depression was well under way, we once again sailed back to France and this time were there for three years—part of the time in the South and part near Paris. My father died at that time and in 1934 we returned to America.

On arrival, we went directly to Ashantee to visit Nelka's Aunt Martha, who had been quite ill for sometime after a car accident. We arrived on a Saturday. The next Tuesday Aunt Martha died. This was again a terrible shock for Nelka. Once again death had struck suddenly and this time her last close relative was gone. Both Aunt Susie and Uncle Herbert had died without Nelka being with them and now Aunt Martha dies only three days after we had returned.

Aunt Martha left Ashantee to Nelka and her cousin Lutie Van Horn. So unexpectedly we found ourselves here and remained. At first we thought that we would sell the property but the depression was on and it was not possible to do so.

Thus we stayed and stayed. I did some farming and we still had the remnants of her aunt's horse business, but these were difficult years for us.

I think that while this prolonged stay might have been difficult and materially complicated, this time was not wasted, as Nelka pointed out, from a moral point of view. It was a time of consolidation of our points of view, of our beliefs and conceptions.

And so we stayed here from 1934 until today, and until Nelka passed away in December 1963—a long stay of close to thirty years.

Nelka had had a very varied, very diversified and unusual life. A life which was one of highly emotional feelings. I think characteristic of Nelka was her highly emotional expression of loyalty and devotion, an emotion, which dominated most of her life and all of her actions.

Anything she did or undertook was primarily motivated by emotion rather than by reason, but once decided upon she carried out her actions with great determination and great will power.

Her first overwhelming emotional feeling was a patriotic nationalistic feeling for Russia, and a mystic devotion to the person of the Emperor and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Then her next emotional feeling was the attachment and deep loyalty for her family and her kin.

But in Russia she had no relatives and all her family was American. Because of that there seemed always to be a conflict of feelings, attachments and loyalties, a conflict which dominated a great part of her life, at least the first part of it. I think in many respects this conflict of feelings was upsetting and painful and she suffered a great deal from the frustrations that these feelings often brought about.

Because of these conflicting feelings and attachments Nelka was restless and went back and forth between Europe and America always seeking a solution and a way of life. I think these conflicting feelings and the deep attachment to her family were the main reasons why for so long she had not married. She just was afraid to create or add a new attachment.

Pretty, with a lovely figure, always very feminine, with a brilliant mind and a sparkling personality, a great sense of humor, broad and diversified education, an understanding of art and good taste, cosmopolitan in her experiences and speaking four languages—Nelka had tremendous success both with men and with women.

The friends she had were always deeply devoted friends who kept their friendship through years or through life and were always under the spell of her personality.

Her overwhelming personality and charm naturally attracted men and about thirty men of every nationality had at one time or another asked her in marriage. When she was twenty-two, during her four months visit in Bulgaria, five men proposed to her.

But she never agreed, first because just marriage for the sake of marriage had no attraction for her, and because of her emotional attachments she was afraid to create a new one. She also once told my mother that she would never marry unless she had a complete and overwhelming feeling, and that she had not yet found.

Throughout these years and because of these conflicting feelings, I think she was disturbed and in many ways not happy. There was too much conflict of feelings. Also her philosophically inclined mind was always searching and seeking—searching a religious understanding of life, always questioning the reasons for this or that problem of life. Her Aunt Susan Blow, who was a great student of philosophy, contributed much in a way to Nelka's emotional seekings. But how often in later years Nelka lamented the fact that she had not utilized fully the wisdom and the knowledge that her aunt could have given her in her philosophical understandings. Nelka was seeking by herself, trying to unravel the questions which bothered her through her own thinking.

But from a rational point of view some of her feelings and emotions were very devastating for her own existence and her own serenity. And her deep attachment to the family was also a source of pain and suffering because of its acuteness. There was not much family left but for those who remained, Nelka gave a full measure of love and devotion. The loss of those close to her were blows which did not heal easily and caused deep pain. The death of her little dog Tibi likewise gave a nearly exaggerated frustration and grief. Just like everything else in her life, Nelka's grief was complete. She in everything understood and accepted only completeness. Nothing in her life meant anything if it was only partial. She could never settle for 50%, always seeking totality, only completeness, and this of course is a tremendous strain on one's person. That strain I think showed itself in Nelka for many years of her life and only towards the later part of it she seemed to acquire some stability of feeling and emotional impulse. There was a reason for that of which I will speak later.

A friend of hers once said about her, "She was a tremendous personality and such force."

Like all humans she had her weaknesses, but these weaknesses were in a way her force, for by sheer will power, by determination or by uncompromising dedication, she was able to control or overcome her weaknesses. Not many are able to do that.

She had many friends in all walks of life and in different countries of many nationalities, but always the reaction was the same—a complete spell of attraction and fascination and generally a long lasting friendship—which once established, was never broken. And that because of that tremendous personality.

Around 1885 lived a young Russian girl, Marie Bashkirtzeff. She wrote some prose and poetry and did some painting. She lived and died very young from TB on the French Riviera in Nice. Not particularly pretty, nor particularly striking, she had nevertheless a tremendous personality. In fact so striking that the city of Nice after her death created a Museum Bashkirtzeff where were kept her paintings, her writings and her personal things. The French author Francois Coppee said of Marie Bashkirtzeff: "Je l'ai vue une fois, je l'ai vue une heure, je ne l'oublierais jamais." (I saw her once, I saw her one hour—I shall forget her never.)

I think as far as personality is concerned, this applied likewise to Nelka. As I said before, I saw her for the first time when I was but seven years old. The impression I got then never left me throughout my life and only grew and developed with time and age.

We were married for 45 years and my love and devotion to her date back from that encounter at seven. In other words a span of 60 years—a lifetime. A lifetime during which everything was centered around this one person.

I think one can say that she had been both very happy and very unhappy in her life, at least this was the balance of her feelings during the first half of her life. During that period she experienced great happiness in her relationship with her mother and with other members of her family, in the devotion and loyalty she had to them. She also experienced happiness in her endeavors in her school work, in her interests in life and for life. The happiness she may have derived from the realization of things well done and accomplished.

But also there was great, overwhelming unhappiness and sorrow, because of the unusually hard way

in which she accepted the loss of those who were close to her. Few probably felt such losses as acutely as she did and this caused pain and anguish. Then there also was unhappiness in the contradiction and the division of feelings, between two countries, two backgrounds, two ideologies, two attachments. This constant division brought with it many heartaches, many disappointments.

And then the second half of her life was the one she passed with me. I can only hope that I may have given her at least a measure of the happiness which she so much deserved. Again there were disappointments, frustrations and heartaches as there are in every life and existence. But gradually, with age she seemed to acquire a greater calm in her feelings, she seemed to mellow in her intensity, she seemed to find greater reconciliation within her own beliefs and thoughts and find a greater calm of the soul and a greater satisfaction in her beliefs than she had before that.

She always felt that the turning point in her life, as well as in mine, started from the time we were in Constantinople and when we saw a distant aunt of mine, Princess Gorchakoff.

She was a student of Theosophy and also seemed to have the calm and serenity which comes from the study of that philosophy. Undoubtedly she had a good deal of influence on Nelka and started us on a new way of thinking. Out of this encounter developed gradually all the changes of beliefs and attitudes which brought about such a fundamental and radical change in all the outlooks which Nelka had held hitherto and which she was now discarding.

I think I can say that towards the end she had acquired great moral calm, satisfaction and serenity. She was not perplexed or afraid of the uncertainties of one's beliefs, of the imminence of death or of the questions of the hereafter.

Doubt, uncertainty, perplexity and an unresolved search seemed to have been supplanted by a feeling of calm and confidence. A great thing for anyone to have and to be able to have the moral fortitude to face such a change and to accept it graciously.

And the change was radical and complete in every phase of her life:

From a framework of an organized Church, the change to a live internal belief in the teachings of Christ and an effort to carry this out in the aspects of everyday living, in reality of application and not in dogma.

From a conservative, ultra conservative aristocratic, nearly feudal system of absolute monarchy, an understanding that this had become obsolete and had no value except perhaps in its purely external beauty—to a realistic approach of a form of Christian socialism and the brotherhood not only of man but of all living creatures.

From an accepted habit of meat eating to complete ethical vegetarianism as a regard to the sanctity of all life. A complete Reverence of Life.

From an intolerance towards the beliefs of others to a complete understanding of the others point of view. A tolerance towards others, accepting from them only as much as the given person can understand in the given time and his mental and moral development, and no more. But at the same time expecting to see that person exercise in practice the full measure of that understanding and belief.

From a pride and satisfaction at her aristocratic origin, an admission that this had no value and that the only thing that counted was the "aristocracy of the spirit."

From a worry of having to put a new fur collar on her winter coat to a refusal to wear any fur as being the product of animal slaughter or the product of the trap, producing protracted agony to the animals.

From a lack of understanding, if not indifference, to animals and dogs in particular, an intense devotion, love and work for all animals and for dogs in particular.

From an interest and participation in medicine, a complete reversal in her attitude towards it because of the vivisectional basis of most of it. As a result, an ardent and militant anti-vivisectionist.

A complete change all along the line.

Despite an often tragic look on life and a serious questioning of its purposes, despite a great deal of sorrow which she always felt very deeply, despite an often sad expression on her face in her photographs, Nelka had a great deal of natural gaiety and a tremendous sense of humor. She was always ready to see the funny qualities of people or the funny side of events and could laugh with a great deal of abandon.



Despite her strong Russian nationalism, Nelka was fundamentally cosmopolitan. Having had a diversified education in various countries, speaking four languages and having traveled extensively through many countries, she had a cosmopolitan mind and outlook and was perfectly at home in any country and with any nationality, in any surrounding.

Nelka's mind was always a very philosophical mind and which was never at rest. I have never known anyone who did so much constant thinking. She was always thinking, her mind never idle, always trying to "think things out." Many people are ready or willing to just "accept." Nelka was never ready to just "accept." She would accept only after she had thought it out and could accept it as a result of her own thinking.

Perhaps the most striking change in her outlook and belief was the question of war. She had been a strong militarist; that is, that she understood and justified and accepted war. In fact she considered that this was the only right attitude that one could have and that the willingness to go to war for an idea or a principle could not be questioned. Thus, she had participated in three Wars.

But then later, having seen all the horrors of war, its utter futility, absurdity and uselessness and most of all its immorality and its contradictions to the principles of the teachings of Christ, she became an uncompromising and militant pacifist.

Very characteristic of Nelka was her attitude towards all action and activities motivated for a principle. She was never worried or seeking results. She always said that one should do the right thing as one understood it and not worry about the results, those will take care of themselves. If you did the right thing, the result was bound to come, but should not be the goal in itself—the goal only being to try to do the maximum according to one's understanding. A very admirable conception but one which it is not easy to accept by most who only seek results and often with means which might not be the right ones. The concept that the end justifies the means was certainly the absolute opposite of what she was either seeking or believing.

It took courage to advocate such beliefs and even perhaps more courage to be able to turn around and so fundamentally change the beliefs from the ones held to the ones now accepted. But the concept of accepting only that which one understands at the given time, applied just as much to the beliefs first held as to the ones ultimately accepted.

Nelka was never afraid physically, but she was also never afraid morally.

I think after our marriage and also the circumstances of the Revolution Nelka lost some of her restlessness. Marriage for better or worse was an achievement and carried with it an obligation and a purpose. She took the acceptance of marriage as a completeness and a fusion of two persons into one. This in itself was an anchor which held back the former restlessness.

Also the Russia she loved so was gone as a practical and possible entity and only a memory of a past devotion remained. Therefore, both marriage and the Revolution brought about a stabilization of feelings and a concentration as well. There was less possible diversion and this brought a mental calm and satisfaction. There was less searching or even the necessity for it.

Her loyalty to the principles of marriage was complete like everything else in her life to which she never gave less than completeness. She always was looking for one hundred percent and nothing less would do.

In later years of her life and after our marriage, Nelka settled much more mentally and morally and seemed to find many of the answers she had so long been seeking. And this, not because of the external differences of life or the establishment of a marital status, but rather as the result of certain new currents of thought which came as a result of the study of Theosophy and the wisdom of the East.

While I cannot claim any personal influence which I may have contributed, there certainly was no divergence and thus no upsetting uncertainties. I think we were blessed in that way that we helped each other and followed largely the same path of mental analysis hand in hand.

I feel and consider that I was exceptionally privileged in my life to have had such a mate, such a guide, such a helper, such a companion.

She never married before because she had not found the completeness of feeling. I am grateful and happy to think that she found that completeness with me, which I hope I was able to give her at least in a measure.

She gave me the complete devotion and love which she did for a very happy existence and complete understanding between us for 45 years. I, at least, understood what a very extraordinary person she

was and what a blessing had been bestowed on me for having had her for my own.

Nelka—a unique name for a unique person.

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