

ST. JOHN STAR, SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1905

5

LETTERS FROM A RUSSIAN SOLDIER TO HIS WIFE.

Rabbi Rabinowitz Tells How the Officers Enriched Themselves at the Expense of the Men in The Ranks—How Snap Was Made Known

(Written for the Star by Dr. Rabinowitz.)
Novagard, Tuesday, December 2nd.
Dearest Anna:—Yesterday evening we arrived at Novagard where our company of new recruits is to be stationed for the present. We were at once taken to a large barn-like building and were told to make ourselves as comfortable as we could. We tried hard to comply with these, our first orders, but did not succeed very well, as there is no other furniture in the place than a number of bare wooden cots fixed to the walls, and no bedding at all other than the clothes we have on ourselves. Nevertheless we did not allow the blues to take hold of us, but on the contrary many of us were in such good spirits that the building soon echoed and re-echoed with strains of hearty song. Our supper consisted of a reddish kind of rye bread, which was dealt out to us in half loaves, and a greasy mess of pulp which was neither porridge nor pudding. Maxim Serchoff christened our supper at once "red brick and mortar." Before bedtime a red-nosed officer entered and recited with us a prayer for the life of the tsar. No word was said for our own lives, and Maxim whispered to my ear that this is as it ought to be, since the poor tsar needs our prayers most.

Novagard, December 15th.
Dearest Anna:—Today we have been taken out for the first time to the drilling grounds. As all new recruits are supposed to be fitted out with their first uniforms at their own expense, the great majority of our company are still wearing the clothes which they had on when they left home, and a speckled and spotted herd of animals they appeared indeed. There were some Lithuanians with sheep-skin coats, and a huge red shawl on their necks; there were Poles in tight fitting little jackets, which made them look for all the world like those German acrobats who used to tour our town last fall; there were some Russians whose fingers seemed to be all thumbs, and who resembled closely the figures on the tablets dug from Assyrian ruins; there were also some Jews who kept on mumbling the psalms of David between orders, and some diminutive Finns, who looked like little soldiers on the shelves of a toy shop. Maxim Serchoff laughed so much that he could hardly keep himself in line. But the climax was yet to come when the drilling party was begun. Every ten of us were given in charge of a "Dyadky" (father), whose distinction consisted in the fact that he entered the army a couple of years previous to the new recruits. We were told to honor and obey this new father with the same reverence as we do to our genuine kind, and if I didn't think so, it seems that our company readily assented. Next came the distribution of rifles, which was well witnessed. When a rifle was handed to a Lithuanian he took hold of it by the muzzle with both hands, and the ground in front of him he trod with his little feet. He then held it with both hands, and the rifle would not explode; the white Russians held it aloft but forward, as if preparing to cleave wood; while the Poles held it close to their breasts as a mother does her baby. I will not weary you with a description of our drill exercises on that day, suffice it to say that there were only twenty-five casualties in our company that day, mostly eyes gouged out by the next man's musketry, and ankles sprained by falling over one another; but the Dyadky said that we did remarkably well (I suppose that we came back alive).

Novagard, January 15th.
Dearest Anna:—Today we donned our new uniforms for the first time and we felt in them more like a polar expedition party than soldiers of the tsar. In pictures and illustrations I was always used to admire the military outfits of the Russian infantry as superior to those of any other nation. By the full, ankle-length of the great-coats, high-peaked tam-o'-shanters, and large sized arms, but when I was harnessed in one of these myself I felt like little David when Saul put upon him his own coat of mail and helmet of brass. Some Russian historians make a boast that Russian soldiers have never turned their backs on the enemy, well, with this monster uniform on I am inclined to believe that there is a great deal of truth in their assertion. I found it hard myself to stir, not to speak of turning my back and running. We were told by the Dyadky that the great-coats must be worn summer and winter, but that on very hot days we are privileged to omit the under-shirt from our dressing equipment. Didn't Maxim Serchoff laugh? Why, said he, poking me in the ribs, "this is like starting out peeling an apple from the core."

Novagard, June 13th.
Dearest Anna:—Yesterday I was appointed one of the "Kashovars" (the porridge cooking squad), which is a sort of cook's assistant, and it was my duty to look after the "kasha" (a kind of thick porridge which constitutes the chief meal in Russian military camps) for all the men of the company for all time. I tell you the sight was enough to turn the stomach of an elephant. First of all, a monster copper cauldron was suspended from an iron bar, which was supported by two heavy posts driven into the open ground of the court-yard adjoining our barracks. Next several households of water and as many sacks of coarse meal, which had a striking resemblance to common bran, were turned into the cauldron. When these preliminaries were completed, about two dozen bare arms set to work mixing the flour and water together. This was not all yet. Before the decoction was ready a heavy rain began to fall and in order to save the paste from becoming too thin

several of the kasha-cooking company threw their great-coats over the cauldron. This was enough for my dinner that day. But you need not worry for me, my dearest. I found out lately that a few kopecks put in the hand of the Dyadky will do wonders in the culinary line and thanks to his discovery I have the pick of the military larders. Today I dined on the very same good things that were served to the colonel of our regiment, and I came to the conclusion that not all military rations are made up of "red brick and mortar."

Novagard, July 22nd.
Dearest Anna:—I have just finished a two hours' salute to our colonel, and my right hand is almost pained from being held to my cap for that length of time. "How has this happened?" Why, very simple, I was walking along Petrovsky street, then I noticed the colonel advancing on the other sidewalk from an opposite direction. I immediately wheeled round, presented arms and saluted, awaiting him to motion me away by word or nod in accordance with our military code. But also! he passed on without as much as glancing at me. Whether this was done by malice or oversight I cannot tell, but one thing I know, and that was that I must not budge until he, or some other officer of equal rank, shall happen to pass by and absolve me from this undesired penance. I gained this bitter experience by the mishap of one of our comrades who was given a twenty-four hours' vacation in the dark room for just such a slip as I was now anxious to avoid. Well, then I stood for two hours glued to the spot like the bronze statue of Yermak on our market place until a drunken colonel of dragoons happened to shuffle by and I had to kick him before he motioned me away. When it was a terrible deal; worse than the March manoeuvres when the new commander made us wade in our long uniforms almost to the neck in the ice-cold water of a creek. He said it was to test our discipline, and when he was told afterward that some of us had developed pneumonia, he said coolly that it is better that some should die of pneumonia at home than that they should refuse to wade in their long uniforms almost to the neck in the ice-cold water of a creek. This is what I call a disciplinary! You ought to see him. He holds himself stiff that Maxim Serchoff says he is sure there is an iron spike running from the nape of his neck through his spine way down to his boots.

Novagard, August 1st.
Dearest Anna:—You may congratulate me, I have been elevated to the dignity of instructor for one of the classes in our military school (institute for the education of the rank and file). However, if I am not mistaken my usefulness in this capacity will be short lived. Today I was about to take charge of my class, and so I went up to the superintendent's office to ask for some text-books and writing material, but when that personage listened to my errand, he burst out in an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "Text-books indeed! There are no text-books here! There are no books and no 'resignations' here! There is only duty and obedience in this place. You have been appointed to teach the class of soldiers, and you are to teach them your own resignation to duty. I said nothing more to him, but I sent in my resignation in writing to our colonel. Whether he will accept it, I do not know, but I am sure that he will not. I am fully determined to have nothing to do with this school-teaching mummery.

Novagard, September 12.
Dearest Anna:—For the first time during my military service I am in real trouble, and I want your sympathy. Not on account of the teaching business which I referred to in my last letter; this has ended in a complete victory for myself, i. e., I have been relieved from my undesirable office without much ado. But there is another trouble much more serious than this. Last week our regiment was reviewed by the general of division. Each of the days before his coming our colonel paid us a visit at the barracks in the company of two "denchiks" (Every officer from the highest to the lowest has a right to employ one or more soldiers, according to rank, as valets or personal attendants. These are called "denchiks." Owing to the double superiority of the employer as both master and officer, the position of a "denchik" is really that of a slave of the most dependent type. Each of these denchiks was bending under the burden of two heavily loaded baskets which proved to be well stocked with tempting rolls of white bread. (White bread is considered quite a delicacy among the provincial people of Russia, rye-bread forming the staple food because of its comparative cheapness), a number of bottles of vodka and dozens of raw-herrings (a Russian national dish). "John," said Maxim pulling my sleeve, "there is a storm ahead, or our colonel would not be taking all this trouble to send his bread upon the water." Well, Maxim was right this time. After the rolls had been passed round to all hands, and the spirits of the boys rose,

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Saturday, March 11th.

Further Opening Ladies' Spring Suitings.

Pretty tweed effects in light grays, gray and greenish mixtures—all light grounds and just the style of goods which strike one as fresh and spring like.

The prices are the remarkable feature, for these are surprisingly pretty lines at as low as 50c. yard; others are 75c. and 85c. yard.

Glance Over These New Lines.

English H. S. Linens, Etc. Ladies' New Leather Goods
H. S. Pillow Shams, with embroidered valances, 60c. pair.
H. S. Tray Cloths, embroidered corners, 25c. each.
H. S. Sideboard Cloths, embroidered corners, 40c. up.
Stamped Pillow Shams, ready to work, 30c. pair.
Paris Vellings—just in. The latest conceits in Vellings, New Greys. Very fine Silk Checked Vellings. 18c., 25c. to 50c.
New Taffeta Silk Belts—in navy, cardinal, browns and black. New bodice effect.
Worth 40c. Special 25c.

A BARGAIN -- 100 Yards Linen For Aprons, Boys' or Girls' Blouses or Dresses.

Pure linen holland light ecru color splendid for blouses or suits. Regular 16c., 20c., 23c.

Today, 9c. Yard

Cream Lustre Waists.

Particularly pretty cream lustre waists made with folds.

Special, \$2.00 Each

100 Yards Fancy Cream Lustre For Shirt Waists.

Just in—Very pretty spot and figured cream lustre for shirt waists.

Extra value, 50c. Yard

F. W. DANIEL & Co London House, Charlotte St.

in proportion as the spirits of the bottles fell, the colonel announced to us with a bland smile that the general of division was about to hold a review of our regiment in a few days. This bit of information looked to us quite colorless and we began to wonder why the colonel was making such a fuss about it. But we did not have long to wonder. After a little artificial coughing, the colonel delivered himself of the following little piece of advice: "Boys! what I want to say to you is this. I suppose you have heard before that these officers of high rank are generally quite eccentric fellows. They will sometimes stop in the middle of a maneuver and ask the regiment some altogether irrelevant question, such, for instance, as whether you are satisfied with the food; how many times a week you are served with meat and white bread, etc. Now, I am not afraid of the truth, as I am carrying out the orders of my superiors to the letter, but it is always best to humor these fellows, and give them a bit of colored information. Thus, for instance, if the colonel asks you how many times a week you are served with meat and white bread, etc. Now, I am not afraid of the truth, as I am carrying out the orders of my superiors to the letter, but it is always best to humor these fellows, and give them a bit of colored information. 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