

A LETTER FROM THE JAIL.

Toronto Municipal Jail,
Langstaff, Ont.

To the Editor:

Dear Comrade:

Your request for me to write a short article for the Forward reaches me at a time when calm thinking is almost impossible. My wife has been to see me to-day, and it is a great pleasure to receive her visits, but I always feel somewhat blue afterwards, owing to the reaction, and the recurring sense of injustice that always follows my visitors' day—my forced separation only adding fuel to the fire. I was deeply interested the other day in reading the account of a Mr. Wintgens, who said in his own defence: "My first prison experience is responsible for my criminal life—it was in prison I learnt the art of crime. The prisons are the factories where criminals are produced." The truth of this statement comes to me with added significance owing to my present experience of prison life and conditions. I met Mr. Wintgens while at the Don Jail, and had some conversation with him, which left the impression that he, like thousands of others, had brooded deeply over the injustice meted out in the name of "Law"—and had determined to get even. I may state, by the way, that the guard attacked was the same person that threatened me with the dungeon at the time I was on remand for a technical breach of regulations, of which I had not been instructed, only being there a few hours.

The regulations are very old, dating back to 1905, and according to these the administration is the greatest offender.

These regulations specifically state:

1. That prisoners must receive fresh air exercise.
 2. That juvenile offenders and those on remand must be separated from convicted prisoners.
 3. That bed linen must be changed once a week or more if necessary.
- That sick prisoners receive medical treatment.

None of these regulations are strictly enforced. Some prisoners have been held in custody there for several months without any fresh air treatment. The bed linen is not changed regularly. Medical assistance is extremely lax in some cases. Many young boys have been forced to associate with hardened criminals—and men suffering from disease are not always separated from the healthy persons. Some of the beds are literally lousy, many clean persons being compelled to sleep in them who also become lousy, three or four men sleeping in the same bed linen. I will leave the reader to imagine what the health and mental tone of a respectable person is likely to be under such degrading conditions. I have good reason to believe that men suffering from contagious diseases have in some cases been allowed to associate with other prisoners. These questions should be taken up, as I understand the prison doctor receives 3,000 per year for his services. The dungeon is still in use, notwithstanding that it has been condemned as unsanitary. No wonder men try to commit suicide under such damnable conditions. I myself lost thirteen pounds weight in three and a half weeks, these conditions would destroy the nervous system of any weakly person. If Toronto citizens had any respect for themselves they would not tolerate these conditions one week longer, and who knows under present conditions but they themselves may very soon be there, as the average person inside the jail is just as good as the people outside. True, it is to say that there are many inside who ought to be out, and many out who ought to be in. It might act as a restraint against undemocratic measures if some of

the lawmakers and political judges were given a slight taste of their own medicine.

In fairness to the institution of which I am now a patron, I want to say that the prisoners are treated as human beings. We get lots of fresh air and amusement, and are not penned behind iron bars, iron gates and in cells three feet by ten in dimension. We do not go to bed until eight, whereas at the Don they are locked up at six. We can at least see the trees and landscape, and sleep in spacious dormitories, even if we don't get the same cake as mother used to make. We are permitted a few luxuries—brought in by our friends; and most of all, we are not subjected to the soul-destroying conditions that existed in the middle ages, of which the Don Jail is a rudimentary survival.

In conclusion, I venture to suggest that our penal institutions in general do not eradicate any criminal tendencies as the individual receiving penal treatment loses self-respect, according to the degree of punishment that is administered. The punishment justifies the crime to the individual that commits it. I have just received a message stating that my little boy has been run over by an automobile and that some bones are broken in his foot. I hope it is not serious, and that he will soon resume his position as "Master of the House."

Kindest thanks to all who seek my liberation. I cannot write any more now.

Yours in Comradeship,
I. Bainbridge.

WOMAN'S WAY.

"What will women do when they all get the ballot?"

"I suppose the idea is to do some political housecleaning."

Being loud and vehement, either against a court or for a court, is no proof of patriotism . . . where the heart is right there is true patriotism.—Bishop Berkeley.

One of the noblest crimes of which a workman can be guilty is loyalty to his class.

RED RUSSIA.

(Continued from Page 4).

In all the multitudes of revolutionary leaders, there is not one with Kerensky's personal magnetism, his dramatic faculty of firing men. I first saw him at the Democratic Assembly, where he marched into the middle of the great Alexandrinsky Theatre, in the midst of an immense hostile crowd firmly convinced that he was implicated in the Kornilov affair, and swept them off their feet by his passionate speech. At the opening of the Council of the Russian Republic, I again heard him, and twice more, raising himself and his audience to heights of emotion, collapsing utterly afterward, and the last time weeping violently in his seat. A tall, broadshouldered figure as he stood here, in his utterly plain brown uniform, rather flabby around the middle, with flashing eyes, bristling hair, abrupt gestures, and swift, resonant speech. What did he say? Nothing very concrete, except once when he bitterly denounced the Bolsheviks for provoking bloodshed. Otherwise vague defences of himself, generalities about the necessity for disorder in the country to cease, about defending the revolution, about free Russia. . . . A man of moods, nervous, domineering, independent, of fearful capacity for work under frightful physical handicaps, absolutely honest, but with no real fixity of purpose—as the leader of

the Russian Revolution should have. And sick.

We had many appointments to see him at his office in the Winter Palace. Always at the last moment he would suddenly be taken ill, or busy—with meetings of the Government, the War Council, deputations from the front, from the Caucasus, Siberia, visits of the allied ambassadors, or a delegation like one we saw—reactionary priests—objecting to the separation of the Church and State.

Finally, one day we penetrated as far as the private billiard room of the Emperor, an immense chamber paneled in rosewood inlaid with brass, where in a corner beside the Gargantuan rosewood billiard table, below the shrouded portraits of the Czars, was the plain desk at which he worked. The military Commissar for the Russian troops in France and Salonika was striding up and down biting his nails. It appeared that the Minister-President was closeted with the British Ambassador, hours late for all appointments. . . .

Then, just as we were about to give up, the door opened and a smiling, little spic-and-span naval adjutant beckoned. We entered a great mahogany room, lined with heavy Gothic bookcases, in the centre of which a stairway mounted to a balcony above. This was the Czar's private library and reception room. I had time to notice the works of Jack London, in English, on a shelf, when Kerensky came toward us. As he shook hands he looked into each face sear hingly for a second, and then led the way swiftly across to a big table with chairs all around.

On his high forehead the short hair bristled straight up like a brush, grey-discolored. His whole face was greyish in color, puffed out unhealthily, with deep pouches under the eyes. He looked at one shrewdly, humorously, squinting as if the light hurt. The long fingers of his hands twisted nervously tight around each other once or twice, and then he laid them on the table, and they were quiet. His whole attitude was quizzically friendly, as if receiving reporters was an amusing relaxation. When he picked up a paper with questions on it, I noticed that he put it within an inch of his eyes, as if he were terribly nearsighted.

"What do you consider your job here?" I asked him. He laughed as if it tickled him.

"Just to free Russia," he answered drily, and smiled as if it were a good joke.

"What do you think will be the solution of the present struggle between the extreme radicals and the extreme reactionaries?"

"That I won't answer," he shot back, swiftly. "What's the next?"

"What have you to say to the democratic masses of the United States?"

"Well . . ." he rubbed his chin and grinned. "What am I going to say to that?" His attitude said, do you think I'm God Almighty? "Let them understand the Russian democracy," he went on, "and help it to fight reaction—everywhere in the world. Let them understand the soul of Russia, the real spirit of the Russian people. That's all I have to say to them."

I then asked, "What lesson do you draw from the Russian Revolution for the revolutionary democratic elements of the world?"

"Ah-hah." He turned that over in his mind and gave me a sharp look. "Do you think the Revolution in Russia is over, then? It would be very short-sighted for me to draw any

lesson from the Revolution." He jerked his head in emphasis, and spoke vehemently. "Let the masses of the Russian people in action teach their own lesson. Draw the lesson yourself, comrade—you can see it before your eyes!"

He stopped, and then began abruptly:

"This is not a political revolution. It is not like the French revolution. It is an economic revolution, and there will be necessary in Russia a profound revaluation of classes. And it is also a complicated process for the many different nationalities of Russia. Remember that the French revolution took five years, and that France was inhabited by one people, and that France is only the size of three of our provincial districts. No, the Russian revolution is not over—it is just beginning!"

I made way for the Associated Press correspondent, who had the usual Associated Press prejudices against common peasants, soldiers and workmen who insisted upon calling one tavaristch—comrade.

"Mr. Kerensky," said the Associated Press man, "in England and France people are disappointed with the Revolution—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted Kerensky, quizzically. "Abroad it is fashionable to be disappointed with the Revolution!"

"I mean," went on the Associated Press man, a little disconcerted, "people are disappointed in Russia's part in the war."

I remember it was the day after the news reached Petrograd of the great defeat of the Italians on the Carso; for Kerensky immediately shot back with a grin, "The young man had better go to Italy!"

The Associated Press man tried again. "What is your explanation of why the Russians have stopped fighting?"

"That is a foolish question to ask," Kerensky was annoyed. "Russia started the war first, and for a long time she bore the whole brunt of it. Her losses have been inconceivably greater than any other nation. Russia has now the right to demand of the allies that they bring to bear a greater force of arms." He stopped and stared for a moment at his interlocutor. "You are asking why the Russians have stopped fighting, and the Russians are asking where is the British fleet—with the German battleships in the Gulf of Riga?" Again he ceased suddenly, and as suddenly burst out again. "The Russian Revolution hasn't failed and the Revolutionary Army hasn't failed. It is not the Revolution which caused disorganization in the army—that disorganization was accomplished years ago by the old regime. Why aren't the Russians fighting? I will tell you. Because the masses of the people are economically tired—and because they are disillusioned with the allies."

The Associated Press man tried a new tack. "Do you think it would be advantageous to bring American troops to Russia?"

"Good," remarked the Premier, off-hand, "but impossible. Transportation. . . ."

"What can America do which would help Russia the most?"

Without hesitation Kerensky answered, "Send us boots, shoes, machinery—and money."

Abruptly he stood up, shook hands, and before we were out of the room he went quickly across to a desk piled high with materials and began to write.

(Continued in next issue.)