

Vera and her husband should undertake the care of Catherine's child, and they had promised to treat him as if he were their own. Vera was living in "the commune." Catherine found her ill, and nursed her tenderly till she got better.

A great grief befell Catherine at this time. Her sister Olga died of brain fever, calling in her delirium upon Catherine, whom she had loved better than any one else.

"Women have always loved me. I am proud of it," said Catherine, in speaking of the strong friendship that existed between her and her sisters, her sister-in-law, and other women.

Her sister-in-law stayed in Kiev for some time after her recovery. Finally her husband came to take her home. Catherine then had the anguish of parting with her child. The scene is still vivid in her memory. Outside stood the coach, drawn by two restless horses that snorted and pawed the ground. Vera and her husband were seated in the coach. Catherine came out to them with the baby in her arms. She gave the child to Vera. For a moment or two there was dead silence. Then Catherine burst into tears, weeping and sobbing like an inconsolable child. Vera cried, "Katya, Katya! what is the matter with you?" But the mother wept on. Vera gave her a hasty kiss on the forehead, and the coach drove rapidly away, rattling over the stones.

Catherine stood dazed and bewildered. Her eyes were fixed upon the turning wheels of the coach, and when they disappeared in the distance, she still gazed after them. It was a bright spring day, but a cold autumn seemed to have settled down upon her. She felt forlorn and deserted. She says: