

30 LITTLE GRANDMOTHER OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

on openly. But it was frowned upon by the government, and the would-be helpers of the peasants were ruthlessly suppressed. Then most of them became revolutionists. The experience of Catherine and her friends in this respect was typical.

Thereupon great numbers, including many of the nobility, disguised themselves as peasants, and lived and worked side by side with the poorest of the people, secretly preparing them for revolution. They felt that in this way they could get a better understanding of peasant conditions, since those who wear the shoe know where it pinches. They also felt that it would be unworthy to live in ease and comfort themselves while urging the peasants to face the greatest dangers and sacrifices. "We shall have the right to agitate among them when we are of them," said Catherine. Moreover, this was the only way to overcome the peasants' timid distrust. Victimized for so many centuries, the ex-serfs were as much afraid of the revolutionists as they were of the government. The peasant was almost like a dumb animal. If he cherished any thoughts of revolt, he hardly dared tell them to any one, and he certainly would never confide them to a nobleman.

Before entering upon the active revolutionary work which would take her away from home for good, and which was almost sure to end in exile or death, Catherine made a round of farewell visits among her relatives and friends. First she went to bid good-bye to her elder sister Natalie, who lived in the district of Novo-Aleksandriya, in the province of Kovno. From there she went to Lugovetz for a last interview with her parents and her husband. It was a sad and memorable