

Catherine, however, felt the need of doing something more radical. In quest of more light and more helpers, she went to Kiev, where one of her sisters was nursing a husband lying at the point of death. Catherine attended the funeral, and comforted the widow. Just then she got a letter from Kovalik, the friend of her childhood, announcing that he and several others who were profoundly dissatisfied with the state of things in Russia were going to America to found a colony where everybody would work with their hands as well as their brains — a sort of Brook Farm. He invited her to join them. She replied:

“Never. How can we leave Russia now, when there is so much of importance to be done here, that is hardly even begun? In America they are better off without us than the people in Russia are with us.”

Meanwhile she looked about her in Kiev for recruits to the cause of progress. She knew no one in the city, but she determined to search for “good people.” The university students had established a lunch room where meals could be had for six rubles a month. Any outsider could eat there at the same price. Catherine paid for a month’s board in advance, and came every day, to eat and observe. The room occupied the whole ground floor of an old wooden building. The tables were long rough-hewn fixtures, with tablecloths not over clean. At each corner stood piles of thick, heavy white plates, and at meal times these would be dropped along in a row with a great clatter, amid the din made by the students, talking, discussing, and waxing hot in argument, seemingly much more interested in feeding their minds than their stomachs. Catherine was wearing her old-fashioned Atlas fur, with its short sleeves,