

substitute for the human hand; it did away with human slavery and introduced the Iron Man.

11. 1791 — *The Death of Mirabeau*. If Mirabeau had not lived the sort of life he had lived as a young man and had had greater power of resistance and therefore had been able to live a few years longer, he might have been able to save the crown of France; and without the downfall of the Bourbons there would have been no revolution to upset all the thrones of Europe and no Napoleon to give us the modern centralized state. The crisis of the eighteenth century occurred when Mirabeau fell ill; the result was decided in a very definite and not wholly agreeable fashion when he died.

Next month Will Durant will make his choice of the Twelve Greatest Dates in History.

12. 1917 — *The Fall of the Kerensky Government*. When the absence of a single regiment of loyal police troops drove out the Kerensky government, the way was opened to Lenin and his Bolshevik followers. From our own standpoint this was about the most disastrous date in history, for it led to the emancipation of Asia and Africa from European tutelage, and that is something which all of us sooner or later will begin to notice in our own lives and pocketbooks. The future will probably bring such extraordinary developments as a result of this last date that we had better include it, even though we are at present ignorant of the strange events that await us just around the next corner as a consequence of it.

The ENGINEER

These Russians V



by WILLIAM C. WHITE

HE is an architect, but by the Russian custom which classes all who work with plans and machines as engineers he is entitled to the green cap of their order. He wears it proudly. It is significant that most of the visible marks of the professions are gone — the student's cap, the professor's gown, the uniforms of the civil service; there remain only the badges of the soldiers and engineers.

It was Petr Petrovitch, formerly a lawyer, now, at nearly fifty, "a man about town," who first spoke to me about him. Petr called frequently, airing his virulent anti-Soviet opinions, seeking to know what I thought. This time he said: "I found another room recently

— in the apartment of an engineer, Andrei Georgievitch. He expects soon to go to America and would like to meet you. Come with me now if you are free."

As we walked down Prechistinka, he explained: "Andrei Georgievitch makes a lot of money — perhaps five hundred rubles a month. Engineers are better off than any other class in Russia: they are so much needed and there are so few."

Andrei Georgievitch, who seemed about forty, was most cordial. "Although I am very busy, I have been studying English," he said. "But some of your technical descriptions puzzle me. If you could come once in a while

and explain, I should be much obliged. Perhaps I can help you with Russian — it is certainly easier to learn than English.”

He showed me his apartment. There were two bedrooms, a living room, bath, and kitchen; new furniture, ugly in its massiveness; and a grand piano which took up most of the space in the living room.

“Of course we are very fortunate in this place, although it is very expensive. Some day all of Moscow will live in houses like this.” I noticed that the parquetry work was beginning to come unglued and that there was an inch of space between the baseboard and the floor. He understood my glance. “Oh, yes; poorly constructed, of course. These workmen of ours — no responsibility.”

Nadyezhda Ivanovna, his wife, entered. She was well-dressed — a blonde, heavily rouged, thirty perhaps, pretty but looking tired, as if running on a treadmill which she thought would lead her back to twenty. She asked if I had any magazines showing styles abroad.

Andrei Georgievitch laughed; “My wife is interested only in clothes, music, and, I hope, her husband.” He smiled at her. “Of course, I shall have to leave her behind when I go to America, but it will be for only six months, I should think.”

There was tea, in glasses with silver holders, one of those expensive, heavily iced cakes, and chocolates (at six rubles a pound). Petr Petrovitch joined us.

“When is the next lottery?” Andrei asked him; then to me: “Petr Petrovitch is unemployed.”

“There is no place for Tsarist law in this lawless land,” Petr growled.

“So with money he saved, he speculates in government bonds. Every bond has lotteries attached to it — some with prizes as high as fifty thousand rubles. He buys bonds of one series just before the drawings are held and sells them afterward if he has won no prize.”

“I haven’t won a prize for more than a year, and then it was only a thousand rubles.”

“I don’t see how you keep on living, Petr.”

“Everything gets worse and worse. Did you see about the sentence in the trial of Khalamov? He was an engineer. . . .”

Andrei nodded but said nothing.

“I heard to-day that when his wife was taken to see him just before he was shot, she wasn’t allowed to go nearer than thirty feet. His last words were: ‘Tell my friends not to think evil of me. I made no confession incriminating them.’ The secret police guards began to drag him away, but he shouted, ‘They tortured me until I signed a blank piece of paper.’”

Andrei replied, “I heard that story too.”

Nadyezhda Ivanovna interrupted, “You are always talking politics, Petr Petrovitch. Forget it. I’ll play the piano. I got a new American fox trot to-day — it’s called ‘Tahiti.’ What was it called in America?”

“‘Tea For Two,’” I replied.

In this article Mr. White deals with the most far-reaching problem of the Communist régime. The spectacle of Socialism, and then Bolshevism, overturning the ancient throne of the Tsars was dramatic, but the political revolution was as nothing compared with the economic revolution on which it was based. The great question which it raised — and the answer may be apparent within the next ten years — was whether industry organized on the Communistic plan can establish itself to the point where it can undersell capitalistic industry, and thereby flood the Western world with cheap Russian goods. If it can, then Communism will live and grow strong. If it cannot, then Communism as an economic experiment will fail miserably; and, though it may linger on as a political idea, its threat to the capitalistic nations will no longer be a real menace.

I SAW him frequently, for his departure was chronically postponed. During the first months he spoke frankly about his problems, describing his difficulties, but never complaining. The Russian language has had to go abroad for a word for “loyal”; he was *loyalnyi* to the Soviet

régime in everything he said. His father had been an engineer, killed in the war. Andrei Georgievitch had gone direct from technical school to the front in 1914; then he had served two years in the Red Army. His professional career only began in 1921, but he had risen to an important position as inspector of construction work. “Russia is a country for young men,” he explained. “We need engineers badly.”

Petr Petrovitch was listening. “Wait till you get to America. There you will see a country really doing things,” he remarked sarcastically.

“I am eager to go. But, I wonder, shall I find any real conception of what we are doing here? Our country covers a sixth of the globe, and we are trying to give it the factories, the roads, the power plants, that it has always

lacked. Suppose all those things were destroyed in America to-morrow and you had to build them up immediately — that is what we are attempting, but without the experience of ever having had them, and with an illiterate population, with limited technical skill, and with little money. Have you studied the Five-Year Plan?" he asked.

"The Five-Year Plan is a joke," Petr Petrovitch interrupted. "All the figures in it were taken out of the blue sky. Change Russia to an industrial country in five years? Bah!"

"Yes, some people joke about it," replied Andrei Georgievitch.

"What's the funniest story you know, in three words?" they ask. 'Five-Year Plan!' At least it's unique. We have arranged a scheme for the unified development of all aspects of economic and cultural life in our country. It sets levels we must reach in industry, in everything, by 1933."

"Will it work?" I asked. Petr Petrovitch laughed.

"The first year looks good," Andrei Georgievitch explained, "although the cost of some of our achievements must be paid for by later generations. We go short on food now to get a meager surplus for export, and thus get foreign capital to buy the machinery that we need badly."

"Yes," Petr Petrovitch interrupted, "as some peasant said, 'How fine it will be when each of us has an airplane. We can travel that much farther to try to find a dozen eggs.' Imagine having cloth, needles, rubber overshoes on ration cards. Where are there any signs of industrializing Russia — except for your statistics? Where are fewer goods on the market?"

"There are things more needed here than cloth and overshoes. Not material things, either; but you wouldn't understand, Petr. As for material things, we are putting what little money we have into electric stations, mines, foundries, cement works — primary undertakings that will provide the material to build

your shirt and shoe factories. In the meantime, consumable manufactured goods are scarce. If you cared to look, you would see that our pig iron production has increased tremendously in the past few months. But you don't use pig iron, Petr; therefore you say all the Plan is a failure."

"Well, if you say so," Petr said. "But who can tell what is true from Communist talk? And whenever the Soviet factories *do* make anything, the quality of their output is so rotten — by the way," he asked, turning to me, "you don't know any foreigner coming in soon? There is a *good* hair tonic in Berlin."

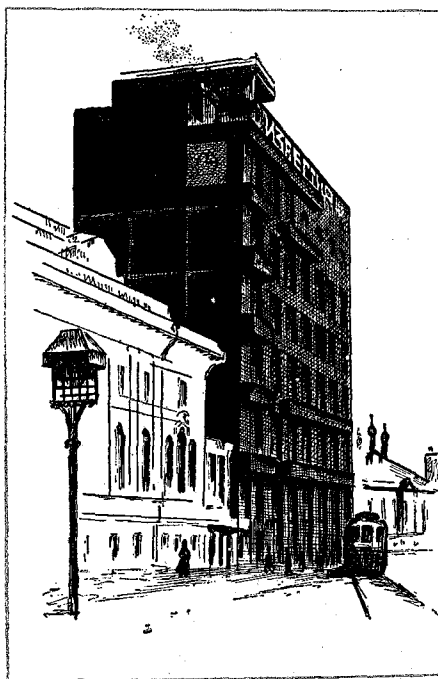
"I am glad you have nothing more to worry you than hair tonic," said Andrei Georgievitch. "But one of the problems in all Russia is with the poor quality of the labor. It takes us three months to erect a scaffold. Hand labor is cheap here — and slow. If only we had your steel construction! That's what I shall study in America. Our workmen are inaccurate and careless. . . ."

"How can we raise the quality of their labor? The revolution has not removed money as the chief incentive for working. There is piece-work in the factories, and wages are still the whole end

of labor. I once thought it might be otherwise; in those days we forgot that we were in Russia and not in some better world. A few months ago a factory near here won a money prize for the best annual record. Did the workmen use the money to buy technical books or to start night courses? They went on a three-day spree which closed the mill."

"The workmen line up in front of every vodka store on Saturday," said Petr Petrovitch. "It takes more than a revolution to change a Russian."

"You might think," said Andrei, "that, in our Socialist state, you could tell them, 'Men, take pride in your work; these things are yours.' To the Communists and skilled workers that does mean something. The others only



Office of the "Izvestia"
Moscow

answer, 'How about raising our wages?'"

Nadyezhda Ivanovna entered. "Always politics and economics!" she said. "Come, tea is ready."

"In a minute, darling."

"I know your minutes! Well, Petr Petrovitch, you come sing and I shall play for you." They went out.

III
"THERE is always trouble with our superiors, too," continued Andrei Georgievitch. One government bureau issues an order, then another; then a third contradicts both. And questionnaires — one department issued one last month with fourteen hundred questions and subdivisions! If Soviet Russia ever goes under it will be from the weight of the orders, decrees, and resolutions of its bureaucracy! . . .

"Not far from Moscow a factory building was just being completed as the revolution began. It stood idle until some department decided it would be a place suitable for refining the rarer metals. Another department got the machinery, but it was too large to go in the doorway, so the front of the building was removed. After the mill was rebuilt, another department found that the machines were too heavy for the foundations: the plant stood on swampy land and the whole thing was in danger of sinking. The front was again torn down and the machinery taken out. It lay there to rust. Another department decided to use the plant to clean wool. Then it was found to be too far from the source of supply; so the mill stands idle to-day — the result of bureaucracy and red tape."

"But what about the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection Commissariat?"

"Yes, that is an organization to investigate what they call looseness, sometimes counter-revolution, on the economic front. It is the busiest of all government departments, for mistakes happen continually. A hydroelectric plant was begun in the Caucasus. It was discovered, after a million and a half rubles had been spent on it, that the river to operate it is dry nine months of the year.

Again, another trust decided to concentrate all stores of horsehair at Kursk. Carloads from all over the Union move on that city — but the department forgets to issue the order to provide storage space. And the cars still stand on the sidings."

"But in a country this size such things *would* happen occasionally," I said.

"Here these things happen continually and they cost us dear. Jail sentences follow in some instances. The Inspection Commissariat sometimes finds graft as well as red tape. You can't change the Russian civil service in eleven years. But we have eliminated most of the bribery and corruption. No, our difficulties are not from political rottenness."

He paused and opened an English grammar. "I am very much interested in what I shall see in America. Red tape in your government, yes, and perhaps corruption, yes; but in your business — ah, what is that word? Efficiency! We have neither the word nor the idea in Russia."

The door opened quietly and Petr Petrovitch came in. "What are you two babbling about?" he asked.

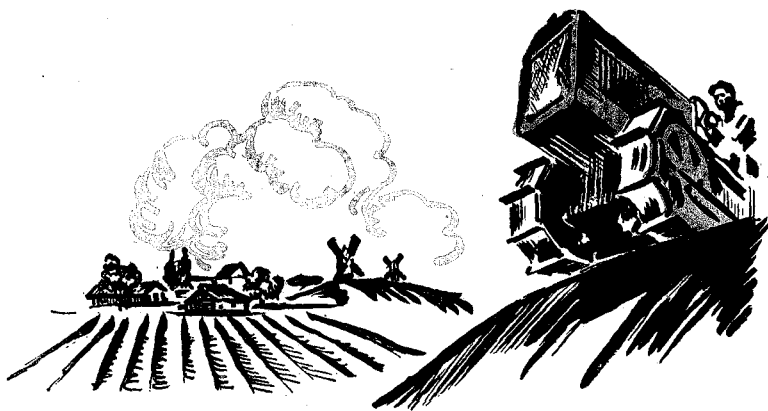
"Chiefly the English language," Andrei replied.

"Well, tea is ready," said Petr.

Through the open door Nadyezhda Ivanovna was singing:

"A gypsy maiden I was born,
Neath the wagon, near our fire.
All my life have I been torn
With passion's unrestrained desire."

IV
"ANDREI GEORGIEVITCH is not a member of the Party," his wife explained to me one evening while we waited for him to return from



Tractor and Russian Village

another journey of inspection. "He says, 'I am an architect and there is much for me to do. Let the Communists attend to politics.' Yet he is so busy, and recently so nervous. I wish he would go abroad: I see him little enough now. I gave up the theater when we married, but I am often tempted to return. Ah, the revolution — it has changed you all from men into economic and political mechanisms!"

Her husband returned, tired. The authorities were straining to increase production and headlines announced the rise or fall of output in factories and in mines; there were gloomy editorials. People were becoming "production conscious," for the government was intent on having its people realize that the factories were all-important.

"The newspapers are pointing out that the figures of the Five-Year Plan are going to be hard to reach," said Andrei Georgievitch after tea. "Goods, goods, and more goods — material things will save the Soviet Union. So the Five-Year Plan says! Yet on every trip I see that we need more than goods. We need a new attitude in our work."

"But what goods they make!" said Nadyezhda Ivanovna. "I bought some silk chiffon to-day — eighteen rubles a yard; and you can stick your finger through it."

"Yes. Remember what I told you about government bureaus? Well, at the head of every industry there is a trust and this trust determines how much each of its factories shall produce and how they shall operate. Nothing is more important here than costs of production. Although our industries are government-owned — no individual stockholders, no fretting over dividends, no banks to worry them —

yet there is always a fight to make a profit and to bring down production costs. We are not efficient, we are not skilled, and our costs stay high — in many lines higher than in your capitalistic world. The trust tells a mill, 'Your production costs must be cut twelve per cent.' And what results? If the director of the factory doesn't succeed, he and his staff will be replaced. So the easiest way to cut costs is to reduce quality."

"If you don't believe it, try these caramels," said Nadyezhda Ivanovna. "They taste of kerosene."

"To cut the costs they stopped using paraffin paper for wrapping and substituted something dipped in kerosene," Andrei Georgievitch explained. "From every side there are protests. One director admitted that half the satin he produced came back as worthless. A shirt factory had sixty-seven per cent of its output returned."

"The maid bought a can of sauerkraut and cabbage this morning," said Nadyezhda disgustedly. "It used to cost seventy-six kopecks. Now it costs sixty-six — but there is only one sausage in it instead of four."

"See to-day's *Pravda*," replied Andrei. "'The Tomsy Laboratory found cans of meat half filled with bits of bone and hair. Canned fish was found to contain a mixture of sand, fish scales, entrails, even eyes. Twenty thousand cans from the Troisk factory marked 'Lamb with Buckwheat' were filled chiefly with buckwheat — and bone and hair. We demand immediate investigation in the courts.'"

"But how does that cut costs?" I asked.

"It doesn't, of course. But a factory is ordered to produce so much, and it does. Hurry! — the Five-Year Plan demands it. Directors, Communist leaders, foremen — all combine, for they want to make a good showing. Just so they can say, 'We have produced more and yet our costs are lower.' How to decrease costs, increase quantity, yet still maintain quality is the problem which must be solved before the Plan can be realized. If we can't produce more cheaply than the capitalistic world, then what is the use of Socialism?"

"Do you think you can?"

"Sometimes I doubt it. I am afraid that bureaucratic red tape and inefficiency and the fetish of statistics will prevent us. A workman's wages are worth only as much as he can get



Palace of State Industry

for them in exchange; if he gets more in your capitalistic West, why continue this system? Yet, I can never decide whether it is Socialism or Russia that causes the faults in our system."

"Andrei," his wife interrupted, "you waste your energy worrying. Why not do as other engineers? They take their salary, do their work — and not a bit more. Suppose it *is* Socialism? Or Russia? Can you change either one?" She left the room.

"The whole thing goes back to that fear of responsibility. The Communist group at the head gives the orders and each man strives to put them through his department in some fashion, assuming as little responsibility for their execution as he can. The result is that tractors go out without carburetors, shoes hold together for a week. And who can you blame? Take the Clothing Trust. It sent out trousers with one leg shorter than the other. Anything to keep up to the figures of the Five-Year Plan! The workmen said, 'They'll fit somehow.' The inspector said, 'We've got to keep up to the contract; they'll fit somehow.' The store-keeper said to the customer, 'There's a shortage in trousers — be glad you can get these.'

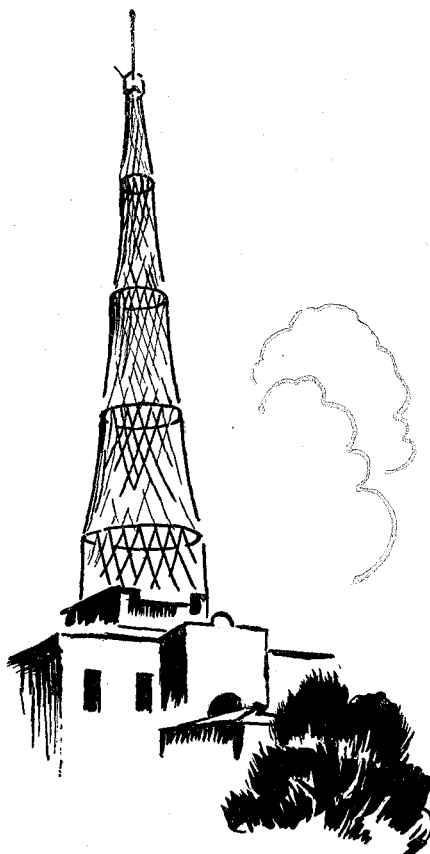
"But why don't the well-paid engineers take the responsibility?" I asked.

"Because, unless they are Communists, they are afraid. Don't forget that when the state owns the factories, politics and business mix. I am eager to study the apportionment of responsibilities in your American factories."

In the room adjoining, Nadyezhda Ivanovna sang a love song from Boris Goudinov. Andrei Georgievitch stopped and listened. "Perhaps it would be better if I, too, could sing and didn't take things so seriously. I seldom go to the opera or to the theater. No time! I am so busy, so tired. I sometimes think of that place in the opera *Khovanshchino* where the choir sings,

'Give us back the good old days.' How the audience cheers, even now. . . .

"But I didn't know what things were like in those days. I was a student — a Socialist, of course. With the revolution I saw a great chance for real work here — not work for selfish gain, but work that would help us achieve the best in ourselves. We would be a new people. But now," turning to the newspaper, "I see the production of rubber overshoes has fallen off ten per cent in the last month."



Radio Station, Moscow

THE NEWSPAPER one morning announced the arrival of thirty engineers in Moscow, come to help in construction work. Andrei Georgievitch had helped meet them and spoke of them that evening. Suddenly he turned bitter. "These Americans — they make a myth of them. They come here, and everyone says in a hushed voice, 'Ah! The Americans come! Ah, ah!' Are they better than we Russians? If only we had their chance! But when *we* go abroad, what do people say? 'Huh, here's another of those damned, stupid Russians!'" Then he caught himself, embarrassed. "Oh, I beg your pardon. . . . But this morning I felt

bitter. Did you see this?"

He offered me the morning paper and pointed to a little black-margined announcement that three engineers, found guilty of very serious sabotage, had been executed.

"Perhaps they were guilty. Do you know where the greatest weakness in this whole Soviet system lies? In its slogan, 'Workers of the world, unite!' The workers unite — what then? They can't run factories. What about these engineers? They were not capitalists, but they certainly were not proletarians. Where did they fit into the scheme? In this country, where factories are everything, the engineers have the power to make or break

the scheme. Most of us are not Communists, but I think we are loyal. Yet when the situation forces the Communists to give control of the things they most prize — their factories — into the hands of a group outside their 'Workers of the World,' naturally they watch that group with suspicion. . . .

"A monkey wrench in a machine can do more damage to the state here than many an assassination. Thousands of dollars' worth of government property can be destroyed in an instant. Such a thing is more than sabotage here: it is a crime against the state — counter-revolution. Anti-Soviet elements long ago discovered this curious outgrowth of the revolution. Why shoot some babbling Commissar, who can be replaced by one talking even louder, when you can quietly flood a coal mine? Such sabotage there has been. When detected, it has been shot out."

"Doesn't that stop it?"

"Of course not. And the result has been increasing mistrust of *all* engineers by the proletarian government. We are the intelligentsia, we surpass the workers in technical knowledge. Our knowledge they *must* have; but, to get it, they must let us at their machinery. They own all means of production, but we, the Russian engineers, must operate them and construct others. And the result — constant mistrust on both sides. No engineer wants any responsibility, of course. It puts him in a position where he can too easily be suspected of sabotage. . . .

"One of the Commissars said not long ago: 'We shall use the intelligentsia — even those hostile to the Soviet régime — and in the meantime try to win those who hesitate. But the intelligentsia must always feel over them the hand of the proletariat, which serves those who work honestly as a strong and friendly support, but which is heavy and harsh when it hits the head of an enemy.' There you have a confession that the proletarian democracy needs outside aid. So they watch us, spy on us, suspect us. Does a manufacturer in America suspect his engineers? That's one advantage in privately owned factories which I would to God we had in those owned by a class."

"But what about the new engineers, educated from proletarian stock?"

"The government does all it can to create them, rushing them through the schools, saying that practical work in the mill is more

important than work in the laboratories. But one is not a master engineer after four years in a technical school. They cannot replace us — yet. And there is little proof that when these proletarian lads are engineers they will still be proletarians: we get good salaries. 'Proletarian' engineers may be the solution, but it will be long before we shall have them."

Nadyezhda Ivanovna entered. "Can't you stop talking and let the American teach me how to play bridge? I hear it is all the rage abroad."

"In a few minutes," Andrei answered. He continued, "The strength of the Communist rule here lies in the factory proletariat. Thus factories take on a dual rôle. They are, economically, units for production; and, more important, they are political units. At the head of each factory are a Communist, who may know nothing about the machinery or the processes involved, and a technical director."

"Which is higher?"

"In theory, the engineer. But the workmen are regimented, and the Communist and his fellow Party members are the real control of the mill. The director says, 'We must spend a hundred thousand rubles for new machinery.' The workers may say: 'We do not need it; that is spending government money uselessly. What are you trying to do — sabotage?' Or the Communist leader may decide to send sixty workers out of the village for some political campaign. Their wages continue, yet production naturally drops — and the technical director gets the blame."

"Consequently, the technical men are very chary about criticizing the workmen. The workmen criticize one another; that helps waste their time at meetings. But too much criticism of the proletariat may be taken as criticism of the Communist régime. The workmen become bosses. Let them boss. It is their factory, although it is our Russia. . . .

"And what happens? Some of the men in the Donbas coal mine sabotage trial a year ago were guilty; some, perhaps, were not. No matter — make an example for all engineers. Production fell thirty-five per cent in those mines, while the workers held meetings and more meetings. A railroad engineer advised one railroad to junk a hundred locomotives. Then the workers set up a cry, 'This criminal

(Continued on page 192)

Wilson Memorial

A First Short Story

by RUTH GORDON



Drawings by Dorothy McKay

MR. CLEMENT jogged forward in his porch chair and studied intently the star-strewn sky. "A beautiful night," he declared thoughtfully. "See Orion's sword and belt?"

"Where's that, Victor?" and Mrs. Clement, too, leaned forward.

"Over Blaikie's house," he said vaguely, and then after a moment, "those four stars straight across and down the middle, hanging down like."

"Oh yes, I see what you mean. Pretty," she commented and returned once more to her placid rocking.

"A beautiful night," he repeated and, taking off his shoe, extracted a pebble which had been pressing into his heel for some time.

"What's that, Victor?"

"Pebble," he said briefly, and after examining it thoroughly, as if his shoe had been an oyster and this a possible pearl, cast it over the railing into the nasturtium bed.

Up the street came the sound of whistling, which became louder. The musical young man stopped at the foot of their walk, struck a match, and looked at a slip of paper. "Mr. Victor Clement live here?" he asked.

Mr. Clement rose. "Mr. Clement? Er — yes," he said after a moment of deliberation, as if after running over a list of people he had finally recalled one of that name. "I er," he began confidently, and then paused hesitantly, finally deciding with a slight cough to say "am him" rather than "am he."

"I'm John Sibley," the young man said, offering his hand. "I'd like to talk to you, Mr.

Clement, about a meeting we're getting up for a Woodrow Wilson Memorial. I don't know whether you've heard about it or not."

"A Wilson Memorial!" exclaimed Mr. Clement. "Here, take this seat, young feller. Mama, get Mr. . . . er . . . a chair."

"Can't I get it?" offered the visitor.

"Oh no," said Mr. Clement graciously, "it's just inside."

"Want to come out, Willie?" Mrs. Clement called, holding open the screen door.

"You're letting in flies," her husband warned. "He don't want to come out."

"Should think he would, with all that fur on him," she said and sat down beside Mr. Clement. "There he is now," she exclaimed in mild exasperation, as Willie tried his claws on the screen. "I declare, that cat!"

"Let him out, Mama," Mr. Clement advised wearily. "Now then, young man — I didn't get your name —"

"Sibley — John Sibley. You were down on our list, sir, as one of the Democrats of this ward, and we're getting together all the loyal supporters we can for this meeting next Tuesday to see what we can work out for a memorial to Woodrow Wilson. They haven't decided yet what it will be, but most likely some sort of a fountain. We thought you might like to come."

"Why, my Godfrey!" burst out Mr. Clement.

"Papa, *papa*," reproved his wife, with a slight Southern accent of refinement.

"Why, damn it," he continued, "what did I always say? There wasn't a time since