

march toward democracy. As Marquis Okuma has said: 'Nations are moving toward democracy the way rivers move toward the sea; sometimes they hurl

themselves against rocks in their passage, but they surmount all obstacles and their pace is merely accelerated by resistance.'

## CHERRY STONES

BY JAN STRUTHER

From *The Westminster Gazette*, April 9  
(BRITISH OLD LIBERAL WEEKLY)

THERE was once a Philosopher. He lived in a cherry orchard and he had eight sons. No one knew to what school of thought he belonged, but he had the reputation of being a sage, so nobody questioned the fact.

One day his sons came to him and said:

'Father, there is a riddle that none of us can solve. We beseech you to tell us the answer, because you are old and very wise. What is Life?'

And they waited in respectful silence for his reply.

The Philosopher gave an inward groan. The day was warm, sunny, blue, and golden, full of the murmur of bees and the singing of birds. He did not feel in a mood for answering questions. Besides, like many philosophers, he did not know the answer himself.

'My sons,' he said, solemnly, 'that is a riddle which I want you to solve without my help. Go out, follow each of you a different calling, live your own life and find out for yourselves what the world means. At the end of five years come back here and give me your definition of Life.'

So the eight young men set forth, and their father, having for the moment escaped from philosophy, — which is the art of providing plausible answers to

insoluble problems, — gave a sigh of relief and went on eating cherries.

Five years later the eight young men came back. All the cherries were ripe, and the Philosopher was sitting in the orchard eating the luscious red fruit off a green plate. He welcomed his sons in that affectionate yet detached manner by which you may know the Philosopher wherever you meet him, and called upon each in turn to give an answer to the riddle.

'Life,' said the first, — a cynical fellow in a Tinker's apron, — 'is a tin kettle, bright and shining without, dark and hollow within, full of bubbles and vapor, sometimes hot, sometimes cold; it is always wearing into holes, and we spend our time trying to mend it and patch it, until at last it wears out and we throw it away.'

'Life,' said the second, — a Tailor, sanctimonious and sententious, — 'is a piece of stuff given to each man to make a coat — rich velvet to some, narrow homespun to others. Each must cut his coat according to his cloth, and as he makes it so must he wear it, long or short, patterned or plain, well-fitting or ill.'

'Life,' said the Soldier son, with hearty vigor, 'is a war in which no man knows friend from enemy; in which

there are many skirmishes and few decisive battles; in which every one thinks he knows for what he is fighting, but no one is quite sure; yet, in truth, the cause matters little so long as we have the chance to fight.'

'Life,' said the Sailor son, who had the blue of far distances in his eyes, 'is the ship we steer across the ocean of Time. If we set our sails skillfully, provision ourselves well, and escape from mutiny, tempest, and shipwreck, we may one day come to harbor: no man knows what the port is like, and the wise ones do not care, so long as the weather's fair and the voyage merry.'

'Life,' said the fifth son, who was white-fingered and a fine Gentleman, 'is a play-house, and we are the audience. We hiss the villain, applaud the hero, and kiss our hands to the leading lady: as for the author — whose name is not on the playbill — we blame him when the piece is tedious and forget his existence when we are entertained; and at the fall of the curtain we drive home yawning to bed.'

'Life,' said the Apothecary, in his long black robe, 'is an apothecary's store, full of divers drugs from which we take our choice. Knowing little of chemistry, we frequently judge the contents of the bottle by the color of the glass, and do not discover until afterwards whether the phial contained poison or elixir, nightshade, all-heal, or bittersweet.'

'Life,' said the seventh son, a Ploughboy, whose words were few and halting, 'is just a field we have to plough, wide or narrow, clay, loam, or marl. Some stumble from side to side and plough a crooked furrow; some go by a

distant tree and plough a straight one. 'T is simple enough.'

The last of the eight was a Thief with a crafty face.

'Life is a strong-box full of treasure, which men are ever trying to steal; some only bruise their knuckles on the hard iron; some manage to break in and snatch a handful of coin; the wise spend it at once and enjoy it, but the foolish hoard it up and wander about forever afterwards fleeing from justice. A few are caught and hanged, but most of them live to a ripe old age.'

The Philosopher looked at his eight sons in silence.

'Father,' they said, 'which of us is right?'

'You are all right — and you are all wrong.'

'But there cannot be eight answers to one question.'

'There are eighty — eight hundred — eighty thousand as many as there are men on the earth.'

'And which solves the riddle?'

'Nobody knows — yet.'

'But when shall we know?' they persisted.

The Philosopher was tired of all this: the day was warm, sunny, blue, and golden, and the cherries were ripe, and he wanted to go to sleep. But there was his reputation to keep up. So he said:

'As to that, my sons, I will consult the wisdom of the Cherry Stones.' And he began, very drowsily, to count the stones which lay on his green plate.

'This year, next year, sometime, never, this year — next year — sometime — never — this year . . . next year . . . sometimes . . . never . . .

The Philosopher had fallen asleep in the sun.

## 'THREE MONTHS IN SOVIET RUSSIA'

[The book here reviewed, of which an English edition is promised in the United States, is one of the most readable and brilliant accounts of conditions in Bolshevist Russia which has yet appeared. As this review suggests, its convincingness is increased by the obviously sympathetic attitude of the author toward the ideal aspects of Bolshevism.]

From *Frankfurter Zeitung*, April 17  
(RADICAL LIBERAL DAILY)

WE now know in a general way how things look in Soviet Russia. We are aware that they are very bad. Yet there are many people who still insist that these unfavorable accounts are colored to influence opinion. This can hardly be said of a book written by a man who is himself a Bolshevik. I refer to Arthur Holitscher's *Three Months in Soviet Russia*. Holitscher is a writer of high rank, among whose works is an excellent book upon the United States which shows that he possesses in an unusual degree the faculty of seeing things and of describing vividly what he has seen. Always a radical in politics, he has become an outright convert to Bolshevism during the last few years. He visited Russia and left the country a Bolshevik. He cherishes the conviction that the Red Star of the Soviets is the beacon light of salvation and he says this frankly in his book. But precisely for this reason — because we are reading the testimony of a convert to Bolshevism — what he says is most interesting; for it confirms everything that we have heard hitherto regarding conditions in Soviet Russia. Holitscher has made an honest effort to tell the truth. His absolute faith in the future of Bolshevism makes it possible for him to describe frankly and without reserve the Russia of to-day, — and it is a sad enough picture which he draws.

Holitscher went to Russia as a correspondent of the United Press. He

tells us that representatives of the foreign press reside in Russia 'in houses under military guard.' 'Felt-slipped spies sneak through the halls and the greasy imprint of unwashed ears circles every keyhole. People are at the mercy of any clothes-closet *Torquemada*.' Before leaving the country every bit of written and printed paper in a man's possession must be submitted for inspection to the Extraordinary Commission, . . . 'A man hides everything he knows of importance in his own memory in order to guard it from the misunderstanding and stupidity of spies and boundary guards. This condition, of always being upon the intellectual defensive, gradually produces abnormal spiritual depression, a specific Moscow psychosis, which is harder to endure than all the other privations which men suffer in Russia.' Most interesting of all is the attitude which the Bolsheviks insist upon the inquirers who visit their country adopting. 'I was constantly told: "What we need here is men of imagination: none of your petty, plodding matter-of-fact people whose horizon extends no further than the end of their noses." I pointed out to several of the gentlemen who expressed themselves to me in this way that the leaders of the Bolsheviks denied most emphatically that they were seeking a Utopia — but that their eagerness to be judged only by foreigners gifted with vivid imagination seemed