

# Russia of Today



Russian School Girls of Today.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

**L**ITTLE has been noticed of the real test which is going on inside Soviet Russia in recent years because the clamor of theory and proclamations has filled the ears of the world. Theories have been meeting individualism which is so universal in humanity, unwritten rules of life and trade which have developed through the ages, and world laws which centuries have formulated for nations.

Russia is the world's largest country, stretching across two continents, and when theory and practice reach a balance, the test of a new system of government will have world-wide effect.

Politically, it is divided into six constituent republics; they in turn comprise 33 autonomous units, each differing ethnologically and culturally. Most of them have their own language, their own customs and costumes, and the babel of tongues becomes even greater from the tribes who are as yet too backward for self-government.

Cities and villages string along the railroads and rivers over all that vast territory. As one rides over the Siberian steppes the plains seem unending. Then a peasant's cart is seen in the distance, the inevitable dog trotting behind. Soon appear other carts, all going in the same direction.

Then a village of log houses, with perhaps a public building and a departed aristocrat's brick house, always painted white, and the ever-present church, with its five Turkish-shaped towers, the large one in the center for Christ and the smaller ones on the corners for the four Gospels. The train vanishes again over the unending plains, varied only by stretches of forest or hills, which seem to come and go as suddenly as the villages.

## Moscow a Huge Village.

Moscow, metropolis and capital of Russia, is the largest village in the world. Moscow has its trolley cars, electric lights, tall buildings, theaters, stores, motor busses, and other outward metropolitan manifestations, but at heart it is a village. Leningrad, Odessa, and even some of the cities of the interior have an appearance and an atmosphere of western Europe; Moscow is the heart of Russia and it changes slowly.

Moscow is sprinkled with what is new, but everywhere it speaks of age, from the weather-beaten walls of the Inner City to battlemented monasteries on the outskirts. Broad thoroughfares radiate from its center, but around each corner the streets are narrow, with sidewalks no wider than footpaths.

Fires have wiped it away, invaders, from Tatars to Napoleon, have destroyed it, governments have come and gone, but Moscow, stubborn and dull, has persisted. It symbolizes Russia.

It is only a step from Moscow, overcrowded and teeming with its peoples of many races, with rules for every movement and police to enforce them, into the wild, wide-open spaces. Wolves and bears still roam in the Moscow district, and when the dull winter dusk comes at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and the country is under its white mantle of snow, hunger drives them to prey on mankind.

In daylight hours a constant human stream jostles through the towered Iberian gate in Moscow in the wall between the Red Square and the Place of the Revolution outside the Kitala Gorod (Fortified City). Men in sheepskin coats, the greasy leather outside

and the fur inside; clerks in glossy leather jackets; officials with beaver collars, brief cases under their arms; women in felt boots; girls in slippers, with bundles, babies, and carts, were tramping through the slush.

## Beggars and Robber Gangs.

Begging is a lucrative profession in Moscow except for the few days of sporadic police round-ups. Beggars are of all types and both sexes, from infants who toddle underfoot while an older head directs them from the sidelines, to husky rascals faithful to a vow of "I won't work."

Differing from the whining beggars are the 200,000 to 300,000 homeless children, pariahs of the social order, ragged, sooty-faced from sleeping in the embers of street repair gangs' furnaces, dirty, diseased, dope-poisoned, and desperate. They run in packs.

A gang straggles through the gate, hugging the curb, eyes alert, the world a potential enemy, its plan of action decided. The leader grabs a woman's handbag, a man's fur cap, and overturns an unwary peddler's basket of apples. The basket is picked clean, and with wild screams the gang is gone, scattering through the streets, policemen and pedestrians in vain pursuit.

In several cities homes are maintained by the government for these young vagabonds—heritage of war and revolution, but augmented every month by wanderlust—with baths, clean coats, clothes, food, and a caretaker to give them instruction and advice. Personal liberty goes amiss with this social group, too young to appreciate civic responsibility even if they had been taught it. Police and social workers periodically round up the wild, untamed children and put them in the homes.

The crowds elbow through the white-painted brick gates, in and out of the Red Square, between a gauntlet of vendors. Baskets and clumsy little wagons are on the curb; also flabby, brown, frozen apples for a cent and fat ones, carefully sheltered under blankets, for 40 cents; stands of cigarettes, each with one and a quarter inches of tobacco and three inches of paper mouthpiece; oranges for 70 cents; cheeses, cut and weighed while you wait; candies collecting dust; dried sunflower seeds, two cents a glassful.

## Phases of the Social Movement.

The goal which Soviet Russia has set is to industrialize the country until it can supply its domestic needs. It will then be independent of the outside world. The United States is taken as a model, not the countries of Europe, which have developed industry by colonies and foreign trade. Until that goal is reached, or abandoned, no wars of Russia's making need be anticipated.

The social movement in Russia may be divided into three phases: First, to arouse the workers to a revolution; second, to instill the idea in their minds that they were the rulers of the country; third, to impress them that they must produce.

The third stage has now been reached. More and more emphasis is laid on the fact that the worker must produce results and devote less time to theorizing and talking. Stalin recently in one of his rare speeches declared too much time was given in celebrations, meetings, and anniversaries. As practical illustration he cited that the marketing of the grain was costing 13 kopecks a pood when it should cost 8.

## THE TWO THUMB-PRINTS ALIKE

By BERRY PHILLIPS

(Copyright, by W. G. Chapman.)

**T**HE case against Richard Halstein was damning, and it hung on one fact. That fact was the thumb-print. Here it is:

Lewis Halstein had adopted his nephew Richard in infancy. He was a queer old character; he had brought the boy up in idleness, alleging that work was beneath the dignity of a gentleman. That alone shows that Lewis Halstein was decidedly eccentric. At twenty-four, when his nephew left college, he came home to find his uncle, a millionaire and more eccentric than ever. Remember, Richard had never been trained to work. He was about as capable of earning a living as a Polynesian set down in the streets of New York. Less so, for the Polynesian could go on exhibition as the Wild Man of Borneo and earn his two dollars a day. Richard Halstein could not. He looked the ordinary type of better-class American, and there was nothing about him that would make any man look at him twice in the street.

Richard Halstein came home to fall in love with Mildred James, the daughter of his uncle's neighbor. When he heard of the engagement he was furious. He turned his nephew out of his home penniless.

Richard seems to have had a rather hard time. However, it was the uncle who took the initiative. He asked him back, and the butler testified that he heard the two quarreling all the evening in the old man's library. He listened, as a servant will do, and heard Lewis Halstein order his nephew out of the house for good. Following this, Richard Halstein stamped out in a rage. At nine the next morning Lewis Halstein was found lying dead in his library, upon the floor. He had evidently fallen from his chair when a shot fired from behind entered his brain. Upon the table were pen and ink and paper, and it was surmised that he had intended to alter his will, which was found to be in his nephew's favor.

Upon the polished mahogany back of the chair on which he had been seated was found a thumb-print. It was Richard's. That was the one fact against him.

The thumb-print could not have been made earlier in the evening, because the butler testified that after Richard's departure he had heard the old man drag the chair from the living room; it was a high chair, such as he used when writing at a table instead of at his desk.

Richard was arrested and placed on trial. There was no other evidence against him, but a thumb-print is always a thumb-print. Only Miss James believed in his innocence—unless his lawyer, Tom Fellowes, did.

Fellowes was a queer card. He had studied medicine before law, and had been expelled from the medical school for some prank. He had not the best reputation as a lawyer. He was fond of tackling dubious cases; but he won them. Perhaps he was the best lawyer Richard could have had. At any rate, he struck a stroke in court which (I was one of the jurymen) dumfounded us and everybody. He produced One-Lamp Ike.

One-Lamp Ike was a local character, half-witted, against whom the worst known was robbery, petty thieving which had landed him repeatedly in jail, and had more often still secured him a thrashing and nothing more.

The counsel for the state had produced evidence to show that the fingerprint remains through life. Fellowes was cross-examining his last witness.

"You say that only two cases in a hundred million are to be found of similar thumb markings on different men," he said. "Are there a hundred million fingerprint-prints in the world?"

"I don't know," responded the witness testily. "I haven't counted them. There are a good many."

"Name the two cases in which the thumb or finger-prints were found to be the same."

"I don't know of any two. I believe there are none."

"Then what is your ground for the statement that two cases occur in a hundred million?"

"I suppose that merely means that it only occurs in an impossibly large number," retorted the witness uneasily.

"You admit, then, that you were speaking loosely?"

"I say that there are no two men in less than a hundred million with similar finger or thumb-prints."

"I will call the man known as One-Lamp Ike," said Mr. Fellowes.

The court was agog now. Fellowes' purpose became evident, and there was a breathless silence as he produced a sheet of paper, a pad coated with lamp-black, or some similar substance, and a magnifying glass.

"One-Lamp Ike," said Mr. Fellowes,

"you have never had your finger-prints taken before?"

"No, your honor," answered the imbecile, grinning. "You didn't happen to murder Mr. Halstein, I suppose?" Fellowes continued.

One-Lamp scratched his head. "I don't remember of it, sir," he said. "I was drunk at the time."

"Your memory is not very good, I think?"

"No, your honor."

It was all the typical conjurer's patter. Nobody took much notice of it. We were leaning forward in the jury-box, while Mr. Fellowes, having completed his preparations, took One-Lamp's thumb, stuck it to the pad and pressed it down hard on the paper.

"Now," he said to the court, "I claim to show that the last witness was mistaken, or else that here we have the two men in a hundred millions with similar thumb-prints. I submit this evidence to the court." And he handed it up, together with the reproduction of Richard's thumb-print, and the magnifying glass.

The court looked at it for full five minutes, turning the glass this way and that. Then he had it submitted to the jurors. We scanned it. There was no possibility of mistaking that the two prints were identical.

"I propose, your honor," said Fellowes, "that the thumb-print of the prisoner be taken again and superimposed photographically upon this."

The court adjourned in the greatest excitement. Next day, when it reconvened, the two prints were found to coincide exactly. They had been magnified a dozen times; the great web of tracings upon the paper, looking like a maze, was perfectly distinct. There was the one and only pattern. And, examined separately, not the smallest divergence could be found between the thumb-prints of Richard Halstein and those of One-Lamp Ike.

There was only one thing to do. Here were two men, one of whom must have committed the murder. There was no possibility of collusion. There was no further evidence. We acquitted the prisoner by direction of the court, and he left the courtroom a free man.

He married Mildred James the next day, and they went West, where they are reported to be doing well. One-Lamp Ike came into a lot of money in some mysterious fashion a little while later, and was found drowned in a horse-trough, into which he had fallen while intoxicated.

I was frankly puzzled by the coincidence. That some trick had been played seemed more probable to me than that the two men in a hundred million had really been found in the same town. It was about five years after that, being then a resident in a southern town, I met Fellowes, who was practicing in some other place. We became intimate, and in a burst of confidence he told me the facts.

"Richard Halstein did kill his uncle," he said; "but it was only homicide. Murder is what you would have found in your verdict. The appearances were so much against him that it would not have been safe for him to have told the truth."

"Lewis Halstein had sent for him, in the hope of inducing him to give up Mildred James. The uncle had become almost insane over the matter; his quarrel with James had been a bitter one, and his mind was probably weakening from old age. He drew a revolver and threatened to kill his nephew."

"Richard grasped it, and the men fought in silence for several seconds. Then his uncle, who was a strong old man, got his finger upon the trigger. Richard swung the revolver round just in the nick of time. Lewis Halstein pressed the trigger, but the bullet went into his own brain."

"Horrified at his action, Richard went away hurriedly. He wavered between confession and denial. That was a fatal policy, for it brought the rope within an inch of his neck."

"And the thumb-print?" I asked.

He shot a keen look at me. "Quite simple," he replied. "I don't mind telling you now. One-Lamp Ike wasn't such a fool as he looked, and he was quite willing to risk his neck for twenty thousand dollars. You know, I used to study medicine? Well, all that was necessary was to remove the outer cuticle from Richard's thumb, remove the same thing from Ike's, and graft the cuticle from Richard's thumb upon that of Ike. Of course, in time the pattern would reassert itself, but not till the cuticle had become connected with the flesh beneath. Meanwhile, Richard's had grown again. That's all—but if ever such a trick was justified, I think it was to save an innocent man."

## Famous Minor Poet

One of the best-known short poems in the English language is "Old Armchair," written by Eliza Cook, who is called the poet of domestic affections. She was born in Southwark, London, England, in 1818. She early achieved success in the comparatively humble literary path she laid down for herself, and her articles and poems maintained her in comfort. She died in 1889.

## Sure Relief

## FOR Coughs due to Colds

## Farmers in Co-Operation

At the end of 1925 co-operative farm associations reporting to the Department of Agriculture had on their membership rolls 2,700,000 producers. In view of the fact, however, that some farmers belong to more than one association, and allowing for inactive members, it is estimated that approximately 2,000,000 farmers in this country are now engaged in co-operative marketing. The total business of these associations for the year 1925 amounted to approximately \$2,400,000,000.

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## Curse on a Name?

Eight men in the prime of life have met violent deaths during the last few weeks at Unter Aeger, a village in the Swiss canton of Zug. Each man bore the Christian name Joseph, and superstitious villagers are offering prayers for the removal of the curse which they are convinced has been put on that name.

Anoint the eyelids with Roman Eye Balsam at night and see how refreshed and strengthened your eyes are in the morning. Send now to 372 Pearl St., N. Y. Adv.

## Minus the Brogue

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"How?" asked the grocer.

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## Save Much Trouble

"Father, what is politeness?" "Politeness is the art of concealing from other people what you think of them."—Stray Stories.

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