

At home they saw me only in abrupt flashes. They had a complex life of their own there. My wife was building a nest, and the children had new friends. The closest was the chauffeur of Dr. M. The doctor's wife took my wife and the boys out driving, and was very kind to them. But she was a mere mortal, whereas the chauffeur was a magician, a titan, a superman! With a wave of his hand, he made the machine obey his slightest command. To sit beside him was the supreme delight. When they went into a tea-room, the boys would anxiously demand of their mother, "Why doesn't the chauffeur come in?"

Children have an amazing capacity for adapting themselves to new surroundings. In Vienna we had lived for the most part in the workers' districts, and my boys mastered the Viennese dialect to perfection, besides speaking Russian and German. Dr. Alfred Adler observed with great satisfaction that they spoke the dialect like the good old Viennese cabmen. In the school in Zurich the boys had to switch to the Zurich dialect, which was the language in use in the lower grades, German being studied as a foreign language. In Paris the boys changed abruptly to French, and within a few months had mastered it. Many times I envied them their ease in French conversation. Although they spent, in all, less than a month in Spain and on the Spanish boat, it was long enough for them to pick up the most useful words and expressions. And then in New York, they went to an American school for two months and acquired a rough-and-ready command of English. After the February revolution, they went to school in Petrograd. But school life there was disorganized, and foreign languages vanished from their memory even more quickly than they had been acquired. But they spoke Russian like foreigners. We were often surprised to notice that they would build up a Russian sentence as if it were an exact translation from the French — and yet they could not form the sentence in French. Thus the story of our foreign wanderings was written on the brains of the children as indelibly as if they were palimpsests.

When I telephoned my wife from the newspaper office that Petrograd was in the midst of revolution, the younger boy was in bed with diphtheria. He was nine years old, but he realized definitely — and had for a long time — that revolution meant an amnesty, a return to Russia and a thousand other blessings. He jumped to his feet and danced on the bed in honor of the revolution. It was a sign of his recovery.