

OCTOBER 27, 1930.

# My Russian Diary-II

By GARETH JONES.

**T**HERE is still fun left in Soviet Russia. A woman was cleaning the dusty streets with a hosepipe. Nimble children leapt out of the way. Old folk approached her carefully. Then came a jolly young fellow, in his Russian shirt, who shouted: "You're no good. That's not the way to do it, old woman."

She turned with a grin and yelled: "So that's not the way to do it, isn't it? Then I'll show you."

Whereupon a shower of water aimed directly at the joker sent him scuttling down the street, half cursing and half laughing.

"That'll teach him," she said to the passers-by.

Moral: Never joke to a woman with a hose-pipe.

**I**n a Co-operative restaurant the waitress, who was about thirty to forty, took a great interest in me, because I was a foreigner. As I was sipping the boiling hot greasy potato soup, which I had well earned by standing a quarter of an hour in a long queue in order to get my soup card, she came to me and said: "Have you been to New York?"

"No, why?" I answered.

"I have a brother in New York, and I want to go there. I've tried and tried, but they won't let me go out of the country, nor anybody else, for that matter. I don't like living here. The food's bad. It would be fine if I could get to my brother in America."

**T**HE Circus was great fun; an excellent performance; not so good as Olympia, but still very enjoyable. It was just like a circus in London or Paris or Berlin, or anywhere. The clowns were dressed in the same way and even had the same kind of jokes. "Are you drunk," asked one clown of another, who was wobbling on top of a chair. "No, the chair's drunk," he replied.

One might imagine oneself in Birmingham or Cardiff, were it not for the red and white banners, stretched across the tent with the words, "Let us carry out the Five Years' Plan in Four years," and were it not for the motley crowd.

**A**t the Circus I sat next to a boy of about 14 years of age with fair hair and a very pleasant face. We both burst into peals of laughter as the comedian was performing some antics, and our laughter brought us closer together.

"Would you like to go to England?" I asked him.

"Oh, no, never," he replied very definitely.

"Why not?"

"Don't you know it's a capitalist country."

Communist. They came in and stared at the ceremony in an amused and blasé way, just as if watching some very childish game, which they were far too superior to play. Then they turned to each other and burst into a fit of giggling, went towards the door, gave one last look at these mediæval people who believed in God, and left, laughing. There was an attitude of "We know all about this religion stuff and it's all rot" about these girls.

To-day I noticed in a shop some translations of Edgar Wallace, and not long after I saw a Soviet worker immersed in "The Ringer"—at least, I think, it was "The Ringer," for I could not see his copy clearly.

**R**ASPBERRIES! A peasant woman had a basketful. "Very good raspberries!" she said, looking at me with appealing eyes. So I bought half a pound. "Here you are. I'll wrap them up for you." I looked at the wrapping paper and saw, to my surprise, that it was a sheet of "Pearson's Magazine." I turned to her and said, "That looks a funny language, doesn't it? I wonder what it is?"

She replied, "I don't know. It's all the same to me; just black and white. I can't read."

**W**HAT a strange picture of England Russians must have! To-day a Russian asked me, "Have you many Communists in England?"

"No, not many. There are about 3,500 members of the Party."

"Ah, ha," he said, "I know why."

"Why?"

"They're all clapped into prison straight away."

"Of course not," I answered. "That's one of the things we British are very proud of. You can hold what views you jolly well like. If you're a Communist you can go to a place called Hyde Park and say what you like."

"So you expect me to believe that, do you? They're all in prison." Then came the final blow, as he said with a knowing smile, "Ah, I've heard of your Tower of London."

**I**T is hard to buy many things in Moscow.

Boots scarce, clothing very scarce, and there is a shortage of most goods. This was made clear to me by a story I heard this evening. "Heard this one?" said the little Russian as we talked in a park. "You know we're mechanising everything. We are introducing machines here and machines

body else, for that matter. I don't like living here. The food's bad. It would be fine if I could get to my brother in America.

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"Don't you know it's a capitalist country. I'd never want to go there," he said in a shocked tone. "There's so much oppression in the capitalist countries. I'm sure it can't be nice there."

We still remained friends, however, when I told him that I hailed from that capitalist land and our handshake was very warm as we said good-bye, after the horses with their trappings had left the arena and when the clowns' voices were silent.

THE Moscovite will have to learn to dodge motor-traffic, for already several Rolls-Royces are flying past dirty rickety broken-down droshkas (horse carriages). Fords bump over the stones. Holes in the streets at least over those few places which are being repaired. Moscow is seizing the opportunity of repairing and even asphaltting many of her roads before the winter comes and before the streets are a stretch of trampled white.

I HAPPENED to pass a church with a dome shining gold in the sun. The door was open, so I entered. Ornaments of all colours blazed all round. Before one altar an old priest was carrying on the service. There were no chairs. A small group of people stood reverently and crossed themselves in the orthodox fashion. Some peasant women prostrated themselves on the bare ground and touched the cold stone floor with their temples. One poor woman was kissing an ikon and forcing a squealing baby to do likewise. The baby resisted vigorously. From behind the altar some beautiful men's voices rose singing in harmony. Candles were burning.

AS I stood watching the service two girls entered. They were about 14 or 15 years old, bobbed hair, and looked

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"Yes, I have seen some examples of your mechanising," I said, seriously, not grasping that he was leading up to a joke.

"Well, you haven't seen the place I'm going to tell you about, but it's a wonderful piece of mechanisation. This place is a huge big shop, with dozens of departments, a boot department, a clothes department and a food department. And in spite of its size we've introduced such mechanisation that it only needs one man to manage the whole store."

"And what does he do?" I said, still very serious. "Oh, he just stands at the door and tells the customers that there is nothing to sell."