MENNONITE LIFE

December 1973

MENNONITE
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A Quarterly Magazine
Focusing on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Heritage
& Its Contemporary Expression

This Issue

looks back 50 years to 1923—a pivotal time for Mennonites—and from that vantage point gives perspective on the history of our brotherhood during the past half century. The issue also focuses on John P. Klassen, immigrant from Russia and teacher of art at Bluffton College from 1924 to 1958, whose life and artistic work reflect some of the major motifs of this period.

¶ We are grateful to Robert Kreider who served as guest editor of this issue, developing its concept and gathering the material for publication. In the lead article, he deftly draws together salient elements that characterized the world of 50 years ago and brought about an "avalanche of change." In the context of the revolutions wrought by Ford and Edison in America and Lenin and Stalin in Russia, the reader glimpses the beginnings of Mennonite Central Committee, the start of a large immigration to Canada, and painful stresses among American Mennonites.

¶ Frank H. Epp draws on his extensive research as author of *Mennonite Exodus* to present highlights of the 1923 emigration from Russia—the beginning of a series of mass escapes from the oppressive Communist regime. He outlines the difficulties in initiating the move and the heartening reception accorded the refugees arriving in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

¶ Ten pages of sketches by John P. Klassen reveal his talent while giving a unique statement regarding everyday life in the Mennonite settlements of the Ukraine. The sketches, none ever published before, are reproduced in their original size.

¶ Larry Kehler's outstanding short biography of Klassen shows him not only as an artist skilled in several media, but also as "a deeply committed Anabaptist, a dedicated citizen, a devoted family man . . ."

¶ In "Chortitza Revisited," Paul and Otto Klassen share observations from their recent trip to their father's native community in the Ukraine.

¶ Through translated excerpts from the Diary of Anna Baerg, Peter J. Dyck introduces us to a perceptive chronicle of perseverance amid extreme privation in Russia, 1917-23.

¶ Cover: Horses were a favorite artistic subject for J. P. Klassen. Here a sturdy pair pulls a plow to turn the rich earth of the steppes.

¶ Back Cover: Reproduction of the initial front page of the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, "An Inter-Mennonite Newspaper" marking its 50th anniversary in 1973. Dated August 9, 1923, the first issue carried reports of the death of President Warren G. Harding and of Russian Mennonites arriving in Canada.

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1923: The Year of Our Discontent, The Year of Our Promise

By ROBERT KREIDER

The CPR train with its party of 408 Russian immigrants pulled into Rosthern, Saskatchewan, at 5 o'clock on the afternoon of July 21, 1923. There was great joy in Rosthern that afternoon. They sang hymns. David Toews spoke words of welcome. Abram Hamm, leader of the immigrants, responded with gratitude and declared "that the ambition of the immigrant Mennonites was to adjust themselves to Canadian conditions, to adopt Canadian customs, and to become, not an alien race with the privileges of Canadians, but Canadians worthy of the name."

Could Abram Hamm and his people that July afternoon in 1923 have known that they were setting foot in a land undergoing revolutionary change? This was not the country of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin but a continent of Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Cecil B. de Mille. The centers of revolutionary change were places like Detroit, Chicago, and Hollywood. North American society was erupting with radical changes in technology, life style and values. The immigrants, invited into Canadian Mennonite homes that night, might not sense immediately these new forces of change. But revolutionary forces were abroad in the land.

The first issue of *The Mennonite* in 1923, January 4, did not describe these rumblings of change. The editor did report on the plight of the brethren in Russia:

- An additional $25,000 was needed for the next four months "to give one meal a day to the most needy." The Secretary of the Emergency Relief Committee asked: "Will we let those die for lack of food whom we have fed up to this time?"
- Another shipment of 25 tractors was on its way to Odessa for spring work.
- 40 Mennonite refugees in Constantinople needed homes in America—who would help?
- A party of the Russian brethren were ready for their trip and "it is only a matter of days when they will be on their way."
- The latest shipment of clothing, 18 tons and valued at $25,000, was on its way.

Robert Kreider is a scholar specializing in history and government. He is presently on leave from Bluffton College, where he served as president, 1965-72.

- Neither Canada nor the United States was as crowded in 1923 as today. In fact, Canada had only a third the population of 1973, the United States only a half.

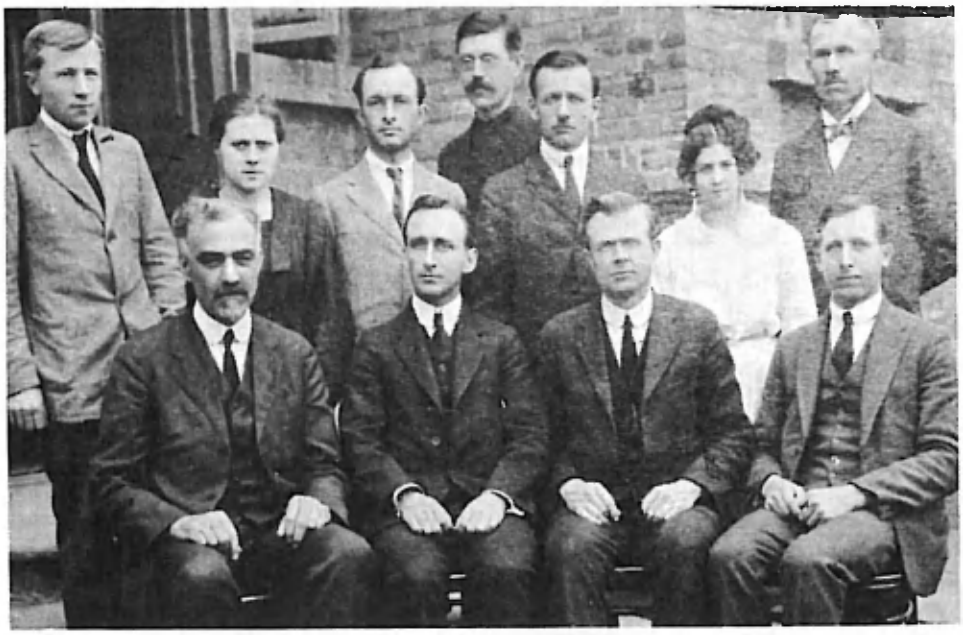
Not everyone in Canada and the United States liked immigrants in 1923. That year in Ottawa members of parliament debated for weeks whether it was good for Canada to permit foreigners to enter the country. The United States Congress was tightening its quotas on immigrants. The Ku Klux Klan, a secret nativist organization, had been engaged in a reign of terror against Negroes, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. One could not help but feel the mood—"Foreigner stay away"—and this from the sons and grandsons of foreign born.

William Lyon Mackenzie King was Prime Minister of Canada. He knew, respected, and helped the Mennonites. Warren Gamaliel Harding was President of the United States. A handsome, friendly, weak man, Harding could not have grasped the needs of Europe's refugee millions. Two weeks after that July 21 afternoon he would be dead and would be succeeded by silent Calvin Coolidge, who declared the "business of America is business." He would not have understood.

Death mercifully spared President Harding the humiliation of public exposure the following year to the scandals of his administration—graft, corruption, fraud, conspiracy—centered in the Ohio gang, a group of self-seeking, pleasure-loving cronies close to the president. The Teapot Dome oil scandal of his administration was not isolated. In Chicago a young man, Al Capone, was rapidly rising in influence, a man gifted in the administrative skills of operating a network of bootleggers and allied criminals. Seven hundred men worked for Mr. Capone, each adept in the use of sawed-off shot guns and sub-machine guns. "Gangster" was a new word in the vocabulary.

Al Capone and his colleagues could not have put it all together in the age of the horse and buggy. These years were the coming of age of the automobile—both a blessing and a monster. In four years the number of automobile owners had doubled in Canada and the United States. Now one in two Mennonite families owned an automobile. It was probably an open touring car costing $500—a black Model T Ford or, perhaps, even a Maxwell, an Essex, a Star, or a Studebaker.

An avalanche of change came in the wake of the automobile: filling stations at every corner, traffic lights, billboards and marked highways, and on the edge of



MCC relief workers in Russia are pictured in the early 1920s. American personnel (seated, from left): C. E. Krehbiel, representative in Molotchna; Alvin J. Miller, director in Russia; P. C. Hiebert, chairman, MCC; Arthur W. Slagel, representative, Alexandrovsk district. Office force at Alexandrovsk (standing): Heinrich Epp, Mary Heinrichs, Heinrich Sawatzky, Jacob Suderman, Heinrich Martens, Mrs. H. Martens, Gerhard Peters. (Photo, Archives of the Mennonite Church)

towns—a sprawl of hot dog stands and tourist cabins. Interurban trolleys were dying as the country was being blanketed with a network of bus lines. The one room country school would soon be extinct as children were being transported by bus to consolidated schools. Some small towns withered on the vine because no paved highway came to their doors. Youth now could hop into a car and drive away from the watchful eye of parent and neighbor. Henry Ford's Model T shook up every part of society. Soon North America would be a people on wheels in a land of highways.

Some called this the jazz age. Divorces were rising. Women were beginning to cut (bob) their hair, use cosmetics and lipstick. Skirts were creeping up higher year by year. Cigarette smoking doubled in less than a decade. F. Scott Fitzgerald appeared as the chronicler of this cynical, flapper age. These status-aspiring people found security in the year's best seller,—Emily Post's *Etiquette*, a guide on how to do the right thing at the right place at the right time. The immigrants may have glimpsed these changes as their train halted briefly in the cities to the east.

1923 was in the middle of a bread-and-circuses era—the golden age of sport—Rogers Hornsby and Babe Ruth in baseball, Bobbie Jones in golf, big Bill Tilden in tennis, Jack Dempsey in boxing, Red Grange in football, and in a category all its own, the Notre Dame football team with a coach of uncanny success, Knute Rockne. Never since the years of Rome's declining empire were so many colossal stadiums being built.

Few of the immigrants going to Mennonite homes that night would have listened to radios. Commercial radio had begun only three years before with stations KDKA of Pittsburgh and WWJ of Detroit. Soon the Mennonite farmsteads being cut out of the bush in Saskatchewan would be linked instantly by radio with the outside world—Saskatoon, Ottawa and New York.

American churches grew by one million members the previous year. *The Mennonite* also reported 4,623 new Christian Endeavor Societies. Almost every issue carried news of expanding CE and youth activities. This was the age of Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver, of Robert E. Spear and John R. Mott.

Competing with pastors for the attention of their flocks were movie theaters sprouting up everywhere and showing the latest films of Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Rudolph Valentino, and Clara Bow. Decades later some of these old films would be coming into Mennonite homes via television.

The tempo of life was accelerating. A barage of advertising bombarded the hapless citizen. Chain grocery stores and five and ten cent stores were spreading from town to town. And everywhere there were offers of "easy payment" plans in installment buying. New national magazines began publishing in 1923—*Reader's Digest* and *Time*—and in their own way helped to shape the minds and values of the people.

Mennonites were still predominantly a farming people and in 1923 farming was in trouble. At the bottom of a prolonged agricultural depression, farm mortgage indebtedness was never higher, but prices for wheat and corn were low. In every community one saw neighboring farms foreclosed and put up for sale. Other basic industries were sick: coal, lumbering, milling, textiles. The automobile, oil, and electrical industries, however, were booming. Land speculators were making a killing in places like Florida. Millionaires were multiplying. And yet no one paid much income tax.

The January 4, 1923, issue of *The Mennonite* reported the conference budget for 1923, a formidable budget for its day:

Foreign Missions	$105,798
1922 deficit for F. Missions	17,200
Home Missions	18,850
1922 deficit for H. Missions	4,500
Relief work	120,000
	$266,348

Approximately 150 Mennonites were serving overseas in church programs in 1923—compared to a handfull 25 years before and perhaps 2,500 a half century later.

1923 was not a good year on the world stage. The post-war settlement was falling apart. Lenin had one more

year to live but already Trotsky and Stalin were fighting for his mantle. The U.S. had refused to enter the League of Nations. The old allies—France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States—no longer behaved as allies. Mussolini had marched on Rome and established a dictatorship. The French and Belgians marched that year into the Ruhr and established military rule, the excuse given being that Germany had defaulted on reparation payments. The mark collapsed; printing presses were running wild turning out inflated German currency. That year Field Marshal von Ludendorff and a man named Adolf Hitler staged in Munich what came to be known as the Beer Hall Putsch. It failed and this man Hitler was sent to prison for five years where he began writing a book, *Mein Kampf.*

Some leaders were passing from the Mennonite stage. Peter Janzen, leader in the immigration to Nebraska in the 1870s, died in 1923. Other leaders appeared. In 1923 Floyd and Sylvia Pannabecker were ordained and would soon leave as missionaries to China. Dr. Harvey Bauman had just completed his medical studies preparatory to going to India. Abram Warkentin arrived from Germany to begin a career in college and seminary teaching.

The year 1923 was a painful one in certain areas of the church. Charges and counter charges about modernism in the brotherhood were being exchanged with unbrotherly abandon. The lodge question was a hot issue in Mennonite circles. Stresses and strains were showing in Old Mennonite congregations, with some laity and pastors crossing over to join Central and General Conference churches. Goshen College closed its doors for a year. No issue of *The Mennonite* was without informative articles or letters from foreign and home mission fields, the relief needs of the Russian brethren, Witmarsum Theological Seminary and the colleges, Sunday School and youth work. The pages of *The Mennonite* reflect a conference with a strong sense of peoplehood. And yet some of the issues discussed at district and triennial conferences seem so trivial by contemporary standards. But then one wonders what readers will say fifty years from now of what we write and speak. Will they shake their heads and lament that we really did not address ourselves to the big issues of faith, service, and witness in a troubled time? What will they think of our agendas in the year of Watergate, the battle for the Sinai, and Key 73?

One of the intriguing communications in *The Mennonite* in 1923 is a letter from members of the Mennonite Central Committee, who report that MCC work in Russia might soon be coming to an end. They ask, "Is a permanent Mennonite relief organization desirable?" It is the very question which is being asked today fifty years later. In what sense do we as Mennonites and Brethren in Christ feel that we are a people? Are we more a people in 1973 than we were in 1923? If we are a people, what do we feel called to do together in this discontented, distraught world of 1973?

1923: The Beginnings of the Great Migration

By FRANK H. EPP

"The escape of these thousands of Mennonites from the terrors of famine and revolution is an epic in Mennonite annals perhaps unsurpassed anywhere in history."—D. V. Wiebe.

In the midsummer of 1922 prospects were good that the mass emigration of Russian Mennonites would actually get underway in that year. In July the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization signed the transportation contract and the Canadian Pacific Railway was ready to send two steamers to Odessa to pick up from 2,700 to 3,000 emigrants.

This first group consisted primarily of those who had been dispossessed of their lands and driven from their homes in the revolution and civil war. In Russia the leaders had all they could do to pacify these impatient refugees. Many had been waiting ever since the *Studienkommission* had gone abroad in 1920 and some were beginning to panic.

Frank H. Epp, author of Mennonite Exodus, *was recently installed as president of Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.*

In Canada the Board initiated preparations for the reception of the impoverished *Russlaender*, for that is how they came to be called by the Canadian Mennonites, who in turn were identified as *Kanadier.* Some Kanadier families planted extra potatoes and raised additional hogs to feed the newcomers.

Special relief appeals were made and in a few months over $8,000 were collected in cash contributions for clothing the immigrants. Representative men were appointed to inspect CPR lands and other settlement opportunities. Both the Russlaender and some of the Kanadier were ready for the immigration movement.

Then the unexpected and unwanted happened. Cholera broke out in the Ukraine, and Odessa was placed under quarantine. This was accompanied by unsettled political conditions in the Dardanelles, the gateway to the Black Sea, which made it impossible for commercial ships to approach a Russian port. Since these conditions increased the emigration pressure, alternative routes were considered immediately.

Then a new difficulty arose. One of the conditions of entry into Canada was a certificate of medical fitness. No

immigrant who had a contagious disease, such as the eye sickness trachoma, or who was a cripple or was mentally deficient would be admitted. To assure that these conditions would be met the Canadian government required the CPR to have medical doctors stationed at the point of departure in Russia.

This the Soviet government refused to allow, primarily because a Russian trade mission had been refused entry into Canada. Moreover, the Soviet government would not permit inspection at the border with the intention of returning the medically unfit to their Russian homeland. This difficulty ended the prospects for emigration in 1922.

In the winter of 1922-23 the intentions of the emigration leaders in Russia were put to a severe test. The events of 1922 had nearly shattered hopes that a mass emigration

Distribution of meals to children and adults was one phase of MCC famine relief in Russia during the early 1920s. (Photo, Archives of the Mennonite Church)

would ever be possible. Moreover, internal conditions had taken a turn for the better. Changes in Soviet economic policy, together with the active reconstruction efforts of American Mennonite relief and the *Verbaende*, brought new hope to the Russian Mennonite colonies.

Moreover, help for the rehabilitation of the German colonies in Russia was also promised by the German and Dutch governments and German agricultural organizations. The result was that doubts and uncertainties had come to certain leaders.

The homeless and impatient Mennonite refugees, however, were of a different opinion. They delegated one of their number J. P. Klassen, Chortitza, later a professor at Bluffton College, to make another trip to Moscow to see if something could be done to foster emigration.

Some of his co-workers tried to discourage him, prevailing on him to cancel his trip to Moscow: "Think of our mission here in Russia, our Mennonite ideals, our beautiful villages, the fertile soil! What a wonderful thing it will be when German help will come. Our task is and remains in Russia!"

Klassen remained firm and boarded the train for Moscow. Here he visited the office of the *Allrussicher Mennonitischer Landwirtshaftlicher Verein* and reported to C. F. Klassen that "we refugees are ready to leave Russia."

Together they went to the RUSCAPA (Russian-Canadian-American-Passenger Agency) and the Moscow office of the CPR representative, A. Ross Owen. "We are ready," said Mr. Owen, "to initiate transportation of the emigrants immediately, but what is the attitude in the colonies now?" "We are determined to go," said Klassen. Then followed the final negotiations and arrangements.

All the barriers had been removed, but only after the Board in Rosthern had made three unusually heavy commitments to the government and the CPR. The Board had to promise that none of the immigrants would become public charges, which meant that, in the event of sickness, hospital and doctor bills had to be paid for as long as five years. A second promise required early settlement of the new arrivals on land. The Board also had to agree to the medical fitness tests and promise both the CPR and the German government to pay any expenses arising out of the detention and treatment of passengers.

When all these conditions were agreed on and the necessary guarantees given, the emigration could begin. Early in July, 1923, the first group of 750 persons left Chortitza. Everything proceeded according to plan until the disappointments at the medical inspection stations in Latvia. The strict medical tests by Canadian doctors revealed that many Mennonites were infested with trachoma, a contagious eye disease. Of the first group of 750 people, 75, or 10 per cent, were detained at the Latvian border and transferred to a camp.

Gerhard Ens and P. P. Epp met the first groups of immigrants arriving on the Empress of France at Quebec on July 16. At this point the Mennonite opponents of the movement again tried to thwart Board efforts by influencing the Kanadier not to receive the Russlaender into their homes, saying that whoever received them became a party to the contract. Only a few condescended to this deceptive propaganda, but the few were quite vocal.

The immigrants were expected in Rosthern on July 21. On July 11 the Board appointed a reception committee. The plan was to distribute the immigrant families to homes in the various districts. A week later a detailed distribution plan was drawn up. Several districts were purposely excluded because of their opposition. A total of 121 families were tentatively placed in 11 districts.

According to the plan of the Board, immigrants should work in the harvest fields, receive going wages, and pay all or most of their earnings toward the Reiseschuld (transportation debt). Food and shelter should be provided freely by their hosts or employees. Through the assistance of the Ontario and American Mennonites free clothing should be provided where needed for the new immigrants.

Early in the morning Mennonites from the surrounding areas had been making their way to Rosthern in Studebakers, Model T Fords, grain wagons, buggies, and hayracks. All roads led to Rosthern that day. Never had so many people or so many cars (450) come to that little prairie town in one day. Several businesses had flags flying.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the long train with ten passenger and three baggage cars pulled into Rosthern.

The land they left: Sketch by John P. Klassen shows harvest scene in the once prosperous Mennonite colonies of the Ukraine.

North of the station and east of the tracks the immigrants detrained. The scenes that followed defied description. There was crying and there was hearty rejoicing.

When the first wave of emotion had passed, the immigrants massed in a body. David Toews assured them of his sympathy and understanding for their sorrow and privations, and welcomed them on behalf of the Canadian Mennonites. After he had spoken the immigrants brought a song of greeting, "Gott gruesse dich" (God Greet You). This was followed by the hymn of thanksgiving, "Nun danket alle Gott" (Now Thank We All Our God).

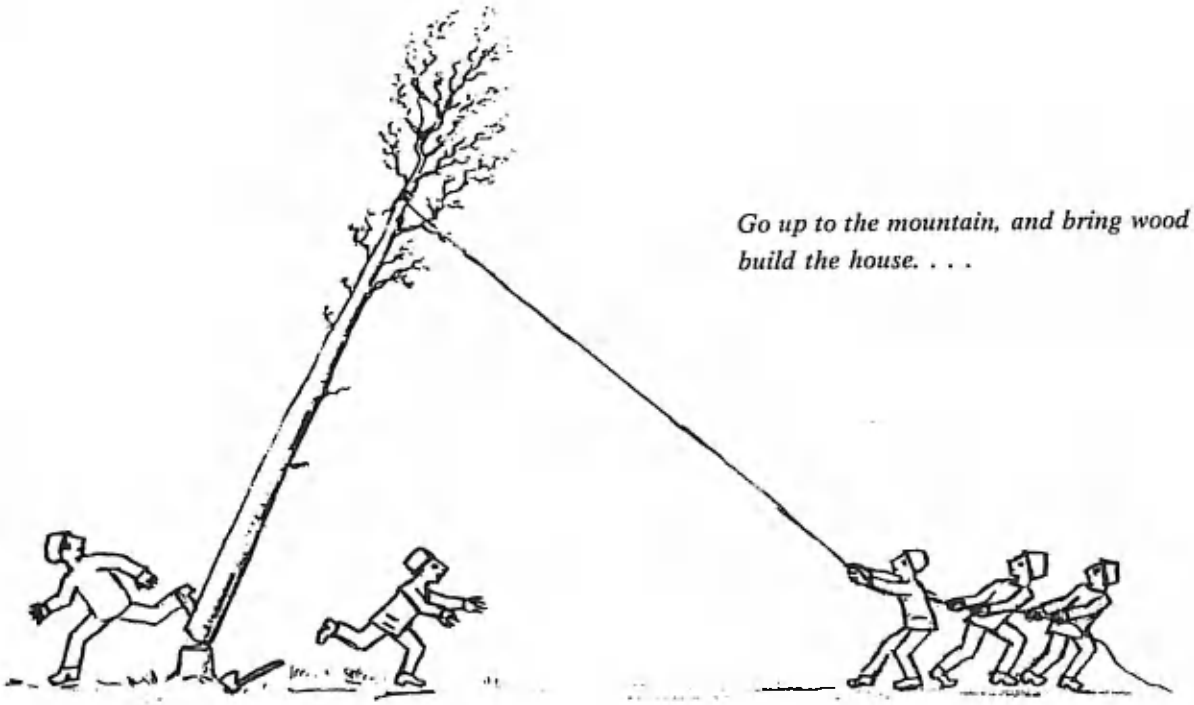
Then Abram Hamm, the leader of the party, arose and expressed his appreciation for the welcome and assured the Canadians "that the ambition of the immigrant Mennonites was to adjust themselves to Canadian conditions, to adopt Canadian customs, and to become, not an alien race with the privileges of Canadians, but Canadians worthy of the name."

It seemed as though public opinion among Canadians and Kanadier had undergone a remarkable change. Almost all of the former resentment was gone. Among those who stood in tears were prominent non-Mennonite citizens and former soldiers.

The reception was beyond the fondest hopes of Toews and his colleagues. The same was true in succeeding years, and until 1928 almost no opposition was heard from Anglo-Saxon Canadians. Among those who offered their assistance were French settlers and Doukhobors of the Rosthern area. Following the service in Rosthern, the immigrants were registered and assigned.

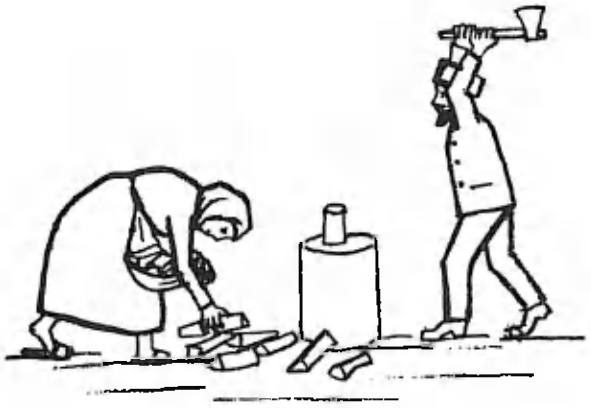
The hospitality of the Kanadier in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan was not just a passing enthusiasm. They provided food and shelter and also work if at all possible. This continued with all the 20,000 immigrants that came. Many underwent privations for the sake of the great cause.

Some had families in their homes continuously for a number of years. On the average every immigrant family needed about two months of free housing and lodging. At a conservative estimate $10 per person per month, the total contribution in free hospitality amounted to about $400,000. As soon as they were able, the Russlaender shared with Kanadier the reception of later immigrants.



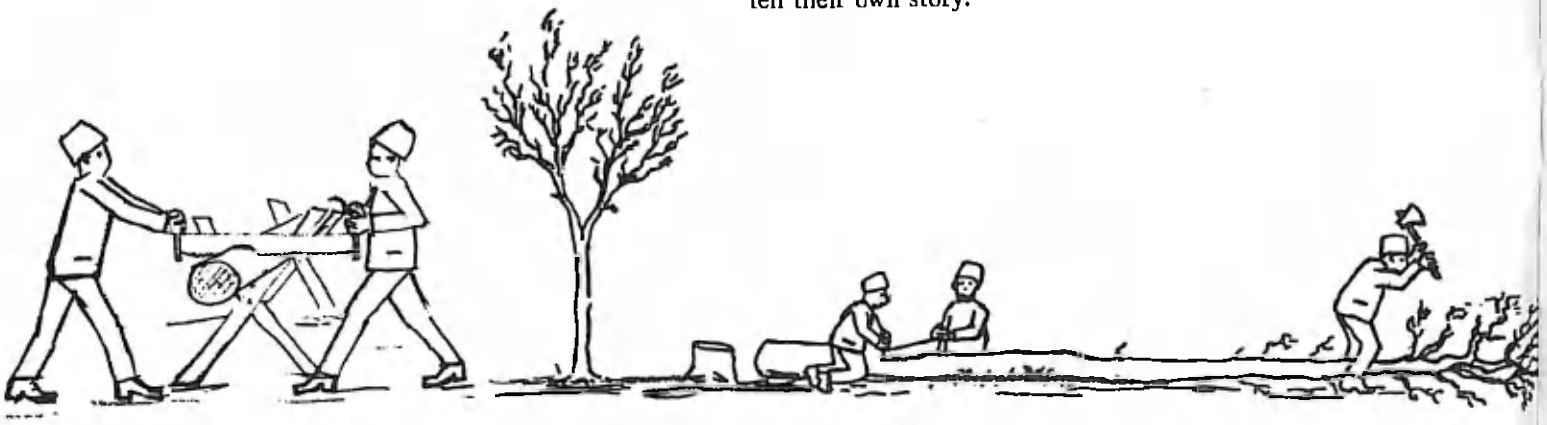
Go up to the mountain, and bring wood and build the house. . . .

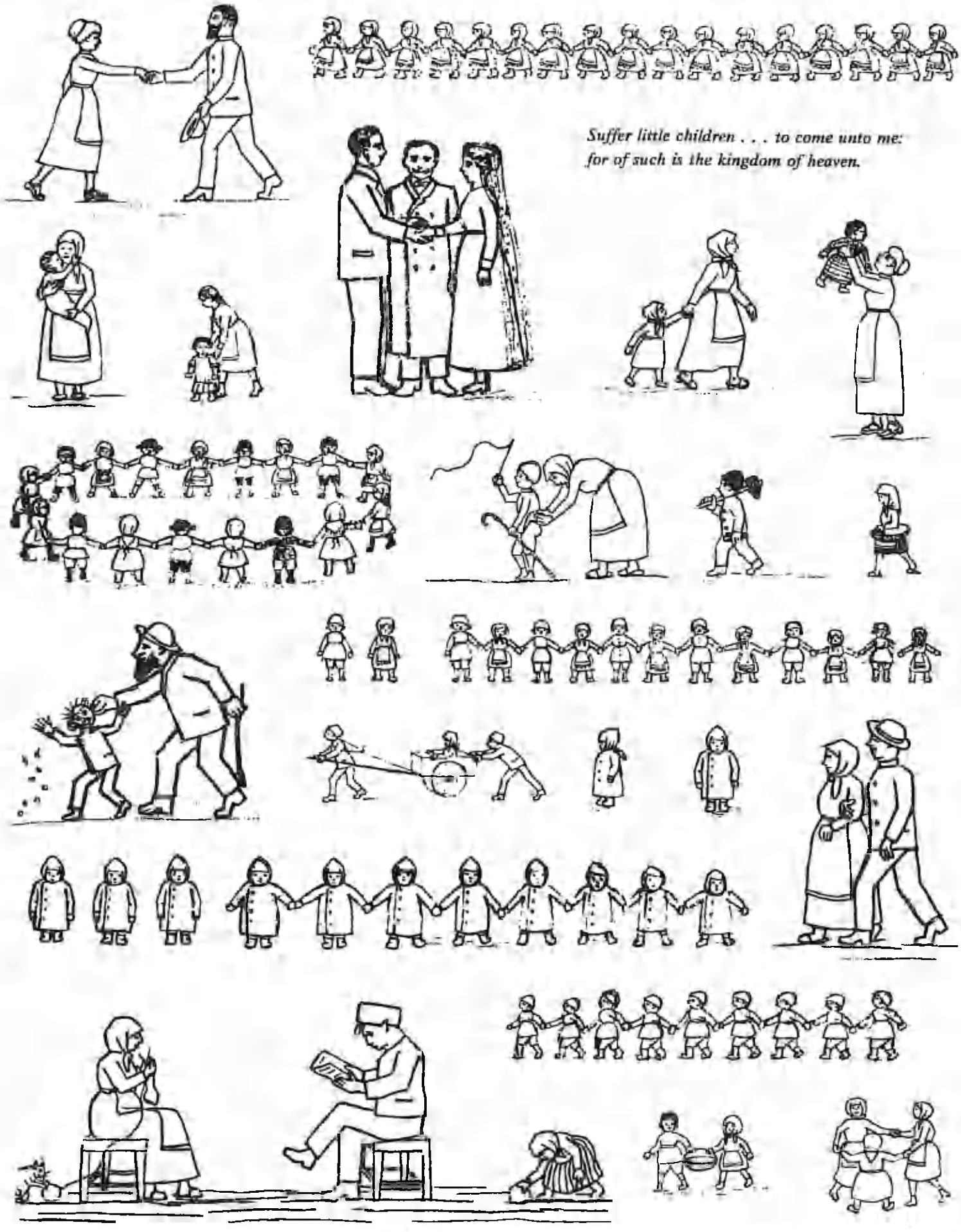
Sketches from a Chortitza Boyhood



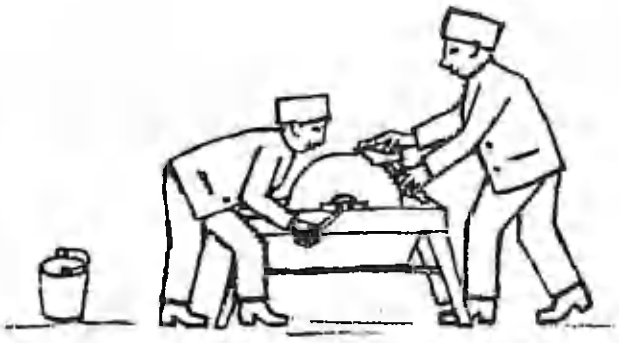
These are drawings in pencil and pen from the hand of the Mennonite artist John Klassen. Together they tell of a world which now exists only in memory—the village life of the Mennonites of South Russia a half century and more ago. Selected for presentation here are only a small fraction of his collection of tiny sketches preserved from the early years of this century.

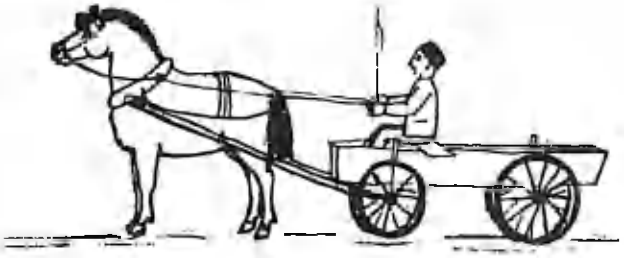
John Klassen was born and grew to manhood in the Chortitza, "the Old Colony." These sketches were done on assorted scraps of paper which could be found in those impoverished years of the war and its aftermath. Here one glimpses again the joys of life in a Russian Mennonite village, followed by the tragedies of war, revolution and famine. The sketches are offered without explanation; they tell their own story.

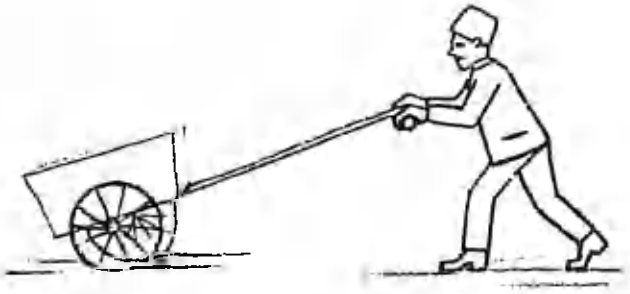


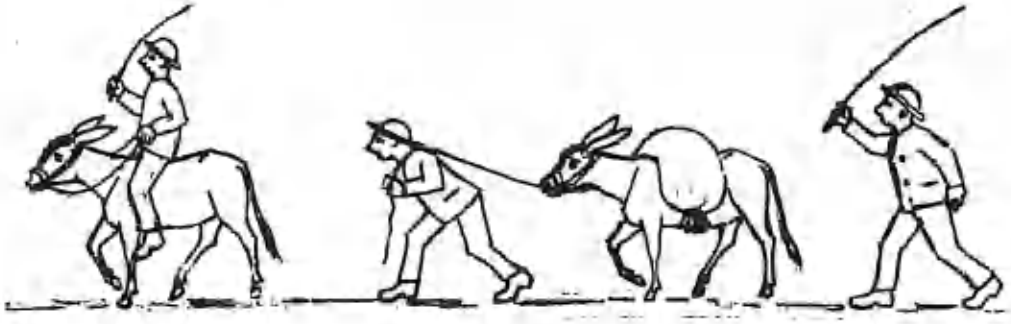


Suffer little children . . . to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.



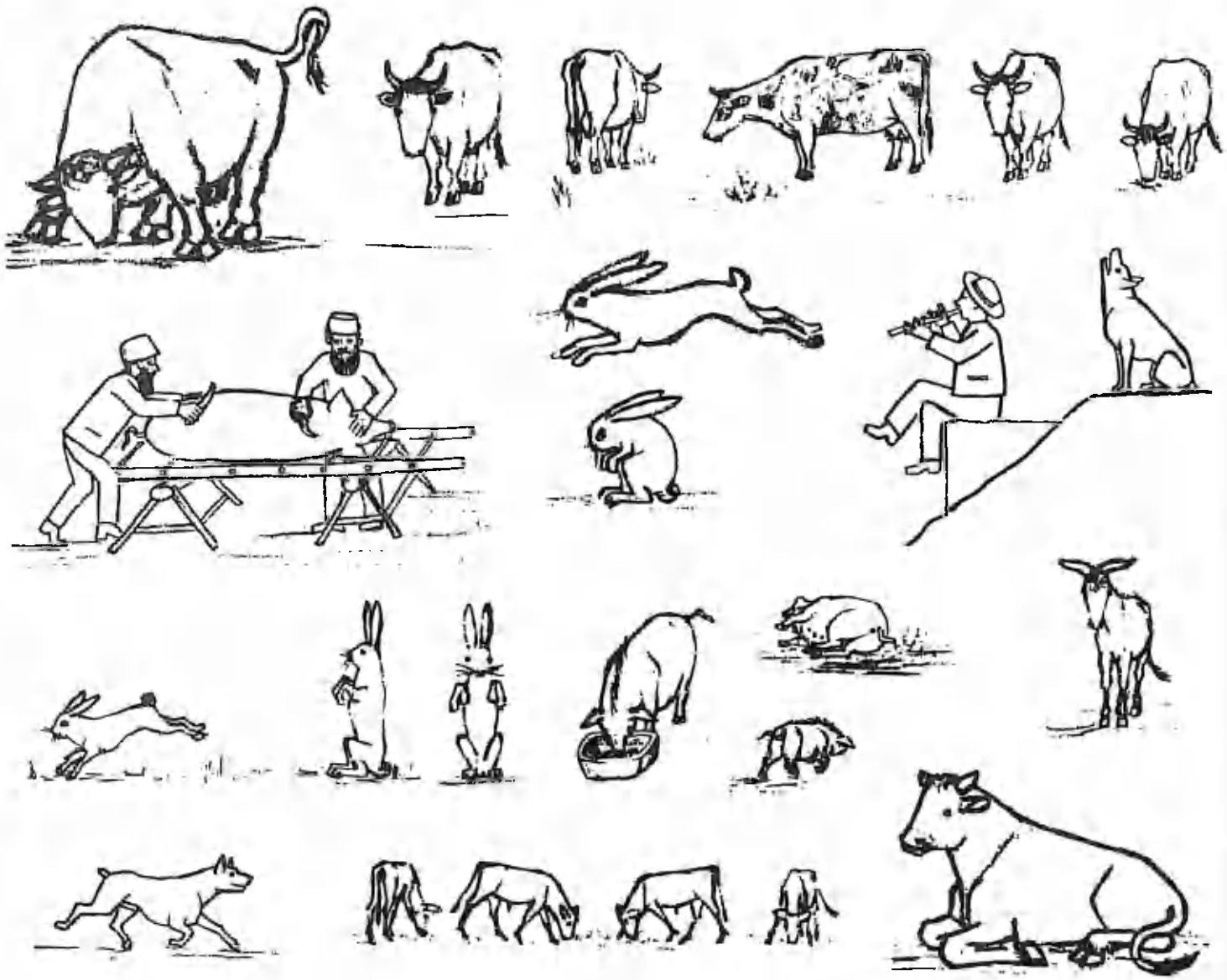




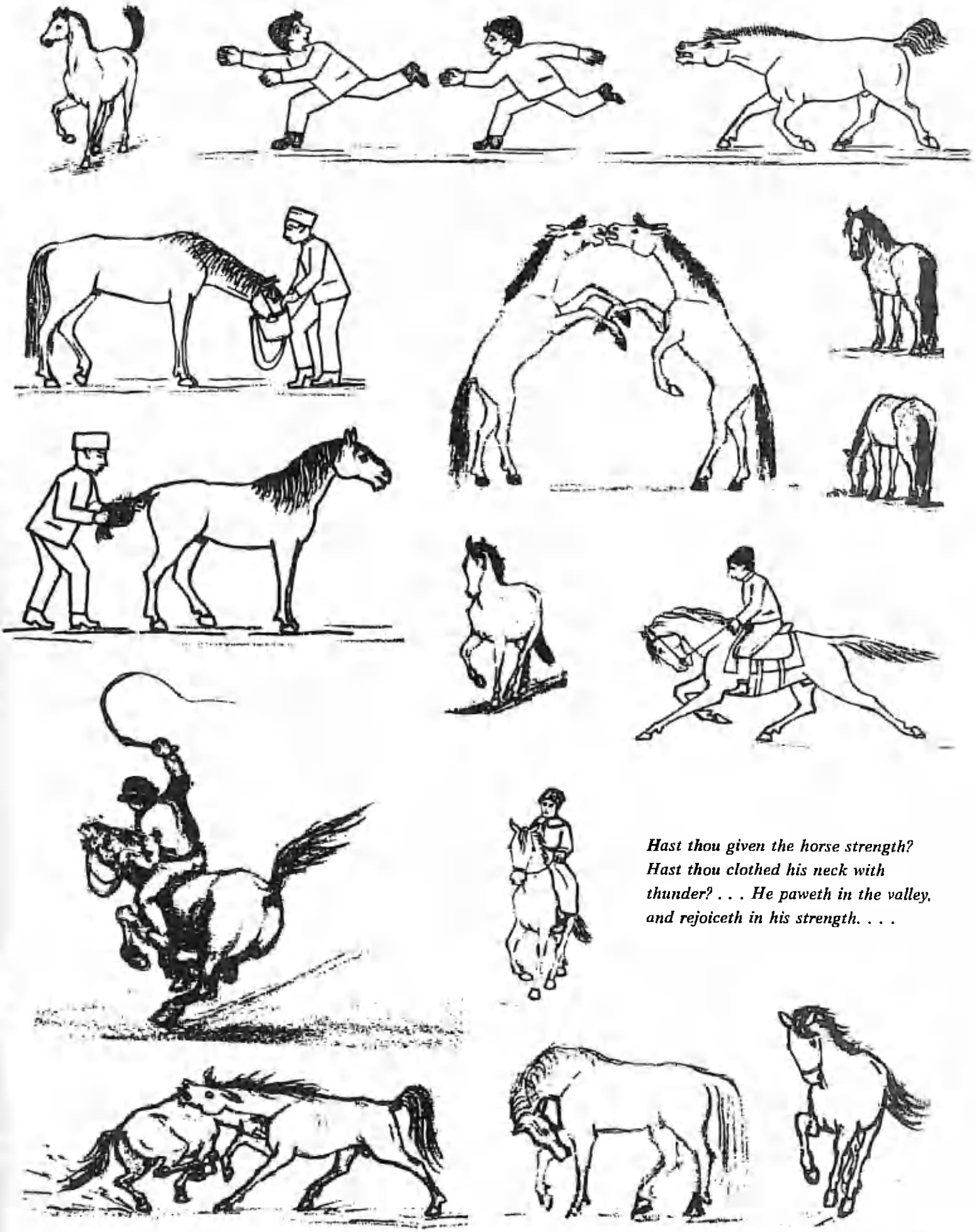


Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening.

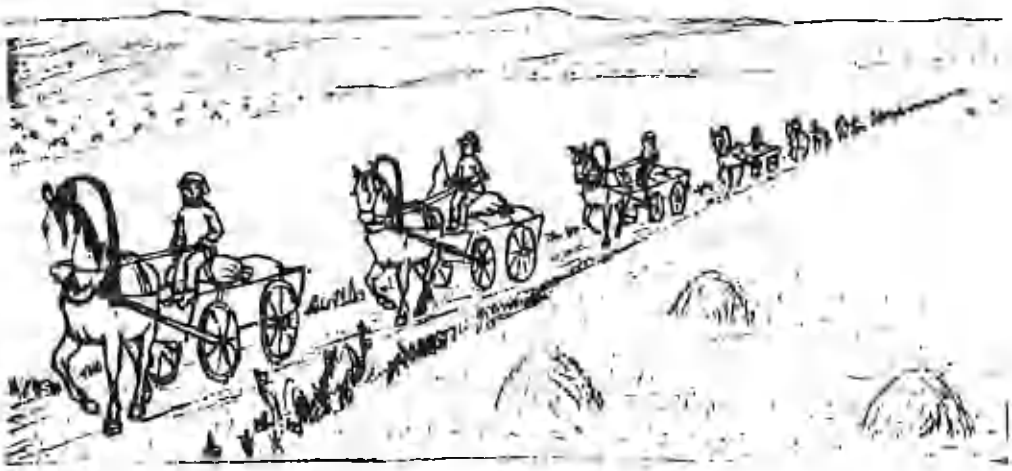
Wherewithal shall we be clothed? . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.



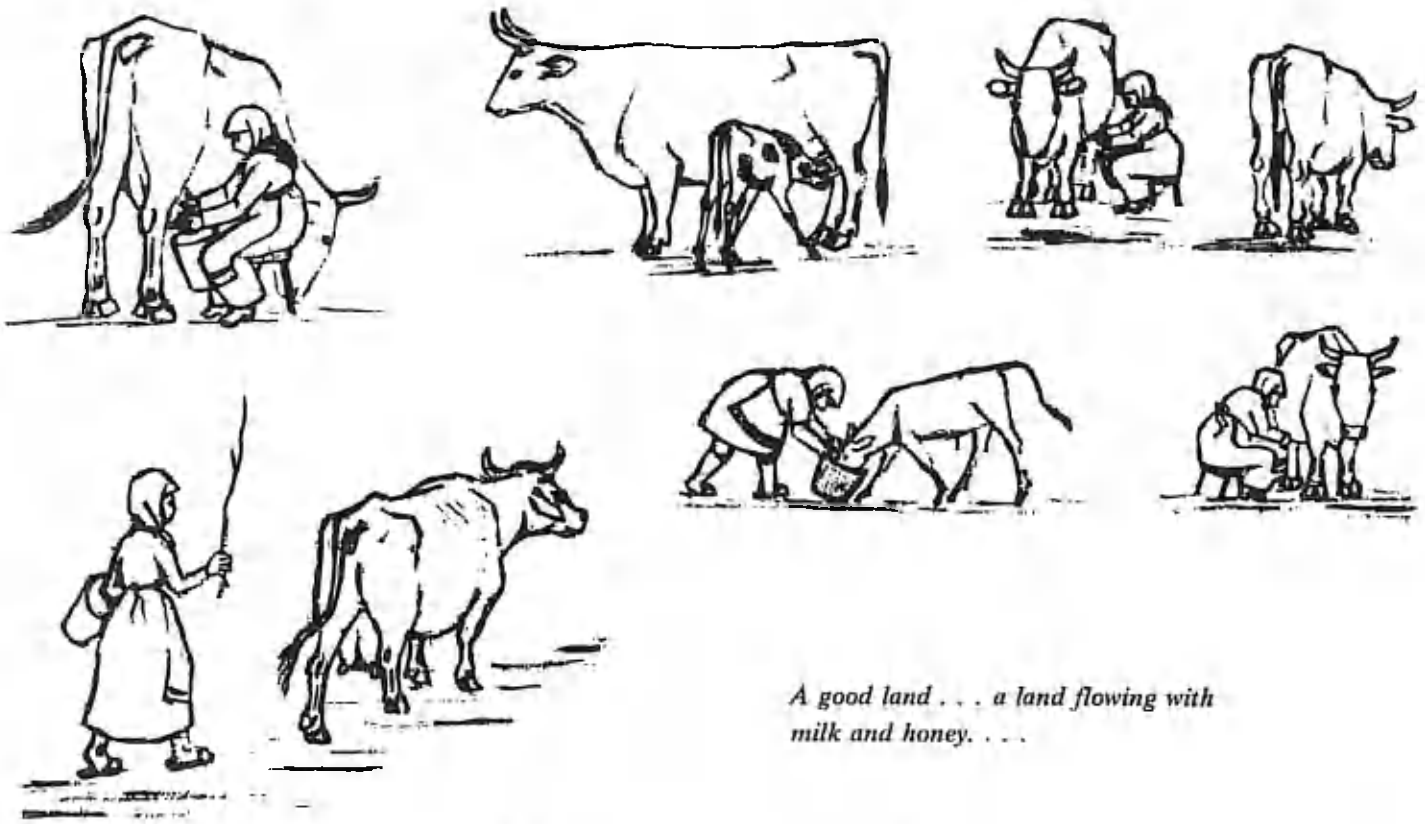
And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind . . . and God saw that it was good.



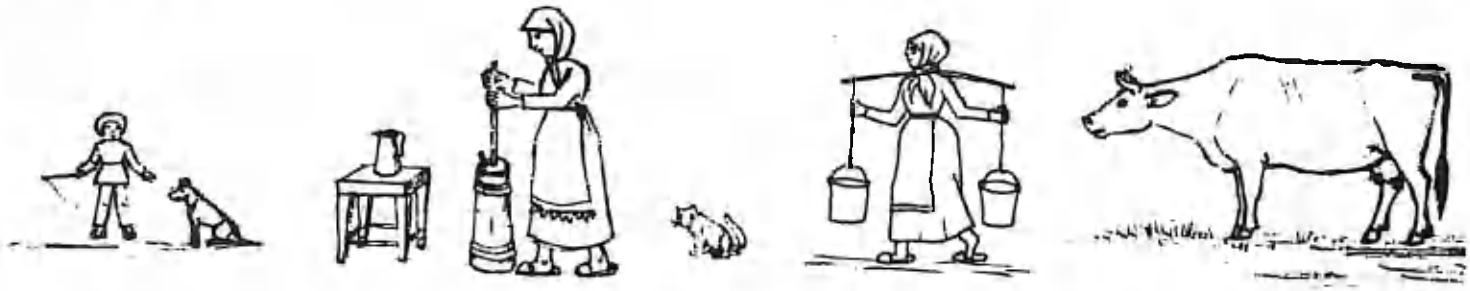
Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? . . . He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. . . .

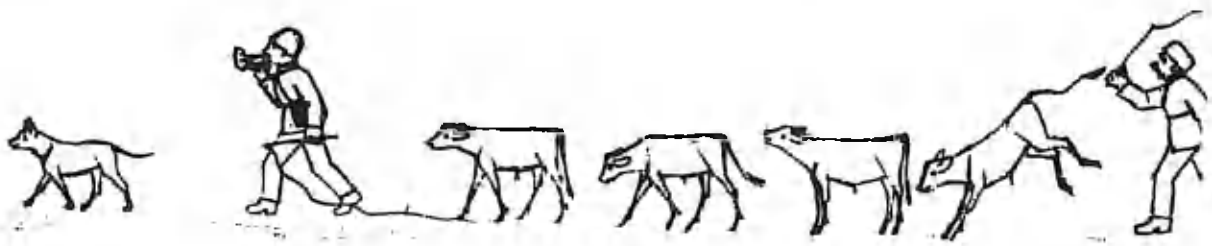


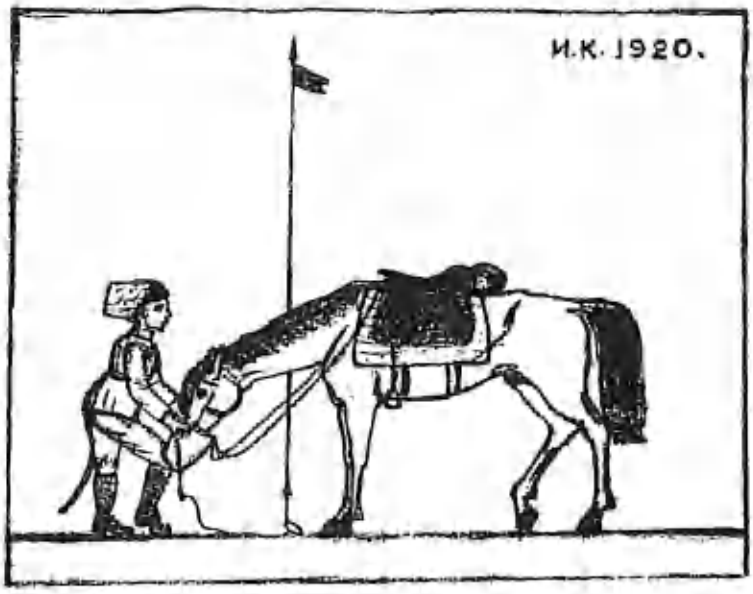
The harvest truly is plenteous . . . pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

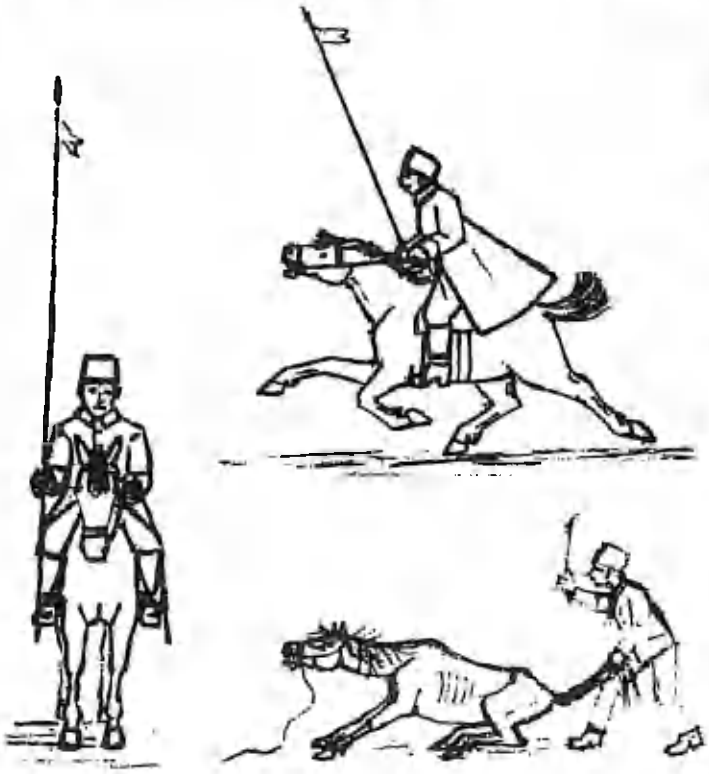


A good land . . . a land flowing with milk and honey. . . .

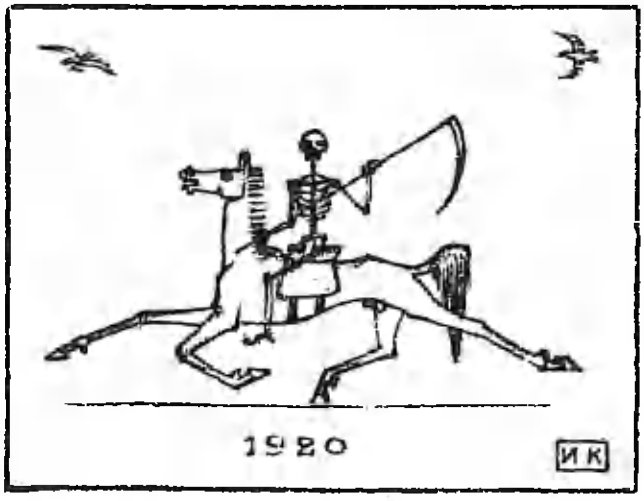




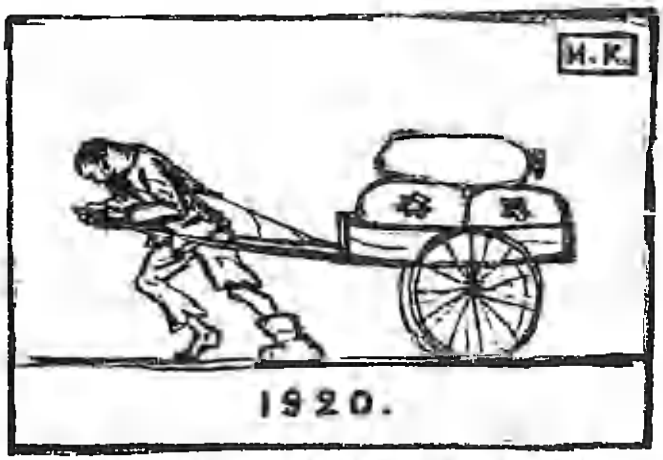




There is a noise of war. . . .



For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: naked, and ye clothed me. . . .



The Artistic Pilgrimage of John P. Klassen

By LARRY KEHLER

Art is not a handicraft, it is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced.—Tolstoy

I have in my hands a ball of clay," he began simply. "Clay, as you know, is one of the most common raw materials we find in nature. It is also the most inglorious and helpless of all matter. We people are just like that. By ourselves we are quite helpless, but touched by the spirit of God, we, too, can be transformed into new creatures. I shall demonstrate this transformation by making a pitcher."

Over 300 times after he reached the age of 60 John P. Klassen, the artist from Bluffton, Ohio, gave this lecture at church functions, services club luncheons, 4-H club rallies, and a variety of other meetings in the United States and Canada.

This time, however, he was giving the lecture in his own basement studio for my benefit. He confided that he had not given the talk in over a year. (It was 1968 when I visited with Mr. and Mrs. Klassen for three days. He was 80 then.) The previous night, he explained, he had rehearsed the talk several times to make certain that he still remembered the words.

He pointed me to a chair in his art-cluttered studio and began his talk. The words came quietly and smoothly. Every few minutes he paused to concentrate on the wet lump of clay on his electric potter's wheel. With deft hands still amazingly steady for his age, he formed the inside of the pitcher.

"What is the purpose of life? For the pitcher I am making now it must be to hold some precious content, to preserve it well, and then to pour it out for others to enjoy. In other words, a life of service, sharing, and giving. But in order to give, one must first receive. First our own inner life must be enriched and expanded. Then we are ready to give and to share."

Next came the handle.

"As I pull the clay (for the handle), I press it from every possible side because I know from life's experiences that outside pressure properly absorbed creates inner strength, and inner strength is a God-given power which not only enables us to keep calm and constant control over ourselves, but it also helps us to overcome and to prevent evil."

Finally, out of the cone of unsightly clay an attractive pitcher was created.

"But this newborn pitcher is still very soft, green, and wet," he continues. "Now that the shaping is done, the water must be completely taken out. To accomplish this, you simply bake or fire everything you make of clay. For our pitcher this will be a trial . . . because the heat will have to be so intense that it will actually bake out the moisture. . . ."

"This is also true of our own life," he emphasizes with conviction. "We, too, have to go through many hard experiences, much suffering and pain. Sometimes we may even feel that God is expecting too much of us. . . . But God, the Creator, takes care of his creation. He watches over the life of everyone of us. . . . But woe unto us if we when going through the solid tests of life keep hidden deep in our hearts some impurities. . . . These must be eliminated or else they will surely destroy us."

John Klassen never charged a fee for the lecture. Usually he merely asked that his travel costs be reimbursed.

Old age and retirement had not dampened his enthusiasm for life and art. Most days he still spent several hours in his basement workshop, chiselling carefully and lovingly on a woodcarving of the Good Samaritan.

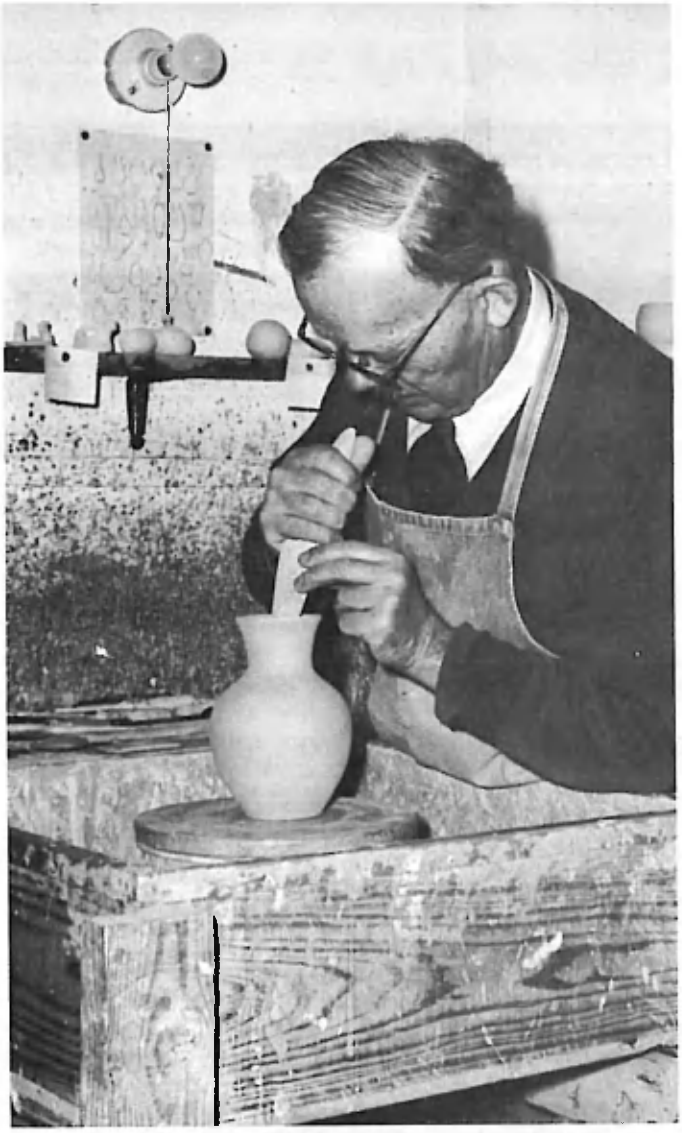
But John Klassen is much more than an artist. He is a deeply committed Anabaptist, a dedicated citizen of his chosen nation, a devoted family man, and a loyal booster of Bluffton College, the school which he served as art instructor from 1924 to his retirement in 1958.

The Artist and Scholar

Klassen became expert in the use of several artistic media. He developed skills in ceramics, wood-carving, and painting. But his most notable works are his sculptures.

The idea of an artistic career was first sparked by teachers and friends who urged him to go on to art school after he graduated from the Mennonite secondary school in Chortitza in the Ukraine. He was accepted for admission to an art school in Moscow in 1905, but unrest in the capital caused his parents to have second thoughts about allowing their talented 17-year-old son to go off to the big city alone.

Larry Kehler of Winnipeg, Manitoba is editor of The Mennonite. *This article was originally published in the* Bluffton College Bulletin.



Klassen at the potter's wheel

(One of Klassen's classmates, Arnold Dyck, who later gained fame among Mennonites for his humorous Low German writings, went to an art school in St. Petersburg.

Klassen did, however, receive his parents' permission to go to Switzerland, where his uncle, Peter Dyck, was studying theology at the Evangelical Reformed "Predigerschule." For the next four years young John studied classical and modern languages, logic, and philosophy in Basel.

"When I went to Switzerland to study my main purpose was to find out more about God," he recalled." I always had the question: Where is God? Who is God?"

In 1909 his father died. The oldest son took over the responsibilities of the large Klassen holdings and offered to help his brother, who still aspired to be an artist, to continue his training.

This support enabled John to go to Berlin, where he immersed himself for a year in the history of art and in painting and drawing from life. A professor noticed Klassen's skillful hands, and recommended that he go to Munich to concentrate on sculpture.

This suggestion appealed to the young art student, and he enrolled in a history of art class at the University in Munich and made arrangements to study under a renowned sculptor, Professor Kurtz.

The history of art course was taught by Professor Berger, who had just initiated a "Kunstgeschichtliches-praktikum." This was an experimental class which combined studies in the history of art with practical artistic experience.

The four years in Munich had a tremendous influence on Klassen's thinking about art.

"The training I received in Germany," he recalls now, "is still my basic skill, my foundation. Their philosophy was to observe and follow nature and then to build one's skills on that." Klassen, however, did not copy nature. He put himself into it.

He felt that the best art has meaning. "The real masters, Rembrandt, Michelangelo, and all the great artists, put meaning into their work."

"My life is full of meaning, so if I want to be honest in what I say about life, I have to give it meaning," he explained. "I went through many hardships and all kinds of experiences that were not meaningless."

And if art is to have meaning, he said further, it must also express something of the spiritual side of life. "It is the spiritual side of life that inspires me. It gives me ideas. And I have connections that way with life itself, with our people, with our church."

Along with his concern about meaning and the spiritual dimension in art, he gave careful attention to detail. In Munich he took courses in human and animal anatomy, the latter under a veterinarian, and he studied perspective under a leading German architect.

The happy years in Munich halted abruptly in 1914 when the "war to end all wars" engulfed the continent.

It would have taken only one more year for Klassen to earn a Ph.D. degree in history of art, but that opportunity was snatched from him when he boarded the last train from Germany to the Russian border.

The German army was already digging trenches when the trainload of Russians arrived at the border. The soldiers shook their fists menacingly at the passengers as they walked across the boundary, but they did not shoot.

Christmas, 1914, Klassen came home to a country at war. For the next nine years he was caught up in one of the most momentous upheavals in modern history, the First World War followed immediately by the Russian revolution.

Klassen had several opportunities to use his skills as a sculptor during that fateful decade, but he recalls now, "When you live through a war . . . it's better not to do art work when the soldiers are dying and getting wounded. That isn't the place to do it. . . . I did, however, make little sketches with a pencil so that I would later remember the experience."

Many of the plaques and paintings he did at Bluffton were inspired by the revolution. "My best school was my experience in Russia," he admitted.

Along with 10,000 other Mennonite men, Klassen was permitted to serve in the Red Cross instead of doing military duty. While serving in this capacity he came to the attention of the Red Cross leader for the area, Prince Uruso, a personal friend of the Czar. The Prince outlined a number of sculptures he wanted Klassen to do once the fighting would cease, but the war went badly and the revolution came hard on its heels, consequently none of these big projects were ever carried out.

Klassen relishes telling his grandchildren about the

Statue of a Russian Cossack, a work completed by Klassen in 1939, is located on the Bluffton College campus.

time he buried Catharine the Great during the revolution. During one of the periods of anarchy he visited a city in the Ukraine and noticed that a large bronze statue of Catharine the Great, an attractive piece made in Paris, had been toppled to the ground. Two of its fingers were missing. Klassen realized that this work of art was in danger of being mutilated by scavengers if it wasn't protected somehow. He persuaded the director of the museum, on whose property the statue was located, to help him save Catharine the Great. That evening they quietly dug a hole on the museum grounds, rolled the statue into it, and covered it up. He has wondered many times since if the statue was ever dug up.

Before the revolution flared up a wealthy Mennonite industrialist, Jacob Niebuhr, commissioned Klassen to make a large sculpture for a recreational area he had established on the Dnieper River. The statue was to be a gift to the Ukrainian people and a symbol of the need for better understanding between the Mennonites and their Russian neighbors.

Klassen pondered this assignment for some time and finally suggested to Niebuhr that he erect a statue of a "Kobzar," a Ukrainian minstrel. Kobzars sang to the accompaniment of a strange 36-string instrument, and occasionally even led the Ukrainian army into battle.

To Klassen's knowledge there was only one Kobzar left in Russia. He was blind and sang in the opera house in St. Petersburg. Arrangements were made for the sightless musician to come to the Ukraine to sit for Klassen.

This is how Klassen recalls the story.

"The Kobzar stayed at our house for a month. During that time I made a figure of clay and then cast it in plaster.

"I remember the Ukrainians when they heard the music that came from our place. They were happy. The old men had tears running down their cheeks. This was part of their history.

"I notified Jacob Niebuhr that I had completed the work on the plaster model and that I was now ready for the stone work. He wanted the figure to be five times life size.

"Niebuhr decided first to get permission from the government to put up such a monument. When he came back, he reported that the governor had been very friendly and had commented that this was a beautiful thing to do for the Ukrainian people, but he was fearful that the Czar would not be pleased because he did not like the Ukrainians to demonstrate their nationalistic feelings."

His inability to proceed with this project was one of the major disappointments of Klassen's life.

"The Mennonites had lived with the Ukrainian people for 150 years. Here was a Mennonite artist now wishing to make a monument for the Ukrainians. We could speak

their language. We knew them well. They were good to us, and now we wanted to put this all into expression by means of art. I think it was a wonderful idea. It is too bad that it didn't come true."

This dream of building a bridge of understanding between the Mennonites and Ukrainians has never left Klassen. He still is hopeful that some day a giant stone statue of the Kobzar, "the blind musician," can be erected in some Ukrainian immigrant community in Canada or the United States.

He has a small, stone model of the Kobzar standing outside the front entrance of his house. This pyramid-shaped statue was sculptured from memory after he came to America.

Klassen joined the Bluffton College faculty in 1924, a year after he had immigrated to Canada from Russia. The invitation to Bluffton came from the president, Dr. S. K. Mosiman, who was determined to provide what assistance he could to the recent Mennonite immigrants from revolution-torn Russia.

President Mosiman provided the encouragement and support Klassen needed during those first difficult years in America. "Dr. Mosiman was my friend," Klassen recalled. "He understood me and helped me in every way he could. If he took a trip to Chicago, he would take me along to see the museum."

At Dr. Mosiman's directive, a workroom with skylights was built in the college's new garage. Here Klassen worked for many years. Later he was moved to the top floor of the administration building.

In the early 1930s, again at Dr. Mosiman's suggestion, Klassen enrolled in a summer art course at Ohio State University. It was here that he began working in ceramics in earnest, although he had worked with clay in Russia earlier.

He made vases and pitchers commemorating those elements of nature for which he had a special appreciation—wheat, corn, eggs, flowers, the seasons, a Ukrainian Easter egg, and many others. His favorite symbols were wheat, corn, and clover.

It was also during that first decade on the Bluffton campus that he made numerous plaques of the experiences he and his family had had in Russia so recently. He depicted the chilling horrors and tragic aftermath of war and revolution.

As if in gratitude to Bluffton for giving him an opportunity to once again pursue his art, he did a number of bronze castings, marble statues, and other pieces depicting campus life and the people who were especially dear to him.

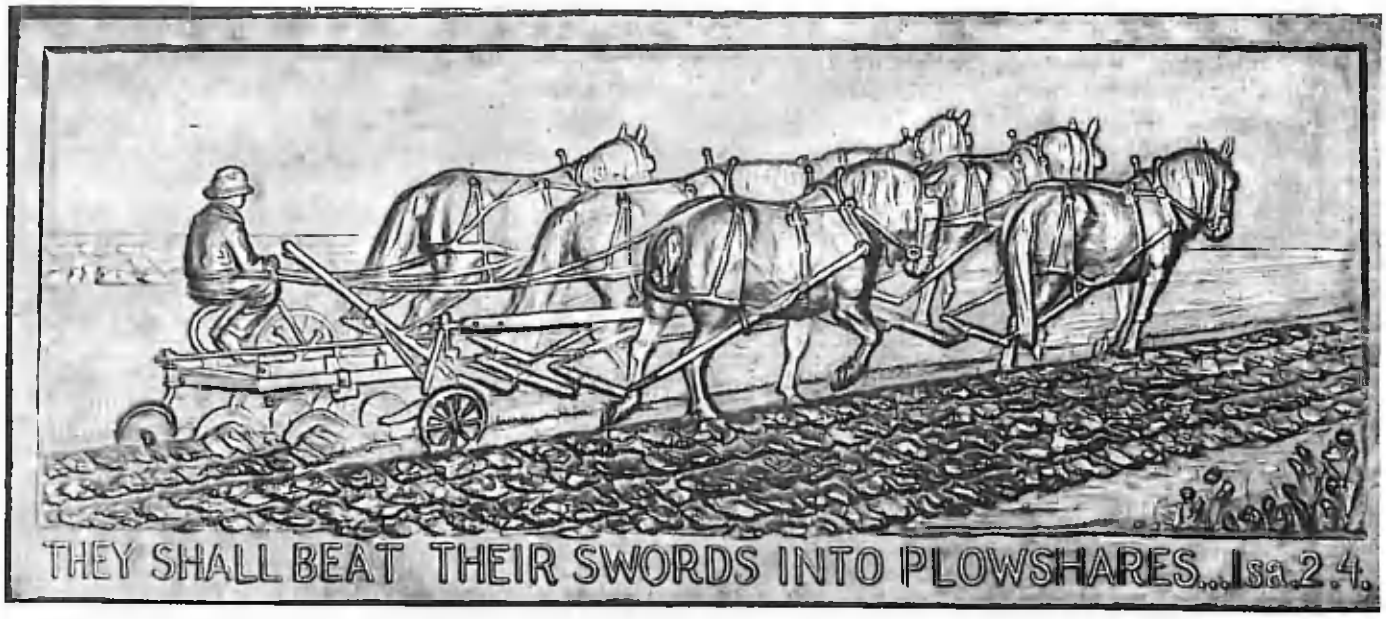
In his crowded work room I saw castings of a trumpet player, a Bluffton baseball pitcher, a choir conductor, a plaque honoring C. H. Musselman, an early benefactor of the college; a multitude of little Bluffton beavers, a plaque of an early art student, and many other reminders of a bygone era in the college's story.

His approach to art instruction was informal. He encouraged students to decide for themselves what they wanted to do. He urged them, however, to choose constructive themes. TV personality Hugh Downs, a Bluffton alumnus, remembers Klassen as one of his favorite instructors at the college.

In 1947 he began giving instructions in woodcarving at 4-H club summer camps in Illinois. He returned to this vacation employment for seven consecutive years. This

Klassen stands in sculptor's pose outside his home with his small stone model of the Kobzar, a Ukrainian minstrel.

Close-up detail of the Kobzar. The plan to erect a large statue such as this in the Ukraine was never realized.



Large bronze plaque illustrating Isaiah 2:4 is one of Klassen's better known works.

experience provided the impetus for him to concentrate on this medium for a number of years.

"When I pick up a piece of wood, just any shape, I wonder what is in it already. . . . Once I see my idea in it, I just have to carve to take off everything that is around that idea. . . . The more I simplify, the better the results. If I leave out the little things and stress the big things, such as the grain and the natural coloring, then I have control over the whole work."

Conformity to established patterns did not come easily to Klassen, the artist and scholar. He disliked assigning grades to his students' work, and he was known to give all his students the same grade.

Pomp and formality irritated him. He regularly refused to wear cap and gown in the commencement exercises. "That was just not for me so I refused to wear it."

Many outstanding pieces have been created by Klassen, the artist, but he probably has no real monumental work for which he will be remembered. But this can be blamed to a large degree on the unsettled times in which he lived. He had neither the resources nor the general public acceptance necessary for a productive artistic career. It would not seem inappropriate to suggest that had Klassen been able to pursue his artistic interests in Europe, he would probably have gained much wider recognition and appreciation.

He officially retired from the Bluffton staff in 1958, at the age of 70, but he worked two more years on a part-time basis. The college has since conferred on him the "professor emeritus" title in recognition of his 34 years of service.

The Anabaptist-Mennonite

For John Klassen religious commitment is the glue that holds life together. Deeply committed to the Anabaptist view of life, he saw reconciliation as one of the crucial needs of our time.

In one of our conversations he emphasized, "We have to build bridges between us and other people, our neighbors. If we can do that, we can do a lot of good. This has to be done in religious work, too. We must build bridges."

He maintained that he bears no ill will against the Communists for the suffering he and his family and friends endured at the Russians' hands during the revolution. It is his opinion that there is something wrong with Mennonites who cannot forgive and forget.

Klassen demonstrated his determined pacifist position many times in his life time. During World War I and the revolution, for example, he did alternative service in the Russian Red Cross. He declined strong urgings to join the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* and the White Army. Many of his plaques and statues very pointedly protest against the inhumanity and futility of war.

A plaque which now hangs at both Bluffton and Bethel colleges is his best known work in this category. It shows a team of horses plowing and contains the inscription from Isaiah, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares."

Another plaque shows a young soldier in the Russian revolution being forced to dig his own grave prior to his execution. The executioners are his former high school classmates who happened to be conscripted by a different army in the civil war.

When war clouds were threatening the world ominously in the late 1930s and the widespread use of poison gases was predicted, Klassen did a two-foot statue which some students later dubbed "The modern Madonna and child." This piece shows a fleeing mother carrying a child, both are wearing gas masks.

During World War II he traveled extensively in Civilian Public Service camps throughout the United States giving instructions in art and attempting to foster the spirit of peace.

His most forceful peace testimony, however, was not given in art form but in a courtroom. In 1931—eight years after their arrival in North America—Professor and Mrs. Klassen applied for U.S. citizenship. Their applications were rejected at a hearing in Lima, Ohio, on Sept. 27, 1931, because of their conscientious objection to war service and their refusal to take the oath of allegiance without reservation.

Klassen told the court, "I came to the United States in 1924 with the conviction that here I would find religious

• *Continued on page 125*

TWO SONS VIEW
THEIR FATHER'S RUSSIAN HOMELAND

Chortitza Revisited

By PAUL KLASSEN
With assistance from Otto Klassen

Street in Chortitza today

Ancient oak, a landmark of Chortitza

What's in a name? Chortitza: a place name. A small village in South Russia, the Ukraine. Chortitza: "wolf hound" in the Ukrainian language. Chortitza: the place where the Mennonite colonization in Russia began, where they were to create many proud monuments to their ingenuity, energy and culture. And the place they finally left when their dream turned into a nightmare.

Chortitza: the home of our parents. The place where our ancestors lived and died for 150 years. Chortitza: the name that always came up when, as youngsters, we heard our parents talk with others about things that had happened. There were many beautiful memories but there were also tales of terror—murders, robberies, famine. And always the poignant wondering about those who were left behind. In the early years an occasional letter arrived sometimes edged in black, with the date mark: Chortitza." Then no more. For years Chortitza slept only as a memory.

Then came World War II and war overcame the village again. This time the remnant of Mennonites were all forced to leave. Again an occasional letter, but now from Siberia, word from one already given up. But Chortitza slept again for those who had known it so long and so well.

Then suddenly it became possible to see it again—to actually go there! For some in our family memories were too tragic, but for others it was a dream hardly hoped for come true. It would be different, all changed. Still, it would be Chortitza. And even if the inhabitants are new and the buildings changed, it can't be all gone. The Dnieper, after all, would still be there, and the island, and surely the great oak tree.

Paul Klassen of Wadsworth, Ohio is a social worker. Otto Klassen is medical director of Oaklawn Psychiatric Center, Elkhart, Ind.

And so we went. We joined a group of others who had places to visit and people to seek out. Three brothers who had never seen their fatherland: we went and we saw. Only fleetingly, only fragments, but we were there and we knew it was the place. Before we got there we had visited Alma Ata in the far reaches of Kazakhstan where a few of the survivors had settled. There we saw brothers and sisters reunited after 47 years. There we found a cousin who used to live in Chortitza, and others who came to say that they remembered our parents. After 50 years and from the opposite side of the earth the bond to Chortitza was still there.

A growing sense of anticipation overcame us as we flew from Kiev to Zaporozhye. The plane flew directly over the broad, meandering Dnieper, as though we had a river pilot for a navigator. From above we would see every detail of this majestic river as it came rolling down from the north country. From Kiev its course is southeastward but at Dnepropetrovsk (formerly Ekatarinaslav) the river makes a great bend and turns finally to the south, as though drawn by the warmth of the Black Sea.

Many towns and villages were visible on either side, and

somewhere below and on our right lay the fields that our father had helped to cultivate, and had so often sketched and painted. With a speed that seemed almost disrespectful the magic jet conquered the distances over the steppes that used to take our parents days in a horse-drawn carriage or railroad.

One of the outstanding features of the Dnieper is the existence of its many sandy banks. They are so extensive that one gets the impression of a seashore rather than a river bank. As we approached Zaporozhye the Dnieper parted, and the long form of Chortitza Island appeared. This is the place where the storied rapids began, and where the giant granite boulders replace the sandy beaches. Excited, we could see exactly the place, across from the foot of the island, where our grandfather walked from his home for a swim until he was 80. At the other end stands the magnificent dam, Lenin's dream, erected in the decade after our parents left. This island was the home of the fierce, formerly feared but now revered Zaporozhye Cossacks, as well as some Mennonite colonists.

It was only a short bus trip from Zaporozhye to the village of Chortitza. Our first view of the town was a cluster of buildings in the distance when we came over a rise in the road from the Dnieper River. In the foreground was Rosental, its twin village, and beyond was Chortitza. Chortitza is bigger now, actually a suburb of Zaporozhye. The airport is in Zaporozhye, the former small city of Alexanderowsk, now a large manufacturing and transportation center of 700,000 people.

The first landmark was the home of Johann Pries, still standing in good repair and quite identifiable as a Mennonite structure. From this we could determine a house where our parents had lived for a short time. Farther up the village street we found the grade school building, still recognizable to those who remember it. We knew then that three doors down was where the house of our grandfather, The Elder Isaac Dyck, had stood, the place where our mother had grown up, the place she so greatly loved. We learned also that this beautiful house had been completely destroyed in World War II, and we looked only at the spot, now a garden place. I stooped to pick up a fragment of red brick, one part of a house. Who knows?

Next came a building we all recognized on sight, the Maedchenschule. Here our mother had attended school, here our parents had lived while our father taught there, and here our elder brother was born. Those were the terrible revolutionary and famine-stricken years of 1921-23. Here it was that the young P. C. Hiebert, sent by the newly created MCC from America, found them, bringing bread and hope. And from here it was that they left by boxcar to the port and then to Canada. Another fragment: a bucket handle in my suitcase to give a customs officer something to ponder over.

As my brother stood taking a picture of the Maedchenschule he was approached cautiously by gaunt, pale man who spoke to him in excellent German. He inquired about my brother's interest in the building and of his identity. When informed that our father had once taught there he seemed the more interested, and asked if he had gone to Canada. Thus encouraged, my brother asked about his own name, and if he might be of German origin. The stranger seemed startled and somewhat alarmed. Quickly he denied this, and gave his name "Ivan Petrovich" (our father's Russian name!) I was then called to help with the German conversation, but as I approached, the man turned and hurriedly walked away, ignoring our requests to talk further. Later, as we were puzzling over this strange behavior and wondering whether we might have happened onto one of our own who had somehow remained or returned to Chortitza, we saw him again, walking on the other side of the street. We hailed him, but we might as well have called to the wind. His head never turned and his stride never slowed as he melted back into the village.

We finished the day by visiting another important landmark, the Alte Eiche, the great oak of Chortitza. It was beneath this ancient tree, then already over 500 years old, our forefathers had camped on their initial arrival in Russia. Now 700 years old, it has become a national monument and is fenced off and given meticulous care. Its massive trunk and lower branches, where our mother climbed, stand as they have for centuries, and its crown still shades the old well where our forefathers drew water.

On the following day we went to Chortitza Island, a favorite picnic spot of our parents and grandparents. A health resort now occupies one portion of it. We were told also of plans to build there a monument to the Zaporozhye Cossacks who made the island their stronghold long before the Mennonites came. We found fertile gardens and an old cemetery containing both Russian and Mennonite graves. On the island and on the Chortitza bank we saw the rugged stone cliffs that we had known from snapshots of long ago picnics. It was not difficult to see the picnickers rowing across from Chortitza and the children scrambling up the cliffs, and to hear the calls from their parents to be careful.

On our last night in the Chortitza area we went to the roof-top restaurant of our hotel to enjoy a dish of ice cream and a view of the city. (We had found Russian ice cream to be delicious and were well on the way to making it a nightly ritual.) Somehow in the press of people who were seeking an empty table we found ourselves seated with a young Russian couple. We found that the young woman could speak some English and was eager to practice it and to know us.

From this girl, then, came a fascinating story, for she too had had Mennonite origins, but had not herself known it until grown. Schultz was her maiden name. Her mother had lived in a Mennonite village in the Crimea. To her it had always been a curiosity that her grandmother spoke German. It was only when she grew up that she learned why. Her grandmother had been Mennonite, and during World War II the family had been relocated, somewhere beyond the Urals, with the rest of the Mennonite population. In order to protect them from further harassment the family concealed their background.

Our friend subsequently studied engineering and she and her husband, Yuri, also an engineer, were working in an auto factory in Zaporozhye, a factory originally built by the Mennonites. They were an intelligent and charming couple and were as greatly concerned about world peace as we. They asked some questions about American politics during that our election year, and we gave them our viewpoint. They seemed a little amazed that we spoke so freely.

And little did we know of other events that were occurring that night. It was June 17, 1972—Watergate. Strange things that happen in the night.

WRITTEN ON THE BACK OF
MILK CAN LABELS, AN ACCOUNT
OF THE CHAOTIC YEARS
FOLLOWING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Diary of Anna Baerg

By PETER J. DYCK

Portrait of Anna Baerg

We felt like men who had just struck gold. We could hardly believe our eyes. "It's a treasure," exclaimed Robert Kreider, then vice-president of the Mennonite Central Committee, paging through a collection of beautifully-preserved flowers, leaves, blossoms, and grasses gathered in Russia in the years of 1917 to 1919. Everything was neatly mounted and labeled in both Russian and German. There must have been hundreds of specimens.

But there was more than this delightful flora collection. A much greater treasure was the diary of Anna Baerg which we found that day in Waldheim, an obscure little town in Saskatchewan. It seems the first entry into the diary was made on November 14, 1916 in Alexanderkrone, Molotschna, Russia, the last entry is dated August 21, 1956, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

This journal of 40 years, written in excellent German (see specimen) and covering the events of the Russian Revolution, the famine, emigration, as well as a great deal of personal intimacies, was not written for publication. In fact it is not even intact. Some pages are in Saskatchewan, others in Ontario and the rest in British Columbia with three brothers and sisters of the deceased author.

Who Was Anna Baerg?

Who was this clever and inventive person with the urge to write even when there was no paper? Who gathered and organized all that flora? Who wrote the numerous poems for special occasions and for no occasions at all? Who wrote in her diary on September 6, 1917, "I love music and song. They are a beautiful gift from God intended to lift the soul out of the dust of daily routine into the higher spheres above."

Anna Baerg was born in Molotschna, Russia, in 1897 and died at the age of 75 in Abbotsford, B. C. She was a hunchback. She never married. She loved life and she dearly loved her Savior, Jesus Christ. Her faith did not depend on her feelings but on God's promises, which she claimed for herself. At 21 she wrote: "And no matter how many times the Devil whispers that I am not a child of God, I am anyway. Nobody, not even the Devil, can deny the historic fact of Golgotha, and what happened there was also for me. I belong to Jesus, and nobody is going to separate us."

A sign that Anna Baerg was a true artist is the fact that she wrote because she simply had to write. "It makes one so happy when it turns out right," she recorded on January 27, 1918, and wondered whether writing had been a gift God had given her. "Because then it would be one's duty to use it. But how can you do that unless there is also encouragement."

She wrote for self-fulfillment and "to be a small mirror of the events of life." And she was her own most severe critic. At the age of 19 she wrote: "Today I began to write a little story. Whether it will be a success I don't know. Once before I had written something, but later I burned it, it was no good."

Regarding the keeping of a diary she wrote: "If one keeps a diary, one ought to enter the impressions immedi-

Peter J. Dyck, a native of Russia, is presently in charge of the Europe and North Africa desk at MCC headquarters, Akron, Pa.

ately, while they are fresh, and the way one experienced it. Later everything pales and one also has difficulty in recapturing the mood."

From Dairy to Diary

Anna Baerg wrote even when there was no paper available. World War I, and the Revolution that followed, wrought havoc on Russia. When the rains stopped and the fields dried up, when animals died and people starved, when Mennonites in North America organized the MCC and began shipping relief supplies, and when the cans of condensed milk had arrived in Russia and their contents consumed, then the labels around those cans were carefully removed and used once more. This time they became the pages of her growing and exciting diary. It was a long way from the dairy in America to the diary in Russia. And finding hundreds of these labels nearly sewn together to make little books is not only evidence of her thrift and ingenuity but also a treasure that in itself records and interprets events on both sides of the Atlantic.

Anna Baerg suffered a great deal, not only physically. The diary reveals this. On December 4, 1916, the third year of World War I, she wrote: "If only it would be true! If only we would have peace soon. How many hearts would rejoice, how many tears of sorrow would become tears of joy. Oh, if only it would be true!" And when the revolution picked up where the war had stopped, when the hatred and violence continued and swept through all Russia, she wrote: "The anarchists are killing and burning everything. Women are being raped . . . I suffer because of these conditions. How long is this injustice going to continue."

Meanwhile famine was stalking through Russia. In his book, *Feeding the Hungry*, P. C. Hiebert says, "The famine was very grievous here, so that thousands died for want of food. Repeated cases of cannibalism were reported." (Page 241).

We turn to the diary, now, written neatly in notebooks in the better years and on scraps of paper, labels from tins and old checks when paper was not available, to see the events of those turbulent years in Russia through the eyes of Anna Baerg. Without further comment here are some of her entries:

1917

January 7. What shall we do? All joy and purpose for living has disappeared. There is nothing to look forward to anymore.

July 3. It is a real stormy day. And the way it is in nature, so it is also in our fatherland: Dark and foreboding. Nearby at Sudermanns 20 men broke into the buildings at night. It was a wild affair.

1918

January 8. Russia has never before known a time like this.

January 13. I will never forget these days. A band of robbers poured into our community, destroying and looting without restraint. Most of them were soldiers or at least they wore military uniforms, and with gun in hand demanded money.

February 6. In Halbstadt things are terrible these days. Seven persons were shot, including a 14-year-old boy.

November 28. A robber band under the leadership of Machnov is feared by everyone. Yesterday they talked about the 80 men (Mennonites) from Halbstadt who were successful in repelling 350 men of the Machnov robbers and now Machnov has come into this territory. It is reported that they are coming to kill everyone, they have decided to kill every bourgeoisie whether big or little. . . . It is a disgrace that there is so little trust in God, as if He could not protect us.

December 23. Yesterday afternoon, four men arrived here, all Mennonites. They had guns over their shoulders and hand grenades in their pockets. In short, everything just the opposite of what one calls nonresistance. I do not want to judge them, although I think God would have been able to deal with the robbers without this little heap of Mennonites. But I can't help wondering what our forefathers would have said about all this!

1920

January 24. News of sickness and death is coming to us from all sides.

February 22. The days are getting longer, it is getting warmer, and the snow is melting. Spring cannot be far away. Spring, beautiful spring, which comes every year. But a time comes when there is no more spring. There is no more spring this year for all those who have died.

May 12. A number of orphan children arrived in Halbstadt from the Old Colony because their parents have either been killed by Machnov or they have died of typhus.

June 4. What chaos, what terrible conditions. If an outside power does not intervene, Russia will not be able by herself to restore order for a long time, and it may be decades before the wounds she is inflicting herself will be healed.

June 5. Today there was much fighting. From early morning till after sundown, we could hear the roar of the cannons.

June 6. The streets are full of military convoys. Everybody has to give lodging and food to the soldiers.

June 21. Days like these Alexanderkrone has never seen. The day after the Reds left, the White military arrived and filled our houses. We expected that the battle would take place right in our village, but instead we had a surprise. Suddenly an airplane appeared above, circled several times and then there was a terrific crash, followed soon after by another one. We all fled into the cellars.

December 20. In Kleefeld, small pox is spreading, some people have already died and typhus is taking its toll in many villages.

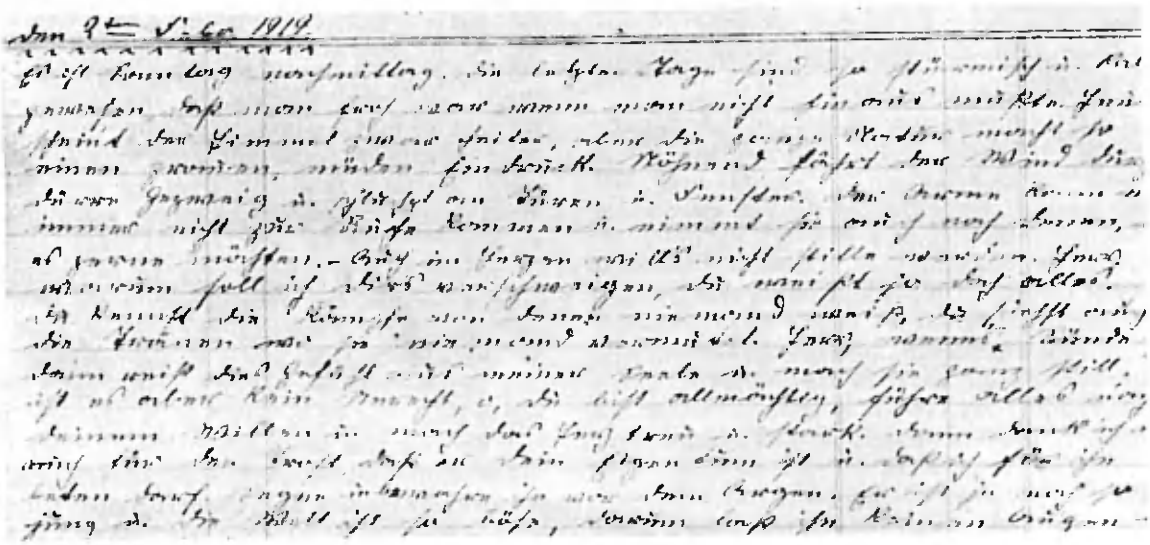
1921

July 7. What a life. One does not need to listen around much and you know enough to really get frightened about the future. In the first place there is the crop failure, and in the second there is the famine. In many places hunger is already the number one killer.

1922

January 26. Mr. Harder reported after the funeral today that the first refief is to arrive in the next days. These are free will gifts from Holland. Mr. Kornelsen told us in church that two shipments from America are also on the way. Miller is to arrive today in Orloff. Mr. Harder said that he had worked with Mr. Miller in Charkow translating for him and that he would probably travel with him some more and be his interpreter.

February 22. We planted potatoes and some vegetables.



Above: Label from milk can distributed by MCC in Russia.
Below: Anna Baerg's script on back of a label.

To be sure, it is a bit early, but the weather is so nice and we have to consider the conditions—this year we will have to live almost exclusively on vegetables because there will probably be little or no bread. I am so sorry for the little children. When Mr. Miller visited the school here, the little ones were overjoyed. Miss Goossen said that afterwards they had studied the word "happy" with the beginners. "Who is happy?" she had asked. They had all been happy! When she asked for the reason of their happiness, they said that it had been because of Mr. Miller's visit. He had made them so happy. In the Sunday school which Kornelsen teaches, and where the lesson had been about the feeding of the five thousand, I was moved to see with what confidence a little boy talked about "Uncle Miller" who was going to bring bread for everybody. And yet they have to wait so long. . .

March 1. Now the bread is here at last. Thank God! It is high time too because the suffering in many places is very severe. Many people have become victims of the black ghost, Famine. There are rumors that about 20 werst (ca. 15 miles) from here, they have dug graves for bodies not yet dead, because they fear that later they will not have the necessary strength for digging anymore. It is also said that some have eaten their own children. And how many ghost-like figures, ruined in body and soul, move aimlessly through the country begging for a piece of bread! I suppose it requires super-human strength to remain firm in one's principles, to resist the gravitational pull downwards. Some of this inner struggle we have experienced ourselves, although we have not yet really experienced starvation. We are always hungry, but we are not yet starving.

March 10. Since yesterday we also have the American relief kitchen here. I took a look at it myself. They have organized it very well. But the food is a bit strange for our Mennonite stomachs. They get their daily ration, plus one piece of white bread. In the first category there are over a hundred and sixty persons. The kitchen personnel and those handling food, which are people of absolute integrity,

receive a double portion. We ourselves are not yet eating from the village kitchen, but mother finds herself pressed to register for the second category because our supplies are rapidly dwindling. Oh, if only we could once eat our fill, but the stuff with which we fill our stomachs does not satisfy. Everywhere it is the same topic, food. Heinz never gets enough and is always begging for more. But enough of that, it almost seems as if eating is the most important thing in life—and yet it is strange what effect food, or the lack of it, has on the whole well-being of man.

March 12. If only more people could be fed. With a few exceptions, actually only the women, children and sick people receive rations. . . . Notice has been sent from house to house that we have to pay "pravnalog." Where does it all go to? ("pravnalog" in normal times is an assessment or taxes, but at that time it was ruthless confiscation of food, property and money. Often when the authorities had confiscated the grain and other foodstuffs, it was left lying under the open sky at railroad stations, rotting and spoiling because there was no storage facility and no trains to move it. PJD) When you hear things like that, the blood pressure goes up and one feels like getting in there with thunder and lightning. But one has to let it go its own course.

Fighting has broken out again, but what the reason is and what is behind it, nobody knows.

March 15. I could not sleep, all kinds of thoughts and questions raced through my mind. To live, you have to be in constant touch with the events of life, with life itself. But what does it mean to live? First, we must be clear about what it does not mean. To live does not mean simply looking on and observing the daily events. At best that could be called vegetating. Nor does it mean thoughtlessly doing your daily routine and work, which only too often is nothing more than a preoccupation with material things. To live does not mean what normally goes under the banner of enjoyment and pleasure. To live is to work, tireless and personal labor. To live is to harness not only one's physical energy, but also one's intellectual and spiritual strength. In one word, to live is to serve! To serve with that which you have and are. And the more we use our gifts and talents, the more they will be developed. A plow that is in constant use, does not become rusty.

But the other side is also true: if you leave your gifts and talents unused, like fallow land, then they disappear and gradually are lost altogether. Thus we see it confirmed that a person who is lazy, who does not exert himself, whether physically, intellectually, or spiritually unknown to himself sinks down to the level of a parasite. And now we ask, but what is the condition of our own Mennonite people? In the realm of the material, we have made great strides forward, there has been much progress. But now that the material things are lost, what has remained? Unfortunately not much.

What joy and excitement at noon today. The impatience of the children was difficult to restrain, it was as if Christmas had arrived and the time for opening presents. We had dumplings for lunch. Not scrawny little things thin as noodles, but real fat dumplings with a little milk and vinegar poured over and in addition a piece of black bread. It tasted like the most delicious food we had ever eaten. But I suppose it is rather small to occupy one's self so much with thoughts about food and nourishment. But it is true that the main topic wherever we go today is, "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, with what shall we clothe ourselves." It is the way Mr. Regier said recently during Bible study: "Let us take care that the empty flour sack does not become our idol."

March 18. What a pity that so much land is left fallow, but there is no seed-grain. It is reported that AMRA (American Relief Administration) has sent much grain to the Volga, but whether some will find its way to us is uncertain. Russia will have to have a big crop if its inhabitants are to live.

Thank God that several railroad cars of relief supplies have again arrived in Halbstadt. Now the American relief kitchen does not need to close before Easter, as many had feared it would. If the food had not arrived now, many would have died of starvation. There are many here who live exclusively from the relief kitchen. Yes, God helps at the right time—I too am beginning to feel stronger again, which makes me very happy. I hope never to forget to be thankful. Yes, God answers prayer. We hear that said again and again. In all eternity, praise and thanks to Him!

March 23. As of today, Walli, Heinz and I also receive our rations from the American kitchen for which we are so glad and thankful. Three times a week we get rice, cooked thick, twice we get bean soup and cocoa. The piece of white bread which we receive with the meal, we save for our supper at home. Incidentally, the village kitchen has supplies for only ten more days, after that we don't know what will happen. Sometimes when you see all the skeletons which one has to send away from one's door, the question arises whether perhaps in the end we will all die of hunger anyway.

March 26. It is Palm Sunday, in the morning the choir sang in church, but I could not be there, nor at choir practice today or the day before. The body just doesn't have the necessary strength and I always feel tired. We always want things different from the way they are, but somehow I had to think that really we are not worthy of this suffering. Is it not true that through suffering even the best people have been refined and purified? There is a greater blessing in suffering than we realize, but the problem is we understand suffering so little. We think of it as martyrdom, but in reality it is one of the most valuable lessons in the school of our God. Those who sit there with deaf ears, hear nothing, of course. . . .

The relief kitchen now has supplies for only two weeks because the Americans have withdrawn their help from here in order to help in other places. The only hope now is Mr. Willing (of the Dutch Mennonites, PJD) and when he also declines, then humanly speaking there is no hope for us—we will all die of starvation.

April 1. We served fried onion and porcupine roast. In former times we heard that gypsies ate that kind of food—now we are in the same situation.

April 5. Kornelsen has returned and brought good news. The relief from Holland has arrived. It is a shipment of 19,000 Pud (about 760,000 pound, PJD). In spite of many problems and much difficulty it has been successfully transported from Sevastopol, the port, to Lichtenau.

April 9. Thank God better days will come again. As of today we received two rations of bread more from the American kitchen. And soon the Dutch help will come too.

April 25. How longingly we look for rain, but it seems the heavens have none for us. At times like these one is overcome by a feeling of desperation. But the courage of the one lifts and strengthens the courage of the other. And God

has not stopped being who He is—we have seen His faithfulness and experienced His concern just yesterday! We looked fearfully into the next days, the kitchen had to be closed for an indefinite period of time because no American food had arrived. The Dutch provisions were to be rationed out at the end of the week. And what happened? When I got home yesterday from Peters, a team of horses was on the yard and they asked to buy our straw, which we were never able to sell or trade. They offered us 18 pounds of millet for it! Was that not God speaking? Was that not His answer! Then the news came from Halbstadt that more supplies had arrived for the kitchen. And to think that our faith sometimes is so small. Surely God has taken care of us until now, He will also take care of us in the future, if not in one way, then in another. So take courage, Anna Baerg, and keep the faith!

May 1. In many ways this was a real day of blessing. First thing in the morning someone brought us almost a whole pud (ca. 40 pounds) of fish which kind people gave us in return for one and a half pounds of butter. In the afternoon the Dutch Relief Food was distributed. We got beans, fish, rice and milk, altogether eight pounds per person for 14 days. In our house, five persons were eligible for this distribution, the others receive theirs from the American kitchen. Oh, what rejoicing and happiness.

May 6. Another day is slowly coming to an end, another day in which we looked in vain for rain. If it doesn't rain soon, there will be a total crop failure. One cannot help but ask what this means? What are God's intentions for us? Is he pointing His finger in the direction of emigration?

It is really interesting to observe how the fields are cultivated nowadays. Very few farmers are working with the plow because the horsepower simply is not available, and if they have horses, they have to stop every few hours to take them to pasture since they have no other feed. It happens not infrequently that a horse will fall down and has to be literally lifted back on his feet again.

Typhus is spreading again. The black ghost has left his seal of death on many people, including a number in our village for whom the doctor has little or no hope.

May 9. We had a good rain today. Whether we will harvest what we sowed, remains to be seen because there is again much talk about emigration to America.

June 5. Many things would be different in the world if there would be more prayer, intercessory prayer. Then people would love each other and understand each other and not always have to find occasions for forgiving each other. When a person learns to pray, really pray, he becomes humble and above all, he learns to know himself.

June 7. The day was hot and windy, but now it is calm and cool. With the coming of evening peace also comes. Here under the chestnut tree only now and then a breeze moves through the dreaming branches. And there the evening star is already shimmering through the trees. I wonder if nature is happy? I almost think so. O world, you are so big and beautiful, and yet with all your power you cannot fill the emptiness in the human breast. That can only be done by the One who is the source of life, the One who quenches all thirst forever, Jesus.

1923

March 19. In the afternoon, we had youth meeting. It got a bit late. To begin with, Rev. Nachtigall and Dyck answered questions and then Kornelsen led a discussion about nonresistance. What made it so interesting was that the one side proved that nonresistance was biblical and the other side attempted to prove from the same Bible the opposite. Why this exercise? Because the young Mennonite men can be sure that they will have to appear before judges to defend their nonresistant position. And some of those examining judges at one time were Christians and know their Bible.

March 28. Today the tractors, for which we had been waiting so long, arrived. (The MCC shipment, consisting of 25 Fordson tractors and plows, had left New York on July 24, 1922 for Odessa, PJD). Six came to our area and will be plowing here for some days. What with the lack of horses, this is a tremendous help. They arrived on the yard of Kornelsen and soon masses of curious people also arrived. I soon dismissed my class because the children too wanted to see and hear these modern miracles at close range.

The Artistic Pilgrimage of John P. Klassen

• *Continued from page 118*

freedom; yet now you ask me to violate the spirit of my religion. . . . Even in Russia we were permitted to refuse to bear arms if our religion forbade."

In early 1933 the Klassens reapplied for citizenship. In a dramatic decision which attracted national attention, Judge E. E. Everett on Feb. 8, 1933, granted U.S. citizenship to Professor Klassen despite his refusal to swear that he would bear arms in defense of the constitution.

The Christian Century (Feb. 22, 1933) commented glowingly on the case in a two-page editorial:

"He spoke brokenly, but measured his words, as if they might be freighted with historic importance; as if, perhaps, they might be used by others after him in their battles for peace. 'Government is greater than man, but God is greater than government, and conscience is the voice of God'."

The story was front-page news across the nation. Articles appeared in the *New York Times, Washington Post,* and the *Literary Digest.*

Judge Everett's decision received wide support. "On humanitarian principles, the decision is bomb-proof," said an editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* "A common sense decision," echoed the *Macon Telegraph.*

In Lima, Ohio, 17 ministers signed a resolution endorsing the ruling.

But other citizens and the local American Legion post took the judge sternly to task for admitting to citizenship a man who refused to bear arms.

Klassen commented after the ordeal, "It is fine to feel I am a citizen. It would have been easier to have taken the oath without reservations and say what the others said. It takes courage to stand by one's convictions."

Yes, it does indeed take courage to follow the dictates of conscience when there is strong pressure to bend. Klassen demonstrated this same trait on another occasion.

During the winter of 1922-23 the Mennonites of southern Russia who had lost their property and other belongings in the revolution were getting impatient with the leaders who were trying to arrange for their emigration

to Canada. Klassen, who was then 34, was serving as secretary of the large group of people, the *Verband*, who desired to leave the country. B. B. Janz was the leader.

The group delegated Klassen to go to Moscow to see if he could get emigration plans moving more rapidly. En route to Moscow, Klassen stopped off at the B. B. Janz residence in Kharkov to pick up a list of the names of people wishing to make the move to Canada.

He was kept waiting for several hours by Janz, but Klassen could overhear him in the next room talking excitedly to Philip Cornies about a letter that had just arrived from Benjamin Unruh in Germany. German industrialists, reported Unruh, were prepared to help the Mennonite farmers in the Crimea get reestablished. Janz and Cornies were elated. In their enthusiasm they forgot all about Klassen. At midnight he was still waiting.

"Ivan Petrovitch, you are much to patient," said the embarrassed Janz when he finally emerged from his meeting with Cornies and found Klassen still waiting. "What's on your heart?"

Klassen explained that he was on his way to Moscow to try to speed up the emigration procedure. The fugitives from the revolution were getting restive, he informed Janz.

"Not so hasty, Brother Klassen," Janz interrupted. "Look at these letters from Benjamin Unruh that have just arrived from Germany. Germany will get us on our feet again. We won't need to emigrate."

Klassen, however, was not swayed by Janz's appeal. He firmly, but politely, told the "Verband" leader that he intended to be on the 5 a.m. train to Moscow. Could he please have the list of names?

Janz produced the list, which he kept hidden under his mattress, and then he and Cornies began a further determined effort to try to dissuade Klassen from making the trip. He was told to think of the tremendous risk involved in emigrating, the Mennonites' mission in Russia, their beautiful villages and fertile soil, and the wonderful future that would soon open up for them with Germany's help.

Cornies even accompanied Klassen to the railroad station, admonishing him to return home rather than making the dangerous trip to the capital. Klassen remained firm and boarded the early morning train for Moscow.

In Moscow he reported to C. F. Klassen and then met with the recently arrived representative of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Mr. Owen. Owen informed him that the CPR was prepared to help the Mennonites with their move to Canada any time. Klassen assured him that the Mennonites would be ready to start the move almost immediately.

During the summer of 1923 the first three trainloads of Russian refugees arrived in Canada. The Klassens were in that group.

We can only conjecture now, of course, as to how much longer the emigration to North America would have been delayed if Klassen had not had the courage to continue on to Moscow after his encounter with Cornies and Janz.

The Klassens' ties to the Russian Mennonites in Canada remained strong although they have been separated from their next of kin for nearly 50 years. They still subscribed to *Der Bote* and read it regularly when I visited them. Several times they made extensive tours of Canada to visit friends and relatives who grew up with them in Russia.

Although Klassen still has rather fond memories of the Mennonites' uncluttered, simple life, his views about Christianity would strike a responsive cord in the hearts of many of today's more activistic Mennonites.

In describing a plaque which shows Christ surrounded by children, he commented, "I don't like to make Christ as a portrait. But I like to portray things that are happening around him. To me Christ means action. Christ is always in relationship to people. In a picture such as this the actual features of the persons really are not of primary importance. The action that is taking place around him is the focal point."

As is evident in so much of his art, the scriptures have had a profound influence on Klassen's life. Other writings which have made lasting impressions on his thinking are *Martyr's Mirror*, Tolstoy's *I cannot Remain Silent*, which came out the year Klassen first went to Switzerland to study; and the works of Luther and Zwingli.

The Man and His Family

John P. Klassen was born into a well-to-do Russian Mennonite home on April 8, 1888. His father, Peter Klassen, cultivated a productive 900-acre farm in the village of Katerinovka.

One of his father's favorite sidelines was raising horses, and John acquired some of his appreciation for horses as a young lad. In later life this love was to express itself in numerous carvings and sculptures of horses.

The senior Klassen was a devout Mennonite, and served as preacher in the small village church. The father's exemplary Christian life, especially his enlightened attitude toward his Ukrainian neighbors, made a lasting impression on young John.

Klassen vividly recalls a dramatic encounter his father had in the early years of the 20th century when the Russian peasants' discontent was beginning to reveal itself in various ways.

During one seeding season the senior Klassen was on his way to one of his tracts of land some distance from the village. A group of angry Ukrainian peasants rode up. They were armed with pitch forks and other weapons. Klassen's father sensed their mood immediately. Before the armed band could say or do anything, Klassen went forward to them and assured them that he knew what was troubling them and that he thought he could help them.

He told them that they were probably disgruntled because the seeding season was upon them and they had no seed grain. He said he had more seed than he needed, and he would be happy to share it with them.

The angry peasants were disarmed by his courage and his magnanimous offer. He had read their predicament correctly. They promised solemnly that they would return the seed grain after the harvest, despite Klassen's insistence that the seed was a gift and that it would not be necessary for them to return it. Most of the peasants, true to their word, did return the seed that autumn.

Klassen's mother, likewise, was a courageous Christian whose example left its mark on her children. John Klassen recalled one incident in particular which made an impression on him.

On one occasion during the revolution Mrs. Klassen was at home alone with two of the younger children when there was a loud hammering on the door. After having

shooed the children off into a sideroom with the explicit instructions to be absolutely quiet, she opened the door to the insistent knockers. There stood two "bandits," men who had fought in one revolutionary army or another but who were now roaming the countryside stealing, raping, and plundering wherever they went.

Mrs. Klassen invited them in politely and observed that they must be very hungry. Could she bring them something to eat? She set bread, cheese, and milk before them, and began to chat with them about their homes, their mothers, and other similar matters.

It took a long time before their ravenous appetites were satisfied. Finally they rose to leave. It had been a long time, they said, since a woman had talked to them in such a kindly way. Her kindness reminded them of their mothers. They departed without incident.

John Klassen was the third of five children. He received his elementary education in the village school. For his high school education he was sent to a central school in Chortitza, an important Mennonite town in the Ukraine. John graduated from this institution in 1905. His parents then agreed to send him to Switzerland for training in theology and languages.

In late 1914, when John returned to his homeland from his studies in Munich, he discovered that his oldest brother had been conscripted into alternative service under the Red Cross. Klassen immediately went to the officials to offer to serve in his brother's stead. His brother, a married man, was needed at home by his family, John argued. The officers laughed, and assured the artist that he would have the opportunity to serve in the Red Cross very soon, but on his own behalf not his brother's.

Thousands of Mennonite young men who had served in the Red Cross came home in 1921 and 1922. This sudden release of all these men resulted in a rash of engagements and weddings which had been so long delayed by the war.

John Klassen was among those who were married at that time. He was wed to a vivacious preacher's daughter, Anna Dyck, on Feb. 27, 1921. His father-in-law, Isaac Dyck, was a recognized leader among the Russian Mennonites.

The couple did not begin their life together under happy circumstances. The Ukraine was in the grips of an intense food shortage, the fruit of the long years of fighting and the resultant neglect of food production. Furthermore, there was much uncertainty among the Mennonite colonists about their future under the new communist regime.

Klassen was engaged to teach art and Ukrainian language at the Mennonite Zentralschule. He was paid in kind—farm produce and other goods—rather than in currency. This method of payment was preferable, of course, because paper currency was often of little value in the fluid Russian situation.

John and Anna Klassen's first child, Herb, was born before they left Russia for Canada in 1923. Four more children were born to them after they moved to Bluffton—Paul, Otto, Karl, and Anita. "We were a happy family," says Mrs. Klassen now as she reminisces about her family's many adventures, joyous moments, and occasional hardships.

The salary which father Klassen received as an art instructor was sometimes too small to provide for all the needs of a growing, vigorous family. During one period when the college was experiencing unusually severe financial difficulties it owed Professor Klassen a total of $1,500 in back pay. Eventually it was agreed that this amount would be applied toward the Klassen children's tuition fees at the college. (At that time the children of faculty members did not yet get free tuition.)

Klassen took on an unlikely array of summer jobs to supplement his college income. He did interior decorating, instructed woodcraft in summer camps, and one summer he made a large polar bear for a Toledo ice cream manufacturer. Naturally he preferred assignments where he could use his artistic skills. He was commissioned to do some of the sculpturing on the interior of the Toledo museum auditorium and he also did plaques and sculptures for many individuals.

What the Klassen children probably missed most during those early years was a car. They did not have a vehicle until 20 years after the family's arrival in the Bluffton community. It was understandably one of the great moments in the family's history when Professor Klassen came home with a Dodge automobile.

The Klassen clan has an extraordinary record of loyalty to the Mennonite church and Bluffton College. All five of the Klassen children graduated from Bluffton and four married Bluffton graduates. They all continue to be members of the Mennonite church. Two of the boys—Herb and Paul—were in Civilian Public Service during World War II.

The four boys were all attracted to the helping professions. Karl and Paul are social workers. Herb is a teacher, and Otto is a psychiatrist. Anita kept the family in this tradition by marrying a medical doctor, Oliver Lugibihl.

Mrs. Klassen has complemented her husband in a most helpful way. Her practical bent of mind and easy-going manner with people have provided an excellent balance to her husband's quiet reserve and idealism. "I'm the extrovert and he's more of an introvert," she said. Through the years she managed many of the household and family affairs to free her husband for his creative work.

No Tragic Figure

Professor John P. Klassen could so easily have become a tragic figure. At so many points in his life he seemed on the verge of being given some project destined for greatness, but each time history seemed to conspire against him and shattered the dream before it could be translated into art.

But Klassen did not allow himself to become a tragic figure. He kept searching for the constructive and beautiful things in life, and he tried to present these in fresh ways so that people would appreciate them again. His faith was another factor which helped sustain him through many difficult moments.

The Christian Century said of Klassen after he was granted his citizenship in 1933: "The Russian immigrant who would rather sculpture beauty than carry a rifle, who would rather heal wounds than inflict them, has had a fair and sympathetic hearing in our courts. Klassen . . . has made his dreams come true. . . . Perhaps the Russian artisan will never chisel beauty finer than the figure of his own rugged self as he stood there in the first moment of his America citizenship . . . (when he said) 'It would have been easier to have taken the oath without reservations and say what the others said. It takes courage to stand by one's convictions'."

The Mennonite Weekly Review

INTRODUCTORY ISSUE | THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 1923 | NUMBER 1

America's First Citizen Gone

PRESIDENT HARDING DIES SUDDENLY.

America bows in grief as the last rites are being performed for our departed president. He was stricken suddenly after a brief illness, and died on the evening of August 2nd. He was in San Francisco at the time, being on the return half of his western and southern tour.

Official service were held yesterday at the national capital, while tomorrow's ceremonies are those in his home town, Marion, Ohio.

Mr. Harding was a man of quiet, kindly manners; he seemed just a plain American citizen, yet lacked nothing of the dignity necessary to his high office; he was a conservative, yet ever progressive; his very sensible policies seem to have been just those which were needed to keep the United States moving toward normalcy during these troublesome times. Mr. Warren G. Harding was a sincerely christian man.

Lausanne Treaty Establishes Peace

The Lausanne peace treaty, formally establishing peace between the European powers and Turkey, was signed July 24th. By the terms of the treaty Turkey regains eastern Thrace; she joins the league of nations on a footing of equality; Constantinople goes definitely to Turkey; peace between Greece and Turkey is made; the patriach of the Greek Orthodox church is allowed to remain in Constantinople (he has since left the, on board a British gun boat); the exchange of Greeks in Turkey for the Turks in Greece is made compulsory; Turkey recognizes the freedom of such detached states as Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine; and with a slight reservation, Turkey is freed of the much discussed capitulations.

English press comment admits that altho the pact is a virtual Turkish victory, yet the treaty is a good one, the London Times describing the document as a model of generosity and justice.

An important point is the provision that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles shall be open to the warships and merchant ships of all nations.

From the American view-point the outcome of the Lausanne parley was decidedly an American victory, in as much as the open door policy for the Near East has been confirmed. Mesopotamian oil was the bone of contention here.

Now that Greece and Turkey have at last laid down arms, the peace of the continent should be somewhat more stable again.

Mr. G. A. Hege of Eagle Rock, ... recently suffered a stroke of paralysis. It was that at first this would prove fatal, but his recovery [illegible] now.

Prof. J. H. Hege of [illegible] and W. A. Schroeder of Newton [illegible] taking summer school work at K. U. [illegible] ... are now putting the finishing touches to Mrs. Helen Hege's ... campus home.

HILLSBORO B. A. OPENS SEPT. 17.

The Hillsboro Bible Academy is opening its doors on Sept. 17, and any one desirous to acquire a good foundation in Bible and Christian growth, is heartily invited to spend a year or two at this institution. The courses are outlined to cover two years, which amounts to 60 units at Bethel College and other accredited institutions. A christian school with a christian environment are important essentials to foster christian growth. Submit your name and we shall be glad to supply you with one of our new catalogues for the year 1923-1924.

The Teachers.

BETHEL SUMMER SCHOOL CLOSES

76 Were Enrolled

Bethel college summer school, held in the Newton high school building for the second consecutive season, came to satisfactory close last Saturday. There was a total enrollment of 76 this year, as compared with 46 last summer. 'Tis true what a former Bethel student remarked, "Why they had as many attending summer school this year as we had in the regular winter sessions about twenty years ago when I went to school."

About 25 of the students were members of the Mennonite church; nine were teachers from the Newton grades and high school, and at least that many had been Newton high school students last winter. Most of those attending either are teachers or else are preparing to teach.

Dr. J. E. Thierstein, director of the summer school, expressed the opinion that "had we started two weeks earlier we would have had 25 more students than we did." Most summer sessions begin earlier in order that students may complete their studies the sooner.

The management of the summer school expressed its gratefulness for the privilege of using the high school building free of charge; nevertheless, it is felt that in the future there hot weather terms should again be conducted upon the Bethel campus, as was the practice until they were discontinued [illegible] several years ago.

Dr. Thierstein declared that very satisfactory work had been done this summer. The following persons formed the personnel of the teaching staff: Dr. J. E. Thierstein, Prof. J. F. Lindscheid, Prof. D. H. Richert, Prof. C. C. Janzen, Prof. J. H. Doell, Mr. Henry Hege, Miss Elisabeth Tangeman, and Prof. Benny Graue.

Dr. W. F. Schroeder, formerly surgeon at the Hillsboro Hospital of Goessel, Kansas, has moved to Newton. His office is located in the Railroad Loan building, in a rooms being those previously occupied by the late Dr. [illegible].

Rev. Geo. Lohrenz, a 1923 graduate of Witmarsum Seminary, will be in charge of the Hillsboro Bible Academy the coming year. Rev. Lohrenz moved to Hillsboro the latter part of last week.

Elizabeth Janzen of Buhler, and [illegible] Hanks of Newton, left from Newton on Tuesday for Bloomington, Illinois, where they will take up nurse's training course at the [illegible] Deaconess Hospital.

Mr. J. M. [illegible] of Newton, Kansas, left for Colorado yesterday on a ... [illegible] ... going to Canada.

Mr. D. E. [illegible] of Newton, ... [illegible]

[illegible] Harms of Whitewater returned to Kansas on Aug. 1st, to resume her work there ... [illegible] ... at the home of her parents, Rev. and Mrs. G. N. Harms.

[illegible] of Halstead ... [illegible]

EVEN HINDU CHILDREN ENJOY EATING AMERICAN WATERMELON

News from our mission fields is always welcomed, but unusual subjects, such as Rev. Suckau tells of in his interesting letter, are read with added interest.

Korba, C. P., India,
June, 21, '23

Dear Brother Ennsz:

You perhaps think that I had forgotten you and your kindness in supplying me with seeds to take to India. This was not the case and I am sending you here a snapshot of some our orphan children enjoying a watermelon which was grown from your seeds. It was quite a treat to have real American watermelons. We had very good success with your Lima beans which yielded a large crop. The Sudan grass came up beautifully and I have gathered some seed to plant some more this rainy season. I have noticed that the seed which I sowed during the rains grew much better. I intended to take a picture of the patch but did not succeed.

No Luck with Potatoes

A friend of ours in Ohio gave us a couple of potatoes and we planted them but did not have any success. I should be glad and thankful if you kindly send us a little parcel of seeds for the next season. The seeds that we should like are: Tomatoes, beets, watermelons, muskmelons, wax beans, lima beans, and sweet corn. We do not want much of each kind. A small packet will be all we need. We should like to have these seeds by the last part of August as that is the time we put out our garden here. Then we have vegetables from Christmas till the hot season comes on in March.

Sea Air Rots Seeds

If you could kindly pack these seeds in a tin can and seal it tight, then the dampness of the sea air cannot harm them. I shall try to get a better picture to send to you later. This one did not turn out well as it was too hot when I tried to finish the picture and the film was spoiled.

At Naini Tal

We are spending a few weeks up here in Naini Tal up in the Himalaya Mountains, about 7,000 feet above sea level. Naini is the name of a goddess. Tal means lake. We are just on the shore of the lake, a most beautiful spot. The air is very cool here, and we cannot imagine that down in the plains it is very hot. This year the heat has been especially intense. Some places the heat has been unbearable. Many people have died of heat stroke.

We are therefore glad and thankful that we could get out of the heat and come here for a little while to spend some time with our children. We are about 600 miles away from them the rest of the year, but this is the only place we can send them to school.

We are glad that they are getting along nicely in school. Theodore has just had his examinations and came out first in his class, and won a prize in Urdu, which is one of the Indian languages taught in school. He is also taking Latin. He enjoys languages. Edna is also getting along nicely in her classes. They often talk of the nice times they had when in Newton. They would rather be there than here because then they would not have to be separated from us. It is a very great sacrifice for them to stay away in school for so long a time.

With kindest greetings to you and your family, I am, Yours in his glad service,

C. H. Suckau

Paul Erb of Hesston College is doing summer school work at the University of Iowa. He is to receive his master's degree in English.

The live stock and implements belonging to the late Conrad Harder of Whitewater were sold at public auction on Tuesday.

Editorial

IN SHALLOW WATERS

He, who would a-swiming go, must sometime learn to swim. This issue marks the first strokes of a beginner, two more practice numbers, Aug. 23rd., and Sept. 6th., and The Mennonite Weekly Review will strike out for itself.

If the novice but keeps his head above water, and does not dry up the lake thru his unskilled flounderings, 'tis said he's made a propitious start. And so with The Review. If in this small way, we can in part introduce ourselves, and yet slowly wade out into deeper waters, these introductory numbers will have served their purpose.

A. J. K.

ALSO AN ENGLISH PAPER!

When the Herald Publishing Company was organized in 1920 the principal purpose was to create an institution through which Literature in the German language would continue to be prepared, published and circulated in behalf of our Mennonite people. But it was also recognized that in the central west the English language was rapidly coming into predominance among the incoming generation. It was clearly realized that this inevitable transition demanded the creation and distribution of suitable literature in the English language. In studying this problem the Board of Directors a year ago believed that the time had come for action, and it was decided to proceed to the establishment of an English Mennonite periodical, suitable particularly to the needs of the middle west. At the annual meeting this decision was approved by resolution. It is believed that the cause of the church and more important, that the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, can be served by the publication of such a paper, and it is anticipated that a large circle of families is ready gladly to receive the same as a means through which touch with their own church and people will be made possible.

H. P. Krehbiel, Pres.

THE TIME TO GET TOGETHER.

Of course we realize that you're all busy, but in spite of that we believe that it would be time well spent if you would do one of these two things — things which you probably already have in mind but feel too busy to attend to:

Either send in your subscription to The Review immediately, or else drop us a postal card asking that you receive sample copies. We will gladly send you the paper free of charge for one month. And anyway, it would be well for us to get acquainted; so let us hear from you — soon.

A. J. K.

IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING

Three Mennonite Parties from Russia Already in Canada.

The Russian Mennonite immigration movement into Canada has already gained considerable momentum. The first two shiploads bore over about 1300 people, and the third transport should have arrived at the time of this writing.

750 people had planned to come over with the first transport, which arrived at Quebec on July 21. Only about 600 of these came tho, the others having been held in Latvia.

426 of the first party went to Rosthern, Sask., 53 went to Herbert, Sask., and 134 went to Manitoba, the town of Steinbach, Man., reporting that 20 were to remain there. It is said that at Rosthern there were more autos at the depot, when the immigrants arrived there, than enough to take away the newcomers. More than one car went home empty.

The second transport landed at Quebec on Aug. 2nd, the party arriving in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Aug. 5th. This group contained about 570 persons, all of whom expected to go to Manitoba, except such as have relatives at other places.

In as much as the Canadian harvest is now in progress, there is plenty of work for all at present. Reports say that all the newcomers seemed contented and happy at the prospects which face them.

Arrangements have been made with the C. P. R. that such refugees as had come to Germany earlier, and are now stranded there, may now join in with those parties which are coming direct from Russia. This should relieve a serious situation arising from the fact that the providing for the large numbers of these refugees is proving too gigantic a task for the people living there (most of them are near Lechfeld, Germany).

There is a fourth group which has now left Russia, and a fifth party which is ready to leave for Moscow, but is being detained by the Soviet government which says that the 2000, for which they had issued permission to leave, have already passed out. It may be that with the oncoming of the fourth party, immigration from there may cease temporarily.

IN GENERAL

Edith Huser and Edna Bixel of Pandora, Ohio, are visiting at the Albert Claassen home north of Newton. They spent a week with Rev. and Mrs. J. J. Plenert of Hutchinson, Kansas, with whom they drove to Hillsboro last Monday for a visit of several days, then coming to Newton. Rev. and Mrs. Plenert returned to their mission station Wednesday evening.

Plans have been made for the organization of a young people's society at the [illegible] Mennonite church. The first program will be rendered Aug. 26th.

Dr. and Mrs. Langenwalter and children left for Wheeling, W. Va., on Thursday, July 26th. They are visiting Mrs. Langenwalter's parents. They plan to be back Aug. 23rd.

Ted Harms, employed at the Kansas State Bank of Newton, returned from his two weeks vacation Wednesday before last.

Two Bethel College families have been made happy thru the arrival of baby young professors. Earl Hubert came to the home of Prof. and Mrs. C. A. Henry Jr. on June 19th; while on July 24th John Willard, who will be more familiarly known as Willard, was born at the Prof. and Mrs. J. E. Linscheid home.

Mrs. J. M. Suderman of Newton ... [illegible] ... spending a pleasant summer at Long Beach, Calif.; ... all except Wilfred, who is at the present time enjoying the [illegible].

Miss Kathryn Penner of Newton returned from [illegible], Kansas, on Wednesday of last week. She had been attending summer school at Bethany College, and plans to return there in the fall to complete her final year of study.

Offers $100,000 For Peace Plan

AMERICAN PEACE AWARD BY MR. BOK

Feeling that peace would be worth $100,000.00 to him, Mr. Edward W. Bok has offered The American Peace Award for "the best practicable plan by which the United States may cooperate with other nations to achive and preserve the peace of the world."

"The conditions define broadly the scope of the plan sought, as follows: 'The winning plan must provide a practical means whereby the United States can take its place and do its share toward preserving world peace, while not making compulsory the participation of the United States in European wars if any such are, in the future found unpreventable. The plan may be based upon the present covenant of the League of Nations or may be entirely apart from that instrument.'"

If the Jury of Award finds it necessary to make a composite plan by selecting ideas or sections from various plans offered, several smaller awards may be offered, probably a second, third, and fourth award of $5,000.00 each.

A complete copy of the conditions of the contest is to be had by addressing The American Peace Award, 342 Madison Avenue, New York City.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hege and daughter Luella Harder left today for Redfield, S. Dak., where Mr. Hege will teach in Redfield College.

Mr. P. E. Janz and family, who have been visiting relatives at Whitewater for about two months, started today for their home at [illegible], Wash.

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Nelson W. Krehbiel of Moundridge, Kansas, on Thursday, July 5, 1923, a daughter named Ann.

Rev. and Mrs. J. P. Lienhard, Miss Emma Lienhard, and Mr. Alfred Lienhard of Arlington, Kansas, were week-end visitors at the home of Prof. and Mrs. J. E. Linscheid.

Mrs. G. A. Linscheid ... [illegible] Indian Mission station in Oklahoma, recently returned from California where she had spent several months with her mother, Mrs. John [illegible].

With [illegible] J. H. Doell and D. H. Richert, and families, yesterday started for ... [illegible] ... vacation.

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A. J. Krehbiel, Editor

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