

promptly suspect me of treason to socialism! You know that I really hope to die at my post, in a street fight or in prison.

But my innermost personality belongs more to my tomtits than to the comrades. This is not because, like so many spiritually bankrupt politicians, I seek refuge and find repose in nature. Far from it, in nature at every turn I see so much cruelty that I suffer greatly.

Take the following episode, which I shall never forget. Last spring I was returning from a country walk when, in the quiet, empty road, I noticed a small dark patch on the ground. Leaning forward I witnessed a voiceless tragedy. A large beetle was lying on its back and waving its legs helplessly, while a crowd of little ants were swarming round it and eating it alive! I was horror stricken, so I took my pocket handkerchief and began to flick the little brutes away. They were so bold and stubborn that it took me some time, and when at length I had freed the poor wretch of a beetle and had carried it to a safe distance on the grass, two of its legs had already been gnawed off...

I fled from the scene feeling that in the end I had conferred a very doubtful boon.

The evening twilight lasts so long now. I love this hour of the gloaming. In the South End I had plenty of blackbirds, but here there are none to be seen or heard. I was feeding a pair all through the winter, but they have vanished.

In the South End I used to stroll through the streets at this hour. It always fascinates me when, during the last violet gleam of daylight, the ruddy gas lamps suddenly flash out, still looking so strange in the half light as if they were almost ashamed of themselves. Then one sees indistinctly a figure moving swiftly through the street, perhaps a servant maid hastening to fetch something from the baker or the grocer before the shops close. The bootmaker's children, who are friends of mine, used to go on playing in the streets after dark, until a loud call summoned them in. And there was always a belated blackbird which could not settle down, but like a naughty child would go on wailing, or would wake with a start and fly noisily from tree to tree.

For my part, I would continue standing in the middle of the street numbering the stars as they came out, reluctant to go home, unwilling to leave the mild air, and the twilight in which day and night were so gently caressing one another.

Sonyusha, I will write again soon. Make you mind easy, everything will turn out all right, for Karl too. Good-bye till the next letter.

With love

Your Rosa

Wronke, May 19, 1917.

..... It is so lovely here now! Everything is green and burgeoning. The foliage of the horse-chestnuts is resplendent; the currant bushes are covered with clusters of yellow stars; the cherry tree, with its reddish leaves, is already in flower; and the black alder will soon blossom.

Louise Kautsky visited me to-day. As a parting gift she gave me some forget-me-nots and some pansies. They've all settled themselves in so nicely; I can hardly believe my eyes, for this is the first time in my life I ever did any planting out. By Whitsuntide I shall have such a lot of flowers under my window!

There is a great variety of newly arrived birds here now.

Hardly a day passes without my making acquaintance with a bird I have never seen before. By the way, you remember that morning in the Botanical Gardens with Karl when we were listening to the nightingale. We saw a huge tree whose leaves were not yet showing, but it was covered with small white flowers; we were all puzzled what it could be, for obviously it was not a fruit tree, and the flowers were quite unfamiliar. I know now! It was a white poplar, and what we thought were flowers were not flowers at all but young leaves. The fully grown leaf of the white poplar is white only on the under surface, whilst the upper surface is dark green; but the young leaves are still covered on both sides with white down, and they shine in the sunlight like flowers.

There is a huge white poplar in my garden, and all the song birds like this tree the best. That same