Behind The Curtain

William Osburn

THE two men emerged from the building housing the linguistic offices of the Paris Peace Conference. They hailed a cab, gave the driver the address of a superior hotel, and arranged themselves comfortably for the ride. The older man, a Nebraskan by birth and education, was one of the State Department's lesser officials who was able to speak Russian. He was about fifty-five, yet he appeared to be many years older. His weak heart was barely able to bear the load which he insisted upon assuming. The past three weeks had been a nightmare for him. All too frequently he had felt it necessary to work until almost dawn. Exact translations of the day's speeches were needed in order to prevent an even greater number of misunderstandings from arising. Gilbert Emory, an undistinguished Nebraskan, was doing his small part to help win the peace. Emory was giving his best.

Next to him in the cab sat his co-worker, Georgi Remizov. The Russian came from Izhevsk, a town almost directly east of Moscow near the Siberian border. Remizov was an average-sized man with strong features and prematurely gray hair. His knowledge of school-book English had enabled him to secure a commission with the Red Army as a liaison officer at the out-break of the war. Ironically, he had spent three and one-half years in Detroit at a time when he felt that he was needed most at home. His native land was bending before a foreign foe while he kept Moscow informed of developments in Detroit. Like the American, he had done his duty; still he had not done his share. He wanted to do more. After the war, he applied for government service. His understanding of the English language and the American idioms which Detroit had taught him had qualified him for the position which he now held. He was Emory's Russian counterpart.

A strange friendship developed between the Russian and the American. For a while this friendship was a great joke among the wits of the foreign services. It was pointed out that there was a possibility that an American and a Russian could become friends. This cynical humor incensed Emory and Remizov. They believed that the differences between their countries could be overcome if there were more personal contacts between the ordinary people of the two nations.

The cab stopped before the hotel. After paying the driver, the men went directly to the American's room. As was their custom, they reviewed the events of the day and discussed what policies they would follow if they were in positions of authority. They talked freely about their own governments, pointing out faults as readily as virtues.

The day's conferences had been successful. The most chronic pessimists saw some hope for the future. A crisis of importance had not only been averted, but the problem which led to it had been solved. A recent speech by the Secretary of State added greatly to the wave of optimism which washed the shores of every great power. Peace and harmony

had been the order of the day.

Remizov was aware of Emory's heart condition. He remarked that at the rate the conference was progressing, it would soon end. Then the American would be able to return to his home. Emory replied that he should like very much to be in Nebraska with his family. He wondered what his brother was doing now that he was out of college. Walter had been vague in his letter.

Walter did not disclose the exact nature of his work in the letter he had sent Gilbert. He could only say that he was engaged in experimental work for the government. More specifically, he was helping to install the largest cyclotron ever built, in a huge plant capable of producing atomic bombs at a phenomenal rate.

Emory asked Remizov if he would not like to return home also. Remizov smiled wistfully. Then he began describing the beauty of his homeland. He told of the broad, unbroken fields which were to the west of his father's home. Now a new airplane factory broke the horizon. The jet planes made there were able to fly non-stop as far as Nebraska.

To Gilbert Emory and Georgi Remizov, the future looked bright. Settling differences by open conferences, as the differences were settled today, was the way to peace. Mistrust was not evident as it had been previously. If the world situation kept progressing at the present rate, the peace conference might soon be over.

What A Measley Shame!

David Craig

I was five years old and my brother Bob was seven when the measles came to our house. I went to bed one night feeling puny and woke up the next morning with a countenance as disfigured as a painting by Picasso. Bob came in my room before I had seen myself and burst into sadistic laughter.

"Oh Mother, come look!" he yelled between gruesome giggles. "David's ruined his face!"

Scared within an inch of my life, I jumped out of bed and looked in the mirror. My face was indeed ruined, but I hadn't done it. I was a mass of foul, red bumps and I felt awful. Mother came in and comforted me.

"Your face isn't ruined," she said, "You have the measles."

Whenever we were sick, Mother would stay home from the office until noon to make us comfortable. She would fix up the bed with clean sheets and put on the blue pillow cases. We loved the blue pillow cases because they meant that we were going to have a lot of extra attention and we knew she'd come home early at night and bring us presents. On this occasion I couldn't enjoy my ill health as much as usual because Bob had to stay home too, and he kept making fun of my bumps. I felt as revolting as a leper whom healthy citizens avoid with