

and the schoolchildren had dragged a toboggan to the top of the tallest hills and made a slide. She heard again their shrieks and screams of excitement. They had been too excited to wait their turn in the toboggan. They had rolled and tumbled among the feathery snow, and jumped up and down, running through the daisies, pulling each other, until all the side of the hill lay in green tatters. She remembered now the agony she had felt and been ashamed to show. Yes, to this very day she regretted her part in it. It had left a wound for life. She sighed. Yes, life! What animals¹ and worse children are! thought Elena—and she turned from the window and wondered how on earth she could bear any more of this journey. Really the last moments of a journey are intolerable. If she could only share the state of apathy that these people were sunk in. The noise of the train seemed to act upon them like a drug. They were content to be carried away. But their stupid country faces, so [—],² so soothed, revolted her faintly as she watched them. No, she would rather suffer these strange pangs of excitement that set upon her at the end of a journey. Any journey—it was always the same. Though more than half her life had been spent in travelling the thrill remained. The unknown place to which she travelled had in her head a fanciful image. It was a town. Ah it was always the poor quarter that she saw first. The narrow streets, the tall houses teeming with careless unruly life. Footsteps ran through them ceaselessly, they ran through the narrow dark vein of the houses. Strange doors banged open, banged shut. In the basements lived the dregs of humanity—old men who kept birds in tiny cages or bought rabbit skins or sold little paper bags of coal and wood. On the roof there were thin cats and pigeons and vulgar clothes hanging out to dry. And the shops, the little shops that she loved brimmed over on to the pavement. They were lighted with long whistling flares of gas—or stalls lighted by candles in round glass globes—or by lamps benign in spreading shades like haymakers' hats. And then there were the cafes and the little [—]² bars. The swing doors opened, the sound of a gramophone rushed out, mingled with the clink of glasses and girls' laughter and men's voices very loud. I will go there, I will go there. To the fringe of the town, to the new roads sticky with clay where the railway thrust out roots of iron, where the houses dark and blind reared up in the air as though for the first time or the last. Yes, there she was walking, her coat collar turned up, her hands in her pockets. A little fox terrier dog rooted in the gutters full of dead leaves. Or it was a village of white and green houses with red geraniums at the windows and lilac bushes in the garden. She was leaning out of the window in the evening. Below her the hay carts were passing, and the air smelt of hay. Behind the haycarts came the girls with scarlet cheeks. One of them carried a cornflower bush in her hands, another carried