

# An Actor Prepares



*Constantin Stanislavski*

INTRODUCTION BY  
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## CHAPTER TWO

### When Acting Is an Art

#### I

TODAY we were called together to hear the Director's criticism of our performance. He said:

"Above all look for what is fine in art and try to understand it. Therefore, we shall begin by discussing the constructive elements of the test. There are only two moments worth noting; the first, when Maria threw herself down the staircase with the despairing cry of 'Oh, help me!' and the second, more extended in time, when Kostya Nazvanov said 'Blood, Iago, blood!' In both instances, you who were playing, and we who were watching, gave ourselves up completely to what was happening on the stage. Such successful moments, by themselves, we can recognize as belonging to the art of living a part."

"And what is this art?" I asked.

"You experienced it yourself. Suppose you state what you felt."

"I neither know nor remember," said I, embarrassed by Tortsov's praise.

"What! You do not remember your own inner excitement? You do not remember that your hands, your eyes and your whole body tried to throw themselves forward to grasp something; you do not remember how you bit your lips and barely restrained your tears?"

"Now that you tell me about what happened, I seem to remember my actions," I confessed.

"But without me you could not have understood the ways in which your feelings found expression?"

"No, I admit I couldn't."

"You were acting with your subconscious, intuitively?" he concluded.

"Perhaps. I do not know. But is that good or bad?"

"Very good, if your intuition carries you along the right path, and very bad if it makes a mistake," explained Tortsov. "During the exhibition performance it did not mislead you, and what you gave us in those few successful moments was excellent."

"Is that really true?" I asked.

"Yes, because the very best that can happen is to have the actor completely carried away by the play. Then regardless of his own will he lives the part, not noticing *how* he feels, not thinking about *what* he does, and it all moves of its own accord, subconsciously and intuitively. Salvini said: 'The great actor should be full of feeling, and especially he should feel the thing he is portraying. He must feel an emotion not only once or twice while he is studying his part, but to a greater or lesser degree every time he plays it, no matter whether it is the first or the thousandth time.' Unfortunately this is not within our control. Our subconscious is inaccessible to our consciousness. We cannot enter into that realm. If for any reason we do penetrate into it, then the subconscious becomes conscious and dies."

"The result is a predicament; we are supposed to create under inspiration; only our subconscious gives us inspiration; yet we apparently can use this subconscious only through our consciousness, which kills it."

"Fortunately there is a way out. We find the solution in an oblique instead of a direct approach. In the soul of a human being there are certain elements which are subject to consciousness and will. These accessible parts are capable in turn of acting on psychic processes that are involuntary."

"To be sure, this calls for extremely complicated creative work. It is carried on in part under the control of our consciousness, but a much more significant proportion is subconscious and involuntary."

"To rouse your subconscious to creative work there is a



subconscious power cannot function without its own engineer—our conscious technique. It is only when an actor feels that his inner and outer life on the stage is flowing naturally and normally, in the circumstances that surround him, that the deeper sources of his subconscious gently open, and from them come feelings we cannot always analyse. For a shorter or longer space of time they take possession of us whenever some inner instinct bids them. Since we do not understand this governing power, and cannot study it, we actors call it simply nature.

"But if you break the laws of normal organic life, and cease to function rightly, then this highly sensitive subconscious becomes alarmed, and withdraws. To avoid this, plan your role consciously at first, then play it truthfully. At this point realism and even naturalism in the inner preparation of a part is essential, because it causes your subconscious to work and induces outbursts of inspiration."

"From what you have said I gather that to study our art we must assimilate a psychological technique of living a part, and that this will help us to accomplish our main object, which is to create the life of a human spirit," Paul Shustov said.

"That is correct but not complete," said Tortsov. "Our aim is not only to create the life of a human spirit, but also to 'express it in a beautiful, artistic form.' An actor is under the obligation to live his part inwardly, and then to give to his experience an external embodiment. I ask you to note especially that the dependence of the body on the soul is particularly important in our school of art. *In order to express a most delicate and largely subconscious life it is necessary to have control of an unusually responsive, excellently prepared vocal and physical apparatus.* This apparatus must be ready instantly and exactly to reproduce most delicate and all but intangible feelings with great sensitiveness and directness. *That is why an actor of our type is obliged to work so much more than others, both on his inner equipment, which creates the life of the part, and also on his outer physical apparatus, which should reproduce the results of the creative work of his emotions with precision.*

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special technique. We must leave all that is in the fullest sense subconscious to nature, and address ourselves to what is within our reach. When the subconscious, when intuition, enters into our work we must know how not to interfere.

"One cannot always create subconsciously and with inspiration. No such genius exists in the world. Therefore our art teaches us first of all to create consciously and rightly, because that will best prepare the way for the blossoming of the subconscious, which is inspiration. The more you have of conscious creative moments in your role the more chance you will have of a flow of inspiration.

"You may play well or you may play badly; the important thing is that you should play truly," wrote Shchepkin to his pupil Shumski.

"To play truly means to be right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel and act in unison with your role.

"If you take all these internal processes, and adapt them to the spiritual and physical life of the person you are representing, we call that living the part. This is of supreme significance in creative work. Aside from the fact that it opens up avenues for inspiration, living the part helps the artist to carry out one of his main objectives. His job is not to present merely the external life of his character. He must fit his own human qualities to the life of this other person, and pour into it all of his own soul. The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in an artistic form.

"That is why we begin by thinking about the inner side of a role, and how to create its spiritual life through the help of the internal process of living the part. You must live it by actually experiencing feelings that are analogous to it, each and every time you repeat the process of creating it."

"Why is the subconscious so dependent on the conscious?" said I.

"It seems entirely normal to me," was the reply. "The use of steam, electricity, wind, water and other involuntary forces in nature is dependent on the intelligence of an engineer. Our



"Even the externalizing of a role is greatly influenced by the subconscious. In fact no artificial, theatrical technique can even compare with the marvels that nature brings forth.

"I have pointed out to you today, in general outlines, what we consider essential. Our experience has led to a firm belief that only our kind of art, soaked as it is in the living experiences of human beings, can artistically reproduce the impalpable shadings and depths of life. Only such art can completely absorb the spectator and make him both understand and also inwardly experience the happenings on the stage, enriching his inner life, and leaving impressions which will not fade with time.

"Moreover, and this is of primary importance, *the organic bases of the laws of nature on which our art is founded will protect you in the future from going down the wrong path.* Who knows under what directors, or in what theatres, you will work? Not everywhere, not with everyone, will you find creative work based on nature. In the vast majority of theatres the actors and producers are constantly violating nature in the most shameless manner. But if you are sure of the limits of true art, and of the organic laws of nature, you will not go astray, you will be able to understand your mistakes and correct them. That is why a study of the foundations of our art is the beginning of the work of every student actor."

"Yes, yes," I exclaimed, "I am so happy that I was able to take a step, if only a small one, in that direction."

"Not so fast," said Tortsov, "otherwise you will suffer the bitterest disillusion. Do not mix up living your part with what you showed us on the stage."

"Why, what did I show?"

"I have told you that in all that big scene from *Othello* there were only a few minutes in which you succeeded in living the part. I used them to illustrate to you, and to the other students, the foundations of our type of art. However, if we speak of the whole scene between *Othello* and *Iago*, we certainly cannot call it our type of art."

"What is it, then?"

"That is what we call forced acting," defined the Director.

"And what, really, is that?" said I, puzzled.

"When one acts as you did," he explained, "there are individual moments when you suddenly and unexpectedly rise to great artistic heights and thrill your audience. In such moments you are creating according to your inspiration, improvising, as it were; but would you feel yourself capable enough, or strong enough spiritually or physically, to play the five great acts of *Othello* with the same lift with which you accidentally played part of that one short scene?"

"I do not know," I said, conscientiously.

"I know, unquestionably, that such an undertaking would be far beyond the strength not only of a genius with an extraordinary temperament, but even of a very Hercules," answered Tortsov. "For our purposes you must have, in addition to the help of nature, a well worked-out psychological technique, an enormous talent, and great physical and nervous reserves. You have not all these things, any more than do the personality actors who do not admit technique. They, as you did, rely entirely on inspiration. If this inspiration does not turn up then neither you nor they have anything with which to fill in the blank spaces. You have long stretches of nervous let-down in playing your part, complete artistic impotence, and a naïve amateurish sort of acting. At such times your playing is lifeless, stilted. Consequently high moments alternate with over-acting."

## 2

Today we heard some more from Tortsov about our acting. When he came to the classroom he turned to Paul and said to him:

"You too gave us some interesting moments, but they were rather typical of the 'art of representation.'"

"Now since you successfully demonstrated this other way of acting, Paul, why not recall for us how you created the role of *Iago*?" suggested the Director.



"I went right at the role for its inner content, and studied that for a long time," said Paul. "At home it seemed to me that I really did live the part, and at some of the rehearsals there were certain places in the role that I seemed to feel. Therefore I do not know what the art of 'representation' has to do with it."

"In it the actor also lives his part," said Tortsov. "This partial identity with our method is what makes it possible to consider this other type also true art."

"Yet his objective is different. He lives his part as a preparation for perfecting an external form. Once that is determined to his satisfaction he reproduces that form through the aid of mechanically trained muscles. Therefore, in this other school, living your role is not the chief moment of creation as it is with us, but one of the preparatory stages for further artistic work."

"But Paul did use his own feelings at the exhibition performance!" I maintained.

Someone else agreed with me, and insisted that in Paul's acting, just as in mine, there had been a few scattered moments of truly living the part, mixed with a lot of incorrect acting.

"No," insisted Tortsov, *"in our art you must live the part every moment that you are playing it, and every time. Each time it is recreated it must be lived afresh and incarnated afresh."* This describes the few successful moments in Kostya's acting. But I did not notice freshness in improvisation, or in feeling his part, in Paul's playing. On the contrary, I was astonished in a number of places by the accuracy and artistic finish of a form and method of acting which is permanently fixed, and which is produced with a certain inner coldness. However, I did feel in those moments that the original, of which this was only the artificial copy, *had been* good and true. This echo of a former process of living the part made his acting, in certain moments, a true example of the art of representation."

"How could I have got hold of the art of mere reproduction?" Paul could not understand.

"Let us find out by your telling us more about how you prepared your Iago," suggested the Director.

"To be sure that my feelings were externally reflected I used a mirror."

"That is dangerous," remarked Tortsov. *"You must be very careful in the use of a mirror. It teaches an actor to watch the outside rather than the inside of his soul, both in himself and in his part."*

"Nevertheless, it did help me to see how my exterior reflected my sensations," Paul insisted.

"Your own sensations, or the sensations prepared for your part?"

"My own, but applicable to Iago," explained Paul.

"Consequently, while you were working with the mirror, what interested you was not so much your exterior, your general appearance, your gestures, but principally the way in which you externalized your inner sensations," probed Tortsov.

"Exactly!" exclaimed Paul.

"That is also typical," remarked the Director.

"I remember how pleased I was when I saw the correct reflection of what I felt," Paul continued to reminisce.

"You mean that you fixed these methods of expressing your feelings in a permanent form?" Tortsov asked.

"They became fixed by themselves through frequent repetition."

"Then in the end you worked out a definite external form for the interpretation of certain successful parts in your role, and you were able to achieve their external expression through technique?" asked Tortsov with interest.

"Evidently yes," admitted Paul.

"And you made use of this form each time that you repeated the role?" examined the Director.

"Evidently I did."

"Now tell me this: did this established form come to you each time through an inner process, or after it was once born



careers. They take advantage of the ignorance of the public, its perverted taste, favouritism, intrigues, false success, and many other means which have no relation to creative art. These exploiters are the deadliest enemies of art. We have to use the sternest measures with them, and if they cannot be reformed they must be removed from the boards. Therefore," here he turned to Sonya again, "you must make up your mind, once and for all, did you come here to serve art, and to make sacrifices for its sake, or to exploit your own personal ends?"

"However," Tortsov continued, turning to the rest of us, "it is only in theory that we can divide art into categories. Practically, all schools of acting are mixed together. It is unfortunately true that we frequently see great artists, because of human weakness, lowering themselves to mechanical acting, and mechanical actors rising for moments to heights of true art.

"Side by side we see moments of living a part, representing the part, mechanical acting, and exploitation. That is why it is so necessary for actors to recognize the boundaries of art."

It was quite clear to me, after listening to Tortsov's explanation, that the exhibition performance had done us more harm than good.

"No," he protested, when I told him my opinion. "The performance showed you what you must never do on the stage."

At the end of the discussion the Director announced that tomorrow, in addition to our work with him, we are to begin regular activities that have the purpose of developing our voices and bodies,—lessons in singing, gymnastics, dancing, and fencing. These classes will be held daily, because the development of the muscles of the human body requires systematic and thorough exercise, and a long time.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Action

#### I

WHAT a day! It was our first lesson with the Director.

We gathered in the school, a small but perfectly equipped theatre. He came in, looked us all over carefully, and said: "Maria, please go up onto the stage."

The poor girl was terrified. She reminded me of a frightened puppy, the way she ran off to hide herself. At last we caught her and led her to the Director, who was laughing like a child. She covered her face with her hands, and repeated all her favourite exclamations: "Oh dear, I cannot do it! Oh dear, I am afraid!"

"Calm yourself," said he, looking her straight in the eye, "and let us do a little play. This is the plot." He was paying no attention to the young woman's agitation. "The curtain goes up, and you are sitting on the stage. You are alone. You sit and sit and sit. . . . At last the curtain comes down again. That is the whole play. Nothing simpler could be imagined, could it?"

Maria did not answer, so he took her by the arm and without a word led her onto the stage, while all the rest of us laughed.

The Director turned and said quietly: "My friends, you are in a schoolroom. And Maria is going through a most important moment in her artistic life. Try to learn when to laugh, and at what."

He took her out to the middle of the stage. We sat silent and waited for the curtain to rise. It went up slowly. She sat in the middle, near the front, her hands still covering her face. The solemn atmosphere and the long silence made themselves felt. She realized that something must be done.



First she removed one hand from her face, then the other, at the same time dropping her head so low that we could see nothing but the nape of her neck. Another pause. It was painful, but the Director waited in determined silence. Aware of the increasing tension, Maria looked out into the audience, but turned away instantly. Not knowing where to look, or what to do, she began to change, to sit first one way and then another, to take awkward positions, throw herself back and then straighten up, to bend over, pull hard at her very short skirt, look fixedly at something on the floor.

For a long time the Director was relentless, but at last he gave the sign for the curtain. I rushed up to him, because I wanted him to try me on the same exercise.

I was put in the middle of the stage. This was not a real performance; nevertheless I was full of self-contradictory impulses. Being on the stage, I was on exhibition, and yet an inner feeling demanded solitude. Part of me sought to entertain the onlookers, so that they would not become bored; another part told me to pay no attention to them. My legs, arms, head, and torso, although they did what I directed, added something superfluous of their own. You move your arm or leg quite simply, and suddenly you are all twisted, and look as though you were posing for a picture.

Strange! I had been on the stage only once, yet it was infinitely easier for me to sit on the stage affectedly than simply. I could not think what I ought to do. Afterward the others told me I looked in turn stupid, funny, embarrassed, guilty, apologetic. The Director merely waited. Then he tried the same exercise on the others.

"Now," said he, "let us go further. Later we shall return to these exercises, and learn how to sit on the stage."

"Isn't that what we have been doing?" we asked.

"Oh, no," he replied. "You were not simply sitting."

"What ought we to have done?"

Instead of giving his answer in words he rose quickly, walked up to the stage in a business-like way, and sat down

heavily in an arm-chair to rest, as if he were at home. He neither did nor tried to do anything, yet his simple sitting posture was striking. We watched him, and wanted to know what was going on inside of him. He smiled. So did we. He looked thoughtful, and we were eager to know what was passing through his mind. He looked at something, and we felt we must see what it was that had attracted his attention.

In ordinary life one would not be specially interested in his manner of taking a seat, or remaining in it. But for some reason, when he is on the stage, one watches him closely, and perhaps has an actual pleasure in seeing him merely sit.

This did not happen when the others sat on the stage. We neither wanted to look at them nor to know what was going on inside them. Their helplessness and desire to please were ridiculous. Yet although the Director paid not the slightest attention to us, we were strongly drawn to him.

What is the secret? He told us himself.

Whatever happens on the stage must be for a *purpose*. Even keeping your seat must be for a purpose, a specific purpose, not merely the general purpose of being in sight of the audience. One must earn one's right to be sitting there. And it is not easy.

"Now let us repeat the experiment," he said, without leaving the stage. "Maria, come up here to me. I am going to act with you."

"You!" cried Maria, and she ran up onto the stage.

Again she was placed in the arm-chair, in the middle of the stage, and again she began to wait nervously, to move consciously, to pull her skirts.

The Director stood near her, and seemed to be looking for something very carefully in his notebook.

Meantime, gradually, Maria became more quiet, more concentrated, and finally was motionless, with her eyes fixed on him. She was afraid she might disturb him, and she merely waited for further orders. Her pose was life-like, natural. She almost seemed to be beautiful. The stage brought out her good



features. Some time passed in just that way. Then the curtain fell.

"How do you feel?" the Director asked, as they returned to their places in the auditorium.

"I? Why? Did we act?"

"Of course."

"Oh! But I thought. . . . I was just sitting and waiting until you found your place in the book, and would tell me what to do. Why, I didn't act anything."

"That was the best part of it," said he. "You sat and waited, and did not act anything."

Then he turned to the rest of us. "Which struck you as more interesting?" he asked. "To sit on the stage and show off your small feet, as Sonya did, or your whole figure, like Grisha, or to sit for a specific purpose, even so simple a one as waiting for something to happen? It may not be of intrinsic interest in itself, but it is life, whereas showing yourself off takes you out of the realm of living art.

"On the stage, you must always be enacting something; action, motion, is the basis of the art followed by the actor."

"But," Grisha broke in, "you have just said that acting is necessary, and that showing off your feet or your figure, as I did, is not action. Why is it action to sit in a chair, as you did, without moving a finger? To me it looked like complete lack of action."

I interrupted boldly: "I do not know whether it was action or inaction, but all of us are agreed that his so-called lack of action was of far more interest than your action."

"You see," the Director said calmly, addressing Grisha, "the external immobility of a person sitting on the stage does not imply passiveness. You may sit without a motion and at the same time be in full action. Nor is that all. Frequently physical immobility is the direct result of inner intensity, and it is these inner activities that are far more important artistically. The essence of art is not in its external forms but in its spiritual

content. So I will change the formula I gave you a moment ago, and put it like this:

*"On the stage it is necessary to act, either outwardly or inwardly."*

## 2

"Let us give a new play," said the Director to Maria, as he came into the classroom today.

"Here is the gist of it: your mother has lost her job and her income; she has nothing to sell to pay for your tuition in dramatic school. In consequence you will be obliged to leave tomorrow. But a friend has come to your rescue. She has no cash to lend you, so she has brought you a brooch set in valuable stones. Her generous act has moved and excited you. Can you accept such a sacrifice? You cannot make up your mind. You try to refuse. Your friend sticks the pin into a curtain and walks out. You follow her into the corridor, where there is a long scene of persuasion, refusal, tears, gratitude. In the end you accept, your friend leaves, and you come back into the room to get the brooch. But—where is it? Can anyone have entered and taken it? In a rooming house that would be altogether possible. A careful, nerve-racking search ensues.

"Go up on the stage. I shall stick the pin in a fold of this curtain and you are to find it."

In a moment he announced that he was ready.

Maria dashed onto the stage as if she had been chased. She ran to the edge of the footlights and then back again, holding her head with both hands, and writhing with terror. Then she came forward again, and then again went away, this time in the opposite direction. Rushing out toward the front she seized the folds of the curtain and shook them desperately, finally burying her head in them. This act she intended to represent looking for the brooch. Not finding it, she turned quickly and dashed off the stage, alternately holding her head or beating her breast, apparently to represent the general tragedy of the situation.



Those of us who were sitting in the orchestra could scarcely keep from laughing.

It was not long before Maria came running down to us in a most triumphant manner. Her eyes shone, her cheeks flamed.

"How do you feel?" asked the Director.

"Oh, just wonderful! I can't tell you how wonderful. I'm so happy," she cried, hopping around on her seat. "I feel just as if I had made my *début* . . . really at home on the stage."

"That's fine," said he encouragingly, "but where is the brooch? Give it to me."

"Oh, yes," said she, "I forgot that."

"That is rather strange. You were looking hard for it, and you forgot it!"

We could scarcely look around before she was up on the stage again, and was going through the folds of the curtain.

"Do not forget this one thing," said the Director warningly, "if the brooch is found you are saved. You may continue to come to these classes. But if the pin is not found you will have to leave the school."

Immediately her face became intense. She glued her eyes on the curtain, and went over every fold of the material from top to bottom, painstakingly, systematically. This time her search was at a much slower pace, but we were all sure that she was not wasting a second of her time and that she was sincerely excited, although she made no effort to seem so.

"Oh, where is it? Oh, I've lost it."

This time the words were muttered in a low voice.

"It isn't there," she cried, with despair and consternation, when she had gone through every fold.

Her face was all worry and sadness. She stood motionless, as if her thoughts were far away. It was easy to feel how the loss of the pin had moved her.

We watched, and held our breath.

Finally the Director spoke.

"How do you feel now, after your second search?" he asked.

"How do I feel? I don't know." Her whole manner was languid, she shrugged her shoulders as she tried for some answer, and unconsciously her eyes were still on the floor of the stage. "I looked hard," she went on, after a moment.

"That's true. This time you really did look," said he. "But what did you do the first time?"

"Oh, the first time I was excited, I suffered."

"Which feeling was more agreeable, the first, when you rushed about and tore up the curtain, or the second, when you searched through it quietly?"

"Why, of course, the first time, when I was looking for the pin."

"No, do not try to make us believe that the first time you were looking for the pin," said he. "You did not even think of it. You merely sought to suffer, for the sake of suffering."

"But the second time you really did look. We all saw it; we understood, we believed, because your consternation and distraction actually existed."

"Your first search was bad. The second was good."

This verdict stunned her. "Oh," she said, "I nearly killed myself that first time."

"That doesn't count," said he. "It only interfered with a real search. On the stage do not run for the sake of running, or suffer for the sake of suffering. Don't act 'in general,' for the sake of action; always act with a purpose."

"And truthfully," said I.

"Yes," he agreed; "and now, get up on the stage and do it."

We went, but for a long time we did not know what to do. We felt we must make an impression, but I couldn't think of anything worth the attention of an audience. I started to be Othello, but soon stopped. Leo tried in turn an aristocrat, a general, and a peasant. Maria ran around holding her head and her heart to represent tragedy. Paul sat on a chair in a Hamlet-like pose and seemed to be representing either sorrow or disillusion. Sonya flirted around, and by her side Grisha declared his love in the most worn traditions of the stage. When I hap-



pened to look at Nicholas Umnovkyh and Dasha Dymkova, who had as usual hidden themselves in a corner, I almost groaned to see their fixed stares and wooden attitudes, as they did a scene from Ibsen's *Brand*.

"Let's sum up what you have done," said the Director. "I shall begin with you," he said, indicating me. "And at the same time with you and you," he went on, pointing to Maria and Paul. "Sit right here, on these chairs, where I can see you better, and begin; you are to be jealous, you to suffer, you to grieve, just producing those moods for their own sakes."

We sat down, and immediately we felt the absurdity of our situation. As long as I was walking about, writhing like a savage, it was possible to imagine that there was some sense in what I was doing, but when I was put on a chair, with no external movements, the absurdity of my performance was clear.

"Well, what do you think?" asked the Director. "Can one sit on a chair, and for no reason at all be jealous? Or all stirred up? Or sad? Of course it is impossible. Fix this for all time in your memories: *On the stage there cannot be, under any circumstances, action which is directed immediately at the arousing of a feeling for its own sake.* To ignore this rule results only in the most disgusting artificiality. *When you are choosing some bit of action leave feeling and spiritual content alone.* Never seek to be jealous, or to make love, or to suffer, for its own sake. *All such feelings are the result of something that has gone before. Of the thing that goes before you should think as hard as you can. As for the result, it will produce itself.* The false acting of passions, or of types, or the mere use of conventional gestures,—these are all frequent faults in our profession. But you must keep away from these unrealities. You must not copy passions or copy types. You must live in the passions and in the types. Your acting of them must grow out of your living in them."

Vanya then suggested that we could act better if the stage was not so bare; if there were more properties about, furniture, fireplace, ash trays.

"Very well," agreed the Director, and ended the lesson at this point.

## 3

Our work for today was again scheduled for the School Stage, but when we arrived we found the entrance to the auditorium closed. However, another door was open that led directly onto the stage. As we entered we were astonished to find ourselves in a vestibule. Next to that was a cosy little living-room, in which were two doors, one opening into a dining-room and thence into a small bedroom, the other into a long corridor, on one side of which was a ballroom, brilliantly lighted. This whole apartment was partitioned off by scenery taken from productions in the repertory. The main curtain was down and barricaded with furniture.

Not feeling that we were on the boards we behaved as if we were at home. We began by examining the rooms, and then we settled down in groups and began to chat. It did not occur to any of us that the lesson had already begun. At last the Director reminded us that we had come together for work.

"What shall we do?" someone asked.

"The same thing as yesterday," was the reply.

But we continued to stand around.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

It was Paul who answered. "I don't know, really. Suddenly, for no reason at all, to act . . ." he stopped, as if at a loss.

"If it is uncomfortable to act for no reason at all, why then find a reason," said Tortsov. "I am not putting any restrictions on you. Only do not continue to stand there like sticks of wood."

"But," somebody ventured, "wouldn't that be acting for the sake of acting?"

"No," retorted the Director. "From now on there is to be acting only for some purpose. Now you have the surroundings you asked for yesterday; can't you suggest some inner motives

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that will result in simple physical acts? For instance, if I ask you, Vanya, to go and close that door, would you not do it?"

"Close the door? Of course." And Vanya went over, slammed it and returned before we had a chance to look at him.

"That is not what is meant by closing a door," said the Director. "By the word 'close' I imply a wish that the door shall be shut, so that it will stay shut, to stop the draught, or so that persons in the next room shall not hear what we are saying. You merely banged the door, with no reason in your mind, and in a way that might well make it swing open again, as in fact it has done."

"It won't stay shut. Honestly it won't," said Vanya.

"If it is difficult, then it will require more time and care to carry out my request," said the Director.

This time Vanya shut the door properly.

"Tell me something to do," I begged.

"Is it impossible for you to think of anything? There is a fireplace and some wood. Go build a fire."

I did as I was told, laid the wood in the fireplace, but found no matches, either in my pocket or on the mantelpiece. So I came back and told Tortsov of my difficulty.

"What in the world do you want matches for?" asked he.

"To light the fire."

"The fireplace is made of paper. Did you intend to burn down the theatre?"

"I was just going to pretend," I explained.

He held out an empty hand.

"To pretend to light a fire, pretended matches are sufficient. As if the point were to strike a match!

"When you reach the point of playing Hamlet, threading a way through his intricate psychology to the moment when he kills the King, will it be important to you to have a life-size sword in your hand? If you lack one, will you be unable to finish the performance? You can kill the King without a sword, and you can light the fire without a match. What needs to burn is your imagination."

I went on pretending to light my fire. To lengthen the action I arranged that the make-believe matches should go out a number of times, although I tried hard to protect them with my hands. Also I tried to see the fire, to feel the heat, but failed, and soon began to be bored, so that I was compelled to think of something else to do. I began to move the furniture, then to count the objects in the room, but having no purpose behind these acts they were all mechanical.

"There is nothing surprising in that," explained the Director. "If an action has no inner foundation, it cannot hold your attention. It takes no time to push a few chairs about, but if you were compelled to arrange some chairs of different sorts for a particular purpose, as for guests at a dinner who must be seated according to rank, age, and personal harmony, you could spend a long time over them."

But my imagination had run dry.

As soon as he saw that the others had also run down, he gathered us together in the living-room. "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? If I brought a dozen children in here and told them this is their new home, you would see their imagination sparkle; their games would be real games. Can't you be like them?"

"It is easy to say that," Paul complained. "But we aren't children. They naturally desire to play, and with us it must be forced."

"Of course," the Director answered, "if you either will not or cannot light a spark within yourselves, I have no more to say. Every person who is really an artist desires to create inside of himself another, deeper, more interesting life than the one that actually surrounds him."

Grisha broke in: "If the curtain were up, and the audience there, the desire would come."

"No," replied the Director with decision. "If you are really artists you will feel the desire without those accessories. Now be frank. Actually what was it that prevented your acting anything?"

I explained that I could light a fire, move furniture, open and

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shut doors, but these acts are not extended enough to hold my attention. I light the fire, or close the door, and that is the end of it. If one act led to another, and gave rise to a third, natural momentum and tension would be created.

"In short," he summed up, "what you think you need is not short, external, semi-mechanical acts, but some that have a broader perspective, are deeper, and more complicated?"

"No," I answered, "but give us something that, although simple, is interesting."

"Do you mean to say," said he, perplexed, "that all that depends on me? Surely the explanation must be sought in the inner motives, in the circumstances amid which, and for the sake of which, you are doing the act. Take that opening or shutting of a door. Nothing can be simpler, you might say, of less interest, or more mechanical.

"But suppose that in this apartment of Maria's, there used to live a man who became violently insane. They took him away to a psychopathic ward. If he escaped from there, and were behind that door, what would you do?"

Once the question was put in that form our whole inner aim, as the Director described it, was altered. We no longer thought about how to extend our activity, or worried about its external form. Our minds were centred on estimating the value or purpose of this or that act in view of the problem presented. Our eyes began to measure the distance to the door, and to look for safe approaches to it. They examined the surroundings for directions of escape, in case the madman should break through the door. Our instinct of self-preservation sensed danger, and suggested ways of dealing with it.

Either accidentally or on purpose, Vanya, who had been pressing against the door after it was shut, suddenly jumped away, and we all rushed after him, the girls screaming and running off into another room. In the end I found myself under a table, with a heavy bronze ash-receiver in my hand.

The job was not ended. The door was now closed, but not

locked. There was no key. Therefore the safest thing we could do was to barricade it with sofas, tables, and chairs, then call up the hospital and arrange to have them take the necessary steps to regain the custody of the madman.

The success of this improvisation put me in high spirits. I went over to the Director and begged him to give me another chance at lighting the fire.

Without a moment's hesitation he told me Maria had just inherited a fortune! That she has taken this apartment, and is celebrating her good luck by a housewarming, to which she has invited all her fellow-students. One of them, who is well acquainted with Kachalov, Moskvina, and Leonidov, has promised to bring them to the party. But the apartment is very chilly, the central heating has not yet been turned on, although it is very cold outside. Can some wood for an open fire be found?

Some sticks might be borrowed from a neighbor. A little fire is started, but it smokes badly, and must be put out. Meanwhile it has grown late. Another fire is started, but the wood is green, and will not burn. In another minute the guests will be here.

"Now," he continued, "let me see what you would do *if* my supposed facts were true."

When it was all over, the Director said: "Today I can say that you acted with a motive. You have learned that all action in the theatre must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent, and real. Second: *if* acts as a lever to lift us out of the world of actuality into the realm of imagination."

## 4

Today the Director proceeded to enumerate the various functions of *if*.

"This word has a peculiar quality, a kind of power which you sensed, and which produced in you an instantaneous, inner stimulus.

"Note too how easily and simply it came. That door, which was the starting point in our exercise, became a means of de-

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fence, and your basic aim, the object of your concentrated attention, was desire for self-preservation.

"The supposition of danger is always exciting. It is a kind of yeast that will ferment at any time. As for the door and the fireplace, inanimate objects, they excite us only when they are bound up with something else, of more importance to us.

"Take into consideration also that this inner stimulus was brought about without force, and without deception. I did not tell you that there was a madman behind the door. On the contrary, by using the word *if* I frankly recognized the fact that I was offering you only a supposition. All I wanted to accomplish was to make you say what you would have done *if* the supposition about the madman were a real fact, leaving you to feel what anybody in the given circumstances must feel. You in turn did not force yourselves, or make yourselves accept the supposition as reality, but only as a supposition.

"What would have happened if, instead of this frank confession, I had sworn to you that there was, really and truly, a madman behind the door?"

"I should not have believed such an obvious deception," was my reaction.

"With this special quality of *if*," explained the Director, "nobody obliges you to believe or not believe anything. Everything is clear, honest, and above-board. You are given a question, and you are expected to answer it sincerely and definitely.

"Consequently, the secret of the effect of *if* lies first of all in the fact that it does not use fear or force, or make the artist do anything. On the contrary, it reassures him through its honesty, and encourages him to have confidence in a supposed situation. That is why, in your exercise, the stimulus was produced so naturally.

"This brings me to another quality. *It arouses an inner and real activity*, and does this by natural means. Because you are actors you did not give a simple answer to the question. You felt you must answer the challenge to *action*.

"This important characteristic of *if* brings it close to one of the fundamentals of our school of acting—*activity in creative-ness and art*."

5

"Some of you are eager to put what I have been telling you into immediate practice," said the Director today. "That is quite right and I am glad to fall in with your wishes. Let us apply the use of *if* to a role.

"Suppose you were to play a dramatization of Chekhov's tale about an innocent farmer who unscrewed a nut off a railroad track to use as a sinker for his fishing line. For this he was tried and severely punished. This imaginary happening will sink into the consciousness of some, but for most people it will remain a 'funny story.' They will never even glimpse the tragedy of the legal and social conditions hidden behind the laughter. But the artist who is to act one of the parts in this scene cannot laugh. He must think through for himself and, most important, he must live through whatever it was that caused the author to write the story. How would you go about it?" The Director paused.

The students were silent and thoughtful for a time.

"In moments of doubt, when your thoughts, feelings, and imagination are silent, remember *if*. The author also began his work that way. He said to himself:

"What would happen *if* a simple farmer, off on a fishing expedition, were to take a nut from a rail? Now give yourselves the same problem and add: 'What would I do *if* the case came up to me to judge?'"

"I would convict the criminal," I answered, without hesitation.

"What of? On account of the sinker for his fishing line?"

"For the theft of a nut."

"Of course, one shouldn't steal," agreed Tortsov. "But can you punish a man severely for a crime of which he is entirely unconscious?"

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"In case of uncertainty, decide for yourself. You may be wrong, but do not hesitate. An actor must have presence of mind. Do not stop to enquire. Vanya—the vase. Nicholas—the window, Dasha—the pillow, Vassili—the piano. One, two, three, four, five . . ." He counted slowly up to thirty. "Lights out." He called on me first.

"You told me to look at a rug, and I could not decide at once, so I lost some time——"

"Be shorter, and stick to the point."

"The rug is Persian. The general background is reddish brown. A big border frames the edges——" I went on describing it until the Assistant Director called out "Lights."

"You remembered it all wrong. You didn't carry the impression. You scattered it. Leo!"

"I could not make out the subject of the painting, because it is so far away, and I am short-sighted. All I saw was a yellow tone on a red background."

"Lights. There is neither red nor yellow in the painting. Grisha."

"The chandelier is gilt. A cheap product. With glass pendants."

"Lights on. The chandelier is a museum piece, a real piece of Empire. You were asleep at the switch."

"Lights out. Kostya, describe your rug again."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know that I would be required to do it again."

"Never sit there for one instant doing nothing. I warn you all now that I shall examine you twice, or more times, until I get an exact idea of your impressions. Leo!"

He made a startled exclamation and said: "I wasn't noticing."

In the end we were forced to study our objects down to the last detail, and to describe them. In my case, I was called on five times before I succeeded. This work at high pressure lasted half an hour. Our eyes were tired and our attention strained. It would have been impossible to continue any longer with such

intensity. So the lesson was divided into two parts, of a half hour each. After the first part we took a lesson in dancing. Then we went back and did exactly what we did before, except that the time of observation was cut down from thirty seconds to twenty. The Assistant Director remarked that the allowance for observation would eventually be reduced to two seconds.

## 5

The Director continued his demonstration with electric lights today.

"Up to now," he said, "we have been dealing with objects in the form of *points* of light. Now I am going to show you a *circle of attention*. It will consist of a whole section, large or small in dimension, and will include a series of independent points of objects. The eye may pass from one to another of these points, but it must not go beyond the indicated limit of the circle of attention."

First there was complete darkness. A moment later a large lamp was lighted on the table near which I was seated. The shade on the lamp threw the circle of the rays down on my head and hands, and made a bright light on the centre of the table, where there was a number of small things. These shone and reflected all sorts of different colours. The rest of the stage and the hall were swallowed up in darkness.

"This lighted space on the table," said the Director, "illustrates a Small Circle of Attention. You yourself, or rather your head and hands, on which the light falls, are the centre of this circle."

The effect on me was like magic. All the little knick-knacks on the table drew my attention without any forcing or any instruction on my part. In a circle of light, in the midst of darkness, you have the sensation of being entirely alone. I felt even more at home in this circle of light than in my own room.

In such a small space as in this circle you can use your concentrated attention to examine various objects in their most in-

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tricate details, and also to carry on more complicated activities, such as defining shades of feeling and thought. Evidently the Director realized my state of mind, for he came right up to the edge of the stage and said: "Make a note immediately of your mood; it is what we call Solitude in Public. You are in public because we are all here. It is solitude because you are divided from us by the small circle of attention. During a performance, before an audience of thousands, you can always enclose yourself in this circle like a snail in its shell."

After a pause he announced that he would now show us a Medium Circle; everything became dark; the spotlight then illumined a fairly large area, with a group of several pieces of furniture, a table, some chairs with students sitting on them, one corner of the piano, the fireplace with a big arm-chair in front of it. I found myself in the centre of the medium light circle. Of course we could not take in everything at once, but had to examine the area bit by bit, object by object, each thing within the circle making an independent point.

The greatest drawback was that the larger area of lighting produced reflected half-tones that fell on things beyond the circle, so that the wall of darkness did not seem impenetrable.

"Now you have the Large Circle," he went on. The whole living-room was flooded with light. The other rooms were dark, but soon lamps were turned on in them also, and the Director pointed out: "That is the very Largest Circle. Its dimensions depend on the length of your eyesight. Here in this room I have extended the circle as far as is possible. But if we were standing on the seashore or on a plain, the circle would be limited only by the horizon. On the stage such distant perspectives are furnished by the painting on the back-drop.

"Now let us try to repeat the exercises you have just done, except that this time we shall have all the lights on."

We all sat down on the stage, around the large table, with the large lamp. I was just where I had been a few moments before, and felt for the first time the sensation of being alone in public.

Now we were supposed to renew this feeling in full light with only a mental outline to make the circle of attention.

When we were unsuccessful in our attempts the Director explained to us why.

"When you have a spot of light surrounded by darkness," he said, "all the objects inside of it draw your attention because everything outside of it being invisible, there is no attraction there. The outlines of such a circle are so sharp and the encircling shadow so solid that you have no desire to go beyond its limits.

"When the lights are on you have an entirely different problem. As there is no obvious outline to your circle you are obliged to construct one mentally and not allow yourself to look beyond it. Your attention must now replace the light, holding you within certain limits, and this in spite of the drawing power of all sorts of objects now visible outside of it. Therefore since the conditions, with and without the spotlight, are opposite, the method of maintaining the circle must change."

He then outlined the given area by a series of objects in the room.

For instance, the round table outlined one circle, the smallest; in another part of the stage a rug, somewhat larger than the table on it, made a Medium Circle; and the largest rug in the room defined a Large Circle.

"Now let us take the whole apartment, the Largest Circle," said the Director.

Here everything that had helped me up to now to concentrate, failed, and—I felt powerless.

To encourage us he said:

"Time and practice will teach you how to use the method I just suggested to you. Don't forget it and meantime I will show you another technical device which will help to direct your attention. As the circle grows larger the area of your attention must stretch. This area, however, can continue to grow only up to the point where you can still hold it all within the limits of your attention, inside an imaginary line. *As soon as*

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*your border begins to waver, you must withdraw quickly to a smaller circle which can be contained by your visual attention.*

"At this point you will often get into trouble. Your attention will slip and become dissipated in space. *You must collect it again and redirect it as soon as possible to one single point or object*, such as, for instance, that lamp. It will not seem as bright as it did when there was darkness all around it, nevertheless it will still have the power to hold your attention.

"When you have established that point, surround it with a small circle with the lamp at its centre. Then enlarge it to a medium circle which will include several smaller ones. These will not be reinforced each by a central point. If you must have such a point, choose a new object and surround it with another small circle. Apply the same method to a medium circle."

But each time the area of our attention was stretched to a certain point we lost control of it. As each experiment failed the Director made new attempts.

After a time he went on to another phase of the same idea.

"Have you noticed," he said, "that up to now you have always been in the *centre* of the circle? Yet you may sometimes find yourself outside. For example——"

Everything became dark; then a ceiling light, in the next room, was lighted, throwing a spot on the white tablecloth and the dishes.

"Now you are beyond the limits of the small circle of your attention. Your role is a passive one; one of observation. As the circle of light is extended, and the illuminated area in the dining-room grows, your circle also becomes larger and larger, and the area of your observation increases in the same ratio. Also you can use the same method of choosing points of attention in these circles that lie beyond you."

## 6

When I exclaimed today that I wished I need never be separated from the small circle, the Director replied:

"You can carry it with you wherever you go, on the stage or off. Get up on the stage and walk around. Change your seat. Behave as you would if you were at home."

I got up and took several steps in the direction of the fireplace. Everything became entirely dark; then from somewhere appeared a spotlight, that moved along with me. In spite of moving about I felt at home and comfortable in the centre of a small circle. I paced up and down the room, the spotlight following me. I walked to the window and it came also. I sat down at the piano, still with the light. That convinced me that the small circle of attention that moves about with you is the most essential and practical thing I have yet learned.

To illustrate its use the Director told us a Hindu tale, about a Maharajah who, about to choose a minister, announced that he would take only the man who could walk around on top of the city walls, holding a dish full to the brim with milk, without spilling a drop. A number of candidates, yelled at, frightened, or in other ways distracted, spilled the milk. "Those," said the Maharajah, "are no ministers."

Then came another, whom no scream, no threat, and no form of distraction could cause to take his eyes from the rim of the bowl.

"Fire!" said the commander of the troops.

They fired, but with no result.

"There is a real Minister," said the Maharajah.

"Didn't you hear the cries?" he was asked.

"No."

"Didn't you see the attempts to frighten you?"

"No."

"Did you hear the shots?"

"No. I was watching the milk."

As another illustration of the moving circle, this time in concrete form, we were each handed a wooden hoop. Some of these hoops were larger, some smaller, according to the size of the circle to be created. As you walk about with your hoop, you get the picture of the moving centre of attention which you have

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channel and keep him in the right creative line. If you had to stage your departure from the Shustovs' you would have to say to yourself: first of all, what am I doing? Your answer—*going home*—gives you the key to your main objective.

"Along the way, however, there were stops. You stood still at one point and did something else. Therefore *looking in the shop window* is an independent unit. Then as you proceeded you returned to your first unit.

"Finally you reached your room and undressed. This was another bit. When you *lay down* and *began to think* you began still another unit.

"We have cut your total of units from over two hundred down to four. These mark your *channel*.

"Together they create one large objective—*going home*.

"Suppose you are staging the first bit. You are going home, you just walk and walk and do nothing else. Or the second bit, standing in front of the shop window; you just stand and stand. For the third you wash yourself, and for the fourth you lie and lie. If you do that your acting will be boring, monotonous. Your director will insist on a more detailed development of each bit. This will oblige you to break each unit up into finer details and reproduce them clearly and minutely.

"If these finer divisions are still too monotonous you will have to break them up still further until your walk down the street reflects the details typical of such an act: meeting friends, a greeting, observation of what is going on around you, jostling passers-by and so on."

The Director then discussed the things Paul's uncle had talked about. We exchanged knowing smiles as we remembered the turkey.

"The largest pieces you reduce to medium size, then to small, and then to fine, only to reverse the process eventually and re-assemble the whole.

"Always remember," he warned, "that the division is temporary. The part and the play must not remain in fragments. A broken statue, or a slashed canvas, is not a work of art, no matter

how beautiful its parts may be. It is only in the preparation of a role that we use small units. During its actual creation they fuse into large units. The larger and fewer the divisions, the less you have to deal with, the easier it is for you to handle the whole role.

"Actors conquer these larger divisions easily if they are thoroughly filled out. Strung along through a play, they take the place of buoys to mark the channel. This channel points the true course of creativeness and makes it possible to avoid the shallows and reefs.

"Unfortunately many actors dispense with this channel. They are incapable of dissecting a play and analysing it. Therefore they find themselves forced to handle a multitude of superficial, unrelated details, so many that they become confused and lose *all sense of the larger whole*.

"Do not take such actors for your model. *Do not break up a play more than is necessary, do not use details to guide you. Create a channel outlined by large divisions, which have been thoroughly worked out and filled down to the last detail.*

"The technique of division is comparatively simple. You ask yourself: '*What is the core of the play—the thing without which it cannot exist?*' Then you go over the main points without entering into detail. Let us say that we are studying Gogol's *Inspector General*. What is essential to it?"

"The *Inspector General*," said Vanya.

"Or rather the episode with Khlestakov," corrected Paul.

"Agreed," said the Director, "but that is not sufficient. There must be an appropriate background for this tragi-comical occurrence pictured by Gogol. This is furnished by scoundrels of the type of the Mayor, the superintendents of various public institutions, the pair of gossips, etc. Therefore we are obliged to conclude that the play could not exist without both Khlestakov and the naïve inhabitants of the town.

"What else is necessary to the play?" he continued.

"*Stupid romanticism* and the *provincial flirts*, like the Mayor's



wife who precipitated the engagement of her daughter and upset the whole town," suggested someone.

"The postmaster's curiosity and Ossip's sanity," other students threw in. "The bribery, the letter, the arrival of the real Inspector."

"You have divided the play into its main organic episodes—its largest units. Now draw from each of these units its essential content and you will have the inner outline of the whole play. Each large unit is in turn divided into the medium and small parts which, together, compose it. In shaping these divisions it is often necessary to combine several small units.

"You now have a general notion of how to divide a play into its component units, and how to mark out a channel to guide you through it," said Tortsov in conclusion.

## 3

"The division of a play into units, to study its structure, has one purpose," explained the Director today. "There is another, far more important, inner reason. At the heart of every unit lies a *creative objective*.

"Each objective is an organic part of the unit or, conversely, it creates the unit which surrounds it.

"It is just as impossible to inject extraneous objectives into a play as it is to put in units which are not related to it, because the objectives must form a logical and coherent stream. Given this direct, organic bond, all that has been said about *units* applies equally to *objectives*."

"Does that mean," I asked, "that they are also divided up into major and minor steps?"

"Yes, indeed," said he.

"What about the channel?" I asked.

"The objective will be the light that shows the right way," explained the Director.

"The mistake most actors make is that they think about the result instead of about the action that must prepare it. By avoid-

ing action and aiming straight at the result you get a forced product which can lead to nothing but ham acting.

"Try to avoid straining after the result. Act with truth, fullness and integrity of purpose. You can develop this type of action by choosing lively objectives. Set yourself some such problem now and execute it," he suggested.

While Maria and I were thinking it over Paul came to us with the following proposal:

Suppose we are both in love with Maria and have proposed to her. What would we do?

First we laid out a general scheme and then divided it into various units and objectives, each of which, in turn, gave rise to action. When our activity died down, we threw in fresh suppositions, and had new problems to solve. Under the influence of this constant pressure we were so wrapped up in what we were doing that we did not notice when the curtain was raised and the bare stage appeared.

The Director suggested that we continue our work out there, which we did, and when we had finished he said:

"Do you recall one of our first lessons when I asked you to go out onto the bare stage and act? You did not know what to do but floundered around helplessly with external forms and passions? But today, in spite of the bare stage, you felt quite free and moved around easily. What helped you do this?"

"Inner, active objectives," both Paul and I said.

"Yes," he agreed, "because they direct an actor along the right path and restrain him from false acting. It is the objective that gives him faith in his right to come onto the stage and stay there.

"Unfortunately, today's experiment was not altogether convincing. The objectives some of you set were chosen for their own sakes and not because of their inner spring of action. That results in tricks and showing off. Others took purely external objectives related to exhibitionism. As for Grisha, his purpose was, as usual, to let his technique shine. That is just being spectacular, it cannot result in any real stimulus to action. Leo's

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objective was good enough but was too exclusively intellectual and literary.

"We find innumerable objectives on the stage and not all of them are either necessary or good; in fact, many are harmful. An actor must learn to recognize quality, to avoid the useless, and to choose essentially right objectives."

"How can we know them?" I asked.

"I should define right objectives as follows," said he:

"1) They must be on our side of the footlights. They must be directed toward the other actors, and not toward the spectators.

"2) They should be personal yet analogous to those of the character you are portraying.

"3) They must be creative and artistic because their function should be to fulfill the main purpose of our art: to create the life of a human soul and render it in artistic form.

"4) They should be real, live, and human, not dead, conventional, or theatrical.

"5) They should be truthful so that you yourself, the actors playing with you, and your audience can believe in them.

"6) They should have the quality of attracting and moving you.

"7) They must be clear cut and typical of the role you are playing. They must tolerate no vagueness. They must be distinctly woven into the fabric of your part.

"8) They should have value and content, to correspond to the inner body of your part. They must not be shallow, or skim along the surface.

"9) They should be active, to push your role ahead and not let it stagnate.

"Let me warn you against a dangerous form of objective, purely motor, which is prevalent in the theatre and leads to mechanical performance.

"We admit three types of objectives; the external or physical, the inner or psychological, and the rudimentary psychological type."

Vanya expressed dismay at these big words and the Director explained his meaning by an example.

"Suppose you come into the room," he began, "and greet me, nod your head, shake my hand. That is an ordinary *mechanical* objective. It has nothing to do with psychology."

"Is that wrong?" broke in Vanya.

The Director hastened to disabuse him.

"Of course you may say how do you do, but you may not love, suffer, hate or carry out any living, human objective in a purely mechanical way, without experiencing any feeling.

"A different case," he continued, "is holding out your hand and trying to express sentiments of love, respect, gratitude through your grasp and the look in your eye. That is how we execute an *ordinary objective* and yet there is a psychological element in it, so we, in our jargon, define it as a rudimentary type.

"Now here is a third way. Yesterday you and I had a quarrel. I insulted you publicly. Today, when we meet, I want to go up to you and offer my hand, indicating by this gesture that I wish to apologize, admit that I was wrong and beg you to forget the incident. To stretch out my hand to my enemy of yesterday is not a simple problem. I will have to think it over carefully, go through and overcome many emotions before I can do it. That is what we call a *psychological objective*.

"Another important point about an objective is that besides being believable, it should have attraction for the actor, make him wish to carry it out. This magnetism is a challenge to his creative will.

"Objectives which contain these necessary qualities we call creative. It is difficult to cull them out. Rehearsals are taken up, in the main, with the task of finding the right objectives, getting control of them and living with them."

The Director turned to Nicholas. "What is your objective in that favourite scene of yours from *Brand*?" he asked.

"To save humanity," Nicholas replied.