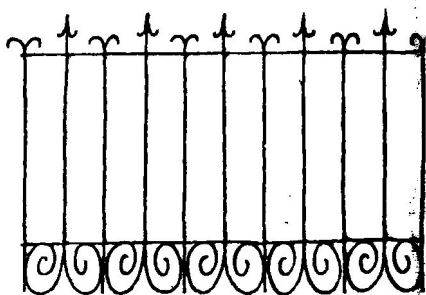
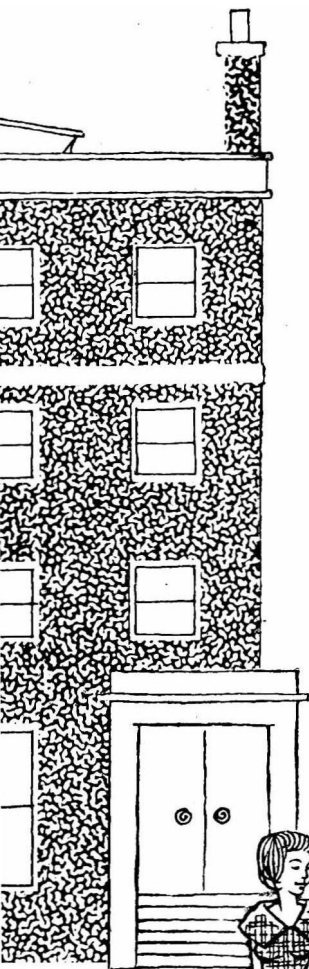




**MEET THE ROBINSONS**



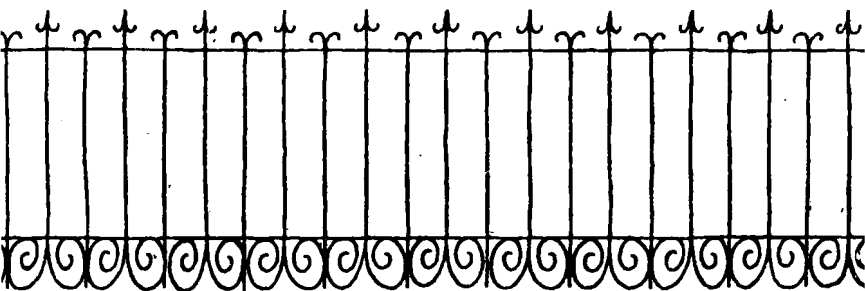




G. H. H A N N A

*Me!*

**THE ROBINSONS**



**THE HIGHER SCHOOL STATE PUBLISHING HOUSE • MOSCOW 1963**

*Художник Л. М. Чернышев*

## INTRODUCTION

This is not an ordinary textbook or manual of English—it is intended to be read for pleasure as well as profit. It does not hope to teach you a lot of new words, in fact you are expected to know most of the words in the vocabulary of these dialogues. Its main practical purpose is to show you how the words you already know are used in their native surroundings by English speakers of the language.

By the time you have reached the stage at which you can read this book you will, of course, know that such questions and answers as: "What is this?", "It is a book", or "Where are you going?", "I am going to the cinema", are hardly likely to occur in real life. An Englishman is far more likely to ask: "What have you got there?" and the answer he would receive would normally be: "A book"; or, "Where are you off to?"—"The pictures". These are the specific features of the purely colloquial language that the author has tried to make clear to readers. This point cannot be too greatly stressed because you, the reader, will probably *understand* the dialogues the first time you read them. Understanding them, however, is not enough; the thing is to use the expressions they contain in your own speech.

Each of the eighteen chapters of the book is a conversation between two or more people on a given theme. They have been kept more or less thematic because vocabulary extension, although not the major purpose of the book, has not been forgotten. The English is purely colloquial and very modern, and is the type of language that would normally be used by educated speakers.

The conversations are all original and have been specially written for this book; they have not been adapted from other books or culled from "classic" authors. Every effort has been made to keep them natural and to give the student really typical conversations. There are many modern idioms in all the talks, but slang and particularly vulgarisms (unfortunately far too frequent in modern British and American literature) have been avoided. By making most of the scenes intimate the author hopes he has avoided the artificiality that inevitably attaches to a text designed to provide material for linguistic exercises. For the same reason no exercises have been included. The section entitled "Colloquial English", printed at the end of the book, contains a number of commentaries mostly linguistic in character. In addition to explaining some particular idiomatic feature that may have escaped the student's notice, they also serve to draw his attention to those expressions that are worth remembering and using.

For whom is the book intended?

For all those who have completed a general course of English and wish to make their spoken language easier and more flexible; for students of language institutes in their fourth and fifth years; for *viva voce* interpreters who would like their language to be more readily understood by visitors from abroad for whom they interpret; lastly, for teachers of English who feel in need of a refresher course and who would like to acquire greater facility of speech.

How should the book be used since no exercises are given?

A great deal depends, of course, on the purpose for which it is being used. One thing every student of the language should do is pick out from each chapter all the phrases he has never himself used (not merely those he does not understand at first), find Russian equivalents for them, and compare them very carefully. You will find that your ordinary speech in your native language is marked by very strong ellipsis although it may differ (in the type of word omitted) from that of a foreign language. A comparison of the two languages will help you understand the basic differences between the literary and colloquial languages.

Another feature to note is the very subtle difference between the choice of words and expressions made by different characters, especially the difference in the adjectives used by men and women. This is apparent from the first chapter. Tatiana says: "I'm dying to know what's in the letter", "I'm just crazy to get started on the way to England", expressions no man would use—a man would be "anxious" to know, "keen" to start or, far more likely, he would emphasise his impatience by some such understatement, as, "I'm just wondering what the letter's about."

If the book is used by a group the dialogues could be read aloud, the men's parts being read by men and the women's by women.

Those readers whose business in life is translation could try translating the dialogues into equally colloquial Russian and then, after laying them aside for a week or two, try translating them back to see how much of the English idioms has been assimilated. The author realises that the acquisition of a correct idiom in a foreign language is a very difficult matter, especially when the student is not living in the country in which the language is spoken. This should not discourage the student and if he does not grasp all the subtleties of these cheerful, often bantering talks in the first chapter or two, he will find that by the end of the book he has learned quite a number of new ways of using words and expressions.

The author would appreciate comments on the book and suggestions for improvement and would be glad to know how teachers of English are using it.

*George H. Hanna*

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. A Letter from England . . . . .	9
2. Getting Ready . . . . .	14
3. A Sea Trip . . . . .	20
4. At a London Hotel . . . . .	25
5. Looking for Lodgings . . . . .	30
6. A Trip to the Suburbs . . . . .	36
7. Meeting the Family . . . . .	42
8. Lunch with the Family . . . . .	49
9. Shopping . . . . .	55
10. A Quiet Afternoon . . . . .	63
11. An Evening at the Theatre . . . . .	70
12. The Sights of London . . . . .	77
13. The Hike . . . . .	84
14. The Great Picnic . . . . .	89
15. A Visit to a Farm . . . . .	96
16. Politics in a London Pub . . . . .	104
17. London by Night . . . . .	113
18. Farewell! . . . . .	120
Colloquial English . . . . .	126







## A LETTER FROM ENGLAND

*(SCENE: in the Robinsons' flat in Moscow. Time: 8 a.m.  
Fred Robinson is an English-born engineer who has been living in the Soviet Union for several years. Tatiana Petrovna, his wife, is an architect. She was born in Sverdlovsk and is now working in Moscow. Tatiana has entered the dining-room while Fred is in the bathroom at his morning toilet.)*

**Tatiana:** *(calling from the dining-room)* Fred!

**Fred:** *(answering from the bathroom)* Hello, are you up already?<sup>1</sup>

**Tatiana:** Why shouldn't I be up? I'm handing in the last drawings of my school building today. How much longer are you going to keep me waiting?

**Fred:** *(irritably)* And how many times must I ask you not to talk to me when I'm shaving? Oh, damn it, now I've cut myself.

**Tatiana:** You must have got out of bed on the wrong side<sup>2</sup> this morning. I'm just dying to know what's in the letter!

**Fred:** *(entering the dining-room)* What on earth<sup>3</sup> is happening here today? I haven't had a chance to talk to you for ages. Every evening you've been poring over that drawing-board of yours, and you've always been asleep when I got up. And the first time in months you're up for breakfast you chatter away at me<sup>4</sup> until I cut my chin. Now you want me to tell you what's in a letter I've never even seen. It's

just a little too much for my poor brain so early in the morning!

T a t i a n a : (*with marked impatience*) There's a letter for you from England. Looks like your mother's writing.<sup>5</sup> Now I'll go and get some clothes on,<sup>6</sup> while you're opening it. I can't go around like this all day. I'll be back in a couple of minutes and you can tell me what it's all about.

F r e d : (*opening the letter with a knife*) All right, run along, dear. I'm sorry I'm so irritable this morning.

T a t i a n a : (*leaves the bedroom door open so that she can talk*) Well, what has your mother got to say?<sup>7</sup>

F r e d : (*after a long pause*) Curiosity killed the cat!<sup>8</sup>

T a t i a n a : (*re-entering the dining-room, buttoning on a housecoat over her underclothes*) Yes, darling, I know, but satisfaction brought it back.<sup>8</sup> (*Goes into the kitchen*) I'll bring in the coffee.

F r e d : (*amazed*) D'you mean to say you've been up long enough to get breakfast?

T a t i a n a : (*from the kitchen*) Yes, I've turned over a new leaf,<sup>9</sup> as from today. (*Comes back with the coffee pot*) Shall I pour you some coffee?

F r e d : Please. (*He continues reading the letter which is an unusually long one.*)

T a t i a n a : Your mother seems to have written a whole book this time. But get on with your coffee before it gets cold.

F r e d : (*between sips of coffee*) My mother wants us to pay her a visit in England. She's getting on in years and thinks it's time I went to see her for a month or so if I don't want to go back to England for good.

T a t i a n a : You have been away an awfully long time, haven't you?

F r e d : Yes, about five years. And she wants to have a look<sup>10</sup> at you, too. She thinks it's very funny having a daughter-in-law she knows only from photographs. You always read the letters I write home, so you know how much I've told her about you. And Dad is very anxious to see you as well.

T a t i a n a : It's your letters that frighten me. You have painted such a wonderful picture of your clever little wife, the most beautiful woman in Russia and the world's leading architect, that I'm sure your mother and father are going to be very disappointed.

F r e d : I'll take the risk, if you will.<sup>11</sup>

T a t i a n a : Why, I'd love to meet your people, especially your mother. You've told me so much about her, I seem to have known her all my life. Do you think we could manage a holiday in England? Think it over while I fry some sausages and eggs (*goes into kitchen*).

F r e d : I thought they were ready.

T a t i a n a : They'd be cinders by now if I'd put them on to fry when I got up.

F r e d : (*walking over to the kitchen door*) D'you know, I think we *could* manage it. It's all right as far as my time's concerned. I didn't have a holiday last year . . .

T a t i a n a : Yes, darling, that's why you're so irritable. You're simply overworked. A holiday abroad would do you the world of good.

F r e d : All right, I can think up my own excuses without your help. But as I was saying when you interrupted me, I have a month's holiday due to me from last year, and a month for this year. One and one make two, I believe. But what about you? How soon can you get away?

T a t i a n a : (*offended at having been given second place*) If you hadn't been so busy swearing at me, and the razor, and the world in general, you'd have heard what I said. I'm handing in the last of my school drawings today. I can insist on a holiday before I start on another job. I'm supposed to be doing<sup>12</sup> a village hospital this autumn, but I needn't start on it till September. What about money? Can we rake up<sup>13</sup> enough between us?

F r e d : Of course we can. Money's no bother, with our holiday pay and our savings we'll have more than enough for two months' holiday. (*Sits down at the table*)

T a t i a n a : So it's settled then. We're going to England. I ought to give you a great big kiss for that.

F r e d : Don't be in such a hurry. I'll have to think it over.

T a t i a n a : Don't try to put me off.<sup>14</sup> We're going to England. I shall need a new hat and some other things, you know, stockings and shoes and what-not.<sup>15</sup>

F r e d : It seems to me you've got enough hats and shoes and stockings and what-nots for a voyage round the world. I can never find a place in the cupboard for my shirts, it's packed so full of your what-nots. It's your own affair, of course, you can buy what you like. (*Smiles slyly*) But if I

were you I'd wait and see. Things in London probably won't be any better than what you can buy here in Moscow, but they're sure to be different and that's what you women like, isn't it?

T a t i a n a : (*kisses him*) Aren't you a darling . . . Oh, my sausages are burning! (*Runs into the kitchen and comes back with a smoking frying pan*) I was just in time to rescue them. How many for you?

F r e d : Two, please, and one egg. And pour me out another cup of coffee, if you don't mind. I have quite a lot of thinking to do on the way to the office. I'm going to ask the chief for my two months holiday from the first of July. And I think I'll tell him I may need a couple of weeks extra, without pay, of course, in case we need more time. That would bring us back about the middle of September.

T a t i a n a : (*crestfallen*) I'm afraid that won't do for me. I must get back in time to start my new project on the first of September. You mustn't be greedy. Two months is a long enough holiday, what do you need more time for?

F r e d : I've got oodles<sup>16</sup> of relatives scattered all over the British landscape and I want to see as many of them as possible.

T a t i a n a : I hope you'll be able to get two whole months all at once, never mind extras. If we're held up for any reason you can always cable.

F r e d : I could, of course, but I shouldn't like to; I have a reputation to keep up.<sup>17</sup> I'll ask for just the two months from the fifteenth of June. That will allow for accidents<sup>18</sup> and still get us back to Moscow in good time.

T a t i a n a : I hope it comes off.<sup>19</sup> I've been wanting to go to England for ever so long. Do you think my English will be good enough to get along with?

F r e d : Don't fish for compliments. You know perfectly well that you speak English almost as well as you do Russian. But look at the time! It's half past eight!

T a t i a n a : Hurry along then, you're never late as a rule, so don't make today an exception if you're going to ask your chief engineer for a favour!

F r e d : Good-bye, then. I'll ask for my holidays from the fifteenth of June and you do the same. Then you can make your appearance on the first of September, as per plan.<sup>20</sup>

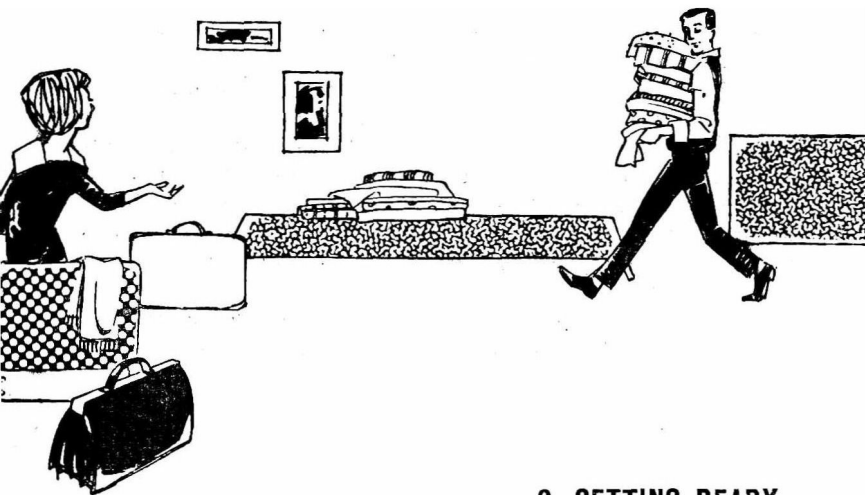
T a t i a n a : You make it sound as though I were an actress. But I really do want to start my work on that

hospital in good time. I've got a reputation to live up to,<sup>21</sup> as well, so don't you forget it.

F r e d : What time do you expect to be home?

T a t i a n a : I shan't be late. There'll be a conference on my school project at three. It's already been approved, except for some minor details and I hope the concilium will approve the project as a whole. At any rate, the chief architect and chief engineer signed the drawings yesterday so I suppose nobody will raise any serious objections. I ought to be home by seven, so don't you be late!

F r e d : (*kisses her good-bye*) I'll get home by a quarter to,<sup>22</sup> and meet you on the doorstep to tell you the news. Good-bye.



## 2. GETTING READY

*(The Robinson's Moscow flat. Time: 6.30 a.m. Fred is still half asleep but Tatiana is lying wide awake.)*

**Tatiana:** *(trying to rouse Fred)* Fred, what was it you called today? D-day,<sup>1</sup> wasn't it?

**Fred:** *(muttering drowsily)* Yes, it's D-day all right, but it's still a long time to zero hour.<sup>2</sup> What about a little more shut-eye?<sup>3</sup>

**Tatiana:** What hour was that?

**Fred:** Zero hour, the time when things begin to hum.<sup>4</sup>

**Tatiana:** When do they begin to hum? What are we going to do? Where do we begin? Do we have to get our tickets today?

**Fred:** We've about a million other things to do before we can think about tickets. We have to get our passports from the Foreign Office. Mine will have the exit visa on it, but I don't know whether you'll have a British visa in your passport or whether we'll have to get that as well. Anyway, it shouldn't take long. They told me yesterday at the Foreign Office that my exit visa is ready.

**Tatiana:** I wonder whether my passport will be ready?

**Fred:** Why shouldn't it be? Once we've got our passports we can book steamship berths from Leningrad to Lon-

don. We'll get railway tickets when we know the sailing date.<sup>5</sup>

T a t i a n a : Do you think we'll be able to spend a day or so in Leningrad? I haven't been there since I was a little girl. I'd love to see what Leningrad is like today.

F r e d : I've never been in Leningrad and I'd like to have a look at that famous city. I don't suppose we shall have much time to spare, though. Maybe a day.

T a t i a n a : Of course, a day's not much in a city you've never seen before, although it'd be a pity to spend too much time there now. Next year we can have a whole month in Leningrad if you'd like it. I'm just crazy to get started<sup>6</sup> on the way to England.

F r e d : I don't want to dampen your ardour, but I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed. Your idea of England is one big *Forsyte Saga*, but I can assure you it isn't. My father isn't a man of property, he's just a retired engine-driver living on his superannuation.<sup>7</sup>

T a t i a n a : Whatever is that — er — superannuation?

F r e d : All the years he was working he paid so much a week into a sort of insurance fund. I'm not sure, but I believe the trade union runs it. Or perhaps the government does, because the railways are nationalised in England.

T a t i a n a : Doesn't he get a state pension?

F r e d : Old age pension, I suppose you mean. No, he doesn't get it until he's sixty-five, which is some time this year. He was retired from the railway service at sixty and that's when his superannuation began.

T a t i a n a : Does he get enough to live on?

F r e d : He and mother live with my brother and his family so I suppose they make ends meet. His superannuation should be pretty good, he worked over forty years on the railway.

T a t i a n a : That's quite a time in one job, isn't it?

F r e d : It's quite common, especially on the railways. His father was an engine-driver, too.

T a t i a n a : Was there much bombing in your part of England?

F r e d : I was in the middle of it all as a kid. London was badly battered in 1940. In general, England suffered plenty from the war, although not so much as the Soviet Union did. Recovery has not been anything like as speedy as it has been



here and I believe there are still plenty of bombed sites<sup>8</sup> that have not been rebuilt.

T a t i a n a : Oh, I know that, I read all the builders' and architects' journals, you know. It isn't because I believe this is going to be a trip to paradise that I'm excited. I've never been abroad and everything will be so different and interesting.

F r e d : What exactly do you expect?

T a t i a n a : I don't quite know. I've seen some wonderful pictures of English landscapes . . .

F r e d : Yes, the English countryside really is beautiful, you know. But I'm afraid everything will seem too small and cramped to you after your great open spaces.

T a t i a n a : Whatever it's like I think we ought to know more about how other people live, what they do, and what they think.

F r e d : After that short lecture on coexistence I suppose we ought to get up, even if it is only seven o'clock. I can hear that sister of yours making plenty of noise in the kitchen so there ought to be some breakfast going soon.<sup>9</sup> Is she willing to stay here while we're away?

T a t i a n a : She's more than willing, she's just dying to. I knew she wanted a holiday in Moscow, that's why I invited her. Let's do something, I'm too excited to sleep. You can take a shower first and then you can shave while I'm taking mine.

F r e d : Sort of streamlining things,<sup>10</sup> aren't you?

T a t i a n a : (*pushing him out of bed*) Come on, lazybones, don't waste any more time. We've got to get washed,<sup>11</sup> eat breakfast and start packing.

\*

\* \*

*(Some hours later the Robinsons are ready to leave home. Trunks and bags are standing about the rooms still open and not fully packed.)*

T a t i a n a : It's almost half past eleven. Shall we take a taxi?

F r e d : Don't be so extravagant, we'll save the taxis for our holidaymaking when it really starts. We can go just as quickly by Underground, it's only a couple of minutes walk from the station.