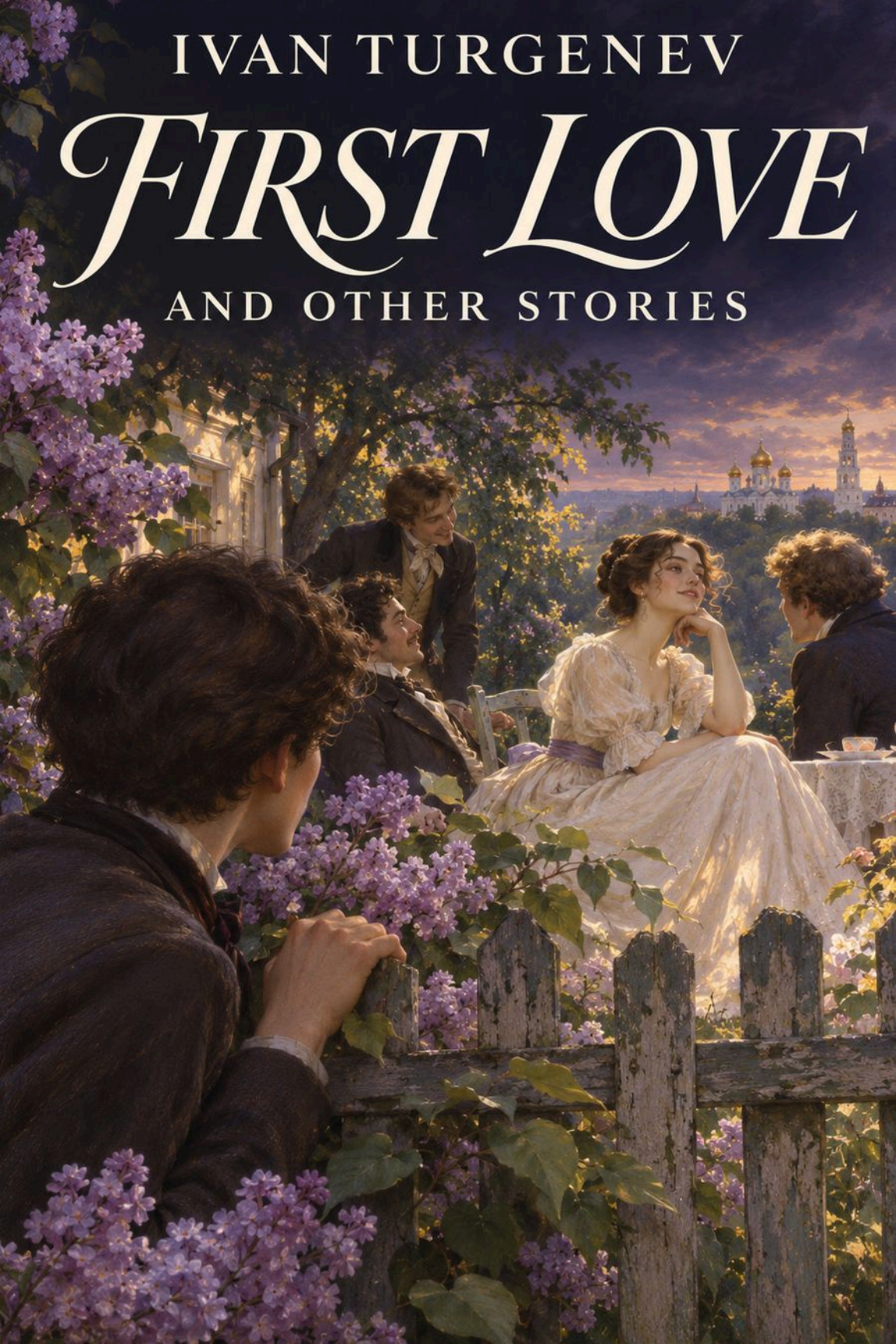
IVAN TURGENEV

FIRST LOVE

AND OTHER STORIES

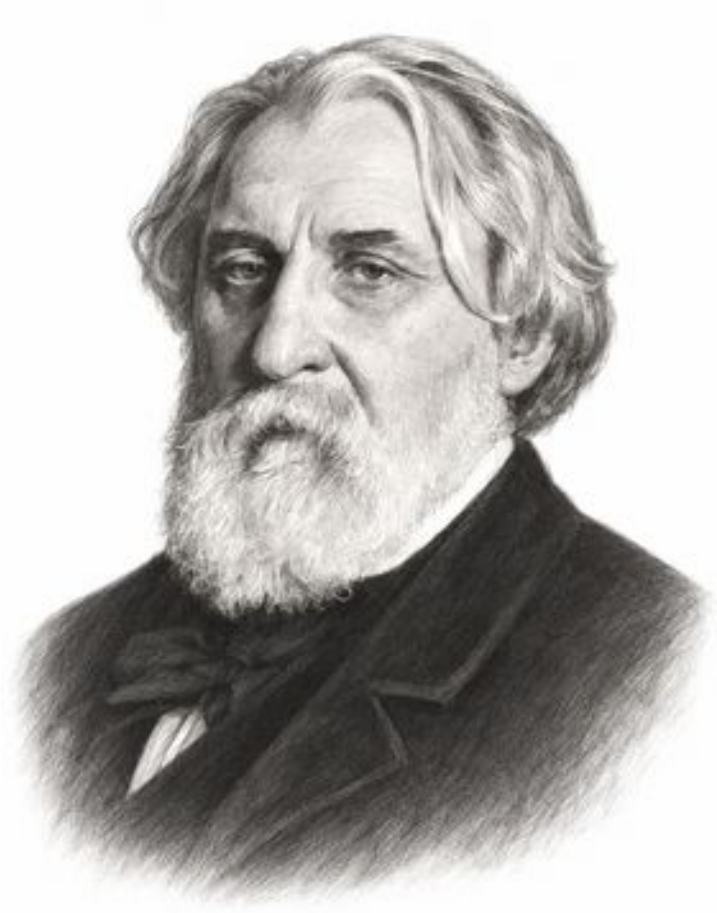


First Love, and Other Stories

Ivan Turgenev

Translated by Isabel F. Hapgood

THE AUTHOR



Ivan Turgenev

1818–1883

Illustrated portrait after Ilya Repin's 1874 portrait in the Tretyakov Gallery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ivan Turgenev

Ivan Turgenev grew up on a family estate in Russia and spent much of his career moving between Russia and Western Europe. His fiction pays close attention to the choices people make and the words they leave unsaid.

First Love takes the form of a remembered summer. Its young narrator watches Zinaida and her admirers, unaware of how much of the story he has yet to understand.

Source: Tretyakov Gallery Magazine and Pipcub's Turgenev author profile.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Five works from Isabel F. Hapgood's 1904 English translation, with the historical frontispiece, Hapgood's preface and notes.



PREFACE

The novel "First Love" was Turgénieff's favourite work, as he more than once confessed. What the author prized in this purely intimate but beautifully finished story was its fidelity to actuality; that is to say, he prized the personal recollections of early youth. In that respect this story has a prominent interest for readers, since it narrates—according to the testimony of the author—an actual fact in his life, and that without the slightest artificial colouring.[1] To what degree Turgénieff's testimony is credible, remarks one critic, is a question which can be rightly decided only by biographical documents. Famous writers are particularly inclined by nature to romantic coquetry with their own personalities—a characteristic which was, apparently, to some extent, inherent in Turgénieff, despite his renowned modesty. Famous writers are fond of leading their contemporaries—and still more posterity—astray with regard to the reflection of intimate details of their lives in their artistic works.... At any rate, Russian artistic productions, in which the authors have endeavoured to set forth biographical details, must be scrutinised with extreme cautiousness. The author, while imagining that he is thoroughly sincere, may involuntarily indulge in inventions concerning himself. But in its literary aspect this story indubitably is one of Turgénieff's masterpieces, and in it the original character of its chief heroine, Princess Zinaída Zasyékin, is depicted with remarkable clearness and charm.... The artist threw off this light and elegant little intimate study by way of relaxation after "On the Eve," a romance dealing with a broad social problem, and by way of preparation for a new work, still more serious in intention, "Fathers and Children."

"First Love" does not contain any social types, does not deal with any social problems. It consists wholly, so to speak, of poetry. The young Princess is one of the author's most poetical creations. Her character is depicted with marvellous grace and elegance in the little scenes which exert so great an influence over her sixteen-year-old admirer. In this young man's father Turgénieff

sketched his own father, who did not love his wife, and whose domestic relations were identical with those here described. His wife was considerably younger than he, and he had married her for her money, One curious detail concerns the Pole, Malévsky. This "dubious Count, swindler, and, in general, dirty little gentleman," as one critic expresses it, "drawn with great artistic vivacity, and with unconcealed scorn, is a very typical figure; and such repulsive Poles were formerly encountered in great numbers in Holy Russia,—and are still to be met with. In this character are concentrated the unpleasant characteristics of the Polish national character: spiritual deceitfulness, double-facedness, insignificance, courtliness, and a tendency to revolting intrigue."

In "A Correspondence" we again encounter one of Turgénieff's favourite types, the superfluous man. But the author has taken a stride in advance with Alexyéi Petróvitch. In this case the superfluous man does not blame either the insipidity of life, or society, or people alone,—he blames himself. In Márya Alexándrovna's friend and correspondent we behold a good and worthy man, cultured in both mind and heart,—but, like many others among Turgénieff's heroes, suffering, so to speak, from a malady of the will. One critic declares that this story is almost identical, on its exterior, with "Rúdin." One of the Russian representatives of "the loftiest aspirations" enters into correspondence with a young girl who, as people were fond of expressing it at that period, belonged among the "choice natures." Disillusioned with life, she is ready to submit to the conditions which encompass her. Under the influence of an ill-defined impulse of affection and sympathy toward this young girl, the hero begins to inflate her sense of being an elect person, and to stir up her energy to contend with the humdrum circle in which she dwells. Just at the moment when he has awakened her courage and her hope that he will join her in this conflict, he stumbles and falls himself, in the most pusillanimous manner. His will is ailing.

Another point worth noting is that in the heroine's third letter the note of the so-called "woman's question" is sounded with remarkable feeling and force.

The explanation vouchsafed by one critic for the prevalence of weak men in Turgénieff's romances, in connection with "A Correspondence," is that the author did not depict strong natures simply because he did not find suitable material for that purpose in the circle which surrounded him. He was determined to draw the best men of his time as he found them—that is to say, men addicted to self-conviction, fiery in language, but weak in resolution.

"The Region of Dead Calm" was written while Turgénieff was forbidden to leave his estate at Spásskoe-Lutovínovo, after his release from the imprisonment wherewith he was punished for having published in Moscow a eulogy of Gógol which the St. Petersburg censor had prohibited. His idea that all men are divided into two categories which, respectively, possess more or less of the characteristics of Hamlet and of Don Quixote, is illustrated again in this story by Véretyeff, who ruins his talents and his life with liquor.

On the other hand, as one critic says, "positively, in the whole of Russian literature, we do not meet elsewhere such a grand, massive, severe, and somewhat coarse woman as Márya Pávlovna." Másha is the first woman in Russian literature to look upon man as a worker, and to treat him with intelligent exaction. Another strange characteristic in a young lady of the remote country districts is Másha's dislike for "sweet" poetry. Her suicide is not a proof that her character was weak. And of the two weak men in the story, Astákhoff is the weaker, the more colourless, in every way—as to character, not as to the author's portraiture.

The pictures of country life among the landed gentry are drawn with great charm and delicate humour.

That Turgénieff was affected, and very sensibly so, by the lack of comprehension evinced by both critics and readers toward his

great work "Fathers and Children," is evident, in part, from the characteristic lyrical fragment, "It is Enough." It is filled with mournful pessimism of a romantic sort, which strongly recalls the pessimism of Leopardi. A certain element of comedy is imparted to this sentimental outpouring by the fact that the author fancied (and, probably, with entire sincerity) that he bore a strong resemblance in his convictions to Bazároff, his creation. Dostoiévsky depicted this comic element very caustically, in the most malicious of parodies on Turgénieff in general and on "It is Enough" and "Phantoms" in particular. This parody is contained in his romance "Devils," and constitutes one of the most venomous pages in that decidedly venomous romance. The following is an excerpt: "In the meantime, the mist swirled and swirled, and swirled round and round until it bore more resemblance to a million pillows than to mist. And suddenly everything vanishes, and a great Genius crosses the Volga in winter, during a thaw. Two and a half pages about this transit. But, notwithstanding, he tumbles into a hole in the ice. The Genius goes to the bottom. Do you think he drowns? Not a bit of it! All this is for the sake, after he is completely foundered and is beginning to choke, of making a block of ice, a tiny block, about the size of a pea, but clear and transparent, float past him 'like a frozen tear'; and on that block of ice Germany, or, to put it more accurately, the sky of Germany, is reflected; and by the rainbow play of that reflection it reminds him of the tear which—dost thou remember?—trickled from thine eyes when we sat under the emerald tree, and thou didst joyfully exclaim: 'There is no crime!'—'Yes!' said I through my tears; 'but if that is so, then assuredly there are no righteous men either.' We fell to sobbing and parted forever."

"The Dog" was first published in the feuilleton of the *Petersburg News*, No. 85, 1865. It is generally admitted to be one of Turgénieff's weak and unsuccessful works. But one critic describes how enthralling it was when the author narrated it (in advance of publication) to a group of friends in Moscow, and what a deep impression it made upon them. "When I read it afterward in

print," he says, "it seemed to me a pale copy of Turgénieff's verbal narration. One was impressed with the idea that, when he sat down to write it, he was overcome with apprehension lest his readers and critics should suppose that he believed in this mysterious adventure. But conviction on the part of the author—in appearance at least—is precisely what is required in such cases. He told the tale with enthusiasm, and even turned pale, and his face assumed a cast of fear at the dramatic points." The critic adds that he could not get to sleep for hours afterward.

I. F. H.

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FIRST LOVE

(1860)

THE guests had long since departed. The clock struck half-past twelve. There remained in the room only the host, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, and Vladímir Petróvitch.

The host rang and ordered the remains of the supper to be removed.—"So then, the matter is settled,"—he said, ensconcing himself more deeply in his arm-chair, and lighting a cigar:—"each of us is to narrate the history of his first love. 'Tis your turn, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch."

Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, a rather corpulent man, with a plump, fair-skinned face, first looked at the host, then raised his eyes to the ceiling.—"I had no first love,"—he began at last:—"I began straight off with the second."

"How was that?"

"Very simply. I was eighteen years of age when, for the first time, I dangled after a very charming young lady; but I courted her as though it were no new thing to me: exactly as I courted others afterward. To tell the truth, I fell in love, for the first and last time, at the age of six, with my nurse;—but that is a very long time ago. The details of our relations have been erased from my memory; but even if I remembered them, who would be interested in them?"

"Then what are we to do?"—began the host.—"There was nothing very startling about my first love either; I never fell in love with any one before Anna Ivánovna, now my wife; and everything ran as though on oil with us; our fathers made up the match, we very promptly fell in love with each other, and entered the bonds of matrimony without delay. My story can be told in two words. I must confess, gentlemen, that in raising the question of first love, I

set my hopes on you, I will not say old, but yet no longer young bachelors. Will not you divert us with something, Vladímir Petróvitch?"

"My first love belongs, as a matter of fact, not altogether to the ordinary category,"—replied, with a slight hesitation, Vladímir Petróvitch, a man of forty, whose black hair was sprinkled with grey.

"Ah!"—said the host and Sergyéi Nikoláevitch in one breath.—"So much the better.... Tell us."

"As you like ... or no: I will not narrate; I am no great hand at telling a story; it turns out dry and short, or long-drawn-out and artificial. But if you will permit me, I will write down all that I remember in a note-book, and will read it aloud to you."

At first the friends would not consent, but Vladímir Petróvitch insisted on having his own way. A fortnight later they came together again, and Vladímir Sergyéitch kept his promise.

This is what his note-book contained.

I

I was sixteen years old at the time. The affair took place in the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow, in my parents' house. They had hired a villa near the Kalúga barrier, opposite the Neskútchny Park.[2]—I was preparing for the university, but was working very little and was not in a hurry.

No one restricted my freedom. I had done whatever I pleased ever since I had parted with my last French governor, who was utterly unable to reconcile himself to the thought that he had fallen "like a bomb" (*comme une bombe*) into Russia, and with a stubborn expression on his face, wallowed in bed for whole days at a time. My father treated me in an indifferently-affectionate way; my mother paid hardly any attention to me, although she had no

children except me: other cares engrossed her. My father, still a young man and very handsome, had married her from calculation; she was ten years older than he. My mother led a melancholy life: she was incessantly in a state of agitation, jealousy, and wrath—but not in the presence of my father; she was very much afraid of him, and he maintained a stern, cold, and distant manner.... I have never seen a man more exquisitely calm, self-confident, and self-controlled.

I shall never forget the first weeks I spent at the villa. The weather was magnificent; we had left town the ninth of May, on St. Nicholas's day. I rambled,—sometimes in the garden of our villa, sometimes in Neskútchny Park, sometimes beyond the city barriers; I took with me some book or other,—a course of Kaidánoff,—but rarely opened it, and chiefly recited aloud poems, of which I knew a great many by heart. The blood was fermenting in me, and my heart was aching—so sweetly and absurdly; I was always waiting for something, shrinking at something, and wondering at everything, and was all ready for anything at a moment's notice. My fancy was beginning to play, and hovered swiftly ever around the selfsame image, as martins hover round a belfry at sunset. But even athwart my tears and athwart the melancholy, inspired now by a melodious verse, now by the beauty of the evening, there peered forth, like grass in springtime, the joyous sensation of young, bubbling life.

I had a saddle-horse; I was in the habit of saddling it myself, and when I rode off alone as far as possible, in some direction, launching out at a gallop and fancying myself a knight at a tourney—how blithely the wind whistled in my ears!—Or, turning my face skyward, I welcomed its beaming light and azure into my open soul.

I remember, at that time, the image of woman, the phantom of woman's love, almost never entered my mind in clearly-defined outlines; but in everything I thought, in everything I felt, there lay

hidden the half-conscious, shamefaced presentiment of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine....

This presentiment, this expectation permeated my whole being; I breathed it, it coursed through my veins in every drop of blood ... it was fated to be speedily realised.

Our villa consisted of a wooden manor-house with columns, and two tiny outlying wings; in the wing to the left a tiny factory of cheap wall-papers was installed.... More than once I went thither to watch how half a score of gaunt, dishevelled young fellows in dirty smocks and with tipsy faces were incessantly galloping about at the wooden levers which jammed down the square blocks of the press, and in that manner, by the weight of their puny bodies, printed the motley-hued patterns of the wall-papers. The wing on the right stood empty and was for rent. One day—three weeks after the ninth of May—the shutters on the windows of this wing were opened, and women's faces made their appearance in them; some family or other had moved into it. I remember how, that same day at dinner, my mother inquired of the butler who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasyékin, said at first, not without some respect:—"Ah! a Princess" ... and then she added:—"She must be some poor person!"

"They came in three hired carriages, ma'am,"—remarked the butler, as he respectfully presented a dish. "They have no carriage of their own, ma'am, and their furniture is of the very plainest sort."

"Yes,"—returned my mother,—"and nevertheless, it is better so."

My father shot a cold glance at her; she subsided into silence.

As a matter of fact, Princess Zasyékin could not be a wealthy woman: the wing she had hired was so old and tiny and low-roofed that people in the least well-to-do would not have been willing to inhabit it.—However, I let this go in at one ear and out at the other. The princely title had little effect on me: I had recently been reading Schiller's "The Brigands."

II

I had a habit of prowling about our garden every evening, gun in hand, and standing guard against the crows.—I had long cherished a hatred for those wary, rapacious and crafty birds. On the day of which I have been speaking, I went into the garden as usual, and, after having fruitlessly made the round of all the alleys (the crows recognised me from afar, and merely cawed spasmodically at a distance), I accidentally approached the low fence which separated *our* territory from the narrow strip of garden extending behind the right-hand wing and appertaining to it. I was walking along with drooping head. Suddenly I heard voices: I glanced over the fence—and was petrified.... A strange spectacle presented itself to me.

A few paces distant from me, on a grass-plot between green raspberry-bushes, stood a tall, graceful young girl, in a striped, pink frock and with a white kerchief on her head; around her pressed four young men, and she was tapping them in turn on the brow with those small grey flowers, the name of which I do not know, but which are familiar to children; these little flowers form tiny sacs, and burst with a pop when they are struck against anything hard. The young men offered their foreheads to her so willingly, and in the girl's movements (I saw her form in profile) there was something so bewitching, caressing, mocking, and charming, that I almost cried aloud in wonder and pleasure; and I believe I would have given everything in the world if those lovely little fingers had only consented to tap me on the brow. My gun slid down on the grass, I forgot everything, I devoured with my eyes that slender waist, and the neck and the beautiful arms, and the slightly ruffled fair hair, the intelligent eyes and those lashes, and the delicate cheek beneath them....

"Young man, hey there, young man!"—suddenly spoke up a voice near me:—"Is it permissible to stare like that at strange young ladies?"

I trembled all over, I was stupefied.... Beside me, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with closely-clipped black hair, gazing ironically at me. At that same moment, the young girl turned toward me.... I beheld huge grey eyes in a mobile, animated face—and this whole face suddenly began to quiver, and to laugh, and the white teeth gleamed from it, the brows elevated themselves in an amusing way.... I flushed, picked up my gun from the ground, and, pursued by ringing but not malicious laughter, I ran to my own room, flung myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands. My heart was fairly leaping within me; I felt very much ashamed and very merry: I experienced an unprecedented emotion.

After I had rested awhile, I brushed my hair, made myself neat and went down-stairs to tea. The image of the young girl floated in front of me; my heart had ceased to leap, but ached in an agreeable sort of way.

"What ails thee?"—my father suddenly asked me:—"hast thou killed a crow?"

I was on the point of telling him all, but refrained and only smiled to myself. As I was preparing for bed, I whirled round thrice on one foot, I know not why, pomaded my hair, got into bed and slept all night like a dead man. Toward morning I awoke for a moment, raised my head, cast a glance of rapture around me—and fell asleep again.

III

"How am I to get acquainted with them?" was my first thought, as soon as I awoke in the morning. I went out into the garden before tea, but did not approach too close to the fence, and saw no one. After tea I walked several times up and down the street in front of the villa, and cast a distant glance at the windows.... I thought I descried *her* face behind the curtains, and retreated with all possible despatch. "But I must get acquainted,"—I thought, as I walked with irregular strides up and down the sandy stretch which extends in front of the Neskútchny Park ... "but how? that is the question." I recalled the most trifling incidents of the meeting on the previous evening; for some reason, her manner of laughing at me presented itself to me with particular clearness.... But while I was fretting thus and constructing various plans, Fate was already providing for me.

During my absence, my mother had received a letter from her new neighbour on grey paper sealed with brown wax, such as is used only on postal notices, and on the corks of cheap wine. In this letter, written in illiterate language, and with a slovenly chirography, the Princess requested my mother to grant her her protection: my mother, according to the Princess's words, was well acquainted with the prominent people on whom the fortune of herself and her children depended, as she had some extremely important law-suits: "I apeal tyou,"—she wrote,—"as a knoble woman to a knoble woman, and moarover, it is agriable to me to makeus of this oportunity." In conclusion, she asked permission of my mother to call upon her. I found my mother in an unpleasant frame of mind: my father was not at home, and she had no one with whom to take counsel. It was impossible not to reply to a "knoble woman," and to a Princess into the bargain; but how to reply perplexed my mother. It seemed to her ill-judged to write a note in French, and my mother was not strong in Russian orthography herself—and was aware of the fact—and did not wish to compromise herself. She was delighted at my arrival, and immediately ordered me to go to the Princess and explain to her

verbally that my mother was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to be of service to Her Radiance,[3] and begged that she would call upon her about one o'clock.

This unexpectedly swift fulfilment of my secret wishes both delighted and frightened me; but I did not betray the emotion which held possession of me, and preliminarily betook myself to my room for the purpose of donning a new neckcloth and coat; at home I went about in a round-jacket and turn-over collars, although I detested them greatly.

IV

In the cramped and dirty anteroom of the wing, which I entered with an involuntary trembling of my whole body, I was received by a grey-haired old serving-man with a face the hue of dark copper, pig-like, surly little eyes, and such deep wrinkles on his forehead as I had never seen before in my life. He was carrying on a platter the gnawed spinal bone of a herring, and, pushing to with his foot the door which led into the adjoining room, he said abruptly:—"What do you want?"

"Is Princess Zasyékin at home?"—I inquired.

"Vonifáty!"—screamed a quavering female voice on the other side of the door.

The servant silently turned his back on me, thereby displaying the badly-worn rear of his livery with its solitary, rusted, armouried button, and went away, leaving the platter on the floor.

"Hast thou been to the police-station?"—went on that same feminine voice. The servant muttered something in reply.—"Hey?... Some one has come?"—was the next thing audible.... "The young gentleman from next door?—Well, ask him in."

"Please come into the drawing-room, sir,"—said the servant, making his appearance again before me, and picking up the platter

from the floor. I adjusted my attire and entered the "drawing-room."

I found myself in a tiny and not altogether clean room, with shabby furniture which seemed to have been hastily set in place. At the window, in an easy-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty, with uncovered hair[4] and plain-featured, clad in an old green gown, and with a variegated worsted kerchief round her neck. Her small black eyes fairly bored into me.

I went up to her and made my bow.

"I have the honour of speaking to Princess Zasyékin?"

"I am Princess Zasyékin: and you are the son of Mr. B—?"

"Yes, madam. I have come to you with a message from my mother."

"Pray be seated. Vonifáty! where are my keys? Hast thou seen them?"

I communicated to Madame Zasyékin my mother's answer to her note. She listened to me, tapping the window-pane with her thick, red fingers, and when I had finished she riveted her eyes on me once more.

"Very good; I shall certainly go,"—said she at last.—"But how young you are still! How old are you, allow me to ask?"

"Sixteen,"—I replied with involuntary hesitation.

The Princess pulled out of her pocket some dirty, written documents, raised them up to her very nose and began to sort them over.

"'Tis a good age,"—she suddenly articulated, turning and fidgeting in her chair.—"And please do not stand on ceremony. We are plain folks."

"Too plain,"—I thought, with involuntary disgust taking in with a glance the whole of her homely figure.

At that moment, the other door of the drawing-room was swiftly thrown wide open, and on the threshold appeared the young girl whom I had seen in the garden the evening before. She raised her hand and a smile flitted across her face.

"And here is my daughter,"—said the Princess, pointing at her with her elbow.—"Zínotchka, the son of our neighbour, Mr. B—. What is your name, permit me to inquire?"

"Vladímir,"—I replied, rising and lisping with agitation.

"And your patronymic?"

"Petróvitch."

"Yes! I once had an acquaintance, a chief of police, whose name was Vladímir Petróvitch also. Vonifáty! don't hunt for the keys; the keys are in my pocket."

The young girl continued to gaze at me with the same smile as before, slightly puckering up her eyes and bending her head a little on one side.

"I have already seen M'sieu Voldemar,"—she began. (The silvery tone of her voice coursed through me like a sweet chill.)—"Will you permit me to call you so?"

"Pray do, madam,"—I lisped.

"Where was that?"—asked the Princess.

The young Princess did not answer her mother.

"Are you busy now?"—she said, without taking her eyes off me.

"Not in the least, madam."

"Then will you help me to wind some wool? Come hither, to me."

She nodded her head at me and left the drawing-room. I followed her.

In the room which we entered the furniture was a little better and was arranged with great taste.—But at that moment I was almost

unable to notice anything; I moved as though in a dream and felt a sort of intense sensation of well-being verging on stupidity throughout my frame.

The young Princess sat down, produced a knot of red wool, and pointing me to a chair opposite her, she carefully unbound the skein and placed it on my hands. She did all this in silence, with a sort of diverting deliberation, and with the same brilliant and crafty smile on her slightly parted lips. She began to wind the wool upon a card doubled together, and suddenly illumined me with such a clear, swift glance, that I involuntarily dropped my eyes. When her eyes, which were generally half closed, opened to their full extent her face underwent a complete change; it was as though light had inundated it.

"What did you think of me yesterday, M'sieu Voldemar?"—she asked, after a brief pause.—"You certainly must have condemned me?"

"I ... Princess ... I thought nothing ... how can I...." I replied, in confusion.

"Listen,"—she returned.—"You do not know me yet; I want people always to speak the truth to me. You are sixteen, I heard, and I am twenty-one; you see that I am a great deal older than you, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me ... and obey me,"—she added.—"Look at me; why don't you look at me?"

I became still more confused; but I raised my eyes to hers, nevertheless. She smiled, only not in her former manner, but with a different, an approving smile.—"Look at me,"—she said, caressingly lowering her voice:—"I don't like that.... Your face pleases me; I foresee that we shall be friends. And do you like me?"—she added slyly.

"Princess...." I was beginning....

"In the first place, call me Zinaída Alexándrovna; and in the second place,—what sort of a habit is it for children"—(she

corrected herself)—"for young men—not to say straight out what they feel? You do like me, don't you?"

Although it was very pleasant to me to have her talk so frankly to me, still I was somewhat nettled. I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a small boy, and, assuming as easy and serious a mien as I could, I said:—"Of course I like you very much, Zinaída Alexándrovna; I have no desire to conceal the fact."

She shook her head, pausing at intervals.—"Have you a governor?"—she suddenly inquired.

"No, I have not had a governor this long time past."

I lied: a month had not yet elapsed since I had parted with my Frenchman.

"Oh, yes, I see: you are quite grown up."

She slapped me lightly on the fingers.—"Hold your hands straight!"—And she busied herself diligently with winding her ball.

I took advantage of the fact that she did not raise her eyes, and set to scrutinising her, first by stealth, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed to me even more charming than on the day before: everything about it was so delicate, intelligent and lovely. She was sitting with her back to the window, which was hung with a white shade; a ray of sunlight making its way through that shade inundated with a flood of light her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, and calm, tender bosom.—I gazed at her—and how near and dear she became to me! It seemed to me both that I had known her for a long time and that I had known nothing and had not lived before she came.... She wore a rather dark, already shabby gown, with an apron; I believe I would willingly have caressed every fold of that gown and of that apron. The tips of her shoes peeped out from under her gown; I would have bowed down to those little boots.... "And here I sit, in front of her,"—I thought.—"I have become acquainted with her ... what happiness, my God!" I came near bouncing out of my chair with

rapture, but I merely dangled my feet to and fro a little, like a child who is enjoying dainties.

I felt as much at my ease as a fish does in water, and I would have liked never to leave that room again as long as I lived.

Her eyelids slowly rose, and again her brilliant eyes beamed caressingly before me, and again she laughed.

"How you stare at me!"—she said slowly, shaking her finger at me.

I flushed scarlet.... "She understands all, she sees all,"—flashed through my head. "And how could she fail to see and understand all?"

Suddenly there was a clattering in the next room, and a sword clanked.

"Zína!"—screamed the old Princess from the drawing-room.—"Byelovzóroff has brought thee a kitten."

"A kitten!"—cried Zinaída, and springing headlong from her chair, she flung the ball on my knees and ran out.

I also rose, and, laying the skein of wool on the window-sill, went into the drawing-room, and stopped short in amazement. In the centre of the room lay a kitten with outstretched paws; Zinaída was kneeling in front of it, and carefully raising its snout. By the side of the young Princess, taking up nearly the entire wall-space between the windows, was visible a fair-complexioned, curly-haired young man, a hussar, with a rosy face and protruding eyes.

"How ridiculous!"—Zinaída kept repeating:—"and its eyes are not grey, but green, and what big ears it has! Thank you, Viktór Egóritch! you are very kind."

The hussar, in whom I recognised one of the young men whom I had seen on the preceding evening, smiled and bowed, clicking his spurs and clanking the links of his sword as he did so.

"You were pleased to say yesterday that you wished to possess a striped kitten with large ears ... so I have got it, madam. Your word is my law."—And again he bowed.

The kitten mewed faintly, and began to sniff at the floor.

"He is hungry!"—cried Zinaída.—"Vonifáty! Sónya! bring some milk."

The chambermaid, in an old yellow gown and with a faded kerchief on her head, entered with a saucer of milk in her hand, and placed it in front of the kitten. The kitten quivered, blinked, and began to lap.

"What a rosy tongue it has,"—remarked Zinaída, bending her head down almost to the floor, and looking sideways at it, under its very nose.

The kitten drank its fill, and began to purr, affectedly contracting and relaxing its paws. Zinaída rose to her feet, and turning to the maid, said indifferently:—"Take it away."

"Your hand—in return for the kitten,"—said the hussar, displaying his teeth, and bending over the whole of his huge body, tightly confined in a new uniform.

"Both hands,"—replied Zinaída, offering him her hands. While he was kissing them, she gazed at me over his shoulder.

I stood motionless on one spot, and did not know whether to laugh or to say something, or to hold my peace. Suddenly, through the open door of the anteroom, the figure of our footman, Feódor, caught my eye. He was making signs to me. I mechanically went out to him.

"What dost thou want?"—I asked.

"Your mamma has sent for you,"—he said in a whisper.—"She is angry because you do not return with an answer."

"Why, have I been here long?"

“More than an hour.”

“More than an hour!”—I repeated involuntarily, and returning to the drawing-room, I began to bow and scrape my foot.

“Where are you going?”—the young Princess asked me, with a glance at the hussar.

“I must go home, madam. So I am to say,”—I added, addressing the old woman,—“that you will call upon us at two o’clock.”

“Say that, my dear fellow.”

The old Princess hurriedly drew out her snuffbox, and took a pinch so noisily that I fairly jumped.—“Say that,”—she repeated, tearfully blinking and grunting.

I bowed once more, turned and left the room with the same sensation of awkwardness in my back which a very young man experiences when he knows that people are staring after him.

“Look here, M’sieu Voldemar, you must drop in to see us,”—called Zinaída, and again burst out laughing.

“What makes her laugh all the time?” I thought, as I wended my way home accompanied by Feódor, who said nothing to me, but moved along disapprovingly behind me. My mother reproved me, and inquired, with surprise, “What could I have been doing so long at the Princess’s?” I made her no answer, and went off to my own room. I had suddenly grown very melancholy.... I tried not to weep.... I was jealous of the hussar.

V

The Princess, according to her promise, called on my mother, and did not please her. I was not present at their meeting, but at table my mother narrated to my father that that Princess Zasyékin seemed to her a *femme très vulgaire*; that she had bored her immensely with her requests that she would intervene on her behalf with Prince Sergyéi; that she was always having such law-suits and affairs,—*de vilaines affaires d'argent*,—and that she must be a great rogue. But my mother added that she had invited her with her daughter to dine on the following day (on hearing the words "with her daughter," I dropped my nose into my plate),—because, notwithstanding, she was a neighbour, and with a name. Thereupon my father informed my mother that he now recalled who the lady was: that in his youth he had known the late Prince Zasyékin, a capitally-educated but flighty and captious man; that in society he was called "*le Parisien*," because of his long residence in Paris; that he had been very wealthy, but had gambled away all his property—and, no one knew why, though probably it had been for the sake of the money,—"although he might have made a better choice,"—added my father, with a cold smile,—he had married the daughter of some clerk in a chancellery, and after his marriage had gone into speculation, and ruined himself definitively.

"'Tis a wonder she did not try to borrow money,"—remarked my mother.

"She is very likely to do it,"—said my father, calmly.—"Does she speak French?"

"Very badly."

"M-m-m. However, that makes no difference. I think thou saidst that thou hadst invited her daughter; some one assured me that she is a very charming and well-educated girl."

"Ah! Then she does not take after her mother."

"Nor after her father,"—returned my father.—"He was also well educated, but stupid."

My mother sighed, and became thoughtful. My father relapsed into silence. I felt very awkward during the course of that conversation.

After dinner I betook myself to the garden, but without my gun. I had pledged my word to myself that I would not go near the "Zasyékin garden"; but an irresistible force drew me thither, and not in vain. I had no sooner approached the fence than I caught sight of Zinaída. This time she was alone. She was holding a small book in her hands and strolling slowly along the path. She did not notice me. I came near letting her slip past; but suddenly caught myself up and coughed.

She turned round but did not pause, put aside with one hand the broad blue ribbon of her round straw hat, looked at me, smiled quietly, and again riveted her eyes on her book.

I pulled off my cap, and after fidgeting about a while on one spot, I went away with a heavy heart. "*Que suis-je pour elle?*"—I thought (God knows why) in French.

Familiar footsteps resounded behind me; I glanced round and beheld my father advancing toward me with swift, rapid strides.

"Is that the young Princess?"—he asked me.

"Yes."

"Dost thou know her?"

"I saw her this morning at the Princess her mother's."

My father halted and, wheeling abruptly round on his heels, retraced his steps. As he came on a level with Zinaída he bowed courteously to her. She bowed to him in return, not without some surprise on her face, and lowered her book. I saw that she followed him with her eyes. My father always dressed very elegantly, originally and simply; but his figure had never seemed to me more

graceful, never had his grey hat sat more handsomely on his curls, which were barely beginning to grow thin.

I was on the point of directing my course toward Zinaída, but she did not even look at me, but raised her book once more and walked away.

VI

I spent the whole of that evening and the following day in a sort of gloomy stupor. I remember that I made an effort to work, and took up Kaidánoff; but in vain did the large-printed lines and pages of the famous text-book flit before my eyes. Ten times in succession I read the words: "Julius Cæsar was distinguished for military daring," without understanding a word, and I flung aside my book. Before dinner I pomaded my hair again, and again donned my frock-coat and neckerchief.

"What's that for?"—inquired my mother.—"Thou art not a student yet, and God knows whether thou wilt pass thy examination. And thy round-jacket was made not very long ago. Thou must not discard it!"

"There are to be guests,"—I whispered, almost in despair.

"What nonsense! What sort of guests are they?"

I was compelled to submit. I exchanged my coat for my round-jacket, but did not remove my neckerchief. The Princess and her daughter made their appearance half an hour before dinner; the old woman had thrown a yellow shawl over her green gown, with which I was familiar, and had donned an old-fashioned mob-cap with ribbons of a fiery hue. She immediately began to talk about her notes of hand, to sigh and to bewail her poverty, and to "importune," but did not stand in the least upon ceremony; and she took snuff noisily and fidgeted and wriggled in her chair as before. It never seemed to enter her head that she was a Princess. On the other hand, Zinaída bore herself very stiffly, almost haughtily, like a real young Princess. Cold impassivity and dignity

had made their appearance on her countenance, and I did not recognise her,—did not recognise her looks or her smile, although in this new aspect she seemed to me very beautiful. She wore a thin barège gown with pale-blue figures; her hair fell in long curls along her cheeks, in the English fashion: this coiffure suited the cold expression of her face.

My father sat beside her during dinner, and with the exquisite and imperturbable courtesy which was characteristic of him, showed attention to his neighbour. He glanced at her from time to time, and she glanced at him now and then, but in such a strange, almost hostile, manner. Their conversation proceeded in French;—I remember that I was surprised at the purity of Zinaída's accent. The old Princess, as before, did not restrain herself in the slightest degree during dinner, but ate a great deal and praised the food. My mother evidently found her wearisome, and answered her with a sort of sad indifference; my father contracted his brows in a slight frown from time to time. My mother did not like Zinaída either.

"She's a haughty young sprig,"—she said the next day.—"And when one comes to think of it, what is there for her to be proud of?—*avec sa mine de grisette*!"

"Evidently, thou hast not seen any grisettes,"—my father remarked to her.

"Of course I haven't, God be thanked!... Only, how art thou capable of judging of them?"

Zinaída paid absolutely no attention whatever to me. Soon after dinner the old Princess began to take her leave.

"I shall rely upon your protection, Márya Nikoláevna and Piótr Vasílitch,"—she said, in a sing-song tone, to my father and mother.—"What is to be done! I have seen prosperous days, but they are gone. Here am I a Radiance,"—she added, with an unpleasant laugh,—"but what's the good of an honour when you've nothing to eat?"—My father bowed respectfully to her and

escorted her to the door of the anteroom. I was standing there in my round-jacket, and staring at the floor, as though condemned to death. Zinaída's behaviour toward me had definitively annihilated me. What, then, was my amazement when, as she passed me, she whispered to me hastily, and with her former affectionate expression in her eyes:—"Come to us at eight o'clock, do you hear? without fail...." I merely threw my hands apart in amazement;—but she was already retreating, having thrown a white scarf over her head.

VII

Precisely at eight o'clock I entered the tiny wing inhabited by the Princess, clad in my coat, and with my hair brushed up into a crest on top of my head. The old servant glared surlily at me, and rose reluctantly from his bench. Merry voices resounded in the drawing-room. I opened the door and retreated a pace in astonishment. In the middle of the room, on a chair, stood the young Princess, holding a man's hat in front of her; around the chair thronged five men. They were trying to dip their hands into the hat, but she kept raising it on high and shaking it violently. On catching sight of me she exclaimed:—

"Stay, stay! Here's a new guest; he must be given a ticket,"—and springing lightly from the chair, she seized me by the lapel of my coat.—"Come along,"—said she;—"why do you stand there? Messieurs, allow me to make you acquainted: this is Monsieur Voldemar, the son of our neighbour. And this,"—she added, turning to me, and pointing to the visitors in turn,—"is Count Malévsky, Doctor Lúshin, the poet Maidánoff, retired Captain Nirmátzky, and Byelovzóroff the hussar, whom you have already seen. I beg that you will love and favour each other."

I was so confused that I did not even bow to any one; in Doctor Lúshin I recognised that same swarthy gentleman who had so ruthlessly put me to shame in the garden; the others were strangers to me.

"Count!"—pursued Zinaída,—"write a ticket for M'sieu Voldemar."

"That is unjust,"—returned the Count, with a slight accent,—a very handsome and foppishly-attired man, with a dark complexion, expressive brown eyes, a thin, white little nose, and a slender moustache over his tiny mouth.—"He has not been playing at forfeits with us."

"'Tis unjust,"—repeated Byelovzóroff and the gentleman who had been alluded to as the retired Captain,—a man of forty, horribly pockmarked, curly-haired as a negro, round-shouldered, bow-legged, and dressed in a military coat without epaulets, worn open on the breast.

"Write a ticket, I tell you,"—repeated the Princess.—"What sort of a rebellion is this? M'sieu Voldemar is with us for the first time, and to-day no law applies to him. No grumbling—write; I will have it so."

The Count shrugged his shoulders, but submissively bowing his head, he took a pen in his white, ring-decked hand, tore off a scrap of paper and began to write on it.

"Permit me at least to explain to M'sieu Voldemar what it is all about,"—began Lúshin, in a bantering tone;—"otherwise he will be utterly at a loss. You see, young man, we are playing at forfeits; the Princess must pay a fine, and the one who draws out the lucky ticket must kiss her hand. Do you understand what I have told you?"

I merely glanced at him and continued to stand as though in a fog, while the Princess again sprang upon the chair and again began to shake the hat. All reached up to her—I among the rest.

"Maidánoff,"—said the Princess to the tall young man with a gaunt face, tiny mole-like eyes and extremely long, black hair,—"you, as a poet, ought to be magnanimous and surrender your ticket to M'sieu Voldemar, so that he may have two chances instead of one."

But Maidánoff shook his head in refusal and tossed his hair. I put in my hand into the hat after all the rest, drew out and unfolded a ticket.... O Lord! what were my sensations when I beheld on it, "Kiss!"

"Kiss!"—I cried involuntarily.

"Bravo! He has won,"—chimed in the Princess.—"How delighted I am!"—She descended from the chair, and gazed into my eyes so clearly and sweetly that my heart fairly laughed with joy.—"And are you glad?"—she asked me.

"I?" ... I stammered.

"Sell me your ticket,"—suddenly blurted out Byelovzóroff, right in my ear.—"I'll give you one hundred rubles for it."

I replied to the hussar by such a wrathful look that Zinaída clapped her hands, and Lúshin cried:—"That's a gallant fellow!"

"But,"—he went on,—"in my capacity of master of ceremonies, I am bound to see that all the regulations are carried out. M'sieu Voldemar, get down on one knee. That is our rule."

Zinaída stood before me with her head bent a little to one side, as though the better to scrutinise me, and offered me her hand with dignity. Things grew dim before my eyes; I tried to get down on one knee, plumped down on both knees, and applied my lips to Zinaída's fingers in so awkward a manner that I scratched the tip of my nose slightly on her nails.

"Good!"—shouted Lúshin, and helped me to rise.

The game of forfeits continued. Zinaída placed me beside her. What penalties they did invent! Among other things, she had to impersonate a "statue"—and she selected as a pedestal the monstrously homely Nirmátzky, ordering him to lie flat on the floor, and to tuck his face into his breast. The laughter did not cease for a single moment. All this noise and uproar, this unceremonious, almost tumultuous merriment, these unprecedented relations with strangers, fairly flew to my head; for

I was a boy who had been reared soberly, and in solitude, and had grown up in a stately home of gentry. I became simply intoxicated, as though with wine. I began to shout with laughter and chatter more loudly than the rest, so that even the old Princess, who was sitting in the adjoining room with some sort of pettifogger from the Íversky Gate[5] who had been summoned for a conference, came out to take a look at me. But I felt so happy that, as the saying is, I didn't care a farthing for anybody's ridicule, or anybody's oblique glances.

Zinaída continued to display a preference for me and never let me leave her side. In one forfeit I was made to sit by her, covered up with one and the same silk kerchief: I was bound to tell her *my secret*. I remember how our two heads found themselves suddenly in choking, semi-transparent, fragrant gloom; how near and softly her eyes sparkled in that gloom, and how hotly her parted lips breathed; and her teeth were visible, and the tips of her hair tickled and burned me. I maintained silence. She smiled mysteriously and slyly, and at last whispered to me: "Well, what is it?" But I merely flushed and laughed, and turned away, and could hardly draw my breath. We got tired of forfeits, and began to play "string." Good heavens! what rapture I felt when, forgetting myself with gaping, I received from her a strong, sharp rap on my fingers; and how afterward I tried to pretend that I was yawning with inattention, but she mocked at me and did not touch my hands, which were awaiting the blow!

But what a lot of other pranks we played that same evening! We played on the piano, and sang, and danced, and represented a gipsy camp. We dressed Nirmátzky up like a bear, and fed him with water and salt. Count Malévsky showed us several card tricks, and ended by stacking the cards and dealing himself all the trumps at whist; upon which Lúshin "had the honour of congratulating him." Maidánoff declaimed to us fragments from his poem, "The Murderer" (this occurred in the very thick of romanticism), which he intended to publish in a black binding, with the title in letters of the colour of blood. We stole his hat from

the knees of the pettifogger from the Íversky Gate, and made him dance the kazák dance by way of redeeming it. We dressed old Vonifáty up in a mob-cap, and the young Princess put on a man's hat.... It is impossible to recount all we did. Byelovzóroff alone remained most of the time in a corner, angry and frowning.... Sometimes his eyes became suffused with blood, he grew scarlet all over and seemed to be on the very point of swooping down upon all of us and scattering us on all sides, like chips; but the Princess glanced at him, menaced him with her finger, and again he retired into his corner.

We were completely exhausted at last. The old Princess was equal to anything, as she put it,—no shouts disconcerted her,—but she felt tired and wished to rest. At midnight supper was served, consisting of a bit of old, dry cheese and a few cold patties filled with minced ham, which seemed to us more savoury than any pasty; there was only one bottle of wine, and that was rather queer:—dark, with a swollen neck, and the wine in it left an after-taste of pinkish dye; however, no one drank it. Weary and happy to exhaustion, I emerged from the wing; a thunder-storm seemed to be brewing; the black storm-clouds grew larger and crept across the sky, visibly altering their smoky outlines. A light breeze was uneasily quivering in the dark trees, and somewhere beyond the horizon the thunder was growling angrily and dully, as though to itself.

I made my way through the back door to my room. My nurse-valet was sleeping on the floor and I was obliged to step over him; he woke up, saw me, and reported that my mother was angry with me, and had wanted to send after me again, but that my father had restrained her. I never went to bed without having bidden my mother good night and begged her blessing. There was no help for it! I told my valet that I would undress myself and go to bed unaided,—and extinguished the candle. But I did not undress and I did not go to bed.

I seated myself on a chair and sat there for a long time, as though enchanted. That which I felt was so new and so sweet.... I sat there, hardly looking around me and without moving, breathing slowly, and only laughing silently now, as I recalled, now inwardly turning cold at the thought that I was in love, that here it was, that love. Zinaída's face floated softly before me in the darkness—floated, but did not float away; her lips still smiled as mysteriously as ever, her eyes gazed somewhat askance at me, interrogatively, thoughtfully and tenderly ... as at the moment when I had parted from her. At last I rose on tiptoe, stepped to my bed and cautiously, without undressing, laid my head on the pillow, as though endeavouring by the sharp movement to frighten off that wherewith I was filled to overflowing....

I lay down, but did not even close an eye. I speedily perceived that certain faint reflections kept constantly falling into my room.... I raised myself and looked out of the window. Its frame was distinctly defined from the mysteriously and confusedly whitened panes. "'Tis the thunder-storm,"—I thought,—and so, in fact, there was a thunder-storm; but it had passed very far away, so that even the claps of thunder were not audible; only in the sky long, indistinct, branching flashes of lightning, as it were, were uninterruptedly flashing up. They were not flashing up so much as they were quivering and twitching, like the wing of a dying bird. I rose, went to the window, and stood there until morning.... The lightning-flashes never ceased for a moment; it was what is called a pitch-black night. I gazed at the dumb, sandy plain, at the dark mass of the Neskútchny Park, at the yellowish façades of the distant buildings, which also seemed to be trembling at every faint flash.... I gazed, and could not tear myself away; those dumb lightning-flashes, those restrained gleams, seemed to be responding to the dumb and secret outbursts which were flaring up within me also. Morning began to break; the dawn started forth in scarlet patches. With the approach of the sun the lightning-flashes grew paler and paler; they quivered more and

more infrequently, and vanished at last, drowned in the sobering and unequivocal light of the breaking day.

And my lightning-flashes vanished within me also. I felt great fatigue and tranquillity ... but Zinaída's image continued to hover triumphantly over my soul. Only it, that image, seemed calm; like a flying swan from the marshy sedges, it separated itself from the other ignoble figures which surrounded it, and as I fell asleep, I bowed down before it for the last time in farewell and confiding adoration....

Oh, gentle emotions, soft sounds, kindness and calming of the deeply-moved soul, melting joy of the first feelings of love,—where are ye, where are ye?

VIII

On the following morning, when I went down-stairs to tea, my mother scolded me,—although less than I had anticipated,—and made me narrate how I had spent the preceding evening. I answered her in few words, omitting many particulars and endeavouring to impart to my narrative the most innocent of aspects.

"Nevertheless, they are not people *comme il faut*,"—remarked my mother;—"and I do not wish thee to run after them, instead of preparing thyself for the examination, and occupying thyself."

As I knew that my mother's anxiety was confined to these few words, I did not consider it necessary to make her any reply; but after tea my father linked his arm in mine, and betaking himself to the garden with me, made me tell him everything I had done and seen at the Zasyékins'.

My father possessed a strange influence over me, and our relations were strange. He paid hardly any attention to my education, but he never wounded me; he respected my liberty—he was even, if I may so express it, courteous to me ... only, he did not allow me to get close to him. I loved him, I admired him; he seemed to me a

model man; and great heavens! how passionately attached to him I should have been, had I not constantly felt his hand warding me off! On the other hand, when he wished, he understood how to evoke in me, instantaneously, with one word, one movement, unbounded confidence in him. My soul opened, I chatted with him as with an intelligent friend, as with an indulgent preceptor ... then, with equal suddenness, he abandoned me, and again his hand repulsed me, caressingly and softly, but repulsed nevertheless.

Sometimes a fit of mirth came over him, and then he was ready to frolic and play with me like a boy (he was fond of every sort of energetic bodily exercise); once—only once—did he caress me with so much tenderness that I came near bursting into tears.... But his mirth and tenderness also vanished without leaving a trace, and what had taken place between us gave me no hopes for the future; it was just as though I had seen it all in a dream. I used to stand and scrutinise his clever, handsome, brilliant face ... and my heart would begin to quiver, and my whole being would yearn toward him, ... and he would seem to feel what was going on within me, and would pat me on the cheek in passing—and either go away, or begin to occupy himself with something, or suddenly freeze all over,—as he alone knew how to freeze,—and I would immediately shrivel up and grow frigid also. His rare fits of affection for me were never called forth by my speechless but intelligible entreaties; they always came upon him without warning. When meditating, in after years, upon my father's character, I came to the conclusion that he did not care for me or for family life; he loved something different, and enjoyed that other thing to the full. "Seize what thou canst thyself, and do not give thyself into any one's power; the whole art of life consists in belonging to one's self,"—he said to me once. On another occasion I, in my capacity of a young democrat, launched out in his presence into arguments about liberty (he was what I called "kind" that day; at such times one could say whatever one liked to him).—"Liberty,"—he repeated,—"but dost thou know what can give a man liberty?"

"What?"

"Will, his own will, and the power which it gives is better than liberty. Learn to will, and thou wilt be free, and wilt command."

My father wished, first of all and most of all, to enjoy life—and he did enjoy life.... Perhaps he had a presentiment that he was not fated long to take advantage of the "art" of living: he died at the age of forty-two.

I described to my father in detail my visit to the Zasyékins. He listened to me half-attentively, half-abstractedly, as he sat on the bench and drew figures on the sand with the tip of his riding-whip. Now and then he laughed, glanced at me in a brilliant, amused sort of way, and spurred me on by brief questions and exclamations. At first I could not bring myself even to utter Zinaída's name, but I could not hold out, and began to laud her. My father still continued to laugh. Then he became thoughtful, dropped his eyes and rose to his feet.

I recalled the fact that, as he came out of the house, he had given orders that his horse should be saddled. He was a capital rider, and knew much better how to tame the wildest horses than did Mr. Rarey.

"Shall I ride with thee, papa?"—I asked him.

"No,"—he replied, and his face assumed its habitual indifferently-caressing expression.—"Go alone, if thou wishest; but tell the coachman that I shall not go."

He turned his back on me and walked swiftly away. I followed him with my eyes, until he disappeared beyond the gate. I saw his hat moving along the fence; he went into the Zasyékins' house.

He remained with them no more than an hour, but immediately thereafter went off to town and did not return home until evening.

After dinner I went to the Zasyékins' myself. I found no one in the drawing-room but the old Princess. When she saw me, she scratched her head under her cap with the end of her

knitting-needle, and suddenly asked me: would I copy a petition for her?

"With pleasure,"—I replied, and sat down on the edge of a chair.

"Only look out, and see that you make the letters as large as possible,"—said the Princess, handing me a sheet of paper scrawled over in a slovenly manner:—"and couldn't you do it to-day, my dear fellow?"

"I will copy it this very day, madam."

The door of the adjoining room opened a mere crack and Zinaída's face showed itself in the aperture,—pale, thoughtful, with hair thrown carelessly back. She stared at me with her large, cold eyes, and softly shut the door.

"Zína,—hey there, Zína!"—said the old woman. Zinaída did not answer. I carried away the old woman's petition, and sat over it the whole evening.

IX

My "passion" began with that day. I remember that I then felt something of that which a man must feel when he enters the service: I had already ceased to be a young lad; I was in love. I have said that my passion dated from that day; I might have added that my sufferings also dated from that day. I languished when absent from Zinaída; my mind would not work, everything fell from my hands; I thought intently of her for days together.... I languished ... but in her presence I was no more at ease. I was jealous, I recognised my insignificance, I stupidly sulked and stupidly fawned; and, nevertheless, an irresistible force drew me to her, and every time I stepped across the threshold of her room, it was with an involuntary thrill of happiness. Zinaída immediately divined that I had fallen in love with her, and I never thought of concealing the fact; she mocked at my passion, played tricks on me, petted and tormented me. It is sweet to be the sole source, the autocratic and irresponsible cause of the greatest joys and the profoundest woe to another person, and I was like soft wax in Zinaída's hands. However, I was not the only one who was in love with her; all the men who were in the habit of visiting her house were crazy over her, and she kept them all in a leash at her feet. It amused her to arouse in them now hopes, now fears, to twist them about at her caprice (she called it, "knocking people against one another"),—and they never thought of resisting, and willingly submitted to her. In all her vivacious and beautiful being there was a certain peculiarly bewitching mixture of guilefulness and heedlessness, of artificiality and simplicity, of tranquillity and playfulness; over everything she did or said, over her every movement, hovered a light, delicate charm, and an original, sparkling force made itself felt in everything. And her face was incessantly changing and sparkling also; it expressed almost simultaneously derision, pensiveness, and passion. The most varied emotions, light, fleeting as the shadows of the clouds on a sunny, windy day, kept flitting over her eyes and lips.

Every one of her adorers was necessary to her. Byelovzóroff, whom she sometimes called "my wild beast," and sometimes simply "my own," would gladly have flung himself into the fire for her; without trusting to his mental capacities and other merits, he kept proposing that he should marry her, and hinting that the others were merely talking idly. Maidánoff responded to the poetical chords of her soul: a rather cold man, as nearly all writers are, he assured her with intense force—and perhaps himself also—that he adored her. He sang her praises in interminable verses and read them to her with an unnatural and a genuine sort of enthusiasm. And she was interested in him and jeered lightly at him; she did not believe in him greatly, and after listening to his effusions she made him read Púshkin, in order, as she said, to purify the air. Lúshin, the sneering doctor, who was cynical in speech, knew her best of all and loved her best of all, although he abused her to her face and behind her back. She respected him, but would not let him go, and sometimes, with a peculiar, malicious pleasure, made him feel that he was in her hands. "I am a coquette, I am heartless, I have the nature of an actress," she said to him one day in my presence; "and 'tis well! So give me your hand and I will stick a pin into it, and you will feel ashamed before this young man, and it will hurt you; but nevertheless, Mr. Upright Man, you will be so good as to laugh." Lúshin flushed crimson, turned away and bit his lips, but ended by putting out his hand. She pricked it, and he actually did break out laughing ... and she laughed also, thrusting the pin in pretty deeply and gazing into his eyes while he vainly endeavoured to glance aside....

I understood least of all the relations existing between Zinaída and Count Malévsky. That he was handsome, adroit, and clever even I felt, but the presence in him of some false, dubious element, was palpable even to me, a lad of sixteen, and I was amazed that Zinaída did not notice it. But perhaps she did detect that false element and it did not repel her. An irregular education, strange acquaintances, the constant presence of her mother, the poverty and disorder in the house—all this, beginning with the very

freedom which the young girl enjoyed, together with the consciousness of her own superiority to the people who surrounded her, had developed in her a certain half-scornful carelessness and lack of exaction. No matter what happened—whether Vonifáty came to report that there was no sugar, or some wretched bit of gossip came to light, or the visitors got into a quarrel among themselves, she merely shook her curls, and said: "Nonsense!"—and grieved very little over it.

On the contrary, all my blood would begin to seethe when Malévsky would approach her, swaying his body cunningly like a fox, lean elegantly over the back of her chair and begin to whisper in her ear with a conceited and challenging smile, while she would fold her arms on her breast, gaze attentively at him and smile also, shaking her head the while.

"What possesses you to receive Malévsky?"—I asked her one day.

"Why, he has such handsome eyes,"—she replied.—"But that is no business of yours."

"You are not to think that I am in love with him,"—she said to me on another occasion.—"No; I cannot love people upon whom I am forced to look down. I must have some one who can subdue me.... And I shall not hit upon such an one, for God is merciful! I shall not spare any one who falls into my paws—no, no!"

"Do you mean to say that you will never fall in love?"

"And how about you? Don't I love you?"—she said, tapping me on the nose with the tip of her glove.

Yes, Zinaída made great fun of me. For the space of three weeks I saw her every day; and what was there that she did not do to me! She came to us rarely, but I did not regret that; in our house she was converted into a young lady, a Princess,—and I avoided her. I was afraid of betraying myself to my mother; she was not at all well disposed toward Zinaída, and kept a disagreeable watch on us. I was not so much afraid of my father; he did not appear to notice me, and talked little with her, but that little in a peculiarly

clever and significant manner. I ceased to work, to read; I even ceased to stroll about the environs and to ride on horseback. Like a beetle tied by the leg, I hovered incessantly around the beloved wing; I believe I would have liked to remain there forever ... but that was impossible. My mother grumbled at me, and sometimes Zinaída herself drove me out. On such occasions I shut myself up in my own room, or walked off to the very end of the garden, climbed upon the sound remnant of a tall stone hothouse, and dangling my legs over the wall, I sat there for hours and stared,—stared without seeing anything. White butterflies lazily flitted among the nettles beside me; an audacious sparrow perched not far off on the half-demolished red bricks and twittered in an irritating manner, incessantly twisting his whole body about and spreading out his tail; the still distrustful crows now and then emitted a caw, as they sat high, high above me on the naked crest of a birch-tree; the sun and the wind played softly through its sparse branches; the chiming of the bells, calm and melancholy, at the Don Monastery was wafted to me now and then,—and I sat on, gazing and listening, and became filled with a certain nameless sensation which embraced everything: sadness and joy, and a presentiment of the future, and the desire and the fear of life. But I understood nothing at the time of all that which was fermenting within me, or I would have called it all by one name, the name of Zinaída.

But Zinaída continued to play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. Now she coquetted with me, and I grew agitated and melted with emotion; now she repulsed me, and I dared not approach her, dared not look at her.

I remember that she was very cold toward me for several days in succession and I thoroughly quailed, and when I timidly ran to the wing to see them, I tried to keep near the old Princess, despite the fact that she was scolding and screaming a great deal just at that time: her affairs connected with her notes of hand were going badly, and she had also had two scenes with the police-captain of the precinct.

One day I was walking through the garden, past the familiar fence, when I caught sight of Zinaída. Propped up on both arms, she was sitting motionless on the grass. I tried to withdraw cautiously, but she suddenly raised her head and made an imperious sign to me. I became petrified on the spot; I did not understand her the first time. She repeated her sign. I immediately sprang over the fence and ran joyfully to her; but she stopped me with a look and pointed to the path a couple of paces from her. In my confusion, not knowing what to do, I knelt down on the edge of the path. She was so pale, such bitter grief, such profound weariness were revealed in her every feature, that my heart contracted within me, and I involuntarily murmured: "What is the matter with you?"

Zinaída put out her hand, plucked a blade of grass, bit it, and tossed it away as far as she could.

"Do you love me very much?"—she inquired suddenly.—"Yes?"

I made no answer,—and what answer was there for me to make?

"Yes,"—she repeated, gazing at me as before.—"It is so. They are the same eyes,"—she added, becoming pensive, and covering her face with her hands.—"Everything has become repulsive to me,"—she whispered;—"I would like to go to the end of the world; I cannot endure this, I cannot reconcile myself.... And what is in store for me?... Akh, I am heavy at heart ... my God, how heavy at heart!"

"Why?"—I timidly inquired.

Zinaída did not answer me and merely shrugged her shoulders. I continued to kneel and to gaze at her with profound melancholy. Every word of hers fairly cut me to the heart. At that moment, I think I would willingly have given my life to keep her from grieving. I gazed at her, and nevertheless, not understanding why she was heavy at heart, I vividly pictured to myself how, in a fit of uncontrollable sorrow, she had suddenly gone into the garden, and had fallen on the earth, as though she had been mowed down. All around was bright and green; the breeze was rustling in the

foliage of the trees, now and then rocking a branch of raspberry over Zinaída's head. Doves were cooing somewhere and the bees were humming as they flew low over the scanty grass. Overhead the sky shone blue,—but I was so sad....

"Recite some poetry to me,"—said Zinaída in a low voice, leaning on her elbow.—"I like to hear you recite verses. You make them go in a sing-song, but that does not matter, it is youthful. Recite to me: 'On the Hills of Georgia.'—Only, sit down first."

I sat down and recited, "On the Hills of Georgia."

"'That it is impossible not to love,'"—repeated Zinaída.—"That is why poetry is so nice; it says to us that which does not exist, and which is not only better than what does exist, but even more like the truth.... 'That it is impossible not to love'?—I would like to, but cannot!"—Again she fell silent for a space, then suddenly started and rose to her feet.—"Come along. Maidánoff is sitting with mamma; he brought his poem to me, but I left him. He also is embittered now ... how can it be helped? Some day you will find out ... but you must not be angry with me!"

Zinaída hastily squeezed my hand, and ran on ahead. We returned to the wing. Maidánoff set to reading us his poem of "The Murderer," which had only just been printed, but I did not listen. He shrieked out his four-footed iambics in a sing-song voice; the rhymes alternated and jingled like sleigh-bells, hollow and loud; but I kept staring all the while at Zinaída, and striving to understand the meaning of her strange words.

"Or, perchance, a secret rival
Has unexpectedly subjugated thee?"

suddenly exclaimed Maidánoff through his nose—and my eyes and Zinaída's met. She dropped hers and blushed faintly. I saw that she was blushing, and turned cold with fright. I had been jealous before, but only at that moment did the thought that she had fallen in love flash through my mind. "My God! She is in love!"

X

My real tortures began from that moment. I cudgelled my brains, I pondered and pondered again, and watched Zinaída importunately, but secretly, as far as possible. A change had taken place in her, that was evident. She took to going off alone to walk, and walked a long while. Sometimes she did not show herself to her visitors; she sat for hours together in her chamber. This had not been her habit hitherto. Suddenly I became—or it seemed to me that I became—extremely penetrating. "Is it he? Or is it not he?"—I asked myself, as in trepidation I mentally ran from one of her admirers to another. Count Malévsky (although I felt ashamed to admit it for Zinaída's sake) privately seemed to me more dangerous than the others.

My powers of observation extended no further than the end of my own nose, and my dissimulation probably failed to deceive any one; at all events, Doctor Lúshin speedily saw through me. Moreover, he also had undergone a change of late; he had grown thin, he laughed as frequently as ever, but somehow it was in a duller, more spiteful, a briefer way;—an involuntary, nervous irritability had replaced his former light irony and feigned cynicism.

"Why are you forever tagging on here, young man?"—he said to me one day, when he was left alone with me in the Zasyékins' drawing-room. (The young Princess had not yet returned from her stroll and the shrill voice of the old Princess was resounding in the upper story; she was wrangling with her maid.)—"You ought to be studying your lessons, working while you are young;—but instead of that, what are you doing?"

"You cannot tell whether I work at home,"—I retorted not without arrogance, but also not without confusion.

"Much work you do! That's not what you have in your head. Well, I will not dispute ... at your age, that is in the natural order of

things. But your choice is far from a happy one. Can't you see what sort of a house this is?"

"I do not understand you,"—I remarked.

"You don't understand me? So much the worse for you. I regard it as my duty to warn you. Fellows like me, old bachelors, may sit here: what harm will it do us? We are a hardened lot. You can't pierce our hide, but your skin is still tender; the air here is injurious for you,—believe me, you may become infected."

"How so?"

"Because you may. Are you healthy now? Are you in a normal condition? Is what you are feeling useful to you, good for you?"

"But what am I feeling?"—said I;—and in my secret soul I admitted that the doctor was right.

"Eh, young man, young man,"—pursued the doctor, with an expression as though something extremely insulting to me were contained in those two words;—"there's no use in your dissimulating, for what you have in your soul you still show in your face, thank God! But what's the use of arguing? I would not come hither myself, if ..." (the doctor set his teeth) ... "if I were not such an eccentric fellow. Only this is what amazes me—how you, with your intelligence, can fail to see what is going on around you."

"But what is going on?"—I interposed, pricking up my ears.

The doctor looked at me with a sort of sneering compassion.

"A nice person I am,"—said he, as though speaking to himself.—"What possessed me to say that to him. In a word,"—he added, raising his voice,—"I repeat to you: the atmosphere here is not good for you. You find it pleasant here, and no wonder! And the scent of a hothouse is pleasant also—but one cannot live in it! Hey! hearken to me,—set to work again on Kaidánoff."

The old Princess entered and began to complain to the doctor of toothache. Then Zinaída made her appearance.

"Here,"—added the old Princess,—"scold her, doctor, do. She drinks iced water all day long; is that healthy for her, with her weak chest?"

"Why do you do that?"—inquired Lúshin.

"But what result can it have?"

"What result? You may take cold and die."

"Really? Is it possible? Well, all right—that just suits me!"

"You don't say so!"—growled the doctor. The old Princess went away.

"I do say so,"—retorted Zinaída.—"Is living such a cheerful thing? Look about you.... Well—is it nice? Or do you think that I do not understand it, do not feel it? It affords me pleasure to drink iced water, and you can seriously assure me that such a life is worth too much for me to imperil it for a moment's pleasure—I do not speak of happiness."

"Well, yes,"—remarked Lúshin:—"caprice and independence.... Those two words sum you up completely; your whole nature lies in those two words."

Zinaída burst into a nervous laugh.

"You're too late by one mail, my dear doctor. You observe badly; you are falling behind.—Put on your spectacles.—I am in no mood for caprices now; how jolly to play pranks on you or on myself!—and as for independence.... M'sieu Voldemar,"—added Zinaída, suddenly stamping her foot,—"don't wear a melancholy face. I cannot endure to have people commiserating me."—She hastily withdrew.

"This atmosphere is injurious, injurious to you, young man,"—said Lúshin to me once more.

XI

On the evening of that same day the customary visitors assembled at the Zasyékins'; I was among the number.

The conversation turned on Maidánoff's poem; Zinaída candidly praised it.—"But do you know what?"—she said:—"If I were a poet, I would select other subjects. Perhaps this is all nonsense, but strange thoughts sometimes come into my head, especially when I am wakeful toward morning, when the sky is beginning to turn pink and grey.—I would, for example.... You will not laugh at me?"

"No! No!"—we all exclaimed with one voice.

"I would depict,"—she went on, crossing her arms on her breast, and turning her eyes aside,—"a whole company of young girls, by night, in a big boat, on a tranquil river. The moon is shining, and they are all in white and wear garlands of white flowers, and they are singing, you know, something in the nature of a hymn."

"I understand, I understand, go on,"—said Maidánoff significantly and dreamily.

"Suddenly there is a noise—laughter, torches, tambourines on the shore.... It is a throng of bacchantes running with songs and outcries. It is your business to draw the picture, Mr. Poet ... only I would like to have the torches red and very smoky, and that the eyes of the bacchantes should gleam beneath their wreaths, and that the wreaths should be dark. Don't forget also tiger-skins and cups—and gold, a great deal of gold."

"But where is the gold to be?" inquired Maidánoff, tossing back his lank hair and inflating his nostrils.

"Where? On the shoulders, the hands, the feet, everywhere. They say that in ancient times women wore golden rings on their ankles.—The bacchantes call the young girls in the boat to come to them. The girls have ceased to chant their hymn,—they cannot go on with it,—but they do not stir; the river drifts them to the shore.

And now suddenly one of them rises quietly.... This must be well described: how she rises quietly in the moonlight, and how startled her companions are.... She has stepped over the edge of the boat, the bacchantes have surrounded her, they have dashed off into the night, into the gloom.... Present at this point smoke in clouds; and everything has become thoroughly confused. Nothing is to be heard but their whimpering, and her wreath has been left lying on the shore."

Zinaída ceased speaking. "Oh, she is in love!"—I thought again.

"Is that all?"—asked Maidánoff.

"That is all,"—she replied.

"That cannot be made the subject of an entire poem,"—he remarked pompously,—"but I will utilise your idea for some lyrical verses."

"In the romantic vein?"—asked Malévsky.

"Of course, in the romantic vein—in Byron's style."

"But in my opinion, Hugo is better than Byron,"—remarked the young Count, carelessly:—"he is more interesting."

"Hugo is a writer of the first class,"—rejoined Maidánoff, "and my friend Tonkoshéeff, in his Spanish romance, 'El Trovador'...."

"Ah, that's the book with the question-marks turned upside down?"—interrupted Zinaída.

"Yes. That is the accepted custom among the Spaniards. I was about to say that Tonkoshéeff...."

"Come now! You will begin to wrangle again about classicism and romanticism,"—Zinaída interrupted him again.—"Let us rather play...."

"At forfeits?"—put in Lúshin.

"No, forfeits is tiresome; but at comparisons." (This game had been invented by Zinaída herself; some object was named, and each

person tried to compare it with something or other, and the one who matched the thing with the best comparison received a prize.) She went to the window. The sun had just set; long, crimson clouds hung high aloft in the sky.

"What are those clouds like?"—inquired Zinaída and, without waiting for our answers, she said:—"I think that they resemble those crimson sails which were on Cleopatra's golden ship, when she went to meet Antony. You were telling me about that not long ago, do you remember, Maidánoff?"

All of us, like Polonius in "Hamlet," decided that the clouds reminded us precisely of those sails, and that none of us could find a better comparison.

"And how old was Antony at that time?"—asked Zinaída.

"He was assuredly still a young man,"—remarked Malévsky.

"Yes, he was young,"—assented Maidánoff confidently.

"Excuse me,"—exclaimed Lúshin,—"he was over forty years of age."

"Over forty years of age,"—repeated Zinaída, darting a swift glance at him....

I soon went home.—"She is in love," my lips whispered involuntarily.... "But with whom?"

XII

The days passed by. Zinaída grew more and more strange, more and more incomprehensible. One day I entered her house and found her sitting on a straw-bottomed chair, with her head pressed against the sharp edge of a table. She straightened up ... her face was again all bathed in tears.

"Ah! It's you!"—she said, with a harsh grimace.—"Come hither."

I went up to her: she laid her hand on my head and, suddenly seizing me by the hair, began to pull it.

"It hurts" ... I said at last.

"Ah! It hurts! And doesn't it hurt me? Doesn't it hurt me?"—she repeated.

"Aï!"—she suddenly cried, perceiving that she had pulled out a small tuft of my hair.—"What have I done? Poor M'sieu Voldemar!" She carefully straightened out the hairs she had plucked out, wound them round her finger, and twisted them into a ring.

"I will put your hair in my locket and wear it,"—she said, and tears glistened in her eyes.—"Perhaps that will comfort you a little ... but now, good-bye."

I returned home and found an unpleasant state of things there. A scene was in progress between my father and my mother; she was upbraiding him for something or other, while he, according to his wont, was maintaining a cold, polite silence—and speedily went away. I could not hear what my mother was talking about, neither did I care to know: I remember only, that, at the conclusion of the scene, she ordered me to be called to her boudoir, and expressed herself with great dissatisfaction about my frequent visits at the house of the old Princess, who was, according to her assertions, *une femme capable de tout*. I kissed her hand (I always did that when I wanted to put an end to the conversation), and went off to my own room. Zinaída's tears had completely discomfited me; I positively did not know what to think, and was ready to cry myself: I was still a child, in spite of my sixteen years. I thought no more of Malévsky, although Byelovzóroff became more and more menacing every day, and glared at the shifty Count like a wolf at a sheep; but I was not thinking of anything or of anybody. I lost myself in conjectures and kept seeking isolated spots. I took a special fancy to the ruins of the hothouse. I could clamber up on the high wall, seat myself, and sit there such an unhappy, lonely, and sad youth that I felt sorry for myself—and how delightful those mournful sensations were, how I gloated over them!...

One day, I was sitting thus on the wall, gazing off into the distance and listening to the chiming of the bells ... when suddenly something ran over me—not a breeze exactly, not a shiver, but something resembling a breath, the consciousness of some one's proximity.... I dropped my eyes. Below me, in a light grey gown, with a pink parasol on her shoulder, Zinaída was walking hastily along the road. She saw me, halted, and, pushing up the brim of her straw hat, raised her velvety eyes to mine.

"What are you doing there, on such a height?"—she asked me, with a strange sort of smile.—"There now,"—she went on,—"you are always declaring that you love me—jump down to me here on the road if you really do love me."

Before the words were well out of Zinaída's mouth I had flown down, exactly as though some one had given me a push from behind. The wall was about two fathoms high. I landed on the ground with my feet, but the shock was so violent that I could not retain my balance; I fell, and lost consciousness for a moment. When I came to myself I felt, without opening my eyes, that Zinaída was by my side.—"My dear boy,"—she was saying, as she bent over me—and tender anxiety was audible in her voice—"how couldst thou do that, how couldst thou obey?... I love thee ... rise."

Her breast was heaving beside me, her hands were touching my head, and suddenly—what were my sensations then!—her soft, fresh lips began to cover my whole face with kisses ... they touched my lips.... But at this point Zinaída probably divined from the expression of my face that I had already recovered consciousness, although I still did not open my eyes—and swiftly rising to her feet, she said:—"Come, get up, you rogue, you foolish fellow! Why do you lie there in the dust?"—I got up.

"Give me my parasol,"—said Zinaída.—"I have thrown it somewhere; and don't look at me like that what nonsense is this? You are hurt? You have burned yourself with the nettles, I suppose. Don't look at me like that, I tell you.... Why, he understands nothing, he doesn't answer me,"—she added, as

though speaking to herself.... “Go home, M’sieu Voldemar, brush yourself off, and don’t dare to follow me—if you do I shall be very angry, and I shall never again....”

She did not finish her speech and walked briskly away, while I sat down by the roadside ... my legs would not support me. The nettles had stung my hands, my back ached, and my head was reeling; but the sensation of beatitude which I then experienced has never since been repeated in my life. It hung like a sweet pain in all my limbs and broke out at last in rapturous leaps and exclamations. As a matter of fact, I was still a child.

XIII

I was so happy and proud all that day; I preserved so vividly on my visage the feeling of Zinaída’s kisses; I recalled her every word with such ecstasy; I so cherished my unexpected happiness that I even became frightened; I did not even wish to see her who was the cause of those new sensations. It seemed to me that I could ask nothing more of Fate, that now I must “take and draw a deep breath for the last time, and die.” On the other hand, when I set off for the wing next day, I felt a great agitation, which I vainly endeavoured to conceal beneath the discreet facial ease suitable for a man who wishes to let it be understood that he knows how to keep a secret. Zinaída received me very simply, without any emotion, merely shaking her finger at me and asking: Had I any bruises? All my discreet ease of manner and mysteriousness instantly disappeared, and along with them my agitation. Of course I had not expected anything in particular, but Zinaída’s composure acted on me like a dash of cold water. I understood that I was a child in her eyes—and my heart waxed very heavy! Zinaída paced to and fro in the room, smiling swiftly every time she glanced at me; but her thoughts were far away, I saw that clearly.... “Shall I allude to what happened yesterday myself,”—I thought;—“shall I ask her where she was going in such haste, in order to find out, definitively?” ... but I merely waved my hand in despair and sat down in a corner.

Byelovzóroff entered; I was delighted to see him.

"I have not found you a gentle saddle-horse,"—he began in a surly tone;—"Freitag vouches to me for one—but I am not convinced. I am afraid."

"Of what are you afraid, allow me to inquire?" asked Zinaída.

"Of what? Why, you don't know how to ride. God forbid that any accident should happen! And what has put that freak into your head?"

"Come, that's my affair, M'sieu my wild beast. In that case, I will ask Piótr Vasílievitch".... (My father was called Piótr Vasílievitch.... I was amazed that she should mention his name so lightly and freely, exactly as though she were convinced of his readiness to serve her.)

"You don't say so!"—retorted Byelovzóroff.—"Is it with him that you wish to ride?"

"With him or some one else,—that makes no difference to you. Only not with you."

"Not with me,"—said Byelovzóroff.—"As you like. What does it matter? I will get you the horse."

"But see to it that it is not a cow-like beast. I warn you in advance that I mean to gallop."

"Gallop, if you wish.... But is it with Malévsky that you are going to ride?"

"And why shouldn't I ride with him, warrior? Come, quiet down. I'll take you too. You know that for me Malévsky is now—fie!"—She shook her head.

"You say that just to console me,"—growled Byelovzóroff.

Zinaída narrowed her eyes.—"Does that console you? oh ... oh oh ... warrior!"—she said at last, as though unable to find any other word.—"And would you like to ride with us, M'sieu Voldemar?"

“I’m not fond of riding ... in a large party,” ... I muttered, without raising my eyes.

“You prefer a *tête-à-tête*?... Well, every one to his taste,”—she said, with a sigh.—“But go, Byelovzóroff, make an effort. I want the horse for to-morrow.”

“Yes; but where am I to get the money?”—interposed the old Princess.

Zinaída frowned.

“I am not asking any from you; Byelovzóroff will trust me.”

“He will, he will,” grumbled the old Princess—and suddenly screamed at the top of her voice:—“Dunyáshka!”

“*Maman*, I made you a present of a bell,”—remarked the young Princess.

“Dunyáshka!”—repeated the old woman.

Byelovzóroff bowed himself out; I went out with him. Zinaída did not detain me.

XIV

I rose early the next morning, cut myself a staff, and went off beyond the city barrier. "I'll have a walk and banish my grief,"—I said to myself. It was a beautiful day, brilliant but not too hot; a cheerful, fresh breeze was blowing over the earth and rustling and playing moderately, keeping in constant motion and agitating nothing. For a long time I roamed about on the hills and in the forests. I did not feel happy; I had left home with the intention of surrendering myself to melancholy;—but youth, the fine weather, the fresh air, the diversion of brisk pedestrian exercise, the delight of lying in solitude on the thick grass, produced their effect; the memory of those unforgettable words, of those kisses, again thrust themselves into my soul. It was pleasant to me to think that Zinaída could not, nevertheless, fail to do justice to my decision, to my heroism.... "Others are better for her than I,"—I thought:—"so be it! On the other hand, the others only say what they will do, but I have done it! And what else am I capable of doing for her?"—My imagination began to ferment. I began to picture to myself how I would save her from the hands of enemies; how, all bathed in blood, I would wrest her out of prison; how I would die at her feet. I recalled a picture which hung in our drawing-room of Malek-Adel carrying off Matilda—and thereupon became engrossed in the appearance of a big, speckled woodpecker which was busily ascending the slender trunk of a birch-tree, and uneasily peering out from behind it, now on the right, now on the left, like a musician from behind the neck of his bass-viol.

Then I began to sing: "Not the white snows,"—and ran off into the romance which was well known at that period, "I will await thee when the playful breeze"; then I began to recite aloud Ermák's invocation to the stars in Khomyakóff's tragedy; I tried to compose something in a sentimental vein; I even thought out the line wherewith the whole poem was to conclude: "Oh, Zinaída! Zinaída!"—But it came to nothing. Meanwhile, dinner-time was approaching. I descended into the valley; a narrow, sandy path wound through it and led toward the town. I strolled along that

path.... The dull trampling of horses' hoofs resounded behind me. I glanced round, involuntarily came to a standstill and pulled off my cap. I beheld my father and Zinaída. They were riding side by side. My father was saying something to her, bending his whole body toward her, and resting his hand on the neck of her horse; he was smiling. Zinaída was listening to him in silence, with her eyes severely downcast and lips compressed. At first I saw only them; it was not until several moments later that Byelovzóroff made his appearance from round a turn in the valley, dressed in hussar uniform with pelisse, and mounted on a foam-flecked black horse. The good steed was tossing his head, snorting and curvetting; the rider was both reining him in and spurring him on. I stepped aside. My father gathered up his reins and moved away from Zinaída; she slowly raised her eyes to his—and both set off at a gallop.... Byelovzóroff dashed headlong after them with clanking sword. "He is as red as a crab,"—I thought,—"and she.... Why is she so pale? She has been riding the whole morning—and yet she is pale?"

I redoubled my pace and managed to reach home just before dinner. My father was already sitting, re-dressed, well-washed and fresh, beside my mother's arm-chair, and reading aloud to her in his even, sonorous voice, the feuilleton of the *Journal des Débats*; but my mother was listening to him inattentively and, on catching sight of me, inquired where I had been all day, adding, that she did not like to have me prowling about God only knew where and God only knew with whom. "But I have been walking alone,"—I was on the point of replying; but I glanced at my father and for some reason or other held my peace.

XV

During the course of the next five or six days I hardly saw Zinaída; she gave it out that she was ill, which did not, however, prevent the habitual visitors from presenting themselves at the wing—"to take their turn in attendance,"—as they expressed it;—all except Maidánoff, who immediately became dispirited as soon as he had no opportunity to go into raptures. Byelovzóroff sat morosely in a corner, all tightly buttoned up and red in the face; on Count Malévsky's delicate visage hovered constantly a sort of evil smile; he really had fallen into disfavour with Zinaída and listened with particular pains to the old Princess, and drove with her to the Governor-General's in a hired carriage. But this trip proved unsuccessful and even resulted in an unpleasantness for Malévsky: he was reminded of some row with certain Putéisk officers, and was compelled, in self-justification, to say that he was inexperienced at the time. Lúshin came twice a day, but did not remain long. I was somewhat afraid of him after our last explanation and, at the same time, I felt a sincere attachment for him. One day he went for a stroll with me in the Neskútchny Park, was very good-natured and amiable, imparted to me the names and properties of various plants and flowers, and suddenly exclaimed—without rhyme or reason, as the saying is—as he smote himself on the brow: "And I, like a fool, thought she was a coquette! Evidently, it is sweet to sacrifice one's self—for some people!"

"What do you mean to say by that?"—I asked.

"I don't mean to say anything to you,"—returned Lúshin, abruptly.

Zinaída avoided me; my appearance—I could not but perceive the fact—produced an unpleasant impression on her. She involuntarily turned away from me ... involuntarily; that was what was bitter, that was what broke my heart! But there was no help for it and I tried to keep out of her sight and only stand guard over her from a distance, in which I was not always successful. As

before, something incomprehensible was taking place with her; her face had become different—she was altogether a different person. I was particularly struck by the change which had taken place in her on a certain warm, tranquil evening. I was sitting on a low bench under a wide-spreading elder-bush; I loved that little nook; the window of Zinaída's chamber was visible thence. I was sitting there; over my head, in the darkened foliage, a tiny bird was rummaging fussily about; a great cat with outstretched back had stolen into the garden, and the first beetles were booming heavily in the air, which was still transparent although no longer light. I sat there and stared at the window, and waited to see whether some one would not open it: and, in fact, it did open, and Zinaída made her appearance in it. She wore a white gown, and she herself—her face, her shoulders and her hands—was pale to whiteness. She remained for a long time motionless, and for a long time stared, without moving, straight in front of her from beneath her contracted brows. I did not recognise that look in her. Then she clasped her hands very, very tightly, raised them to her lips, to her forehead—and suddenly, unlocking her fingers, pushed her hair away from her ears, shook it back and, throwing her head downward from above with a certain decisiveness, she shut the window with a bang.

Two days later she met me in the park. I tried to step aside, but she stopped me.

"Give me your hand"—she said to me, with her former affection.—"It is a long time since you and I have had a chat."

I looked at her; her eyes were beaming softly and her face was smiling, as though athwart a mist.

"Are you still ailing?"—I asked her.

"No, everything has passed off now,"—she replied, breaking off a small, red rose.—"I am a little tired, but that will pass off also."

"And will you be once more the same as you used to be?"—I queried.

Zinaída raised the rose to her face, and it seemed to me as though the reflection of the brilliant petals fell upon her cheeks.—"Have I changed?"—she asked me.

"Yes, you have changed,"—I replied in a low voice.

"I was cold toward you,—I know that,"—began Zinaída;—"but you must not pay any heed to that.... I could not do otherwise.... Come, what's the use of talking about that?"

"You do not want me to love you—that's what!" I exclaimed gloomily, with involuntary impetuosity.

"Yes, love me, but not as before."

"How then?"

"Let us be friends,—that is how!"—Zinaída allowed me to smell of the rose.—"Listen; I am much older than you, you know—I might be your aunt, really; well, if not your aunt, then your elder sister. While you...."

"I am a child to you,"—I interrupted her.

"Well, yes, you are a child, but a dear, good, clever child, of whom I am very fond. Do you know what? I will appoint you to the post of my page from this day forth; and you are not to forget that pages must not be separated from their mistress. Here is a token of your new dignity for you,"—she added, sticking the rose into the button-hole of my round-jacket; "a token of our favour toward you."

"I have received many favours from you in the past,"—I murmured.

"Ah!"—said Zinaída, and darting a sidelong glance at me.—"What a memory you have! Well? And I am ready now also...."

And bending toward me, she imprinted on my brow a pure, calm kiss.

I only stared at her—but she turned away and, saying,—"Follow me, my page,"—walked to the wing. I followed her—and was in a constant state of bewilderment.—"Is it possible,"—I thought,—"that this gentle, sensible young girl is that same Zinaída whom I used to know?"—And her very walk seemed to me more quiet, her whole figure more majestic, more graceful....

And, my God! with what fresh violence did love flame up within me!

XVI

After dinner the visitors were assembled again in the wing, and the young Princess came out to them. The whole company was present, in full force, as on that first evening, never to be forgotten by me: even Nirmátzky had dragged himself thither. Maidánoff had arrived earlier than all the rest; he had brought some new verses. The game of forfeits began again, but this time without the strange sallies, without pranks and uproar; the gipsy element had vanished. Zinaída gave a new mood to our gathering. I sat beside her, as a page should. Among other things, she proposed that the one whose forfeit was drawn should narrate his dream; but this was not a success. The dreams turned out to be either uninteresting (Byelovzóroff had dreamed that he had fed his horse on carp, and that it had a wooden head), or unnatural, fictitious. Maidánoff regaled us with a complete novel; there were sepulchres and angels with harps, and burning lights and sounds wafted from afar. Zinaída did not allow him to finish. "If it is a question of invention,"—said she,—"then let each one relate something which is positively made up."—Byelovzóroff had to speak first.

The young hussar became confused.—"I cannot invent anything!"—he exclaimed.

"What nonsense!"—interposed Zinaída.—"Come, imagine, for instance, that you are married, and tell us how you would pass the time with your wife. Would you lock her up?"

"I would."

"And would you sit with her yourself?"

"I certainly would sit with her myself."

"Very good. Well, and what if that bored her, and she betrayed you?"

"I would kill her."

"Just so. Well, now supposing that I were your wife, what would you do then?"

Byelovzóroff made no answer for a while.—"I would kill myself...."

Zinaída burst out laughing.—"I see that there's not much to be got out of you."

The second forfeit fell to Zinaída's share. She raised her eyes to the ceiling and meditated.—"See here,"—she began at last,—"this is what I have devised.... Imagine to yourselves a magnificent palace, a summer night, and a marvellous ball. This ball is given by the young Queen. Everywhere there are gold, marble, silk, lights, diamonds, flowers, the smoke of incense—all the whims of luxury."

"Do you love luxury?"—interrupted Lúshin.

"Luxury is beautiful,"—she returned;—"I love everything that is beautiful."

"More than what is fine?"—he asked.

"That is difficult; somehow I don't understand. Don't bother me. So then, there is a magnificent ball. There are many guests, they are all young, very handsome, brave; all are desperately in love with the Queen."

"Are there no women among the guests?"—inquired Malévsky.

"No—or stay—yes, there are."

"Also very handsome?"

"Charming. But the men are all in love with the Queen. She is tall and slender; she wears a small gold diadem on her black hair."

I looked at Zinaída—and at that moment she seemed so far above us, her white forehead and her impassive eyebrows exhaled so much clear intelligence and such sovereignty, that I said to myself: "Thou thyself art that Queen!"

"All throng around her,"—pursued Zinaída;—"all lavish the most flattering speeches on her."

"And is she fond of flattery?"—asked Lúshin.

"How intolerable! He is continually interrupting.... Who does not like flattery?"

"One more final question,"—remarked Malévsky:—"Has the Queen a husband?"

"I have not thought about that. No, why should she have a husband?"

"Of course,"—assented Malévsky;—"why should she have a husband?"

"Silence!"—exclaimed, in English, Maidánoff, who spoke French badly.

"*Merci*,"—said Zinaída to him.—"So then, the Queen listens to those speeches, listens to the music, but does not look at a single one of the guests. Six windows are open from top to bottom, from ceiling to floor, and behind them are the dark sky with great stars and the dark garden with huge trees. The Queen gazes into the garden. There, near the trees is a fountain: it gleams white athwart the gloom—long, as long as a spectre. The Queen hears the quiet plashing of its waters in the midst of the conversation and the music. She gazes and thinks: 'All of you gentlemen are noble, clever, wealthy; you are all ready to die at my feet, I rule over you; ... but yonder, by the side of the fountain, by the side of that plashing water, there is standing and waiting for me the man whom I love, who rules over me. He wears no rich garments, nor

precious jewels; no one knows him; but he is waiting for me, and is convinced that I shall come—and I shall come, and there is no power in existence which can stop me when I wish to go to him and remain with him and lose myself with him yonder, in the gloom of the park, beneath the rustling of the trees, beneath the plashing of the fountain....'"

Zinaída ceased speaking.

"Is that an invention?"—asked Malévsky slyly.

Zinaída did not even glance at him.

"But what should we do, gentlemen,"—suddenly spoke up Lúshin,—"if we were among the guests and knew about that lucky man by the fountain?"

"Stay, stay,"—interposed Zinaída:—"I myself will tell you what each one of you would do. You, Byelovzóroff, would challenge him to a duel; you, Maidánoff, would write an epigram on him.... But no—you do not know how to write epigrams; you would compose a long iambic poem on him, after the style of Barbier, and would insert your production in the *Telegraph*. You, Nirmátzky, would borrow from him ... no, you would lend him money on interest; you, doctor...." She paused.... "I really do not know about you,—what you would do."

"In my capacity of Court-physician," replied Lúshin, "I would advise the Queen not to give balls when she did not feel in the mood for guests...."

"Perhaps you would be in the right. And you, Count?"

"And I?"—repeated Malévsky, with an evil smile.

"And you would offer him some poisoned sugar-plums."

Malévsky's face writhed a little and assumed for a moment a Jewish expression; but he immediately burst into a guffaw.

"As for you, M'sieu Voldemar...." went on Zinaída,—"but enough of this; let us play at some other game."

“M’sieu Voldemar, in his capacity of page to the Queen, would hold up her train when she ran off into the park,”—remarked Malévsky viciously.

I flared up, but Zinaída swiftly laid her hand on my shoulder and rising, said in a slightly tremulous voice:—“I have never given Your Radiance the right to be insolent, and therefore I beg that you will withdraw.”—She pointed him to the door.

“Have mercy, Princess,”—mumbled Malévsky, turning pale all over.

“The Princess is right,”—exclaimed Byelovzóroff, rising to his feet also.

“By God! I never in the least expected this,”—went on Malévsky:—“I think there was nothing in my words which.... I had no intention of offending you.... Forgive me.”

Zinaída surveyed him with a cold glance, and smiled coldly.—“Remain, if you like,”—she said, with a careless wave of her hand.—“M’sieu Voldemar and I have taken offence without cause. You find it merry to jest.... I wish you well.”

“Forgive me,”—repeated Malévsky once more; and I, recalling Zinaída’s movement, thought again that a real queen could not have ordered an insolent man out of the room with more majesty.

The game of forfeits did not continue long after this little scene; all felt somewhat awkward, not so much in consequence of the scene itself as from another, not entirely defined, but oppressive sensation. No one alluded to it, but each one was conscious of its existence within himself and in his neighbour. Maidánoff recited to us all his poems—and Malévsky lauded them with exaggerated warmth.

“How hard he is trying to appear amiable now,”—Lúshin whispered to me.

We soon dispersed. Zinaída had suddenly grown pensive; the old Princess sent word that she had a headache; Nirmátzky began to complain of his rheumatism....

For a long time I could not get to sleep; Zinaída's narrative had impressed me.—"Is it possible that it contains a hint?"—I asked myself:—"and at whom was she hinting? And if there really is some one to hint about ... what must I decide to do? No, no, it cannot be,"—I whispered, turning over from one burning cheek to the other.... But I called to mind the expression of Zinaída's face during her narration.... I called to mind the exclamation which had broken from Lúshin in the Neskútchny Park, the sudden changes in her treatment of me—and lost myself in conjectures. "Who is he?" Those three words seemed to stand in front of my eyes, outlined in the darkness; a low-lying, ominous cloud seemed to be hanging over me—and I felt its pressure—and waited every moment for it to burst. I had grown used to many things of late; I had seen many things at the Zasyékins'; their disorderliness, tallow candle-ends, broken knives and forks, gloomy Vonifáty, the shabby maids, the manners of the old Princess herself,—all that strange life no longer surprised me.... But to that which I now dimly felt in Zinaída I could not get used.... "An adventuress,"—my mother had one day said concerning her. An adventuress—she, my idol, my divinity! That appellation seared me; I tried to escape from it by burrowing into my pillow; I raged—and at the same time, to what would not I have agreed, what would not I have given, if only I might be that happy mortal by the fountain!...

My blood grew hot and seethed within me. "A garden ... a fountain," ... I thought.... "I will go into the garden." I dressed myself quickly and slipped out of the house. The night was dark, the trees were barely whispering; a quiet chill was descending from the sky, an odour of fennel was wafted from the vegetable-garden. I made the round of all the alleys; the light sound of my footsteps both disconcerted me and gave me courage; I halted, waiting and listening to hear how my heart was beating

quickly and violently. At last I approached the fence and leaned against a slender post. All at once—or was it only my imagination?—a woman's figure flitted past a few paces distant from me.... I strained my eyes intently on the darkness; I held my breath. What was this? Was it footsteps that I heard or was it the thumping of my heart again?—"Who is here?"—I stammered in barely audible tones. What was that again? A suppressed laugh?... or a rustling in the leaves?... or a sigh close to my very ear? I was terrified.... "Who is here?"—I repeated, in a still lower voice.

The breeze began to flutter for a moment; a fiery band flashed across the sky; a star shot down.—"Is it Zinaída?"—I tried to ask, but the sound died on my lips. And suddenly everything became profoundly silent all around, as often happens in the middle of the night.... Even the katydids ceased to shrill in the trees; only a window rattled somewhere. I stood and stood, then returned to my chamber, to my cold bed. I felt a strange agitation—exactly as though I had gone to a tryst, and had remained alone, and had passed by some one else's happiness.

XVII

The next day I caught only a glimpse of Zinaída; she drove away somewhere with the old Princess in a hired carriage. On the other hand, I saw Lúshin—who, however, barely deigned to bestow a greeting on me—and Malévsky. The young Count grinned and entered into conversation with me in friendly wise. Among all the visitors to the wing he alone had managed to effect an entrance to our house, and my mother had taken a fancy to him. My father did not favour him and treated him politely to the point of insult.

"Ah, *monsieur le page*,"—began Malévsky,—"I am very glad to meet you. What is your beauteous queen doing?"

His fresh, handsome face was so repulsive to me at that moment, and he looked at me with such a scornfully-playful stare, that I made him no answer whatsoever.

"Are you still in a bad humour?"—he went on.—"There is no occasion for it. It was not I, you know, who called you a page; and pages are chiefly with queens. But permit me to observe to you that you are fulfilling your duties badly."

"How so?"

"Pages ought to be inseparable from their sovereigns; pages ought to know everything that they do; they ought even to watch over them,"—he added, lowering his voice,—"day and night."

"What do you mean by that?"

"What do I mean? I think I have expressed myself plainly. Day—and night. It does not matter so much about the day; by day it is light and there are people about; but by night—that's exactly the time to expect a catastrophe. I advise you not to sleep o'nights and to watch, watch with all your might. Remember—in a garden, by night, near the fountain—that's where you must keep guard. You will thank me for this."

Malévsky laughed and turned his back on me. He did not, in all probability, attribute any special importance to what he had said to me; he bore the reputation of being a capital hand at mystification, and was renowned for his cleverness in fooling people at the masquerades, in which that almost unconscious disposition to lie, wherewith his whole being was permeated, greatly aided him.... He had merely wished to tease me; but every word of his trickled like poison through all my veins.—The blood flew to my head.

"Ah! so that's it!"—I said to myself:—"good! So it was not for nothing that I felt drawn to the garden! That shall not be!" I exclaimed, smiting myself on the breast with my fist; although I really did not know what it was that I was determined not to permit.—"Whether Malévsky himself comes into the garden,"—I thought (perhaps he had blurted out a secret; he was insolent enough for that),—"or some one else,"—(the fence of our vegetable-garden was very low and it cost no effort to climb over it)—"at any rate, it will be all the worse for the person whom I

catch! I would not advise any one to encounter me! I'll show the whole world and her, the traitress,"—(I actually called her a traitress)—"that I know how to avenge myself!"

I returned to my own room, took out of my writing-table a recently purchased English knife, felt of the sharp blade, and, knitting my brows, thrust it into my pocket with a cold and concentrated decision, exactly as though it was nothing remarkable for me to do such deeds, and this was not the first occasion. My heart swelled angrily within me and grew stony; I did not unbend my brows until nightfall and did not relax my lips, and kept striding back and forth, clutching the knife which had grown warm in my pocket, and preparing myself in advance for something terrible. These new, unprecedented emotions so engrossed and even cheered me, that I thought very little about Zinaída herself. There kept constantly flitting through my head Aleko, the young gipsy:[6]—"Where art thou going, handsome youth?—Lie down...." and then: "Thou'rt all with blood bespattered!... Oh, what is't that thou hast done?... Nothing!" With what a harsh smile I repeated that: that "Nothing!"

My father was not at home; but my mother, who for some time past had been in a state of almost constant, dull irritation, noticed my baleful aspect at supper, and said to me:—"What art thou sulking at, like a mouse at groats?"—I merely smiled patronisingly at her by way of reply and thought to myself: "If they only knew!"—The clock struck eleven; I went to my own room but did not undress; I was waiting for midnight; at last it struck.—"'Tis time!"—I hissed between my teeth, and buttoning my coat to the throat and even turning up my sleeves I betook myself to the garden.

I had selected a place beforehand where I meant to stand on guard. At the end of the garden, at the spot where the fence, which separated our property from the Zasyékins', abutted on the party-wall, grew a solitary spruce-tree. Standing beneath its low, thick branches, I could see well, as far as the nocturnal gloom

permitted, all that went on around; there also meandered a path which always seemed to me mysterious; like a serpent it wound under the fence, which at that point bore traces of clambering feet, and led to an arbour of dense acacias. I reached the spruce-tree, leaned against its trunk and began my watch.

The night was as tranquil as the preceding one had been; but there were fewer storm-clouds in the sky, and the outlines of the bushes, even of the tall flowers, were more plainly discernible. The first moments of waiting were wearisome, almost terrible. I had made up my mind to everything; I was merely considering how I ought to act. Ought I to thunder out: "Who goes there? Halt! Confess—or die!"—or simply smite.... Every sound, every noise and rustling seemed to me significant, unusual.... I made ready.... I bent forward.... But half an hour, an hour, elapsed; my blood quieted down and turned cold; the consciousness that I was doing all this in vain, that I was even somewhat ridiculous, that Malévsky had been making fun of me, began to steal into my soul. I abandoned my ambush and made the round of the entire garden. As though expressly, not the slightest sound was to be heard anywhere; everything was at rest; even our dog was asleep, curled up in a ball at the gate. I climbed up on the ruin of the hothouse, beheld before me the distant plain, recalled my meeting with Zinaída, and became immersed in meditation....

I started.... I thought I heard the creak of an opening door, then the light crackling of a broken twig. In two bounds I had descended from the ruin—and stood petrified on the spot. Swift, light but cautious footsteps were plainly audible in the garden. They were coming toward me. "Here he is.... Here he is, at last!"—darted through my heart. I convulsively jerked the knife out of my pocket, convulsively opened it—red sparks whirled before my eyes, the hair stood up on my head with fright and wrath.... The steps were coming straight toward me—I bent over, and went to meet them.... A man made his appearance.... My God! It was my father!

I recognised him instantly, although he was all enveloped in a dark cloak,—and had pulled his hat down over his face. He went past me on tiptoe. He did not notice me although nothing concealed me; but I had so contracted myself and shrunk together that I think I must have been on a level with the ground. The jealous Othello, prepared to murder, had suddenly been converted into the school-boy.... I was so frightened by the unexpected apparition of my father that I did not even take note, at first, in what direction he was going and where he had disappeared. I merely straightened up at the moment and thought: "Why is my father walking in the garden by night?"—when everything around had relapsed into silence. In my alarm I had dropped my knife in the grass, but I did not even try to find it; I felt very much ashamed. I became sobered on the instant. But as I wended my way home, I stepped up to my little bench under the elder-bush and cast a glance at the little window of Zinaída's chamber. The small, somewhat curved panes of the little window gleamed dully blue in the faint light which fell from the night sky. Suddenly their colour began to undergo a change.... Behind them—I saw it, saw it clearly,—a whitish shade was lowered, descended to the sill,—and there remained motionless.

"What is the meaning of that?"—I said aloud, almost involuntarily, when I again found myself in my own room.—"Was it a dream, an accident, or...." The surmises which suddenly came into my head were so new and strange that I dared not even yield to them.

XVIII

I rose in the morning with a headache. My agitation of the night before had vanished. It had been replaced by an oppressive perplexity and a certain, hitherto unknown sadness,—exactly as though something had died in me.

"What makes you look like a rabbit which has had half of its brain removed?"—said Lúshin, who happened to meet me. At breakfast I kept casting covert glances now at my father, now at my mother; he was calm, as usual; she, as usual, was secretly irritated. I waited

to see whether my father would address me in a friendly way, as he sometimes did.... But he did not even caress me with his cold, everyday affection.—"Shall I tell Zinaída all?"—I thought.... "For it makes no difference now—everything is over between us." I went to her, but I not only did not tell her anything,—I did not even get a chance to talk to her as I would have liked. The old Princess's son, a cadet aged twelve, had come from Petersburg to spend his vacation with her; Zinaída immediately confided her brother to me.—"Here, my dear Volódya,"—said she (she called me so for the first time), "is a comrade for you. His name is Volódya also. Pray, like him; he's a wild little fellow still, but he has a good heart. Show him Neskútchny Park, walk with him, take him under your protection. You will do that, will you not? You, too, are such a good fellow!"—She laid both hands affectionately on my shoulder—and I was reduced to utter confusion. The arrival of that boy turned me into a boy. I stared in silence at the cadet, who riveted his eyes in corresponding silence on me. Zinaída burst out laughing and pushed us toward each other.—"Come, embrace, children!"—We embraced.—"I'll take you into the garden if you wish,—shall I?"—I asked the cadet.

"Certainly, sir,"—he replied, in a hoarse, genuine cadet voice. Again Zinaída indulged in a burst of laughter.... I managed to notice that never before had she had such charming colour in her face. The cadet and I went off together. In our garden stood an old swing. I seated him on the thin little board and began to swing him. He sat motionless in his new little uniform of thick cloth with broad gold galloon, and clung tightly to the ropes.

"You had better unhook your collar,"—I said to him.

"Never mind, sir,[7] we are used to it, sir,"—he said, and cleared his throat.

He resembled his sister; his eyes were particularly suggestive of her. It was pleasant to me to be of service to him; and, at the same time, that aching pain kept quietly gnawing at my heart. "Now I really am a child," I thought; "but last night...." I remembered

where I had dropped my knife and found it. The cadet asked me to lend it to him, plucked a thick stalk of lovage, cut a whistle from it, and began to pipe. Othello piped also.

But in the evening, on the other hand, how he did weep, that same Othello, over Zinaída's hands when, having sought him out in a corner of the garden, she asked him what made him so melancholy. My tears streamed with such violence that she was frightened.—"What is the matter with you? What is the matter with you, Volódya?"—she kept repeating, and seeing that I made her no reply, she took it into her head to kiss my wet cheek. But I turned away from her and whispered through my sobs:—"I know everything: why have you trifled with me?... Why did you want my love?"

"I am to blame toward you, Volódya" ... said Zinaída.—"Akh, I am very much to blame" ... she said, and clenched her hands.—"How much evil, dark, sinful, there is in me!... But I am not trifling with you now, I love you—you do not suspect why and how.... But what is it you know?"

What could I say to her? She stood before me and gazed at me—and I belonged to her wholly, from head to foot, as soon as she looked at me.... A quarter of an hour later I was running a race with the cadet and Zinaída; I was not weeping; I was laughing, although my swollen eyelids dropped tears from laughing; on my neck, in place of a tie, was bound a ribbon of Zinaída's, and I shouted with joy when I succeeded in seizing her round the waist. She did with me whatsoever she would.

XIX

I should be hard put to it, if I were made to narrate in detail all that went on within me in the course of the week which followed my unsuccessful nocturnal expedition. It was a strange, feverish time, a sort of chaos in which the most opposite emotions, thoughts, suspicions, hopes, joys, and sufferings revolved in a whirlwind; I was afraid to look into myself, if a sixteen-year-old can look into himself; I was afraid to account to myself for anything whatsoever; I simply made haste to live through the day until the evening; on the other hand, at night I slept ... childish giddiness helped me. I did not want to know whether I was beloved, and would not admit to myself that I was not beloved; I shunned my father—but could not shun Zinaída.... I burned as with fire in her presence, ... but what was the use of my knowing what sort of fire it was wherewith I burned and melted—seeing that it was sweet to me to burn and melt! I surrendered myself entirely to my impressions, and dealt artfully with myself, turned away from my memories and shut my eyes to that of which I had a presentiment in the future.... This anguish probably would not have continued long ... a thunder-clap put an instantaneous end to everything and hurled me into a new course.

On returning home one day to dinner from a rather long walk, I learned with surprise that I was to dine alone; that my father had gone away, while my mother was ill, did not wish to dine and had shut herself up in her bedroom. From the footmen's faces I divined that something unusual had taken place.... I dared not interrogate them, but I had a friend, the young butler Philípp, who was passionately fond of poetry and an artist on the guitar; I applied to him. From him I learned that a frightful scene had taken place between my father and mother (for in the maids' room everything was audible, to the last word; a great deal had been said in French, but the maid Másha had lived for five years with a dressmaker from Paris and understood it all); that my mother had accused my father of infidelity, of being intimate with the young lady our neighbour; that my father had first defended himself, then had

flared up and in his turn had made some harsh remark "seemingly about her age," which had set my mother to crying; that my mother had also referred to a note of hand, which appeared to have been given to the old Princess, and expressed herself very vilely about her, and about the young lady as well; and that then my father had threatened her.—"And the whole trouble arose,"—pursued Philípp, "out of an anonymous letter; but who wrote it no one knows; otherwise there was no reason why this affair should have come out."

"But has there been anything?"—I enunciated with difficulty, while my hands and feet turned cold, and something began to quiver in the very depths of my breast.

Philípp winked significantly.—"There has. You can't conceal such doings, cautious as your papa has been in this case;—still, what possessed him, for example, to hire a carriage, or to ... for you can't get along without people there also."

I dismissed Philípp, and flung myself down on my bed. I did not sob, I did not give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself when and how all this had taken place; I was not surprised that I had not guessed it sooner, long before—I did not even murmur against my father.... That which I had learned was beyond my strength; this sudden discovery had crushed me.... All was over. All my flowers had been plucked up at one blow and lay strewn around me, scattered and trampled under foot.

XX

On the following day my mother announced that she was going to remove to town. My father went into her bedroom in the morning and sat there a long time alone with her. No one heard what he said to her, but my mother did not weep any more; she calmed down and asked for something to eat, but did not show herself and did not alter her intention. I remember that I wandered about all day long, but did not go into the garden and did not glance even once at the wing—and in the evening I was the witness of an amazing occurrence; my father took Count Malévsky by the arm and led him out of the hall into the anteroom and, in the presence of a lackey, said coldly to him: "Several days ago Your Radiance was shown the door in a certain house. I shall not enter into explanations with you now, but I have the honour to inform you that if you come to my house again I shall fling you through the window. I don't like your handwriting." The Count bowed, set his teeth, shrank together, and disappeared.

Preparations began for removing to town, on the Arbát,[8] where our house was situated. Probably my father himself no longer cared to remain in the villa; but it was evident that he had succeeded in persuading my mother not to make a row. Everything was done quietly, without haste; my mother even sent her compliments to the old Princess and expressed her regret that, owing to ill-health, she would be unable to see her before her departure. I prowled about like a crazy person, and desired but one thing,—that everything might come to an end as speedily as possible. One thought never quitted my head: how could she, a young girl,—well, and a princess into the bargain,—bring herself to such a step, knowing that my father was not a free man while she had the possibility of marrying Byelovzóroff at least, for example? What had she hoped for? How was it that she had not been afraid to ruin her whole future?—"Yes,"—I thought,—"that's what love is,—that is passion,—that is devotion," ... and I recalled Lúshin's words to me: "Self-sacrifice is sweet—for some people." Once I happened to catch sight of a white spot in one of the

windows of the wing.... “Can that be Zinaída’s face?”—I thought; ... and it really was her face. I could not hold out. I could not part from her without bidding her a last farewell. I seized a convenient moment and betook myself to the wing.

In the drawing-room the old Princess received me with her customary, slovenly-careless greeting.

“What has made your folks uneasy so early, my dear fellow?”—she said, stuffing snuff up both her nostrils. I looked at her, and a weight was removed from my heart. The word “note of hand” uttered by Philípp tormented me. She suspected nothing ... so it seemed to me then, at least. Zinaída made her appearance from the adjoining room in a black gown, pale, with hair out of curl; she silently took me by the hand and led me away to her room.

“I heard your voice,”—she began,—“and came out at once. And did you find it so easy to desert us, naughty boy?”

“I have come to take leave of you, Princess,”—I replied,—“probably forever. You may have heard we are going away.”

Zinaída gazed intently at me.

“Yes, I have heard. Thank you for coming. I was beginning to think that I should not see you.—Think kindly of me. I have sometimes tormented you; but nevertheless I am not the sort of person you think I am.”

She turned away and leaned against the window-casing.

“Really, I am not that sort of person. I know that you have a bad opinion of me.”

“I?”

“Yes, you ... you.”

“I?”—I repeated sorrowfully, and my heart began to quiver as of old, beneath the influence of the irresistible, inexpressible

witchery.—"I? Believe me, Zinaída Alexándrovna, whatever you may have done, however you may have tormented me, I shall love and adore you until the end of my life."

She turned swiftly toward me and opening her arms widely, she clasped my head, and kissed me heartily and warmly. God knows whom that long, farewell kiss was seeking, but I eagerly tasted its sweetness. I knew that it would never more be repeated.—"Farewell, farewell!" I kept saying....

She wrenched herself away and left the room. And I withdrew also. I am unable to describe the feeling with which I retired. I should not wish ever to have it repeated; but I should consider myself unhappy if I had never experienced it.

We removed to town. I did not speedily detach myself from the past, I did not speedily take up my work. My wound healed slowly; but I really had no evil feeling toward my father. On the contrary, he seemed to have gained in stature in my eyes ... let the psychologists explain this contradiction as best they may. One day I was walking along the boulevard when, to my indescribable joy, I encountered Lúshin. I liked him for his straightforward, sincere character; and, moreover, he was dear to me in virtue of the memories which he awakened in me. I rushed at him.

"Aha!"—he said, with a scowl.—"Is it you, young man? Come, let me have a look at you. You are still all sallow, and yet there is not the olden trash in your eyes. You look like a man, not like a lap-dog. That's good. Well, and how are you? Are you working?"

I heaved a sigh. I did not wish to lie, and I was ashamed to tell the truth.

"Well, never mind,"—went on Lúshin,—"don't be afraid. The principal thing is to live in normal fashion and not to yield to impulses. Otherwise, where's the good? No matter whither the wave bears one—'tis bad; let a man stand on a stone if need be, but on his own feet. Here I am croaking ... but Byelovzóroff—have you heard about him?"

"What about him? No."

"He has disappeared without leaving a trace; they say he has gone to the Caucasus. A lesson to you, young man. And the whole thing arises from not knowing how to say good-bye,—to break bonds in time. You, now, seem to have jumped out successfully. Look out, don't fall in again. Farewell."

"I shall not fall in,"—I thought.... "I shall see her no more." But I was fated to see Zinaída once more.

XXI

My father was in the habit of riding on horseback every day; he had a splendid red-roan English horse, with a long, slender neck and long legs, indefatigable and vicious. Its name was Electric. No one could ride it except my father. One day he came to me in a kindly frame of mind, which had not happened with him for a long time: he was preparing to ride, and had donned his spurs. I began to entreat him to take me with him.

"Let us, rather, play at leap-frog,"—replied my father,—"for thou wilt not be able to keep up with me on thy cob."

"Yes, I shall; I will put on spurs also."

"Well, come along."

We set out. I had a shaggy, black little horse, strong on its feet and fairly spirited; it had to gallop with all its might, it is true, when Electric was going at a full trot; but nevertheless I did not fall behind. I have never seen such a horseman as my father. His seat was so fine and so carelessly-adroit that the horse under him seemed to be conscious of it and to take pride in it. We rode the whole length of all the boulevards, reached the Maidens' Field,[9] leaped over several enclosures (at first I was afraid to leap, but my father despised timid people, and I ceased to be afraid), crossed the Moscow river twice;—and I was beginning to think that we were on our way homeward, the more so as my father remarked that my horse was tired, when suddenly he turned away from me in the

direction of the Crimean Ford, and galloped along the shore.—I dashed after him. When he came on a level with a lofty pile of old beams which lay heaped together, he sprang nimbly from Electric, ordered me to alight and, handing me the bridle of his horse, told me to wait for him on that spot, near the beams; then he turned into a narrow alley and disappeared. I began to pace back and forth along the shore, leading the horses after me and scolding Electric, who as he walked kept incessantly twitching his head, shaking himself, snorting and neighing; when I stood still, he alternately pawed the earth with his hoof, and squealed and bit my cob on the neck; in a word, behaved like a spoiled darling, *pur sang*. My father did not return. A disagreeable humidity was wafted from the river; a fine rain set in and mottled the stupid, grey beams, around which I was hovering and of which I was so heartily tired, with tiny, dark spots. Anxiety took possession of me, but still my father did not come. A Finnish sentry, also all grey, with a huge, old-fashioned shako, in the form of a pot, on his head, and armed with a halberd (why should there be a sentry, I thought, on the shores of the Moscow river?), approached me, and turning his elderly, wrinkled face to me, he said:

"What are you doing here with those horses, my little gentleman? Hand them over to me; I'll hold them."

I did not answer him; he asked me for some tobacco. In order to rid myself of him (moreover, I was tortured by impatience), I advanced a few paces in the direction in which my father had retreated; then I walked through the alley to the very end, turned a corner, and came to a standstill. On the street, forty paces distant from me, in front of the open window of a small wooden house, with his back to me, stood my father; he was leaning his breast on the window-sill, while in the house, half concealed by the curtain, sat a woman in a dark gown talking with my father: the woman was Zinaída.

I stood rooted to the spot in amazement. I must confess that I had in nowise expected this. My first impulse was to flee. "My father

will glance round," I thought,—"and then I am lost."... But a strange feeling—a feeling more powerful than curiosity, more powerful even than jealousy, more powerful than fear,—stopped me. I began to stare, I tried to hear. My father appeared to be insisting upon something. Zinaída would not consent. I seem to see her face now—sad, serious, beautiful, and with an indescribable imprint of adoration, grief, love, and a sort of despair. She uttered monosyllabic words, did not raise her eyes, and only smiled—submissively and obstinately. From that smile alone I recognised my former Zinaída. My father shrugged his shoulders, and set his hat straight on his head—which was always a sign of impatience with him.... Then the words became audible: "*Vous devez vous séparer de cette.*"... Zinaída drew herself up and stretched out her hand.... Suddenly, before my very eyes, an incredible thing came to pass:—all at once, my father raised the riding-whip, with which he had been lashing the dust from his coat-tails,—and the sound of a sharp blow on that arm, which was bare to the elbow, rang out. I could hardly keep from shrieking, but Zinaída started, gazed in silence at my father, and slowly raising her arm to her lips, kissed the mark which glowed scarlet upon it.

My father hurled his riding-whip from him, and running hastily up the steps of the porch, burst into the house.... Zinaída turned round, and stretching out her arms, and throwing back her head, she also quitted the window.

My heart swooning with terror, and with a sort of alarmed perplexity, I darted backward; and dashing through the alley, and almost letting go of Electric, I returned to the bank of the river.... I could understand nothing. I knew that my cold and self-contained father was sometimes seized by fits of wild fury; and yet I could not in the least comprehend what I had seen.... But I immediately felt that no matter how long I might live, it would be impossible for me ever to forget that movement, Zinaída's glance and smile; that her image, that new image which had suddenly been presented to me, had forever imprinted itself on my memory. I

stared stupidly at the river and did not notice that my tears were flowing. “She is being beaten,”—I thought.... “She is being beaten ... beaten....”

“Come, what ails thee?—Give me my horse!”—rang out my father’s voice behind me.

I mechanically gave him the bridle. He sprang upon Electric ... the half-frozen horse reared on his hind legs and leaped forward half a fathom ... but my father speedily got him under control; he dug his spurs into his flanks and beat him on the neck with his fist.... “Ekh, I have no whip,”—he muttered.

I remembered the recent swish through the air and the blow of that same whip, and shuddered.

“What hast thou done with it?”—I asked my father, after waiting a little.

My father did not answer me and galloped on. I dashed after him. I was determined to get a look at his face.

“Didst thou get bored in my absence?”—he said through his teeth.

“A little. But where didst thou drop thy whip?”—I asked him again.

My father shot a swift glance at me.—“I did not drop it,”—he said,—“I threw it away.”—He reflected for a space and dropped his head ... and then, for the first and probably for the last time, I saw how much tenderness and compunction his stern features were capable of expressing.

He set off again at a gallop, and this time I could not keep up with him; I reached home a quarter of an hour after him.

“That’s what love is,”—I said to myself again, as I sat at night before my writing-table, on which copy-books and text-books had already begun to make their appearance,—“that is what passion is!... How is it possible not to revolt, how is it possible to endure a blow from any one whomsoever ... even from the hand that is most

dear? But evidently it can be done if one is in love.... And I ... I imagined....”

The last month had aged me greatly, and my love, with all its agitations and sufferings, seemed to me like something very petty and childish and wretched in comparison with that other unknown something at which I could hardly even guess, and which frightened me like a strange, beautiful but menacing face that one strives, in vain, to get a good look at in the semi-darkness....

That night I had a strange and dreadful dream. I thought I was entering a low, dark room.... My father was standing there, riding-whip in hand, and stamping his feet; Zinaída was crouching in one corner and had a red mark, not on her arm, but on her forehead ... and behind the two rose up Byelovzóroff, all bathed in blood, with his pale lips open, and wrathfully menacing my father.

Two months later I entered the university, and six months afterward my father died (of an apoplectic stroke) in Petersburg, whither he had just removed with my mother and myself. A few days before his death my father had received a letter from Moscow which had agitated him extremely.... He went to beg something of my mother and, I was told, even wept,—he, my father! On the very morning of the day on which he had the stroke, he had begun a letter to me in the French language: “My son,”—he wrote to me,—“fear the love of women, fear that happiness, that poison....” After his death my mother sent a very considerable sum of money to Moscow.

XXII

Four years passed. I had but just left the university, and did not yet quite know what to do with myself, at what door to knock; in the meanwhile, I was lounging about without occupation. One fine evening I encountered Maidánoff in the theatre. He had contrived to marry and enter the government service; but I found him unchanged. He went into unnecessary raptures, just as of old, and became low-spirited as suddenly as ever.

"You know,"—he said to me,—"by the way, that Madame Dólsky is here."

"What Madame Dólsky?"

"Is it possible that you have forgotten? The former Princess Zasyékin, with whom we were all in love, you included. At the villa, near Neskútchny Park, you remember?"

"Did she marry Dólsky?"

"Yes."

"And is she here in the theatre?"

"No, in Petersburg; she arrived here a few days ago; she is preparing to go abroad."

"What sort of a man is her husband?"—I asked.

"A very fine young fellow and wealthy. He's my comrade in the service, a Moscow man. You understand—after that scandal ... you must be well acquainted with all that ..." (Maidánoff smiled significantly), "it was not easy for her to find a husband; there were consequences ... but with her brains everything is possible. Go to her; she will be delighted to see you. She is handsomer than ever."

Maidánoff gave me Zinaída's address. She was stopping in the Hotel Demuth. Old memories began to stir in me.... I promised myself that I would call upon my former "passion" the next day. But certain affairs turned up: a week elapsed, and when, at last, I

betook myself to the Hotel Demuth and inquired for Madame Dólsky I learned that she had died four days previously, almost suddenly, in childbirth.

Something seemed to deal me a blow in the heart. The thought that I might have seen her but had not, and that I should never see her,—that bitter thought seized upon me with all the force of irresistible reproach. "Dead!" I repeated, staring dully at the door-porter, then quietly made my way to the street and walked away, without knowing whither. The whole past surged up at one blow and stood before me. And now this was the way it had ended, this was the goal of that young, fiery, brilliant life? I thought that—I pictured to myself those dear features, those eyes, those curls in the narrow box, in the damp, underground gloom,—right there, not far from me, who was still alive, and, perchance, only a few paces from my father.... I thought all that, I strained my imagination, and yet—

From a mouth indifferent I heard the news of death,
And with indifference did I receive it—

resounded through my soul. O youth, youth! Thou carest for nothing: thou possessest, as it were, all the treasures of the universe; even sorrow comforts thee, even melancholy becomes thee; thou are self-confident and audacious; thou sayest: "I alone live—behold!"—But the days speed on and vanish without a trace and without reckoning, and everything vanishes in thee, like wax in the sun, like snow.... And perchance the whole secret of thy charm consists not in the power to do everything, but in the possibility of thinking that thou wilt do everything—consists precisely in the fact that thou scatterest to the winds thy powers which thou hast not understood how to employ in any other way,—in the fact that each one of us seriously regards himself as a prodigal, seriously assumes that he has a right to say: "Oh, what could I not have done, had I not wasted my time!"

And I myself ... what did I hope for, what did I expect, what rich future did I foresee, when I barely accompanied with a single sigh,

with a single mournful emotion, the spectre of my first love which had arisen for a brief moment?

And what has come to pass of all for which I hoped? Even now, when the shades of evening are beginning to close in upon my life, what is there that has remained for me fresher, more precious than the memory of that morning spring thunder-storm which sped so swiftly past?

But I calumniate myself without cause. Even then, at that frivolous, youthful epoch, I did not remain deaf to the sorrowful voice which responded within me to the triumphant sound which was wafted to me from beyond the grave. I remember that a few days after I learned of Zinaída's death I was present, by my own irresistible longing, at the death-bed of a poor old woman who lived in the same house with us. Covered with rags, with a sack under her head, she died heavily and with difficulty. Her whole life had been passed in a bitter struggle with daily want; she had seen no joy, she had not tasted the honey of happiness—it seemed as though she could not have failed to rejoice at death, at her release, her repose. But nevertheless, as long as her decrepit body held out, as long as her breast heaved under the icy hand which was laid upon it, until her last strength deserted her, the old woman kept crossing herself and whispering:—"O Lord, forgive my sins,"—and only with the last spark of consciousness did there vanish from her eyes the expression of fear and horror at her approaching end. And I remember that there, by the bedside of that poor old woman, I felt terrified for Zinaída, and felt like praying for her, for my father—and for myself.

A CORRESPONDENCE

(1855)

SEVERAL years ago I was in Dresden. I stopped in the hotel. As I was running about the town from early morning until late at night, I did not consider it necessary to make acquaintance with my neighbours; at last, accidentally, it came to my knowledge that there was a sick Russian in the house. I went to him, and found a man in the last stage of consumption. Dresden was beginning to pall upon me; I settled down with my new acquaintance. It is wearisome to sit with an invalid, but even boredom is agreeable sometimes; moreover, my invalid was not dejected, and liked to chat. We endeavoured, in every way, to kill time: we played "fool" together, we jeered at the doctor. My compatriot narrated to that very bald German divers fictions about his own condition, which the doctor always "had long foreseen"; he mimicked him when he was surprised at any unprecedented attack, flung his medicine out of the window and so forth.

Nevertheless I repeatedly remarked to my friend that it would not be a bad idea to send for a good physician before it was too late, that his malady was not to be jested with, and so forth. But Alexyéi (my acquaintance's name was Alexyéi Petróvitch S***) put me off every time with jests about all doctors in general, and his own in particular, and at last, one stormy autumn evening, to my importunate entreaties, he replied with such a dejected glance, he shook his head so sadly, and smiled so strangely, that I felt a certain surprise. That same night Alexyéi grew worse, and on the following day he died. Just before his death his customary cheerfulness deserted him: he tossed uneasily in the bed, sighed, gazed anxiously about ... grasped my hand, whispered with an effort: "'Tis difficult to die, you know," ... dropped his head on the pillow, and burst into tears. I did not know what to say to him, and sat silently beside his bed. But Alexyéi speedily conquered this

last, belated compassion.... "Listen," he said to me:—"our doctor will come to-day, and will find me dead.... I can imagine his phiz" ... and the dying man tried to mimic him.... He requested me to send all his things to Russia, to his relatives, with the exception of a small packet, which he presented to me as a souvenir.

This packet contained letters—the letters of a young girl to Alexyéi and his letters to her. There were fifteen of them in all. Alexyéi Petróvitch S*** had known Márya Alexándrovna B*** for a long time—from childhood, apparently. Alexyéi Petróvitch had a cousin, and Márya Alexándrovna had a sister. In earlier years they had all lived together, then they had dispersed, and had not met again for a long time; then they had accidentally all assembled again in the country, in summer, and had fallen in love—Alexyéi's cousin with Márya Alexándrovna, and Alexyéi himself with the latter's sister. Summer passed and autumn came; they parted. Alexyéi being a sensible man, speedily became convinced that he was not in the least beloved, and parted from his beauty very happily; his cousin corresponded with Márya Alexándrovna for a couple of years longer ... but even he divined, at last, that he was deceiving both her and himself in the most unconscionable manner, and he also fell silent.

I should like to tell you a little about Márya Alexándrovna, dear reader, but you will learn to know her for yourself from her letters. Alexyéi wrote his first letter to her soon after her definitive breach with his cousin. He was in Petersburg at the time, suddenly went abroad, fell ill in Dresden and died. I have decided to publish his correspondence with Márya Alexándrovna, and I hope for some indulgence on the part of the reader, because these are not love-letters—God forbid! Love-letters are generally read by two persons only (but, on the other hand, a thousand times in succession), and are intolerable, if not ridiculous, to a third person.

I

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

St. Petersburg, March 7, 1840.

My dear Márya Alexándrovna!

I have never yet written to you a single time, I think, and here I am writing now.... I have chosen a strange time, have I not? This is what has prompted me to it: *Mon cousin Théodore* has been to see me to-day, and—how shall I say it?... and has informed me, in the strictest privacy (he never imparts anything in any other way), that he is in love with the daughter of some gentleman here, and this time is bent on marrying without fail, and that he has already taken the first step—he has explained his intentions! As a matter of course, I hastened to congratulate him on an event so pleasant for him; he has long stood in need of an explanation ... but inwardly I was, I confess, somewhat amazed. Although I knew that everything was over between you, yet it seemed to me.... In a word, I was amazed. I was preparing to go out visiting to-day, but I have remained at home, and intend to have a little chat with you. If you do not care to listen to me, throw this letter into the fire immediately. I declare to you that I wish to be frank, although I feel that you have a perfect right to take me for a decidedly-intrusive man. Observe, however, that I would not have taken pen in hand if I had not known that your sister is not with you: Théodore told me that she will be away all summer visiting your aunt, Madame B***. May God grant her all good things!

So, then, this is the way it has all turned out.... But I shall not offer you my friendship, and so forth; in general, I avoid solemn speeches, and "intimate" effusions. In beginning to write this letter, I have simply obeyed some momentary impulse: if any other feeling is hiding within me, let it remain hidden from sight for the present.

Neither shall I attempt to console you. In consoling others, people generally desire to rid themselves, as speedily as possible, of the unpleasant feeling of involuntary, self-conceited compassion.... I understand sincere, warm sympathy ... but such sympathy is not to be got from every one.... Please be angry with me.... If you are angry, you will probably read my epistle to the end.

But what right have I to write to you, to talk about my friendship, my feelings, about consolation? None whatever—positively, none whatever; and I am bound to admit that, and I rely solely upon your kindness.

Do you know what the beginning of my letter resembles? This: a certain Mr. N. N. entered the drawing-room of a lady who was not in the least expecting him,—who, perhaps, was expecting another man.... He divined that he had come at the wrong time, but there was nothing to be done.... He sat down, and began to talk.... God knows what about: poetry, the beauties of nature, the advantages of a good education ... in a word, he talked the most frightful nonsense.... But in the meanwhile the first five minutes had elapsed; he sat on; the lady resigned herself to her fate, and lo! Mr. N. N. recovered himself, sighed, and began to converse—to the best of his ability.

But, despite all this idle chatter, I feel somewhat awkward, nevertheless. I seem to see before me your perplexed, even somewhat angry face: I feel conscious that it is almost impossible for you not to assume that I have some secret intentions or other, and therefore, having perpetrated a piece of folly, like a Roman I wrap myself in my toga and await in silence your ultimate condemnation....

But, in particular: Will you permit me to continue to write to you?

I remain sincerely and cordially your devoted servant—

Alexyéi S***.

II

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, March 22, 1840.

Dear Sir!
Alexyéi Petróvitch!

I have received your letter, and really, I do not know what to say to you. I would even not have answered you at all had it not seemed to me that beneath your jests was concealed a decidedly-friendly sentiment. Your letter has produced an unpleasant impression on me. In reply to your "idle chatter," as you put it, permit me also to propound to you one question: To what end? What have you to do with me, what have I to do with you? I do not assume any evil intentions on your part, ... on the contrary, I am grateful to you for your sympathy, ... but we are strangers to each other, and I now, at all events, feel not the slightest desire to become intimate with any one whomsoever.

With sincere respects I remain, and so forth,

Márya B***.

III

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

St. Petersburg, March 30.

I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna, I thank you for your note, curt as it is. All this time I have been in a state of great agitation; twenty times a day I have thought of you and of my letter. You can imagine how caustically I have laughed at myself; but now I am in a capital frame of mind, and am patting myself on the head. Márya Alexándrovna, I am entering into correspondence with you! Confess that you could not possibly have expected that after your reply; I am amazed at my own audacity ... never mind! But calm

yourself: I want to talk to you not about myself, but about you. Here, do you see: I find it imperatively necessary—to speak in antiquated style—to express myself to some one. I have no right to select you for my confidante—I admit that; but hearken: I demand from you no reply to my epistles; I do not even wish to know whether you will peruse my "idle chatter," but do not send me back my letters, in the name of all that is holy!

Listen—I am utterly alone on earth. In my youth I led a solitary life, although, I remember, I never pretended to be a Byron; but, in the first place, circumstances, in the second place, the ability to dream and a love for reverie, rather cold blood, pride, indolence—in a word, a multitude of varied causes alienated me from the society of men. The transition from a dreamy to an active life was effected in me late ... perhaps too late, perhaps to this day not completely. So long as my own thoughts and feelings diverted me, so long as I was capable of surrendering myself to causeless silent raptures, and so forth, I did not complain of my isolation. I had no comrades—I did have so-called friends. Sometimes I needed their presence as an electrical machine needs a discharger—that was all. Love ... we will be silent on that subject for the present. But now, I confess, now loneliness weighs upon me, and yet I see no escape from my situation. I do not blame Fate; I alone am to blame, and I am justly chastised. In my youth one thing alone interested me: my charming ego; I took my good-natured self-love for shyness; I shunned society, and lo! now I am frightfully bored with myself. What is to become of me? I love no one; all my friendships with other people are, somehow, strained and false; and I have no memories, because in all my past life, I find nothing except my own self. Save me! I have not made you enthusiastic vows of love; I have not deafened you with a torrent of chattering speeches; I have passed you by with considerable coldness, and precisely for that reason I have made up my mind now to have recourse to you. (I had thought of this even earlier, but you were not free then....) Out of all my self-made joys and sufferings, the sole genuine feeling was the small, but

involuntary attraction to you, which withered then, like a solitary ear of grain amid worthless weeds.... Allow me, at least, to look into another face, another soul,—my own face has grown repugnant to me; I am like a man who has been condemned to live out his entire life in a room with walls made of mirrors.... I do not demand any confessions from you—oh, heavens, no! Grant me the speechless sympathy of a sister, or at least the simple curiosity of a reader—I will interest you, really, I will.

At any rate, I have the honour to be your sincere friend,

A. S.

IV

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

Petersburg, April 7th.

I write again to you, although I foresee that, without your approval, I shall speedily hold my peace. I must admit that you cannot fail to feel a certain distrust of me. What of that? Perhaps you are right. Formerly I would have declared to you (and, probably, would have believed my own words) that, since we parted, I had "developed," had advanced; with condescending, almost affectionate scorn I would have referred to my past; with touching boastfulness I would have initiated you into the secrets of my present, active life ... but now, I assure you, Márya Alexándrovna, I consider it shameful and disgusting to allude to the way in which my vile self-love once on a time fermented and amused itself. Fear not: I shall not force upon you any great truths, any profound views; I have none—none of those truths and views. I have become a nice fellow,—truly I have. I'm bored, Márya Alexándrovna—so bored that I can endure it no longer. That is why I am writing to you.... Really, it seems to me that we can come to an agreement....

However, I positively am in no condition to talk to you until you stretch out your hand to me, until I receive from you a note with the one word "Yes."—Márya Alexándrovna, will you hear me out?—that is the question.

Yours truly,
A. S.

V

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, April 14.

What a strange man you are! Well, then—"yes."

Márya B***.

VI

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

Petersburg, May 2, 1840.

Hurrah! Thanks, Márya Alexándrovna, thanks! You are a very kind and indulgent being.

I begin, according to my promise, to speak of myself, and I shall speak with pleasure, verging on appetite.... Precisely that. One may talk of everything in the world with fervour, with rapture, with enthusiasm, but only of one's self can one talk with appetite.

Listen: an extremely strange incident happened to me the other day: I took a glance at my past for the first time. You will understand me: every one of us frequently recalls the past—with compunction or with vexation, or simply for the lack of something to do; but only at a certain age can one cast a cold, clear glance at his whole past life—as a traveller, turning round, gazes from a lofty mountain upon the plain which he has traversed ... and a secret chill grips the heart of a man when this happens to him for

the first time. At any rate, my heart contracted with pain. So long as we are young, that sort of looking backward is impossible. But my youth is over—and, like the traveller on the mountain, everything has become clearly visible to me....

Yes, my youth is gone, gone irrevocably!... Here it lies before me, all of it, as though in the palm of my hand....

'Tis not a cheerful spectacle! I confess to you, Márya Alexándrovna, that I am very sorry for myself. My God! My God! Is it possible that I myself have ruined my own life to such a degree, have so ruthlessly entangled and tortured myself?... Now I have come to my senses, but it is too late. Have you ever rescued a fly from a spider? You have? Do you remember, you placed it in the sunshine; its wings, its legs were stuck together, glued fast.... How awkwardly it moved, how clumsily it tried to clean itself!... After long-continued efforts, it got itself to rights, after a fashion; it crawled, it tried to put its wings in order ... but it could not walk as it formerly did; it could not buzz, care-free, in the sunshine, now flying through an open window into a cool room, again fluttering freely out into the hot air.... It, at all events, did not fall into the dreadful net of its own free will ... but I!

I was my own spider.

And, nevertheless, I cannot blame myself so very much. Yes, and who—tell me, for mercy's sake—who ever was to blame for anything—alone? Or, to put it more accurately, we are all to blame, yet it is impossible to blame us. Circumstances settle our fate: they thrust us into this road or that, and then they punish us. Every man has his fate.... Wait, wait! There occurs to my mind on this score an artfully-constructed but just comparison. As clouds are first formed by the exhalations from the earth, rise up from its bosom, then separate themselves from it, withdraw from it, and bear over it either blessings or ruin, just so around each one of us and from us ourselves is formed—how shall I express it?—is formed a sort of atmosphere which afterward acts destructively or salutarily upon us ourselves. This I call Fate.... In other words, and

to put it simply: each person makes his own fate, and it makes each person....

Each person makes his own fate—yes!... but our brethren make it far too much—which constitutes our calamity! Consciousness is aroused in us too early; too early do we begin to observe ourselves.... We Russians have no other life-problem than the cultivation of our personality, and here we, barely adult children, already undertake to cultivate it, this our unhappy personality! Without having received from within any definite direction, in reality respecting nothing, believing firmly in nothing, we are free to make of ourselves whatsoever we will.... But it is impossible to demand of every man that he shall immediately comprehend the sterility of a mind, "seething in empty activity" ... and so, there is one more monster in the world, one more of those insignificant beings in which the habits of self-love distort the very striving after truth, and ridiculous ingenuousness lives side by side with pitiful guile ... one of those beings to whose impotent, uneasy thought there remains forever unknown either the satisfaction of natural activity, or the genuine suffering, or the genuine triumph of conviction.... Combining in itself the defects of all ages, we deprive each defect of its good, its redeeming side.... We are as stupid as children, but we are not sincere like them; we are as cold as old men, but the common sense of old age is not in us.... On the other hand, we are psychologists. Oh, yes, we are great psychologists! But our psychology strays off into pathology; our psychology is an artful study of the laws of a diseased condition and a diseased development, with which healthy people have no concern.... But the chief thing is, we are not young,—in youth itself we are not young!

And yet—why calumniate one's self? Have we really never been young? Have the vital forces never sparkled, never seethed, never quivered in us? Yet we have been in Arcadia, and we have roved its bright meads!... Have you ever happened, while strolling among bushes, to hit upon those dark-hued harvest-flies, which, springing out from under your very feet, suddenly expand their

bright red wings with a clatter, flutter on a few paces, and then tumble into the grass again? Just so did our dark youth sometimes expand its gaily-coloured little wings for a few moments, and a brief flight.... Do you remember our silent evening rambles, the four of us together, along the fence of your park, after some long, warm, animated conversation? Do you remember those gracious moments? Nature received us affectionately and majestically into her lap. We entered, with sinking heart, into some sort of blissful waves. Round about the glow of sunset kindled with sudden and tender crimson; from the crimsoning sky, from the illuminated earth, from everywhere, it seemed as though the fresh and fiery breath of youth were wafted abroad, and the joyous triumph of some immortal happiness; the sunset glow blazed; like it, softly and passionately blazed our enraptured hearts, and the tiny leaves of the young trees quivered sensitively and confusedly above us, as though replying to the inward tremulousness of the indistinct feelings and anticipations within us. Do you remember that purity, that kindness and trustfulness of ideas, that emotion of noble hopes, that silence of plenitude? Can it be that we were not then worthy of something better than that to which life has conducted us? Why have we been fated only at rare intervals to catch sight of the longed-for shore, and never to stand thereon with firm foothold, never to touch it—

Not to weep sweetly, like the first of the Jews
On the borders of the Promised Land?

These two lines of Fet[10] have reminded me of others,—also by him.... Do you remember how one day, as we were standing in the road, we beheld in the distance a cloud of rosy dust, raised by a light breeze, against the setting sun? "In a billowy cloud" you began, and we all fell silent on the instant, and set to listening:

In a billowy cloud
The dust rises in the distance....
Whether horseman or pedestrian—
Cannot be descried for the dust.
I see some one galloping

On a spirited steed....
My friend, my distant friend—
Remember me!

You ceased.... All of us fairly shuddered, as though the breath of love had flitted over our hearts, and each one of us—I am convinced of that—longed inexpressibly to flee away in the distance, that unknown distance, where the apparition of bliss rises up and beckons athwart the mist. And yet, observe this odd thing: why should we reach out into the distance?—we thought. Were not we in love with each other? Was not happiness "so near, so possible"? And I immediately asked you: "Why have not we gained the shore we long for?" Because falsehood was walking hand in hand with us; because it was poisoning our best sentiments; because everything in us was artificial and strained; because we did not love each other at all, and only tried to love, imagined that we did love....

But enough, enough! Why irritate one's wounds? Moreover, all that is past irrevocably. That which was good in our past has touched me, and on this good I bid you farewell for the time being. And it is time to end this long letter. I will go and inhale the May air here, in which, through the winter's stern fortress, the spring is forcing its way with a sort of moist and keen warmth. Farewell.

A. S.

VII

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, May 20, 1840.

I have received your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch, and do you know what feeling it aroused in me?—Indignation ... yes, indignation ... and I will immediately explain to you why it aroused precisely that feeling in me. One thing is a pity: I am not a mistress of the pen—I rarely write. I do not know how to express my thoughts accurately

and in a few words; but you will, I hope, come to my aid. You yourself will try to understand me: if only for the sake of knowing why I am angry with you.

Tell me—you are a clever man—have you ever asked yourself what sort of a creature a Russian woman is? What is her fate, her position in the world—in short, what her life is like? I do not know whether you have ever had time to put that question to yourself; I cannot imagine how you would answer it.... I might, in conversation be able to communicate to you my ideas on that subject, but I shall hardly manage it on paper. However, it makes no difference. This is the point: you surely will agree with me that we women—at all events, those of us who are not satisfied with the ordinary cares of domestic life—receive our final education, all the same, from you—from the men: you have a great and powerful influence on us. Look, now, at what you do with us. I shall speak of the young girls, especially of those who, like myself, dwell in the dull places, and there are many such in Russia. Moreover, I do not know others, and cannot judge with regard to them. Figure to yourself such a young girl. Here, now, her education is finished; she is beginning to live, to amuse herself. But amusement alone is not enough for her. She demands a great deal from life; she reads, dreams ... of love:—"Always of love alone!" you will say.... Let us assume that that word means a great deal to her. I will say again that I am not talking of the sort of girl who finds it burdensome and tiresome to think.... She looks about her, waits for the coming of him for whom her soul pines.... At last he makes his appearance: she is carried away; she is like soft wax in his hands. Everything—happiness, and love, and thought—everything has invaded her together with him, all at once; all her tremors are soothed, all her doubts are solved by him; truth itself seems to speak by his mouth; she worships him, she is ashamed of her happiness, she learns, she loves. Great is his power over her at this period!... If he were a hero, he would kindle her to flame, he would teach her to sacrifice herself, and all sacrifices would be easy to her! But there are no heroes in our day.... Nevertheless, he guides her

whithersoever he will; she devotes herself to that which interests him, his every word sinks into her soul: at that time, she does not know, as yet, how insignificant and empty and false that word may be, how little it costs him who utters it, and how little faith it merits! These first moments of bliss and hope are followed, generally—according to circumstances—(circumstances are always to blame)—are followed by parting. It is said that there have been cases where two kindred souls, on recognising each other, have immediately united indissolubly; I have heard, also, that they are not always comfortable as a result.... But I will not speak of that which I have not myself beheld—but that the very pettiest sort of calculation, the most woful prudence, may dwell in a young heart side by side with the most passionate rapture,—that is a fact which, unhappily, I know by my own experience. So, then, parting comes.... Happy is that young girl who instantly recognises that the end of all has come, who does not comfort herself with expectation! But you brave, just men, in the majority of cases, have neither the courage nor the desire to tell us the truth ... you find it more easy to deceive us.... I am ready to believe, however, that you deceive yourselves along with us.... Parting! It is both difficult and easy to endure parting. If only faith in him whom one loves were intact and unassailed, the soul would conquer the pain of parting.... I will say more: only when she is left alone does she learn the sweetness of solitude, not sterile but filled with memories and thoughts. Only then will she learn to know herself—will she come to herself, will she grow strong.... In the letters of the distant friend she will find a support for herself; in her own she will, perhaps, for the first time, express her mind fully.... But as two persons who have started from the source of a river along its different banks can, at first, clasp hands, then hold communication only with the voice, but ultimately lose sight of each other: so also two beings are ultimately disjoined by separation. “What of that?” you will say: “evidently they were not fated to go together....” But here comes in the difference between a man and a woman. It signifies nothing to a man to begin a new life, to shake far from him the past; a woman cannot do that. No, she cannot cast aside

her past, she cannot tear herself away from her roots—no, a thousand times no! And so, a pitiful and ridiculous spectacle presents itself.... Gradually losing hope and faith in herself,—you can form no idea of how painful that is,—she will pine away and fade alone, obstinately clinging to her memories, and turning away from everything which life around her offers.... And he?... Seek him! Where is he? And is it worth while for him to pause? What time has he for looking back? All this is a thing of the past for him, you see.

Or here is another thing which happens: it sometimes happens that he will suddenly conceive a desire to meet the former object of his affections, he will even deliberately go to her.... But, my God! from what a motive of petty vain-glory he does it! In his polite compassion, in his counsels which are intended to be friendly, in his condescending explanations of the past, there is audible such a consciousness of his own superiority! It is so agreeable and cheerful a thing for him to let himself feel every minute how sensible and kind he is! And how little he understands what he is doing! How well he manages not even to guess at what is going on in the woman's heart, and how insultingly he pities her, if he does guess it!...

Tell me, please, whence are we to get the strength to endure all this? Remember this, too: in the majority of cases, a girl who, to her misfortune, has an idea beginning to stir in her head, when she begins to love, and falls under the influence of a man, involuntarily separates herself from her family, from her acquaintances. Even previously she has not been satisfied with their life, yet she has walked on by their side, preserving in her soul all her intimate secrets.... But the breach speedily makes itself visible.... They cease to understand her, they are ready to suspect every movement of hers.... At first she pays no heed to this, but afterward, afterward ... when she is left alone, when that toward which she has been striving and for which she has sacrificed everything escapes her grasp, when she has not attained to heaven, but when every near thing, every possible thing, has retreated far from her—what shall

uphold her? Sneers, hints, the vulgar triumph of coarse common sense she can still bear, after a fashion ... but what is she to do, to what is she to have recourse, when the inward voice begins to whisper to her that all those people were right, and that she has been mistaken; that life, of whatever sort it may be, is better than dreams, as health is better than disease ... when her favourite occupations, her favourite books, disgust her, the books from which one cannot extract happiness,—what, say you,—what shall uphold her? How is she to help succumbing in such a struggle? How is she to live and to go on living in such a wilderness? Confess herself vanquished, and extend her hand like a beggar to indifferent people? Will not they give her at least some of that happiness with which the proud heart once imagined that it could dispense—all that is nothing as yet! But to feel one's self ridiculous at the very moment when one is shedding bitter, bitter tears ... akh! God forbid that you should go through that experience!...

My hands are trembling, and I am in a fever all over.... My face is burning hot. It is time for me to stop.... I shall send off this letter as speedily as possible, while I am not ashamed of my weakness. But, for God's sake, not a word in your reply—do you hear me?—not a word of pity, or I will never write to you again. Understand me: I should not like to have you take this letter as the outpouring of a misunderstood soul which is making complaint.... Akh! it is all a matter of indifference to me! Farewell.

M.

VIII

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

St. Petersburg, May 28, 1840.

Márya Alexándrovna, you are a fine creature ... indeed you are ... your letter has disclosed to me the truth at last! O Lord my God! what torture! A man is constantly thinking that now he has attained simplicity, no longer shows off, puts on airs, or lies ... but

when you come to look at him more attentively, he has become almost worse than he was before. And this must be noted: the man himself, alone that is to say, will never attain to that consciousness, bestir himself as he may! his eye will not discern his own defects, just as the blunted eye of the printer will not detect errors: another, a fresher eye is required. I thank you, Márya Alexándrovna.... You see, I am speaking to you of myself; I dare not speak of you.... Akh, how ridiculous my last letter seems to me now,—so eloquent and sentimental! Go on, I beg of you, with your confession; I have a premonition that you will be relieved thereby, and it will be of great benefit to me. Not without cause does the proverb say: "A woman's wit is better than many thoughts"; and a woman's heart is far more so—God is my witness that it is so! If women only knew how much better, and more magnanimous, and clever—precisely that—clever they are than the men, they would grow puffed up with pride, and get spoiled: but, fortunately, they do not know that; they do not know it because their thoughts have not become accustomed to returning incessantly to themselves, as have the thoughts of us men. They think little about themselves—that is their weakness and their strength; therein lies the whole secret—I will not say of our superiority, but of our power. They squander their souls, as a lavish heir squanders his father's gold, but we collect interest from every look.... How can they enter into rivalry with us?... All this is not compliments, but the simple truth, demonstrated by experience. Again I entreat you, Márya Alexándrovna, to continue writing to me.... If you only knew all that comes into my mind!... But now I do not want to talk, I want to listen to you.... My speech will come later on. Write, write.

Yours truly,
A. S.

IX

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, June 12, 1840.

No sooner had I despatched my last letter to you, Alexyéi Petróvitch, than I repented of it; but there was no help for it. One thing somewhat soothed me: I am convinced that you have understood under the influence of what long-suppressed feelings it was written, and have forgiven me. I did not even read over at the time what I had written to you; I remember that my heart was beating so violently that my pen trembled in my hand. However, although I probably should have expressed myself differently if I had given myself time to think it over, still I have no intention of disclaiming either my words or the feelings which I have imparted to you to the best of my ability. To-day I am much more cool-headed, and have far better control over myself....

I remember that I spoke toward the end of my letter about the painful situation of the young girl who recognises the fact that she is isolated even among her own people.... I will not enlarge further on that point, but rather will I communicate to you a few details; it seems to me that I shall bore you less in that way.

In the first place, you must know that throughout the whole country-side I am not called anything but "the female philosopher"; the ladies, in particular, allude to me by that name. Some assert that I sleep with a Latin book in my hands and in spectacles; others, that I know how to extract some cubic roots or other: not one of them cherishes any doubt that I wear masculine attire on the sly, and that instead of "good morning," I say abruptly: "Georges Sand!"—and indignation against "the female philosopher" is on the increase. We have a neighbour, a man of five-and-forty, a great wit, ... at least, he has the reputation of being a great wit, ... and for him my poor person is an inexhaustible subject for jeers. He has related, concerning me, that as soon as the moon rises in the sky, I cannot take my eyes from it, and he shows

how I look; that I even drink coffee not with cream but with the moon, that is to say, I set my cup in its rays. He swears that I use phrases in the nature of the following: "That is easy because it is difficult; although, on the other hand, it is difficult because it is easy."... He declares that I am always seeking some word or other, always yearning "thither," and he inquires, with comic indignation: "Whither is thither? Whither?" He has also set in circulation about me a rumour to the effect that I ride by night on horseback back and forth through the ford of the river, singing the while Schubert's "Serenade," or simply moaning: "Beethoven, Beethoven!" as much as to say—"She's such a fiery old woman!" and so forth, and so forth. Of course, all this immediately reaches my ears. Perhaps this may surprise you; but do not forget that four years have elapsed since you have sojourned in these parts. Remember how every one gazed askance at us then.... Now their turn has come. And all this is nothing. I sometimes happen to hear words which pierce my heart much more painfully. I will not mention the fact that my poor, good mother cannot possibly pardon me for your cousin's indifference; but all my life runs through the fire, as my old nurse expresses it. "Of course,"—I hear constantly,—"how are we to keep up with thee? We are plain folks, we are guided only by common sense; but, after all, when one comes to think of it, to what have all these philosophisings and books and acquaintances with learned people brought thee?" Perhaps you remember my sister—not the one to whom you were formerly not indifferent, but the other, the elder, who is married. Her husband, you will remember, is a decidedly-ridiculous man; you often used to make fun of him in those days. Yet she is happy: the mother of a family, she loves her husband, and her husband adores her.... "I am like all the rest,"—she says to me sometimes;—"but how about thee?" And she is right: I envy her....

And nevertheless I feel that I should not like to change places with her. Let them call me "a female philosopher," "an eccentric," whatever they choose—I shall remain faithful to the end ... to what?—to an ideal, pray? Yes, to an ideal. Yes, I shall remain

faithful to the end to that which first made my heart beat,—to that which I have acknowledged and do acknowledge to be the true, the good. If only my strength does not fail me, if only my idol does not prove a soulless block....

If you really do feel friendship for me, if you really have not forgotten me, you must help me; you must disperse my doubts, strengthen my beliefs....

But what aid can you render me? "All this is nonsense, like the useless running of a squirrel on a wheel," said my uncle to me yesterday—I think you do not know him—a retired naval officer, and a far from stupid man. "A husband, children, a pot of buckwheat groats: to tend husband and children, and look after the pot of groats—that's what a woman needs."... Tell me, he is right, is he not?

If he really is right, I can still repair the past, I can still get into the common rut. What else is there for me to wait for? What is there to hope for? In one of your letters, you spoke of the wings of youth. How often, how long they remain fettered! And then comes a time, when they fall off; and it is no longer possible to raise one's self above the earth, to soar heavenward. Write to me.

Yours, M.

X

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

St. Petersburg, June 16, 1840.

I hasten to answer your letter, my dear Márya Alexándrovna. I will confess to you that if it were not for.... I will not say business—I have none—if it were not for my being so stupidly habituated to this place, I would go again to you and would talk my fill, but on paper all this comes out so coldly, in such a dead manner....

I repeat to you, Márya Alexándrovna: women are better than men, and you ought to demonstrate that in deed. Let us men fling aside our convictions, like a worn-out garment, or barter them for a morsel of bread, or, in conclusion, let them fall into the sleep which knows no waking, and place over them, as over one formerly beloved, a tombstone, to which one goes only now and then to pray—let us men do all that; but do not you women be false to yourselves, do not betray your ideal.... That word has become ridiculous.... To be afraid of the ridiculous is not to love the truth. It does happen, it is true, that a stupid laugh will make the stupid man, even good people, renounce a great deal ... take for example the defence of an absent friend.... I am guilty in that respect myself. But, I repeat it, you women are better than we are.... In trifles you are inclined to yield to us; but you understand better than we do how to look the devil straight in the eye. I shall give you neither aid nor advice—how can I? and you do not need it; but I do stretch forth my hand to you, and I do say to you: "Have patience; fight until the end; and know that, as a feeling, the consciousness of a battle honourably waged almost transcends the triumph of victory."... The victory does not depend upon us.

Of course, from a certain point of view, your uncle is right: family life is everything for a woman; there is no other life for her.

But what does that prove? Only the Jesuits assert that every means is good, if only one attains his end. It is not true! not true! It is an indignity to enter a clean temple with feet soiled with the mire of the road. At the end of your letter there is a phrase which I do not like: you want to get into the common rut. Look out—do not make a misstep! Do not forget, moreover, that it is impossible to efface the past; and strive as you may, force yourself as you will, you cannot make yourself your sister. You have ascended above her. But your soul is broken, hers is intact. You can lower yourself, bend down to her, but nature will not resign her rights, and the broken place will not grow together again....

You are afraid—let us speak without circumlocution—you are afraid of remaining an old maid. I know that you are already twenty-six years old. As a matter of fact, the position of old maids is not enviable: every one so gladly laughs at them; every one notes their oddities and their weaknesses with such unmagnanimous delight. But if you scan more closely any elderly bachelor,—he deserves to have the finger of scorn pointed at him also,—you will find in him cause to laugh your fill. What is to be done? Happiness is not to be captured by battle. But we must not forget that not happiness but human dignity is the chief goal of life.

You describe your position with great humour. I well understand all its bitterness; your position may, I am sure, be called tragic. But you must know that you are not the only one who finds herself in it: there is hardly any man of the present day who does not find himself in it also. You will say that that does not make it any the easier for you; but what I think is that to suffer in company with thousands is quite a different thing from suffering alone. It is not a question of egotism here, but of a feeling of universal necessity.

"All this is very fine, let us assume," you will say, ... "but, in point of fact, it is not applicable to the case." Why is it not applicable? Up to the present day I think, and I hope that I shall never cease to think, that in God's world everything honest, good, and true is applicable, and sooner or later will be fulfilled; and not only will be fulfilled, but is already being fulfilled, if each one will only hold himself firmly in his place, will not lose patience, will not desire the impossible, but will act, so far as his strength permits. But I think I have given myself up too much to abstractions. I will defer the continuation of my arguments until another letter; but I do not wish to lay down my pen without having pressed your hand warmly, very warmly, and wished you, with all my soul, everything that is good on earth.

Yours, A. S.

P.S. By the way, you say that you have nothing to look forward to, nothing to hope for; how do you know that, allow me to ask?

XI

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, June 30, 1840.

How grateful I am to you for your letter, Alexyéi Petróvitch! How much good it has done me! I see that you really are a good and trustworthy man, and therefore I shall not dissimulate before you. I trust you. I know that you will not make a bad use of my frankness and that you will give me friendly advice. That is the point.

You noticed at the end of my letter a phrase which did not entirely please you. This is what it referred to. There is a neighbour here ... he was not here in your day, and you have not seen him. He ... I might marry him, if I wished; he is a man who is still young, cultured, wealthy. There are no obstacles on the side of my relatives; on the contrary, they—I know this for certain—desire this marriage; he is a fine man, and I think he loves me.... But he is so languid and petty, all his desires are so narrow, that I cannot help recognising my superiority over him; he feels this, and seems to take delight in it, and precisely that repels me from him; I cannot respect him, although he has an excellent heart. What am I to do, tell me? Think for me and write me your opinion sincerely.

But how grateful I am to you for your letter!... Do you know, I have sometimes been visited by such bitter thoughts.... Do you know, I have gone so far as almost to feel ashamed of every—I will not say exalted—but of every trustful feeling. I have shut my book in vexation when it spoke of hope and happiness; I have turned away from the cloudless sky, from the fresh verdure of the trees, from everything that smiled and was glad. What a painful condition this was! I say "was" ... as though it had passed!

I do not know whether it has passed; I know that if it does not return I shall be indebted to you for it. You see, Alexyéi Petróvitch, how much good you have done, perhaps without yourself

suspecting it! Now, in the very heart of summer, the days are magnificent, the sky is blue, bright.... It cannot be more beautiful in Italy. But you are sitting in a stifling and dusty town, you are walking on the scorching pavements. What possesses you to do it? You ought, at least, to remove to a villa somewhere. They say that beyond Peterhoff, on the seashore, there are charming places.

I should like to write more to you, but it is impossible: such a sweet perfume has been wafted up to me from the garden that I cannot remain in the house. I shall put on my hat and go for a stroll.... Farewell until another time, kind Alexyéi Petróvitch.

Yours truly,
M. B.

P.S. I have forgotten to tell you ... just imagine: that wit, of whom I recently wrote you,—just imagine: he has made me a declaration of love, and in the most fiery terms! At first I thought that he was making fun of me; but he wound up with a formal proposal. What do you think of that, after all his calumnies? But he is positively too old. Last night, to pique him, I sat down at the piano in front of the open window in the moonlight, and played Beethoven. It was so delightful to me to feel its cold light on my face, so consolatory to send forth upon the perfumed night air the noble sounds of music, athwart which, at times, the song of the nightingale was audible! It is a long time since I have been so happy, but do you write to me concerning the thing I asked you about in the beginning of my letter: it is very important.

XII

From Alexyéi Petróvich to Márya Alexándrovna

St. Petersburg, July 8, 1840.

My dear Márya Alexándrovna, here is my opinion in two words: throw both the old bachelor and the young suitor overboard! There's no use in deliberating over this. Neither of them is worthy

of you—that is as clear as that twice two are four. The young neighbour may be a good man, but I throw him over! I am convinced that you and he have nothing in common, and you can imagine how cheerful it would be to live together! And why be in a hurry? Is it possible that a woman like you—I have no intention of paying compliments, and therefore will not enlarge further—that such a woman as you should not meet some one who will know how to appreciate her? No, Márya Alexándrovna; heed me if you really think that my advice is beneficial.

But confess that you found it pleasant to behold that old calumniator at your feet!... If I had been in your place, I would have made him sing Beethoven's "Adelaïda" the whole night through, staring at the moon the while.

But God be with them, with your admirers! It is not of them that I wish to talk with you to-day. I am in a sort of half-irritated, half-agitated condition to-day, as the result of a letter which I received yesterday. I send you a copy of it. This letter was written by one of my very old friends and comrades in the service, a kind-hearted but rather narrow-minded man. A couple of years ago he went abroad, and up to the present he has not written to me a single time. Here is his letter. N.B. He is very far from bad-looking.

"*Cher Alexis*:

"I am in Naples. I am sitting in my chamber on the Chiaja at the window. The weather is wonderful. At first I gazed a long time at the sea, then impatience seized upon me, and the brilliant idea of writing a letter to thee occurred to me. I have always felt an affection for thee, my dear friend,—Heaven is my witness that I have! And now I should like to pour myself into thy bosom.... I believe that is the way it is expressed in our elevated language. And the reason I have been seized with impatience is that I am expecting a woman; together we shall go to Baiæ to eat oysters and oranges, to watch the dark-brown shepherds in red nightcaps dance the tarantella, to broil ourselves in the sunshine, to watch the

lizards—in a word, to enjoy life to the full. My dear friend, I am so happy that I am unable to express it to you. If I possessed thy power with the pen, oh, what a picture I would draw before thine eyes! But, unfortunately, as thou knowest, I am an illiterate man. The woman for whom I am waiting, and who has already made me constantly start and glance at the door, loves me—and as for the way I love her, it seems to me that even thou with thy eloquent pen couldst not describe that.

"I must tell thee that I have known her for the last three months, and ever since the very first day of our acquaintance, my love has gone on *crescendo*, in the shape of a chromatic scale, ever higher and higher, and at the present moment it has already attained to the seventh heaven. I am jesting, but, as a matter of fact, my attachment to that woman is something extraordinary, supernatural. Just imagine: I hardly ever talk with her, but I stare at her incessantly and laugh. I sit at her feet, I feel that I am frightfully stupid and happy, simply unlawfully happy. It sometimes happens that she lays her hand on my head.... And then, I must tell thee, ... but thou canst not understand it; for thou art a philosopher, and have been a philosopher all thy life. Her name is Nina, Ninetta—as thou wilt; she is the daughter of a wealthy merchant here. Beautiful as all thy Raphaels; lively as powder, blithe, so clever that it is positively amazing that she should have fallen in love with such a fool as myself; she sings like a bird, and her eyes—

"Forgive me, pray, for this involuntary tirade.... I thought the door creaked.... No, the rogue has not come yet! Thou wilt ask me how all this is going to end, and what I mean to do with myself, and whether I shall remain here long. I know nothing, and wish to know nothing, about that, my dear fellow. What is to be will be.... For if one is to pause and reason constantly....

"'Tis she!... She is running up the stairs and singing.... She has come.... Well, good-by, my dear fellow.... I'm in no mood for thee. Pardon me—it is she who has spattered this letter all over: she

struck the paper with her damp nosegay. At first she thought I was writing to a woman; but as soon as she found out that it was to a man-friend, she bade me give you her compliments, and inquire whether there are any flowers in your country, and whether they are fragrant. Well, good-by.... If you could only hear how she laughs!... Silver rings just like that: and what goodness in every sound!—One fairly wants to kiss her feet. Let us go, let us go! Be not angry at this untidy scrawl, and envy thy—

M..."

The letter actually was bespattered, and exhaled an odour of orange-flowers ... two white petals had adhered to the paper. This letter has excited me.... I have called to mind my sojourn in Naples.... The weather was magnificent then also; May was only just beginning; I had recently completed my twenty-second year; but I did not know any Ninetta. I roamed about alone, consumed with a thirst for bliss, which was both painful and sweet,—sweet to the point where it itself bore a sort of resemblance to bliss.... What a thing it is to be young!... I remember I once went out for a row on the bay at night. There were two of us: the boatman and I ... but what was it you thought? What a night it was, and what a sky, what stars—how they trembled and crumbled in the waves! With what a liquid flame did the water flow over and flash up under the oars, what perfume was wafted all over the sea—it is not for me to describe, however "eloquent" my pen may be. A French ship of the line lay at anchor in the roadstead. It glowed obscurely red all over with lights; long streaks of red light, the reflection of the illuminated windows, stretched across the dark sea. Merry music reached me in occasional bursts; I recall, in particular, the trill of a small flute amid the dull blaring of the horns; it seemed to flutter like a butterfly around my boat. I ordered the man to row to the ship; twice did we make the circuit of it. Women's forms flitted past the windows, borne smartly past on the whirlwind of the waltz.... I ordered the boatman to put off, far away, straight out into the darkness.... I remember that the sounds pursued me long and importunately.... At last they died away. I stood up in the boat

and stretched out my arms over the sea in the dumb pain of longing.... Oh, how my heart ached then! How oppressive was my loneliness! With what joy would I have given myself at that moment wholly, wholly ... wholly, if only there had been any one to whom to give myself! With what a bitter feeling in my soul did I fling myself, face down, in the bottom of the boat and, like Repetíloff, request him to take me somewhere or other!

But my friend here experienced nothing of that sort. And why should he? He has managed matters much more cleverly than I did. He is living ... while I ... not without cause has he called me a philosopher.... 'Tis strange! You, also, are called a philosopher.... Why should such a calamity overtake us?...

I am not living.... But who is to blame for that? Why do I sit here in Petersburg? What am I doing here? Why do I kill day after day? Why don't I go to the country? Are not our steppes beautiful? Or cannot one breathe freely in them? Or is it stifling in them? What possesses me to pursue dreams, when, perchance, happiness is within my reach? It is settled: I am going away, I am going away to-morrow, if possible; I am going home, that is, to you—it is all the same: for we live only twenty versts apart. What's the use, after all, in languishing here? And why is it that this idea did not occur to me earlier? My dear Márya Alexándrovna, we shall soon meet. But it is remarkable that this thought did not enter my head until this moment! I ought to have gone away long, long ago. Farewell until we meet, Márya Alexándrovna.

July 9th.

I have deliberately given myself twenty-four hours to think it over, and now I am definitively convinced that there is no reason why I should remain here. The dust in the streets is so biting that it makes one's eyes ache. To-day I shall begin to pack; on the day after to-morrow, probably, I shall leave here; and ten days hence I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope you will receive me as of old. By the way—your sister is still visiting your aunt, is she not?

Permit me, Márya Alexándrovna, to press your hand warmly, and to say to you from my soul: farewell until a speedy meeting. I was preparing to leave in any case, but this letter has precipitated my intention. Let us assume that this letter proves nothing; let us even assume that Ninetta would not please any one else—me, for example. Yet I am going, all the same; there is no doubt about that. Farewell for the present.

Yours, A. S.

XIII

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, July 16, 1840.

You are coming hither, you will soon be with us, will you not, Alexyéi Petróvitch? I will not conceal from you that this news both delights and agitates me.... How shall we meet? Will that spiritual bond be preserved which, so it seems to me, has already begun to unite us? Will it not break when we meet? I do not know; I am apprehensive, for some reason or other. I will not answer your last letter, although I might say a good deal; I will defer all this until we meet. My mother is greatly delighted at your coming.... She has been aware that I was corresponding with you. The weather is enchanting. We will walk a great deal; I will show you the new places which I have discovered ... one long, narrow valley is particularly nice: it lies between hillocks, covered with forest.... It seems to be hiding in their curves. A tiny brook blows along it and can barely force its way through the grass and flowers.... You shall see. Come: perhaps you will not find it tedious.

M. B.

P.S. You will not see my sister, I think: she is still visiting my aunt. I believe (this is between ourselves) that she is going to marry a very amiable young man—an officer. Why did you send me that letter from Naples? The life here perforce seems dim and pale in

comparison with that luxury and that brilliancy. But Mademoiselle Ninetta is wrong: flowers grow and are fragrant—even with us.

XIV

From Márya Alexándrovna to Alexyéi Petróvitch

Village of ... no, January, 1841.

I have written to you several times, Alexyéi Petróvitch.... You have not answered me. Are you alive? Or perhaps our correspondence has begun to bore you; perhaps you have found for yourself a more agreeable diversion than the letters of a rustic young lady can afford you? Evidently you called me to mind for the lack of something to do. If that is the case, I wish you happiness. If you do not answer me this time, I shall not trouble you again; there will be nothing left for me to do but to regret my imprudence, that I have unnecessarily permitted myself to be roused up, have offered my hand and emerged, if only for a moment, from my isolated nook. I ought to remain in it forever, lock myself in—that is my portion, the portion of all old maids. I ought to accustom myself to that thought. There is no necessity for coming out into God's sunlight, no necessity for craving fresh air, when the lungs will not bear it. By the way, we are now blocked up with dead drifts of snow. I shall be more sensible henceforth.... People do not die of boredom, but it is possible to perish with melancholy, I suppose. If I am mistaken, prove it to me. But I think I am not mistaken. In any case, farewell. I wish you happiness.

M. B.

XV

From Alexyéi Petróvitch to Márya Alexándrovna

Dresden, September, 1842.

I write to you, my dear Márya Alexándrovna, and I write only because I do not wish to die without having taken leave of you, and without having recalled myself to your mind. I am condemned by the doctors ... and I myself feel that my life is drawing to a close. On my table stands a rose; before it fades I shall be no more. But that comparison is not quite just. The rose is far more interesting than I am.

As you see, I am abroad. I have been in Dresden six months. I received your last letters—I am ashamed to confess: I lost several of them more than a year ago, and did not answer you.... I will tell you presently why. But, evidently, you have always been dear to me: with the exception of yourself, there is no one of whom I wish to take leave, and perhaps I have no one to whom I could bid farewell.

Soon after my last letter to you (I was quite ready to set out for your parts, and was making various plans in advance), there happened to me an episode which had, I may say, a strong influence on my fate,—so strong that here I am, dying, thanks to that event. To wit: I set out for the theatre, to see the ballet. I have never liked the ballet, and have always felt a secret disgust for all sorts of actresses, singers, and dancers.... But, obviously, one cannot change his fate, neither does any one know himself, and it is also impossible to foresee the future. In point of fact, nothing happens in life except the unexpected, and we do nothing all our life long but adjust ourselves to events.... But I believe I am dropping into philosophy again. Old habit!... In a word, I fell in love with a dancer.

This was all the more strange because she could not be called a beauty. She had, it is true, wonderful golden hair, with an ash tinge, and large, bright eyes, with a pensive and, at the same time, a bold glance.... Haven't I cause to know the expression of that glance? I pined and languished for a whole year in its rays! She had a splendid figure, and when she danced her folkdance, the spectators used to stamp and shout with rapture.... But I do not

think any one besides myself fell in love with her—at all events, no one fell in love with her as I did. From the very minute that I beheld her for the first time—(will you believe it? all I have to do even now is to shut my eyes, and immediately here stands before me the theatre, the almost empty stage, representing the interior of a forest, and she runs out from behind the side-scenes on the right, with a wreath of vine-leaves on her head and a tiger-skin over her shoulders)—from that fatal minute I belonged to her wholly,—just as a dog belongs to his master; and if now, when I am dying, I do not belong to her, it is merely because she has cast me off.

To tell the truth, she never troubled herself especially about me. She barely noticed me, although she good-naturedly made use of my money. I was for her, as she expressed it in her broken French jargon, "*oun Rousso buon enfan*,"—and nothing more. But I ... I could no longer live anywhere where she was not; I tore myself at one wrench from all that was dear to me, from my native land itself, and set out in pursuit of that woman.

Perhaps you think that she was clever?—Not in the least! It sufficed to cast a glance at her low brow, it sufficed to note, if only once, her lazy, heedless smile, in order instantly to convince one's self as to the paucity of her mental abilities. And I never imagined her to be a remarkable woman. On the whole, I did not deceive myself for a single minute on her score. But that did not help matters in the least. Whatever I thought of her in her absence, in her presence I felt nothing but servile adoration.... In the German fairytales the knights often fall into that sort of stupor. I could not tear my eyes from her features; I could not hear enough of her remarks, or sufficiently watch every movement of hers; to tell the truth, I actually breathed to her breathing. However, she was good-natured, unconstrained—too unconstrained even; she did not put on airs, as the majority of artists do. She had a great deal of life, that is, a great deal of blood, of that splendid Southern blood, into which the sun of their land must have dropped a portion of his rays. She slept nine hours a day, was fond of good eating, never read a single line of print, unless, perhaps, the articles in the

newspapers in which she was mentioned, and almost the sole tender sentiment in her life was her attachment to il signore Carlino, a small and greedy Italian who served as her secretary and whom she afterward married. And with such a woman as this I, who have tasted so many varied intellectual subtleties, I, already an old man, could fall in love! Who could have expected it? I never expected it, at all events. I did not anticipate the part which I should be compelled to play. I did not expect that I should haunt rehearsals, freeze and get bored behind the scenes, inhale the reek of the theatre, make acquaintance with various unseemly individuals ... what am I saying?—make acquaintance—bow to them. I had not expected that I should carry a dancer's shawl, buy new gloves for her, clean her old ones with white bread (but I did it, I take my oath!), cart home her bouquets, run about to the anterooms of journalists and directors, wear myself out, give serenades, catch cold, lose my strength.... I had not expected that I should acquire at last in a certain little German town the ingenious nickname of "*der Kunst-barbar*."... And all this in vain—in the fullest sense of the word, in vain! There, that is precisely the state of the case....

Do you remember how you and I, orally and by letter, argued about love, into what subtleties we entered? And when it is put to the proof, it turns out that real love is a feeling not at all resembling that which we imagined it to be. Love is not even a feeling at all; it is a malady, a well-known condition of the soul and body. It does not develop gradually; there is no possibility of doubting it; one cannot dodge it, although it does not always manifest itself in identically the same fashion. It generally takes possession of a man without being invited, suddenly, against his will—precisely like the cholera or a fever.... It lays hold upon him, the dear creature, as a hawk does upon a chicken; and it will bear him off whithersoever it wishes, struggle and resist as he may.... In love there is no equality, no so-called free union of souls and other ideal things, invented at their leisure by German professors.... No; in love one person is the slave, the other is the sovereign, and not without

cause do the poets prate of the chains imposed by love. Yes, love is a chain, and the heaviest of chains at that. At all events, I have arrived at that conviction, and have reached it by the path of experience. I have purchased that conviction at the price of my life, because I am dying a slave.

Alack, what a fate is mine! one thinks. In my youth I was resolutely determined to conquer heaven for myself.... Later on, I fell to dreaming about the welfare of all mankind, the prosperity of my fatherland. Then that passed off: I thought only of how I might arrange my domestic, my family life ... and I tripped over an ant-hill—and flop! I went headlong on the ground, and into the grave.... What master hands we Russians are at winding up in that fashion!

However, it is high time for me to turn away from all this,—it was time long ago! May this burden fall from my soul along with my life! I wish for the last time, if only for a moment, to enjoy that good, gentle feeling which is diffused within me like a tranquil light as soon as I call you to mind. Your image is now doubly dear to me.... Along with it there surges up before me the image of my native land, and I waft to it and to you my last greeting. Live on, live long and happily, and remember one thing: whether you remain in that remote nook of the steppes, where you sometimes find things so painful, but where I should so like to spend my last

day, or whether you shall enter upon another career, remember: life fails to disappoint him alone who does not meditate upon it, and, demanding nothing from it, calmly accepts its sparse gifts, and calmly makes use of them. Go forward, while you can: but when your feet fail you,—sit down near the road, and gaze at the passers-by without vexation and without envy: for they will not go far! I have said this to you before, but death will teach any man whomsoever; moreover, who shall say what is life, what is truth? Remember *who* it was that gave no answer to this question.... Farewell, Márya Alexándrovna; farewell for the last time, and bear no ill will to poor—

Alexyéi.

THE REGION OF DEAD CALM

(1854)

I

IN a fairly-large recently-whitewashed chamber of a wing of the manor-house in the village of Sásovo, *** county, T*** Government, a young man in a paletot was sitting at a small, warped table, looking over accounts. Two stearine candles, in silver travelling-candlesticks, were burning in front of him; in one corner, on the wall-bench, stood an open bottle-case, in another a servant was setting up an iron bed. On the other side of a low partition a samovár was murmuring and hissing; a dog was nestling about on some hay which had just been brought in. In the doorway stood a peasant-man in a new overcoat girt with a red belt, with a large beard, and an intelligent face—the overseer, judging by all the tokens. He was gazing attentively at the seated young man.

Against one wall stood a very aged, tiny piano; beside it an equally-ancient chest of drawers with holes in place of the locks; between the windows a small, dim mirror was visible; on the partition-wall hung an old portrait, which was almost completely peeled off, representing a woman with powdered hair, in a *robe ronde*, and with a black ribbon about her slender neck. Judging from the very perceptible sagging of the ceiling, and the slope of the floor, which was full of cracks, the little wing into which we have conducted the reader had existed for a very long time. No one lived in it permanently; it was put to use when the owners came. The young man who was sitting at the table was the owner of the village of Sásovo. He had arrived only on the previous day from his principal estate, situated a hundred versts[11] distant, and was preparing to depart on the morrow, after completing the inspection of the farming, listening to the demands of the peasants, and verifying all the documents.

"Well, that will do,"—he said, raising his head;—"I am tired. Thou mayest go now,"—he added, turning to the overseer;—"and come very early to-morrow morning, and notify the peasants at daybreak that they are to present themselves in assembly,—dost hear me?"

"I obey."

"And order the estate-clerk to present to me the report for the last month. But thou hast done well,"—the gentleman went on, casting a glance around him,—"in whitewashing the walls. Everything seems cleaner."

The overseer silently swept a glance around the walls also.

"Well, go now."

The overseer made his obeisance and left the room.

The gentleman stretched himself.

"Hey!"—he shouted,—"Give me some tea!... 'Tis time to go to bed."

His servant went to the other side of the partition, and speedily returned with a glass of tea, a bundle of town cracknels, and a cream-jug on an iron tray. The gentleman began to drink tea, but before he had had time to swallow two mouthfuls, the noise of persons entering resounded from an adjoining room, and some one's squeaking voice inquired:

"Is Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff at home? Can he be seen?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch (that was the name of the young man in the paletot) cast a glance of surprise at his man, and said in a hurried whisper:

"Go, find out who it is."

The man withdrew, slamming behind him the door, which closed badly.

"Announce to Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—rang out the same squeaking voice as before,—"that his neighbour Ipátoff wishes to see him, if it will not incommode him; and another neighbour has come with me, Bodryakóff, Iván Ílitch, who also desires to pay his respects."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made an involuntary gesture of vexation. Nevertheless, when his man entered the room, he said to him:

"Ask them in." And he arose to receive his visitors.

The door opened, and the visitors made their appearance. One of them, a robust, grey-haired little old man, with a small, round head and bright little eyes, walked in advance; the other, a tall, thin man of three-and-thirty, with a long, swarthy face and dishevelled hair, walked behind, with a shambling gait. The old man wore a neat grey coat with large, mother-of-pearl buttons; a small, pink neckerchief, half concealed by the rolling collar of his white shirt, loosely encircled his neck; his feet shone resplendent in gaiters; the plaids of his Scotch trousers were agreeably gay in hue; and, altogether, he produced a pleasant impression. His companion, on the contrary, evoked in the spectator a less favourable sensation: he wore an old black dress-coat, buttoned up to the throat; his full trousers, of thick, winter tricot, matched his coat in colour; no linen was visible, either around his throat or around his wrists. The little old man was the first to approach Vladímir Sergyéitch, and, with an amiable inclination of the head, he began in the same shrill little voice:

"I have the honour to introduce myself,—your nearest neighbour, and even a relative, Ipátoff, Mikhaílo Nikoláitch. I have long wished to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. I hope that I have not disturbed you."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied that he was very glad to see him, and that he was not disturbed in the least, and would not he take a seat ... and drink tea.

"And this nobleman,"—went on the little old man, after listening with a courteous smile to Vladímir Sergyéitch's unfinished phrases, and extending his hand in the direction of the gentleman in the dress-coat,—"also your neighbour ... and my good acquaintance, Iván Ílitch, strongly desired to make your acquaintance."

The gentleman in the dress-coat, from whose countenance no one would have suspected that he was capable of desiring anything strongly in his life—so preoccupied and, at the same time, so sleepy was the expression of that countenance,—the gentleman in the dress-coat bowed clumsily and languidly. Vladímir Sergyéitch bowed to him in return, and again invited the visitors to be seated.

The visitors sat down.

"I am very glad,"—began the little old man, pleasantly throwing apart his hands, while his companion set to scrutinising the ceiling, with his mouth slightly open:—"I am very glad that I have, at last, the honour of seeing you personally. Although you have your permanent residence in a county which lies at a considerable distance from these localities, still, we regard you also as one of our own primordial landed proprietors, so to speak."

"That is very flattering to me,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Flattering or not, it is a fact. You must excuse us, Vladímir Sergyéitch; we people here in *** county are a straightforward folk; we live in our simplicity; we say what we think, without circumlocution. It is our custom, I must tell you, not to call upon each other on Name-days[12] otherwise than in our frock-coats. Truly! We have made that the rule. On that account, we are called 'frock-coaters' in the adjoining counties, and we are even reproached for our bad style; but we pay no attention to that! Pray, what is the use of living in the country—and then standing on ceremony?"

"Of course, what can be better ... in the country ... than that naturalness of intercourse,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And yet,"—replied the little old man,—"among us in our county dwell people of the cleverest sort,—one may say people of European culture, although they do not wear dress-suits. Take, for example, our historian Evsiukóff, Stepán Stepánitch: he is interesting himself in Russian history from the most ancient times, and is known in Petersburg—an extremely learned man! There is in our town an ancient Swedish cannon-ball ... 'tis placed yonder, in the centre of the public square ... and 'twas he who discovered it, you know! Certainly! Tzénteler, Antón Kárlitch ... now he has studied natural history; but they say all Germans are successful in that line. When, ten years ago, a stray hyena was killed in our vicinity, it was this Antón Kárlitch who discovered that it really was a hyena, by cause of the peculiar construction of its tail. And then, we have a landed proprietor Kaburdín: he chiefly writes light articles; he wields a very dashing pen; his articles appear in 'Galatea.' Bodryakóff, ... not Iván Ílitch; no, Iván Ílitch neglects that; but another Bodryakóff, Sergyéi ... what the deuce was his father's baptismal name, Iván Ílitch ... what the deuce was it?"

"Sergyéitch,"—prompted Iván Ílitch.

"Yes; Sergyéi Sergyéitch,—he busies himself with writing verses. Well, of course he's not a Púshkin, but sometimes he gets off things which would pass muster even in the capitals. Do you know his epigram on Agéi Fómitch?"

"What Agéi Fómitch?"

"Akh, pardon me; I keep forgetting that you are not a resident here, after all. He is our chief of police. The epigram is extremely amusing. Thou rememberest it, I believe, Iván Ílitch?"

"Agéi Fómitch,"—said Bodryakóff, indifferently—

" ... not without cause is gloriously
By the nobles' election honoured...."

"I must tell you,"—broke in Ipátoff,—"that he was elected almost exclusively by white balls, for he is a most worthy man."

"Agéi Fómitch,"—repeated Bodryakóff,

" ... not without cause is gloriously
By the nobles' election honoured:
He drinks and eats regularly....
So why should not he be the regulator of order?"[13]

The little old man burst out laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! that isn't bad, is it? Ever since then, if you'll believe me, each one of us will say, for instance, to Agéi Fómitch: 'Good morning!'—and will invariably add: 'so why should not he be the regulator of order?' And does Agéi Fómitch get angry, think you? Not in the least. No—that's not our way. Just ask Iván Ílitch here if it is."

Iván Ílitch merely rolled up his eyes.

"Get angry at a jest—how is that possible? Now, take Iván Ílitch there; his nickname among us is 'The Folding Soul,' because he agrees to everything very promptly. What then? Does Iván Ílitch take offence at that? Never!"

Iván Ílitch, slowly blinking his eyes, looked first at the little old man, then at Vladímir Sergyéitch.

The epithet, "The Folding Soul," really did fit Iván Ílitch admirably. There was not a trace in him of what is called will or character. Any one who wished could lead him whithersoever he would; all that was necessary was to say to him: "Come on, Iván Ílitch!"—and he picked up his cap and went; but if another person turned up, and said to him: "Halt, Iván Ílitch!"—he laid down his cap and remained. He was of a peaceable, tranquil disposition, had lived a bachelor-life, did not play cards, but was fond of sitting beside the players and looking into each of their faces in turn. Without society he could not exist, and solitude he could not endure. At such times he became despondent; however, this happened very rarely with him. He had another peculiarity: rising from his bed betimes in the morning, he would sing in an undertone an old romance:

"In the country once a Baron
Dwelt in simplicity rural...."

In consequence of this peculiarity of Iván Ílitch's, he was also called "The Hawfinch," because, as is well known, the hawfinch when in captivity sings only once in the course of the day, early in the morning. Such was Iván Ílitch Bodryakóff.

The conversation between Ipátoff and Vladímir Sergyéitch lasted for quite a long time, but not in its original, so to speak, speculative direction. The little old man questioned Vladímir Sergyéitch about his estate, the condition of his forests and other sorts of land, the improvements which he had already introduced or was only intending to introduce in his farming; he imparted to him several of his own observations; advised him, among other things, in order to get rid of hummocky pastures, to sprinkle them with oats, which, he said, would induce the pigs to plough them up with their snouts, and so forth. But, at last, perceiving that Vladímir Sergyéitch was so sleepy that he could hardly keep his eyes open, and that a certain deliberation and incoherence were making themselves evident in his speech, the little old man rose, and, with a courteous obeisance, declared that he would not incommode him any longer with his presence, but that he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing the valued guest at his own house not later than the following day, at dinner.

"And the first person you meet, not to mention any small child, but, so to speak, any hen or peasant-woman,"—he added,—"will point out to you the road to my village. All you have to do is to ask for Ipátoff. The horses will trot there of themselves."

Vladímir Sergyéitch replied with a little hesitation—which, however, was natural to him—that he would try ... that if nothing prevented....

"Yes, we shall certainly expect you,"—the little old man interrupted him, cordially, shook his hand warmly, and briskly withdrew, exclaiming in the doorway, as he half turned round:—"Without ceremony!"

“Folding Soul” Bodryakóff bowed in silence and vanished in the wake of his companion, with a preliminary stumble on the threshold.

Having seen his unexpected guests off, Vladímir Sergyéitch immediately undressed, got into bed, and went to sleep.

Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff belonged to the category of people who, after having cautiously tested their powers in two or three different careers, are wont to say of themselves that they have finally come to the conclusion to look at life from a practical point of view, and who devote their leisure to augmenting their revenues. He was not stupid, was rather penurious, and very sensible; was fond of reading, of society, of music—but all in moderation ... and bore himself very decorously. He was twenty-seven years old. A great many young men of his sort have sprung up recently. He was of medium height, well built, and had agreeable though small features; their expression almost never varied; his eyes always gleamed with one and the same stern, bright glance; only now and then did this glance soften with a faint shade of something which was not precisely sadness, nor yet precisely boredom; a courteous smile rarely quitted his lips. He had very handsome, fair hair, silky, and falling in long ringlets. Vladímir Sergyéitch owned about six hundred souls[14] on a good estate, and he was thinking of marriage—a marriage of inclination, but which should, at the same time, be advantageous. He was particularly desirous of finding a wife with powerful connections. In a word, he merited the appellation of “gentleman” which had recently come into vogue.

When he rose on the following morning, very early, according to his wont, our gentleman occupied himself with business, and, we must do him the justice to say, did so in a decidedly practical manner, which cannot always be said of practical young men among us in Russia. He patiently listened to the confused petitions and complaints of the peasants, gave them satisfaction so far as he was able, investigated the quarrels and dissensions which had

arisen between relatives, exhorted some, scolded others, audited the clerk's accounts, brought to light two or three rascalities on the part of the overseer—in a word, handled matters in such wise that he was very well satisfied with himself, and the peasants, as they returned from the assembly to their homes, spoke well of him.

In spite of his promise given on the preceding evening to Ipátoff, Vladímir Sergyéitch had made up his mind to dine at home, and had even ordered his travelling-cook to prepare his favourite rice-soup with pluck; but all of a sudden, possibly in consequence of that feeling of satisfaction which had filled his soul ever since the early morning, he stopped short in the middle of the room, smote himself on the brow with his hand, and, not without some spirit, exclaimed aloud: "I believe I'll go to that flowery old babbler!" No sooner said than done; half an hour later he was sitting in his new tarantás, drawn by four stout peasant-horses, and driving to Ipátoff's house, which was reckoned to be not more than twenty-five versts distant by a capital road.

II

Mikhaílo Nikoláevitch Ipátoff's manor consisted of two separate small mansions, built opposite each other on the two sides of a huge pond through which ran a river. A long dam, planted with silver poplars, shut off the pond; almost on a level with it the red roof of a small hand-mill was visible. Built exactly alike, and painted with the same lilac hue, the tiny houses seemed to be exchanging glances across the broad, watery expanse, with the glittering panes of their small, clean windows. From the middle of each little house a circular terrace projected, and a sharp-peaked pediment rose aloft, supported by four white pillars set close together. The ancient park ran all the way round the pond; lindens stretched out in alleys, and stood in dense clumps; aged pine-trees, with pale yellow boles, dark oaks, magnificent maples here and there reared high in air their solitary crests; the dense verdure of the thickly-spreading lilacs and acacias advanced close up to the very sides of the two little houses, leaving revealed only their fronts, from which winding paths paved with brick ran down the slope. Motley-hued ducks, white and grey geese were swimming in separate flocks on the clear water of the pond; it never became covered with scum, thanks to abundant springs which welled into its "head" from the base of the steep, rocky ravine. The situation of the manor was good, pleasant, isolated, and beautiful.

In one of the two little houses dwelt Mikhaíl Nikoláevitch himself; in the other lived his mother, a decrepit old woman of seventy years. When he drove on to the dam, Vladímir Sergyéitch did not know to which house to betake himself. He glanced about him: a small urchin of the house-serfs was fishing, as he stood barefooted on a half-rotten tree-stump. Vladímir Sergyéitch hailed him.

"But to whom are you going—to the old lady or to the young master?"—replied the urchin, without taking his eyes from his float.

"What lady?"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"I want to find Mikhaílo Nikoláitch."

"Ah! the young master? Well, then, turn to the right."

And the lad gave his line a jerk, and drew from the motionless water a small, silvery carp. Vladímir Sergyéitch drove to the right.

Mikhaíl Nikoláitch was playing at draughts with The Folding Soul when the arrival of Vladímir Sergyéitch was announced to him. He was delighted, sprang from his arm-chair, ran out into the anteroom and there kissed the visitor three times.

"You find me with my invariable friend, Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—began the loquacious little old man:—"with Iván Ílitch, who, I will remark in passing, is completely enchanted with your affability." (Iván Ílitch darted a silent glance at the corner.) "He was so kind as to remain to play draughts with me, while all my household went for a stroll in the park; but I will send for them at once...."

"But why disturb them?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch tried to expostulate....

"Not the least inconvenience, I assure you. Hey, there, Vánka, run for the young ladies as fast as thou canst ... tell them that a guest has favoured us with a visit. And how does this locality please you? It's not bad, is it? Kaburdín has composed some verses about it. 'Ipátovka, refuge lovely'—that's the way they begin,—and the rest of it is just as good, only I don't remember all of it. The park is large, that's the trouble; beyond my means. And these two houses, which are so much alike, as you have, perhaps, deigned to observe, were erected by two brothers—my father Nikolái, and my uncle Sergyéi; they also laid out the park; they were exemplary friends ... Damon and ... there now! I've forgotten the other man's name...."

"Pythion,"—remarked Iván Ílitch.

"Not really? Well, never mind." (At home the old man talked in a much more unconventional manner than when he was paying calls.)—"You are, probably, not ignorant of the fact, Vladímir Sergyéitch, that I am a widower, that I have lost my wife; my elder children are in government educational institutions,[15] and I have

with me only the youngest two, and my sister-in-law lives with me—my wife's sister; you will see her directly. But why don't I offer you some refreshment? Iván Ílitch, my dear fellow, see to a little luncheon ... what sort of vodka are you pleased to prefer?"

"I drink nothing until dinner."

"Goodness, how is that possible! However, as you please. The truest hospitality is to let the guest do as he likes. We are very simple-mannered folk here, you see. Here with us, if I may venture so to express myself, we live not so much in a lonely as in a dead-calm place, a remote nook—that's what! But why don't you sit down?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch seated himself, without letting go of his hat.

"Permit me to relieve you,"—said Ipátoff, and delicately taking his hat from him, he carried it off to a corner, then returned, looked his visitor in the eye with a cordial smile, and, not knowing just what agreeable thing to say to him, inquired, in the most hearty manner,—whether he was fond of playing draughts.

"I play all games badly,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"And that's a very fine thing in you,"—returned Ipátoff:—"but draughts is not a game, but rather a diversion—a way of passing leisure time; isn't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch cast an indifferent glance at Ipátoff, as though he were thinking to himself, "The devil only knows whether it is a game or a diversion," but, after waiting a while, he said:

"Yes; draughts don't count."

"Chess is quite another matter, they say,"—pursued Ipátoff;—"'tis a very difficult game, I'm told. But, in my opinion ... but yonder come my people!"—he interrupted himself, glancing through the half-open glass door, which gave upon the park.

Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, turned round, and beheld first two little girls, about ten years of age, in pink cotton frocks and

broad-brimmed hats, who were running alertly up the steps of the terrace; not far behind them a tall, plump, well-built young girl of twenty, in a dark gown, made her appearance. They all entered the house, and the little girls courtesied sedately to the visitor.

"Here, sir, let me present you,"—said the host;—"my daughters, sir. This one here is named Kátya, and this one is Nástya, and this is my sister-in-law, Márya Pávlovna, whom I have already had the pleasure of mentioning to you. I beg that you will love and favour them."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow to Márya Pávlovna; she replied to him with a barely perceptible inclination of the head.

Márya Pávlovna held in her hand a large, open knife; her thick, ruddy-blond hair was slightly dishevelled,—a small green leaf had got entangled in it, her braids had escaped from the comb,—her dark-skinned face was flushed, and her red lips were parted; her gown looked crumpled. She was breathing fast; her eyes were sparkling; it was evident that she had been working in the garden. She immediately left the room; the little girls ran out after her.

"She's going to rearrange her toilet a bit,"—remarked the old man, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"they can't get along without that, sir!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch grinned at him in response, and became somewhat pensive. Márya Pávlovna had made an impression on him. It was long since he had seen such a purely Russian beauty of the steppes. She speedily returned, sat down on the divan, and remained motionless. She had smoothed her hair, but had not changed her gown,—had not even put on cuffs. Her features expressed not precisely pride, but rather austerity, almost harshness; her brow was broad and low, her nose short and straight; a slow, lazy smile curled her lips from time to time; her straight eyebrows contracted scornfully. She kept her large, dark eyes almost constantly lowered. "I know," her repellent young face seemed to be saying; "I know that you are all looking at me; well, then, look; you bore me." But when she raised her eyes, there was

something wild, beautiful, and stolid about them, which was suggestive of the eyes of a doe. She had a magnificent figure. A classical poet would have compared her to Ceres or Juno.

"What have you been doing in the garden?"—Ipátoff asked her, being desirous of bringing her into the conversation.

"I have been cutting off dead branches, and digging up the flower-beds," she replied, in a voice which was rather low, but agreeable and resonant.

"And are you tired?"

"The children are; I am not."

"I know,"—interposed the old man, with a smile;—"thou art a regular Bobélina! And have you been to grandmamma's?"

"Yes; she is asleep."

"Are you fond of flowers?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked her.

"Yes."

"Why dost thou not put on thy hat when thou goest out of doors?"—Ipátoff remarked to her.—"Just see how red and sunburned thou art."

She silently passed her hand over her face. Her hands were not large, but rather broad, and decidedly red. She did not wear gloves.

"And are you fond of gardening?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch put another question to her.

"Yes."

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to narrate what a fine garden there was in his neighbourhood, belonging to a wealthy landed proprietor named N***.—The head gardener, a German, received in wages alone two thousand rubles, silver[16]—he said, among other things.

"And what is the name of that gardener?"—inquired Iván Ílitch, suddenly.

"I don't remember,—Meyer or Müller, I think. But why do you ask?"

"For no reason in particular, sir,"—replied Iván Ílitch.—"To find out his name."

Vladímir Sergyéitch continued his narration. The little girls, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch's daughters, entered, sat down quietly, and quietly began to listen....

A servant made his appearance at the door, had announced that Egór Kapítonitch had arrived.

"Ah! Ask him in, ask him in!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.

There entered a short, fat little old man, one of the sort of people who are called squat or dumpy, with a puffy and, at the same time, a wrinkled little face, after the fashion of a baked apple. He wore a grey hussar jacket with black braiding and a standing collar; his full coffee-coloured velveteen trousers ended far above his ankles.

"Good morning, my most respected Egór Kapítonitch,"—exclaimed Ipátoff, advancing to meet him.—"We haven't seen each other for a long time."

"Couldn't be helped,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch in a lisping and whining voice, after having preliminarily exchanged salutations with all present;—"surely you know, Mikhaíl Sergyéitch, whether I am a free man or not?"

"And how are you not a free man, Egór Kapítonitch?"

"Why, of course I'm not, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch; there's my family, my affairs.... And there's Matryóna Márkovna to boot," and he waved his hand in despair.

"But what about Matryóna Márkovna?"

And Ipátoff launched a slight wink at Vladímir Sergyéitch, as though desirous of exciting his interest in advance.

"Why, everybody knows,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch, as he took a seat;—"she's always discontented with me, don't you know that? Whatever I say, it's wrong, not delicate, not decorous. And why it isn't decorous, the Lord God alone knows. And the young ladies, my daughters that is to say, do the same, taking pattern by their mother. I don't say but what Matryóna Márkovna is a very fine woman, but she's awfully severe on the score of manners."

"But, good gracious! in what way are your manners bad, Egór Kapítonitch?"

"That's exactly what I'd like to know myself; but, evidently, she's hard to suit. Yesterday, for instance, I said at table: 'Matryóna Márkovna,'" and Egór Kapítonitch imparted to his voice an insinuating inflection,—"'Matryóna Márkovna,' says I, 'what's the meaning of this,—that Aldóshka isn't careful with the horses, doesn't know how to drive?' says I; 'there's the black stallion quite foundered.'—I-iikh! how Matryóna Márkovna did flare up, and set to crying shame on me: 'Thou dost not know how to express thyself decently in the society of ladies,' says she; and the young ladies instantly galloped away from the table, and on the next day, the Biriúloff young ladies, my wife's nieces, had heard all about it. And how had I expressed myself badly? And no matter what I say—and sometimes I really am incautious,—no matter to whom I say it, especially at home,—those Biriúloff girls know all about it the next day. A fellow simply doesn't know what to do. Sometimes I'm just sitting so, thinking after my fashion,—I breathe hard, as perhaps you know,—and Matryóna Márkovna sets to berating me again: 'Don't snore,' says she; 'nobody snores nowadays!'—'What art thou scolding about, Matryóna Márkovna?' says I. 'Good mercy, thou shouldst have compassion, but thou scoldest.' So I don't meditate at home any more. I sit and look down—so—all the time. By Heaven, I do. And then, again, not long ago, we got into bed; 'Matryóna Márkovna,' says I, 'what makes thee spoil thy

page-boy, mátushka?[17] Why, he's a regular little pig,' says I, 'and he might wash his face of a Sunday, at least.' And what happened? It strikes me that I said it distantly, tenderly, but I didn't hit the mark even then; Matryóna Márkovna began to cry shame on me again: 'Thou dost not understand how to behave in the society of ladies,' says she; and the next day the Biriúloff girls knew all about it. What time have I to think of visits under such circumstances, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch?"

"I'm amazed at what you tell me,"—replied Ipátoff;—"I did not expect that from Matryóna Márkovna. Apparently, she is...."

"An extremely fine woman,"—put in Egór Kapítonitch;—"a model wife and mother, so to speak, only strict on the score of manners. She says that *ensemble* is necessary in everything, and that I haven't got it. I don't speak French, as you are aware, I only understand it. But what's that *ensemble* that I haven't got?"

Ipátoff, who was not very strong in French himself, only shrugged his shoulders.

"And how are your children—your sons, that is to say?"—he asked Egór Kapítonitch after a brief pause.

Egór Kapítonitch darted an oblique glance at him.

"My sons are all right. I'm satisfied with them. The girls have got out of hand, but I'm satisfied with my sons. Lyólya discharges his service well, his superior officers approve of him; that Lyólya of mine is a clever fellow. Well, Míkhetz—he's not like that; he has turned out some sort of a philanthropist."

"Why a philanthropist?"

"The Lord knows; he speaks to nobody, he shuns folks. Matryóna Márkovna mostly abashes him. 'Why dost thou take pattern by thy father?' she says to him. 'Do thou respect him, but copy thy mother as to manners.' He'll get straightened out, he'll turn out all right also."

Vladímir Sergyéitch asked Ipátoff to introduce him to Egór Kapítonitch. They entered into conversation. Márya Pávlovna did not take part in it; Iván Ílitch seated himself beside her, and said two words, in all, to her; the little girls came up to him, and began to narrate something to him in a whisper.... The housekeeper entered, a gaunt old woman, with her head bound up in a dark kerchief, and announced that dinner was ready. All wended their way to the dining-room.

The dinner lasted for quite a long time. Ipátoff kept a good cook, and ordered pretty good wines, not from Moscow, but from the capital of the government. Ipátoff lived at his ease, as the saying goes. He did not own more than three hundred souls, but he was not in debt to any one, and had brought his estate into order. At table, the host himself did the greater part of the talking; Egór Kapítonitch chimed in, but did not forget himself, at the same time; he ate and drank gloriously. Márya Pávlovna preserved unbroken silence, only now and then replying with half-smiles to the hurried remarks of the two little girls, who sat one on each side of her. They were, evidently, very fond of her. Vladímir Sergyéitch made several attempts to enter into conversation with her, but without particular success. Folding Soul Bodryakóff even ate indolently and languidly. After dinner all went out on the terrace to drink coffee. The weather was magnificent; from the garden was wafted the sweet perfume of the lindens, which were then in full flower; the summer air, slightly cooled by the thick shade of the trees, and the humidity of the adjacent pond, breathed forth a sort of caressing warmth. Suddenly, from behind the poplars of the dam, the trampling of a horse's hoofs became audible, and a moment later, a horsewoman made her appearance in a long riding-habit and a grey hat, mounted on a bay horse; she was riding at a gallop; a page was galloping behind her, on a small, white cob.

"Ah!"—exclaimed Ipátoff,—"Nadézhda Alexyéevna is coming. What a pleasant surprise!"

"Alone?"—asked Márya Pávlovna, who up to that moment had been standing motionless in the doorway.

"Alone.... Evidently, something has detained Piótr Alexyéevitch."

Márya Pávlovna darted a sidelong glance from beneath her brows, a flush overspread her face, and she turned away.

In the meantime, the horsewoman had ridden through the wicket-gate into the garden, galloped up to the terrace, and sprang lightly to the ground, without waiting either for her groom or for Ipátoff, who had started to meet her. Briskly gathering up the train of her riding-habit, she ran up the steps, and springing upon the terrace, exclaimed blithely:

"Here I am!"

"Welcome!"—said Ipátoff.—"How unexpected, how charming this is! Allow me to kiss your hand...."

"Certainly,"—returned the visitor; "only, you must pull off the glove yourself.—I cannot." And, extending her hand to him, she nodded to Márya Pávlovna.—"Just fancy, Másha, my brother will not be here to-day,"—she said, with a little sigh.

"I see for myself that he is not here,"—replied Márya Pávlovna in an undertone.

"He bade me say to thee that he is busy. Thou must not be angry. Good morning, Egór Kapítonitch; good morning, Iván Ílitch; good morning, children.... Vásya,"—added the guest, turning to her small groom,—"order them to walk Little Beauty up and down well, dost hear? Másha, please give me a pin, to fasten up my train.... Come here, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch."

Ipátoff went closer to her.

"Who is that new person?"—she asked, quite loudly.

"That is a neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímir Sergyéevitch, you know, the owner of Sásovo. I'll introduce him if you like, shall I?"

"Very well ... afterward. Akh, what splendid weather!"—she went on.—"Egór Kapítonitch, tell me—can it be possible that Matryóna Márkovna growls even in such weather as this?"

"Matryóna Márkovna never grumbles in any sort of weather, madam; and she is merely strict on the score of manners...."

"And what are the Biriúloff girls doing? They know all about it the next day, don't they?..." And she burst into a ringing, silvery laugh.

"You are pleased to laugh constantly,"—returned Egór Kapítonitch.—"However, when should a person laugh, if not at your age?"

"Egór Kapítonitch, don't get angry, my dear man! Akh, I'm tired; allow me to sit down...."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna dropped into an arm-chair, and playfully pulled her hat down over her very eyes.

Ipátoff led Vladímir Sergyéitch up to her.

"Permit me, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, to present to you our neighbour, Mr. Astákhoff, of whom you have, probably, heard a great deal."

Vladímir Sergyéitch made his bow, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked up at him from under the brim of her round hat.

"Nadézhda Alexyéevna Véretyeff, our neighbour,"—went on Ipátoff, turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"She lives here with her brother, Piótr Alexyéitch, a retired lieutenant of the Guards. She is a great friend of my sister-in-law, and bears good will to our household in general."

"A whole formal inventory,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, laughing, and, as before, scanning Vladímir Sergyéitch from under her hat.

But, in the meantime, Vladímir Sergyéitch was thinking to himself: "Why, this is a very pretty woman also." And, in fact, Nadézhda

Alexyéevna was a very charming young girl. Slender and graceful, she appeared much younger than she really was. She was already in her twenty-eighth year. She had a round face, a small head, fluffy fair hair, a sharp, almost audaciously upturned little nose, and merry, almost crafty little eyes. Mockery fairly glittered in them, and kindled in them in sparks. Her features, extremely vivacious and mobile, sometimes assumed an almost amusing expression; humour peered forth from them. Now and then, for the most part suddenly, a shade of pensiveness flitted across her face,—and at such times it became gentle and kindly; but she could not surrender herself long to meditation. She easily seized upon the ridiculous sides of people, and drew very respectable caricatures. Everybody had petted her ever since she was born, and that is something which is immediately perceptible; people who have been spoiled in childhood preserve a certain stamp to the end of their lives. Her brother loved her, although he asserted that she stung, not like a bee, but like a wasp; because a bee stings and then dies, whereas it signifies nothing for a wasp to sting. This comparison enraged her.

"Have you come here for long?"—she asked Vladímir Sergyéitch, dropping her eyes, and twisting her riding-whip in her hands.

"No; I intend to go away from here to-morrow."

"Whither?"

"Home."

"Home? Why, may I venture to ask?"

"What do you mean by 'why'? I have affairs at home which do not brook delay."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna looked at him.

"Are you such a ... punctual man?"

"I try to be a punctual man,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"In our sedate era, every honourable man *must* be sedate and punctual."

"That is perfectly just,"—remarked Ipátoff.—"Isn't that true Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch merely glanced at Ipátoff; but Egór Kapítonitch remarked:

"Yes, that's so."

"'Tis a pity,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"precisely what we lack is a *jeune premier*. You know how to act comedy, I suppose?"

"I have never put my powers in that line to the test."

"I am convinced that you would act well. You have that sort of bearing ... a stately mien, which is indispensable in a *jeune premier*. My brother and I are preparing to set up a theatre here. However, we shall not act comedies only: we shall act all sorts of things—dramas, ballets, and even tragedies. Why wouldn't Másha do for Cleopatra or Phèdre? Just look at her!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round.... Márya Pávlovna was gazing thoughtfully into the distance, as she stood leaning her head against the door, with folded arms.... At that moment, her regular features really did suggest the faces of ancient statues. She did not catch Nadézhda Alexyéevna's last words; but, perceiving that the glances of all present were suddenly directed to her, she immediately divined what was going on, blushed, and was about to retreat into the drawing-room.... Nadézhda Alexyéevna briskly grasped her by the hand and, with the coquettish caressing action of a kitten, drew her toward her, and kissed that almost masculine hand. Márya Pávlovna flushed more vividly than before.

"Thou art always playing pranks, Nádya,"—she said.

"Didn't I speak the truth about thee? I am ready to appeal to all.... Well, enough, enough, I won't do it again. But I will say again,"—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch,—"that it is a pity you are going away. We have a *jeune premier*, it is true; he calls himself so, but he is very bad."

"Who is he? permit me to inquire."

"Bodryakóff the poet. How can a poet be a *jeune premier*? In the first place, he dresses in the most frightful way; in the second place, he writes epigrams, and gets shy in the presence of every woman, even in mine. He lisps, one of his hands is always higher than his head, and I don't know what besides. Tell me, please, M'sieu Astákhoff, are all poets like that?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch drew himself up slightly.

"I have never known a single one of them, personally; but I must confess that I have never sought acquaintance with them."

"Yes, you certainly are a positive man. We shall have to take Bodryakóff; there's nothing else to be done. Other *jeunes premiers* are even worse. That one, at all events, will learn his part by heart. Másha, in addition to tragic rôles, will fill the post of prima donna.... You haven't heard her sing, have you, M'sieu Astákhoff?"

"No,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, displaying his teeth in a smile; "and I did not know...."

"What is the matter with thee to-day, Nádya?"—said Márya Pávlovna, with a look of displeasure.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna sprang to her feet.

"For Heaven's sake, Másha, do sing us something, please.... I won't let thee alone until thou singest us something, Másha dearest. I would sing myself, to entertain the visitors, but thou knowest what a bad voice I have. But, on the other hand, thou shalt see how splendidly I will accompany thee."

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

"There's no getting rid of thee,"—she said at last.—"Like a spoiled child, thou art accustomed to have all thy caprices humoured. I will sing, if you like."

"Bravo, bravo!"—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, clapping her hands.—"Let us go into the drawing-room, gentlemen.—And as for caprices,"—she added, laughing,—"I'll pay you off for that! Is

it permissible to expose my weaknesses in the presence of strangers? Egór Kapítonitch, does Matryóna Márkovna shame you *thus* before people?"

"Matryóna Márkovna,"—muttered Egór Kapítonitch,—"is a very worthy lady; only, on the score of manners...."

"Well, come along, come along!"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him, and entered the drawing-room.

All followed her. She tossed off her hat and seated herself at the piano. Márya Pávlovna stood near the wall, a good way from Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Másha,"—said the latter, after reflecting a little,—"sing us 'The farm-hand is sowing the grain.'"[18]

Márya Pávlovna began to sing. Her voice was pure and powerful, and she sang well—simply, and without affectation. All listened to her with great attention, while Vladímir Sergyéitch could not conceal his amazement. When Márya Pávlovna had finished, he stepped up to her, and began to assure her that he had not in the least expected....

"Wait, there's something more coming!"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him.—"Másha, I will soothe thy Topknot[19] soul:—Now sing us 'Humming, humming in the trees.'"

"Are you a Little Russian?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked her.

"I am a native of Little Russia," she replied, and began to sing "Humming, humming."

At first she uttered the words in an indifferent manner; but the mournfully passionate lay of her fatherland gradually began to stir her, her cheeks flushed scarlet, her glance flashed, her voice rang out fervently. She finished.

"Good heavens! How well thou hast sung that!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, bending over the keys.—"What a pity that my brother was not here!"

Márya Pávlovna instantly dropped her eyes, and laughed with her customary bitter little laugh.

"You must give us something more,"—remarked Ipátoff.

"Yes, if you will be so good,"—added Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Excuse me, I will not sing any more to-day,"—said Márya Pávlovna, and left the room.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed after her, first reflected, then smiled, began to pick out "The farm-hand is sowing the grain" with one finger, then suddenly began to play a brilliant polka, and without finishing it, struck a loud chord, clapped to the lid of the piano, and rose.

"'Tis a pity that there is no one to dance with!"—she exclaimed.—"It would be just the thing!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her.

"What a magnificent voice Márya Pávlovna has,"—he remarked;—"and with how much feeling she sings!"

"And are you fond of music?"

"Yes ... very."

"Such a learned man, and you are fond of music!"

"But what makes you think that I am learned?"

"Akh, yes; excuse me, I am always forgetting that you are a positive man. But where has Márya Pávlovna gone? Wait, I'll go after her."

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna fluttered out of the drawing-room.

"A giddy-pate, as you see,"—said Ipátoff, coming up to Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but the kindest heart. And what an education she received you cannot imagine; she can express herself in all languages. Well, they are wealthy people, so that is comprehensible."

"Yes,"—articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, abstractedly,—"she is a very charming girl. But permit me to inquire, Was your wife also a native of Little Russia?"

"Yes, she was, sir, My late wife was a Little Russian, as her sister Márya Pávlovna is. My wife, to tell the truth, did not even have a perfectly pure pronunciation; although she was a perfect mistress of the Russian language, still she did not express herself quite correctly; they pronounce *i*, *ui*, there, and their *kha* and *zhe* are peculiar also, you know; well, Márya Pávlovna left her native land in early childhood. But the Little Russian blood is still perceptible, isn't it?"

"Márya Pávlovna sings wonderfully,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Really, it is not bad. But why don't they bring us some tea? And where have the young ladies gone? 'Tis time to drink tea."

The young ladies did not return very speedily. In the meantime, the samovár was brought, the table was laid for tea. Ipátoff sent for them. Both came in together. Márya Pávlovna seated herself at the table to pour the tea, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna walked to the door opening on the terrace, and began to gaze out into the garden. The brilliant summer day had been succeeded by a clear, calm evening; the sunset was flaming; the broad pond, half flooded with its crimson, stood a motionless mirror, grandly reflecting in its deep bosom all the airy depths of the sky, and the house, and the trees turned upside down, and had grown black, as it were. Everything was silent round about. There was no noise anywhere.

"Look, how beautiful!"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna to Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he approached her;—"down below there, in the pond, a star has kindled its fire by the side of the light in the house; the house-light is red, the other is golden. And yonder comes grandmamma,"—she added in a loud voice.

From behind a clump of lilac-bushes a small calash made its appearance. Two men were drawing it. In it sat an old lady, all

wrapped up, all doubled over, with her head resting on her breast. The ruffle of her white cap almost completely concealed her withered and contracted little face. The tiny calash halted in front of the terrace. Ipátoff emerged from the drawing-room, and his little daughters ran out after him. They had been constantly slipping from room to room all the evening, like little mice.

"I wish you good evening, dear mother,"—said Ipátoff, stepping up close to the old woman, and elevating his voice.—"How do you feel?"

"I have come to take a look at you,"—said the old woman in a dull voice, and with an effort.—"What a glorious evening it is. I have been asleep all day, and now my feet have begun to ache. Okh, those feet of mine! They don't serve me, but they ache."

"Permit me, dear mother, to present to you our neighbour, Astákhoff, Vladímir Sergyéitch."

"I am very glad to meet you,"—returned the old woman, scanning him with her large, black, but dim-sighted eyes.—"I beg that you will love my son. He is a fine man; I gave him what education I could; of course, I did the best a woman could. He is still somewhat flighty, but, God willing, he will grow steady, and 'tis high time he did; 'tis time for me to surrender matters to him. Is that you, Nádya?"—added the old woman, glancing at Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Yes, grandmamma."

"And is Másha pouring tea?"

"Yes, grandmamma, she is pouring tea."

"And who else is there?"

"Iván Ílitch, and Egór Kapítonitch."

"The husband of Matryóna Márkovna?"

"Yes, dear mother."

The old woman mumbled with her lips.

"Well, good. But why is it, Mísha, that I can't manage to get hold of the overseer? Order him to come to me very early to-morrow morning; I shall have a great deal of business to arrange with him. I see that nothing goes as it should with you, without me. Come, that will do, I am tired; take me away.... Farewell, bátiushka;[20] I don't remember your name and patronymic,"—she added, addressing Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Pardon an old woman. But don't come with me, grandchildren, it isn't necessary. All you care for is to run all the time. Másha spoils you. Well, start on."

The old woman's head, which she had raised with difficulty, fell back again on her breast....

The tiny calash started, and rolled softly away.

"How old is your mother?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Only in her seventy-third year; but it is twenty-six years since her legs failed her; that happened soon after the demise of my late father. But she used to be a beauty."

All remained silent for a while.

Suddenly, Nadézhda Alexyéevna gave a start. "Was that—a bat flying past? Áï, what a fright!"

And she hastily returned to the drawing-room.

"It is time for me to go home, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch; order my horse to be saddled."

"And it is time for me to be going, too,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Where are you going?"—said Ipátoff.—"Spend the night here. Nadézhda Alexyéevna has only two versts to ride, while you have fully twelve. And what's your hurry, too, Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Wait for the moon; it will soon be up now. It will be lighter to ride."

"Very well,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"It is a long time since I had a moonlight ride."

"And will you spend the night?"—Ipátoff asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Really, I don't know.... However, if I do not incommode you...."

"Not in the least, I assure you; I will immediately order a chamber to be prepared for you."

"But it is nice to ride by moonlight,"—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as candles were brought, tea was served, and Ipátoff and Egór Kapítonitch had sat down to play preference together, while The Folding Soul seated himself silently beside them:—"especially through the forest, between the walnut-trees. It is both terrifying and agreeable, and what a strange play of light and shade there is—it always seems as though some one were stealing up behind you, or in front of you...."

Vladímir Sergyéitch smirked condescendingly.

"And here's another thing,"—she went on;—"have you ever happened to sit beside the forest on a warm, dark, tranquil night? At such times it always seems to me as though two persons were hotly disputing in an almost inaudible whisper, behind me, close at my very ear."

"That is the blood beating,"—said Ipátoff.

"You describe in a very poetical way,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch. Nadézhda Alexyéevna glanced at him.

"Do you think so?... In that case, my description would not please Másha."

"Why? Is not Márya Pávlovna fond of poetry?"

"No; she thinks all that sort of thing is made up—is all false; and she does not like that."

"A strange reproach!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Made up! How could it be otherwise? But, after all, what are composers for?"

"Well, there, that's exactly the point; but I am sure you cannot be fond of poetry."

"On the contrary, I love good verses, when they really are good and melodious, and—how shall I say it?—when they present ideas, thoughts...."

Márya Pávlovna rose.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna turned swiftly toward her.

"Whither art thou going, Másha?"

"To put the children to bed. It is almost nine o'clock."

"But cannot they go to bed without thee?"

But Márya Pávlovna took the children by the hand and went away with them.

"She is out of sorts to-day,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"and I know why,"—she added in an undertone.—"But it will pass off."

"Allow me to inquire,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch,—"where you intend to spend the winter?"

"Perhaps here, perhaps in Petersburg. It seems to me that I shall be bored in Petersburg."

"In Petersburg! Good gracious! How is that possible?"

And Vladímir Sergyéitch began to describe all the comforts, advantages, and charm of life in our capital. Nadézhda Alexyéevna listened to him with attention, never taking her eyes from him. She seemed to be committing his features to memory, and laughed to herself from time to time.

"I see that you are very eloquent,"—she said at last.—"I shall be obliged to spend the winter in Petersburg."

"You will not repent of it,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I never repent of anything; it is not worth the bother. If you have perpetrated a blunder, try to forget it as speedily as possible—that's all."

"Allow me to ask,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, and in the French language;—"have you known Márya Pávlovna long?"

"Allow me to ask,"—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna, with a swift laugh;—"why you have put precisely that question to me in French?"

"Because ... for no particular reason...."

Again Nadézhda Alexyéevna laughed.

"No; I have not known her very long. But she is a remarkable girl, isn't she?"

"She is very original,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, through his teeth.

"And in your mouth—in the mouth of positive persons—does that constitute praise? I do not think so. Perhaps I seem original to you, also? But,"—she added, rising from her seat and casting a glance through the window,—"the moon must have risen; that is its light on the poplars. It is time to depart.... I will go and give order that Little Beauty shall be saddled."

"He is already saddled, ma'am,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna's groom, stepping out from the shadow in the garden into a band of light which fell on the terrace.

"Ah! Well, that's very good, indeed! Másha, where art thou? Come and bid me good-bye."

Márya Pávlovna made her appearance from the adjoining room. The men rose from the card-table.

"So you are going already?"—inquired Ipátoff.

"I am; it is high time."

She approached the door leading into the garden.

"What a night!"—she exclaimed.—"Come here; hold out your face to it; do you feel how it seems to breathe upon you? And what fragrance! all the flowers have waked up now. They have waked up—and we are preparing to go to sleep.... Ah, by the way, Másha,"—she added:—"I have told Vladímir Sergyéitch, you know, that thou art not fond of poetry. And now, farewell ... yonder comes my horse...."

And she ran briskly down the steps of the terrace, swung herself lightly into the saddle, said, "Good-bye until to-morrow!"—and lashing her horse on the neck with her riding-switch, she galloped off in the direction of the dam.... The groom set off at a trot after her.

All gazed after her....

"Until to-morrow!"—her voice rang out once more from behind the poplars.

The hoof-beats were still audible for a long time in the silence of the summer night. At last, Ipátoff proposed that they should go into the house again.

"It really is very nice out of doors,"—he said;—"but we must finish our game."

All obeyed him. Vladímir Sergyéitch began to question Márya Pávlovna as to why she did not like poetry.

"Verses do not please me,"—she returned, with apparent reluctance.

"But perhaps you have not read many verses?"

"I have not read them myself, but I have had them read to me."

"And is it possible that they did not please you?"

"No; none of them."

“Not even Púshkin’s verses?”

“Not even Púshkin’s.”

“Why?”

Márya Pávlovna made no answer; but Ipátoff, twisting round across the back of his chair, remarked, with a good-natured laugh, that she not only did not like verses, but sugar also, and, in general, could not endure anything sweet.

“But, surely, there are verses which are not sweet,”—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“For example?”—Márya Pávlovna asked him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch scratched behind his ear.... He himself knew very few verses by heart, especially of the sort which were not sweet.

“Why, here now,”—he exclaimed at last;—“do you know Púshkin’s ‘The Upas-Tree’?[21] No? That poem cannot possibly be called sweet.”

“Recite it,”—said Márya Pávlovna, dropping her eyes.

Vladímir Sergyéitch first stared at the ceiling, frowned, mumbled something to himself, and at last recited “The Upas-Tree.”

After the first four lines, Márya Pávlovna slowly raised her eyes, and when Vladímir Sergyéitch ended, she said, with equal slowness:

“Please recite it again.”

“So these verses do please you?”—asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“Recite it again.”

Vladímir Sergyéitch repeated “The Upas-Tree.” Márya Pávlovna rose, went out into the next room, and returned with a sheet of paper, an inkstand and a pen.

“Please write that down for me,”—she said to Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Certainly; with pleasure,"—he replied, beginning to write.—"But I must confess that I am puzzled to know why these verses have pleased you so. I recited them simply to prove to you that not all verses are sweet."

"So am I!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.—"What do you think of those verses, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch, according to his wont, merely glanced at Ipátoff, but did not utter a word.

"Here, ma'am,—I have finished,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he placed an interrogation-point at the end of the last line.

Márya Pávlovna thanked him, and carried the written sheet off to her own room.

Half an hour later supper was served, and an hour later all the guests dispersed to their rooms. Vladímir Sergyéitch had repeatedly addressed Márya Pávlovna; but it was difficult to conduct a conversation with her, and his anecdotes did not seem to interest her greatly. He probably would have fallen asleep as soon as he got into bed had he not been hindered by his neighbour, Egór Kapítonitch. Matryóna Márkovna's husband, after he was fully undressed and had got into bed, talked for a very long time with his servant, and kept bestowing reprimands on him. Every word he uttered was perfectly audible to Vladímir Sergyéitch: only a thin partition separated them.

"Hold the candle in front of thy breast,"—said Egór Kapítonitch, in a querulous voice;—"hold it so that I can see thy face. Thou hast aged me, aged me, thou conscienceless man—hast aged me completely."

"But, for mercy's sake, Egór Kapítonitch, how have I aged you?"—the servant's dull and sleepy voice made itself heard.

"How? I'll tell thee how. How many times have I said to thee: 'Mítka,' I have said to thee, 'when thou goest a-visiting with me, always take two garments of each sort, especially' ... hold the

candle in front of thy breast ... 'especially underwear.' And what hast thou done to me to-day?"

"What, sir?"

"'What, sir?' What am I to put on to-morrow?"

"Why, the same things you wore to-day, sir."

"Thou hast aged me, malefactor, aged me. I was almost beside myself with the heat to-day, as it was. Hold the candle in front of thy breast, I tell thee, and don't sleep when thy master is talking to thee."

"Well, but Matryóna Márkovna said, sir, 'That's enough. Why do you always take such a mass of things with you? They only get worn out for nothing.'"

"Matryóna Márkovna.... Is it a woman's business, pray, to enter into that? You have aged me. Okh, you have made me old before my time!"

"Yes; and Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"What's that thou saidst?"

"I say, Yakhím said the same thing, sir."

"Yakhím! Yakhím!"—repeated Egór Kapítonitch, reproachfully.—"Ekh, you have aged me, ye accursed, and don't even know how to speak Russian intelligibly. Yakhím! Who's Yakhím! Efrím,—well, that might be allowed to pass, it is permissible to say that; because the genuine Greek name is Evthímius, dost understand me?... Hold the candle in front of thy breast.... So, for the sake of brevity, thou mayest say Efrím, if thou wilt, but not Yakhím by any manner of means. Yákhim!"[22] added Egór Kapítonitch, emphasising the syllable *Ya*.—"You have aged me, ye malefactors. Hold the candle in front of thy breast!"

And for a long time, Egór Kapítonitch continued to berate his servant, in spite of sighs, coughs, and other tokens of impatience on the part of Vladímir Sergyéitch....

At last he dismissed his Mítka, and fell asleep; but Vladímir Sergyéitch was no better off for that: Egór Kapítonitch snored so mightily and in so deep a voice, with such playful transitions from high tones to the very lowest, with such accompanying whistlings, and even snappings, that it seemed as though the very partition were shaking in response to him; poor Vladímir Sergyéitch almost wept. It was very stifling in the chamber which had been allotted to him, and the feather-bed whereon he was lying embraced his whole body in a sort of crawling heat.

At last, in despair, Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, opened the window, and began with avidity to inhale the nocturnal freshness. The window looked out on the park. It was light overhead, the round face of the full moon was now clearly reflected in the pond, and stretched itself out in a long, golden sheaf of slowly transfused spangles. On one of the paths Vladímir Sergyéitch espied a figure in woman's garb; he looked more intently; it was Márya Pávlovna; in the moonlight her face seemed pale. She stood motionless, and suddenly began to speak.... Vladímir Sergyéitch cautiously put out his head....

"But a man—with glance imperious—
Sent a man to the Upas-tree...."

reached his ear....

"Come,"—he thought,—"the verses must have taken effect...."

And he began to listen with redoubled attention.... But Márya Pávlovna speedily fell silent, and turned her face more directly toward him; he could distinguish her large, dark eyes, her severe brows and lips....

Suddenly, she started, wheeled round, entered the shadow cast by a dense wall of lofty acacias, and disappeared. Vladímir Sergyéitch stood for a considerable time at the window, then got into bed again, but did not fall asleep very soon.

"A strange being,"—he thought, as he tossed from side to side;—"and yet they say that there is nothing particular in the

provinces.... The idea! A strange being! I shall ask her to-morrow what she was doing in the park."

And Egór Kapítonitch continued to snore as before.

III

On the following morning Vladímir Sergyéitch awoke quite late, and immediately after the general tea and breakfast in the dining-room, drove off home to finish his business on his estate, in spite of all old Ipátoff's attempts to detain him. Márya Pávlovna also was present at the tea; but Vladímir Sergyéitch did not consider it necessary to question her concerning her late stroll of the night before; he was one of the people who find it difficult to surrender themselves for two days in succession to any unusual thoughts and assumptions whatsoever. He would have been obliged to discuss verses, and the so-called "poetical" mood wearied him very quickly. He spent the whole day until dinner in the fields, ate with great appetite, dozed off, and when he woke up, tried to take up the clerk's accounts; but before he had finished the first page, he ordered his tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Ipátoff's. Evidently, even positive people do not bear about in their breasts hearts of stone, and they are no more fond of being bored than other plain mortals.

As he drove upon the dam he heard voices and the sound of music. They were singing Russian ballads in chorus in Ipátoff's house. He found the whole company which he had left in the morning on the terrace; all, Nadézhda Alexyéevna among the rest, were sitting in a circle around a man of two-and-thirty—a swarthy-skinned, black-eyed, black-haired man in a velvet jacket, with a scarlet kerchief carelessly knotted about his neck, and a guitar in his hands. This was Piótr Alexyéevitch Véretyeff, brother of Nadézhda Alexyéevna. On catching sight of Vladímir Sergyéitch, old Ipátoff advanced to meet him with a joyful cry, led him up to Véretyeff, and introduced them to each other. After exchanging the customary greetings with his new acquaintance, Astákhoff made a respectful bow to the latter's sister.

"We're singing songs in country fashion, Vladímir Sergyéitch,"—began Ipátoff, and pointing to Véretyeff he added:-"Piótr Alexyéitch is our leader,—and what a leader! Just you listen to him!"

"This is very pleasant,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Will not you join the choir?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna asked him.

"I should be heartily glad to do so, but I have no voice."

"That doesn't matter! See, Egór Kapítonitch is singing, and I'm singing. All you have to do is to chime in. Pray, sit down; and do thou strike up, my dear fellow!"

"What song shall we sing now?"—said Véretyeff, thrumming the guitar; and suddenly stopping short, he looked at Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting by his side.—"I think it is your turn now,"—he said to her.

"No; do you sing,"—replied Márya Pávlovna.

"Here's a song now: 'Adown dear Mother Volga'"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, with importance.

"No, we will save that up for the last,"—replied Véretyeff, and tinkling the strings of the guitar, he struck up, in slow measure, "The sun is setting."

He sang splendidly, dashingly, and blithely. His manly face, already expressive, became still more animated when he sang; now and then he shrugged his shoulders, suddenly pressed the strings with his palm, raised his arm, shook his curls, and darted a falcon-like look around him. More than once in Moscow he had seen the famous Ilyá, and he imitated him. The chorus chimed in lustily. Márya Pávlovna's voice separated itself in a melodious flood from the other voices; it seemed to drag them after it; but she would not sing alone, and Véretyeff remained the leader to the end.

They sang a great many other songs....

In the meantime, along with the evening shadows, a thunder-storm drew on. From noonday it had been steaming hot, and thunder had kept rumbling in the distance; but now a broad thunder-cloud, which had long lain like a leaden pall on the very rim of the horizon, began to increase and show itself above the crests of the trees, the stifling air began to quiver more distinctly, shaken more and more violently by the approaching storm; the wind rose, rustled the foliage abruptly, died into silence, again made a prolonged clamour, and began to roar; a surly gloom flitted over the earth, swiftly dispelling the last reflection of the sunset glow; dense clouds suddenly floated up, as though rending themselves free, and sailed across the sky; a fine rain began to patter down, the lightning flashed in a red flame, and the thunder rumbled heavily and angrily.

"Let us go,"—said old Ipátoff,—"or we shall be drenched."

All rose.

"Directly!"—exclaimed Piótr Alexyéitch.—"One more song, the last. Listen:

"Akh, thou house, thou house of mine,
Thou new house of mine...."

he struck up in a loud voice, briskly striking the strings of the guitar with his whole hand. "My new house of maple-wood," joined in the chorus, as though reluctantly carried away. Almost at the same moment, the rain began to beat down in streams; but Véretyeff sang "My house" to the end. From time to time, drowned by the claps of thunder, the dashing ballad seemed more dashing than ever beneath the noisy rattle and gurgling of the rain. At last the final detonation of the chorus rang out—and the whole company ran, laughing, into the drawing-room. Loudest of all laughed the little girls, Ipátoff's daughters, as they shook the rain-drops from their frocks. But, by way of precaution, Ipátoff closed the window, and locked the door; and Egór Kapítonitch lauded him, remarking that Matryóna Márkovna also always gave orders to shut up whenever there was a thunder-storm, because

electricity is more capable of acting in an empty space. Bodryakóff looked him straight in the face, stepped aside, and overturned a chair. Such trifling mishaps were constantly happening to him.

The thunder-storm passed over very soon. The doors and windows were opened again, and the rooms were filled with moist fragrance. Tea was brought. After tea the old men sat down to cards again. Iván Ílitch joined them, as usual. Vladímir Sergyéitch was about to go to Márya Pávlovna, who was sitting at the window with Véretyeff; but Nadézhda Alexyéevna called him to her, and immediately entered into a fervent discussion with him about Petersburg and Petersburg life. She attacked it; Vladímir Sergyéitch began to defend it. Nadézhda Alexyéevna appeared to be trying to keep him by her side.

"What are you wrangling about?"—inquired Véretyeff, rising and approaching them.

He swayed lazily from side to side as he walked; in all his movements there was perceptible something which was not exactly carelessness, nor yet exactly fatigue.

"Still about Petersburg."—replied Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"Vladímir Sergyéitch cannot sufficiently praise it."

"'Tis a fine town,"—remarked Véretyeff;—"but, in my opinion, it is nice everywhere. By Heaven, it is. If one only has two or three women, and—pardon my frankness—wine, a man really has nothing left to wish for."

"You surprise me,"—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch. "Can it be possible that you are really of one opinion, that there does not exist for the cultured man...."

"Perhaps ... in fact ... I agree with you,"—interrupted Véretyeff, who, notwithstanding all his courtesy, had a habit of not listening to the end of retorts;—"but that's not in my line; I'm not a philosopher."

"Neither am I a philosopher,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"and I have not the slightest desire to be one; but here it is a question of something entirely different."

Véretyeff cast an abstracted glance at his sister, and she, with a faint laugh, bent toward him, and whispered in a low voice:

"Petrúsha, my dear, imitate Egór Kapítonitch for us, please."

Véretyeff's face instantly changed, and, Heaven knows by what miracle, became remarkably like the face of Egór Kapítonitch, although the features of the two faces had absolutely nothing in common, and Véretyeff himself barely wrinkled up his nose and pulled down the corners of his lips.

"Of course,"—he began to whisper, in a voice which was the exact counterpart of Egór Kapítonitch's,—"Matryóna Márkovna is a severe lady on the score of manners; but, on the other hand, she is a model wife. It is true that no matter what I may have said...."

"The Biriúloff girls know it all,"—put in Nadézhda Alexyéevna, hardly restraining her laughter.

"Everything is known on the following day,"—replied Véretyeff, with such a comical grimace, with such a perturbed sidelong glance, that even Vladímir Sergyéitch burst out laughing.

"I see that you possess great talent for mimicry,"—he remarked.

Véretyeff passed his hand over his face, his features resumed their ordinary expression, while Nadézhda Alexyéevna exclaimed:

"Oh, yes! he can mimic any one whom he wishes.... He's a master hand at that."

"And would you be able to imitate me, for example?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I should think so!"—returned Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—"of course."

"Akh, pray do me the favour to represent me,"—said Astákhoff, turning to Véretyeff.—"I beg that you will not stand on ceremony."

"And so you too have believed her?"—replied Véretyeff, slightly screwing up one eye, and imparting to his voice the sound of Astákhoff's voice, but so cautiously and slightly that only Nadézhda Alexyéevna noticed it, and bit her lips.—"Please do not believe her; she will tell you other untrue things about me."

"And if you only knew what an actor he is!"—pursued Nadézhda Alexyéevna:—"he plays every conceivable sort of a part. And so splendidly! He is our stage-manager, and our prompter, and everything you like. It's a pity that you are going away so soon."

"Sister, thy partiality blinds thee,"—remarked Véretyeff, in a pompous tone, but still with the same touch of Astákhoff.—"What will Mr. Astákhoff think of thee?—He will regard thee as a rustic."

"No, indeed,"—Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning....

"See here, Petrúsha,"—interposed Nadézhda Alexyéevna;—"please show us how a drunken man is utterly unable to get his handkerchief out of his pocket; or no: show us, rather, how a boy catches a fly on the window, and how it buzzes under his fingers."

"Thou art a regular child,"—replied Véretyeff.

Nevertheless he rose, and stepping to the window, beside which Márya Pávlovna was sitting, he began to pass his hand across the panes, and represent how a small boy catches a fly.

The accuracy with which he imitated its pitiful squeak was really amazing. It seemed as though a live fly were actually struggling under his fingers. Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing, and gradually every one in the room got to laughing. Márya Pávlovna's face alone underwent no change, not even her lips quivered. She sat with downcast eyes, but raised them at last, and

casting a serious glance at Véretyeff, she muttered through her set teeth:

"What possesses you to make a clown of yourself?"

Véretyeff instantly turned away from the window, and, after standing still for a moment in the middle of the room, he went out on the terrace, and thence into the garden, which had already grown perfectly dark.

"How amusing that Piótr Alexyéitch is!"—exclaimed Egór Kapítonitch, slapping down the seven of trumps with a flourish on some one else's ace.—"Really, he's very amusing!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna rose, and hastily approaching Márya Pávlovna, asked her in an undertone:

"What didst thou say to my brother?"

"Nothing,"—replied the other.

"What dost thou mean by 'nothing'? Impossible."

And after waiting a little, Nadézhda Alexyéevna said: "Come!"—took Márya Pávlovna by the hand, forced her to rise, and went off with her into the garden.

Vladímir Sergyéitch gazed after the two young girls not without perplexity. But they were not absent long; a quarter of an hour later they returned, and Piótr Alexyéitch entered the room with them.

"What a splendid night!" exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as she entered.—"How beautiful it is in the garden!"

"Akh, yes. By the way,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"allow me to inquire, Márya Pávlovna, whether it was you whom I saw in the garden last night?"

Márya Pávlovna gave him a swift look straight in the eyes.

"Moreover, so far as I could make out, you were declaiming Púshkin's 'The Upas-Tree.'"

Véretyeff frowned slightly, and he also began to stare at Astákhoff.

"It really was I,"—said Márya Pávlovna;—"only, I was not declaiming anything; I never declaim."

"Perhaps it seemed so to me,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but...."

"It did seem so to you?"—remarked Márya Pávlovna, coldly.

"What's 'The Upas-Tree'?"—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Why, don't you know?"—retorted Astákhoff.—"Do you mean to say you don't remember Púshkin's verses: 'On the unhealthy, meagre soil'?"

"Somehow I don't remember.... That upas-tree is a poisonous tree, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Like the datura.... Dost remember, Másha, how beautiful the datura were on our balcony, in the moonlight, with their long, white blossoms? Dost remember what fragrance poured from them,—so sweet, insinuating, and insidious?"

"An insidious fragrance!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes; insidious. What are you surprised at? They say it is dangerous, but it is attractive. Why can evil attract? Evil should not be beautiful."

"Oh, what theories!"—remarked Piótr Alexyéitch;—"how far away we have got from verses!"

"I recited those verses yesterday evening to Márya Pávlovna," interposed Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"and they pleased her greatly."

"Akh, please recite them,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"Certainly, madam."

And Astákhoff recited "The Upas-Tree."

"Too bombastic,"—ejaculated Véretyeff, as though against his will, as soon as Vladímir Sergyéitch had finished.

"The poem is too bombastic?"

"No, not the poem.... Excuse me, it seems to me that you do not recite with sufficient simplicity. The thing speaks for itself; however, I may be mistaken."

"No, thou art not mistaken,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, pausing between her words.

"Oh, yes; that is a matter of course! In thy eyes I am a genius, an extremely gifted man, who knows everything, can do everything; unfortunately, he is overcome with laziness; isn't that so?"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna merely shook her head.

"I shall not quarrel with you; you must know best about that,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch, somewhat sulkily.—"That's not in my line."

"I made a mistake, pardon me,"—ejaculated Véretyeff, hastily.

In the meantime, the game of cards had come to an end.

"Akh, by the way,"—said Ipátoff, as he rose;—"Vladímir Sergyéitch, one of the local landed proprietors, a neighbour, a very fine and worthy man, Akílin, Gavríla Stepánitch, has commissioned me to ask you whether you will not do him the honour to be present at his ball,—that is, I just put it so, for beauty of style, and said 'ball,' but it is only an evening party with dancing, quite informal. He would have called upon you himself without fail, only he was afraid of disturbing you."

"I am much obliged to the gentleman,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but it is imperatively necessary that I should return home...."

"Why—but when do you suppose the ball takes place? 'Tis to-morrow. To-morrow is Gavríla Stepánitch's Name-day. One day more won't matter, and how much pleasure you will give him!

And it's only ten versts from here. If you will allow, we will take you thither."

"Really, I don't know,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"And are you going?"

"The whole family! And Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Piótr Alexyéitch,—everybody is going!"

"You may invite me on the spot for the fifth quadrille, if you like,"—remarked Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"The first four are already bespoken."

"You are very kind; and are you already engaged for the mazurka?"

"I? Let me think ... no, I think I am not."

"In that case, if you will be so kind, I should like to have the honour...."

"That means that you will go? Very good. Certainly."

"Bravo!"—exclaimed Ipátoff.—"Well, Vladímir Sergyéitch, you have put us under an obligation. Gavrílo Stepánitch will simply go into raptures. Isn't that so, Iván Ílitch?"

Iván Ílitch would have preferred to hold his peace, according to his wont, but thought it better to utter a sound of approval.

"What possessed thee,"—said Piótr Alexyéitch an hour later to his sister, as he sat with her in a light two-wheeled cart, which he was driving himself,—"what possessed thee to saddle thyself with that sour-visaged fellow for the mazurka?"

"I have reasons of my own for that,"—replied Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"What reasons?—permit me to inquire."

"That's my secret."

"Oho!"

And with his whip he lightly flicked the horse, which was beginning to prick up its ears, snort, and shy. It was frightened by the shadow of a huge willow bush which fell across the road, dimly illuminated by the moon.

"And shalt thou dance with Másha?"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna, in her turn, questioned her brother.

"Yes," he said indifferently.

"Yes! yes!"—repeated Nadézhda Alexyéevna, reproachfully.—"You men,"—she added, after a brief pause,—"positively do not deserve to be loved by nice women."

"Dost think so? Well, and that sour-visaged Petersburger—does he deserve it?"

"Sooner than thou."

"Really!"

And Piótr Alexyéitch recited, with a sigh:

"What a mission, O Creator,
To be ... the brother of a grown-up sister!"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst out laughing.

"I cause thee a great deal of trouble, there's no denying that. I have a commission to thee."

"Really?—I hadn't the slightest suspicion of that."

"I'm speaking of Másha."

"On what score?"

Nadézhda Alexyéevna's face assumed a slight expression of pain.

"Thou knowest thyself,"—she said softly.

"Ah, I understand!—What's to be done, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, ma'am? I love to drink with a good friend, ma'am, sinful man that I am; I love it, ma'am."

"Stop, brother, please don't talk like that!... This is no jesting matter."

"Tram-tram-tam-poom!"—muttered Piótr Alexyéitch through his teeth.

"It is thy perdition, and thou jestest...."

"The farm-hand is sowing the grain, his wife does not agree...."

struck up Piótr Alexyéitch loudly, slapped the horse with the reins, and it dashed onward at a brisk trot.

IV

On reaching home Véretyeff did not undress, and a couple of hours later, when the flush of dawn was just colouring the sky, he was no longer in the house.

Half-way between his estate and Ipátoff's, on the very brink of a broad ravine, stood a small birch grove. The young trees grew very close together, and no axe had yet touched their graceful trunks; a shadow which was not dense, but continuous, spread from the tiny leaves on the soft, thin grass, all mottled with the golden heads of buttercups,[23] the white dots of wood-campanula, and the tiny deep-crimson crosses of wild pinks. The recently-risen sun flooded the whole grove with a powerful though not brilliant light; dewdrops glittered everywhere, while here and there large drops kindled and glowed red; everything exhaled freshness, life, and that innocent triumph of the first moments of the morning, when everything is still so bright and still so silent. The only thing audible was the carolling voices of the larks above the distant fields, and in the grove itself two or three small birds were executing, in a leisurely manner, their brief songs, and then, apparently, listening to see how their performance had turned out. From the damp earth arose a strong, healthy scent; a pure, light breeze fluttered all about in cool gusts. Morning, glorious morning, breathed forth from everything—everything looked and

smiled of the morning, like the rosy, freshly-washed face of a baby who has just waked up.

Not far from the ravine, in the middle of a small glade, on an outspread cloak, sat Véretyeff. Márya Pávlovna was standing beside him, leaning against a birch-tree, with her hands clasped behind her.

Both were silent. Márya Pávlovna was gazing fixedly into the far distance; a white scarf had slipped from her head to her shoulders, the errant breeze was stirring and lifting the ends of her hastily-knotted hair. Véretyeff sat bent over, tapping the grass with a small branch.

"Well,"—he began at last,—"are you angry with me?"

Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

Véretyeff darted a glance at her.

"Másha, are you angry?"—he repeated.

Márya Pávlovna scanned him with a swift glance from head to foot turned slightly away, and said:

"Yes."

"What for?"—asked Véretyeff, and flung away his branch.

Again Márya Pávlovna made no reply.

"But, as a matter of fact, you have a right to be angry with me,"—began Véretyeff, after a brief pause.—"You must regard me as a man who is not only frivolous, but even...."

"You do not understand me,"—interrupted Márya Pávlovna.—"I am not in the least angry with you on my own account."

"On whose account, then?"

"On your own."

Véretyeff raised his head and laughed.

"Ah! I understand!"—he said.—"Again! again the thought is beginning to agitate you: 'Why don't I make something of myself?' Do you know what, Másha, you are a wonderful being; by Heaven, you are! You worry so much about other people and so little about yourself. There is not a bit of egoism in you; really, really there isn't. There's no other girl in the world like you. It's a pity about one thing: I decidedly am not worthy of your affection; I say that without jesting."

"So much the worse for you. You feel and do nothing."—Again Véretyeff laughed.

"Másha, take your hand from behind your back, and give it to me,"—he said, with insinuating affection in his voice.

Márya Pávlovna merely shrugged her shoulders.

"Give me your beautiful, honest hand; I want to kiss it respectfully and tenderly. Thus does a giddy-pated scholar kiss the hand of his condescending tutor."

And Véretyeff reached out toward Márya Pávlovna.

"Enough of that!"—said she. "You are always laughing and jesting, and you will jest away your life like that."

"H'm! jest away my life! A new expression! But I hope, Márya Pávlovna, that you used the verb 'to jest' in the active sense?"

Márya Pávlovna contracted her brows.

"Enough of that, Véretyeff,"—she repeated.

"To jest away life,"—went on Véretyeff, half rising;—"but you are imagining me as worse than I am; you are wasting your life in seriousness. Do you know, Másha, you remind me of a scene from Púshkin's 'Don Juan.' You have not read Púshkin's 'Don Juan'?"

"No."

"Yes, I had forgotten, you see, that you do not read verses.—In that poem guests come to a certain Laura; she drives them all away and

remains alone with Carlos. The two go out on the balcony; the night is wonderful. Laura admires, and Carlos suddenly begins to demonstrate to her that she will grow old in course of time.—'Well,' replies Laura, 'it may be cold and rainy in Paris now, but here, with us, "the night is redolent of orange and of laurel." Why make guesses at the future?' Look around you, Másha; is it not beautiful here? See how everything is enjoying life, how young everything is. And aren't we young ourselves?"

Véretyeff approached Márya Pávlovna; she did not move away from him, but she did not turn her head toward him.

"Smile, Másha,"—he went on;—"only with your kind smile, not with your usual grin. I love your kind smile. Raise your proud, stern eyes.—What ails you? You turn away. Stretch out your hand to me, at least."

"Akh, Véretyeff,"—began Másha;—"you know that I do not understand how to express myself. You have told me about that Laura. But she was a woman, you see.... A woman may be pardoned for not thinking of the future."

"When you speak, Másha,"—returned Véretyeff,—"you blush incessantly with self-love and modesty: the blood fairly flows in a crimson flood into your cheeks. I'm awfully fond of that in you."

Márya Pávlovna looked Véretyeff straight in the eye.

"Farewell,"—she said, and threw her scarf over her head.

Véretyeff held her back. "Enough, enough. Stay!"—he cried.—"Come, why are you going? Issue your commands! Do you want me to enter the service, to become an agriculturist? Do you want me to publish romances with accompaniment for the guitar; to print a collection of poems, or of drawings; to busy myself with painting, sculpture, dancing on the rope? I'll do anything, anything, anything you command, if only you will be satisfied with me! Come, really now, Másha, believe me."

Again Márya Pávlovna looked at him.

"You will do all that in words only, not in deeds. You declare that you will obey me...."

"Of course I do."

"You obey, but how many times have I begged you...."

"What about?"

Márya Pávlovna hesitated.

"Not to drink liquor,"—she said at last.

Véretyeff laughed.

"Ekh, Másha! And you are at it, too! My sister is worrying herself to death over that also. But, in the first place, I'm not a drunkard at all; and in the second place, do you know why I drink? Look yonder, at that swallow.... Do you see how boldly it manages its tiny body,—and hurls it wherever it wishes? Now it has soared aloft, now it has darted downward. It has even piped with joy: do you hear? So that's why I drink, Másha, in order to feel those same sensations which that swallow experiences.... Hurl yourself whithersoever you will, soar wheresoever you take a fancy...."

"But to what end?"—interrupted Másha.

"What do you mean by that? What is one to live on then?"

"But isn't it possible to get along without liquor?"

"No, it is not; we are all damaged, rumpled. There's passion ... it produces the same effect. That's why I love you."

"Like wine.... I'm much obliged to you."

"No, Másha, I do not love you like wine. Stay, I'll prove it to you sometime,—when we are married, say, and go abroad together. Do you know, I am planning in advance how I shall lead you in front of the Venus of Milo. At this point it will be appropriate to say:

"And when she stands with serious eyes
Before the Chyprian of Milos—

Twain are they, and the marble in comparison
Suffers, it would seem, affront....

"What makes me talk constantly in poetry to-day? It must be that this morning is affecting me. What air! 'Tis exactly as though one were quaffing wine."

"Wine again,"—remarked Márya Pávlovna.

"What of that! A morning like this, and you with me, and not feel intoxicated! 'With serious eyes....' Yes,"—pursued Véretyeff, gazing intently at Márya Pávlovna,—"that is so.... For I remember, I have beheld, rarely, but yet I have beheld these dark, magnificent eyes, I have beheld them tender! And how beautiful they are then! Come, don't turn away, Másha; pray, smile at least ... show me your eyes merry, at all events, if they will not vouchsafe me a tender glance."

"Stop, Véretyeff,"—said Márya Pávlovna.—"Release me! It is time for me to go home."

"But I'm going to make you laugh,"—interposed Véretyeff; "by Heaven, I will make you laugh. Eh, by the way, yonder runs a hare...."

"Where?"—asked Márya Pávlovna.

"Yonder, beyond the ravine, across the field of oats. Some one must have startled it; they don't run in the morning. I'll stop it on the instant, if you like."

And Véretyeff whistled loudly. The hare immediately squatted, twitched its ears, drew up its fore paws, straightened itself up, munched, sniffed the air, and again began to munch with its lips. Véretyeff promptly squatted down on his heels, like the hare, and began to twitch his nose, sniff, and munch like it. The hare passed its paws twice across its muzzle and shook itself,—they must have been wet with dew,—stiffened its ears, and bounded onward. Véretyeff rubbed his hands over his cheeks and shook himself also.... Márya Pávlovna could not hold out, and burst into a laugh.

"Bravo!"—cried Véretyeff, springing up. "Bravo! That's exactly the point—you are not a coquette. Do you know, if any fashionable young lady had such teeth as you have she would laugh incessantly. But that's precisely why I love you, Másha, because you are not a fashionable young lady, don't laugh without cause, and don't wear gloves on your hands, which it is a joy to kiss, because they are sunburned, and one feels their strength.... I love you, because you don't argue, because you are proud, taciturn, don't read books, don't love poetry...."

"I'll recite some verses to you, shall I?"—Márya Pávlovna interrupted him, with a certain peculiar expression on her face.

"Verses?"—inquired Véretyeff, in amazement.

"Yes, verses; the very ones which that Petersburg gentleman recited last night."

"'The Upas-Tree' again?... So you really were declaiming in the garden, by night? That's just like you.... But does it really please you so much?"

"Yes, it does."

"Recite it."

Márya Pávlovna was seized with shyness....

"Recite it, recite it,"—repeated Véretyeff.

Márya Pávlovna began to recite; Véretyeff stood in front of her, with his arms folded on his breast, and bent himself to listen. At the first line Márya Pávlovna raised her eyes heavenward; she did not wish to encounter Véretyeff's gaze. She recited in her even, soft voice, which reminded one of the sound of a violoncello; but when she reached the lines:

"And the poor slave expired at the feet
Of his invincible sovereign...."

her voice began to quiver, her impassive, haughty brows rose ingenuously, like those of a little girl, and her eyes, with involuntary devotion, fixed themselves on Véretyeff....

He suddenly threw himself at her feet and embraced her knees.

"I am thy slave!"—he cried.—"I am at thy feet, thou art my sovereign, my goddess, my ox-eyed Hera, my Medea...."

Márya Pávlovna attempted to repulse him, but her hands sank helplessly in his thick curls, and, with a smile of confusion, she dropped her head on her breast....

V

Gavríla Stepánitch Akílin, at whose house the ball was appointed, belonged to the category of landed proprietors who evoked the admiration of the neighbours by their ingenuity in living well on very insignificant means. Although he did not own more than four hundred serfs, he was in the habit of entertaining the whole government in a huge stone mansion, with a tower and a flag on the tower, erected by himself. The property had descended to him from his father, and had never been distinguished for being well ordered; Gavríla Stepánitch had been an absentee for a long time—had been in the service in Petersburg. At last, twenty-five years before the date of our story, he returned to his native place, with the rank of Collegiate Assessor,[24] and, with a wife and three daughters, had simultaneously undertaken reorganisation and building operations, had gradually set up an orchestra, and had begun to give dinners. At first everybody had prophesied for him speedy and inevitable ruin; more than once rumours had become current to the effect that Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was to be sold under the hammer; but the years passed, dinners, balls, banquets, concerts, followed each other in their customary order, new buildings sprang out of the earth like mushrooms, and still Gavríla Stepánitch's estate was not sold under the hammer, and he himself continued to live as before, and had even grown stout of late.

Then the neighbours' gossip took another direction; they began to hint at certain vast sums which were said to be concealed; they talked of a treasure.... "And if he were only a good farmer, ..." so argued the nobles among themselves; "but that's just what he isn't, you know! Not at all! So it is deserving of surprise, and incomprehensible." However that may have been, every one went very gladly to Gavríla Stepánitch's house. He received his guests cordially, and played cards for any stake they liked. He was a grey-haired little man, with a small, pointed head, a yellow face, and yellow eyes, always carefully shaven and perfumed with eau-de-cologne; both on ordinary days and on holidays he wore a roomy blue dress-coat, buttoned to the chin, a large stock, in which he had a habit of hiding his chin, and he was foppishly fastidious about his linen; he screwed up his eyes and thrust out his lips when he took snuff, and spoke very politely and softly, incessantly employing the letter *s*.[25]

In appearance, Gavríla Stepánitch was not distinguished by vivacity, and, in general, his exterior was not prepossessing, and he did not look like a clever man, although, at times, craft gleamed in his eye. He had settled his two elder daughters advantageously; the youngest was still at home, and of marriageable age. Gavríla Stepánitch also had a wife, an insignificant and wordless being.

At seven o'clock in the evening, Vladímir Sergyéitch presented himself at the Ipátoffs' in dress-suit and white gloves. He found them all entirely dressed; the little girls were sitting sedately, afraid of mussing their starched white frocks; old Ipátoff, on catching sight of Vladímir Sergyéitch in his dress-suit, affectionately upbraided him, and pointed to his own frock-coat; Márya Pávlovna wore a muslin gown of a deep rose colour, which was extremely becoming to her. Vladímir Sergyéitch paid her several compliments. Márya Pávlovna's beauty attracted him, although she was evidently shy of him; he also liked Nadézhda Alexyéevna, but her free-and-easy manners somewhat disconcerted him. Moreover, in her remarks, her looks, her very smiles, mockery frequently peeped forth, and this disturbed his

citified and well-bred soul. He would not have been averse to making fun of others with her, but it was unpleasant to him to think that she was probably capable of jeering at himself.

The ball had already begun; a good many guests had assembled, and the home-bred orchestra was crashing and booming and screeching in the gallery, when the Ipátoff family, accompanied by Vladímir Sergyéitch, entered the hall of the Akílin house. The host met them at the very door, thanked Vladímir Sergyéitch for his tender procuration of an agreeable surprise,—that was the way he expressed himself,—and, taking Ipátoff's arm, he led him to the drawing-room, to the card-tables. Gavríla Stepánitch had received a bad education, and everything in his house, both the music and the furniture and the food and the wines, not only could not be called first-class, but were not even fit to be ranked as second-class. On the other hand, there was plenty of everything, and he himself did not put on airs, was not arrogant ... the nobles demanded nothing more from him, and were entirely satisfied with his entertainment. At supper, for instance, the caviare was served cut up in chunks and heavily salted; but no one objected to your taking it in your fingers, and there was plenty wherewith to wash it down: wines which were cheap, it is true, but were made from grapes, nevertheless, and not some other concoction. The springs in Gavríla Stepánitch's furniture were rather uncomfortable, owing to their stiffness and inflexibility; but, not to mention the fact that there were no springs whatever in many of the couches and easy-chairs, any one could place under him a worsted cushion, and there was a great number of such cushions lying about, embroidered by the hands of Gavríla Stepánitch's spouse herself—and then there was nothing left to desire.

In a word, Gavríla Stepánitch's house could not possibly have been better adapted to the sociable and unceremonious style of ideas of the inhabitants of *** county, and it was solely owing to Mr. Akílin's modesty that at the assemblies of the nobility he was not elected Marshal, but a retired Major Podpékin, a greatly respected and worthy man, despite the fact that he brushed his hair over to

the right temple from the left ear, dyed his moustache a lilac hue, and as he suffered from asthma, had of late fallen into melancholy.

So, then, the ball had already begun. They were dancing a quadrille of ten pairs. The cavaliers were the officers of a regiment stationed close by, and divers not very youthful squires, and two or three officials from the town. Everything was as it should be, everything was proceeding in due order. The Marshal of the Nobility was playing cards with a retired Actual Councillor of State,[26] and a wealthy gentleman, the owner of three thousand souls. The actual state councillor wore on his forefinger a ring with a diamond, talked very softly, kept the heels of his boots closely united, and did not move them from the position used by dancers of former days, and did not turn his head, which was half concealed by a capital velvet collar. The wealthy gentleman, on the contrary, was constantly laughing at something or other, elevating his eyebrows, and flashing the whites of his eyes. The poet Bodryakóff, a man of shy and clumsy aspect, was chatting in a corner with the learned historian Evsiukóff: each had clutched the other by the button. Beside them, one noble, with a remarkably long waist, was expounding certain audacious opinions to another noble who was timidly staring at his forehead. Along the wall sat the mammas in gay-hued caps; around the doors pressed the men of simple cut, young fellows with perturbed faces, and elderly fellows with peaceable ones; but one cannot describe everything. We repeat: everything was as it should be.

Nadézhda Alexyéevna had arrived even earlier than the Ipátoffs; Vladímir Sergyéitch saw her dancing with a young man of handsome appearance in a dandified dress-suit, with expressive eyes, thin black moustache, and gleaming teeth; a gold chain hung in a semicircle on his stomach. Nadézhda Alexyéevna wore a light-blue gown with white flowers; a small garland of the same flowers encircled her curly head; she was smiling, fluttering her fan, and gaily gazing about her; she felt that she was the queen of the ball. Vladímir Sergyéitch approached her, made his obeisance,

and looking her pleasantly in the face, he asked her whether she remembered her promise of the day before.

"What promise?"

"Why, that you would dance the mazurka with me."

"Yes, of course I will dance it with you."

The young man who stood alongside Nadézhda Alexyéevna suddenly flushed crimson.

"You have probably forgotten, mademoiselle,"—he began,—"that you had already previously promised to-day's mazurka to me."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna became confused.

"Akh! good heavens, what am I to do?"—she said:—"excuse me, pray, M'sieu Steltchínsky, I am so absent-minded; I really am ashamed...."

M'sieu Steltchínsky made no reply, and merely dropped his eyes; Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a slight air of dignity.

"Be so good, M'sieu Steltchínsky,"—went on Nadézhda Alexyéevna; "you and I are old acquaintances, but M'sieu Astákhoff is a stranger among us; do not place me in an awkward position: permit me to dance with him."

"As you please,"—returned the young man.—"But you must begin."

"Thanks,"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna, and fluttered off to meet her vis-à-vis.

Steltchínsky followed her with his eyes, then looked at Vladímir Sergyéitch. Vladímir Sergyéitch, in his turn, looked at him, then stepped aside.

The quadrille soon came to an end. Vladímir Sergyéitch strolled about the hall a little, then he betook himself to the drawing-room and paused at one of the card-tables. Suddenly he felt some one

touch his hand from behind; he turned round—before him stood Steltchínsky.

"I must have a couple of words with you in the next room, if you will permit,"—said the latter, in French, very courteously, and with an accent which was not Russian.

Vladímir Sergyéitch followed him.

Steltchínsky halted at a window.

"In the presence of ladies,"—he began, in the same language as before,—"I could not say anything else than what I did say; but I hope you do not think that I really intend to surrender to you my right to the mazurka with M-lle Véretyeff."

Vladímir Sergyéitch was astounded.

"Why so?"—he asked.

"Because, sir,"—replied Steltchínsky, quietly, laying his hand on his breast and inflating his nostrils,—"I don't intend to,—that's all."

Vladímir Sergyéitch also laid his hand on his breast, but did not inflate his nostrils.

"Permit me to remark to you, my dear sir,"—he began,—"that by this course you may drag M-lle Véretyeff into unpleasantness, and I assume...."

"That would be extremely unpleasant to me, but no one can prevent your declining, declaring that you are ill, or going away...."

"I shall not do it. For whom do you take me?"

"In that case, I shall be compelled to demand satisfaction from you."

"In what sense do you mean ... satisfaction?"

"The sense is evident."

"You will challenge me to a duel?"

"Precisely so, sir, if you do not renounce the mazurka."

Steltchínsky endeavoured to utter these words as negligently as possible. Vladímir Sergyéitch's heart set to beating violently. He looked his wholly unexpected antagonist in the face. "Phew, O Lord, what stupidity!" he thought.

"You are not jesting?"—he articulated aloud.

"I am not in the habit of jesting in general,"—replied Steltchínsky, pompously;—"and particularly with people whom I do not know. You will not renounce the mazurka?"—he added, after a brief pause.

"I will not,"—retorted Vladímir Sergyéitch, as though deliberating.

"Very good! We will fight to-morrow."

"Very well."

"To-morrow morning my second will call upon you."

And with a courteous inclination, Steltchínsky withdrew, evidently well pleased with himself.

Vladímir Sergyéitch remained a few minutes longer by the window.

"Just look at that, now!"—he thought.—"This is the result of thy new acquaintances! What possessed me to come? Good! Splendid!"

But at last he recovered himself, and went out into the hall.

In the hall they were already dancing the polka. Before Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes Márya Pávlovna flitted past with Piótr Alexyéitch, whom he had not noticed up to that moment; she seemed pale, and even sad; then Nadézhda Alexyéevna darted past, all beaming and joyous, with some youthful, bow-legged, but fiery artillery officer; on the second round, she was dancing with Steltchínsky. Steltchínsky shook his hair violently when he danced.

"Well, my dear fellow,"—suddenly rang out Ipátoff's voice behind Vladímir Sergyéitch's back;—"you're only looking on, but not dancing yourself? Come, confess that, in spite of the fact that we live in a dead-calm region, so to speak, we aren't badly off, are we, hey?"

"Good! damn the dead-calm region!" thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and mumbling something in reply to Ipátoff, he went off to another corner of the hall.

"I must hunt up a second,"—he pursued his meditations;—"but where the devil am I to find one? I can't take Véretyeff; I know no others; the devil only knows what a stupid affair this is!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch, when he got angry, was fond of mentioning the devil.

At this moment, Vladímir Sergyéitch's eyes fell upon The Folding Soul, Iván Ílitch, standing idly by the window.

"Wouldn't he do?"—he thought, and shrugging his shoulders, he added almost aloud:—"I shall have to take him."

Vladímir Sergyéitch stepped up to him.

"A very strange thing has just happened to me,"—began our hero with a forced smile:—"just imagine some young man or other, a stranger to me, has challenged me to a duel; it is utterly impossible for me to refuse; I am in indispensable need of a second: will not you act?"

Although Iván Ílitch was characterised, as we know, by imperturbable indifference, yet such an unexpected proposition startled even him. Thoroughly perplexed, he riveted his eyes on Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes,"—repeated Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"I should be greatly indebted to you. I am not acquainted with any one here. You alone...."

"I can't,"—said Iván Ílitch, as though just waking up;—"I absolutely can't."

"Why not? You are afraid of unpleasantness; but all this will, I hope, remain a secret...."

As he spoke these words, Vladímir Sergyéitch felt himself blushing and growing confused.

"Excuse me, I can't possibly,"—repeated Iván Ílitch, shaking his head and drawing back, in which operation he again overturned a chair.

For the first time in his life it was his lot to reply to a request by a refusal; but then, the request was such a queer one!

"At any rate,"—pursued Vladímir Sergyéitch, in an agitated voice, as he grasped his hand,—"do me the favour not to speak to any one concerning what I have said to you. I earnestly entreat this of you."

"I can do that, I can do that,"—hastily replied Iván Ílitch;—"but the other thing I cannot do, say what you will; I positively am unable to do it."

"Well, very good, very good,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch;—"but do not forget that I rely on your discretion.... I shall announce to-morrow to that gentleman," he muttered to himself with vexation,—"that I could not find a second, so let him make what arrangements he sees fit, for I am a stranger here. And the devil prompted me to apply to that gentleman! But what else was there for me to do?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch was very, very unlike his usual self.

In the meantime, the ball went on. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have greatly liked to depart at once, but departure was not to be thought of until the end of the mazurka. How was he to give up to his delighted antagonist? Unhappily for Vladímir Sergyéitch, the dances were in charge of a free-and-easy young gentleman with long hair and a sunken chest, over which, in semblance of a

miniature waterfall, meandered a black satin neckcloth, transfixed with a huge gold pin. This young gentleman had the reputation, throughout the entire government, of being a man who had assimilated, in their most delicate details, all the customs and rules of the highest society, although he had lived in Petersburg only six months altogether, and had not succeeded in penetrating any loftier heights than the houses of Collegiate Assessor Sandaráki and his brother-in-law, State Councillor Kostandaráki. He superintended the dances at all balls, gave the signal to the musicians by clapping his hands, and in the midst of the roar of the trumpets and the squeaking of the violins shouted: "*En avant deux!*" or "*Grande chaîne!*" or "*A vous, mademoiselle!*" and was incessantly flying, all pale and perspiring, through the hall, slipping headlong, and bowing and scraping. He never began the mazurka before midnight. "And that is a concession,"—he was wont to say;—"in Petersburg I would keep you in torment until two o'clock."

This ball seemed very long to Vladímir Sergyéitch. He prowled about like a shadow from hall to drawing-room, now and again exchanging cold glances with his antagonist, who never missed a single dance, and undertook to invite Márya Pávlovna for a quadrille, but she was already engaged—and a couple of times he bandied words with the anxious host, who appeared to be harassed by the tedium which was written on the countenance of the new guest. At last, the music of the longed-for mazurka thundered out. Vladímir Sergyéitch hunted up his lady, brought two chairs, and seated himself with her, near the end of the circle, almost opposite Steltchínsky.

The young man who managed affairs was in the first pair, as might have been expected. With what a face he began the mazurka, how he dragged his lady after him, how he beat the floor with his foot, and twitched his head the while,—all this is almost beyond the power of human pen to describe.

“But it seems to me, M’sieu Astákhoff, that you are bored,”—began Nadézhda Alexyéevna, suddenly turning to Vladímir Sergyéitch.

“I? Not in the least. What makes you think so?”

“Why, because I do from the expression of your face.... You have never smiled a single time since you arrived. I had not expected that of you. It is not becoming to you positive gentlemen to be misanthropical and to frown à la Byron. Leave that to the authors.”

“I notice, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, that you frequently call me a positive man, as though mockingly. It must be that you regard me as the coldest and most sensible of beings, incapable of anything which.... But do you know, I will tell you something; a positive man is often very sad at heart, but he does not consider it necessary to display to others what is going on there inside of him; he prefers to hold his peace.”

“What do you mean by that?”—inquired Nadézhda Alexyéevna, surveying him with a glance.

“Nothing, ma’am,”—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, with feigned indifference, assuming an air of mystery.

“Really?”

“Really, nothing.... You shall know some day, later on.”

Nadézhda Alexyéevna wanted to pursue her questions, but at that moment a young girl, the host’s daughter, led up to her Steltchínsky and another cavalier in blue spectacles.

“Life or death?”—she asked in French.

“Life,”—exclaimed Nadézhda Alexyéevna; “I don’t want death just yet.”

Steltchínsky bowed; she went off with him.[27]

The cavalier in the blue glasses, who was called Death, started off with the host's daughter. Steltchínsky had invented the two designations.

"Tell me, please, who is that Mr. Steltchínsky?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna, as soon as the latter returned to her place.

"He is attached to the Governor's service, and is a very agreeable man. He does not belong in these parts. He is somewhat of a coxcomb, but that runs in the blood of all of them. I hope you have not had any explanations with him on account of the mazurka?"

"None whatever, I assure you,"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, with a little hesitation.

"I'm such a forgetful creature! You can't imagine!"

"I am bound to be delighted with your forgetfulness: it has afforded me the pleasure of dancing with you to-night."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna gazed at him, with her eyes slightly narrowed.

"Really? You find it agreeable to dance with me?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch answered her with a compliment. Little by little he got to talking freely. Nadézhda Alexyéevna was always charming, and particularly so that evening; Vladímir Sergyéitch thought her enchanting. The thought of the duel on the morrow, while it fretted his nerves, imparted brilliancy and vivacity to his remarks; under its influence he permitted himself slight exaggerations in the expression of his feelings.... "I don't care!" he thought. Something mysterious, involuntarily sad, something elegantly-hopeless peeped forth in all his words, in his suppressed sighs, in his glances which suddenly darkened. At last, he got to chattering to such a degree that he began to discuss love, women, his future, the manner in which he conceived of happiness, what he demanded of Fate.... He explained himself allegorically, by

hints. On the eve of his possible death, Vladímir Sergyéitch flirted with Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

She listened to him attentively, laughed, shook her head, now disputed with him, again pretended to be incredulous.... The conversation, frequently interrupted by the approach of ladies and cavaliers, took a rather strange turn toward the end.... Vladímir Sergyéitch had already begun to interrogate Nadézhda Alexyéevna about herself, her character, her sympathies. At first she parried the questions with a jest, then, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly to Vladímir Sergyéitch, she asked him when he was going away.

"Whither?"—he said, in surprise.

"To your own home."

"To Sásovo?"

"No, home, to your village, a hundred versts from here."

Vladímir Sergyéitch cast down his eyes.

"I should like to go as promptly as possible,"—he said with a preoccupied look on his face.—"To-morrow, I think ... if I am alive. For I have business on hand. But why have you suddenly taken it into your head to ask me about that?"

"Because I have!"—retorted Nadézhda Alexyéevna.

"But what is the reason?"

"Because I have!"—she repeated.—"I am surprised at the curiosity of a man who is going away to-morrow, and to-day wants to find out about my character...."

"But, pardon me ..." began Vladímir Sergyéitch....

"Ah, here, by the way ... read this,"—Nadézhda Alexyéevna interrupted him with a laugh, as she handed him a motto-slip of paper from bonbons which she had just taken from a small table

that stood near by, as she rose to meet Márya Pávlovna, who had stopped in front of her with another lady.

Márya Pávlovna was dancing with Piótr Alexyéitch. Her face was covered with a flush, and was flaming, but not cheerful.

Vladímir Sergyéitch glanced at the slip of paper; thereon, in wretched French letters, was printed:

"*Qui me néglige me perd.*"

He raised his eyes, and encountered Steltchínsky's gaze bent upon him. Vladímir Sergyéitch smiled constrainedly, threw his elbow over the back of the chair, and crossed his legs—as much as to say: "I don't care for thee!"

The fiery artillery officer brought Nadézhda Alexyéevna up to her chair with a dash, pirouetted gently in front of her, bowed, clicked his spurs, and departed. She sat down.

"Allow me to inquire,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch, with pauses between his words,—"in what sense I am to understand this billet?..."

"But what in the world does it say?"—said Nadézhda Alexyéevna.—"Ah, yes! '*Qui me néglige me perd.*' Well! that's an admirable rule of life, which may be of service at every step. In order to make a success of anything, no matter what, one must not neglect anything whatsoever.... One must endeavour to obtain everything; perhaps one will obtain something. But I am ridiculous. I ... I am talking to you, a practical man, about rules of life...."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna burst into a laugh, and Vladímir Sergyéitch strove, in vain, to the very end of the mazurka, to renew their previous conversation. Nadézhda Alexyéevna avoided it with the perversity of a capricious child. Vladímir Sergyéitch talked to her about his sentiments, and she either did not reply to him at all, or else she called his attention to the gowns of the ladies, to the ridiculous faces of some of the men, to the skill with which her

brother danced, to the beauty of Márya Pávlovna; she began to talk about music, about the day before, about Egór Kapítonitch and his wife, Matryóna Márkovna ... and only at the very close of the mazurka, when Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to make her his farewell bow, did she say, with an ironical smile on her lips and in her eyes:

"So you are positively going to-morrow?"

"Yes; and very far away, perhaps,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, significantly.

"I wish you a happy journey."

And Nadézhda Alexyéevna swiftly approached her brother, merrily whispered something in his ear, then asked aloud:

"Grateful to me? Yes? art thou not? otherwise he would have asked *her* for the mazurka."

He shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"Nevertheless, nothing will come of it...."

She led him off into the drawing-room.

"The flirt!"—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, and taking his hat in his hand, he slipped unnoticed from the hall, hunted up his footman, to whom he had previously given orders to hold himself in readiness, and was already donning his overcoat, when suddenly, to his intense surprise, the lackey informed him that it was impossible to depart, as the coachman, in some unknown manner, had drunk to intoxication, and that it was utterly impossible to arouse him. After cursing the coachman in a remarkably brief but extremely powerful manner (this took place in the anteroom, outside witnesses were present), and informing his footman that if the coachman was not in proper condition by daylight to-morrow, then no one in the world would be capable of picturing to himself what the result would be, Vladímir Sergyéitch returned to the hall, and requested the major-domo to allot him a chamber, without waiting for supper, which was already prepared in the

drawing-room. The master of the house suddenly popped up, as it were, out of the floor, at Vladímir Sergyéitch's very elbow (Gavríla Stepánitch wore boots without heels, and therefore moved about without the slightest sound), and began to hold him back, assuring him that there would be caviar of the very best quality for supper; but Vladímir Sergyéitch excused himself on the plea of a headache. Half an hour later he was lying in a small bed, under a short coverlet, and trying to get to sleep.

But he could not get to sleep. Toss as he would from side to side, strive as he would to think of something else, the figure of Steltchínsky importunately towered up before him.... Now he is taking aim ... now he has fired.... "Astákhoff is killed," says some one. Vladímir Sergyéitch could not be called a brave man, yet he was no coward; but even the thought of a duel, no matter with whom, had never once entered his head.... Fight! with his good sense, peaceable disposition, respect for the conventions, dreams of future prosperity, and an advantageous marriage! If it had not been a question of his own person, he would have laughed heartily, so stupid and ridiculous did this affair seem to him. Fight! with whom, and about what?!

"Phew! damn it! what nonsense!"—he exclaimed involuntarily aloud.—"Well, and what if he really does kill me?"—he continued his meditations;—"I must take measures, make arrangements.... Who will mourn for me?"

And in vexation he closed his eyes, which were staringly-wide open, drew the coverlet up around his neck ... but could not get to sleep, nevertheless....

Dawn was already breaking, and exhausted with the fever of insomnia, Vladímir Sergyéitch was beginning to fall into a doze, when suddenly he felt some weight or other on his feet. He opened his eyes.... On his bed sat Véretyeff.

Vladímir Sergyéitch was greatly amazed, especially when he noticed that Véretyeff had no coat on, that beneath his unbuttoned shirt his bare breast was visible, that his hair was tumbling over his

forehead, and that his very face appeared changed. Vladímir Sergyéitch got half-way out of bed....

"Allow me to ask ..." he began, throwing his hands apart....

"I have come to you,"—said Véretyeff, in a hoarse voice;—"excuse me for coming in such a guise.... We have been drinking a bit yonder. I wanted to put you at ease. I said to myself: 'Yonder lies a gentleman who, in all probability, cannot get to sleep.—Let's help him.'—Understand; you are not going to fight to-morrow, and can go to sleep...."

Vladímir Sergyéitch was still more amazed than before.

"What was that you said?"—he muttered.

"Yes; that has all been adjusted,"—went on Véretyeff;—"that gentleman from the banks of the Visla ... Steltchínsky ... makes his apologies to you ... to-morrow you will receive a letter.... I repeat to you:—all is settled.... Snore away."

So saying, Véretyeff rose, and directed his course, with unsteady steps, toward the door.

"But permit me, permit me,"—began Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"How could you have found out, and how can I believe...."

"Akh! you think that I ... you know ..." (and he reeled forward slightly).... "I tell you ... he will send a letter to you to-morrow.... You do not arouse any particular sympathy in me, but magnanimity is my weak side. But what's the use of talking.... It's all nonsense anyway.... But confess,"—he added, with a wink;—"you were pretty well scared, weren't you, hey?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch flew into a rage.

"Permit me, in conclusion, my dear sir,"—said he....

"Well, good, good,"—Véretyeff interrupted him with a good-natured smile.—"Don't fly into a passion. Evidently you are not aware that no ball ever takes place without that sort of thing. That's the established rule. It never amounts to anything. Who

feels like exposing his brow? Well, and why not bluster, hey? at newcomers, for instance? *In vino veritas.* However, neither you nor I know Latin. But I see by your face that you are sleepy. I wish you good night, Mr. Positive Man, well-intentioned mortal. Accept this wish from another mortal who isn't worth a brass farthing himself. *Addio, mio caro!*"

And Véretyeff left the room.

"The devil knows what this means!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause, banging his fist into the pillow;—"no one ever heard the like!... this must be cleared up! I won't tolerate this!"

Nevertheless, five minutes later he was already sleeping softly and profoundly.... Danger escaped fills the soul of man with sweetness, and softens it.

This is what had taken place before that unanticipated nocturnal interview between Véretyeff and Vladímir Sergyéitch.

In Gavríla Stepánitch's house lived his grand-nephew, who occupied bachelor quarters in the lower story. When there were balls on hand, the young men dropped in at his rooms between the dances, to smoke a hasty pipe, and after supper they assembled there for a friendly drinking-bout. A good many of the guests had dropped in on him that night. Steltchínsky and Véretyeff were among the number; Iván Ílitch, The Folding Soul, also wandered in there in the wake of the others. They brewed a punch. Although Iván Ílitch had promised Astákhoff that he would not mention the impending duel to any one whomsoever, yet, when Véretyeff accidentally asked him what he had been talking about with that glum fellow (Véretyeff never alluded to Astákhoff otherwise), The Folding Soul could not contain himself, and repeated his entire conversation with Vladímir Sergyéitch, word for word.

Véretyeff burst out laughing, then lapsed into meditation.

"But with whom is he going to fight?"—he asked.

"That's what I cannot say,"—returned Iván Ílitch.

"At all events, with whom has he been talking?"

"With different people.... With Egór Kapítonitch. It cannot be that he is going to fight with him?'

Véretyeff went away from Iván Ílitch.

So, then, they made a punch, and began to drink. Véretyeff was sitting in the most conspicuous place. Jolly and profligate, he held the pre-eminence in gatherings of young men. He threw off his waistcoat and neckcloth. He was asked to sing; he took a guitar and sang several songs. Heads began to wax rather hot; the young men began to propose toasts. Suddenly Steltchínsky, all red in the face, sprang upon the table, and elevating his glass high above his head, exclaimed loudly:

"To the health ... of I know whom,"—he hastily caught himself up, drank off his liquor, and smashed his glass on the floor, adding:—"May my foe be shivered into just such pieces to-morrow!"

Véretyeff, who had long had his eye on him, swiftly raised his head....

"Steltchínsky,"—said he,—"in the first place, get off the table; that's indecorous, and you have very bad boots into the bargain; and, in the second place, come hither, I will tell thee something."

He led him aside.

"Hearken, brother; I know that thou art going to fight to-morrow with that gentleman from Petersburg."

Steltchínsky started.

"How ... who told thee?"

"I tell thee it is so. And I also know on whose account thou art going to fight."

"Who is it? I am curious to know."

"Akh, get out with thee, thou Talleyrand! My sister's, of course. Come, come, don't pretend to be surprised. It gives you a goose-like expression. I can't imagine how this has come about, but it is a fact. That will do, my good fellow,"—pursued Véretyeff.—"What's the use of shamming? I know, you see, that you have been paying court to her this long time."

"But, nevertheless, that does not prove...."

"Stop, if you please. But hearken to what I am about to say to you. I won't permit that duel under any circumstances whatsoever. Dost understand? All this folly will descend upon my sister. Excuse me: so long as I am alive ... that shall not be. As for thou and I, we shall perish—we're on the road to it; but she must live a long time yet, and live happily. Yes, I swear,"—he added, with sudden heat,—"that I will betray all others, even those who might be ready to sacrifice everything for me, but I will not permit any one to touch a single hair of her head."

Steltchínsky emitted a forced laugh.

"Thou art drunk, my dear fellow, and art raving ... that's all."

"And art not thou, I'd like to know? But whether I am drunk or not, is a matter of not the slightest consequence. But I'm talking business. Thou shalt not fight with that gentleman, I guarantee that. And what in the world possessed thee to have anything to do with him? Hast grown jealous, pray? Well, those speak the truth who say that men in love are stupid! Why she danced with him simply in order to prevent his inviting.... Well, but that's not the point. But this duel shall not take place."

"H'm! I should like to see how thou wilt prevent me?"

"Well, then, this way: if thou dost not instantly give me thy word to renounce this duel, I will fight with thee myself."

"Really?"

"My dear fellow, entertain no doubt on that score. I will insult thee on the spot, my little friend, in the presence of every one, in the

most fantastic manner, and then fight thee across a handkerchief, if thou wilt. But I think that will be disagreeable to thee, for many reasons, hey?"

Steltchínsky flared up, began to say that this was *intimidation*,[28] that he would not permit any one to meddle with his affairs, that he would not stick at anything ... and wound up by submitting, and renouncing all attempts on the life of Vladímir Sergyéitch. Véretyeff embraced him, and half an hour had not elapsed, before the two had already drunk Brüderschaft for the tenth time,—that is to say, they drank with arms interlocked.... The young man who had acted as floor-manager of the ball also drank Brüderschaft with them, and at first clung close to them, but finally fell asleep in the most innocent manner, and lay for a long time on his back in a condition of complete insensibility.... The expression of his tiny, pale face was both amusing and pitiful.... Good heavens! what would those fashionable ladies, his acquaintances, have said, if they had beheld him in that condition! But, luckily for him, he was not acquainted with a single fashionable lady.

Iván Ílitch also distinguished himself on that night. First he amazed the guests by suddenly striking up: "In the country a Baron once dwelt."

"The hawfinch! The hawfinch has begun to sing!"—shouted all. "When has it ever happened that a hawfinch has sung by night?"

"As though I knew only one song,"—retorted Iván Ílitch, who was heated with liquor;—"I know some more, too."

"Come, come, come, show us your art."

Iván Ílitch maintained silence for a while, and suddenly struck up in a bass voice: "Krambambuli,[29] bequest of our fathers!" but so incoherently and strangely, that a general outburst of laughter immediately drowned his voice, and he fell silent. When all had dispersed, Véretyeff betook himself to Vladímir Sergyéitch, and the brief conversation already reported, ensued between them.

On the following day, Vladímir Sergyéitch drove off to his own Sásovo very early. He passed the whole morning in a state of excitement, came near mistaking a passing merchant for a second, and breathed freely only when his lackey brought him a letter from Steltchínsky. Vladímir Sergyéitch perused that letter several times,—it was very adroitly worded.... Steltchínsky began with the words: "*La nuit porte conseil, Monsieur*,"—made no excuses whatever, because, in his opinion, he had not insulted his antagonist in any way; but admitted that he had been somewhat irritated on the preceding evening, and wound up with the statement that he held himself entirely at the disposition of Mr. Astákhoff ("*de M-r Astákhoff*"), but no longer demanded satisfaction himself. After having composed and despatched a reply, which was filled, simultaneously with courtesy which bordered on playfulness, and a sense of dignity, in which, however, no trace of braggadocio was perceptible, Vladímir Sergyéitch sat down to dinner, rubbing his hands, ate with great satisfaction, and immediately afterward set off, without having even sent relays on in advance. The road along which he drove passed at a distance of four versts from Ipátoff's manor.... Vladímir Sergyéitch looked at it.

"Farewell, region of dead calm!"—he said with a smile.

The images of Nadézhda Alexyéevna and Márya Pávlovna presented themselves for a moment to his imagination; he dismissed them with a wave of his hand, and sank into a doze.

VI

More than three months had passed. Autumn had long since set in; the yellow forests had grown bare, the tomtits had arrived, and—unfailing sign of the near approach of winter—the wind had begun to howl and wail. But there had been no heavy rains, as yet, and mud had not succeeded in spreading itself over the roads. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Vladímir Sergyéitch set out for the government capital, for the purpose of winding up several matters of business. He spent the morning in driving about, and in the evening went to the club. In the vast, gloomy hall of the club he encountered several acquaintances, and, among others, the old retired captain of cavalry Flitch, a busybody, wit, gambler, and gossip, well known to every one. Vladímir Sergyéitch entered into conversation with him.

"Ah, by the way!"—suddenly exclaimed the retired cavalry-captain; "an acquaintance of yours passed through here the other day, and left her compliments for you."

"Who was she?"

"Madame Steltchínsky."

"I don't know any Madame Steltchínsky."

"You knew her as a girl.... She was born Véretyeff.... Nadézhda Alexyéevna. Her husband served our Governor. You must have seen him also.... A lively man, with a moustache.... He's hooked a splendid woman, with money to boot."

"You don't say so,"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"So she has married him.... H'm! And where have they gone?"

"To Petersburg. She also bade me remind you of a certain bonbon motto.... What sort of a motto was it, allow me to inquire?"

And the old gossip thrust forward his sharp nose.

"I don't remember, really; some jest or other,"—returned Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"But permit me to ask, where is her brother now?"

"Piótr? Well, he's in a bad way."

Mr. Flitch rolled up his small, foxy eyes, and heaved a sigh.

"Why, what's the matter?"—asked Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"He has taken to dissipation! He's a ruined man."

"But where is he now?"

"It is absolutely unknown where he is. He went off somewhere or other after a gipsy girl; that's the most certain thing of all. He's not in this government, I'll guarantee that."

"And does old Ipátoff still live there?"

"Mikhaíl Nikoláitch? That eccentric old fellow? Yes, he still lives there."

"And is everything in his household ... as it used to be?"

"Certainly, certainly. Here now, why don't you marry his sister-in-law? She's not a woman, you know, she's simply a monument, really. Ha, ha! People have already been talking among us ... 'why,' say they...."

"You don't say so, sir,"—articulated Vladímir Sergyéitch, narrowing his eyes.

At that moment, Flitch was invited to a cardgame, and the conversation terminated.

Vladímir Sergyéitch had intended to return home promptly; but suddenly he received by special messenger a report from the overseer, that six of the peasants' homesteads had burned down in Sásovo, and he decided to go thither himself. The distance from the government capital to Sásovo was reckoned at sixty versts. Vladímir Sergyéitch arrived toward evening at the wing with which the reader is already acquainted, immediately gave orders that the overseer and clerk should be summoned, scolded them both in proper fashion, inspected the scene of the conflagration next morning, took the necessary measures, and after dinner, after

some wavering, set off to visit Ipátoff. Vladímir Sergyéitch would have remained at home, had he not heard from Flitch of Nadézhda Alexyéevna's departure; he did not wish to meet her; but he was not averse to taking another look at Márya Pávlovna.

Vladímir Sergyéitch, as on the occasion of his first visit, found Ipátoff busy at draughts with The Folding Soul. The old man was delighted to see him; yet it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though his face were troubled, and his speech did not flow freely and readily as of old.

Vladímir Sergyéitch exchanged a silent glance with Iván Ílitch. Both winced a little; but they speedily recovered their serenity.

"Are all your family well?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Yes, thank God, I thank you sincerely,"—replied Ipátoff.—"Only Márya Pávlovna isn't quite ... you know, she stays in her room most of the time."

"Has she caught cold?"

"No ... she just likes to. She will make her appearance at tea."

"And Egór Kapítonitch? What is he doing?"

"Akh! Egór Kapítonitch is a dead man. His wife has died."

"It cannot be!"

"She died in twenty-four hours, of cholera. You wouldn't know him now, he has become simply unrecognisable. 'Without Matryóna Márkovna,' he says, 'life is a burden to me. I shall die,' he says, 'and God be thanked,' he says; 'I don't wish to live,' says he. Yes, he's done for, poor fellow."

"Akh! good heavens, how unpleasant that is!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"Poor Egór Kapítonitch!"

All were silent for a time.

"I hear that your pretty neighbour has married,"—remarked Vladímir Sergyéitch, flushing faintly.

"Nadézhda Alexyéevna? Yes, she has."

Ipátoff darted a sidelong glance at Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"Certainly ... certainly, she has married and gone away."

"To Petersburg?"

"To St. Petersburg."

"Márya Pávlovna must miss her, I think. I believe they were great friends."

"Of course she misses her. That cannot be avoided. But as for friendship, I'll just tell you, that the friendship of girls is even worse than the friendship of men. So long as they are face to face, it's all right; but, otherwise, it vanishes."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, by Heaven, 'tis so! Take Nadézhda Alexyéevna, for example. She hasn't written to us since she went away; but how she promised, even vowed that she would! In truth, she's in no mood for that now."

"And has she been gone long?"

"Yes; it must be fully six weeks. She hurried off on the very day after the wedding, foreign fashion."

"I hear that her brother is no longer here, either?"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch, after a brief pause.

"No; he is not. They are city folk, you see; as though they would live long in the country!"

"And does no one know where he has gone?"

"No."

"He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear," remarked Iván Ílitch.

"He just went into a rage, and—slap-bang on the ear," repeated Ipátoff. "Well, and how about yourself, Vladímir Sergyéitch,—what nice things have you been doing?"—he added, wheeling round on his chair.

Vladímir Sergyéitch began to tell about himself; Ipátoff listened and listened to him, and at last exclaimed:

"But why doesn't Márya Pávlovna come? Thou hadst better go for her, Iván Ílitch."

Iván Ílitch left the room, and returning, reported that Márya Pávlovna would be there directly.

"What's the matter? Has she got a headache?"—inquired Ipátoff, in an undertone.

"Yes," replied Iván Ílitch.

The door opened, and Márya Pávlovna entered. Vladímir Sergyéitch rose, bowed, and could not utter a word, so great was his amazement: so changed was Márya Pávlovna since he had seen her the last time! The rosy bloom had vanished from her emaciated cheeks; a broad black ring encircled her eyes; her lips were bitterly compressed; her whole face, impassive and dark, seemed to have become petrified.

She raised her eyes, and there was no spark in them.

"How do you feel now?" Ipátoff asked her.

"I am well,"—she replied; and sat down at the table, on which the samovár was already bubbling.

Vladímir Sergyéitch was pretty thoroughly bored that evening. But no one was in good spirits. The conversation persisted in taking a cheerless turn.

"Just listen,"—said Ipátoff, among other things, as he lent an ear to the howling of the wind;—"what notes it emits! The summer is long since past; and here is autumn passing, too, and winter is at the door. Again we shall be buried in snow-drifts. I hope the snow

will fall very soon. Otherwise, when you go out into the garden, melancholy descends upon you.... Just as though there were some sort of a ruin there. The branches of the trees clash together.... Yes, the fine days are over!"

"They are over,"—repeated Iván Ílitch.

Márya Pávlovna stared silently out of the window.

"God willing, they will return,"—remarked Ipátoff.

No one answered him.

"Do you remember how finely they sang songs here that time?"—said Vladímir Sergyéitch.

"I should think they did,"—replied the old man, with a sigh.

"But you might sing to us,"—went on Vladímir Sergyéitch, turning to Márya Pávlovna;—"you have such a fine voice."

She did not answer him.

"And how is your mother?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch inquired of Ipátoff, not knowing what to talk about.

"Thank God! she gets on nicely, considering her ailments. She came over in her little carriage to-day. She's a broken tree, I must tell you—creak, creak, and the first you know, some young, strong sapling falls over; but she goes on standing and standing. Ekh, ha, ha!"

Márya Pávlovna dropped her hands in her lap, and bowed her head.

"And, nevertheless, her existence is hard,"—began Ipátoff again;—"rightly is it said: 'old age is no joy.'"

"And there's no joy in being young,"—said Márya Pávlovna, as though to herself.

Vladímir Sergyéitch would have liked to return home that night, but it was so dark out of doors that he could not make up his mind

to set out. He was assigned to the same chamber, up-stairs, in which, three months previously, he had passed a troubled night, thanks to Egór Kapítonitch....

"Does he snore now?"—thought Vladímir Sergyéitch, as he recalled his drilling of his servant, and the sudden appearance of Márya Pávlovna in the garden....

Vladímir Sergyéitch walked to the window, and laid his brow against the cold glass. His own face gazed dimly at him from out of doors, as though his eyes were riveted upon a black curtain, and it was only after a considerable time that he was able to make out against the starless sky the branches of the trees, writhing wildly in the gloom. They were harassed by a turbulent wind.

Suddenly it seemed to Vladímir Sergyéitch as though something white had flashed along the ground.... He gazed more intently, laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and exclaiming in an undertone: "That's what imagination will do!" got into bed.

He fell asleep very soon; but he was not fated to pass a quiet night on this occasion either. He was awakened by a running to and fro, which arose in the house.... He raised his head from the pillow.... Agitated voices, exclamations, hurried footsteps were audible, doors were banging; now the sound of women weeping rang out, shouts were set up in the garden, other cries farther off responded.... The uproar in the house increased, and became more noisy with every moment.... "Fire!" flashed through Vladímir Sergyéitch's mind. In alarm he sprang from his bed, and rushed to the window; but there was no redness in the sky; only, in the garden, points of flame were moving briskly along the paths,—caused by people running about with lanterns. Vladímir Sergyéitch went quickly to the door, opened it, and ran directly into Iván Ílitch. Pale, dishevelled, half-clothed, the latter was dashing onward, without himself knowing whither.

"What is it? What has happened?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch, excitedly, seizing him by the arm.

"She has disappeared; she has thrown herself into the water,"—replied Iván Ílitch, in a choking voice.

"Who has thrown herself into the water? Who has disappeared?"

"Márya Pávlovna! Who else could it be but Márya Pávlovna? She has perished, the darling! Help! Good heavens, let us run as fast as we can! Be quick, my dear people!"

And Iván Ílitch rushed down the stairs.

Vladímir Sergyéitch put on his shoes somehow, threw his cloak over his shoulders, and ran after him.

In the house he no longer encountered any one, all had hastened out into the garden; only the little girls, Ipátoff's daughters, met him in the corridor, near the anteroom; deadly pale with terror, they stood there in their little white petticoats, with clasped hands and bare feet, beside a night-lamp set on the floor. Through the drawing-room, past an overturned table, flew Vladímir Sergyéitch to the terrace. Through the grove, in the direction of the dam, light and shadows were flashing....

"Go for boat-hooks! Go for boat-hooks as quickly as possible!"—Ipátoff's voice could be heard shouting.

"A net, a net, a boat!"—shouted other voices.

Vladímir Sergyéitch ran in the direction of the shouts. He found Ipátoff on the shore of the pond; a lantern hung on a bough brilliantly illuminated the old man's grey head. He was wringing his hands, and reeling like a drunken man; by his side, a woman lay writhing and sobbing on the grass; round about men were bustling. Iván Ílitch had already advanced into the water up to his knees, and was feeling the bottom with a pole; a coachman was undressing, trembling all over as he did so; two men were dragging a boat along the shore; a sharp trampling of hoofs was audible along the village street.... The wind swept past with a shriek, as though endeavouring to quench the lantern, while the pond plashed noisily, darkling in a menacing way....

"What do I hear?"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch, rushing up to Ipátoff.—"Is it possible?"

"The boat-hooks—fetch the boat-hooks!"—moaned the old man by way of reply to him....

"But good gracious, perhaps you are mistaken, Mikhaíl Nikoláitch...."

"No, mistaken indeed!"—said the woman who was lying on the grass, Márya Pávlovna's maid, in a tearful voice. "Unlucky creature that I am, I heard her myself, the darling, throw herself into the water, and struggling in the water, and screaming: 'Save me!' and then, once more: 'Save me!'"

"Why didn't you prevent her, pray?"

"But how was I to prevent her, dear little father, my lord? Why, when I discovered it, she was no longer in her room, but my heart had a foreboding, you know; these last days she has been so sad all the time, and has said nothing; so I knew how it was, and rushed straight into the garden, just as though some one had made me do it; and suddenly I heard something go splash! into the water: 'Save me!' I heard the cry: 'Save me!'... Okh, my darling, light of my eyes!"

"But perhaps it only seemed so to thee!"

"Seemed so, forsooth! But where is she? what has become of her?"

"So that is what looked white to me in the gloom," thought Vladímir Sergyéitch....

In the meanwhile, men had run up with boat-hooks, dragged thither a net, and begun to spread it out on the grass, a great throng of people had assembled, a commotion had arisen, and a jostling ... the coachman seized one boat-hook, the village elder seized another, both sprang into the boat, put off, and set to searching the water with the hooks; the people on the shore lighted them. Strange and dreadful did their movements seem, and their

shadows in the gloom, above the agitated pond, in the dim and uncertain light of the lanterns.

"He ... here, the hook has caught!"—suddenly cried the coachman.

All stood stock-still where they were.

The coachman pulled the hook toward him, and bent over.... Something horned and black slowly came to the surface....

"A tree-stump,"—said the coachman, pulling away the hook.

"But come back, come back!"—they shouted to him from the shore.—"Thou wilt accomplish nothing with the hooks; thou must use the net."

"Yes, yes, the net!"—chimed in others.

"Stop,"—said the elder;—"I've got hold of something also ... something soft, apparently,"—he added, after a brief pause.

A white spot made its appearance alongside the boat....

"The young lady!"—suddenly shouted the elder.—"'Tis she!"

He was not mistaken.... The hook had caught Márya Pávlovna by the sleeve of her gown. The coachman immediately seized her, dragged her out of the water ... in a couple of powerful strokes the boat was at the shore.... Ipátoff, Iván Ílitch, Vladímir Sergyéitch, all rushed to Márya Pávlovna, raised her up, bore her home in their arms, immediately undressed her, and began to roll her, and warm her.... But all their efforts, their exertions, proved vain.... Márya Pávlovna did not come to herself.... Life had already left her.

Early on the following morning, Vladímir Sergyéitch left Ipátovka; before his departure, he went to bid farewell to the dead woman. She was lying on the table in the drawing-room in a white gown.... Her thick hair was not yet entirely dry, a sort of mournful surprise was expressed on her pale face, which had not had time to grow distorted; her parted lips seemed to be trying to speak, and ask something; ... her hands, convulsively clasped, as though with grief, were pressed tight to her breast.... But with whatever

sorrowful thought the poor drowned girl had perished, death had laid upon her the seal of its eternal silence and peace ... and who understands what a dead face expresses during those few moments when, for the last time, it meets the glance of the living before it vanishes forever and is destroyed in the grave?

Vladímir Sergyéitch stood for a while in decorous meditation before the body of Márya Pávlovna, crossed himself thrice, and left the room, without having noticed Iván Ílitch who was weeping softly in one corner.... And he was not the only one who wept that day: all the servants in the house wept bitterly: Márya Pávlovna had left a good memory behind her.

The following is what old Ipátoff wrote, a week later, in reply to a letter which had come, at last, from Nadézhda Alexyéevna:

"One week ago, dear Madam, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, my unhappy sister-in-law, your acquaintance, Márya Pávlovna, wilfully ended her own life, by throwing herself by night into the pond, and we have already committed her body to the earth. She decided upon this sad and terrible deed, without having bidden me farewell, without leaving even a letter or so much as a note, to declare her last will.... But you know better than any one else, Nadézhda Alexyéevna, on whose soul this great and deadly sin must fall! May the Lord God judge your brother, for my sister-in-law could not cease to love him, nor survive the separation...."

Nadézhda Alexyéevna received this letter in Italy, whither she had gone with her husband, Count de Steltchínsky, as he was called in all the hotels. He did not visit hotels alone, however; he was frequently seen in gambling-houses, in the Kur-Saal at the baths.... At first he lost a great deal of money, then he ceased to lose, and his face assumed a peculiar expression, not precisely suspicious, nor yet precisely insolent, like that which a man has who unexpectedly gets involved in scandals.... He saw his wife rarely. But Nadézhda Alexyéevna did not languish in his absence. She developed a passion for painting and the fine arts. She associated chiefly with artists, and was fond of discussing the beautiful with young men. Ipátoff's letter grieved her greatly, but did not prevent

her going that same day to "the Dogs' Cave," to see how the poor animals suffocated when immersed in sulphur fumes.

She did not go alone. She was escorted by divers cavaliers. Among their number, a certain Mr. Popelin, an artist—a Frenchman, who had not finished his course—with a small beard, and dressed in a checked sack-coat, was the most agreeable. He sang the newest romances in a thin tenor voice, made very free-and-easy jokes, and although he was gaunt of form, yet he ate a very great deal.

VII

It was a sunny, cold January day; a multitude of people were strolling on the Névsky Prospékt. The clock on the tower of the city hall marked three o'clock. Along the broad stone slabs, strewn with yellow sand, was walking, among others, our acquaintance Vladímir Sergyéitch Astákhoff. He has grown very virile since we parted from him; his face is framed in whiskers, and he has grown plump all over, but he has not aged. He was moving after the crowd at a leisurely pace, and now and then casting a glance about him; he was expecting his wife; she had preferred to drive up in the carriage with her mother. Vladímir Sergyéitch married five years ago, precisely in the manner which he had always desired: his wife was wealthy, and with the best of connections. Courteously lifting his splendidly brushed hat when he met his numerous acquaintances, Vladímir Sergyéitch was still stepping out with the free stride of a man who is satisfied with his lot, when suddenly, just at the Passage,[30] he came near colliding with a gentleman in a Spanish cloak and foraging-cap, with a decidedly worn face, a dyed moustache, and large, swollen eyes. Vladímir Sergyéitch drew aside with dignity, but the gentleman in the foraging-cap glanced at him, and suddenly exclaimed:

"Ah! Mr. Astákhoff, how do you do?"

Vladímir Sergyéitch made no reply, and stopped short in surprise. He could not comprehend how a gentleman who could bring

himself to walk on the Névsky in a foraging-cap could be acquainted with his name.

"You do not recognise me,"—pursued the gentleman in the cap:—"I saw you eight years ago, in the country, in the T*** Government, at the Ipátoffs'. My name is Véretyeff."

"Akh! Good heavens! excuse me!"—exclaimed Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"But how you have changed since then!..."

"Yes, I have grown old,"—returned Piótr Alexyéitch, passing his hand, which was devoid of a glove, over his face.—"But you have not changed."

Véretyeff had not so much aged as fallen away and sunk down. Small, delicate wrinkles covered his face; and when he spoke, his lips and cheeks twitched slightly. From all this it was perceptible that the man had been living hard.

"Where have you disappeared to all this time, that you have not been visible?"—Vladímir Sergyéitch asked him.

"I have been wandering about here and there. And you have been in Petersburg all the while?"

"Yes, most of the time."

"Are you married?"

"Yes."

And Vladímir Sergyéitch assumed a rather severe mien, as though with the object of saying to Véretyeff: "My good fellow, don't take it into thy head to ask me to present thee to my wife."

Véretyeff understood him, apparently. An indifferent sneer barely flitted across his lips.

"And how is your sister?"—inquired Vladímir Sergyéitch.—"Where is she?"

"I cannot tell you for certain. She must be in Moscow. I have not received any letters from her this long time!"

"Is her husband alive?"

"Yes."

"And Mr. Ipátoff?"

"I don't know; probably he is alive also; but he may be dead."

"And that gentleman—what the deuce was his name?—Bodryakóff,—what of him?"

"The one you invited to be your second—you remember, when you were so scared? Why, the devil knows!"

Vladímir Sergyéitch maintained silence for a while, with dignity written on his face.

"I always recall with pleasure those evenings,"—he went on,—"when I had the opportunity" (he had nearly said, "the honour") "of making the acquaintance of your sister and yourself. She was a very amiable person. And do you sing as agreeably as ever?"

"No; I have lost my voice.... But that was a good time!"

"I visited Ipátovka once afterward,"—added Vladímir Sergyéitch, elevating his eyebrows mournfully. "I think that was the name of that village—on the very day of a terrible event...."

"Yes, yes, that was frightful, frightful,"—Véretyeff hastily interrupted him.—"Yes, yes. And do you remember how you came near fighting with my present brother-in-law?"

"H'm! I remember!"—replied Vladímir Sergyéitch, slowly.—"However, I must confess to you that so much time has elapsed since then, that all that sometimes seems to me like a dream...."

"Like a dream,"—repeated Véretyeff, and his pale cheeks flushed;—"like a dream ... no, it was not a dream, for me at all events. It was the time of youth, of mirth and happiness, the time of unlimited hopes, and invincible powers; and if it was a dream,

then it was a very beautiful dream. And now, you and I have grown old and stupid, we dye our moustaches, and saunter on the Névsky, and have become good for nothing; like broken-winded nags, we have become utterly vapid and worn out; it cannot be said that we are pompous and put on airs, nor that we spend our time in idleness; but I fear we drown our grief in drink,—that is more like a dream, and a hideous dream. Life has been lived, and lived in vain, clumsily, vulgarly—that's what is bitter! That's what one would like to shake off like a dream, that's what one would like to recover one's self from!... And then ... everywhere, there is one frightful memory, one ghost.... But farewell!"

Véretyeff walked hastily away; but on coming opposite the door of one of the principal confectioners on the Névsky, he halted, entered, and after drinking a glass of orange vodka at the buffet, he wended his way through the billiard-room, all dark and dim with tobacco-smoke, to the rear room. There he found several acquaintances, his former comrades—Pétya Lazúrin, Kóstya Kovróvsky, and Prince Serdiukóff, and two other gentlemen who were called simply Vasiúk, and Filát. All of them were men no longer young, though unmarried; some of them had lost their hair, others were growing grey; their faces were covered with wrinkles, their chins had grown double; in a word, these gentlemen had all long since passed their prime, as the saying is. Yet all of them continued to regard Véretyeff as a remarkable man, destined to astonish the universe; and he was wiser than they only because he was very well aware of his utter and radical uselessness. And even outside of his circle, there were people who thought concerning him, that if he had not ruined himself, the deuce only knows what he would have made of himself.... These people were mistaken. Nothing ever comes of Véretyeffs.

Piótr Alexyéitch's friends welcomed him with the customary greetings. At first he dumbfounded them with his gloomy aspect and his splenetic speeches; but he speedily calmed down, cheered up, and affairs went on in their wonted rut.

But Vladímir Sergyéitch, as soon as Véretyeff left him, contracted his brows in a frown and straightened himself up. Piótr Alexyéitch's unexpected sally had astounded, even offended him extremely.

"'We have grown stupid, we drink liquor, we dye our moustaches' ... *parlez pour vous, mon cher*," —he said at last, almost aloud, and emitting a couple of snorts caused by an access of involuntary indignation, he was preparing to continue his stroll.

"Who was that talking with you?" —rang out a loud and self-confident voice behind him.

Vladímir Sergyéitch turned round and beheld one of his best friends, a certain Mr. Pompónsky. This Mr. Pompónsky, a man of lofty stature, and stout, occupied a decidedly important post, and never once, from his very earliest youth, had he doubted himself.

"Why, a sort of eccentric," —said Vladímir Sergyéitch, linking his arm in Mr. Pompónsky's.

"Good gracious, Vladímir Sergyéitch, is it permissible for a respectable man to chat on the street with an individual who wears a foraging-cap on his head? 'Tis indecent! I'm amazed! Where could you have made acquaintance with such a person?"

"In the country."

"In the country.... One does not bow to one's country neighbours in town.... *ce n'est pas comme il faut*. A gentleman should always bear himself like a gentleman if he wishes that...."

"Here is my wife," —Vladímir Sergyéitch hastily interrupted him.—"Let us go to her."

And the two gentlemen directed their steps to a low-hung, elegant carriage, from whose window there peered forth the pale, weary, and irritatingly-arrogant little face of a woman who was still young, but already faded.

Behind her another lady, also apparently in a bad humour,—her mother,—was visible. Vladímir Sergyéitch opened the door of the carriage, and offered his arm to his wife. Pompónsky gave his to the mother-in-law, and the two couples made their way along the Névsky Prospékt, accompanied by a short, black-haired footman in yellowish-grey gaiters, and with a big cockade on his hat.

IT IS ENOUGH

(1864)

A FRAGMENT FROM THE DIARY OF A DEAD ARTIST

I

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II

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III

"IT is enough," I said to myself, while my feet, treading unwillingly the steep slope of the mountain, bore me downward toward the quiet river; "it is enough," I repeated, as I inhaled the resinous scent of the pine grove, to which the chill of approaching evening had imparted a peculiar potency and pungency; "it is enough," I said once more, as I seated myself on a mossy hillock directly on the brink of the river and gazed at its dark, unhurried waves, above which a thick growth of reeds lifted their pale-green stalks.... "It is enough!—Have done with dreaming, with striving: 'tis high time to pull thyself together; 'tis high time to clutch thy head with both hands and bid thy heart be still. Give over pampering thyself with the sweet indulgence of indefinite but captivating sensations; give over running after every new form of beauty; give over seizing every tremor of its delicate and powerful pinions.—Everything is known, everything has been felt over and over again many times already.... I am weary.—What care I that at this very moment the dawn is suffusing the sky ever more and more broadly, like some inflamed, all-conquering passion! What care I that two paces from me, amid the tranquillity and the tenderness and the gleam of evening, in the dewy depths of a motionless bush, a nightingale has suddenly burst forth in such magical notes as though there had never been any nightingales in the world before it, and as though it were the first to chant the first song of the first love! All that has been, has been, I repeat; it has been recapitulated a thousand times—and when one remembers that all this will so continue for a whole eternity—as though to order, by law—one even grows vexed! Yes ... vexed!"

IV

Eh, how I have suffered! Formerly such thoughts never entered my head—formerly, in those happy days when I myself was wont to flame like the glow of dawn, and to sing like the nightingale.—I must confess that everything has grown obscure round about me, all life has withered. The light which gives to its colours both significance and power—that light which emanates from the heart of man—has become extinct within me.... No, it has not yet become extinct—but it is barely smouldering, without radiance and without warmth. I remember how one day, late at night, in Moscow, I stepped up to the grated window of an ancient church and leaned against the uneven glass. It was dark under the low arches; a forgotten shrine-lamp flickered with a red flame in front of an ancient holy picture, and only the lips of the holy face were visible, stern and suffering: mournful gloom closed in around and seemed to be preparing to crush with its dull weight the faint ray of unnecessary light.... And in my heart reign now the same sort of light and the same sort of gloom.

V

And this I write to thee—to thee, my only and unforgettable friend; to thee, my dear companion,[31] whom I have left forever, but whom I shall never cease to love until my life ends.... Alas! thou knowest what it was that separated us. But I will not refer to that now. I have left thee ... but even here, in this remote nook, at this distance, in this exile, I am all permeated with thee, I am in thy power as of yore, as of yore I feel the sweet pressure of thy hands upon my bowed head!—Rising up for the last time, from the mute grave in which I now am lying, I run a mild, much-moved glance over all my past, over all our past.... There is no hope and no return, but neither is there any bitterness in me, or regret; and clearer than the heavenly azure, purer than the first snows on the mountain heights, are my beautiful memories.... They do not press upon me in throngs: they pass by in procession, like those muffled figures of the Athenian god-born ones, which—dost thou remember?—we admired so greatly on the ancient bas-reliefs of the Vatican....

VI

I have just alluded to the light which emanates from the human heart and illumines everything which surrounds it.... I want to talk with thee about that time when that gracious light burned in my heart.—Listen ... but I imagine that thou art sitting in front of me, and gazing at me with thine affectionate but almost severely-attentive eyes. O eyes never to be forgotten! On whom, on what are they now fixed? Who is receiving into his soul thy glance—that glance which seems to flow from unfathomable depths, like those mysterious springs—like you both bright and dark—which well up at the very bottom of narrow valleys, beneath overhanging cliffs?... Listen.

VII

It was at the end of March, just before the Feast of the Annunciation, shortly after I saw thee for the first time—and before I as yet suspected what thou wert destined to become to me, although I already bore thee, silently and secretly in my heart.—I was obliged to cross one of the largest rivers in Russia. The ice had not yet begun to move in it, but it seemed to have swollen up and turned dark; three days previously a thaw had set in. The snow was melting round about diligently but quietly; everywhere water was oozing out; in the light air a soundless breeze was roving. The same even, milky hue enveloped earth and sky: it was not a mist, but it was not light; not a single object stood out from the general opacity; everything seemed both near and indistinct. Leaving my kibítka far behind, I walked briskly over the river-ice, and with the exception of the beat of my own footsteps, I could hear nothing. I walked on, enveloped on all sides by the first stupor and breath of early spring ... and little by little augmenting with every step, with every movement in advance, there gradually rose up and grew within me a certain joyous incomprehensible agitation.... It drew me on, it hastened my pace—and so powerful were its transports, that I came to a standstill at last and looked about me in surprise and questioningly, as though desirous of detecting the outward cause of my ecstatic condition.... All was still, white, sunny; but I raised my eyes: high above flocks of migratory birds were flying past.... "Spring! Hail, Spring!"—I shouted in a loud voice. "Hail, life and love and happiness!"—And at that same instant, with sweetly-shattering force, similar to the flower of a cactus, there suddenly flared up within me thy image—flared up and stood there, enchantingly clear and beautiful—and I understood that I loved thee, thee alone, that I was all filled with thee....

VIII

I think of thee ... and many other memories, other pictures rise up before me,—and thou art everywhere, on all the paths of my life I encounter thee.—Now there presents itself to me an old Russian garden on the slope of a hill, illuminated by the last rays of the summer sun. From behind silvery poplars peeps forth the wooden roof of the manor-house, with a slender wreath of crimson smoke hanging above the white chimney, and in the fence a wicket-gate stands open a crack, as though some one had pulled it to with undecided hand. And I stand and wait, and gaze at that gate and at the sand on the garden paths; I wonder and I am moved: everything I see seems to me remarkable and new, everything is enveloped with an atmosphere of a sort of bright, caressing mystery, and already I think I hear the swift rustle of footsteps; and I stand, all alert and light, like a bird which has just folded its wings and is poised ready to soar aloft again—and my heart flames and quivers in joyous dread before the imminent happiness which is flitting on in front....

IX

Then I behold an ancient cathedral in a distant, beautiful land. The kneeling people are crowded close in rows; a prayerful chill, something solemn and sad breathes forth from the lofty, bare vault, from the huge pillars which branch upward.—Thou art standing by my side, speechless and unsympathetic, exactly as though thou wert a stranger to me; every fold of thy dark gown hangs motionless, as though sculptured; motionless lie the mottled reflections of the coloured windows at thy feet on the well-worn flagstones.—And now, vigorously agitating the air dim with incense, inwardly agitating us, in a heavy surge the tones of the organ roll out; and thou hast turned pale and drawn thyself up; thy gaze has touched me, has slipped on higher and is raised heavenward;—but it seems to me that only a deathless soul can look like that and with such eyes....

X

Now another picture presents itself to me.—'Tis not an ancient temple which crushes us with its stern magnificence: the low walls of a cosey little room separate us from the whole world.—What am I saying? We are alone—alone in all the world; except us two there is no living thing; beyond those friendly walls lie darkness and death and emptiness. That is not the wind howling, that is not the rain streaming in floods; it is Chaos wailing and groaning; it is its blind eyes weeping. But with us all is quiet and bright, and warm and gracious; something diverting, something childishly innocent is fluttering about like a butterfly, is it not? We nestle up to each other, we lean our heads together and both read a good book; I feel the slender vein in thy delicate temple beating; I hear how thou art living, thou hearest how I am living, thy smile is born upon my face before it comes on thine; thou silently repliest to my silent question; thy thoughts, my thoughts, are like the two wings of one and the same bird drowned in the azure.... The last partitions have fallen—and our love has become so calm, so profound, every breach has vanished so completely, leaving no trace behind it, that we do not even wish to exchange a word, a glance.... We only wish to breathe, to breathe together, to live together, to be together, ... and not even to be conscious of the fact that we are together....

XI

Or, in conclusion, there presents itself to me a clear September morning when thou and I were walking together through the deserted garden, as yet not wholly out of bloom, of an abandoned palace, on the bank of a great non-Russian river, beneath the soft radiance of a cloudless sky. Oh, how shall I describe those sensations?—that endlessly-flowing river, that absence of people, and tranquillity, and joy, and a certain intoxicating sadness, and the vibration of happiness, the unfamiliar, monotonous town, the autumnal croaking of the daws in the tall, bright trees—and those affectionate speeches and smiles and glances long and soft, which pierce to the very bottom, and beauty,—the beauty in ourselves, round about, everywhere;—it is beyond words. Oh, bench on which we sat in silence, with heads drooping low with happiness—I shall never forget thee to my dying hour!—How charming were those rare passers-by with their gentle greeting and kind faces, and the large, quiet boats which floated past (on one of them—dost thou remember?—stood a horse gazing pensively at the water gliding by under its feet), the childish babble of the little waves inshore and the very barking of distant dogs over the expanse of the river, the very shouts of the corpulent under-officer at the red-cheeked recruits drilling there on one side, with their projecting elbows and their legs thrust forward like the legs of cranes!... We both felt that there never had been and never would be anything better in the world for us than those moments—than all the rest.... But what comparisons are these! Enough ... enough.... Alas! yes: it is enough.

XII

For the last time I have surrendered myself to these memories, and I am parting from them irrevocably—as a miser, after gloating for the last time upon his hoard, his gold, his bright treasure, buries it in the damp earth; as the wick of an exhausted lamp, after flashing up in one last brilliant flame, becomes covered with grey ashes. The little wild animal has peered forth for the last time from his lair at the velvety grass, at the fair little sun, at the blue, gracious waters,—and has retreated to the deepest level, and curled himself up in a ball, and fallen asleep. Will he have visions, if only in his sleep, of the fair little sun, and the grass, and the blue, gracious waters?

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XIII

Sternly and ruthlessly does Fate lead each one of us—and only in the early days do we, occupied with all sorts of accidents, nonsense, ourselves, fail to feel her harsh hand.—So long as we are able to deceive ourselves and are not ashamed to lie, it is possible to live and to hope without shame. The truth—not the full truth (there can be no question of that), but even that tiny fraction which is accessible to us—immediately closes our mouths, binds our hands, and reduces "to negation."—The only thing that is then left for a man, in order to keep erect on his feet and not crumble to dust, not to become bemired in the ooze of self-forgetfulness, is self-scorn; is to turn calmly away from everything and say: "It is enough!"—and folding his useless arms on his empty breast to preserve the last, the sole merit which is accessible to him, the merit of recognising his own insignificance; the merit to which Pascal alludes, when, calling man a thinking reed, he says that if the entire universe were to crush him, he, that reed, would still be higher than the universe because he would know that it is crushing him—while it would not know that. A feeble merit! Sad consolation! Try as thou mayest to permeate thyself with it, to believe in it,—oh, thou my poor brother, whosoever thou mayest be!—thou canst not refute those ominous words of the poet:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing....[32]

I have cited the verses from "Macbeth," and those witches, phantoms, visions have recurred to my mind.... Alas! it is not visions, not fantastic, subterranean powers that are terrible; the creations of Hoffmann are not dreadful, under whatsoever form they may present themselves.... The terrible thing is that there is nothing terrible, that the very substance of life itself is petty, uninteresting—and insipid to beggary. Having once become

permeated with *this* consciousness, having once tasted of *this* wormwood, no honey will ever seem sweet—and even that loftiest, sweetest happiness, the happiness of love, of complete friendship, of irrevocable devotion—even it loses all its charm; all its worth is annihilated by its own pettiness, its brevity. Well, yes: a man has loved, he has burned, he has faltered words about eternal bliss, about immortal enjoyments—and behold: it is long, long since the last trace vanished of that worm which has eaten out the last remnants of his withered tongue. Thus late in autumn, on a frosty day, when everything is lifeless and dumb in the last blades of grass, on the verge of the denuded forest, the sun has but to emerge for an instant from the fog, to gaze intently at the chilled earth, and immediately, from all sides, gnats rise up; they frolic in the warmth of his rays, they bustle and jostle upward, downward, they circle round one another.... The sun hides himself, and the gnats fall to the earth in a soft rain—and there is an end to their momentary life.

XIV

"But are there no great conceptions, no great words of consolation? Nationality, right, liberty, humanity, art?" Yes; those words do exist, and many people live by them and for them. But nevertheless, I have an idea that if Shakspeare were to be born again he would find no occasion to disclaim his "Hamlet," his "Lear." His penetrating glance would not descry anything new in human existence: the same motley and, in reality, incoherent picture would still unfold itself before him in its disquieting monotony. The same frivolity, the same cruelty, the same pressing demand for blood, gold, filth, the same stale pleasures, the same senseless sufferings in the name of ... well, in the name of the same nonsense which was ridiculed by Aristophanes three thousand years ago, the same coarse lures to which the many-headed beast still yields as readily as ever—in a word, the same anxious skipping of the squirrel in the same old wheel, which has not even been renewed.... Shakspeare would again make Lear repeat his harsh: "There are no guilty ones"—which, in other words, signifies: "There are no just"—and he also would say: "It is enough!" and he also would turn away.—One thing only: perhaps, in contrast to the gloomy, tragic tyrant Richard, the ironical genius of the great poet would like to draw another, more up-to-date tyrant, who is almost ready to believe in his own virtue and rests calmly at night or complains of the over-dainty dinner at the same time that his half-stifled victims are endeavouring to comfort themselves by at least imagining him as Richard III. surrounded by the ghosts of the people he has murdered....

But to what purpose?

Why demonstrate—and that by picking and weighing one's words, by rounding and polishing one's speech—why demonstrate to gnats that they really are gnats?

XV

But art?... Beauty?... Yes, those are mighty words; they are, probably, mightier than those which I have mentioned above. The Venus of Melos, for example, is more indubitable than the Roman law, or than the principles of 1789. Men may retort—and how many times have I heard these retorts!—that beauty itself is also a matter of convention, that to the Chinese it presents itself in a totally different manner from what it does to the European.... But it is not the conventionality of art which disconcerts me; its perishableness, and again its perishableness,—its decay and dust—that is what deprives me of courage and of faith. Art, at any given moment, is, I grant, more powerful than Nature itself, because in it there is neither symphony of Beethoven nor picture of Ruysdael nor poem of Goethe—and only dull-witted pedants or conscienceless babblers can still talk of art as a copy of Nature. But in the long run Nature is irresistible; she cannot be hurried, and sooner or later she will assert her rights. Unconsciously and infallibly obedient to law, she does not know art, as she does not know liberty, as she does not know good; moving onward from eternity, transmitted from eternity, she tolerates nothing immortal, nothing unchangeable.... Man is her child; but the human, the artificial is inimical to her, precisely because she strives to be unchangeable and immortal. Man is the child of Nature; but she is the universal mother, and she has no preferences: everything which exists in her bosom has arisen only for the benefit of another and must, in due time, make way for that other—she creates by destroying, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to her what she creates, what she destroys, if only life be not extirpated, if only death do not lose its rights.... And therefore she as calmly covers with mould the divine visage of Phidias's Jupiter as she does a plain pebble, and delivers over to be devoured by the contemned moth the most precious lines of Sophocles. Men, it is true, zealously aid her in her work of extermination; but is not the same elementary force,—is not the force of Nature shown in the finger of the barbarian who senselessly shattered the radiant brow of

Apollo, in the beast-like howls with which he hurled the picture of Apelles into the fire? How are we poor men, poor artists, to come to an agreement with this deaf and dumb force, blind from its birth, which does not even triumph in its victories, but marches, ever marches on ahead, devouring all things? How are we to stand up against those heavy, coarse, interminably and incessantly onrolling waves, how believe, in short, in the significance and worth of those perishable images which we, in the darkness, on the verge of the abyss, mould from the dust and for a mere instant?

XVI

All this is so ... but only the transitory is beautiful, Shakspeare has said; and Nature herself, in the unceasing play of her rising and vanishing forms, does not shun beauty. Is it not she who sedulously adorns the most momentary of her offspring—the petals of the flowers, the wings of the butterfly—with such charming colours? Is it not she who imparts to them such exquisite outlines? It is not necessary for beauty to live forever in order to be immortal—one moment is sufficient for it. That is so; that is just, I grant you—but only in cases where there is no personality, where man is not, liberty is not: the faded wing of the butterfly comes back again, and a thousand years later, with the selfsame wing of the selfsame butterfly, necessity sternly and regularly and impartially fulfils its round ... but man does not repeat himself like the butterfly, and the work of his hands, his art, his free creation once destroyed, is annihilated forever.... To him alone is it given to "create" ... but it is strange and terrible to articulate: "We are creators ... for an hour,"—as there once was, they say, a caliph for an hour.—Therein lies our supremacy—and our curse: each one of these "creators" in himself—precisely he, not any one else, precisely that ego—seems to have been created with deliberate intent, on a plan previously designed; each one more or less dimly understands his significance, feels that he is akin to something higher, something eternal—and he lives, he is bound to live in the moment and for the moment.[33] Sit in the mud, my dear fellow, and strive toward heaven!—The greatest among us are precisely those who are the most profoundly conscious of all of that fundamental contradiction; but in that case the question arises,—are the words "greatest, great" appropriate?

XVII

But what shall be said of those to whom, despite a thorough desire to do so, one cannot apply those appellations even in the sense which is attributed to them by the feeble human tongue?—What shall be said of the ordinary, commonplace, second-rate, third-rate toilers—whoever they may be—statesmen, learned men, artists—especially artists? How force them to shake off their dumb indolence, their dejected perplexity, how draw them once more to the field of battle, if once the thought as to the vanity of everything human, of every activity which sets for itself a higher aim than the winning of daily bread, has once crept into their heads? By what wreaths are they lured on—they, for whom laurels and thorns have become equally insignificant? Why should they again subject themselves to the laughter of "the cold throng" or to "the condemnation of the dunce,"—of the old dunce who cannot forgive them for having turned away from the former idols; of the young dunce who demands that they shall immediately go down on their knees in his company, that they should lie prone before new, just-discovered idols? Why shall they betake themselves again to that rag-fair of phantoms, to that market-place where both the seller and the buyer cheat each other equally, where everything is so noisy, so loud—and yet so poor and worthless? Why "with exhaustion in their bones" shall they interweave themselves again with that world where the nations, like peasant urchins on a festival day, flounder about in the mud for the sake of a handful of empty nuts, or admire with gaping mouths the wretched woodcuts, decorated with tinsel gold,—with that world where they had no right to life while they lived in it, and, deafening themselves with their own shouts, each one hastens with convulsive speed to a goal which he neither knows nor understands? No ... no.... It is enough ... enough ... enough!

XVIII

... The rest is silence.[34] ...

THE DOG

(1866)

"BUT if we can admit the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its intervention in real life,—then allow me to inquire, what rôle is sound judgment bound to play after this?"—shouted Antón Stepánitch, crossing his arms on his stomach.

Antón Stepánitch had held the rank of State Councillor,[35] had served in some wonderful department, and, as his speech was interlarded with pauses and was slow and uttered in a bass voice, he enjoyed universal respect. Not long before the date of our story, "the good-for-nothing little Order of St. Stanislas had been stuck on him," as those who envied him expressed it.

"That is perfectly just,"—remarked Skvorévitch.

"No one will dispute that,"—added Kinarévitch.

"I assent also,"—chimed in, in falsetto, from a corner the master of the house, Mr. Finopléntoff.

"But I, I must confess, cannot assent, because something supernatural has happened to me,"—said a man of medium stature and middle age, with a protruding abdomen and a bald spot, who had been sitting silent before the stove up to that moment. The glances of all present in the room were turned upon him with curiosity and surprise—and silence reigned.

This man was a landed proprietor of Kalúga, not wealthy, who had recently come to Petersburg. He had once served in the hussars, had gambled away his property, resigned from the service and settled down in the country. The recent agricultural changes had cut off his revenues, and he had betaken himself to the capital in search of a snug little position. He possessed no abilities, and had no influential connections; but he placed great reliance on the friendship of an old comrade in the service, who had suddenly,

without rhyme or reason, become a person of importance, and whom he had once aided to administer a sound thrashing to a card-sharper. Over and above that he counted upon his own luck—and it had not betrayed him; several days later he obtained the post of inspector of government storehouses, a profitable, even honourable position which did not require extraordinary talents: the storehouses themselves existed only in contemplation, and no one even knew with certainty what they were to contain,—but they had been devised as a measure of governmental economy.

Antón Stepánitch was the first to break the general silence.

"What, my dear sir?"—he began. "Do you seriously assert that something supernatural—I mean to say, incompatible with the laws of nature—has happened to you?"

"I do,"—returned "my dear sir," whose real name was Porfíry Kapítonitch.

"Incompatible with the laws of nature?"—energetically repeated Antón Stepánitch, who evidently liked that phrase.

"Precisely ... yes; precisely the sort of thing you allude to."

"This is astonishing! What think you, gentlemen?"—Antón Stepánitch endeavoured to impart to his features an ironical expression, but without result—or, to speak more accurately, the only result was to produce the effect that Mr. State Councillor smelt a bad odour.—"Will not you be so kind, my dear sir,"—he went on, addressing the landed proprietor from Kalúga,—"as to communicate to us the particulars of such a curious event?"

"Why not? Certainly!"—replied the landed proprietor, and moving forward to the middle of the room in an easy manner he spoke as follows:

I have, gentlemen, as you are probably aware,—or as you may not be aware,—a small estate in Kozyól County. I formerly derived some profit from it—but now, of course, nothing but unpleasantness is to be anticipated. However, let us put politics

aside! Well, sir, on that same estate I have a "wee little" manor: a vegetable garden, as is proper, a tiny pond with little carp, and some sort of buildings—well, and a small wing for my own sinful body.... I am a bachelor. So, sir, one day—about six years ago—I had returned home rather late; I had been playing cards at a neighbour's house—but I beg you to observe, I was not tipsy, as the expression goes. I undressed, got into bed, and blew out the light. And just imagine, gentlemen; no sooner had I blown out the light, than something began to rummage under my bed! Is it a rat? I thought. No, it was not a rat: it clawed and fidgeted and scratched itself.... At last it began to flap its ears!

It was a dog—that was clear. But where had the dog come from? I keep none myself. "Can some stray animal have run in?" I thought. I called to my servant; his name is Fílka. The man entered with a candle.

"What's this,"—says I,—"my good Fílka? How lax thou art! A dog has intruded himself under my bed."

"What dog?"—says he.

"How should I know?"—says I;—"that's thy affair—not to allow thy master to be disturbed."

My Fílka bent down, and began to pass the candle about under the bed.

"Why,"—says he,—"there's no dog here."

I bent down also; in fact there was no dog.... Here was a marvel! I turned my eyes on Fílka: he was smiling.

"Fool,"—said I to him,—"what art thou grinning about? When thou didst open the door the dog probably took and sneaked out into the anteroom. But thou, gaper, didst notice nothing, because thou art eternally asleep. Can it be that thou thinkest I am drunk?"

He attempted to reply, but I drove him out, curled myself up in a ring, and heard nothing more that night.

But on the following night—just imagine!—the same thing was repeated. No sooner had I blown out the light than it began to claw and flap its ears. Again I summoned Fílka, again he looked under the bed—again nothing! I sent him away, blew out the light—phew, damn it! there was the dog still. And a dog it certainly was: I could hear it breathing and rummaging in its hair with its teeth in search of fleas so plainly!

"Fílka!"—says I,—"come hither without a light!"... He entered.... "Well, now,"—says I, "dost thou hear?..."

"I do,"—said he. I could not see him, but I felt that the fellow was quailing.

"What dost thou make of it?"—said I.

"What dost thou command me to make of it, Porfíry Kapítonitch?... 'Tis an instigation of the Evil One!"

"Thou art a lewd fellow; hold thy tongue with thy instigation of the Evil One."... But the voices of both of us were like those of birds, and we were shaking as though in a fever—in the darkness. I lighted a candle: there was no dog, and no noise whatever—only Fílka and I as white as clay. And I must inform you, gentlemen—you can believe me or not—but from that night forth for the space of six weeks the same thing went on. At last I even got accustomed to it and took to extinguishing my light because I cannot sleep with a light. "Let him fidget!" I thought. "It doesn't harm me."

"But—I see—that you do not belong to the cowardly squad,"—interrupted Antón Stepánitch, with a half-scornful, half-condescending laugh. "The hussar is immediately perceptible!"

"I should not be frightened at you, in any case,"—said Porfíry Kapítonitch, and for a moment he really did look like a hussar.—"But listen further."

A neighbour came to me, the same one with whom I was in the habit of playing cards. He dined with me on what God had sent, and lost fifty rubles to me for his visit; night was drawing on—it was time for him to go. But I had calculations of my own:—"Stop and spend the night with me, Vasíly Vasílitch; to-morrow thou wilt win it back, God willing."

My Vasíly Vasílitch pondered and pondered—and stayed. I ordered a bed to be placed for him in my own chamber.... Well, sir, we went to bed, smoked, chattered,—chiefly about the feminine sex, as is fitting in bachelor society,—and laughed, as a matter of course. I look; Vasíly Vasílitch has put out his candle and has turned his back on me; that signifies: "*Schlafen Sie wohl.*" I waited a little and extinguished my candle also. And imagine: before I had time to think to myself, "What sort of performance will there be now?" my dear little animal began to make a row. And that was not all; he crawled out from under the bed, walked across the room, clattering his claws on the floor, waggling his ears, and suddenly collided with a chair which stood by the side of Vasíly Vasílitch's bed!

"Porfíry Kapítonitch,"—says Vasíly Vasílitch, and in such an indifferent voice, you know,—"I didn't know that thou hadst taken to keeping a dog. What sort of an animal is it—a setter?"

"I have no dog,"—said I,—"and I never have had one."

"Thou hast not indeed! But what's this?"

"What is this?"—said I.—"See here now; light the candle and thou wilt find out for thyself."

"It isn't a dog?"

"No."

Vasíly Vasílitch turned over in bed.—"But thou art jesting, damn it?"

"No, I'm not jesting."—I hear him go scratch, scratch with a match, and that thing does not stop, but scratches its side. The flame

flashed up ... and basta! There was not a trace of a dog! Vasíly Vasílitch stared at me—and I stared at him.

"What sort of a trick is this?"—said he.

"Why,"—said I,—"this is such a trick that if thou wert to set Socrates himself on one side and Frederick the Great on the other even they couldn't make head or tail of it."—And thereupon I told him all in detail. Up jumped my Vasíly Vasílitch as though he had been singed! He couldn't get into his boots.

"Horses!"—he yelled—"horses!"

I began to argue with him, but in vain. He simply groaned.

"I won't stay,"—he shouted,—"not a minute!—Of course, after this, thou art a doomed man!—Horses!..."

But I prevailed upon him. Only his bed was dragged out into another room—and night-lights were lighted everywhere. In the morning, at tea, he recovered his dignity; he began to give me advice.

"Thou shouldst try absenting thyself from the house for several days, Porfíry Kapítonitch," he said: "perhaps that vile thing would leave thee."

But I must tell you that he—that neighbour of mine—had a capacious mind! he worked his mother-in-law so famously among other things: he palmed off a note of hand on her; which signifies that he chose the most vulnerable moment! She became like silk: she gave him a power of attorney over all her property—what more would you have? But that was a great affair—to twist his mother-in-law round his finger—wasn't it, hey? Judge for yourselves. But he went away from me somewhat discontented; I had punished him to the extent of another hundred rubles. He even swore at me: "Thou art ungrateful,"—he said, "thou hast no feeling;" but how was I to blame for that? Well, this is in parenthesis—but I took his suggestion under consideration. That

same day I drove off to town and established myself in an inn, with an acquaintance, an old man of the Old Ritualist sect.[36]

He was a worthy old man, although a trifle harsh, because of loneliness: his whole family were dead. Only he did not favour tobacco at all,[37] and felt a great loathing for dogs; I believe, for example, that rather than admit a dog into the room he would have rent himself in twain! "For how is it possible?"—he said. "There in my room, on the wall, the Sovereign Lady herself deigns to dwell;[38] and shall a filthy dog thrust his accursed snout in there?"—That was ignorance, of course! However, this is my opinion: if any man has been vouchsafed wisdom, let him hold to it!

"But you are a great philosopher, I see,"—interrupted Antón Stepánitch again, with the same laugh as before.

This time Porfíry Kapítonitch even scowled.

"What sort of a philosopher I am no one knows,"—he said as his moustache twitched in a surly manner:—"but I would gladly take you as a pupil."

We all fairly bored our eyes into Antón Stepánitch; each one of us expected an arrogant retort or at least a lightning glance.... But Mr. State Councillor altered his smile from scorn to indifference, then yawned, dangled his foot—and that was all!

So then, I settled down at that old man's house—[went on Porfíry Kapítonitch].—He assigned me a room "for acquaintance's" sake,—not of the best; he himself lodged there also, behind a partition—and that was all I required. But what tortures I did undergo! The chamber was small, it was hot, stifling, and there were flies, and such sticky ones; in the corner was a remarkably large case for images, with ancient holy pictures; their garments were dim and puffed out; the air was fairly infected with olive-oil, and some sort of a spice in addition; on the bedstead were two down beds; if you moved a pillow, out ran a cockroach from beneath it.... I drank an incredible amount of tea, out of sheer

tedium—it was simply horrible! I got into bed; it was impossible to sleep.—And on the other side of the partition my host was sighing and grunting and reciting his prayers. I heard him begin to snore—and very lightly and courteously, in old-fashioned style. I had long since extinguished my candle—only the shrine-lamp was twinkling in front of the holy pictures.... A hindrance, of course! So I took and rose up softly, in my bare feet: I reached up to the lamp and blew it out.... Nothing happened.—"Aha!" I thought: "this means that he won't make a fuss in the house of strangers."... But no sooner had I lain down on the bed than the row began again! The thing clawed, and scratched himself and flapped his ears ... well, just as I wanted him to. Good! I lay there and waited to see what would happen. I heard the old man wake up.

"Master,"—said he,—"hey there, master?"

"What's wanted?"—said I.

"Was it thou who didst put out the shrine-lamp?"—And without awaiting my reply, he suddenly began to mumble:

"What's that? What's that? A dog? A dog? Akh, thou damned Nikonian!"[39]

"Wait a bit, old man,"—said I,—"before thou cursest; but it would be better for thee to come hither thyself. Things deserving of wonder are going on here,"—said I.

The old man fussed about behind the partition and entered my room with a candle, a slender one, of yellow wax; and I was amazed as I looked at him! He was all bristling, with shaggy ears and vicious eyes like those of a polecat; on his head was a small skull-cap of white felt; his beard reached to his girdle and was white also; and he had on a waistcoat with brass buttons over his shirt, and fur boots on his feet, and he disseminated an odour of juniper. In that condition he went up to the holy pictures, crossed himself thrice with two fingers[40] lighted the shrine-lamp, crossed himself again, and turning to me, merely grunted:

"Explain thyself!"

Thereupon, without the least delay, I communicated to him all the circumstances. The old man listened to all my explanations without uttering the smallest word; he simply kept shaking his head. Then he sat down on my bed, still maintaining silence. He scratched his breast, the back of his head, and other places, and still remained silent.

"Well, Feodúl Ivánitch,"—said I, "what is thy opinion: is this some sort of visitation of the Evil One, thinkest thou?"

The old man stared at me.—"A pretty thing thou hast invented! A visitation of the Evil One, forsooth! 'Twould be all right at thy house, thou tobacco-user,—but 'tis quite another thing here! Only consider how many holy things there are here! And thou must needs have a visitation of the devil!—And if it isn't that, what is it?"

The old man relapsed into silence, scratched himself again, and at last he said, but in a dull sort of way, because his moustache kept crawling into his mouth:

"Go thou to the town of Byéleff. There is only one man who can help thee. And that man dwells in Byéleff;[41] he is one of our people. If he takes a fancy to help thee, that's thy good luck; if he doesn't take a fancy,—so it must remain."

"But how am I to find him?"—said I.

"We can give thee directions,"—said he;—"only why dost thou call this a visitation of the devil? 'Tis a vision, or a sign; but thou wilt not be able to comprehend it; 'tis not within thy flight. And now lie down and sleep under Christ's protection, dear little father; I will fumigate with incense; and in the morning we will take counsel together. The morning is wiser than the evening, thou knowest."

Well, sir, and we did take counsel together in the morning—only I came near choking to death with that same incense. And the old man instructed me after this wise: that when I had reached Byéleff I was to go to the public square, and in the second shop on the right inquire for a certain Prokhóritch; and having found

Prokhóritch, I was to hand him a document. And the whole document consisted of a scrap of paper, on which was written the following: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. To Sergyéi Prokhóritch Pervúshin. Trust this man. Feodúly Ivánovitch." And below: "Send some cabbages, for God's sake."

I thanked the old man, and without further ado ordered my tarantás to be harnessed, and set off for Byéleff. For I argued in this way: admitting that my nocturnal visitor did not cause me much grief, still, nevertheless, it was not quite decorous for a nobleman and an officer—what do you think about it?

"And did you really go to Byéleff?"—whispered Mr. Finopléntoff.

I did, straight to Byéleff. I went to the square, and inquired in the second shop on the right for Prokhóritch. "Is there such a man?"—I asked.

"There is,"—I was told.

"And where does he live?"

"On the Oká, beyond the vegetable-gardens."

"In whose house?"[42]

"His own."

I wended my way to the Oká, searched out his house, that is to say, not actually a house, but a downright hovel. I beheld a man in a patched blue overcoat and a tattered cap,—of the petty burgher class, judging by his appearance,—standing with his back to me, and digging in his cabbage-garden.—I went up to him.

"Are you such and such a one?"—said I.

He turned round,—and to tell you the truth, such piercing eyes I have never seen in all my life. But his whole face was no bigger than one's fist; his beard was wedge-shaped, and his lips were sunken: he was an aged man.

"I am he,"—he said.—"What do you wanta?"

"Why, here,"—said I;—"this is what I wanta,"—and I placed the document in his hand. He gazed at me very intently, and said:

"Please come into the house; I cannot read without my spectacles."

Well, sir, he and I went into his kennel—actually, a regular kennel; poor, bare, crooked; it barely held together. On the wall was a holy picture of ancient work,[43] as black as a coal; only the whites of the eyes were fairly burning in the faces of the holy people. He took some round iron spectacles from a small table, placed them on his nose, perused the writing, and through his spectacles again scrutinised me.

"You have need of me?"

"I have,"—said I,—"that's the fact."

"Well,"—said he, "if you have, then make your statement, and I will listen."

And just imagine; he sat down, and pulling a checked handkerchief from his pocket, he spread it out on his knees—and the handkerchief was full of holes—and gazed at me as solemnly as though he had been a senator,[44] or some minister or other; and did not ask me to sit down. And what was still more astonishing, I suddenly felt myself growing timid, so timid ... simply, my soul sank into my heels. He pierced me through and through with his eyes, and that's all there is to be said! But I recovered my self-possession, and narrated to him my whole story. He remained silent for a while, shrank together, mowed with his lips, and then began to interrogate me, still as though he were a senator, so majestically and without haste. "What is your name?"—he asked. "How old are you? Who were your parents? Are you a bachelor or married?"—Then he began to mow with his lips again, frowned, thrust out his finger and said:

"Do reverence to the holy image of the honourable saints of Solovétzk,[45] Zósim and Saváty."

I made a reverence to the earth, and did not rise to my feet; such awe and submission did I feel for that man that I believe I would have instantly done anything whatsoever he might have ordered me!... I see that you are smiling, gentlemen; but I was in no mood for laughing then, by Heaven I was not.

"Rise, sir,"—he said at last.—"It is possible to help you. This has not been sent to you by way of punishment, but as a warning; it signifies that you are being looked after; some one is praying earnestly for you. Go now to the bazaar and buy yourself a bitch, which you must keep by you day and night, without ceasing. Your visions will cease, and your dog will prove necessary to you into the bargain."

A flash of light seemed suddenly to illuminate me; how those words did please me! I made obeisance to Prokhóritch, and was on the point of departing, but remembered that it was impossible for me not to show him my gratitude; I drew a three-ruble note from my pocket. But he put aside my hand and said to me:

"Give it to our chapel, or to the poor, for this service is gratis."

Again I made him an obeisance, nearly to the girdle, and immediately marched off to the bazaar. And fancy, no sooner had I begun to approach the shops when behold, a man in a frieze cloak advanced to meet me, and under his arm he carried a setter bitch, two months old, with light-brown hair, a white muzzle, and white fore paws.

"Halt!" said I to the man in the frieze cloak; "what will you take for her?"

"Two rubles in silver."

"Take three!"

The man was astonished, and thought the gentleman had lost his mind—but I threw a banknote in his teeth, seized the bitch in my arms, and rushed to my tarantás. The coachman harnessed up the horses briskly, and that same evening I was at home. The dog sat

on my lap during the whole journey—and never uttered a sound; but I kept saying to her: "Tresórushko! Tresórushko!" I immediately gave her food and water, ordered straw to be brought, put her to bed, and dashed into bed myself. I blew out the light; darkness reigned.

"Come now, begin!"—said I.—Silence.—"Do begin, thou thus and so!"—Not a sound. It was laughable. I began to take courage.—"Come now, begin, thou thus and so, and 'tother thing!" But nothing happened—there was a complete lull! The only thing to be heard was the bitch breathing hard.

"Fílka!"—I shouted;—"Fílka! Come hither, stupid man!"—He entered.—"Dost thou hear the dog?"

"No, master,"—said he,—"I don't hear anything,"—and began to laugh.

"And thou wilt not hear it again forever! Here's half a ruble for thee for vodka!"

"Please let me kiss your hand,"—said the fool, and crawled to me in the dark.... My joy was great, I can tell you!

"And was that the end of it all?"—asked Antón Stepánitch, no longer ironically.

The visions did cease, it is true—and there were no disturbances of any sort—but wait, that was not the end of the whole matter. My Tresórushko began to grow, and turned out a cunning rogue. Thick-tailed, heavy, flop-eared, with drooping dewlaps, she was a regular "take-advance,"—a thoroughgoing good setter. And moreover, she became greatly attached to me. Hunting is bad in our parts,—well, but as I had set up a dog I had to supply myself with a gun also. I began to roam about the surrounding country with my Tresór; sometimes I would knock over a hare (my heavens, how she did course those hares!), and sometimes a quail or a duck. But the chief point was that Tresór never, never strayed a step away from me. Wherever I went, there she went also; I even took her to the bath with me—truly! One of our young

gentlewomen undertook to eject me from her drawing-room on account of Tresór; but I raised such a row that I smashed some of her window-panes!

Well, sir, one day—it happened in summer.... And I must tell you that there was such a drought that no one could recall its like; the air was full of something which was neither smoke nor fog; there was an odour of burning, and mist, and the sun was like a red-hot cannon-ball; and the dust was such that one could not leave off sneezing! People went about with their mouths gaping open, just like crows.

It bored me to sit at home constantly in complete undress, behind closed shutters; and by the way, the heat was beginning to moderate.... And so, gentlemen, I set off afoot to the house of one of my neighbours. This neighbour of mine lived about a verst from me,—and was really a benevolent lady. She was still young and blooming, and of the most attractive exterior; only she had a fickle disposition. But that is no detriment in the feminine sex; it even affords pleasure.... So, then, I trudged to her porch—and that trip seemed very salt to me! Well, I thought, Nimfodóra Semyónovna will regale me with bilberry-water, and other refreshments—and I had already grasped the door-handle when, suddenly, around the corner of the servants' cottage there arose a trampling of feet, a squealing and shouting of small boys.... I looked round. O Lord, my God! Straight toward me was dashing a huge, reddish beast, which at first sight I did not recognise as a dog; its jaws were gaping, its eyes were blood-shot, its hair stood on end.... Before I could take breath the monster leaped upon the porch, elevated itself on its hind legs, and fell straight on my breast. What do you think of that situation? I was swooning with fright, and could not lift my arms; I was completely stupefied; ... all I could see were the white tusks right at the end of my nose, the red tongue all swathed in foam. But at that moment another dark body soared through the air in front of me, like a ball—it was my darling Tresór coming to my rescue; and she went at that beast's throat like a leech! The beast rattled hoarsely in the throat, gnashed its teeth, staggered

back.... With one jerk I tore open the door, and found myself in the anteroom. I stood there, beside myself with terror, threw my whole body against the lock, and listened to a desperate battle which was in progress on the porch. I began to shout, to call for help; every one in the house took alarm. Nimfodóra Semyónovna ran up with hair unbraided; voices clamoured in the courtyard—and suddenly there came a cry: "Hold him, hold him, lock the gate!"

I opened the door,—just a crack,—and looked. The monster was no longer on the porch. People were rushing in disorder about the courtyard, flourishing their arms, picking up billets of wood from the ground—just as though they had gone mad. "To the village! It has run to the village!" shrieked shrilly a peasant-woman in a pointed coronet head-dress of unusual dimensions, thrusting her head through a garret-window. I emerged from the house.

"Where is Tresór?"—said I.—And at that moment I caught sight of my saviour. She was walking away from the gate, limping, all bitten, and covered with blood....

"But what was it, after all?"—I asked the people, as they went circling round the courtyard like crazy folk.

"A mad dog!"—they answered me, "belonging to the Count; it has been roving about here since yesterday."

We had a neighbour, a Count; he had introduced some very dreadful dogs from over-sea. My knees gave way beneath me; I hastened to the mirror and looked to see whether I had been bitten. No; God be thanked, nothing was visible; only, naturally, my face was all green; but Nimfodóra Semyónovna was lying on the couch, and clucking like a hen. And that was easily to be understood: in the first place, nerves; in the second place, sensibility. But she came to herself, and asked me in a very languid way: was I alive? I told her that I was, and that Tresór was my saviour.

"Akh,"—said she,—"what nobility! And I suppose the mad dog smothered her?"

"No,"—said I,—"it did not smother her, but it wounded her seriously."

"Akh,"—said she,—"in that case, she must be shot this very moment!"

"Nothing of the sort,"—said I;—"I won't agree to that; I shall try to cure her." ...

In the meanwhile, Tresór began to scratch at the door; I started to open it for her.

"Akh,"—cried she,—"what are you doing? Why, she will bite us all dreadfully!"

"Pardon me,"—said I,—"the poison does not take effect so soon."

"Akh,"—said she,—"how is that possible? Why, you have gone out of your mind!"

"Nimfótchka,"—said I,—"calm thyself; listen to reason...."

But all at once she began to scream: "Go away; go away this instant with your disgusting dog!"

"I will go,"—said I.

"Instantly,"—said she,—"this very second! Take thyself off, brigand,"—said she,—"and don't dare ever to show yourself in my sight again. Thou mightest go mad thyself!"

"Very good, ma'am,"—said I; "only give me an equipage, for I am afraid to go home on foot now."

She riveted her eyes on me. "Give, give him a calash, a carriage, a drozhky, whatever he wants,—anything, for the sake of getting rid of him as quickly as possible. Akh, what eyes! akh, what eyes he has!"—And with these words she flew out of the room, dealing a maid who was entering a box on the ear,—and I heard her go off into another fit of hysterics.—And you may believe me or not, gentlemen, but from that day forth I broke off all acquaintance with Nimfodóra Semyónovna; and, taking all things into mature

consideration, I cannot but add that for that circumstance also I owe my friend Tresór a debt of gratitude until I lie down in my coffin.

Well, sir, I ordered a calash to be harnessed, placed Tresór in it, and drove off home with her. At home I looked her over, washed her wounds, and thought to myself: "I'll take her to-morrow, as soon as it is light, to the wizard in Efrém County. Now this wizard was an old peasant, a wonderful man; he would whisper over water—but others say that he emitted serpents' venom on it—and give it to you to drink, and your malady would instantly disappear. By the way, I thought, I'll get myself bled in Efrémovo; 'tis a good remedy for terror; only, of course, not from the arm, but from the bleeding-vein."

"But where is that place—the bleeding-vein?"—inquired Finopléntoff, with bashful curiosity.

Don't you know? That spot on the fist close to the thumb, on which one shakes snuff from the horn.—Just here, see! 'Tis the very best place for blood-letting; therefore, judge for yourselves; from the arm it will be venal blood, while from this spot it is sparkling. The doctors don't know that, and don't understand it; how should they, the sluggards, the dumb idiots? Blacksmiths chiefly make use of it. And what skilful fellows they are! They'll place their chisel on the spot, give it a whack with their hammer—and the deed is done!... Well, sir, while I was meditating in this wise, it had grown entirely dark out of doors, and it was time to go to sleep. I lay down on my bed, and Tresór, of course, was there also. But whether it was because of my fright or of the stifling heat, or because the fleas or my thoughts were bothersome, at any rate, I could not get to sleep. Such distress fell upon me as it is impossible to describe; and I kept drinking water, and opening the window, and thrumming the "Kamárynskaya"[46] on the guitar, with Italian variations.... In vain! I felt impelled to leave the room,—and that's all there was to it. At last I made up my mind. I took a pillow, a coverlet, and a sheet, and wended my way across the

garden to the hay-barn; well, and there I settled myself. And there things were agreeable to me, gentlemen; the night was still, extremely still, only now and then a breeze as soft as a woman's hand would blow across my cheek, and it was very cool; the hay was fragrant as tea, the katydids were rasping in the apple-trees; then suddenly a quail would emit its call—and you would feel that he was taking his ease, the scamp, sitting in the dew with his mate.... And the sky was so magnificent; the stars were twinkling, and sometimes a little cloud, as white as wadding, would float past, and even it would hardly stir....

At this point in the narrative, Skvorévitch sneezed; Kinarévitch, who never lagged behind his comrade in anything, sneezed also. Antón Stepánitch cast a glance of approbation at both.

Well, sir—[went on Porfíry Kapítonitch],—so I lay there, and still I could not get to sleep. A fit of meditation had seized upon me; and I pondered chiefly over the great marvel, how that Prokhóritch had rightly explained to me about the warning—and why such wonders should happen to me in particular.... I was astonished, in fact, because I could not understand it at all—while Tresórushko whimpered as she curled herself up on the hay; her wounds were paining her. And I'll tell you another thing that kept me from sleeping—you will hardly believe it; the moon! It stood right in front of me, so round and big and yellow and flat; and it seemed to me as though it were staring at me—by Heaven it did; and so arrogantly, importunately.... At last I stuck my tongue out at it, I really did. Come, I thought, what art thou so curious about? I turned away from it; but it crawled into my ear, it illuminated the back of my head, and flooded me as though with rain; I opened my eyes, and what did I see? It made every blade of grass, every wretched little blade in the hay, the most insignificant spider's web, stand out distinctly! "Well, look, then!" said I. There was no help for it. I propped my head on my hand and began to stare at it. But I could not keep it up; if you will believe it, my eyes began to stick out like a hare's and to open very wide indeed, just as though they did not know what sleep was like. I think I could have eaten

up everything with those same eyes. The gate of the hay-barn stood wide open; I could see for a distance of five versts out on the plain; and distinctly, not in the usual way on a moonlight night. So I gazed and gazed, and did not even wink.... And suddenly it seemed to me as though something were waving about far, far away ... exactly as though things were glimmering indistinctly before my eyes. Some time elapsed; again a shadow leaped across my vision,—a little nearer now; then again, still nearer. What is it? I thought. Can it be a hare? No, I thought, it is larger than a hare, and its gait is unlike that of a hare. I continued to look, and again the shadow showed itself, and it was moving now across the pasture-land (and the pasture-land was whitish from the moonlight) like a very large spot; it was plain that it was some sort of a wild beast—a fox or a wolf. My heart contracted within me ... but what was I afraid of, after all? Aren't there plenty of wild animals running about the fields by night? But my curiosity was stronger than my fears; I rose up, opened my eyes very wide, and suddenly turned cold all over. I fairly froze rigid on the spot, as though I had been buried in ice up to my ears; and why? The Lord only knows! And I saw the shadow growing bigger and bigger, which meant that it was making straight for the hay-barn.... And then it became apparent to me that it really was a large, big-headed wild beast.... It dashed onward like a whirlwind, like a bullet.... Good heavens! What was it? Suddenly it stopped short, as though it scented something.... Why, it was the mad dog I had encountered that day! 'Twas he, 'twas he! O Lord! And I could not stir a finger, I could not shout.... It ran to the gate, glared about with its eyes, emitted a howl, and dashed straight for me on the hay!

But out of the hay, like a lion, sprang my Tresór; and then the struggle began. The two clinched jaw to jaw, and rolled over the ground in a ball! What took place further I do not remember; all I do remember is that I flew head over heels across them, just as I was, into the garden, into the house, and into my own bedroom!... I almost dived under the bed—there's no use in concealing the fact.

And what leaps, what bounds I made in the garden! You would have taken me for the leading ballerina who dances before the Emperor Napoleon on the day of his Angel—and even she couldn't have overtaken me. But when I had recovered myself a little, I immediately routed out the entire household; I ordered them all to arm themselves, and I myself took a sword and a revolver. (I must confess that I had purchased that revolver after the Emancipation, in case of need, you know—only I had hit upon such a beast of a pedlar that out of three charges two inevitably missed fire.) Well, sir, I took all this, and in this guise we sallied forth, in a regular horde, with staves and lanterns, and directed our footsteps toward the hay-barn. We reached it and called—nothing was to be heard; we entered the barn at last.... and what did we see? My poor Tresórushko lay dead, with her throat slit, and that accursed beast had vanished without leaving a trace!

Then, gentlemen, I began to bleat like a calf, and I will say it without shame; I fell down on the body of my twofold rescuer, so to speak, and kissed her head for a long time. And there I remained in that attitude until my old housekeeper, Praskóvya, brought me to my senses (she also had run out at the uproar).

"Why do you grieve so over the dog, Porfíry Stepánitch?"—said she. "You will surely catch cold, which God forbid!" (I was very lightly clad.) "And if that dog lost her life in saving you, she ought to reckon it as a great favour!"

Although I did not agree with Praskóvya, I went back to the house. And the mad dog was shot on the following day by a soldier from the garrison. And it must have been that that was the end appointed by Fate to the dog, for the soldier fired a gun for the first time in his life, although he had a medal for service in the year '12. So that is the supernatural occurrence which happened to me.

The narrator ceased speaking and began to fill his pipe. But we all exchanged glances of surprise.

"But perhaps you lead a very upright life,"—began Mr. Finopléntoff,—"and so by way of reward...." But at that word he

faltered, for he saw that Porfíry Kapítonitch's cheeks were beginning to swell out and turn red, and his eyes too were beginning to pucker up—evidently the man was on the point of breaking out....

"But admitting the possibility of the supernatural, the possibility of its interference in everyday life, so to speak,"—began Antón Stepánitch:—"then what rôle, after this, must sound sense play?"

None of us found any answer, and, as before, we remained perplexed.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The well-known poet Yákoff Petróvitch Polónsky is the authority for this statement, in his "Recollections of Turgénieff," printed in the early numbers of the *Niva* for 1884.—Translator.

[2] The finest of the public parks in Moscow, situated near the famous Sparrow Hills, is called "Neskútchny"—"Not Tiresome," generally rendered "Sans Souci." It contains an imperial residence, the Alexander Palace, used as an official summer home by the Governor-General of Moscow.—Translator.

[3] Princes, princesses, counts, and countesses have the title of *Siyátelstvo* (*siyám*—to shine, to be radiant); generally translated "Illustrious Highness" or "Serenity."—Translator.

[4] The custom still prevails in Russia, to a great extent, for all elderly women to wear caps. In the peasant class it is considered as extremely indecorous to go "simple-haired," as the expression runs—Translator.

[5] The famous gate from the "White town" into the "China town," in Moscow, where there is a renowned holy picture of the Iberian Virgin, in a chapel. Evidently the lawyers' quarter was in this vicinity.—Translator.

[6] In Púshkin's poem, "The Gipsies."—Translator.

[7] The respectful "s," which is an abbreviation of "sir" or "madam."—Translator.

[8] A square in Moscow.—Translator.

[9] A great plain situated on the outskirts of the town. So called because (says tradition) it was here that annually were assembled the young girls who were sent, in addition to the money tribute, to the Khan, during the Tatár period, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—Translator.

[10] Afanásy Afanásievitch Shénshin (1820-1892) always wrote under this name.—Translator.

[11] A verst is two thirds of a mile.—Translator.

[12] The Name-day—that is, the day of the saint after whom a person is named—is observed with feasting and congratulation, instead of the birthday. For ceremonious calls, no matter at what hour of the day, a man who has no official uniform must wear his evening suit, on penalty of being considered ignorant or rude, or (in official circles) of being refused admittance.—Translator.

[13] A pun is intended: *isprávno*, regularly, in orderly manner; *ispravnik*, the chief of police in a rural district.—Translator.

[14] Male serfs. The women and children did not figure on the revision lists.—Translator.

[15] Of different grades (civil and military), for the children of the nobility or gentry. They are not charities.—Translator.

[16] In those days there was a great difference in the value of silver and paper money—hence the kind is usually specified.—Translator.

[17] Literally, "dear little mother."—Translator.

[18] A little Russian song.—Translator.

[19] The popular nickname among Great Russians for the Little Russians.—Translator.

[20] Literally, "dear little father": the genuinely Russian mode of address to a man of any class, as *mátushka* ("dear little mother") is for women of all classes.—Translator.

[21] The poem, after describing the deadly qualities of the upas-tree, narrates how a potentate sent one of his slaves to bring him flowers from it. The slave, thoroughly aware of his danger, fulfilled his sovereign's behest, returned with branches of the tree, and dropped dead.—Translator.

[22] It should be Akím, popular for Iakínthos, Hyacinth.—Translator.

[23] The unpoetical Russian name is "chicken-blindness" (night-blindness).—Translator.

[24] The eighth (out of fourteen) in Peter the Great's Table of Ranks.—Translator.

[25] "S'," a polite addition to sentences, equivalent to a contraction of the words for "sir" or "madam."—Translator.

[26] The fourth from the top in the Table of Ranks.—Translator.

[27] The figures in the mazurka are like those in the cotillon (which is often danced the same evening), but the step is very animated and original.—Translator.

[28] He uses an impromptu Russification of a foreign word: *intimidátziya*.—Translator.

[29] A mixed drink.—Translator.

[30] A large collection of shops, under one roof, extending from the Névsky Prospékt to the Bolsháya Italyánskaya ("Great Italian Street"), in St. Petersburg.—Translator.

[31] The Russian shows that a woman is addressed.—Translator.

[32] "Macbeth," Act V, scene v.

[33] How can one fail to recall at this point the words of Mephistopheles in "Faust":

"Er (Gott) findet sich in einen ew'gen Glanze,
Uns hat er in die Finsterniss gebracht—
Und euch taugt einzig Tag und Nacht."

[34] This is in English in the original.—Translator.

[35] The fifth (from the top) of the fourteen grades in the Table of Ranks, instituted by Peter the Great, which were to be won by service to the State.—Translator.

[36] Those who reject the official and necessary corrections made in the Scriptures and Church service books in the reign of Peter the Great's father.—Translator.

[37] The Old Ritualists oppose tea, coffee, and tobacco, chiefly, it would seem, because they are "newfangled," having come into use after the schism. Later on they invented curious religious reasons for their denunciation of these and other things.—Translator.

[38] The holy picture (*ikóna*) of the Mother of Christ.—Translator.

[39] The Old Ritualists' most opprobrious epithet, designating a member of the State Church, which accepted the emendations instituted by Patriarch Níkon referred to in a previous note.—Translator.

[40] One of the hotly disputed points of difference between the Old Ritualists and the members of the State Church is in their manner of crossing themselves. The latter use the forefinger, middle finger, and thumb joined at the tips.—Translator.

[41] In the government of Tula, central Russia.—Translator.

[42] Formerly, houses were not numbered, and addresses ran: "In the house of ***" (the proprietor, man or woman), often with many complicated directions added to designate the special house. These ancient addresses still remain, along with the numbers or alone, especially on many of the houses in Moscow, and in country towns.—Translator.

[43] Old Ritualists will tolerate no others. Neither will they employ the words "buy" or "sell" in connection with these ikónas; they say "exchange."—Translator.

[44] The Senate in Russia is the Supreme Court of Appeals, and the senators are appointed, not elected.—Translator.

[45] A famous monastery on an island in the White Sea.—Translator.

[46] A vivacious and favourite popular dance-tune. It is several centuries old, and of interesting historical origin.—Translator.

EDITION NOTE

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