

The Complete Works of Fyodor Dostoevsky

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Contents

List of Works by Genre and Title	16
List of Works in Chronological Order	17
Biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky	18
Family Origins	18
Early life	18
Beginnings of a literary career	19
Exile in Siberia	20
Post-prison maturation as writer	20
Later literary career	21
Works and influence	22
Dostoevsky and Existentialism	24
Major works	25
Short stories	25
Crime and Punishment	27
The Brothers Karamazov	29
The Double: A Petersburg Poem	31
Chapter 1	33
Chapter 2	38
Chapter 3	46
Chapter 4	52
Chapter 6	61
Chapter 7	67

Chapter 8	76
Chapter 9	83
Chapter 5	93
Chapter 10	107
Chapter 11	122
Chapter 12	130
Chapter 13	140
The Gambler	151
I	153
II	160
III	165
IV	169
V	173
VI	179
VII	185
VIII	191
IX	197
X	204
XI	214
XII	221
XIII	231
XIV	240

XV	247
XVI	255
XVII	262
The Idiot	270
Part 1	272
I.	272
II.	279
III.	287
IV.	296
V.	306
VI.	317
VII.	324
VIII.	334
IX.	344
X.	350
XI.	355
XII.	360
XIII.	367
XIV.	374
XV.	381
XVI.	388
Part 2	397
I.	397
II.	404
III.	414
IV.	425
V.	429
VI.	437
VII.	447
VIII.	454
IX.	466
X.	475
XI.	484
XII.	494

Part 3	500
I	500
II.	510
III.	520
IV.	532
V.	543
VI.	553
VII.	565
VIII.	575
IX.	586
X.	596

Part 4	602
I	602
II.	611
III.	617
IV.	625
V.	634
VI.	648
VII.	660
VIII.	672
IX.	686
X.	695
XI.	705
XII.	716

Notes from the Underground 719

Part 1	721
I	721
II	723
III	725
IV	727
V	729
VI	730
VII	731
VIII	735
IX	738
X	740
XI	741

Part 2	744
I	744
II	752
III	755
IV	761
V	767
VI	770
VII	778
VIII	782
IX	789
X	793

Poor Folk **797**

April	799
April 8th	799
April 8th	802
April 8th	803
April 9th	806
April 12th	806
April 25th	809

May **810**

June	812
June 1st	812
Manuscript	812
1	812
2	816
June 11th	831
June 12th	832
June 20th	834
June 21st	835
June 22nd	835
June 25th	836
June 26th	836
June 27th	840
June 28th	841

July	844
July 1st	844

July 7th.	846
July 8th.	847
July 27th.	849
July 28th.	851
July 28th.	851
July 29th.	853
August	854
August 1st.	854
August 2nd.	855
August 3rd.	856
August 4th.	857
August 4th.	859
August 5th.	860
August 5th.	861
August 11th.	864
August 13th.	865
August 14th.	865
August 19th.	866
August 21st.	866
September	868
September 3rd.	868
September 5th.	870
September 9th.	876
September 10th.	879
September 11th.	879
September 15th.	881
September 18th.	882
September 19th.	884
September 23rd.	884
September 23rd.	886
September 27th.	887
September 27th.	888
September 28th.	889
September 28th.	889
September 29th.	890
September 30th.	890

The Possessed or The Devils **894**

Part 1 **896**

Chapter 1: Introductory Some Details of the Biography of That Highly Respected Gentleman Stefan Teofimovitch Verhovensky 896

1 896

2 899

3 901

4 902

5 905

6 907

7 910

8 911

9 915

Chapter 2: Prince Harry. Matchmaking. 919

1 919

2 923

3 926

4 929

5 935

6 936

7 941

8 944

Chapter 3: The Sins of Others 948

1 948

2 951

3 953

4 955

5 961

6 965

7 970

8 974

Chapter 4: The Cripple Shatov Was Not Perverse... 979

1 979

2 981

3 985

4 987

5 996

6 998

Chapter 5: The Subtle Serpent Varvara Petrovna Rang the Bell and Threw Herself Into an Easy Chair by the Window 1004

1 1004

2	1006
3	1007
4	1012
5	1018
6	1022
7	1029
8	1035

Part 2 **1039**

Chapter 1: Night Eight Days Had Passed	1039
Chapter 2	1042
1	1042
2	1045
3	1053
4	1061
5	1067
6	1076
7	1084
8	1089
Chapter 3: The Duel the Next Day	1092
1	1092
2	1093
3	1097
4	1098
Chapter 4: All in Expectation	1101
1	1101
2	1107
3	1110
Chapter 5: On the Eve Op the Fete	1117
1	1117
2	1122
3	1129
Chapter 6: Pyotr Stepanovitch is Busy	1135
1	1135
2	1137
3	1140
4	1148
5	1156
6	1162
Chapter 7: A Meeting	1167
1	1167
2	1171

Chapter 8: Ivan the Tsarevitch	1184
Chapter 9: A Raid at Stefan Trofimovitch's	1192
Chapter 10: Filibusters. A Fatal Morning.	1199
1	1199
2	1207
3	1209
Part 3	1216
Chapter 1: The Fete—first Part	1216
1	1216
2	1218
3	1227
4	1232
5	1232
Chapter 2: The End of the Fete He Would Not See Me	1237
1	1237
2	1238
3	1245
4	1253
Chapter 3: A Romance Ended	1257
1	1257
2	1262
3	1268
Chapter 4: The Last Resolution That Morning	1273
1	1273
2	1280
3	1283
4	1289
Chapter 5: A Wanderer	1290
1	1290
2	1297
3	1302
4	1306
#	1309
Chapter 6: A Busy Night	1313
1	1313
2	1321
3	1333
Chapter 7: Stepan Trofimovitch's Last Wandering	1336
1	1336
2	1345
3	1354

Chapter 8: Conclusion	1361
---------------------------------	------

The Raw Youth **1370**

Part 1	1372
Chapter 1	1372
1	1372
2	1372
3	1373
4	1375
5	1376
6	1379
7	1380
8	1382
Chapter 2	1384
1	1384
2	1387
3	1390
4	1397
Chapter 3	1400
1	1400
2	1401
3	1404
4	1409
5	1410
6	1413
Chapter 4	1415
1	1415
2	1418
3	1423
4	1426
Chapter 5	1427
1	1427
2	1429
3	1433
4	1438
Chapter 6	1442
1	1442
2	1446
3	1451
4	1455

Chapter 7	1459
1	1459
2	1463
3	1467
4	1469
Chapter 8	1470
1	1470
2	1473
3	1482
Chapter 9	1487
1	1487
2	1490
3	1496
4	1497
5	1499
Chapter 10	1504
1	1504
2	1508
3	1512
4	1514
5	1517
Part 2	1518
Chapter 1	1518
1	1518
2	1519
3	1524
4	1526
Chapter 2	1530
1	1530
2	1532
3	1535
Chapter 3	1541
1	1541
2	1546
3	1548
4	1552
Chapter 4	1554
1	1554
2	1558
Chapter 5	1563
1	1563

2	1568
3	1573
Chapter 6	1577
1	1577
2	1580
3	1582
4	1586
Chapter 7	1588
1	1588
2	1592
3	1595
Chapter 8	1602
1	1602
2	1605
3	1608
4	1610
5	1613
6	1615
Chapter 9	1617
1	1617
2	1620
3	1624
4	1628

Part 3 **1630**

Chapter 1	1630
1	1630
2	1633
3	1635
Chapter 2	1640
1	1640
2	1642
3	1645
4	1651
5	1653
Chapter 3	1654
1	1654
2	1656
3	1660
4	1661
Chapter 4	1669
1	1669

2	1674
3	1679
4	1683
Chapter 5	1685
1	1685
2	1689
3	1694
Chapter 6	1701
1	1701
2	1707
3	1710
Chapter 7	1714
1	1714
2	1717
3	1721
Chapter 8	1725
1	1725
2	1727
Chapter 9	1731
1	1731
2	1732
3	1737
4	1741
5	1744
Chapter 10	1745
1	1745
2	1747
3	1753
4	1755
Chapter 11	1760
1	1760
2	1764
3	1767
4	1769
Chapter 12	1773
1	1773
2	1776
3	1779
4	1782
5	1783
Chapter 13 - Conclusion	1785
1	1785

2	1789
3	1791

The Christmas Tree and The Wedding **1795**

The Crocodile **1802**

Chapter 1	1803
Chapter 2	1809
Chapter 3	1815
Chapter 4	1822
1	1828
2	1831
3	1832
4	1835
5	1838

List of Works by Genre and Title

Novels:

- The Brothers Karamazov
- Crime and Punishment
- The Double: A Petersburg Poem
- The Gambler
- The Idiot
- Notes from the Underground
- Poor Folk
- The Possessed or The Devils
- The Raw Youth or The Adolescent

Short stories:

- The Christmas Tree and the Wedding
- The Crocodile
- The Dream of a Ridiculous Man

List of Works in Chronological Order

- Poor Folk (1846)
- The Double: A Petersburg Poem (1846)
- The Christmas Tree and the Wedding (1848)
- Notes from Underground (1864)
- The Crocodile (1865)
- Crime and Punishment (1866)
- The Gambler (1867)
- The Idiot (1868)
- The Possessed or Demons (1872)
- The Raw Youth or The Adolescent (1875)
- The Dream of a Ridiculous Man (1877)
- The Brothers Karamazov (1880)

Biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, sometimes transliterated Dostoyevsky, Dostoievsky, Dostojevskij or Dostoevski (November 11 [O.S. October 30] 1821 - February 9 [O.S. January 28] 1881) was a Russian novelist and writer of fiction whose works, including *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, have had a profound and lasting effect on intellectual thought and world literature.

Dostoevsky's literary output explores human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual context of 19th-century Russian society. Considered by many as a founder or precursor of 20th century existentialism, his *Notes from Underground* (1864), written in the embittered voice of the anonymous "underground man", was named by Walter Kaufmann as the "best overture for existentialism ever written."

Family Origins

Dostoevsky was Russian on his mother's side. His paternal ancestors were Lithuanian, from a place called Dostoyeve, natives of the government of Minsk, not far from Pinsk. Dostoevsky's paternal ancestors were Polonized nobles (*szlachta*) and went to war bearing Polish Radwan Coat of Arms. Dostoevsky (Polish "Dostojewski") Radwan armorial bearings were drawn for the Dostoevsky Museum in Moscow. The family eventually passed into Ukraina.

Early life

Dostoevsky was the second of seven children born to Mikhail and Maria Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's father was a retired military surgeon and a violent alcoholic, who served as a doctor at the Mariinsky Hospital for the Poor in Moscow. The hospital was situated in one of the worst areas in Moscow. Local landmarks included a cemetery for criminals, a lunatic asylum, and an orphanage for abandoned infants. This urban landscape made a lasting impression on the young Dostoevsky, whose interest in and compassion for the poor, oppressed, and tormented was apparent. Though his parents forbade it, Dostoevsky liked to wander out to the hospital garden, where the suffering patients sat to catch a glimpse of sun. The young Dostoevsky loved to spend time with these patients and hear their stories.

There are many stories of Dostoevsky's father's despotic treatment of his children. After returning home from work, he would take a nap while his children, ordered to

keep absolutely silent, stood by their slumbering father in shifts and swatted at any flies that came near his head. However, it is the opinion of Joseph Frank, a biographer of Dostoevsky, that the father figure in *The Brothers Karamazov* is not based on Dostoevsky's own father. Letters and personal accounts demonstrate that they had a fairly loving relationship.

Shortly after his mother died of tuberculosis in 1837, Dostoevsky and his brother were sent to the Military Engineering Academy at St. Petersburg. Fyodor's father died in 1839. Though it has never been proven, it is believed by some that he was murdered by his own serfs. According to one account, they became enraged during one of his drunken fits of violence, restrained him, and poured vodka into his mouth until he drowned. Another story holds that Mikhail died of natural causes, and a neighboring landowner invented the story of his murder so that he might buy the estate inexpensively. Some have argued that his father's personality had influenced the character of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, the "wicked and sentimental buffoon", father of the main characters in his 1880 novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, but such claims fail to withstand the scrutiny of many critics.

Dostoevsky was an epileptic and his first seizure occurred when he was 9 years old. Epileptic seizures recurred sporadically throughout his life, and Dostoevsky's experiences are thought to have formed the basis for his description of Prince Myshkin's epilepsy in his novel *The Idiot* and that of Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, among others.

At the St. Petersburg Academy of Military Engineering, Dostoevsky was taught mathematics, a subject he despised. However, he also studied literature by Shakespeare, Pascal, Victor Hugo and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Though he focused on areas different from mathematics, he did well on the exams and received a commission in 1841. That year, he is known to have written two romantic plays, influenced by the German Romantic poet/playwright Friedrich Schiller: *Mary Stuart* and *Boris Godunov*. The plays have not been preserved. Dostoevsky described himself as a "dreamer" when he was a young man, and at that time revered Schiller. However, in the years during which he yielded his great masterpieces, his opinions changed and he sometimes poked fun at Schiller.

Beginnings of a literary career

Dostoevsky was made a lieutenant in 1842, and left the Engineering Academy the following year. He completed a translation into Russian of Balzac's novel *Eugénie Grandet* in 1843, but it brought him little or no attention. Dostoevsky started to write his own fiction in late 1844 after leaving the army. In 1845, his first work, the epistolary short novel, *Poor Folk*, published in the periodical *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), was met with great acclaim. As legend has it, the editor of the magazine, poet Nikolai Nekrasov, walked into the office of liberal critic Vissarion Belinsky and announced, "a new Gogol has arisen!" Belinsky, his followers and many others agreed and after the

novel was fully published in book form at the beginning of the next year, Dostoevsky became a literary celebrity at the age of 24.

In 1846, Belinsky and many others reacted negatively to his novella, *The Double*, a psychological study of a bureaucrat whose alter ego overtakes his life. Dostoevsky's fame began to cool. Much of his work after *Poor Folk* met with mixed reviews and it seemed that Belinsky's prediction that Dostoevsky would be one of the greatest writers of Russia was mistaken.

Exile in Siberia

Dostoevsky was arrested and imprisoned on April 23, 1849 for being a part of the liberal intellectual group, the Petrashevsky Circle. Czar Nicholas I after seeing the Revolutions of 1848 in Europe was harsh on any sort of underground organization which he felt could put autocracy into jeopardy. On November 16 that year Dostoevsky, along with the other members of the Petrashevsky Circle, was sentenced to death. After a mock execution, in which he and other members of the group stood outside in freezing weather waiting to be shot by a firing squad, Dostoevsky's sentence was commuted to four years of exile with hard labor at a katorga prison camp in Omsk, Siberia. Dostoevsky described later to his brother the sufferings he went through as the years in which he was "shut up in a coffin." Describing the dilapidated barracks which, as he put in his own words, "should have been torn down years ago", he wrote:

"In summer, intolerable closeness; in winter, unendurable cold. All the floors were rotten. Filth on the floors an inch thick; one could slip and fall. We were packed like herrings in a barrel. There was no room to turn around. From dusk to dawn it was impossible not to behave like pigs. Fleas, lice, and black beetles by the bushel."

He was released from prison in 1854, and was required to serve in the Siberian Regiment. Dostoevsky spent the following five years as a private (and later lieutenant) in the Regiment's Seventh Line Battalion, stationed at the fortress of Semipalatinsk, now in Kazakhstan. While there, he began a relationship with Maria Dmitrievna Isaeva, the wife of an acquaintance in Siberia. They married in February 1857, after her husband's death.

Post-prison maturation as writer

Dostoevsky's experiences in prison and the army resulted in major changes in his political and religious convictions. Firstly, his ordeal somehow caused him to become disillusioned with 'Western' ideas; he repudiated the contemporary Western European philosophical movements, and to instead pay greater tribute to traditional, rural-based, rustic Russian 'values'. But even more significantly, he had what his biographer Joseph Frank describes as a conversion experience in prison, which greatly strengthened his

Christian, and specifically Orthodox, faith (Dostoevsky would later depict his conversion experience in the short story, *The Peasant Marey* (1876)).

Dostoevsky focused his newfound condemnation of Western European philosophy especially on the Nihilist and Socialist movements; and much of his post-prison work — particularly the novel, *The Possessed* and the essays, *The Diary of a Writer* — contains both criticism of socialist and nihilist ideas, as well as thinly-veiled parodies of contemporary Western-influenced Russian intellectuals (Timofey Granovsky), revolutionaries (Sergey Nechayev), and even fellow novelists (Ivan Turgenev). In social circles, Dostoevsky allied himself with well-known conservatives, such as the statesman Konstantin Pobedonostsev. His post-prison essays praised the tenets of the Pochvennichestvo movement, a late-19th Russian nativist ideology closely aligned with Slavophilism.

In short, Dostoevsky's post-prison fiction abandoned the European-style domestic melodramas and quaint character studies of his youthful work in favor of dark, complex story-lines and situations, played-out by brooding, tortured characters — often styled partly on Dostoevsky himself — who agonized over existential themes of spiritual torment, religious awakening, and the psychological confusion caused by the conflict between traditional Russian culture and the influx of modern, Western philosophy. Dostoevsky's novels focused on the idea that utopias and positivist ideas being utilitarian were unrealistic and unobtainable.

Later literary career

In December 1859, Dostoevsky returned to St. Petersburg, where he ran a series of unsuccessful literary journals, *Vremya* (Time) and *Epokha* (Epoch), with his older brother Mikhail. The latter had to be shut down as a consequence of its coverage of the Polish Uprising of 1863. That year Dostoevsky traveled to Europe and frequented the gambling casinos. There he met Apollinaria Suslova, the model for Dostoevsky's "proud women," such as Katerina Ivanovna, in both *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Dostoevsky was devastated by his wife's death in 1864, which was followed shortly thereafter by his brother's death. He was financially crippled by business debts and the need to provide for his wife's son from her earlier marriage and his brother's widow and children. Dostoevsky sank into a deep depression, frequenting gambling parlors and accumulating massive losses at the tables.

Dostoevsky suffered from an acute gambling compulsion as well as from its consequences. By one account *Crime and Punishment*, possibly his best known novel, was completed in a mad hurry because Dostoevsky was in urgent need of an advance from his publisher. He had been left practically penniless after a gambling spree. Dostoevsky wrote *The Gambler* simultaneously in order to satisfy an agreement with his publisher Stellovsky who, if he did not receive a new work, would have claimed the copyrights to all of Dostoevsky's writings.

Motivated by the dual wish to escape his creditors at home and to visit the casinos abroad, Dostoevsky traveled to Western Europe. There, he attempted to rekindle a love affair with Suslova, but she refused his marriage proposal. Dostoevsky was heartbroken, but soon met Anna Grigorevna Snitkina, a twenty-year-old stenographer. Shortly before marrying her in 1867, he dictated *The Gambler* to her. This period resulted in the writing of what are generally considered to be his greatest books. From 1873 to 1881 he published the *Writer's Diary*, a monthly journal full of short stories, sketches, and articles on current events. The journal was an enormous success.

Dostoevsky is also known to have influenced and been influenced by the philosopher Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov. Solovyov is noted as the inspiration for the character Alyosha Karamazov.

In 1877, Dostoevsky gave the keynote eulogy at the funeral of his friend, the poet Nekrasov, to much controversy. On June 8, 1880, shortly before he died, he gave his famous Pushkin speech at the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow. From that event on, Dostoevsky was acclaimed all over Russia as one of her greatest writers and hailed as a prophet, almost a mystic.

In his later years, Fyodor Dostoevsky lived for a long time at the resort of Staraya Russa in northwestern Russia, which was closer to St. Petersburg and less expensive than German resorts. He died on February 9 (January 28 O.S.), 1881 of a lung hemorrhage associated with emphysema and an epileptic seizure. He was interred in Tikhvin Cemetery at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, St Petersburg, Russia. Forty thousand mourners attended his funeral. His tombstone reads "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." from John 12:24, which is also the epigraph of his final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Works and influence

Dostoevsky's influence has been acclaimed by a wide variety of writers, including Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Charles Bukowski, Albert Camus, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry Miller, Yukio Mishima, Cormac McCarthy, Gabriel García Márquez, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Orhan Pamuk and Joseph Heller. American novelist Ernest Hemingway cited Dostoevsky as a major influence on his work in his autobiographical novella *A Moveable Feast*.

In a book of interviews with Arthur Power (*Conversations with James Joyce*), James Joyce praised Dostoevsky's influence:

..he is the man more than any other who has created modern prose, and intensified it to its present-day pitch. It was his explosive power which shattered the Victorian novel with its simpering maidens and ordered commonplaces; books which were without imagination or violence.

In her essay *The Russian Point of View*, Virginia Woolf stated that,

The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul. Against our wills we are drawn in, whirled round, blinded, suffocated, and at the same time filled with a giddy rapture. Out of Shakespeare there is no more exciting reading.

Though a writer of symbolic tales (and in this respect sometimes compared to Herman Melville), Dostoevsky displayed a nuanced understanding of human psychology in his major works. He created an opus of vitality and almost hypnotic power, characterized by feverishly dramatized scenes where his characters are, frequently in scandalous and explosive atmosphere, passionately engaged in Socratic dialogues à la Russe; the quest for God, the problem of Evil and suffering of the innocents haunt the majority of his novels.

His characters fall into a few distinct categories: humble and self-effacing Christians (Prince Myshkin, Sonya Marmeladova, Alyosha Karamazov, Starets Zosima), self-destructive nihilists (Svidrigailov, Smerdyakov, Stavrogin, the underground man), cynical debauchees (Fyodor Karamazov), and rebellious intellectuals (Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov); also, his characters are driven by ideas rather than by ordinary biological or social imperatives. In comparison with Tolstoy, whose characters are realistic, the characters of Dostoevsky are usually more symbolic of the ideas they represent, thus Dostoevsky is often cited as one of the forerunners of Literary Symbolism in specific Russian Symbolism.

Dostoevsky's novels are compressed in time (many cover only a few days) and this enables the author to get rid of one of the dominant traits of realist prose, the corrosion of human life in the process of the time flux - his characters primarily embody spiritual values, and these are, by definition, timeless. Other obsessive themes include suicide, wounded pride, collapsed family values, spiritual regeneration through suffering (the most important motif), rejection of the West and affirmation of Russian Orthodoxy and Tsarism. Literary scholars such as Bakhtin have characterized his work as 'polyphonic': unlike other novelists, Dostoevsky does not appear to aim for a 'single vision', and beyond simply describing situations from various angles, Dostoevsky engendered fully dramatic novels of ideas where conflicting views and characters are left to develop unevenly into unbearable crescendo.

Dostoevsky and the other giant of late 19th century Russian literature, Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, never met in person, even though each praised, criticized and influenced each other (Dostoevsky remarked of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* that it was a "flawless work of art"; Henri Troyat reports that Tolstoy once remarked of *Crime and Punishment* that, "Once you read the first few chapters you know pretty much how the novel will end up"). There was, however, a meeting arranged, but there was a confusion about where the meeting place was and they never rescheduled. Tolstoy reportedly burst into tears when he learnt of Dostoevsky's death. A copy of *The Brothers Karamazov* was found on the nightstand next to Tolstoy's deathbed at the Astapovo

railway station. Since their time, the two are considered by the critics and public as two of the greatest novelists produced by their homeland.

Dostoevsky has also been noted as having expressed anti-Semitic remarks. In the recent biography by Joseph Frank, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, Frank spent much time on *A Writer's Diary* - a regular column which Dostoevsky wrote in the periodical *The Citizen* from 1873 to the year before his death in 1881. Frank notes that the *Diary* is "filled with politics, literary criticism, and pan-Slav diatribes about the virtues of the Russian Empire, [and] represents a major challenge to the Dostoevsky fan, not least on account of its frequent expressions of anti-Semitism." Frank, in his foreword that he wrote for the book *Dostoevsky and the Jews*, attempts to place Dostoevsky as a product of his time. Frank notes that Dostoevsky did make anti-semitic remarks, but that Dostoevsky's writing and stance by and large was one where Dostoevsky held a great deal of guilt for his comments and positions that were anti-semitic. Dostoevsky was in the vein of many literary giants who also made anti-Semitic remarks such as Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot, from Pushkin to Pasternak. Much of the points made that depict Dostoevsky's views as an anti-Semite, do so by denying that Dostoevsky expressed support for the equal rights of and for the Russian Jewish population. A position that was not widely supported at the time, in his homeland. This criticism of Dostoevsky also appears to deny his sincerity in the statements that Dostoevsky made, that he was for equal rights for the Russian Jewish populace, and the Serfs of his own country. Since neither group at the point in history had equal rights. The criticism maintains that Dostoevsky was insincere when he stated that he did not hate Jewish people and was not an Anti-Semite. This position maintained without taking into consideration Dostoevsky's expressed desire to peacefully reconcile Jews and Christians into a single universal brotherhood of all mankind.

Dostoevsky and Existentialism

With the publication of *Crime and Punishment* in 1866, Fyodor Dostoevsky became one of Russia's most prominent authors in the nineteenth century. Dostoevsky has also been called one of the founding fathers of the philosophical movement known as existentialism. In particular, his *Notes from Underground*, first published in 1864, has been depicted as a founding work of existentialism. For Dostoevsky, war is the rebellion of the people against the idea that reason guides everything. And thus, reason is the ultimate principle of guidance for neither history nor mankind. Having been exiled to the city of Omsk (Siberia) in 1849, many of Dostoevsky's works entail notions of suffering and despair.

Nietzsche referred to Dostoevsky as "the only psychologist from whom I have something to learn: he belongs to the happiest windfalls of my life, happier even than the discovery of Stendhal." He said that *Notes from the Underground* "cried truth from the blood." According to Mihajlo Mihajlov's "The great catalyzer: Nietzsche and Russian

neo-Idealism”, Nietzsche constantly refers to Dostoevsky in his notes and drafts throughout the winter of 1886-1887. Nietzsche also wrote abstracts of several of Dostoevsky’s works.

Freud wrote an article entitled Dostoevsky and Parricide that asserts that the greatest works in world literature are all about parricide (though he is critical of Dostoevsky’s work overall, the inclusion of *The Brothers Karamazov* in a set of the three greatest works of literature is remarkable).

Major works

- Poor Folk (1846)
- The Double: A Petersburg Poem (1846)
- Netochka Nezvanova (1849)
- The Village of Stepanchikovo (1859)
- The Insulted and Humiliated (1861)
- The House of the Dead (1862)
- Notes from Underground (1864)
- Crime and Punishment (1866)
- The Gambler (1867)
- The Idiot (1869)
- The Possessed (1872)
- The Raw Youth (1875)
- The Brothers Karamazov (1880)
- A Writer’s Diary (1873-1881)

Short stories

- Mr Prokharchin (1846)
- Polzunkov (1847)
- The Landlady (1847)

- White Nights (1848)
- A Christmas Tree and a Wedding (1848)
- A Weak Heart (1848)
- An Honest Thief (1848)
- A Nasty Story (1862)
- Winter Notes on Summer Impressions (1863)
- The Crocodile (1865)
- The Eternal Husband (1870)
- The Peasant Marey (1876)
- A Gentle Creature sometimes translated as The Meek Girl (1876)
- The Dream of a Ridiculous Man (1877)

Crime and Punishment

See here.

The Brothers Karamazov

See here.

The Double: A Petersburg Poem

Translated by Constance Garnett

Chapter 1

It was a little before eight o'clock in the morning when Yakov Petrovitch Golyadkin, a titular councillor, woke up from a long sleep. He yawned, stretched, and at last opened his eyes completely. For two minutes, however, he lay in his bed without moving, as though he were not yet quite certain whether he were awake or still asleep, whether all that was going on around him were real and actual, or the continuation of his confused dreams. Very soon, however, Mr. Golyadkin's senses began more clearly and more distinctly to receive their habitual and everyday impressions. The dirty green, smoke-begrimed, dusty walls of his little room, with the mahogany chest of drawers and chairs, the table painted red, the sofa covered with American leather of a reddish colour with little green flowers on it, and the clothes taken off in haste overnight and flung in a crumpled heap on the sofa, looked at him familiarly. At last the damp autumn day, muggy and dirty, peeped into the room through the dingy window pane with such a hostile, sour grimace that Mr. Golyadkin could not possibly doubt that he was not in the land of Nod, but in the city of Petersburg, in his own flat on the fourth storey of a huge block of buildings in Shestilavotchny Street. When he had made this important discovery Mr. Golyadkin nervously closed his eyes, as though regretting his dream and wanting to go back to it for a moment. But a minute later he leapt out of bed at one bound, probably all at once, grasping the idea about which his scattered and wandering thoughts had been revolving. From his bed he ran straight to a little round looking-glass that stood on his chest of drawers. Though the sleepy, short-sighted countenance and rather bald head reflected in the looking-glass were of such an insignificant type that at first sight they would certainly not have attracted particular attention in any one, yet the owner of the countenance was satisfied with all that he saw in the looking-glass. "What a thing it would be," said Mr. Golyadkin in an undertone, "what a thing it would be if I were not up to the mark today, if something were amiss, if some intrusive pimple had made its appearance, or anything else unpleasant had happened; so far, however, there's nothing wrong, so far everything's all right."

Greatly relieved that everything was all right, Mr Golyadkin put the looking-glass back in its place and, although he had nothing on his feet and was still in the attire in which he was accustomed to go to bed, he ran to the little window and with great interest began looking for something in the courtyard, upon which the windows of his flat looked out. Apparently what he was looking for in the yard quite satisfied him too; his face beamed with a self-satisfied smile. Then, after first peeping, however, behind the partition into his valet Petrushka's little room and making sure that Petrushka was not there, he went on tiptoe to the table, opened the drawer in it and, fumbling in

the furthest corner of it, he took from under old yellow papers and all sorts of rubbish a shabby green pocket-book, opened it cautiously, and with care and relish peeped into the furthest and most hidden fold of it. Probably the roll of green, grey, blue, red and particoloured notes looked at Golyadkin, too, with approval: with a radiant face he laid the open pocket-book before him and rubbed his hands vigorously in token of the greatest satisfaction. Finally, he took it out - his comforting roll of notes - and, for the hundredth time since the previous day, counted them over, carefully smoothing out every note between his forefinger and his thumb.

“Seven hundred and fifty roubles in notes,” he concluded at last, in a half-whisper. “Seven hundred and fifty roubles, a noteworthy sum! It’s an agreeable sum,” he went on, in a voice weak and trembling with gratification, as he pinched the roll with his fingers and smiled significantly; “it’s a very agreeable sum! A sum agreeable to any one! I should like to see the man to whom that would be a trivial sum! There’s no knowing what a man might not do with a sum like that... . What’s the meaning of it, though?” thought Mr. Golyadkin; “where’s Petrushka?” And still in the same attire he peeped behind the partition again. Again there was no sign of Petrushka; and the samovar standing on the floor was beside itself, fuming and raging in solitude, threatening every minute to boil over, hissing and lispng in its mysterious language, to Mr. Golyadkin something like, “Take me, good people, I’m boiling and perfectly ready.”

“Damn the fellow,” thought Mr. Golyadkin. “That lazy brute might really drive a man out of all patience; where’s he dawdling now?”

In just indignation he went out into the hall, which consisted of a little corridor at the end of which was a door into the entry, and saw his servant surrounded by a good-sized group of lackeys of all sorts, a mixed rabble from outside as well as from the flats of the house. Petrushka was telling something, the others were listening. Apparently the subject of the conversation, or the conversation itself, did not please Mr. Golyadkin. He promptly called Petrushka and returned to his room, displeased and even upset. “That beast would sell a man for a halfpenny, and his master before any one,” he thought to himself: “and he has sold me, he certainly has. I bet he has sold me for a farthing. Well?”

“They’ve brought the livery, sir.”

“Put it on, and come here.”

When he had put on his livery, Petrushka, with a stupid smile on his face, went in to his master. His costume was incredibly strange. He had on a much-worn green livery, with frayed gold braid on it, apparently made for a man a yard taller than Petrushka. In his hand he had a hat trimmed with the same gold braid and with a feather in it, and at his hip hung a footman’s sword in a leather sheath. Finally, to complete the picture, Petrushka, who always liked to be in neglig., was barefooted. Mr. Golyadkin looked at Petrushka from all sides and was apparently satisfied. The livery had evidently been hired for some solemn occasion. It might be observed, too, that during his master’s inspection Petrushka watched him with strange expectance and with marked curiosity followed every movement he made, which extremely embarrassed Mr. Golyadkin.

“Well, and how about the carriage?”

“The carriage is here too.”

“For the whole day?”

“For the whole day. Twenty five roubles.”

“And have the boots been sent?”

“Yes.”

“Dolt! can't even say, 'yes, sir.' Bring them here.”

Expressing his satisfaction that the boots fitted, Mr. Golyadkin asked for his tea, and for water to wash and shave. He shaved with great care and washed as scrupulously, hurriedly sipped his tea and proceeded to the principal final process of attiring himself: he put on an almost new pair of trousers; then a shirtfront with brass studs, and a very bright and agreeably flowered waistcoat; about his neck he tied a gay, particoloured cravat, and finally drew on his coat, which was also newish and carefully brushed. As he dressed, he more than once looked lovingly at his boots, lifted up first one leg and then the other, admired their shape, kept muttering something to himself, and from time to time made expressive grimaces. Mr. Golyadkin was, however, extremely absent-minded that morning, for he scarcely noticed the little smiles and grimaces made at his expense by Petrushka, who was helping him dress. At last, having arranged everything properly and having finished dressing, Mr. Golyadkin put his pocket-book in his pocket, took a final admiring look at Petrushka, who had put on his boots and was therefore also quite ready, and, noticing that everything was done and that there was nothing left to wait for, he ran hurriedly and fussily out on to the stairs, with a slight throbbing at his heart. The light-blue hired carriage with a crest on it rolled noisily up to the steps. Petrushka, winking to the driver and some of the gaping crowd, helped his master into the carriage; and hardly able to suppress an idiotic laugh, shouted in an unnatural voice: “Off!” jumped up on the footboard, and the whole turnout, clattering and rumbling noisily, rolled into the Nevsky Prospect. As soon as the light-blue carriage dashed out of the gate, Mr. Golyadkin rubbed his hands convulsively and went off into a slow, noiseless chuckle, like a jubilant man who has succeeded in bringing off a splendid performance and is as pleased as Punch with the performance himself. Immediately after his access of gaiety, however, laughter was replaced by a strange and anxious expression on the face of Mr. Golyadkin. Though the weather was damp and muggy, he let down both windows of the carriage and began carefully scrutinizing the passers-by to left and to right, at once assuming a decorous and sedate air when he thought any one was looking at him. At the turning from Liteyny Street into the Nevsky Prospect he was startled by a most unpleasant sensation and, frowning like some poor wretch whose corn has been accidentally trodden on, he huddled with almost panic-stricken haste into the darkest corner of his carriage.

He had seen two of his colleagues, two young clerks serving in the same government department. The young clerks were also, it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin, extremely amazed at meeting their colleague in such a way; one of them, in fact, pointed him out to the other. Mr. Golyadkin even fancied that the other had actually called his name, which,

of course, was very unseemly in the street. Our hero concealed himself and did not respond. "The silly youngsters!" he began reflecting to himself. "Why, what is there strange in it? A man in a carriage, a man needs to be in a carriage, and so he hires a carriage. They're simply noodles! I know them - simply silly youngsters, who still need thrashing! They want to be paid a salary for playing pitch-farthing and dawdling about, that's all they're fit for. It'd let them all know, if only ..."

Mr. Golyadkin broke off suddenly, petrified. A smart pair of Kazan horses, very familiar to Mr. Golyadkin, in a fashionable droshky, drove rapidly by on the right side of his carriage. The gentleman sitting in the droshky, happening to catch a glimpse of Mr. Golyadkin, who was rather incautiously poking his head out of the carriage window, also appeared to be extremely astonished at the unexpected meeting and, bending out as far as he could, looked with the greatest of curiosity and interest into the corner of the carriage in which our hero made haste to conceal himself. The gentleman in the droshky was Andrey Filippovitch, the head of the office in which Mr. Golyadkin served in the capacity of assistant to the chief clerk. Mr. Golyadkin, seeing that Andrey Filippovitch recognized him, that he was looking at him open-eyed and that it was impossible to hide, blushed up to her ears.

"Bow or not? Call back or not? Recognize him or not?" our hero wondered in indescribable anguish, "or pretend that I am not myself, but somebody else strikingly like me, and look as though nothing were the matter. Simply not I, not I - and that's all," said Mr. Golyadkin, taking off his hat to Andrey Filippovitch and keeping his eyes fixed upon him. "I'm ... I'm all right," he whispered with an effort; "I'm ... quite all right. It's not I, it's not I - and that is the fact of the matter."

Soon, however, the droshky passed the carriage, and the magnetism of his chief's eyes was at an end. Yet he went on blushing, smiling and muttering something to himself...

"I was a fool not to call back," he thought at last. "I ought to have taken a bolder line and behaved with gentlemanly openness. I ought to have said 'This is how it is, Andrey Filippovitch, I'm asked to the dinner too,' and that's all it is!"

Then, suddenly recalling how taken aback he had been, our hero flushed as hot as fire, frowned, and cast a terrible defiant glance at the front corner of the carriage, a glance calculated to reduce all his foes to ashes. At last, he was suddenly inspired to pull the cord attached to the driver's elbow, and stopped the carriage, telling him to drive back to Liteyny Street. The fact was, it was urgently necessary for Mr. Golyadkin, probably for the sake of his own peace of mind, to say something very interesting to his doctor, Krestyan Ivanovitch. And, though he had made Krestyan Ivanovitch's acquaintance quite recently, having, indeed, only paid him a single visit, and that one the previous week, to consult him about some symptom. but a doctor, as they say, is like a priest, and it would be stupid for him to keep out of sight, and, indeed, it was his duty to know his patients. "Will it be all right, though," our hero went on, getting out of the carriage at the door of a five-storey house in Liteyny Street, at which he had told the driver to stop the carriage: "Will it be all right? Will it be proper? Will

it be appropriate? After all, though," he went on, thinking as he mounted the stairs out of breath and trying to suppress that beating of his heart, which had the habit of beating on all other people's staircases: "After all, it's on my own business and there's nothing reprehensible in it... . It would be stupid to keep out of sight. Why, of course, I shall behave as though I were quite all right, and have simply looked in as I passed... . He will see, that it's all just as it should be."

Reasoning like this, Mr. Golyadkin mounted to the second storey and stopped before flat number five, on which there was a handsome brass door-plate with the inscription

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KRESTYAN IVANOVITCH RUTENSPITZ Doctor of Medicine and Surgery

Stopping at the door, our hero made haste to assume an air of propriety, ease, and even of a certain affability, and prepared to pull the bell. As he was about to do so he promptly and rather appropriately reflected that it might be better to come to-morrow, and that it was not very pressing for the moment. But as he suddenly heard footsteps on the stairs, he immediately changed his mind again and at once rang Krestyan Ivanovitch's bell - with an air, moreover, of great determination.

Chapter 2

The doctor of medicine and surgery, Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz, a very hale though elderly man, with thick eyebrows and whiskers that were beginning to turn grey, eyes with an expressive gleam in them that looked capable of routing every disease, and, lastly, with orders of some distinction on his breast, was sitting in his consulting-room that morning in his comfortable armchair. He was drinking coffee, which his wife had brought him with her own hand, smoking a cigar and from time to time writing prescriptions for his patients. After prescribing a draught for an old man who was suffering from haemorrhoids and seeing the aged patient out by the side door, Krestyan Ivanovitch sat down to await the next visitor.

Mr. Golyadkin walked in.

Apparently Krestyan Ivanovitch did not in the least expect nor desire to see Mr. Golyadkin, for he was suddenly taken aback for a moment, and his countenance unconsciously assumed a strange and, one may almost say, a displeased expression. As Mr. Golyadkin almost always turned up inappropriately and was thrown into confusion whenever he approached any one about his own little affairs, on this occasion, too, he was desperately embarrassed. Having neglected to get ready his first sentence, which was invariably a stumbling-block for him on such occasions, he muttered something - apparently an apology - and, not knowing what to do next, took a chair and sat down, but, realizing that he had sat down without being asked to do so, he was immediately conscious of his lapse, and made haste to efface his offence against etiquette and good breeding by promptly getting up again from the seat he had taken uninvited. Then, on second thoughts, dimly perceiving that he had committed two stupid blunders at once, he immediately decided to commit a third - that is, tried to right himself, muttered something, smiled, blushed, was overcome with embarrassment, sank into expressive silence, and finally sat down for good and did not get up again. Only, to protect himself from all contingencies, he looked at the doctor with that defiant glare which had an extraordinary power of figuratively crushing Mr. Golyadkin's enemies and reducing them to ashes. This glance, moreover, expressed to the full Mr. Golyadkin's independence - that is, to speak plainly, the fact that Mr. Golyadkin was "all right," that he was "quite himself, like everybody else," and that there was "nothing wrong in his upper storey." Krestyan Ivanovitch coughed, cleared his throat, apparently in token of approval and assent to all this, and bent an inquisitorial interrogative gaze upon his visitor.

"I have come to trouble you a second time, Krestyan Ivanovitch," began Mr. Golyadkin, with a smile, "and now I venture to ask your indulgence a second time... ." He was obviously at a loss for words.

“H’m ... Yes!” pronounced Krestyan Ivanovitch, puffing out a spiral of smoke and putting down his cigar on the table, “but you must follow the treatment prescribed to you; I explained to you that what would be beneficial to your health is a change of habits... . Entertainment, for instance, and, well, friends - you should visit your acquaintances, and not be hostile to the bottle; and likewise keep cheerful company.”

Mr. Golyadkin, still smiling, hastened to observe that he thought he was like every one else, that he lived by himself, that he had entertainments like every one else ... that, of course, he might go to the theatre, for he had the means like every one else, that he spent the day at the office and the evenings at home, that he was quite all right; he even observed, in passing, that he was, so far as he could see, as good as any one, that he lived at home, and finally, that he had Petrushka. At this point Mr. Golyadkin hesitated.

“H’m! no, that is not the order of proceeding that I want; and that is not at all what I would ask you. I am interested to know, in general, are you a great lover of cheerful company? Do you take advantages of festive occasions; and well, do you lead a melancholy or cheerful manner of life?”

“Krestyan Ivanovitch, I ...”

“H’m! ... I tell you,” interrupted the doctor, “that you must have a radical change of life, must, in a certain sense, break in your character.” (Krestyan Ivanovitch laid special stress on the word “break in,” and paused for a moment with a very significant air.) “Must not shrink from gaiety, must visit entertainments and clubs, and in any case, be not hostile to the bottle. Sitting at home is not right for you ... sitting at home is impossible for you.”

“I like quiet, Krestyan Ivanovitch,” said Mr. Golyadkin, with a significant look at the doctor and evidently seeking words to express his ideas more successfully: “In my flat there’s only me and Petrushka... . I mean my man, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I mean to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that I go my way, my own way, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I keep myself to myself, and so far as I can see am not dependent on any one. I go out for walks, too, Krestyan Ivanovitch.”

“What? Yes! well, nowadays there’s nothing agreeable in walking: the climate’s extremely bad.”

“Quite so, Krestyan Ivanovitch. Though I’m a peaceable man, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as I’ve had the honour of explaining to you already, yet my way lies apart, Krestyan Ivanovitch. The ways of life are manifold ... I mean ... I mean to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch... . Excuse me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I’ve no great gift for eloquent speaking.”

“H’m ... you say ...”

“I say, you must excuse me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that as far as I can see I am no great hand at eloquence in speaking,” Mr. Golyadkin articulated, stammering and hesitating, in a half-aggrieved voice. “In that respect, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I’m not quite like other people,” he added, with a peculiar smile, “I can’t talk much, and have

never learnt to embellish my speech with literary graces. On the other hand, I act, Krestyan Ivanovitch; on the other hand, I act, Krestyan Ivanovitch.”

“H’m ... How’s that ... you act?” responded Krestyan Ivanovitch.

Then silence followed for half a minute. The doctor looked somewhat strangely and mistrustfully at his visitor. Mr. Golyadkin, for his part, too, stole a rather mistrustful glance at the doctor.

“Krestyan Ivanovitch,” he began, going on again in the same tone as before, somewhat irritated and puzzled by the doctors extreme obstinacy: “I like tranquillity and not the noisy gaiety of the world. Among them, I mean, in the noisy world, Krestyan Ivanovitch one must be able to polish the floor with one’s boots ...” (here Mr. Golyadkin made a slight scrape on the floor with his toe); “they expect it, and they expect puns too ... one must know how to make a perfumed compliment ... that’s what they expect there. And I’ve not learnt to do it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I’ve never learnt all those tricks, I’ve never had the time. I’m a simple person, and not ingenious, and I’ve no external polish. On that side I surrender, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I lay down my arms, speaking in that sense.”

All this Mr. Golyadkin pronounced with an air which made it perfectly clear that our hero was far from regretting that he was laying down his arms in that sense and that he had not learnt these tricks; quite the contrary, indeed. As Krestyan Ivanovitch listened to him, he looked down with a very unpleasant grimace on his face, seeming to have a presentiment of something. Mr. Golyadkin’s tirade was followed by a rather long and significant silence.

“You have, I think, departed a little from the subject,” Krestyan Ivanovitch said at last, in a low voice: “I confess I cannot altogether understand you.”

“I’m not a great hand at eloquent speaking, Krestyan Ivanovitch; I’ve had the honour to inform you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, already,” said Mr. Golyadkin, speaking this time in a sharp and resolute tone.

“H’m!” ...

“Krestyan Ivanovitch!” began Mr. Golyadkin again in a low but more significant voice in a somewhat solemn style and emphasizing every point: “Krestyan Ivanovitch, when I came in here I began with apologies. I repeat the same thing again, and again ask for your indulgence. There’s no need for me to conceal it, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I’m an unimportant man, as you know; but fortunately for me, I do not regret being an unimportant man. Quite the contrary, indeed, Krestyan Ivanovitch, and, to be perfectly frank, I’m proud that I’m not a great man but an unimportant man. I’m not one to intrigue and I’m proud of that too, I don’t act on the sly, but openly, without cunning, and although I could do harm too, and a great deal of harm, indeed, and know to whom and how to do it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, yet I won’t sully myself, and in that sense I was my hands. In that sense, I say, I wash them, Krestyan Ivanovitch!” Mr. Golyadkin paused expressively for a moment; he spoke with mild fervour.

“I set to work, Krestyan Ivanovitch,” our hero continued, “directly, openly, by no devious ways, for I disdain them, and leave them to others. I do not try to degrade

those who are perhaps purer than you and I ... that is, I mean, I and they, Krestyan Ivanovitch - I didn't mean you. I don't like insinuations; I've no taste for contemptible duplicity; I'm disgusted by slander and calumny. I only put on a mask at a masquerade, and don't wear one before people every day. I only ask you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, how you would revenge yourself upon your enemy, your most malignant enemy - the one you would consider such?" Mr. Golyadkin concluded with a challenging glance at Krestyan Ivanovitch.

Though Mr. Golyadkin pronounced this with the utmost distinctness and clearness, weighing his words with a self-confident air and reckoning on their probable effect, yet meanwhile he looked at Krestyan Ivanovitch with anxiety, with great anxiety, with extreme anxiety. Now he was all eyes: and timidly waited for the doctor's answer with irritable and agonized impatience. But to the perplexity and complete amazement of our hero, Krestyan Ivanovitch only muttered something to himself; then he moved his armchair up to the table, and rather drily though politely announced something to the effect that his time was precious, and that he did not quite understand; that he was ready, however, to attend to him as far as he was able, but he would not go into anything further that did not concern him. At this point he took the pen, drew a piece of paper towards him, cut out of it the usual long strip, and announced that he would immediately prescribe what was necessary.

"No, it's not necessary, Krestyan Ivanovitch! No, that's not necessary at all!" said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up from his seat, and clutching Krestyan Ivanovitch's right hand. "That isn't what's wanted, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

And, while he said this, a queer change came over him. His grey eyes gleamed strangely, his lips began to quiver, all the muscles, all the features of his face began moving and working. He was trembling all over. After stopping the doctor's hand, Mr. Golyadkin followed his first movement by standing motionless, as though he had no confidence in himself and were waiting for some inspiration for further action.

Then followed a rather strange scene.

Somewhat perplexed, Krestyan Ivanovitch seemed for a moment rooted to his chair and gazed open-eyed in bewilderment at Mr. Golyadkin, who looked at him in exactly the same way. At last Krestyan Ivanovitch stood up, gently holding the lining of Mr. Golyadkin's coat. For some seconds they both stood like that, motionless, with their eyes fixed on each other. Then, however, in an extraordinarily strange way came Mr. Golyadkin's second movement. His lips trembled, his chin began twitching, and our hero quite unexpectedly burst into tears. Sobbing, shaking his head and striking himself on the chest with his right hand, while with his left clutching the lining of the doctor's coat, he tried to say something and to make some explanation but could not utter a word.

At last Krestyan Ivanovitch recovered from his amazement.

"Come, calm yourself!" he brought out at last, trying to make Mr. Golyadkin sit down in an armchair.

"I have enemies, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I have enemies; I have malignant enemies who have sworn to ruin me ..." Mr Golyadkin answered in a frightened whisper.

"Come, come, why enemies? you mustn't talk about enemies! You really mustn't. Sit down, sit down," Krestyan Ivanovitch went on, getting Mr. Golyadkin once and for all into the armchair.

Mr. Golyadkin sat down at last, still keeping his eyes fixed on the doctor. With an extremely displeased air, Krestyan Ivanovitch strode from one end of the room to another. A long silence followed.

"I'm grateful to you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I'm very grateful, and I'm very sensible of all you've done for me now.

To my dying day I shall never forget your kindness, Krestyan Ivanovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up from his seat with an offended air.

"Come, give over! I tell you, give over!" Krestyan Ivanovitch responded rather sternly to Mr. Golyadkin's outburst, making him sit down again.

"Well, what's the matter? Tell me what is unpleasant," Krestyan Ivanovitch went on, "and what enemies are you talking about? What is wrong?"

"No, Krestyan Ivanovitch we'd better leave that now," answered Mr. Golyadkin, casting down his eyes; "let us put all that aside for the time... . Till another time, Krestyan Ivanovitch, till a more convenient moment, when everything will be discovered and the mask falls off certain faces, and something comes to light. But, meanwhile, now, of course, after what has passed between us ... you will agree yourself, Krestyan Ivanovitch... . Allow me to wish you good morning, Krestyan Ivanovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, getting up gravely and resolutely and taking his hat.

"Oh, well ... as you like ... h'm ..." (A moment of silence followed.) "For my part, you know ... whatever I can do ... and I sincerely wish you well."

"I understand you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand: I understand you perfectly now ... In any case excuse me for having troubled you, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"H'm, no, I didn't mean that. However, as you please; go on taking the medicines as before... ."

"I will go with the medicines as you say, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I will go on with them, and I will get them at the same chemist's ... To be a chemist nowadays, Krestyan Ivanovitch, is an important business... ."

"How so? In what sense do you mean?"

"In a very ordinary sense, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I mean to say that nowadays that's the way of the world..."

"H'm..."

"And that every silly youngster, not only a chemist's boy turns up his nose at respectable people."

"H'm. How do you understand that?"

"I'm speaking of a certain person, Krestyan Ivanovitch ... of a common acquaintance of ours, Krestyan Ivanovitch, of Vladimir Semyonovitch ..."

"Ah!"

“Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch: and I know certain people, Krestyan Ivanovitch, who didn’t keep to the general rule of telling the truth, sometimes.”

“Ah! How so?”

“Why, yes, it is so: but that’s neither here nor there: they sometimes manage to serve you up a fine egg in gravy.”

“What? Serve up what?”

“An egg in gravy, Krestyan Ivanovitch. It’s a Russian saying. They know how to congratulate some one the right moment, for instance; there are people like that.”

“Congratulate?”

“yes, congratulate, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as some one I know very well did the other day!” ...

“Some one you know very well ... Ah! how was that?” said Krestyan Ivanovitch, looking attentively at Mr. Golyadkin.

“Yes, some one I know very well indeed congratulated some one else I know very well - and, what’s more, a comrade, a friend of his heart, on his promotion, on his receiving the rank of assessor. This was how it happened to come up: ‘I am exceedingly glad of the opportunity to offer you, Vladimir Semyonovitch, my congratulations, my sincere congratulations, on your receiving the rank of assessor. And I’m the more please, as all the world knows that there are old women nowadays who tell fortunes.’”

At this point Mr. Golyadkin gave a sly nod, and screwing up his eyes, looked at Krestyan Ivanovitch ...

“H’m. So he said that... .”

“He did, Krestyan Ivanovitch, he said it and glanced at once at Andrey Filippovitch, the uncle of our Prince Charming, Vladimir Semyonovitch. But what is it to me, Krestyan Ivanovitch, that he has been made an assessor? What is it to me? And he wants to get married and the milk is scarcely dry on his lips, if I may be allowed the expression. And I said as much. Vladimir Semyonovitch, said I! I’ve said everything now; allow me to withdraw.”

“H’m ...”

“Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, all me now, I say, to withdraw. But, to kill two birds with one stone, as I twitted our young gentleman with the old women, I turned to Klara Olsufyevna (it all happened the same day, before yesterday at Olsufy Ivanovitch’s), and she had only just sung a song with feeling, ‘You’ve sung songs of feeling, madam,’ said I, ‘but they’ve not been listened to with a pure heart.’ And by that I hinted plainly, Krestyan Ivanovitch, hinted plainly, that they were not running after her now, but looking higher ...”

“Ah! And what did he say?”

“He swallowed the pill, Krestyan Ivanovitch, as the saying is.”

“H’m ...”

“Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. To the old man himself, too, I said, ‘Olsufy Ivanovitch,’ said I, ‘I know how much I’m indebted to you, I appreciate to the full all the kindness you’ve showered upon me from my childhood up. But open your eyes, Olsufy

Ivanovitch,' I said. 'Look about you. I myself do things openly and aboveboard, Olsufy Ivanovitch.'

"Oh, really!"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. Really ..."

"What did he say?"

"Yes, what, indeed, Krestyan Ivanovitch? He mumbled one thing and another, and 'I know you,' and that 'his Excellency was a benevolent man' - he rambled on ... But, there, you know! he's begun to be a bit shaky, as they say, with old age."

"Ah! So that's how it is now ..."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch. And that's how we all are! Poor old man! He looks towards the grave, breathes incense, as they say, while they concoct a piece of womanish gossip and he listens to it; without him they wouldn't ..."

"Gossip, you say?"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, they've concocted a womanish scandal. Our bear, too, had a finger in it, and his nephew, our Prince Charming. They've joined hands with the old women and, of course, they've concocted the affair. Would you believe it? They plotted the murder of some one! ..."

"The murder of some one?"

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, the moral murder of some one. They spread about ... I'm speaking of a man I know very well."

Krestyan Ivanovitch nodded.

"They spread rumours about him ... I confess I'm ashamed to repeat them, Krestyan Ivanovitch."

"H'm." ...

"They spread a rumour that he had signed a promise to marry though he was already engaged in another quarter ... and would you believe it, Krestyan Ivanovitch, to whom?"

"Really?"

"To a cook, to a disreputable German woman from whom he used to get his dinners; instead of paying what he owed, he offered her his hand."

"Is that what they say?"

"Would you believe it, Krestyan Ivanovitch? A low German, a nasty shameless German, Karolina Ivanovna, if you know ..."

"I confess, for my part ..."

"I understand you, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand, and for my part I feel it ..."

"Tell me, please, where are you living now?"

"Where am I living now, Krestyan Ivanovitch?"

"Yes ... I want ... I believe you used to live ..."

"Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I did, I used to. To be sure I lived!" answered Mr. Golyadkin, accompanying his words with a little laugh, and somewhat disconcerting Krestyan Ivanovitch by his answer.

"No, you misunderstood me; I meant to say ..."

“I, too, meant to say, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I meant it too,” Mr. Golyadkin continued, laughing. “But I’ve kept you far too long, Krestyan Ivanovitch. I hope you will allow me now, to wish you good morning.”

“H’m ...”

“Yes, Krestyan Ivanovitch, I understand you; I fully understand you now,” said our hero, with a slight flourish before Krestyan Ivanovitch. “And so permit me to wish you good morning ...”

At this point our hero made a scraping with the toe of his boot and walked out of the room, leaving Krestyan Ivanovitch in the utmost amazement. As he went down the doctor’s stairs he smiled and rubbed his hands gleefully. On the steps, breathing the fresh air and feeling himself at liberty, he was certainly prepared to admit that he was the happiest of mortals, and thereupon to go straight to his office - when suddenly his carriage rumbled up to the door: he glanced at it and remembered everything. Petrushka was already opening the carriage door. Mr. Golyadkin was completely overwhelmed by a strong and unpleasant sensation. He blushed, as it were, for a moment. Something seemed to stab him. He was just about to raise his foot to the carriage step when he suddenly turned round and looked towards Krestyan Ivanovitch’s window. Yes, it was so! Krestyan Ivanovitch was standing at the window, was stroking his whiskers with his right hand and staring with some curiosity at the hero of our story.

“That doctor is silly,” thought Mr. Golyadkin, huddling out of sight in the carriage; “extremely silly. He may treat his patients all right, but still ... he’s as stupid as a post.”

Mr. Golyadkin sat down, Petrushka shouted “Off!” and the carriage rolled towards Nevsky Prospect again.

Chapter 3

All that morning was spent by Mr. Golyadkin in a strange bustle of activity. On reaching the Nevsky Prospect our hero told the driver to stop at the bazaar. Skipping out of his carriage, he ran to the Arcade, accompanied by Petrushka, and went straight to a shop where gold and silver articles were for sale. One could see from his very air that he was overwhelmed with business and had a terrible amount to do. Arranging to purchase a complete dinner- and tea-service for fifteen hundred roubles and including in the bargain for that sum a cigar-case of ingenious form and a silver shaving-set, and finally, asking the price of some other articles, useful and agreeable in their own way, he ended by promising to come without fail next day, or to send for his purchases the same day. He took the number of the shop, and listening attentively to the shopkeeper, who was very pressing for a small deposit, said that he should have it all in good time. After which he took leave of the amazed shopkeeper and, followed by a regular flock of shopmen, walked along the Arcade, continually looking round at Petrushka and diligently seeking out fresh shops. On the way he dropped into a money-changer's and changed all his big notes into small ones, and though he lost on the exchange, his pocket-book was considerably fatter, which evidently afforded him extreme satisfaction. Finally, he stopped at a shop for ladies' dress materials. Here, too, after deciding to purchase good for a considerable sum, Mr. Golyadkin promised to come again, took the number of the shop and, on being asked for a deposit, assured the shopkeeper that "he should have a deposit too, all in good time." Then he visited several other shops, making purchases in each of them, asked the price of various things, sometimes arguing a long time with the shopkeeper, going out of the shop and returning two or three times - in fact he displayed exceptional activity. From the Arcade our hero went to a well-known furniture shop, where he ordered furniture for six rooms; he admired a fashionable and very toilet table for ladies' use in the latest style, and, assuring the shopkeeper that he would certainly send for all these things, walked out of the shop, as usual promising a deposit. then he went off somewhere else and ordered something more. In short, there seemed to be no end to the business he had to get through. At last, Mr. Golyadkin seemed to grow heartily sick of it all, and he began, goodness knows why, to be tormented by the stings of conscience. Nothing would have induced him now, for instance, to meet Andrey Filippovitch, or even Krestyan Ivanovitch.

At last, the town clock struck three. When Mr. Golyadkin finally took his seat in the carriage, of all the purchases he had made that morning he had, it appeared, in reality only got a pair of gloves and a bottle of scent, that cost a rouble and a half. As it was still rather early, he ordered his coachman to stop near a well-known restaurant

in Nevsky Prospect which he only knew by reputation, got out of the carriage, and hurried in to have a light lunch, to rest and to wait for the hour fixed for the dinner.

Lunching as a man lunches who has the prospect before him of going out to a sumptuous dinner, that is, taking a snack of something in order to still the pangs, as they say, and drinking one small glass of vodka, Mr. Golyadkin established himself in an armchair and, modestly looking about him, peacefully settled down to an emaciated nationalist paper. After reading a couple of lines he stood up and looked in the looking-glass, set himself to rights and smoothed himself down; then he went to the window and looked to see whether his carriage was there ... then he sat down again in his place and took up the paper. It was noticeable that our hero was in great excitement. Glancing at his watch and seeing that it was only a quarter past three and that he had consequently a good time to wait and, at the same time, opining that to sit like that was unsuitable, Mr. Golyadkin ordered chocolate, though he felt no particular inclination for it at the moment. Drinking the chocolate and noticing that the time had moved on a little, he went up to pay his bill.

He turned round and saw facing him two of his colleagues, the same two he had met that morning in Liteyny Street, - young men, very much his juniors both in age and rank. Our hero's relations with them were neither one thing nor the other, neither particularly friendly nor openly hostile. Good manners were, of course, observed on both sides: there was no closer intimacy, nor could there be. The meeting at this moment was extremely distasteful to Mr. Golyadkin. He frowned a little, and was disconcerted for an instant.

"Yakov Petrovitch, Yakov Petrovitch!" chirped the two register clerks; "you here? what brings you? ..."

"Ah, it is you, gentlemen," Mr. Golyadkin interrupted hurriedly, somewhat embarrassed and scandalized by the amazement of the clerks and by the abruptness of their address, but feeling obliged, however, to appear jaunty and free and easy. "You've deserted gentlemen, he-he-he ..." Then, to keep up his dignity and to condescend to the juveniles, with whom he never overstepped certain limits, he attempted to slap one of the youths on the shoulder; but this effort at good fellowship did not succeed and, instead of being a well-bred little jest, produced quite a different effect.

"Well, and our bear, is he still at the office?"

"Who's that, Yakov Petrovitch?"

"Why, the bear. Do you mean to say you don't know whose name that is? ..." Mr. Golyadkin laughed and turned to the cashier to take his change.

"I mean Andrey Filippovitch, gentlemen," he went on, finishing with the cashier, and turning to the clerks this time with a very serious face. The two register clerks winked at one another.

"He's still at the office and asking for you, Yakov Petrovitch," answered one of them.

"At the office, eh! In that case, let him stay, gentlemen. And asking for me, eh?"

"He was asking for you, Yakov Petrovitch; but what's up with you, scented, pomaded, and such a swell? ..."

“Nothing, gentlemen, nothing! that’s enough,” answered Mr. Golyadkin, looking away with a constrained smile. Seeing that Mr. Golyadkin was smiling, the clerks laughed aloud. Mr. Golyadkin was a little offended.

“I’ll tell you as friends, gentlemen,” our hero said, after a brief silence, as though making up his mind (which, indeed, was the case) to reveal something to them. “You all know me, gentlemen, but hitherto you’ve known me only on one side. no one is to blame for that and I’m conscious that the fault has been partly my own.”

Mr. Golyadkin pursed his lips and looked significantly at the clerks. The clerks winked at one another again.

“Hitherto, gentlemen, you have not known me. To explain myself here and now would not be appropriate. I will only touch on it lightly in passing. There are people, gentlemen, who dislike roundabout ways and only mask themselves at masquerades. There are people who do not see man’s highest avocation in polishing the floor with their boots. There are people, gentlemen, who refuse to say that they are happy and enjoying a full life when, for instance, their trousers set properly. There are people, finally, who dislike dashing and whirling about for no object, fawning, and licking the dust, and above all, gentlemen, poking their noses where they are not wanted... I’ve told you almost everything, gentlemen; now allow me to withdraw...”

Mr. Golyadkin paused. As the register clerks had not got all that they wanted, both of them with great incivility burst into shouts of laughter. Mr. Golyadkin flared up.

“Laugh away, gentlemen, laugh away for the time being! If you live long enough you will see,” he said, with a feeling of offended dignity, taking his hat and retreating to the door.

“But I will say more, gentlemen,” he added, turning for the last time to the register clerks, “I will say more - you are both here with me face to face. This, gentlemen, is my rule: if I fail I don’t lose heart, if I succeed I persevere, and in any case I am never underhand. I’m not one to intrigue - and I’m proud of it. I’ve never prided myself on diplomacy. They say, too, gentlemen, that the bird flies itself to the hunter. It’s true and I’m ready to admit it; but who’s the hunter, and who’s the bird in this case? That is still the question, gentlemen!”

Mr. Golyadkin subsided into eloquent silence, and, with a most significant air, that is, pursing up his lips and raising his eyebrows as high as possible, he bowed to the clerks and walked out, leaving them in the utmost amazement.

“What are your orders now?” Petrushka asked, rather gruffly; he was probably weary of hanging about in the cold. “What are your orders?” he asked Mr. Golyadkin, meeting the terrible, withering glance with which our hero had protected himself twice already that morning, and to which he had recourse now for the third time as he came down the steps.

“To Ismailovsky Bridge.”

“To Ismailovsky Bridge! Off!”

“Their dinner will not begin till after four, or perhaps five o’clock,” thought Mr. Golyadkin; “isn’t it early now? However, I can go a little early; besides, it’s only a

family dinner. And so I can go sans facons, as they say among well-bred people. Why shouldn't I go sans facons? The bear told us, too, that it would all be sans facons, and so I will be the same... ." Such were Mr. Golyadkin's reflections and meanwhile his excitement grew more and more acute. It could be seen that he was preparing himself for some great enterprise, to say nothing more; he muttered to himself, gesticulated with his right hand, continually looked out of his carriage window, so that, looking at Mr. Golyadkin, no one would have said that he was on his way to a good dinner, and only a simple dinner in his family circle - sans facons, as they say among well-bred people. Finally, just at Ismailovsky Bridge, Mr. Golyadkin pointed out a house; and the carriage rolled up noisily and stopped at the first entrance on the right. Noticing a feminine figure at the second storey window, Mr. Golyadkin kissed his hand to her. He had, however, not the slightest idea what he was doing, for he felt more dead than alive at the moment. He got out of the carriage pale, distracted; he mounted the steps, took off his hat, mechanically straightened himself, and though he felt a slight trembling in his knees, he went upstairs.

"Olsufy Ivanovitch?" he inquired of the man who opened the door.

"At home, sir; at least he's not at home, his honour's not at home."

"What? What do you mean, my good man? I-I've come to dinner, brother. Why, you know me?"

"To be sure I know you! I've orders not to admit you."

"You ... you, brother ... you must be making a mistake. It's I, my boy, I'm invited; I've come to dinner," Mr. Golyadkin announced, taking off his coat and displaying unmistakable intentions of going into the room.

"Allow me, sir, you can't, sir. I've orders not to admit you. I've orders to refuse you. That's how it is."

Mr. Golyadkin turned pale. At that very moment the door of the inner room opened and Gerasimitch, Olsufy Ivanovitch's old butler, came out.

"You see the gentlemen wants to go in, Emelyan Gerasimitch, and I ..."

"And you're a fool, Alexeitch. Go inside and send the rascal Semyonovitch here. It's impossible," he said politely but firmly, addressing Mr. Golyadkin. "It's quite impossible. His honour begs you to excuse him; he can't see you."

"He said he couldn't see me?" Mr. Golyadkin asked uncertainly. "Excuse me, Gerasimitch, why is it impossible?"

"It's quite impossible. I've informed your honour; they said 'Ask him to excuse us.' They can't see you."

"Why not? How's that? Why?"

"Allow me, allow me! ..."

"How is it though? It's out of the question! Announce me ... How is it? I've come to dinner..."

"Excuse me, excuse me ..."

"Ah, well, that's a different matter, they asked to be excused: but, allow me, Gerasimitch; how is it, Gerasimitch?"

“Excuse me, excuse me! replied Gerasimitch, very firmly putting away Mr. Golyadkin’s hand and making way for two gentlemen who walked into the entry that very instant. The gentlemen in question were Andrey Filippovitch and his nephew Vladimir Semyonovitch. Both of the looked with amazement at Mr. Golyadkin. Andrey Filippovitch seemed about to say something, but Mr. Golyadkin had by now made up his mind: he was by now walking out of Olsufy Ivanovitch’s entry, blushing and smiling, with eyes cast down and a countenance of helpless bewilderment. “I will come afterwards, Gerasimitch; I will explain myself: I hope that all this will without delay be explained in due season... .”

“Yakov Petrovitch, Yakov Petrovitch ...” He heard the voice of Andrey Filippovitch following him.

Mr. Golyadkin was by that time on the first landing. He turned quickly to Andrey Filippovitch.

“What do you desire, Andrey Filippovitch?” he said in a rather resolute voice.

“What’s wrong with you, Yakov Petrovitch? In what way?”

“No matter, Andrey Filippovitch. I’m on my own account here. This is my private life, Andrey Filippovitch.”

“What’s that?”

“I say, Andrey Filippovitch, that this is my private life, and as for my being here, as far as I can see, there’s nothing reprehensible to be found in it as regards my official relations.”

“What! As regards your official ... What’s the matter with you, my good sir?”

“Nothing, Andrey Filippovitch, absolutely nothing; an impudent slut of a girl, and nothing more ...”

“What! What?” Andrey Filippovitch was stupefied with amazement. Mr. Golyadkin, who had up till then looked as though he would fly into Andrey Filippovitch’s face, seeing that the head of his office was laughing a little, almost unconsciously took a step forward. Andrey Filippovitch jumped back. Mr. Golyadkin went up one step and then another. Andrey Filippovitch looked about him uneasily. Mr. Golyadkin mounted the stairs rapidly. Still more rapidly Andrey Filippovitch darted into the flat and slammed the door after him. Mr. Golyadkin was left alone. Everything grew dark before his eyes. He was utterly nonplussed, and stood now in a sort of senseless hesitation, as though recalling something extremely senseless, too, that had happened quite recently. “Ech, ech!” he muttered, smiling with constraint. Meanwhile, there came the sounds of steps and voices on the stairs, probably of other guests invited by Olsufy Ivanovitch. Mr. Golyadkin recovered himself to some extent; put up his racoon collar, concealing himself behind it as far as possible, and began going downstairs with rapid little steps, tripping and stumbling in his haste. He felt overcome by a sort of weakness and numbness. His confusion was such that, when he came out on the steps, he did not even wait for his carriage but walked across the muddy court to it. When he reached his carriage and was about to get into it, Mr. Golyadkin inwardly uttered a desire to sink into the earth, or to hide in a mouse hole together with his carriage. It seemed to

him that everything in Olsufy Ivanovitch's house was looking at him now out of every window. He knew that he would certainly die on the spot if he were to go back.

"What are you laughing at, blockhead?" he said in a rapid mutter to Petrushka, who was preparing to help him into the carriage.

"What should I laugh at? I'm not doing anything; where are we to drive to now?"

"Go home, drive on... ."

"Home, off!" shouted Petrushka, climbing on to the footboard.

"What a crow's croak!" thought Mr. Golyadkin. Meanwhile, the carriage had driven a good distance from Ismailovsky Bridge. Suddenly our hero pulled the cord with all his might and shouted to the driver to turn back at once. The coachman turned his horses and within two minutes was driving into Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard again.

"Don't, don't, you fool, back!" shouted Mr. Golyadkin - and, as though he were expecting this order, the driver made no reply but, without stopping at the entrance, drove all round the courtyard and out into the street again.

Mr. Golyadkin did not drive home, but, after passing the Semyonovsky Bridge, told the driver to return to a side street and stop near a restaurant of rather modest appearance. Getting out of the carriage, our hero settled up with the driver and so got rid of his equipage at last. He told Petrushka to go home and await his return, while he went into the restaurant, took a private room and ordered dinner. He felt very ill and his brain was in the utmost confusion and chaos. For a long time he walked up and down the room in agitation; at last he sat down in a chair, propped his brow in his hands and began doing his very utmost to consider and settle something relating to his present position.

Chapter 4

That day the birthday of Klara Olsufyevna, the only daughter of the civil councillor, Berendyev, at one time Mr. Golyadkin's benefactor and patron, was being celebrated by a brilliant and sumptuous dinner-party, such as had not been seen for many a long day within the walls of the flats in the neighbourhood of Ismailovsky Bridge - a dinner more like some Balthazar's feast, with a suggestion of something Babylonian in its brilliant luxury and style, with Veuve-Clicquot champagne, with oysters and fruit from Eliseyev's and Milyutin's, with all sorts of fatted calves, and all grades of the government service. This festive day was to conclude with a brilliant ball, a small birthday ball, but yet brilliant in its taste, its distinction and its style. Of course, I am willing to admit that similar balls do happen sometimes, though rarely. Such balls, more like family rejoicings than balls, can only be given in such houses as that of the civil councillor, Berendyev. I will say more: I even doubt if such balls could be given in the houses of all civil councillors. Oh, if I were a poet! such as Homer or Pushkin, I mean, of course; with any lesser talent one would not venture - I should certainly have painted all that glorious day for you, oh, my readers, with a free brush and brilliant colours! Yes, I should begin my poem with my dinner, I should lay special stress on that striking and solemn moment when the first goblet was raised to the honour of the queen of the fete. I should describe to you the guests plunged in a reverent silence and expectation, as eloquent as the rhetoric of Demosthenes; I should describe for you, then, how Andrey Filippovitch, having as the eldest of the guests some right to take precedence, adorned with his grey hairs and the orders what well befit grey hairs, got up from his seat and raised above his head the congratulatory glass of sparkling wine - brought from a distant kingdom to celebrate such occasions and more like heavenly nectar than plain wine. I would portray for you the guests and the happy parents raising their glasses, too, after Andrey Filippovitch, and fastening upon him eyes full of expectation. I would describe for you how the same Andrey Filippovitch, so often mentioned, after dropping a tear in his glass, delivered his congratulations and good wishes, proposed the toast and drank the health ... but I confess, I freely confess, that I could not do justice to the solemn moment when the queen of the fete, Klara Olsufyevna, blushing like a rose in spring, with the glow of bliss and of modesty, was so overcome by her feelings that she sank into the arms of her tender mamma; how that tender mamma shed tears, and how the father, Olsufy Ivanovitch, a hale old man and a privy councillor, who had lost the use of his legs in his long years of service and been rewarded by destiny for his devotion with investments, a house, some small estates, and a beautiful daughter, sobbed like a little child and announced through his tears that

his Excellency was a benevolent man. I could not, I positively could not, describe the enthusiasm that followed that moment in every heart, an enthusiasm clearly evinced in the conduct of a youthful register clerk (though at that moment he was more like a civil councillor than a register clerk), who was moved to tears, too, as he listened to Andrey Filippovitch. In his turn, too, Andrey Filippovitch was in that solemn moment quite unlike a collegiate councillor and the head of an office in the department - yes, he was something else ... what, exactly, I do not know, but not a collegiate councillor. He was more exalted! Finally ... Oh, why do I not possess the secret of lofty, powerful language, of the sublime style, to describe these grand and edifying moments of human life, which seem created expressly to prove that virtue sometimes triumphs over ingratitude, free-thinking, vice and envy! I will say nothing, but in silence - which will be better than any eloquence - I will point to that fortunate youth, just entering on his twenty-sixth spring - to Vladimir Semyonovitch, Andrey Filippovitch's nephew, who in his turn now rose from his seat, who in his turn proposed a toast, and upon whom were fastened the tearful eyes of the parents, the proud eyes of Andrey Filippovitch, the modest eyes of the queen of the fete, the solemn eyes of the guests and even the decorously envious eyes of some of the young man's youthful colleagues. I will say nothing of that, though I cannot refrain from observing that everything in that young man - who was, indeed, speaking in a complimentary sense, more like an elderly than a young man - everything, from his blooming cheeks to his assessorial rank seemed almost to proclaim aloud the lofty pinnacle a man can attain through morality and good principles! I will not describe how Anton Antonovitch Syetotochkin, a little old man as grey as a badger, the head clerk of a department, who was a colleague of Andrey Filippovitch's and had once been also of Olsufy Ivanovitch's, and was an old friend of the family and Klara Olsufyevna's godfather, in his turn proposed a toast, crowed like a cock, and cracked many little jokes; how by this extremely proper breach of propriety, if one may use such an expression, he made the whole company laugh till they cried, and how Klara Olsufyevna, at her parents' bidding, rewarded him for his jocular and politeness with a kiss. I will only say that the guests, who must have felt like kinsfolk and brothers after such a dinner, at last rose from the table, and the elderly and more solid guests, after a brief interval spent in friendly conversation, interspersed with some candid, though, of course, very polite and proper observations, went decorously into the next room and, without losing valuable time, promptly divided themselves up into parties and, full of the sense of their own dignity, installed themselves at tables covered with green baize. Meanwhile, the ladies established in the drawing-room suddenly became very affable and began talking about dress-materials. And the venerable host, who had lost the use of his legs in the service of loyalty and religion, and had been rewarded with all the blessings we have enumerated above, began walking about on crutches among his guests, supported by Vladimir Semyonovitch and Klara Olsufyevna, and he, too, suddenly becoming extremely affable, decided to improvise a modest little dance, regardless of expense; to that end a nimble youth (the one who was more like a civil councillor than a youth) was despatched to fetch musicians, and musicians to

the number of eleven arrived, and exactly at half-past eight struck up the inviting strains of a French quadrille, followed by various other dances... . It is needless to say that my pen is too weak, dull, and spiritless to describe the dance that owed its inspiration to the genial hospitality of the grey-headed host. And how, I ask, can the modest chronicler of Mr. Golyadkin's adventures, extremely interesting as they are in their own way, how can I depict the choice and rare mingling of beauty, brilliance, style, gaiety, polite solidity and solid politeness, sportiveness, joy, all the mirth and playfulness of these wives and daughters of petty officials, more like fairies than ladies - in a complimentary sense - with their lily shoulders and their rosy faces, their ethereal figures, their playfully agile homeopathic - to use the exalted language appropriate - little feet? How can I describe to you, finally, the gallant officials, their partners - gay and solid youths, steady, gleeful, decorously vague, smoking a pipe in the intervals between the dancing in a little green room apart, or not smoking a pipe in the intervals between the dances, every one of them with a highly respectable surname and rank in the service - all steeped in a sense of the elegant and a sense of their own dignity; almost all speaking French to their partners, or if Russian, using only the most well-bred expressions, compliments and profound observations, and only in the smoking-room permitting themselves some genial lapses from this high tone, some phrases of cordial and friendly brevity, such, for instance, as: "Pon my soul, Petka, you rake, you did kick me off that polka in style," or, "I say, Vasya, you dog, you did give your partner a time of it." For all this, as I've already had the honour of explaining, oh, my readers! my pen fails me, and therefore I am dumb. Let us rather return to Mr. Golyadkin, the true and only hero of my very truthful tale.

The fact is that he found himself now in a very strange position, to the least of it. He was here also, gentlemen - that is, not at the dance, but almost at the dance; he was "all right, though; he could take care of himself," yet at that moment he was a little astray; he was standing at that moment, strange to say - on the landing of the back stairs to Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. But it was "all right" his standing there; he was "quite well." He was standing in a corner, huddled in a place which was not very warm, though it was dark, partly hidden by a huge cupboard and an old screen, in the midst of rubbish, litter, and odds and ends of all sorts, concealing himself for the time being and watching the course of proceedings as a disinterested spectator. He was only looking on now, gentlemen; he, too, gentlemen, might go in, of course ... why should he not go in? He had only to take one step and he would go in, and would go in very adroitly. Just now, though he had been standing nearly three hours between the cupboard and the screen in the midst of the rubbish, litter and odds and ends of all sorts, he was only quoting, in his own justification, a memorable phrase of the French minister, Villesle: "All things come in time to him who has the strength to wait." Mr. Golyadkin had read this sentence in some book on quite a different subject, but now very aptly recalled it. The phrase, to begin with, was exceedingly appropriate to his present position, and, indeed, why should it not occur to the mind of a man who had been waiting for almost three hours in the cold and the dark in expectation of

a happy ending to his adventures. After quoting very appropriately the phrase of the French minister, Villesle, Mr. Golyadkin immediately thought of the Turkish Vizier, Martsimiris, as well as of the beautiful Mergravine Luise, whose story he had read also in some book. Then it occurred to his mind that the Jesuits made it their rule that any means were justified if only the end were attained. Fortifying himself somewhat with this historical fact, Mr. Golyadkin said to himself, What were the Jesuits? The Jesuits were every one of them very great fools; that he was better than any of them; that if only the refreshment-room would be empty for one minute (the door of the refreshment-room opened straight into the passage to the back stairs, where Mr. Golyadkin was in hiding now), he would, in spite of all the Jesuits in the world, go straight in, first from the refreshment-room into the tea-room, then into the room where they were now playing cards, and then straight into the hall where they were now dancing the polka, and he would go in - he would slip through - and that would be all, no one would notice him; and once there he would know what to do.

Well, so this is the position in which we find the hero of our perfectly true story, though, indeed, it is difficult to explain what was passing in him at that moment. The fact is that he had made his way to the back of the stairs and to the passage, on the ground that, as he said, "why shouldn't he? and everyone did go that way?"; but he had not ventured to penetrate further, evidently he did not dare to do so ... "not because there was anything he did not dare, but just because he did not care to, because he preferred to be in hiding"; so here he was, waiting now for a chance to slip in, and he had been waiting for it two hours and a half. "Why not wait? Villesle himself had waited. But what had Villesle to do with it?" thought Mr. Golyadkin: "How does Villesle come in? But how am I to ... to go and walk in? ... Ech, you dummy!" said Mr. Golyadkin, pinching his benumbed cheek with his benumbed fingers; "you silly fool, you silly old Golyadkin - silly fool of a surname!" ...

But these compliments paid to himself were only by the way and without any apparent aim. Now he was on the point of pushing forward and slipping in; the refreshment-room was empty and no one was in sight. Mr. Golyadkin saw all this through the little window; in two steps he was at the door and had already opened it. "Should he go in or not? Come, should he or not? I'll go in ... why not? to the bold all ways lie open!" Reassuring himself in this way, our hero suddenly and quite unexpectedly retreated behind the screen. "No," he thought. "Ah, now, somebody's coming in? Yes, they've come in; why did I dawdle when there were no people about? Even so, shall I go and slip in? ... No, how slip in when a man has such a temperament! Fie, what a low tendency! I'm as scared as a hen! Being scared is our special line, that's the fact of the matter! To be abject on every occasion is our line: no need to ask us about that. Just stand here like a post and that's all! At home I should be having a cup of tea now ... It would be pleasant, too, to have a cup of tea. If I come in later Petrushka 'll grumble, maybe. Shall I go home? Damnation take all this! I'll go and that'll be the end of it!" Reflecting on his position in this way, Mr. Golyadkin dashed forward as though some one had touched a spring in him; in two steps he found himself in the

refreshment-room, flung off his overcoat, took off his hat, hurriedly thrust these things into a corner, straightened himself and smoothed himself down; then ...then he moved on to the tea-room, and from the tea-room darted into the next room, slipped almost unnoticed between the card-players, who were at the tip-top of excitement, then ... Mr. Golyadkin forgot everything that was going on about him, and went straight as an arrow into the drawing room.

As luck would have it they were not dancing. The ladies were promenading up and down the room in picturesque groups. The gentlemen were standing about in twos and threes or flitting about the room engaging partners. Mr. Golyadkin noticed nothing of this. He saw only Klara Olsufyevna, near her Andrey Filippovitch, then Vladimir Semyonovitch, two or three officers, and, finally, two or three other young men who were also very interesting and, as any one could see at once, were either very promising or had actually done something... . He saw some one else too. Or, rather, he saw nobody and looked at nobody ... but, moved by the same spring which had sent him dashing into the midst of a ball to which he had not been invited, he moved forward, and then forwarder and forwarder. On the way he jostled against a councillor and trod on his foot, and incidentally stepped on a very venerable old lady's dress and tore it a little, pushed against a servant with a tray and then ran against somebody else, and, not noticing all this, passing further and further forward, he suddenly found himself facing Klara Olsufyevna. There is no doubt whatever that he would, with the utmost delight, without winking an eyelid, have sunk through the earth at that moment; but what has once been done cannot be recalled ... can never be recalled. What was he to do? "If I fail I don't lose heart, if I succeed I persevere." Mr. Golyadkin was, of course, not "one to intrigue," and "not accomplished in the art of polishing the floor with his boots." ... And so, indeed, it proved. Besides, the Jesuits had some hand in it too ... though Mr. Golyadkin had no thoughts to spare for them now! All the moving, noisy, laughing groups were suddenly hushed as though at a signal and, little by little, crowded round Mr. Golyadkin. He, however, seemed to hear nothing, to see nothing, he could not look ... he could not possibly look at anything; he kept his eyes on the floor and so stood, giving himself his word of honour, in passing, to shoot himself one way or another that night. Making this vow, Mr. Golyadkin inwardly said to himself, "Here goes!" and to his own great astonishment began unexpectedly to speak.

He began with congratulations and polite wishes. The congratulations went off well, but over the good wishes out hero stammered. He felt that if he stammered all would be lost at once. And so it turned out - he stammered and floundered ... floundering, he blushed crimson; blushing, he was overcome with confusion. In his confusion he raised his eyes; raising his eyes he looked about him; looking about him - he almost swooned ... Every one stood still, every one was silent, a little nearer there was laughter. Mr. Golyadkin fastened a humble, imploring look on Andrey Filippovitch. Andrey Filippovitch. Andrey Filippovitch responded with such a look that if our hero had not been utterly crushed already he certainly would have been crushed a second time - that is, if that were possible. The silence lasted long.

“This is rather concerned with my domestic circumstances and my private life, Andrey Filippovitch,” our hero, half-dead, articulated in a scarcely audible voice; “it is not an official incident, Andrey Filippovitch ...”

“For shame, sir, for shame!” Andrey Filippovitch pronounced in a half whisper, with an indescribable air of indignation; he pronounced these words and, giving Klara Olsufyevna his arm, he turned away from Mr. Golyadkin.

“I’ve nothing to be ashamed of, Andrey Filippovitch,” answered Mr. Golyadkin, also in a whisper, turning his miserable eyes about him, trying helplessly to discover in the amazed crowd something on which he could gain a footing and retrieve his social position.

“Why, it’s all right, it’s nothing, gentlemen! Why, what’s the matter? Why, it might happen to any one,” whispered Mr. Golyadkin, moving a little away and trying to escape from the crowd surrounding him.

They made way for him. Our hero passed through two rows of inquisitive and wondering spectators. Fate drew him on. He felt himself, that fate was leading him on. He would have given a great deal, of course, for a chance to be back in the passage by the back stairs, without having committed a breach of propriety; but as that was utterly impossible he began trying to creep away into a corner and to stand there - modestly, decorously, apart, without interfering with any one, without attracting especial attention, but at the same time to win the favourable notice of his host and the company. At the same time Mr. Golyadkin felt as though the ground were giving way under him, as though he were staggering, falling. At last he made his way to a corner and stood in it, like an unconcerned, rather indifferent spectator, leaning his arms on the backs of two chairs, taking complete possession of them in that way, and trying, as far as he could, to glance confidently at Olsufy Ivanovitch’s guests, grouped about him. Standing nearest him was an officer, a tall and handsome fellow, beside whom Golyadkin felt himself an insect.

“These two chairs, lieutenant, are intended, one for Klara Olsufyevna, and the other for Princess Tchevtchehanov; I’m taking care of them for them,” said Mr. Golyadkin breathlessly, turning his imploring eyes on the officer. The lieutenant said nothing, but turned away with a murderous smile. Checked in this direction, our hero was about to try his luck in another quarter, and directly addressed an important councillor with a cross of great distinction on his breast. But the councillor looked him up and down with such a frigid stare that Mr. Golyadkin felt distinctly as though a whole bucketful of cold water had been thrown over him. He subsided into silence. He made up his mind that it was better to keep quiet, not to open his lips, and to show that he was “all right,” that he was “like every one else,” and that his position, as far as he could see, was quite a proper one. With this object he rivetted his gaze on the lining of his coat, then raised his eyes and fixed them upon a very respectable-looking gentleman. “That gentleman has a wig on,” thought Mr. Golyadkin; “and if he takes off that wig he will be bald, his head will be as bare as the palm of my hand.” Having made this important discovery, Mr. Golyadkin thought of the Arab Emirs, whose heads are left

bare and shaven if they take off the green turbans they wear as a sign of their descent from the prophet Mahomet. Then, probably from some special connection of ideas with the Turks, he thought of Turkish slippers and at once, apropos of that, recalled the fact that Andrey Filippovitch was wearing boots, and that his boots were more like slippers than boots. It was evident that Mr. Golyadkin had become to some extent reconciled to his position. "What if that chandelier," flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind, "were to come down from the ceiling and fall upon the company. I should rush at once to save Klara Olsufyevna. 'Save her!' I should cry. 'Don't be alarmed, madam, it's of no consequence, I will rescue you, I.' Then ..." At that moment Mr. Golyadkin looked about in search of Klara Olsufyevna, and saw Gerasimitch, Olsufy Ivanovitch's old butler. Gerasimitch, with a most anxious and solemnly official air, was making straight for him. Mr. Golyadkin started and frowned from an unaccountable but most disagreeable sensation; he looked about him mechanically; it occurred to his mind that if only he could somehow creep off somewhere, unobserved, on the sly - simply disappear, that it, behave as though he had done nothing at all, as though the matter did not concern him in the least! ... But before hour hero could make up his mind to do anything, Gerasimitch was standing before him.

"Do you see, Gerasimitch," said our hero, with a little smile, addressing Gerasimitch; "you go and tell them - do you see the candle there in the chandelier, Gerasimitch - it will be falling down directly: so, you know, you must tell them to see to it; it really will fall down, Gerasimitch... ."

"The candle? No, the candle's standing straight; but somebody is asking for you, sir."

"Who is asking for me, Gerasimitch?"

"I really can't say, sir, who it is. A man with a message. 'Is Yakov Petrovitch Golyadkin here?' says he. 'Then call him out,' says he, 'on very urgent and important business ...' you see."

"No, Gerasimitch, you are making a mistake; in that you are making a mistake, Gerasimitch."

"I doubt it, sir."

"No, Gerasimitch, it isn't doubtful; there's nothing doubtful about it, Gerasimitch. Nobody's asking for me, but I'm quite at home here - that is, in my right place, Gerasimitch."

Mr. Golyadkin took breath and looked about him. Yes! every one in the room, all had their eyes fixed upon him, and were listening in a sort of solemn expectation. The men had crowded a little nearer and were all attention. A little further away the ladies were whispering together. The master of the house made his appearance at no great distance from Mr. Golyadkin, and though it was impossible to detect from his expression that he, too, was taking a close and direct interest in Mr. Golyadkin's position, for everything was being done with delicacy, yet, nevertheless, it all made our hero feel that the decisive moment had come for him. Mr. Golyadkin saw clearly that the time had come for a old stroke, the chance of putting his enemies to shame.

Mr. Golyadkin was in great agitation. He was aware of a sort of inspiration and, in a quivering and impressive voice, he began again, addressing the waiting butler -

“No, my dear fellow, no one’s calling for me. You are mistaken. I will say more: you were mistaken this morning too, when you assured me... . dared to assure me, I say (he raised his voice), “that Olsufy Ivanovitch, who has been my benefactor for as long as I can remember and has, in a sense, been a father to me, was shutting his door upon me at the moment of solemn family rejoicing for his paternal heart.” (Mr. Golyadkin looked about him complacently, but with deep feeling. A tear glittered on his eyelash.) “I repeat, my friend,” our hero concluded, “you were mistaken, you were cruelly and unpardonably mistaken... .”

The moment was a solemn one. Mr. Golyadkin felt that the effect was quite certain. He stood with modestly downcast eyes, expecting Olsufy Ivanovitch to embrace him. Excitement and perplexity were apparent in the guests, even the inflexible and terrible Gerasimitch faltered over the words “I doubt it ...” when suddenly the ruthless orchestra, apropos of nothing, struck up a polka. All was lost, all was scattered to the winds. Mr. Golyadkin started; Gerasimitch stepped back; everything in the room began undulating like the sea; and Vladimir Semyonovitch led the dance with Klara Olsufyevna, while the handsome lieutenant followed with Princess Tchevtchehanov. Onlookers, curious and delighted, squeezed in to watch them dancing the polka - an interesting, fashionable new dance which every one was crazy over. Mr. Golyadkin was, for the time, forgotten. But suddenly all were thrown into excitement, confusion and bustle; the music ceased ... a strange incident had occurred. Tired out with the dance, and almost breathless with fatigue, Klara Olsufyevna, with glowing cheeks and heaving bosom, sank into an armchair, completely exhausted ... All hearts turned to the fascinating creature, all vied with one another in complimenting her and thanking her for the pleasure conferred on them, - all at once there stood before her Mr. Golyadkin. He was pale, extremely perturbed; he, too, seemed completely exhausted, he could scarcely move. He was smiling for some reason, he stretched out his hand imploringly. Klara Olsufyevna was so taken aback that she had not time to withdraw hers and mechanically got up at his invitation. Mr. Golyadkin lurched forward, first once, then a second time, then lifted his leg, then made a scrape, then gave a sort of stamp, then stumbled ... he, too, wanted to dance with Klara Olsufyevna. Klara Olsufyevna uttered a shriek; every one rushed to release her hand from Mr. Golyadkin’s, and in a moment our hero was carried almost ten paces away by the rush of the crowd. A circle formed round him too. Two old ladies, whom he had almost knocked down in his retreat raised a great shrieking and outcry. The confusion was awful; all were asking questions, every one was shouting, every one was finding fault. The orchestra was silent. Our hero whirled round in his circle and mechanically, with a semblance of a smile, muttered something to himself, such as, “Why not?” and “that the polka, so far, at least, as he could see, was a new and very interesting dance, invented for the diversion of the ladies... but that since things had taken this turn, he was ready to consent.” But Mr. Golyadkin’s consent no one apparently thought of asking. Our hero was suddenly aware that some

one's hand was laid on his arm, that another hand was pressed against his back, that he was with peculiar solicitude being guided in a certain direction. At last he noticed that he was going straight to the door. Mr. Golyadkin wanted to say something, to do something... . But no, he no longer wanted to do anything. He only mechanically kept laughing in answer. At last he was aware that they were putting on his greatcoat, that his hat was thrust over his eyes; finally he felt that he was in the entry on the stairs in the dark and cold. At last he stumbled, he felt that he was falling down a precipice; he tried to cry out - and suddenly he found himself in the courtyard. The air blew fresh on him, he stood still for a minute; at that very instant, the strains reached him of the orchestra striking up again. Mr. Golyadkin suddenly recalled it all; it seemed to him that all his flagging energies came back to him again. He had been standing as though rivetted to the spot, but now he started off and rushed away headlong, anywhere, into the air, into freedom, wherever chance might take him.

Chapter 6

It was striking midnight from all the clock towers in Petersburg when Mr. Golyadkin, beside himself, ran out on the Fontanka Quay, close to the Ismailovsky Bridge, fleeing from his foes, from persecution, from a hailstorm of nips and pinches aimed at him, from the shrieks of excited old ladies, from the Ohs and Ahs of women and from the murderous eyes of Andrey Filippovitch. Mr. Golyadkin was killed - killed entirely, in the full sense of the word, and if he still preserved the power of running, it was simply through some sort of miracle, a miracle in which at last he refused himself to believe. It was an awful November night - wet, foggy, rainy, snowy, teeming with colds in the head, fevers, swollen faces, quinseys, inflammations of all kinds and descriptions - teeming, in fact, with all the gifts of a Petersburg November. The wind howled in the deserted streets, lifting up the black water of the canal above the rings on the bank, and irritably brushing against the lean lamp-posts which chimed in with its howling in a thin, shrill creak, keeping up the endless squeaky, jangling concert with which every inhabitant of Petersburg is so familiar. Snow and rain were falling both at once. Lashed by the wind, the streams of rainwater spurted almost horizontally, as though from a fireman's hose, pricking and stinging the face of the luckless Mr. Golyadkin like a thousand pins and needles. In the stillness of the night, broken only by the distant rumbling of carriages, the howl of the wind and the creaking of the lamp-posts, there was the dismal sound of the splash and gurgle of water, rushing from every roof, every porch, every pipe and every cornice, on to the granite of the pavement. There was not a soul, near or far, and, indeed, it seemed there could not be at such an hour and in such weather. And so only Mr. Golyadkin, alone with his despair, was fleeing in terror along the pavement of Fontanka, with his usual rapid little step, in haste to get home as soon as possible to his flat on the fourth storey in Shestilavotchny Street.

Though the snow, the rain, and all the nameless horrors of a raging snowstorm and fog, under a Petersburg November sky, were attacking Mr. Golyadkin, already shattered by misfortunes, were showing him no mercy, giving him no rest, drenching him to the bone, glueing up his eyelids, blowing right through him from all sides, baffling and perplexing him - though conspiring and combining with all his enemies to make a grand day, evening, and night for him, in spite of all this Mr. Golyadkin was almost insensible to this final proof of the persecution of destiny: so violent had been the shock and the impression made upon him a few minutes before at the civil councillor Berendyev's! If any disinterested spectator could have glanced casually at Mr. Golyadkin's painful progress, he would certainly have said that Mr. Golyadkin looked as though he wanted to hide from himself, as though he were trying to run

away from himself! Yes! It was really so. One may say more: Mr. Golyadkin did not want only to run away from himself, but to be obliterated, to cease to be, to return to dust. At the moment he took in nothing surrounding him, understood nothing of what was going on about him, and looked as though the miseries of the stormy night, of the long tramp, the rain, the snow, the wind, all the cruelty of the weather, did not exist for him. The golosh slipping off the boot on Mr. Golyadkin's right foot was left behind in the snow and slush on the pavement of Fontanka, and Mr. Golyadkin did not think of turning back to get it, did not, in fact, notice that he had lost it. He was so perplexed that, in spite of everything surrounding him, he stood several times stock still in the middle of the pavement, completely possessed by the thought of his recent horrible humiliation; at that instant he was dying, disappearing; then he suddenly set off again like mad and ran and ran without looking back, as though he were pursued, as though he were fleeing from some still more awful calamity... . The position was truly awful! ... At last Mr. Golyadkin halted in exhaustion, leaned on the railing in the attitude of a man whose nose has suddenly begun to bleed, and began looking intently at the black and troubled waters of the canal. All that is known is that at that instant Mr. Golyadkin reached such a pitch of despair, was so harassed, so tortured, so exhausted, and so weakened in what feeble faculties were left him that he forgot everything, forgot the Ismailovsky Bridge, forgot Shestilavotchny Street, forgot his present plight ... After all, what did it matter to him? The thing was done. The decision was affirmed and ratified; what could he do? All at once ... all at once he started and involuntarily skipped a couple of paces aside. With unaccountable uneasiness he began gazing about him; but no one was there, nothing special had happened, and yet ... and yet he fancied that just now, that very minute, some one was standing near him, beside him, also leaning on the railing, and - marvellous to relate! - had even said something to him, said something quickly, abruptly, not quite intelligibly, but something quite private, something concerning himself.

"Why, was it my fancy?" said Mr. Golyadkin, looking round once more. "But where am I standing? ... Ech, ech," he thought finally, shaking his head, though he began gazing with an uneasy, miserable feeling into the damp, murky distance, straining his sight and doing his utmost to pierce with his short-sighted eyes the wet darkness that stretched all round him. There was nothing new, however, nothing special caught the eye of Mr. Golyadkin. Everything seemed to be all right, as it should be, that is, the snow was falling more violently, more thickly and in larger flakes, nothing could be seen twenty paces away, the lamp-posts creaked more shrilly than ever and the wind seemed to intone its melancholy song even more tearfully, more piteously, like an importunate beggar whining for a copper to get a crust of bread. At the same time a new sensation took possession of Mr. Golyadkin's whole being: agony upon agony, terror upon terror ... a feverish tremor ran through his veins. The moment was insufferably unpleasant! "Well, no matter; perhaps it's no matter at all, and there's no stain on any one's honour. Perhaps it's as it should be," he went on, without understanding what he was saying.

“Perhaps it will all be for the best in the end, and there will be nothing to complain of, and every one will be justified.”

Talking like this and comforting himself with words, Mr. Golyadkin shook himself a little, shook off the snow which had drifted in thick layers on his hat, his collar, his overcoat, his tie, his boots and everything - but his strange feeling, his strange obscure misery he could not get rid of, could not shake off. Somewhere in the distance there was the boom of a cannon shot. “Ach, what weather!” thought our hero. “Tchoo! isn’t there going to be a flood? It seems as though the water has risen so violently.”

Mr. Golyadkin had hardly said or thought this when he saw a person coming towards him, belated, no doubt, like him, through some accident. An unimportant, casual incident, one might suppose, but for some unknown reason Mr. Golyadkin was troubled, even scared, and rather flurried. It was not that he was exactly afraid of some ill-intentioned man, but just that “perhaps ... after all, who knows, this belated individual,” flashed through Mr. Golyadkin’s mind, “maybe he’s that very thing, maybe he’s the very principal thing in it, and isn’t here for nothing, but is here with an object, crossing my path and provoking me.” Possibly, however, he did not think this precisely, but only had a passing feeling of something like it - and very unpleasant. There was no time, however, for thinking and feeling. The stranger was already within two paces. Mr. Golyadkin, as he invariably did, hastened to assume a quite peculiar air, an air that expressed clearly that he, Golyadkin, kept himself to himself, that he was “all right,” that the road was wide enough for all, and that he, Golyadkin, was not interfering with any one. Suddenly he stopped short as though petrified, as though struck by lightning, and quickly turned round after the figure which had only just passed him - turned as though some one had given him a tug from behind, as though the wind had turned him like a weathercock. The passer-by vanished quickly in the snowstorm. He, too, walked quickly; he was dressed like Mr. Golyadkin and, like him, too, wrapped up from head to foot, and he, too, tripped and trotted along the pavement of Fontanka with rapid little steps that suggested that he was a little scared.

“What - what is it?” whispered Mr. Golyadkin, smiling mistrustfully, though he trembled all over. An icy shiver ran down his back. Meanwhile, the stranger had vanished completely; there was no sound of his step, while Mr. Golyadkin still stood and gazed after him. At last, however, he gradually came to himself.

“Why, what’s the meaning of it?” he thought with vexation. “Why, have I really gone out of my mind, or what?” He turned and went on his way, making his footsteps more rapid and frequent, and doing his best not to think of anything at all. He even closed his eyes at last with the same object. Suddenly, through the howling of the wind and the uproar of the storm, the sound of steps very close at hand reached his ears again. He started and opened his eyes. Again a rapidly approaching figure stood out black before him, some twenty paces away. This little figure was hastening, tripping along, hurrying nervously; the distance between them grew rapidly less. Mr. Golyadkin could by now get a full view of the second belated companion. He looked full at him and cried out with amazement and horror; his legs gave way under him. It was the same individual

who had passed him ten minutes before, and who now quite unexpectedly turned up facing him again. But this was not the only marvel that struck Mr. Golyadkin. He was so amazed that he stood still, cried out, tried to say something, and rushed to overtake the stranger, even shouted something to him, probably anxious to stop him as quickly as possible. The stranger did, in fact, stop ten paces from Mr. Golyadkin, so that the light from the lamp-post that stood near fell full upon his whole figure - stood still, turned to Mr. Golyadkin, and with impatient and anxious face waited to hear what he would say.

“Excuse me, possibly I’m mistaken,” our hero brought out in a quavering voice.

The stranger in silence, and with an air of annoyance, turned and rapidly went on his way, as though in haste to make up for the two seconds he had wasted on Mr. Golyadkin. As for the latter, he was quivering in every nerve, his knees shook and gave way under him, and with a moan he squatted on a stone at the edge of the pavement. There really was reason, however, for his being so overwhelmed. The fact is that this stranger seemed to him somehow familiar. That would have been nothing, though. But he recognised, almost certainly recognised this man. He had often seen him, that man, had seen him some time, and very lately too; where could it have been? Surely not yesterday? But, again, that was not the chief thing that Mr. Golyadkin had often seen him before; there was hardly anything special about the man; the man at first sight would not have aroused any special attention. He was just a man like any one else, a gentleman like all other gentlemen, of course, and perhaps he had some good qualities and very valuable one too - in fact, he was a man who was quite himself. Mr. Golyadkin cherished no sort of hatred or enmity, not even the slightest hostility towards this man - quite the contrary, it would seem, indeed - and yet (and this was the real point) he would not for any treasure on earth have been willing to meet that man, and especially to meet him as he had done now, for instance. We may say more: Mr. Golyadkin knew that man perfectly well: he even knew what he was called, what his name was; and yet nothing would have induced him, and again, for no treasure on earth would he have consented to name him, to consent to acknowledge that he was called so-and-so, that his father’s name was this and his surname was that. Whether Mr. Golyadkin’s stupefaction lasted a short time or a long time, whether he was sitting for a long time on the stone of the pavement I cannot say; but, recovering himself a little at last, he suddenly fell to running, without looking round, as fast as his legs could carry him; his mind was preoccupied, twice he stumbled and almost fell - and through this circumstance his other boot was also bereaved of its golosh. At last Mr. Golyadkin slackened his pace a little to get breath, looked hurriedly round and saw that he had already, without being aware of it, run passed part of the Nevsky Prospect and was now standing at the turning into Liteyny Street. Mr. Golyadkin turned into Liteyny Street. His position at that instant was like that of a man standing at the edge of a fearful precipice, while the earth is bursting open under him, is already shaking, moving, rocking for the last time, falling, drawing him into the abyss, and yet, the luckless wretch has not the strength, nor the resolution, to leap back, to avert

his eyes from the yawning gulf below; the abyss draws him and at last he leaps into it of himself, himself hastening the moment of destruction. Mr. Golyadkin knew, felt and was firmly convinced that some other evil would certainly befall him on the way, that some unpleasantness would overtake him, that he would, for instance, meet his stranger once more: but - strange to say, he positively desired this meeting, considered it inevitable, and all he asked was that it might all be quickly over, that he should be relieved from his position in one way or another, but as soon as possible. And meanwhile he ran on and on, as though moved by some external force, for he felt a weakness and numbness in his whole being: he could not think of anything, though his thoughts caught at everything like brambles. A little lost dog, soaked and shivering, attached itself to Mr. Golyadkin, and ran beside him, scurrying along with tail and ears drooping, looking at him from time to time with timid comprehension. Some remote, long-forgotten idea - some memory of something that had happened long ago - came back into his mind now, kept knocking at his brain as with a hammer, vexing him and refusing to be shaken off.

“Ech, that horrid little cur!” whispered Mr. Golyadkin, not understanding himself.

At last he saw his stranger at the turning into Italyansky Street. But this time the stranger was not coming to meet him, but was running in the same direction as he was, and he, too, was running, a few steps in front. At last they turned into Shestilavotchny Street.

Mr. Golyadkin caught his breath. The stranger stopped exactly before the house in which Mr. Golyadkin lodged. He heard a ring at the bell and almost at the same time the grating of the iron bolt. The gate opened, the stranger stooped, darted in and disappeared. Almost at the same instant Mr. Golyadkin reached the spot and like an arrow flew in at the gate. Heedless of the grumbling porter, he ran, gasping for breath, into the yard, and immediately saw his interesting companion, whom he had lost sight of for a moment.

The stranger darted towards the staircase which led to Mr. Golyadkin's flat. Mr. Golyadkin rushed after him. The stairs were dark, damp and dirt. At every turning there were heaped-up masses of refuse from the flats, so that any unaccustomed stranger who found himself on the stairs in the dark was forced to travel to and fro for half an hour in danger of breaking his legs, cursing the stairs as well as the friends who lived in such an inconvenient place. But Mr. Golyadkin's companion seemed as though familiar with it, as though at home; he ran up lightly, without difficulty, showing a perfect knowledge of his surroundings. Mr. Golyadkin had almost caught him up; in fact, once or twice the stranger's coat flicked him on the nose. His heart stood still. The stranger stopped before the door of Mr. Golyadkin's flat, knocked on it, and (which would, however, have surprised Mr. Golyadkin at any other time) Petrushka, as though he had been sitting up in expectation, opened the door at once and, with a candle in his hand, followed the strange as the latter went in. The hero of our story dashed into his lodging beside himself; without taking off his hat or coat he crossed the little passage and stood still in the doorway of his room, as though thunderstruck. All

his presentiments had come true. All that he had dreaded and surmised was coming to pass in reality. His breath failed him, his head was in a whirl. The stranger, also in his coat and hat, was sitting before him on his bed, and with a faint smile, screwing up his eyes, nodded to him in a friendly way. Mr. Golyadkin wanted to scream, but could not - to protest in some way, but his strength failed him. His hair stood on end, and he almost fell down with horror. And, indeed, there was good reason. He recognised his nocturnal visitor. The nocturnal visitor was no other than himself - Mr. Golyadkin himself, another Mr. Golyadkin, but absolutely the same as himself - in fact, what is called a double in every respect... .

Chapter 7

At eight o'clock next morning Mr. Golyadkin woke up in his bed. At once all the extraordinary incidents of the previous day and the wild, incredible night, with all its almost impossible adventures, presented themselves to his imagination and memory with terrifying vividness. Such intense, diabolical malice on the part of his enemies, and, above all, the final proof of that malice, froze Mr. Golyadkin's heart. But at the same time it was all so strange, incomprehensible, wild, it seemed so impossible, that it was really hard to credit the whole business; Mr. Golyadkin was, indeed, ready to admit himself that it was all an incredible delusion, a passing aberration of the fancy, a darkening of the mind, if he had not fortunately known by bitter experience to what lengths spite will sometimes carry any one, what a pitch of ferocity an enemy may reach when he is bent on revenging his honour and prestige. Besides, Mr. Golyadkin's exhausted limbs, his heavy head, his aching back, and the malignant cold in his head bore vivid witness to the probability of his expedition of the previous night and upheld the reality of it, and to some extent of all that had happened during that expedition. And, indeed, Mr. Golyadkin had known long, long before that something was being got up among them, that there was some one else with them. But after all, thinking it over thoroughly, he made up his mind to keep quiet, to submit and not to protest for the time.

"They are simply plotting to frighten me, perhaps, and when they see that I don't mind, that I make no protest, but keep perfectly quiet and put up with it meekly, they'll give it up, they'll give it up of themselves, give it up of their own accord."

Such, then, were the thoughts in the mind of Mr. Golyadkin as, stretching in his bed, trying to rest his exhausted limbs, he waited for Petrushka to come into his room as usual ... He waited for a full quarter of an hour. He heard the lazy scamp fiddling about with the samovar behind the screen, and yet he could not bring himself to call him. We may say more: Mr. Golyadkin was a little afraid of confronting Petrushka.

"Why, goodness knows," he thought, "goodness knows how that rascal looks at it all. He keeps on saying nothing, but he has his own ideas."

At last the door creaked and Petrushka came in with a tray in his hands. Mr. Golyadkin stole a timid glance at him, impatiently waiting to see what would happen, waiting to see whether he would not say something about a certain circumstance. But Petrushka said nothing; he was, on the contrary, more silent, more glum and ill-humoured than usual; he looked askance from under his brows at everything; altogether it was evident that he was very much put out about something; he did not even once

glance at his master, which, by the way, rather piqued the latter. Setting all he had brought on the table, he turned and went out of the room without a word.

“He knows, he knows, he knows all about it, the scoundrel!” Mr. Golyadkin grumbled to himself as he took his tea. Yet out here did not address a single question to his servant, though Petrushka came into his room several times afterwards on various errands. Mr. Golyadkin was in great trepidation of spirit. He dreaded going to the office. He had a strong presentiment that there he would find something that would not be “just so.”

“You may be sure,” he thought, “that as soon as you go you will light upon something! Isn’t it better to endure in patience? Isn’t it better to wait a bit now? Let them do what they like there; but I’d better stay here a bit today, recover my strength, get better, and think over the whole affair more thoroughly, then afterwards I could seize the right moment, fall upon them like snow from the sky, and get off scot free myself.”

Reasoning like this, Mr. Golyadkin smoked pipe after pipe; time was flying. It was already nearly half-past nine.

“Why, it’s half-past nine already,” thought Mr. Golyadkin; “it’s late for me to make my appearance. Besides, I’m ill, of course I’m ill, I’m certainly ill; who denies it? What’s the matter with me? If they send to make inquiries, let the executive clerk come; and, indeed, what is the matter with me really? Mr back aches, I have a cough, and a cold in my head; and, in fact, it’s out of the question for me to go out, utterly out of the question in such weather. I might be taken ill and, very likely, die; nowadays especially the death-rate is so high ...”

With such reasoning Mr. Golyadkin succeeded at last in setting his conscience at rest, and defended himself against the reprimands he expected from Andrey Filipovitch for neglect of his duty. As a rule in such cases our hero was particularly fond of justifying himself in his own eyes with all sorts of irrefutable arguments, and so completely setting his conscience at rest. And so now, having completely soothed his conscience, he took up his pipe, filled it, and had no sooner settled down comfortably to smoke, when he jumped up quickly from the sofa, flung away the pipe, briskly washed, shaved, and brushed his hair, got into his uniform and so on, snatched up some papers, and flew to the office.

Mr. Golyadkin went into his department timidly, in quivering expectation of something unpleasant - an expectation which was none the less disagreeable for being vague and unconscious; he sat timidly down in his invariable place next the head clerk, Anton Antonovitch Syetotchkin. Without looking at anything or allowing his attention to be distracted, he plunged into the contents of the papers that lay before him. He made up his mind and vowed to himself to avoid, as far as possible, anything provocative, anything that might compromise him, such as indiscreet questions, jests, or unseemly allusions to any incidents of the previous evening; he made up his mind also to abstain from the usual interchange of civilities with his colleagues, such as inquiries after health and such like. But evidently it was impossible, out of the question, to keep to this. Anxiety and uneasiness in regard to anything near him that was annoying always

worried him far more than the annoyance itself. And that was why, in spite of his inward vows to refrain from entering into anything, whatever happened, and to keep aloof from everything, Mr. Golyadkin from time to time, on the sly, very, very quietly, raised his head and stealthily looked about him to right and to left, peeped at the countenances of his colleagues, and tried to gather whether there were not something new and particular in them referring to himself and with sinister motives concealed from him. He assumed that there must be a connection between all that had happened yesterday and all that surrounded him now. At last, in his misery, he began to long for something - goodness knows what - to happen to put an end to it - even some calamity - he did not care. At this point destiny caught Mr. Golyadkin: he had hardly felt this desire when his doubts were solved in the strange and most unexpected manner.

The door leading from the next room suddenly gave a soft and timid creak, as though to indicate that the person about to enter was a very unimportant one, and a figure, very familiar to Mr. Golyadkin, stood shyly before the very table at which our hero was seated. The latter did not raise his head - no, he only stole a glance at him, the tiniest glance; but he knew all, he understood all, to every detail. He grew hot with shame, and buried his devoted head in his papers with precisely the same object with which the ostrich, pursued by hunters, hides his head in the burning sand. The new arrival bowed to Andrey Filippovitch, and thereupon he heard a voice speaking in the regulation tone of condescending tone of politeness with which all persons in authority address their subordinates in public offices.

“Take a seat here.” said Andrey Filippovitch, motioning the newcomer to Anton Antonovitch’s table. “Here, opposite Mr. Golyadkin, and we’ll soon give you something to do.”

Andrey Filippovitch ended by making a rapid gesture that decorously admonished the newcomer of his duty, and then he immediately became engrossed in the study of the papers that lay in a heap before him.

Mr. Golyadkin lifted his eyes at last, and that he did not fall into a swoon was simply because he had foreseen it all from the first, that he had been forewarned from the first, guessing in his soul who the stranger was. Mr. Golyadkin’s first movement was to look quickly about him, to see whether there were any whispering, any office joke being cracked on the subject, whether any one’s face was agape with wonder, whether, indeed, some one had not fallen under the table from terror. But to his intense astonishment there was no sign of anything of the sort. The behaviour of his colleagues and companions surprised him. It seemed contrary to the dictates of common sense. Mr. Golyadkin was positively scared at this extraordinary reticent. The fact spoke for itself; it was a strange, horrible, uncanny thing. It was enough to rouse any one. All this, of course, only passed rapidly through Mr. Golyadkin’s mind. He felt as though he were burning in a slow fire. And, indeed, there was enough to make him. The figure that was sitting opposite Mr. Golyadkin now was his terror, was his shame, was his nightmare of the evening before; in short, was Mr. Golyadkin himself, not the Mr. Golyadkin who was sitting now in his chair with his mouth wide open and his pen

petrified in his hand, not the one who acted as assistant to his chief, not the one who liked to efface himself and slink away in the crowd, not the one whose deportment plainly said, "Don't touch me and I won't touch you," or, "Don't interfere with me, you see I'm not touching you"; no, this was another Mr. Golyadkin, quite different, yet at the same time, exactly like the first - the same height, the same figure, the same clothes, the same baldness; in fact, nothing, absolutely nothing, was lacking to complete the likeness, so that if one were to set them side by side, nobody, absolutely nobody, could have undertaken to distinguish which was the real Mr. Golyadkin and which was the new one, which was the original and which was the copy.

Our hero was - if the comparison can be made - in the position of a man upon whom some practical joker has stealthily, by way of jest, turned a burning glass.

"What does it mean? Is it a dream?" he wondered. "Is it reality or the continuation of what happened yesterday? And besides, by what right is this all being done? Who sanctioned such a clerk, who authorized this? Am I asleep, am I in a waking dream?"

Mr. Golyadkin tried pinching himself, even tried to screw up his courage to pinch some one else ... No, it was not a dream and that was all about it. Mr. Golyadkin felt that the sweat was trickling down him in big drops; he felt that what was happening to him was something incredible, unheard of, and for that very reason was, to complete his misery, utterly unseemly, for Mr. Golyadkin realized and felt how disadvantageous it was to be the first example of such a burlesque adventure. He even began to doubt his own existence, and though he was prepared for anything and had been longing for his doubts to be settled in any way whatever, yet the actual reality was startling in its unexpectedness. His misery was poignant and overwhelming. At times he lost all power of thought and memory. Coming to himself after such a moment, he noticed that he was mechanically and unconsciously moving the pen over the paper. Mistrustful of himself, he began going over what he had written - and could make nothing of it. At last the other Mr. Golyadkin, who had been sitting discreetly and decorously at the table, got up and disappeared through the door into the other room. Mr. Golyadkin looked around - everything was quiet; he heard nothing but the scratching of pens, the rustle of turning over pages, and conversation in the corners furthest from Andrey Filippovitch's seat. Mr. Golyadkin looked at Anton Antonovitch, and as, in all probability, our hero's countenance fully reflected his real condition and harmonized with the whole position, and was consequently, from one point of view, very remarkable, good-natured Anton Antonovitch, laying aside his pen, inquired after his health with marked sympathy.

"I'm very well, thank God, Anton Antonovitch," said Mr. Golyadkin, stammering. "I am perfectly well, Anton Antonovitch. I am all right now, Anton Antonovitch," he added uncertainly, not yet fully trusting Anton Antonovitch, whose name he had mentioned so often.

"I fancied you were not quite well: though that's not to be wondered at; no, indeed! Nowadays especially there's such a lot of illness going about. Do you know ..."

"Yes, Anton Antonovitch, I know there is such a lot of illness ... I did not mean that, Anton Antonovitch," Mr. Golyadkin went on, looking intently at Anton Antonovitch.

“You see, Anton Antonovitch, I don’t even know how you, that is, I mean to say, how to approach this matter, Anton Antonovitch... .”

“How so? I really ... do you know ... I must confess I don’t quite understand; you must ... you must explain, you know, in what way you are in difficulties,” said Anton Antonovitch, beginning to be in difficulties himself, seeing that there were actually tears in Mr. Golyadkin’s eyes.

“Really, Anton Antonovitch ... I ... here ... there’s a clerk here, Anton Antonovitch ...”

“Well! I don’t understand now.”

“I mean to say, Anton Antonovitch, there’s a new clerk here.”

“Yes, there is; a namesake of yours.”

“What?” cried Mr. Golyadkin.

“I say a namesake of yours; his name’s Golyadkin too. Isn’t he a brother of yours?”

“No, Anton Antonovitch, I ...”

“H’m! you don’t say so! Why, I thought he must be a relation of yours. Do you know, there’s a sort of family likeness.”

Mr. Golyadkin was petrified with astonishment, and for the moment he could not speak. To treat so lightly such a horrible, unheard-of thing, a thing undeniably rare and curious in its way, a thing which would have amazed even an unconcerned spectator, to talk of a family resemblance when he could see himself as in a looking-glass!

“Do you know, Yakov Petrovitch, what I advise you to do?” Anton Antonovitch went on. “Go and consult a doctor. Do you know, you look somehow quite unwell. Your eyes look peculiar ... you know, there’s a peculiar expression in them.”

“No, Anton Antonovitch, I feel, of course ... that is, I keep wanting to ask about this clerk.”

“Well?”

“That is, have not you noticed, Anton Antonovitch, something peculiar about him, something very marked?”

“That is ... ?”

“That is, I mean, Anton Antonovitch, a striking likeness with somebody, for instance; with me, for instance? You spoke just now, you see, Anton Antonovitch, of a family likeness. You let slip the remark... . You know there really are sometimes twins exactly alike, like two drops of water, so that they can’t be told apart. Well, it’s that that I mean.”

“To be sure,” said Anton Antonovitch, after a moment’s thought, speaking as though he were struck by the fact for the first time: “yes, indeed! You are right, there is a striking likeness, and you are quite right in what you say. You really might be mistaken for one another,” he went on, opening his eyes wider and wider; “and, do you know, Yakov Petrovitch, it’s positively a marvellous likeness, fantastic, in fact, as the saying is; that is, just as you ... Have you observed, Yakov Petrovitch? I wanted to ask you to explain it; yes, I must confess I didn’t take particular notice at first. It’s wonderful, it’s

really wonderful! And, you know, you are not a native of these parts, are you, Yakov Petrovitch?"

"No."

"He is not from these parts, you know, either. Perhaps he comes from the same part of the country as you do. Where, may I make bold to inquire, did your mother live for the most part?"

"You said ... you say, Anton Antonovitch, that he is not a native of these parts?"

"No, he is not. And indeed how strange it is!" continued the talkative Anton Antonovitch, for whom it was a genuine treat to gossip. "It may well arouse curiosity; and yet, you know, you might pass him by, brush against him, without noticing anything. But you mustn't be upset about it. It's a thing that does happen. Do you know, the same thing, I must tell you, happened to my aunt on my mother's side; she saw her own double before her death ..."

"No, I - excuse me for interrupting you, Anton Antonovitch - I wanted to find out, Anton Antonovitch, how that clerk ... that is, on what footing is he here?"

"In the place of Semyon Ivanovitch, to fill the vacancy left by his death; the post was vacant, so he was appointed. Do you know, I'm told poor Semyon Ivanovitch left three children, all tiny dots. The widow fell at the feet of his Excellency. They do say she's hiding something; she's got a bit of money, but she's hiding it."

"No, Anton Antonovitch, I was still referring to that circumstance."

"You mean ...? To be sure! But why are you so interested in that? I tell you not to upset yourself. All this is temporary to some extent. Why, after all, you know, you have nothing to do with it. So it has been ordained by God Almighty, it's His will, and it is sinful repining. His wisdom is apparent in it. And as far as I can make out, Yakov Petrovitch, you are not to blame in any way. There are all sorts of strange things in the world! Mother Nature is liberal with her gifts, and you are not called upon to answer for it, you won't be responsible. Here, for instance, you have heard, I expect, of those - what's their name? - oh, the Siamese twins who are joined together at the back, live and eat and sleep together. I'm told they get a lot of money."

"Allow me, Anton Antonovitch ..."

"I understand, I understand! Yes! But what of it? It's no matter, I tell you, as far as I can see there's nothing for you to upset yourself about. After all, he's a clerk - as a clerk he seems to be a capable man. He says his name is Golyadkin, that he's not a native of this district, and that he's a titular councillor. He had a personal interview with his Excellency."

"And how did his Excellency ...?"

"It was all right; I am told he gave a satisfactory account of himself, gave his reasons, said, 'It's like this, your Excellency,' and that he was without means and anxious to enter the service, and would be particularly flattered to be serving under his Excellency ... all that was proper, you know; he expressed himself neatly. He must be a sensible man. But of course he came with a recommendation; he couldn't have got in without that ..."

“Oh, from whom ... that is, I mean, who is it has had a hand in this shameful business?”

“Yes, a good recommendation, I’m told; his Excellency, I’m told laughed with Andrey Filippovitch.”

“Laughed with Andrey Filippovitch?”

“Yes, he only just smiled and said that it was all right, and that he had nothing against it, so long as he did his duty ...”

“Well, and what more? You relieve me to some extent, Anton Antonovitch; go on, I entreat you.”

“Excuse me, I must tell you again ... Well, then, come, it’s nothing, it’s a very simple matter; you mustn’t upset yourself, I tell you, and there’s nothing suspicious about it... .”

“No. I ... that is, Anton Antonovitch, I want to ask you, didn’t his Excellency say anything more ...about me, for instance?”

“Well! To be sure! No, nothing of the sort; you can set your mind quite at rest. You know it is, of course, a rather striking circumstance, and at first ...why, here, I, for instance, I scarcely noticed it. I really don’t know why I didn’t notice it till you mentioned it. But you can set your mind at rest entirely. He said nothing particular, absolutely nothing,” added good-natured Anton Antonovitch, getting up from his chair.

“So then, Anton, Antonovitch, I ...”

“Oh, you must excuse me. Here I’ve been gossiping about these trivial matters, and I’ve business that is important and urgent. I must inquire about it.”

“Anton Antonovitch!” Andrey Filippovitch’s voice sounded, summoning him politely, “his Excellency has been asking for you.”

“This minute, I’m coming this minute, Andrey Filippovitch.” And Anton Antonovitch, taking a pile of papers, flew off first to Andrey Filippovitch and then into his Excellency’s room.

“Then what is the meaning of it?” thought Mr. Golyadkin. “Is there some sort of game going on? So the wind’s in that quarter now ... That’s just as well; so things have taken a much pleasanter turn,” our hero said to himself, rubbing his hands, and so delighted that he scarcely knew where he was. “So our position is an ordinary thing. So it turns out to be all nonsense, it comes to nothing at all. No one has done anything really, and they are not budging, the rascals, they are sitting busy over their work; that’s splendid, splendid! I like the good-natured fellow, I’ve always liked him, and I’m always ready to respect him ... though it must be said one doesn’t know what to think; this Anton Antonovitch ... I’m afraid to trust him; his hair’s grey, and he’s getting shaky. It’s an immense and glorious thing that his Excellency said nothing, and let it pass! It’s a good thing! I approve! Only why does Andrey Filippovitch interfere with his grins? What’s he got to do with it? The old rogue. Always on my track, always, like a black cat, on the watch to run across a man’s path, always thwarting and annoying a man, always annoying and thwarting a man ...”

Mr. Golyadkin looked around him again, and again his hopes revived. Yet he felt that he was troubled by one remote idea, an unpleasant idea. It even occurred to him that he might try somehow to make up to the clerks, to be the first in the field even (perhaps when leaving the office or going up to them as though about his work), to drop a hint in the course of conversation, saying, "This is how it is, what a striking likeness, gentlemen, a strange circumstance, a burlesque farce!" - that is, treat it all lightly, and in this way sound the depth of the danger. "Devils breed in still waters," our hero concluded inwardly.

Mr. Golyadkin, however, only contemplated this; he thought better of it in time. He realized that this would be going too far. "That's your temperament," he said to himself, tapping himself lightly on the forehead; "as soon as you gain anything you are delighted! You're a simple soul! No, you and I had better be patient, Yakov Petrovitch; let us wait and be patient!"

Nevertheless, as we have mentioned already, Mr. Golyadkin was buoyed up with the most confident hopes, feeling as though he had risen from the dead.

"No matter," he thought, "it's as though a hundred tons had been lifted off my chest! Here is a circumstance, to be sure! The box has been opened by the lid. Krylov is right, a clever chap, a rogue, that Krylov, and a great fable-writer! And as for him, let him work in the office, and good luck to him so long as he doesn't meddle or interfere with any one; let him work in the office - I consent and approve!"

Meanwhile the hours were passing, flying by, and before he noticed the time it struck four. The office was closed. Andrey Filippovitch took his hat, and all followed his example in due course. Mr. Golyadkin dawdled a little on purpose, long enough to be the last to go out when all the others had gone their several ways. Going out from the street he felt as though he were in Paradise, so that he even felt inclined to go a longer way round, and to walk along the Nevsky Prospect.

"To be sure this is destiny," thought our hero, "this unexpected turn in affairs. And the weather's more cheerful, and the frost and the little sledges. And the frost suits the Russian, the Russian gets on capitally with the frost. I like the Russian. And the dear little snow, and the first few flakes in autumn; the sportsman would say, 'It would be nice to go shooting hares in the first snow.' Well, there, it doesn't matter."

This was how Mr. Golyadkin's enthusiasm found expression. Yet something was fretting in his brain, not exactly melancholy, but at times he had such a gnawing at his heart that he did not know how to find relief.

"Let us wait for the day, though, and then we shall rejoice. And, after all, you know, what does it matter? Come, let us think it over, let us look at it. Come, let us consider it, my young friend, let us consider it. Why, a man's exactly like you in the first place, absolutely the same. Well, what is there in that? If there is such a man, why should I weep over it? What is it to me? I stand aside, I whistle to myself, and that's all! That's what I laid myself open to, and that's all about it! Let him work in the office! Well, it's strange and marvellous, they say, that the Siamese twins ... But why bring in Siamese twins? They are twins, of course, but even great men, you know, sometimes look queer

creatures. In fact, we know from history that the famous Suvorov used to crow like a cock ... But there, he did all that with political motives; and he was a great general ...but what are generals, after all? But I keep myself to myself, that's all, and I don't care about any one else, and, secure in my innocence, I scorn my enemies. I am not one to intrigue, and I'm proud of it. Gentle, straightforward, neat and nice, meek and mild."

All at once Mr. Golyadkin broke off, his tongue failed him and he began trembling like a leaf; he even closed his eyes for a minute. Hoping, however, that the object of his terror was only an illusion, he opened his eyes at last and stole a timid glance to the right. No, it was not an illusion! ... His acquaintance of that morning was tripping along by his side, smiling, peeping into his face, and apparently seeking an opportunity to begin a conversation with him. The conversation was not begun, however. They both walked like this for about fifty paces. All Mr. Golyadkin's efforts were concentrated on muffling himself up, hiding himself in his coat and pulling his hat down as far as possible over his eyes. To complete his mortification, his companion's coat and hat looked as though they had been taken off Mr. Golyadkin himself.

"Sir," our hero articulated at last, trying to speak almost in a whisper, and not looking at his companion, "we are going different ways, I believe ... I am convinced of it, in fact," he said, after a pause. "I am convinced, indeed, that you quite understand me," he added, rather severely, in conclusion.

"I could have wished ..." his companion pronounced at last, "I could have wished ... no doubt you will be magnanimous and pardon me ... I don't know to whom to address myself here ... my circumstances ... I trust you will pardon my intrusiveness. I fancied, indeed, that, moved by compassion, you showed some interest in me this morning. On my side, I felt drawn to you from the first moment. I ..."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin inwardly wished that his companion might sink into the earth.

"If I might venture to hope that you would accord me an indulgent hearing, Yakov Petrovitch ..."

"We - here, we - we ... you had better come home with me," answered Mr. Golyadkin. "We will cross now to the other side of the Nevsky Prospect, it will be more convenient for us there, and then by the little back street ... we'd better go by the back street."

"Very well, by all means let us go by the back street," our hero's meek companion responded timidly, suggesting by the tone of his reply that it was not for him to choose, and that in his position he was quite prepared to accept the back street. As for Mr. Golyadkin, he was utterly unable to grasp what was happening to him. He could not believe in himself. He could not get over his amazement.

Chapter 8

He recovered himself a little on the staircase as he went up to his flat.

“Oh, I’m a sheep’s head,” he railed at himself inwardly. “Where am I taking him? I am thrusting my head into the noose. What will Petrushka think, seeing us together? What will the scoundrel dare to imagine now? He’s suspicious ...”

But it was too late to regret it. Mr. Golyadkin knocked at the door; it was opened, and Petrushka began taking off the visitor’s coat as well as his master’s. Mr. Golyadkin looked askance, just stealing a glance at Petrushka, trying to read his countenance and divine what he was thinking. But to his intense astonishment he saw that his servant showed no trace of surprise, but seemed, on the contrary, to be expected something of the sort. Of course he did not look morose, as it was; he kept his eyes turned away and looked as though he would like to fall upon somebody.

“Hasn’t somebody bewitched them all today?” thought our hero. “Some devil must have got round them. There certainly must be something peculiar in the whole lot of them today. Damn it all, what a worry it is!”

Such were Mr. Golyadkin’s thoughts and reflections as he led his visitor into his room and politely asked him to sit down. The visitor appeared to be greatly embarrassed, he was very shy, and humbly watched every movement his host made, caught his glance, and seemed trying to divine his thoughts from them. There was a downtrodden, crushed, scared look about all his gestures, so that - if the comparison may be allowed - he was at that moment rather like the man who, having lost his clothes, is dressed up in somebody else’s: the sleeves work up to the elbows, the waist is almost up to his neck, and he keeps every minute pulling down the short waistcoat; he wriggles sideways and turns away, tries to hide himself, or peeps into every face, and listens whether people are talking of his position, laughing at him or putting him to shame - and he is crimson with shame and overwhelmed with confusion and wounded vanity... . Mr. Golyadkin put down his hat in the window, and carelessly sent it flying to the floor. The visitor darted at once to pick it up, brushed off the dust, and carefully put it back, while he laid his own on the floor near a chair, on the edge of which he meekly seated himself. This little circumstance did something to open Mr. Golyadkin’s eyes; he realized that the man was in great straits, and so did not put himself out for his visitor as he had done at first, very properly leaving all that to the man himself. The visitor, for his part, did nothing either; whether he was shy, a little ashamed, or from politeness was waiting for his host to begin is not certain and would be difficult to determine. At that moment Petrushka came in; he stood still in the doorway, and fixed his eyes in the direction furthest from where the visitor and his master were seated.

“Shall I bring in dinner for two?” he said carelessly, in a husky voice.

“I - I don’t know ... you ... yes, bring dinner for two, my boy.”

Petrushka went out. Mr. Golyadkin glanced at his visitor. The latter crimsoned to his ears. Mr. Golyadkin was a kind-hearted man, and so in the kindness of his heart he at once elaborated a theory.

“The fellow’s hard up,” he thought. “Yes, and in his situation only one day. Most likely he’s suffered in his time. Maybe his good clothes are all that he has, and nothing to get him a dinner. Ah, poor fellow, how crushed he seems! But no matter; in a way it’s better so... . Excuse me,” began Mr. Golyadkin, “allow me to ask what I may call you.”

“I ... I ... I’m Yakov Petrovitch,” his visitor almost whispered, as though conscience-stricken and ashamed, as though apologizing for being called Yakov Petrovitch too.

“Yakov Petrovitch!” repeated our visitor, unable to conceal his confusion.

“Yes, just so... . The same name as yours,” responded the meek visitor, venturing to smile and speak a little jocosely. But at once he drew back, assuming a very serious air, though a little disconcerted, noticing that his host was in no joking mood.

“You ... allow me to ask you, to what am I indebted for the honour ...?”

“Knowing your generosity and your benevolence,” interposed the visitor in a rapid but timid voice, half rising from his seat, “I have ventured to appeal to you and to beg for your ... acquaintance and protection ...” he concluded, choosing his phrases with difficulty and trying to select words not too flattering or servile, that he might not compromise his dignity and not so bold as to suggest an unseemly equality. In fact, one may say the visitor behaved like a gentlemanly beggar with a darned waistcoat, with an honourable passport in his pocket, who has not yet learnt by practice to hold out his hand properly for alms.

“You perplex me,” answered Mr. Golyadkin, gazing round at himself, his walls and his visitor. “In what could I ... that is, I mean, in what way could I be of service to you?”

“I felt drawn to you, Yakov Petrovitch, at first sight, and, graciously forgive me, I built my hopes Yakov Petrovitch. I ... I’m in a desperate plight here, Yakov Petrovitch; I’m poor, I’ve had a great deal of trouble, Yakov Petrovitch, and have only recently come here. Learning that you, with your innate goodness and excellence of heart, are of the same name ...”

Mr. Golyadkin frowned.

“Of the same name as myself and a native of the same district, I made up my mind to appeal to you, and to make known to you my difficult position.”

“Very good, very good; I really don’t know what to say,” Mr. Golyadkin responded in an embarrassed voice. “We’ll have a talk after dinner ...”

The visitor bowed; dinner was brought in. Petrushka laid the table, and Mr. Golyadkin and his visitor proceeded to partake of it. The dinner did not last long, for they were both in a hurry, the host because he felt ill at ease, and was, besides, ashamed that the dinner was a poor one - he was partly ashamed because he wanted to give

the visitor a good meal, and partly because he wanted to show him he did not live like a beggar. The visitor, on his side too, was in terrible confusion and extremely embarrassed. When he had finished the piece of bread he had taken, he was afraid to put out his hand to take another piece, was ashamed to help himself to the best morsels, and was continually assuring his host that he was not at all hungry, that the dinner was excellent, that he was absolutely satisfied with it, and should not forget it to his dying day. When the meal was over Mr. Golyadkin lighted his pipe, and offered a second, which was brought in, to his visitor. They sat facing each other, and the visitor began telling his adventures.

Mr. Golyadkin junior's story lasted for three or four hours. His history was, however, composed of the most trivial and wretched, if one may say so, incidents. It dealt with details of service in some lawcourt in the provinces, of prosecutors and presidents, of some department intrigues, of the depravity of some registration clerks, of an inspector, of the sudden appointment of a new chief in the department, of how the second Mr. Golyadkin had suffered quite without any fault on his part; of his aged aunt, Pelegea Semyonovna; of how, through various intrigues on the part of his enemies, he had lost his situation, and had come to Petersburg on foot; of the harassing and wretched time he had spent here in Petersburg, how for a long time he had tried in vain to get a job, had spent all his money, had nothing left, had been living almost in the street, lived on a crust of bread and washed it down with his tears, slept on the bare floor, and finally how some good Christian had exerted himself on his behalf, had given him an introduction, and had nobly got him into a new berth. Mr. Golyadkin's visitor shed tears as he told his story, and wiped his eyes with a blue-check handkerchief that looked like oilcloth. He ended by making a clean breast of it to Mr. Golyadkin, and confessing that he was not only for the time without means of subsistence and money for a decent lodging, but had not even the wherewithal to fit himself out properly, so that he had, he said in conclusion, been able to get together enough for a pair of wretched boots, and that he had had to hire a uniform for the time.

Mr. Golyadkin was melted; he was genuinely touched. Even though his visitor's story was the paltriest story, every word of it was like heavenly manna to his heart. The fact was that Mr. Golyadkin was beginning to forget his last misgivings, to surrender his soul to freedom and rejoicing, and at last mentally dubbed himself a fool. It was all so natural! And what a thing to break his heart over, what a thing to be so distressed about! To be sure there was, there really was, one ticklish circumstance - but, after all, it was not a misfortune; it could be no disgrace to a man, it could not cast a slur on his honour or ruin his career, if he were innocent, since nature herself was mixed up in it. Moreover, the visitor begged for protection, wept, railed at destiny, seemed such an artless, pitiful, insignificant person, with no craft or malice about him, and he seemed now to be ashamed himself, though perhaps on different grounds, of the strange resemblance of his countenance with that of Mr. Golyadkin's. his behaviour was absolutely unimpeachable; his one desire was to please his host, and he looked as a man looks who feels conscience-stricken and to blame in regard to some one else. If

any doubtful point were touched upon, for instance, the visitor at once agreed with Mr. Golyadkin's opinion. If by mistake he advanced an opinion in opposition to Mr. Golyadkin's and afterwards noticed that he had made a slip, he immediately corrected his mistake, explained himself and made it clear that he meant the same thing as his host, that he thought as he did and took the same view of everything as he did. In fact, the visitor made every possible effort to "make up to" Mr. Golyadkin, so that the latter made up his mind at last that his visitor must be a very amiable person in every way. Meanwhile, tea was brought in; it was nearly nine o'clock. Mr. Golyadkin felt in a very good-humour, grew lively and skittish, let himself go a little, and finally plunged into a most animated and interesting conversation with his visitor. In his festive moments Mr. Golyadkin was fond of telling interesting anecdotes. So now he told the visitor a great deal about Petersburg, about its entertainments and attractions, about the theatre, the clubs, about Brulov's picture, and about the two Englishmen who came from England to Petersburg on purpose to look at the iron railing of the Summer Garden, and returned at once when they had seen it; about the office; about Olsufy Ivanovitch and Andrey Filippovitch; about the way that Russia was progressing, was hour by hour progressing towards a state of perfection, so that

"Arts and letters flourish here today";

about an anecdote he had lately read in the Northern Bee concerning a boa-constrictor in India of immense strength; about Baron Brambeus, and so on. In short, Mr. Golyadkin was quite happy, first, because his mind was at rest, secondly, because, so far from being afraid of his enemies, he was quite prepared now to challenge them all to mortal combat; thirdly, because he was now in the role of patron and was doing a good deed. Yet he was conscious at the bottom of his heart that he was not perfectly happy, that there was still a hidden worm gnawing at his heart, though it was only a tiny one. He was extremely worried by the thought of the previous evening at Olsufy Ivanovitch's. He would have given a great deal now for nothing to have happened of what took place then.

"It's no matter, though!" our hero decided at last, and he firmly resolved in his heart to behave well in future and never to be guilty of such pranks again. As Mr. Golyadkin was now completely worked up, and had suddenly become almost blissful, the fancy took him to have a jovial time. Rum was brought in by Petrushka, and punch was prepared. The visitor and his host drained a glass each, and then a second. The visitor appeared even more amiable than before, and gave more than one proof of his frankness and charming character; he entered keenly into Mr. Golyadkin's joy, seemed only to rejoice in his rejoicing, and to look upon him as his one and only benefactor. Taking up a pen and a sheet of paper, he asked Golyadkin not to look at what he was going to write, but afterwards showed his host what he had written. It turned out to be a verse of four lines, written with a good deal of feeling, in excellent language and handwriting, and evidently was the composition of the amiable visitor himself. the lines were as follows -

"If thou forget me,

I shall not forget thee;
Though all things may be,

Do not thou forget me.” With tears in his eyes Mr. Golyadkin embraced his companion, and, completely overcome by his feelings, he began to initiate his friend into some of his own secrets and private affairs, Andrey Filippovitch and Klara Olsufyevna being prominent in his remarks.

“Well, you may be sure we shall get on together, Yakov Petrovitch,” said our hero to his visitor. “You and I will take to each other like fish to the water, Yakov Petrovitch; we shall be like brothers; we’ll be cunning, my dear fellow, we’ll work together; we’ll get up an intrigue, too, to pay them out. To pay them out we’ll get up an intrigue too. And don’t you trust any of them. I know you, Yakov Petrovitch, and I understand your character; you’ll tell them everything straight out, you know, you’re a guileless soul! You must hold aloof from them all, my boy.”

His companion entirely agreed with him, thanked Mr. Golyadkin, and he, too, grew tearful at last.

“Do you know, Yasha,” Mr. Golyadkin went on in a shaking voice, weak with emotion, “you must stay with me for a time, or stay with me for ever. We shall get on together. What do you say, brother, eh? And don’t you worry or repine because there’s such a strange circumstance about us now; it’s a sin to repine, brother; it’s nature! And Mother Nature is liberal with her gifts, so there, brother Yasha! It’s from love for you that I speak, from brotherly love. But we’ll be cunning, Yasha; we’ll lay a mine, too, and we’ll make them laugh the other side of their mouths.”

They reached their third and fourth glasses of punch at last, and then Mr. Golyadkin began to be aware of two sensations: the one that he was extraordinarily happy, and the other that he could not stand on his legs. The guest was, of course, invited to stay the night. A bed was somehow made up on two chairs. Mr. Golyadkin junior declared that under a friend’s roof the bare floor would be a soft bed, that for his part he could sleep anywhere, humbly and gratefully; that he was in paradise now, that he had been through a great deal of trouble and grief in his time; he had seen ups and downs, had all sorts of things to put up with, and - who could tell what the future would be? - maybe he would have still more to put up with. Mr. Golyadkin senior protested against this, and began to maintain that one must put one’s faith in God. His guest entirely agreed, observing that there was, of course, no one like God. At this point Mr. Golyadkin senior observed that in certain respects the Turks were right in calling upon God even in their sleep. Then, though disagreeing with certain learned professors in the slanders they had promulgated against the Turkish prophet Mahomet and recognizing him as a great politician in his own line, Mr. Golyadkin passed to a very interesting description of an Algerian barber’s shop which he had read in a book of miscellanies. The friends laughed heartily at the simplicity of the Turks, but paid due tribute to their fanaticism, which they ascribed to opium... . At last the guest began undressing, and thinking in the kindness of his heart that very likely he hadn’t even a decent shirt, Mr. Golyadkin went behind the screen to avoid embarrassing a

man who had suffered enough, and partly to reassure himself as far as possible about Petrushka, to sound him, to cheer him up if he could, to be kind to the fellow so that every one might be happy and that everything might be pleasant all round. It must be remarked that Petrushka still rather bothered Mr. Golyadkin.

“You go to bed now, Pyotr,” Mr. Golyadkin said blandly, going into his servant’s domain; “you go to bed now and wake me up and eight o’clock. Do you understand Petrushka?”

Mr. Golyadkin spoke with exceptional softness and friendliness. But Petrushka remained mute. He was busy making his bed, and did not even turn round to face his master, which he ought to have done out of simple respect.

“Did you hear what I said, Pyotr?” Mr. Golyadkin went on. “You go to bed now and wake me tomorrow at eight o’clock; do you understand?”

“Why, I know that; what’s the use of telling me?” Petrushka grumbled to himself.

“Well, that’s right, Petrushka; I only mention it that you might be happy and at rest. Now we are all happy, so I want you, too, to be happy and satisfied. And now I wish you good-night. Sleep, Petrushka, sleep; we all have to work ... Don’t think anything amiss, my man ...” Mr. Golyadkin began, but stopped short. “Isn’t this too much?” he thought. “Haven’t I gone too far? That’s how it always is; I always overdo things.”

Our hero felt much dissatisfied with himself as he left Petrushka. He was, besides, rather wounded by Petrushka’s grumpiness and rudeness. “One jests with the rascal, his master does him too much honour, and the rascal does not feel it,” thought Mr. Golyadkin. “But there, that’s the nasty way of all that sort of people!”

Somewhat shaken, he went back to his room, and, seeing that his guest had settled himself for the night, he sat down on the edge of his bed for a minute.

“Come, you must own, Yasha,” he began in a whisper, wagging his head, “you’re a rascal, you know; what a way you’ve treated me! You see, you’ve got my name, do you know that?” he went on, jesting in a rather familiar way with his visitor. At last, saying a friendly good-night to him, Mr. Golyadkin began preparing for the night. The visitor meanwhile began snoring. Mr. Golyadkin in his turn got into bed, laughing and whispering to himself: “You are drunk today, my dear fellow, Yakov Petrovitch, you rascal, you old Golyadkin - what a surname to have! Why, what are you so pleased about? You’ll be crying tomorrow, you know, you sniveller; what am I to do with you?”

At this point a rather strange sensation pervaded Mr. Golyadkin’s whole being, something like doubt or remorse.

“I’ve been over-excited and let myself go,” he thought; “now I’ve a noise in my head and I’m drunk; I couldn’t restrain myself, ass that I am! and I’ve been babbling bushels of nonsense, and, like a rascal, I was planning to be so sly. Of course, to forgive and forget injuries is the height of virtue; but it’s a bad thing, nevertheless! Yes, that is so!”

At this point Mr. Golyadkin got up, took a candle and went on tiptoe to look once more at his sleeping guest. He stood over him for a long time meditating deeply.

“An unpleasant picture! A burlesque, a regular burlesque, and that’s the fact of the matter!”

At last Mr. Golyadkin settled down finally. There was a humming, a buzzing, a ringing in his head. He grew more and more drowsy ... tried to think about something very important, some delicate question - but could not. Sleep descended upon his devoted head, and he slept as people generally do sleep who are not used to drinking and have consumed five glasses of punch at some festive gathering.

Chapter 9

Mr. Golyadkin woke up next morning at eight o'clock as usual; as soon as he was awake he recalled all the adventures of the previous evening - and frowned as he recalled them. "Ugh, I did play the fool last night!" he thought, sitting up and glancing at his visitor's bed. But what was his amazement when he saw in the room no trace, not only of his visitor, but even of the bed on which his visitor had slept!

"What does it mean?" Mr. Golyadkin almost shrieked. "What can it be? What does this new circumstance portend?"

While Mr. Golyadkin was gazing in open-mouthed bewilderment at the empty spot, the door creaked and Petrushka came in with the tea-tray.

"Where, where?" our hero said in a voice hardly audible, pointing to the place which had been occupied by his visitor the night before.

At first Petrushka made no answer and did not look at his master, but fixed his eyes upon the corner to the right till Mr. Golyadkin felt compelled to look into that corner too. After a brief silence, however, Petrushka in a rude and husky voice answered that his master was not at home.

"You idiot; why I'm your master, Petrushka!" said Mr. Golyadkin in a breaking voice, looking open-eyed at his servant.

Petrushka made no reply, but he gave Mr. Golyadkin such a look that the latter crimsoned to his ears - looked at him with an insulting reproachfulness almost equivalent to open abuse. Mr. Golyadkin was utterly flabbergasted, as the saying is. At last Petrushka explained that the 'other one' had gone away an hour and a half ago, and would not wait. His answer, of course, sounded truthful and probable; it was evident that Petrushka was not lying; that his insulting look and the phrase the 'other one' employed by him were only the result of the disgusting circumstance with which he was already familiar, but still he understood, though dimly, that something was wrong, and that destiny had some other surprise, not altogether a pleasant one, in store for him.

"All right, we shall see," he thought to himself. "We shall see in due time; we'll get to the bottom of all this ... Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us!" he moaned in conclusion, in quite a different voice. "And why did I invite him to what end did I do all that? Why, I am thrusting my head into their thievish noose myself; I am tying the noose with my own hands. Ach, you fool, you fool! You can't resist babbling like some silly boy, some chancery clerk, some wretched creature of no class at all, some rag, some rotten dishcloth; you're a gossip, an old woman! ... Oh, all ye saints! And he wrote verses, the rogue, and expressed his love for me! How could ... How can I show him the door

in a polite way if he turns up again, the rogue? Of course, there are all sorts of ways and means. I can say this is how it is, my salary being so limited ... Or scare him off in some way saying that, taking this and that into consideration, I am forced to make clear ... that he would have to pay an equal share of the cost of board and lodging, and pay the money in advance. H'm! No, damn it all, no! That would be degrading to me. It's not quite delicate! Couldn't I do something like this: suggest to Petrushka that he should annoy him in some way, should be disrespectful, be rude, and get rid of him in that way. Set them at each other in some way... . No, damn it all, no! It's dangerous and again, if one looks at it from that point of view - it's not the right thing at all! Not the right thing at all! But there, even if he doesn't come, it will be a bad look-out, too! I babbled to him last night! ... Ach, it's a bad look-out, a bad look-out! Ach, we're in a bad way! Oh, I'm a cursed fool, a cursed fool! you can't train yourself to behave as you ought, you can't conduct yourself reasonably. Well, what if he comes and refuses. And God grant he may come! I should be very glad if he did come... .”

Such were Mr. Golyadkin's reflections as he swallowed his tea and glanced continually at the clock on the wall.

“It's a quarter to nine; it's time to go. And something will happen! What will there be there? I should like to know what exactly lies hidden in this - that is, the object, the aim, and the various intrigues. It would be a good thing to find out what all these people are plotting, and what will be their first step... .”

Mr. Golyadkin could endure it no longer. He threw down his unfinished pipe, dressed and set off for the office, anxious to ward off the danger if possible and to reassure himself about everything by his presence in person. There was danger: he knew himself that there was danger.

“We ... will get to the bottom of it,” said Mr. Golyadkin, taking off his coat and goloshes in the entry. “We'll go into all these matters immediately.”

Making up his mind to act in this way, our hero put himself to rights, assumed a correct and official air, and was just about to pass into the adjoining room, when suddenly, in the very doorway, he jostled against his acquaintance of the day before, his friend and companion. Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed not to notice Mr. Golyadkin senior, though they met almost nose to nose. Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed to be busy, to be hastening somewhere, was breathless; he had such an official, such a business-like air that it seemed as though any one could read his face: ‘Entrusted with a special commission.’ ...

“Oh, it's you, Yakov Petrovitch!” said our hero, clutching the hand of his last night's visitor.

“Presently, presently, excuse me, tell me about it afterwards,” cried Mr. Golyadkin junior, dashing on.

“But, excuse me; I believe, Yakov Petrovitch, you wanted ...”

“What is it? Make haste and explain.”

At this point his visitor of the previous night halted as though reluctantly and against his will, and put his ear almost to Mr. Golyadkin's nose.

"I must tell you, Yakov Petrovitch, that I am surprised at your behaviour ... behaviour which seemingly I could not have expected at all."

"There's a proper form for everything. Go to his Excellency's secretary and then appeal in the proper way to the directors of the office. Have you got your petition?"

"You ... I really don't know Yakov Petrovitch! You simply amaze me, Yakov Petrovitch! You certainly don't recognize me or, with characteristic gaiety, you are joking."

"Oh, it's you," said Mr. Golyadkin junior, seeming only now to recognize Mr. Golyadkin senior. "So, it's you? Well, have you had a good night?"

Then smiling a little - a formal and conventional smile, by no means the sort of smile that was befitting (for, after all, he owed a debt of gratitude to Mr. Golyadkin senior) - smiling this formal and conventional smile, Mr. Golyadkin junior added that he was very glad Mr. Golyadkin senior had had a good night; then he made a slight bow and shuffling a little with his feet, looked to the right, and to the left, then dropped his eyes to the floor, made for the side door and muttering in a hurried whisper that he had a special commission, dashed into the next room. He vanished like an apparition.

"Well, this is queer!" muttered our hero, petrified for a moment; "this is queer! This is a strange circumstance."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin felt as though he had pins and needles all over him.

"However," he went on to himself, as he made his way to his department, "however, I spoke long ago of such a circumstance: I had a presentiment long ago that he had a special commission. Why, I said yesterday that the man must certainly be employed on some special commission."

"Have you finished copying out the document you had yesterday, Yakov Petrovitch," Anton Antonovitch Syetotchkin asked Mr. Golyadkin, when the latter was seated beside him. "Have you got it here?"

"Yes," murmured Mr. Golyadkin, looking at the head clerk with a rather helpless glance.

"That's right! I mention it because Andrey Filippovitch has asked for it twice. I'll be bound his Excellency wants it... ."

"Yes, it's finished..."

"Well, that's all right then."

"I believe, Anton Antonovitch, I have always performed my duties properly. I'm always scrupulous over the work entrusted to me by my superiors, and I attend to it conscientiously."

"Yes. Why, what do you mean by that?"

"I mean nothing, Anton Antonovitch. I only want to explain, Anton Antonovitch, that I ... that is, I meant to express that spite and malice sometimes spare no person whatever in their search for their daily and revolting food... ."

"Excuse me, I don't quite understand you. What person are you alluding to?"

"I only meant to say, Anton Antonovitch, that I'm seeking the straight path and I scorn going to work in a roundabout way. That I am not one to intrigue, and that, if I may be allowed to say so, I may very justly be proud of it... ."

“Yes. That’s quite so, and to the best of my comprehension I thoroughly endorse your remarks; but allow me to tell you, Yakov Petrovitch, that personalities are not quite permissible in good society, that I, for instance, am ready to put up with anything behind my back - for every one’s abused behind his back - but to my face, if you please, my good sir, I don’t allow any one to be impudent. I’ve grown grey in the government service, sir, and I don’t allow any one to be impudent to me in my old age... .”

“No, Anton Antonovitch ... you see, Anton Antonovitch ... you haven’t quite caught my meaning. To be sure, Anton Antonovitch, I for my part could only thing it an honour ...”

“Well, then, I ask pardon too. We’ve been brought up in the old school. And it’s too late for us to learn your new-fangled ways. I believe we’ve had understanding enough for the service of our country up to now. As you are aware, sir, I have an order of merit for twenty-five years’ irreproachable service... .”

“I feel it, Anton Antonovitch, on my side, too, I quite feel all that. But I didn’t mean that, I am speaking of a mask, Anton Antonovitch... .”

“A mask?”

“Again you ... I am apprehensive that you are taking this, too, in a wrong sense, that is the sense of my remarks, as you say yourself, Anton Antonovitch. I am simply enunciating a theory, that is, I am advancing the idea, Anton Antonovitch, that persons who wear a mask have become far from uncommon, and that nowadays it is hard to recognize the man beneath the mask ...”

“Well, do you know, it’s not altogether so hard. Sometimes it’s fairly easy. Sometimes one need not go far to look for it.”

“No, you know, Anton Antonovitch, I say, I say of myself, that I, for instance, do not put on a mask except when there is need of it; that is simply at carnival time or at some festive gathering, speaking in the literal sense; but that I do not wear a mask before people in daily life, speaking in another less obvious sense. That’s what I meant to say, Anton Antonovitch.”

“Oh, well, but we must drop all this, for now I’ve no time to spare,” said Anton Antonovitch, getting up from his seat and collecting some papers in order to report upon them to his Excellency. “Your business, as I imagine, will be explained in due course without delay. You will see for yourself whom you should censure and whom you should blame, and thereupon I humbly beg you to spare me from further explanations and arguments which interfere with my work... .”

“No, Anton Antonovitch,” Mr. Golyadkin, turning a little pale, began to the retreating figure of Anton Antonovitch; “I had no intention of the kind.”

“What does it mean?” our hero went on to himself, when he was left alone; “what quarter is the wind in now, and what is one to make of this new turn?”

At the very time when our bewildered and half-crushed hero was setting himself to solve this new question, there was a sound of movement and bustle in the next room, the door opened and Andrey Filippovitch, who had been on some business in his Excellency’s study, appeared breathless in the doorway, and called to Mr. Golyadkin.

Knowing what was wanted and anxious not to keep Andrey Filippovitch waiting, Mr. Golyadkin leapt up from his seat, and as was fitting immediately bustled for all he was worth getting the manuscript that was required finally neat and ready and preparing to follow the manuscript and Andrey Filippovitch into his Excellency's study. Suddenly, almost slipping under the arm of Andrey Filippovitch, who was standing right in the doorway, Mr. Golyadkin junior darted into the room in breathless haste and bustle, with a solemn and resolutely official air; he bounded straight up to Mr. Golyadkin senior, who was expecting nothing less than such a visitation.

"The papers, Yakov Petrovitch, the papers ... his Excellency has been pleased to ask for them; have you got them ready?" Mr. Golyadkin senior's friend whispered in a hurried undertone. "Andrey Filippovitch is waiting for you... ."

"I know he is waiting without your telling me," said Mr. Golyadkin senior, also in a hurried whisper.

"No, Yakov Petrovitch, I did not mean that; I did not mean that at all, Yakov Petrovitch, not that at all; I sympathise with you, Yakov Petrovitch, and am humbly moved by genuine interest."

"Which I most humbly beg you to spare me. Allow me, allow me ..."

"You'll put it in an envelope, of course, Yakov Petrovitch, and you'll put a mark in the third page; allow me, Yakov Petrovitch... ."

"You allow me, if you please ..."

"But, I say, there's a blot here, Yakov Petrovitch; did you know there was a blot here? ..."

At this point Andrey Filippovitch called Yakov Petrovitch a second time.

"One moment, Andrey Filippovitch, I'm only just ... Do you understand Russian, sir?"

"It would be best to take it out with a penknife, Yakov Petrovitch. You had better rely upon me; you had better not touch it yourself, Yakov Petrovitch, rely upon me - I'll do it with a penknife ..."

Andrey Filippovitch called Mr. Golyadkin a third time.

"But, allow me, where's the blot? I don't think there's a blot at all."

"It's a huge blot. Here it is! Here, allow me, I saw it here ... you just let me, Yakov Petrovitch, I'll just touch it with the penknife, I'll scratch it out with the penknife from true-hearted sympathy. There, life this; see, it's done."

At this point, and quite unexpectedly, Mr. Golyadkin junior overpowered Mr. Golyadkin senior in the momentary struggle that had arisen between them, and so, entirely against the latter's will, suddenly, without rhyme or reason, took possession of the document required by the authorities, and instead of scratching it out with the penknife in true-hearted sympathy as he had perfidiously promised Mr. Golyadkin senior, hurriedly rolled it up, put it under his arm, in two bounds was beside Andrey Filippovitch, who noticed none of his manoeuvres, and flew with the latter into the Director's room. Mr. Golyadkin remained as though rivetted to the spot, holding the

penknife in his hand and apparently on the point of scratching something out with it ...

Our hero could not yet grasp his new position. He could not at once recover himself. He felt the blow, but thought that it was somehow all right. In terrible, indescribable misery he tore himself at last from his seat, rushed straight to the Director's room, imploring heaven on the way that it would be all right ... In the furthest most room, which adjoined the Director's private room, he ran straight upon Andrey Filippovitch in company with his namesake. Both of them moved aside. Andrey Filippovitch was talking with a good-humoured smile, Mr. Golyadkin senior's namesake was smiling, too, fawning upon Andrey Filippovitch and tripping about at a respectful distance from him, and was whispering something in his ear with a delighted air, to which Andrey Filippovitch assented with a gracious nod. In a flash our hero grasped the whole position. The fact was that the work had surpassed his Excellency's expectations (as he learnt afterwards) and was finished punctually by the time it was needed. He Excellency was extremely pleased with it. It was even said that his excellency had said "Thank you" to Mr. Golyadkin junior, had thanked him warmly, had said that he would remember it on occasion and would never forget it... . Of course, the first thing Mr. Golyadkin did was to protest, to protest with the utmost vigour of which he was capable. Pale as death, and hardly knowing what he was doing, he rushed up to Andrey Filippovitch. But the latter, hearing that Mr. Golyadkin's business was a private matter, refused to listen, observing firmly that he had not a minute to spare for his own affairs.

The curtness of his tone and his refusal struck Mr. Golyadkin.

"I had better, perhaps, try in another quarter ... I had better appeal to Anton Antonovitch."

But to his disappointment Anton Antonovitch was not available either: he, too, was busy over something somewhere!

"Ah, it was not without design that he asked me to spare him explanation and discussion!" thought our hero. "This was what the old rogue had in his mind! In that case I shall simply make bold to approach his Excellency."

Still pale and feeling that his brain was in a complete ferment, greatly perplexed as to what he ought to decide to do, Mr. Golyadkin sat down on the edge of the chair. "It would have been a great deal better if it had all been just nothing," he kept incessantly thinking to himself. "Indeed, such a mysterious business was utterly improbable. In the first place, it was nonsense, and secondly it could not happen. Most likely it was imagination, or something else happened, and not what really did happen; or perhaps I went myself ... and somehow mistook myself for some one else ... in short, it's an utterly impossible thing."

Mr. Golyadkin had no sooner made up his mind that it was an utterly impossible thing that Mr. Golyadkin junior flew into the room with papers in both hands as well as under his arm. Saying two or three words about business to Andrey Filippovitch as he passed, exchanging remarks with one, polite greetings with another, and familiarities

with a third, Mr. Golyadkin junior, having apparently no time to waste, seemed on the point of leaving the room, but luckily for Mr. Golyadkin senior he stopped near the door to say a few words as he passed two or three clerks who were at work there. Mr. Golyadkin senior rushed straight at him. As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior saw Mr. Golyadkin senior's movement he began immediately, with great uneasiness, looking about him to make his escape. but our hero already held his last night's guest by the sleeve. The clerks surrounding the two titular councillors stepped back and waited with curiosity to see what would happen. The senior titular councillor realized that public opinion was not on his side, he realized that they were intriguing against him: which made it all the more necessary to hold his own now. The moment was a decisive one.

"Well!" said Mr. Golyadkin junior, looking rather impatiently at Mr. Golyadkin senior.

The latter could hardly breathe.

"I don't know," he began, "in what way to make plain to you the strangeness of your behaviour, sir."

"Well. Go on." At this point Mr. Golyadkin junior turned round and winked to the clerks standing round, as though to give them to understand that a comedy was beginning.

"The impudence and shamelessness of your manners with me, sir, in the present case, unmasks your true character ... better than any words of mine could do. Don't rely on your trickery: it is worthless... ."

"Come, Yakov Petrovitch, tell me now, how did you spend the night?" answered Mr. Golyadkin junior, looking Mr. Golyadkin senior straight in the eye.

"You forget yourself, sir," said the titular councillor, completely flabbergasted, hardly able to feel the floor under his feet. "I trust that you will take a different tone... ."

"My darling!" exclaimed Mr. Golyadkin junior, making a rather unseemly grimace at Mr. Golyadkin senior, and suddenly, quite unexpectedly, under the pretence of caressing him, he pinched his chubby cheek with two fingers.

Our hero grew as hot as fire ... As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior noticed that his opponent, quivering in every limb, speechless with rage, as red as a lobster, and exasperated beyond all endurance, might actually be driven to attack him, he promptly and in the most shameless way hastened to be beforehand with his victim. Patting him two or three times on the cheek, tickling him two or three times, playing with him for a few seconds in this way while his victim stood rigid and beside himself with fury to the no little diversion of the young men standing round, Mr. Golyadkin junior ended with a most revolting shamelessness by giving Mr. Golyadkin senior a poke in his rather prominent stomach, and with a most venomous and suggestive smile said to him: "You're mischievous brother Yakov, you are mischievous! We'll be sly, you and I, Yakov Petrovitch, we'll be sly."

Then, and before our hero could gradually come to himself after the last attack, Mr. Golyadkin junior (with a little smile beforehand to the spectators standing round) suddenly assumed a most businesslike, busy and official air, dropped his eyes to the

floor and, drawing himself in, shrinking together, and pronouncing rapidly "on a special commission" he cut a caper with his short leg, and darted away into the next room. Our hero could not believe his eyes and was still unable to pull himself together...

At last he roused himself. Recognizing in a flash that he was ruined, in a sense annihilated, that he had disgraced himself and sullied his reputation, that he had been turned into ridicule and treated with contempt in the presence of spectators, that he had been treacherously insulted, by one whom he had looked on only the day before as his greatest and most trustworthy friend, that he had been put to utter confusion, Mr. Golyadkin senior rushed in pursuit of his enemy. At the moment he would not even think of the witnesses of his ignominy.

"They're all in a conspiracy together," he said to himself; "they stand by each other and set each other on to attack me." After taking a dozen steps, however, our hero perceived clearly that all pursuit would be vain and useless, and so he turned back. "You won't get away," he thought, "you will get caught on day; the wolf will have to pay for the sheep's tears."

With ferocious composure and the most resolute determination Mr. Golyadkin went up to his chair and sat down upon it. "You won't escape," he said again.

Now it was not a question of passive resistance: there was determination and pugnacity in the air, and any one who had seen how Mr. Golyadkin at that moment, flushed and scarcely able to restrain his excitement, stabbed his pen into the inkstand and with what fury he began scribbling on the paper, could be certain beforehand that the matter would not pass off like this, and could not end in a simple, womanish way. In the depth of his soul he formed a resolution, and in the depth of his heart swore to carry it out. To tell the truth he still did not quite know how to act, or rather did not know at all, but never mind, that did not matter!

"Imposture and shamelessness do not pay nowadays, sir. Imposture and shamelessness, sir, lead to no good, but lead to the halter. Grishka Otrepyov was the only one, sir, who gained by imposture, deceiving the blind people and even that not for long."

In spite of this last circumstance Mr. Golyadkin proposed to wait till such time as the mask should fall from certain persons and something should be made manifest. For this it was necessary, in the first place, that office hours should be over as soon as possible, and till then our hero proposed to take no step. He knew then how he must act after taking that step, how to arrange his whole plan of action, to abase the horn of arrogance and crush the snake gnawing the dust in contemptible impotence. To allow himself to be treated like a rag used for wiping dirty boots, Mr. Golyadkin could not. He could not consent to that, especially in the present case. Had it not been for that last insult, our hero might have, perhaps, brought himself to control his anger; he might, perhaps, have been silent, have submitted and not have protested too obstinately; he would just have disputed a little, have made a slight complaint, have proved that he was in the right, then he would have given way a little, then, perhaps, he would have given way a little more, then he would have come round altogether, then, especially when the opposing party solemnly admitted that he was right, perhaps, he

would have overlooked it completely, would even have been a little touched, there might even, perhaps - who could tell - spring up a new, close, warm friendship, on an even broader basis than the friendship of last night, so that this friendship might, in the end, completely eclipse the unpleasantness of the rather unseemly resemblance of the two individuals, so that both the titular councillors might be highly delighted, and might go on living till they were a hundred, and so on. To tell the whole truth, Mr. Golyadkin began to regret a little that he had stood up for himself and his rights, and had at once come in for unpleasantness in consequence.

“Should he give in,” thought Mr. Golyadkin, “say he was joking, I would forgive him. I would forgive him even more if he would acknowledge it aloud. but I won’t let myself be treated like a rag. And I have not allowed even persons very different from him to treat me so, still less will I permit a depraved person to attempt it. I am not a rag. I am not a rag, sir!”

In short, our hero made up his mind “You’re in fault yourself, sir!” he thought. He made up his mind to protest with all his might to the very last. That was the sort of man he was! He could not consent to allow himself to be insulted, still less to allow himself to be treated as a rag, and, above all, to allow a thoroughly vicious man to treat him so. No quarrelling, however, no quarrelling! Possibly if some one wanted, if some one, for instance, actually insisted on turning Mr. Golyadkin into rag, he might have done so, might have might have done so without opposition or punishment (Mr. Golyadkin was himself conscious of this at times), and he would have been a rag and not Golyadkin - yes, a nasty, filthy rag; but that rag would not have been a simple rag, it would have been a rag possessed of dignity, it would have been a rag possessed of feelings and sentiments, even though dignity was defenceless and feelings could not assert themselves, and lay hidden deep down in the filthy folds of the rag, still thee feelings were there ...

The hours dragged on incredibly slowly; at last it struck four. Soon after, all got up and, following the head of the department, moved each on his homeward way. Mr. Golyadkin mingled with the crowd; he kept a vigilant look out, and did not lose sight of the man he wanted. At last our hero saw hat his friend ran up to the office attendants who handed the clerks their overcoats, and hung about near them waiting for his in his usual nasty way. The minute was a decisive one. Mr. Golyadkin forced his way somehow through the crowd and, anxious not to be left behind, he, too, began fussing about his overcoat. But Mr. Golyadkin’s friend and companion was given his overcoat first because on this occasion, too, he had succeeded, as he always did, in making up to them, whispering something to them, cringing upon them and getting round them.

After putting on his overcoat, Mr. Golyadkin junior glanced ironically at Mr. Golyadkin senior, acting in this way openly and defiantly, looked about him with his characteristic insolence, finally he tripped to and fro among the other clerks - no doubt in order to leave a good impression on them - said a word to one, whispered something to another, respectfully accosted a third, directed a smile at a fourth, gave his hand to a fifth, and gaily darted downstairs. Mr. Golyadkin senior flew after him, and to his

inexpressible delight overtook him on the last step, and seized him by the collar of his overcoat. It seemed as though Mr. Golyadkin junior was a little disconcerted, and he looked about him with a helpless air.

“What do you mean by this?” he whispered to Mr. Golyadkin at last, in a weak voice.

“Sir, if you are a gentleman, I trust that you remember our friendly relations yesterday,” said out here.

“Ah, yes! Well? Did you sleep well?”

Fury rendered Mr. Golyadkin senior speechless for a moment.

“I slept well, sir ... but allow me to tell you, sir, that you are playing a very complicated game ...”

“Who says so? My enemies say that,” answered abruptly the man who called himself Mr. Golyadkin, and saying this, he unexpectedly freed himself from the feeble hand of the real Mr. Golyadkin. As soon as he was free he rushed away from the stairs, looked around him, saw a cab, ran up to it, got in, and in one moment vanished from Mr. Golyadkin senior’s sight. The despairing titular councillor, abandoned by all, gazed about him, but there was no other cab. He tried to run, but his legs gave way under him. With a look of open-mouthed astonishment on his countenance, feeling crushed and shrivelled up, he leaned helplessly against a lamp post, and remained so for some minutes in the middle of the pavement. It seemed as though all were over for Mr. Golyadkin.

Chapter 5

Everything, apparently, and even nature itself, seemed up in arms against Mr. Golyadkin; but he was still on his legs and unconquered; he felt that he was unconquered. He was ready to struggle. he rubbed his hands with such feeling and such energy when he recovered from his first amazement that it could be deduced from his very air that he would not give in. yet the danger was imminent; it was evident; Mr. Golyadkin felt it; but how to grapple with it, with this danger? - that was the question. the thought even flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind for a moment, "After all, why not leave it so, simply give up? Why, what is it? Why, it's nothing. I'll keep apart as though it were not I," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "I'll let it all pass; it's not I, and that's all about it; he's separate too, maybe he'll give it up too; he'll hang about, the rascal, he'll hang about. He'll come back and give it up again. Than's how it will be! I'll take it meekly. And, indeed, where is the danger? Come, what danger is there? I should like any one to tell me where the danger lies in this business. It is a trivial affair. An everyday affair... ."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin's tongue failed; the words died away on his lips; he even swore at himself for this thought; he convicted himself on the spot of abjectness, of cowardice for having this thought; things were no forwarder, however. He felt that to make up his mind to some course of action was absolutely necessary for him at the moment; he even felt that he would have given a great deal to any one who could have told him what he must decide to do. Yes, but how could he guess what? Though, indeed, he had no time to guess. In any case, that he might lose no time he took a cab and dashed home.

"Well? What are you feeling now?" he wondered; "what are you graciously pleased to be thinking of, Yakov Petrovitch? What are you doing? What are you doing now, you rogue, you rascal? You've brought yourself to this plight, and now you are weeping and whimpering!"

So Mr. Golyadkin taunted himself as he jolted along in the vehicle. To taunt himself and so to irritate his wounds was, at this time, a great satisfaction to Mr. Golyadkin, almost a voluptuous enjoyment.

"Well," he thought, "if some magician were to turn up now, or if it could come to pass in some official way and I were told: 'Give a finger of your right hand, Golyadkin - and it's a bargain with you; there shall not be the other Golyadkin, and you will be happy, only you won't have your finger' - yes, I would sacrifice my finger, I would certainly sacrifice it, I would sacrifice it without winking... . The devil take it all!" the despairing titular councillor cried at last. "Why, what is it all for? Well, it all had to be;

yes, it absolutely had to; yes, just this had to be, as though nothing else were possible! And it was all right at first. Every one was pleased and happy. But there, it had to be! There's nothing to be gained by talking, though; you must act."

And so, almost resolved upon some action, Mr. Golyadkin reached home, and without a moment's delay snatched up his pipe and, sucking at it with all his might and puffing out clouds of smoke to right and to left, he began pacing up and down the room in a state of violent excitement. Meanwhile, Petrushka began laying the table. At last Mr. Golyadkin made up his mind completely, flung aside his pipe, put on his overcoat, said he would not dine at home and ran out of the flat. Petrushka, panting, overtook him on the stairs, bringing the hat he had forgotten. Mr. Golyadkin took his hat, wanted to say something incidentally to justify himself in Petrushka's eyes that the latter might not think anything particular, such as, "What a queer circumstance! here he forgot his hat - and so on," but as Petrushka walked away at once and would not even look at him, Mr. Golyadkin put on his hat without further explanation, ran downstairs, and repeating to himself that perhaps everything might be for the best, and that affairs would somehow be arranged, though he was conscious among other things of a cold chill right down to his heels, he went out into the street, took a cab and hastened to Andrey Filippovitch's.

"Would it not be better tomorrow, though?" thought Mr. Golyadkin, as he took hold of the bell-rope of Andrey Filippovitch's flat. "And, besides, what can I say in particular? There is nothing particular in it. It's such a wretched affair, yes, it really is wretched, paltry, yes, that is, almost a paltry affair ... yes, that's what it is, the incident ... Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin pulled at the bell; the bell rang; footsteps were heard within ... Mr. Golyadkin cursed himself on the spot for his hastiness and audacity. His recent unpleasant experiences, which he had almost forgotten over his work, and his encounter with Andrey Filippovitch immediately came back into his mind. But by now it was too late to run away: the door opened. Luckily for Mr. Golyadkin he was informed that Andrey Filippovitch had not returned from the office and had not dined at home.

"I know where he dines: he dines near the Ismailovsky Bridge," thought our hero; and he was immensely relieved. To the footman's inquiry what message he would leave, he said: "It's all right, my good man, I'll look in later," and he even ran downstairs with a certain cheerful briskness. Going out into the street, he decided to dismiss the cab and paid the driver. When the man asked for something extra, saying he had been waiting in the street and had not spared his horse for his honour, he gave him five kopecks extra, and even willingly; and then walked on.

"It really is such a thing," thought Mr. Golyadkin, "that it cannot be left like that; though, if one looks at it that way, looks at it sensibly, why am I hurrying about here, in reality? Well, yes, though, I will go on discussing why I should take a lot of trouble; why I should rush about, exert myself, worry myself and wear myself out. To begin with, the thing's done and there's no recalling it ... of course, there's no recalling it! Let us put it like this: a man turns up with a satisfactory reference, said to be a capable

clerk, of good conduct, only he is a poor man and has suffered many reverses - all sorts of ups and downs - well, poverty is not a crime: so I must stand aside. Why, what nonsense it is! Well, he came; he is so made, the man is so made by nature itself that he is as like another man as though they were two drops of water, as though he were a perfect copy of another man; how could they refuse to take him into the department on that account? If it is fate, if it is only fate, if it only blind chance that is to blame - is he to be treated like a rag, is he to be refused a job in the office? ... Why, what would become of justice after that? He is a poor man, hopeless, downcast; it makes one's heart ache: compassion bids one care for him! Yes! There's no denying, there would be a fine set of head officials, if they took the same view as a reprobate like me! What an addlepate I am! I have foolishness enough for a dozen! Yes, yes! They did right, and many thanks to them for being good to a poor, luckless fellow ... Why, let us imagine for a moment that we are twins, that we had been born twin brothers, and nothing else - there it is! Well, what of it? Why, nothing! All the clerks can get used to it ... And an outsider, coming into our office, would certainly find nothing unseemly or offensive in the circumstance. In fact, there is really something touching it; to think that the divine Providence created two men exactly alike, and the heads of the department, seeing the divine handiwork, provided for two twins. It would, of course," Mr. Golyadkin went on, drawing a breath and dropping his voice, "it would, of course ... it would, of course, have been better if there had been ... if there had been nothing of this touching kindness, and if there had been no twins either ... The devil take it all! And what need was there for it? And what was the particular necessity that admitted of no delay! My goodness! The devil has made a mess of it! Besides, he has such a character, too, he's of such a playful, horrid disposition - he's such a scoundrel, he's such a nimble fellow! He's such a toady! Such a lickspittle! He's such a Golyadkin! I daresay he will misconduct himself; yes, he'll disgrace my name, the blackguard! And now I have to look after him and wait upon him! What an infliction! But, after all, what of it? It doesn't matter. Granted, he's a scoundrel, well, let him be a scoundrel, but to make up for it, the other one's honest; so he will be a scoundrel and I'll be honest, and they'll say that this Golyadkin's a rascal, don't take any notice of him, and don't mix him up with the other; but the other one's honest, virtuous, mild, free from malice, always to be relied upon in the service, and worthy of promotion; that's how it is, very good ... but what if ... what if they get us mixed up! ... He is equal to anything! Ah, Lord, have mercy upon us! ... He will counterfeit a man, he will counterfeit him, the rascal - he will change one man for another as though he were a rag, and not reflect that a man is not a rag. Ach, mercy on us! Ough, what a calamity!" ...

Reflecting and lamenting in this way, Mr. Golyadkin ran on, regardless of where he was going. He came to his senses in Nevsky Prospect, only owing to the chance that he ran so neatly full-tilt into a passer-by that he saw stars in his eyes. Mr. Golyadkin muttered his excuses without raising his head, and it was only after the passer-by, muttering something far from flattering, had walked a considerable distance away, that he raised his nose and looked about to see where he was and how he had got there.

Noticing when he did so that he was close to the restaurant in which he had sat for a while before the dinner-party at Olsufy Ivanovitch's, our hero was suddenly conscious of a pinching and nipping sensation in his stomach; he remembered that he had not dined; he had no prospect of a dinner-party anywhere. And so, without losing precious time, he ran upstairs into the restaurant to have a snack of something as quickly as possible, and to avoid delay by making all the haste he could. And though everything in the restaurant was rather dear, that little circumstance did not on this occasion make Mr. Golyadkin pause, and, indeed, he had no time to pause over such a trifle. In the brightly lighted room the customers were standing in rather a crowd round the counter, upon which lay heaps of all sorts of such edibles as are eaten by well-bred person's at lunch. The waiter scarcely had time to fill glasses, to serve, to take money and give change. Mr. Golyadkin waited for his turn and modestly stretched out his hand for a savoury patty. Retreating into a corner, turning his back on the company and eating with appetite, he went back to the attendant, put down his plate and, knowing the price, took out a ten-kopeck piece and laid the coin on the counter, catching the waiter's eye as though to say, "Look, here's the money, one pie," and so on.

"One rouble ten kopecks is your bill," the waiter filtered through his teeth.

Mr. Golyadkin was a good deal surprised.

"You are speaking to me? ... I ... I took one pie, I believe."

"You've had eleven," the man said confidently.

"You ... so it seems to me ... I believe, you're mistaken ... I really took only one pie, I think."

"I counted them; you took eleven. Since you've had them you must pay for them; we don't give anything away for nothing."

Mr. Golyadkin was petrified. "What sorcery is this, what is happening to me?" he wondered. Meanwhile, the man waited for Mr. Golyadkin to make up his mind; people crowded round Mr. Golyadkin; he was already feeling in his pocket for a silver rouble, to pay the full amount at once, to avoid further trouble. "Well, if it was eleven, it was eleven," he thought, turning as red as a lobster. "Why, a man's hungry, so he eats eleven pies; well, let him eat, and may it do him good; and there's nothing to wonder at in that, and there's nothing to laugh at ... "

At that moment something seemed to stab Mr. Golyadkin. He raised his eyes and - at once he guessed the riddle. He knew what the sorcery was. All his difficulties were solved ...

In the doorway of the next room, almost directly behind the waiter and facing Mr. Golyadkin, in the doorway which, till that moment, our hero had taken for a looking-glass, a man was standing - he was standing, Mr. Golyadkin was standing - not the original Mr. Golyadkin, the hero of our story, but the other Mr. Golyadkin, the new Mr. Golyadkin. The second Mr. Golyadkin was apparently in excellent spirits. He smiled to Mr. Golyadkin the first, nodded to him, winked, shuffled his feet a little, and looked as though in another minute he would vanish, would disappear into the next room, and then go out, maybe, by a back way out; and there it would be, and all pursuit

would be in vain. In his hand he had the last morsel of the tenth pie, and before Mr. Golyadkin's very eyes he popped it into his mouth and smacked his lips.

"He had impersonated me, the scoundrel!" thought Mr. Golyadkin, flushing hot with shame. "He is not ashamed of the publicity of it! Do they see him? I fancy no one notices him ..."

Mr. Golyadkin threw down his rouble as though it burnt his fingers, and without noticing the waiter's insolently significant grin, a smile of triumph and serene power, he extricated himself from the crowd, and rushed away without looking round. "We must be thankful that at least he has not completely compromised anyone!" thought Mr. Golyadkin senior. "We must be thankful to him, the brigand, and to fate, that everything was satisfactorily settled. The waiter was rude, that was all. But, after all, he was in the right. One rouble and ten kopecks were owing: so he was in the right. 'We don't give things away for nothing,' he said! Though he might have been more polite, the rascal ..."

All this Mr. Golyadkin said to himself as he went downstairs to the entrance, but on the last step he stopped suddenly, as though he had been shot, and suddenly flushed till the tears came into his eyes at the insult to his dignity. After standing stockstill for half a minute, he stamped his foot, resolutely, at one bound leapt from the step into the street and, without looking round, rushed breathless and unconscious of fatigue back home, without changing his coat, though it was his habit to change into an old coat at home, without even stopping to take his pipe, he sat down on the sofa, drew the inkstand towards him, took up a pen, got a sheet of notepaper, and with a hand that trembled from inward excitement, began scribbling the following epistle,

"Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

"I should not take up my pen if my circumstances, and your own action, sir, had not compelled me to that step. Believe me that nothing but necessity would have induced me to enter upon such a discussion with you and therefore, first of all, I beg you, sir, to look upon this step of mine not as a premeditated design to insult you, but as the inevitable consequence of the circumstance that is a bond between us now."

("I think that's all right, proper courteous, though not lacking in force and firmness ... I don't think there is anything for him to take offence at. Besides, I'm fully within my rights," thought Mr. Golyadkin, reading over what he had written.)

"Your strange and sudden appearance, sir, on a stormy night, after the coarse and unseemly behaviour of my enemies to me, for whom I feel too much contempt even to mention their names, was the starting-point of all the misunderstanding existing between us at the present time. Your obstinate desire to persist in your course of action, sir, and forcibly to enter the circle of my existence and all my relations in practical life, transgresses every limit imposed by the merest politeness and every rule of civilized society. I imagine there is no need, sir, for me to refer to the seizure by you of my papers, and particularly to your taking away my good name, in order to gain the favour of my superiors - favour you have not deserved. There is no need to refer here either to your intentional and insulting refusal of the necessary explanation

in regard to us. Finally, to omit nothing, I will not allude here to your last strange, on my even say, your incomprehensible behaviour to me in the coffee-house. I am far from lamenting over the needless - for me - loss of a rouble; but I cannot help expressing my indignation at the recollection of your public outrage upon me, to the detriment of my honour, and what is more, in the presence of several persons of good breeding, though not belonging to my circle of acquaintance.”

“Am I not going too far?” thought Mr. Golyadkin. “Isn’t it too much; won’t it be too insulting - that taunt about good breeding, for instance? ... But there, it doesn’t matter! I must show him the resoluteness of my character. I might, however, to soften him, flatter him, and butter him up at the end. But there, we shall see.”)

“But I should not weary you with my letter, sir, if I were not firmly convinced that the nobility of your sentiments and your open, candid character would suggest to you yourself a means for retrieving all lapses and returning everything to its original position.

“With full confidence I venture to rest assured that you will not take my letter in a sense derogatory to yourself, and at the same time that you will not refuse to explain yourself expressly on this occasion by letter, sending the same by my man.

“In expectation of your reply, I have the honour, dear sir, to remain,

“Your humble servant,

“Y. Golyadkin.”

“Well, that is quite all right. The thing’s done, it has come to letter-writing. But who is to blame for that? He is to blame himself: by his own action he reduces a man to the necessity of resorting to epistolary composition. And I am within my rights... .”

Reading over his letter for the last time, Mr. Golyadkin folded it up, sealed it and called Petrushka. Petrushka came in looking, as usual, sleepy and cross about something.

“You will take this letter, my boy ... do you understand?”

Petrushka did not speak.

“You will take it to the department; there you must find the secretary on duty, Vahramyev. He is the one on duty today. Do you understand that?”

“I understand.”

“‘I understand’! He can’t even say, ‘I understand, sir!’ You must ask the secretary, Vahramyev, and tell him that your master desired you to send his regards, and humbly requests him to refer to the address book of our office and find out where the titular councillor, Golyadkin, is living?”

Petrushka remained mute, and, as Mr. Golyadkin fancied, smiled.

“Well, so you see, Pyotr, you have to ask him for the address, and find out where the new clerk, Golyadkin, lives.”

“Yes.”

“You must ask for the address and then take this letter there. Do you understand?”

“I understand.”

“If there ... where you have to take the letter, that gentleman to whom you have to give the letter, that Golyadkin ... What are you laughing at, you blockhead?”

“What is there to laugh at? What is it to me! I wasn’t doing anything, sir. it’s not for the likes of us to laugh... .”

“Oh, well ... if that gentleman should ask, ‘How is your master, how is he’; if he ... well, if he should ask you anything - you hold your tongue, and answer, ‘My master is all right and begs you for an answer to his letter.’ Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, then, say, ‘My master is all right and quite well,’ say ‘and is just getting ready to pay a call: and he asks you,’ say, ‘for an answer in writing.’ Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“Well, go along, then.”

“Why, what a bother I have with this blockhead too! He’s laughing, and there’s nothing to be done. What’s he laughing at? I’ve lived to see trouble. Here I’ve lived like this to see trouble. Though perhaps it may all turn out for the best... . That rascal will be loitering about for the next two hours now, I expect; he’ll go off somewhere else... . There’s no sending him anywhere. What a misery it is! ... What misery has come upon me!”

Feeling his troubles to the full, our hero made up his mind to remain passive for two hours till Petrushka returned. For an hour of the time he walked about the room, smoked, then put aside his pipe and sat down to a book, then he lay down on the sofa, then took up his pipe again, then again began running about the room. He tried to think things over but was absolutely unable to think about anything. At last the agony of remaining passive reached the climax and Mr. Golyadkin made up his mind to take a step. “Petrushka will come in another hour,” he thought. “I can give the key to the porter, and I myself can, so to speak ... I can investigate the matter: I shall investigate the matter in my own way.”

Without loss of time, in haste to investigate the matter, Mr. Golyadkin took his hat, went out of the room, locked up his flat, went in to the porter, gave him the key, together with ten kopecks - Mr. Golyadkin had become extraordinarily free-handed of late - and rushed off. Mr. Golyadkin went first on foot to the Ismailovsky Bridge. It took him half an hour to get there. When he reached to goal of his journey he went straight into the yard of the house so familiar to him, and glanced up at the windows of the civil councillor Berendyev’s flat. Except for three windows hung with red curtains all the rest was dark.

“Olsufy Ivanovitch has no visitors today,” thought Mr. Golyadkin; “they must all be staying at home today.”

After standing for some time in the yard, our hero tried to decide on some course of action. but he was apparently not destined to reach a decision. Mr. Golyadkin changed his mind, and with a wave of his hand went back into the street.

“No, there’s no need for me to go today. What could I do here? ... No, I’d better, so to speak ... I’ll investigate the matter personally.”

Coming to this conclusion, Mr. Golyadkin rushed off to his office. He had a long way to go. It was horribly muddy, besides, and the wet snow lay about in thick drifts. But it seemed as though difficulty did not exist for our hero at the moment. He was drenched through, it is true, and he was a ood deal spattered with mud.

“But that’s no matter, so long as the object is obtained.”

And Mr. Golyadkin certainly was nearing his goal. The dark mass of the huge government building stood up black before his eyes.

“Stay,” he thought; “where am I going, and what am I going to do here? Suppose I do find out where he lives? Meanwhile, Petrushka will certainly have come back and brought me the answer. I am only wasting my precious time, I am simply wasting my time. Though shouldn’t I, perhaps, go in and see Vahramyev? But, no, I’ll go later... . Ech! There was no need to have gone out at all. But, there, it’s my temperament! I’ve a knack of always seizing a chance of rushing ahead of things, whether there is a need to or not... . H’m! ... what time is it? It must be nine by now. Petrushka might come and not find me at home. It was pure folly on my part to go out... Ech, it is really a nuisance!”

Sincerely acknowledging that he had been guilty of an act of folly, our hero ran back to Shestilavotchny Street. He arrived there, weary and exhausted. From the porter he learned that Petrushka has not dreamed of turning up yet.

“To be sure! I foresaw it would be so,” thought our hero; and meanwhile it’s nine o’clock. Ech, he’s such a good-for-nothing chap! He’s always drinking somewhere! Mercy on us! What a day had fallen to my miserable lot!”

Reflecting in this way, Mr. Golyadkin unlocked his flat, got a light, took off his outdoor things, lighted his pipe and, tired, worn-out, exhausted and hungry, lay down on the sofa and waited for Petrushka. The candle burnt dimly; the light flickered on the wall... . Mr. Golyadkin gazed and gazed, and thought and thought, and fell asleep at last, worn out.

It was late when he woke up. The candle had almost burnt down, was smoking and on the point of going out. Mr. Golyadkin jumped up, shook himself, and remembered it all, absolutely all. behind the screen he heard Petrushka snoring lustily. Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the window - not a light anywhere. he opened the movable pane - all was still; the city was asleep as though it were dead: so it must have been two or three o’clock; so it proved to be, indeed; the clock behind the partition made an effort and struck two. Mr. Golyadkin rushed behind the partition.

He succeeded, somehow, though only after great exertions, in rousing Petrushka, and making him sit up in his bed. At that moment the candle went out completely. About ten minutes passed before Mr. Golyadkin succeeded in finding another candle and lighting it. In the interval Petrushka had fallen asleep again.

“You scoundrel, you worthless fellow!” said Mr. Golyadkin, shaking him up again. “Will you get up, will you wake?” After half an hour of effort Mr. Golyadkin succeeded, however, in rousing his servant thoroughly, and dragging him out from behind the

partition. Only then, our hero remarked the fact that Petrushka was what is called dead-drunk and could hardly stand on his legs.

“You good-for-nothing fellow!” cried Mr. Golyadkin; “you ruffian! You’ll be the death of me! Good heavens! whatever has he done with the letter? Ach, my God! where is it? ... And why did I write it? As though there were any need for me to have written it! I went scribbling away out of pride, like a noodle! I’ve got myself into this fix out of pride! That is what dignity does for you, you rascal, that is dignity! ... Come, what have you done with the letter, you ruffian? To whom did you give it?”

“I didn’t give any one any letter; and I never had any letter ... so there!”

Mr. Golyadkin wrung his hands in despair.

“Listen, Pyotr ... listen to me, listen to me ...”

“I am listening ...”

“Where have you been? - answer ...”

“Where have I been ... I’ve been to see good people! What is it to me!”

“Oh, Lord, have mercy on us! Where did you go, to begin with? Did you go to the department? ... Listen, Pyotr, perhaps you’re drunk?”

“Me drunk! If I should be struck on the spot this minute, not a drop, not a drop - so there... .”

“No, no, it’s no matter you’re being drunk... . I only asked; it’s all right your being drunk; I don’t mind, Petrushka, I don’t mind... . Perhaps it’s only that you have forgotten, but you’ll remember it all. Come, try to remember - have you been to that clerk’s, to Vahramyev’s; have you been to him or not?”

“I have not been, and there’s no such clerk. Not if I were this minute ...”

“No, no, Pyotr! No, Petrushka, you know I don’t mind. Why, you see I don’t mind... . Come, what happened? To be sure, it’s cold and damp in the street, and so a man has a drop, and it’s no matter. I am not angry. I’ve been drinking myself today, my boy... . Come, think and try and remember, did you go to Vahramyev?”

“Well, then, now, this is how it was, it’s the truth - I did go, if this very minute ...”

“Come, that is right, Petrushka, that is quite right that you’ve been. you see I’m not angry... . Come, come,” our hero went on, coaxing his servant more and more, patting him on the shoulder and smiling to him, “come, you had a little nip, you scoundrel... . You had two-penn’orth of something I suppose? You’re a sly rogue! Well, that’s no matter; come, you see that I’m not angry I’m not angry, my boy, I’m not angry... .”

“No, I’m not a sly rogue, say what you like... . I only went to see some good friends. I’m not a rogue, and I never have been a rogue... .”

“Oh, no, no, Petrushka; listen, Petrushka, you know I’m not scolding when I called you a rogue. I said that in fun, I said it in a good sense. You see, Petrushka, it is sometimes a compliment to a man when you call him a rogue, a cunning fellow, that he’s a sharp chap and would not let any one take him in. Some men like it ... Come, come, it doesn’t matter! Come, tell me, Petrushka, without keeping anything back, openly, as to a friend ... did you go to Vahramyev’s, and did he give you the address?”

“He did give me the address, he did give me the address too. He’s a nice gentleman! ‘You master,’ says he, ‘is a nice man,’ says he, ‘very nice man;’ says he, ‘I send my regards,’ says he, ‘to your master, thank him and say that I like him,’ says he - ‘how I do respect your master,’ says he. ‘Because,’ says he, ‘your master, Petrushka,’ says he, ‘is a good man, and you,’ says he, ‘Petrushka, are a good man too’”

“Ah, mercy on us! But the address, the address! You Judas!” The last word Mr. Golyadkin uttered almost in a whisper.

“And the address ... he did give the address too.”

“He did? Well, where does Golyadkin, the clerk Golyadkin, the titular councillor, live?”

“‘Why,’ says he, ‘Golyadkin will be now at Shestilavotchny Street. When you get into Shestilavotchny Street take the stairs on the right and it’s on the fourth floor. And there,’ says he, ‘you’ll find Golyadkin... .’”

“You scoundrel!” our hero cried, out of patience at last. “You’re a ruffian! Why, that’s my address; why, you are talking about me. But there’s another Golyadkin; I’m talking about the other one, you scoundrel!”

“Well, that’s as you please! What is it to me? Have it your own way ...”

“And the letter, the letter?” ...

“What letter? There wasn’t any letter, and I didn’t see any letter.”

“But what have you done with it, you rascal?”

“I delivered the letter, I delivered it. He sent his regards. ‘Thank you,’ says he, ‘your master’s a nice man,’ says he. ‘Give my regards,’ says he, ‘to your master... .’”

“But who said that? Was it Golyadkin said it?”

Petrushka said nothing for a moment, and then, with a broad grin, he stared straight into his master’s face... .

“Listen, you scoundrel!” began Mr. Golyadkin, breathless, beside himself with fury; “listen, you rascal, what have you done to me? Tell me what you’ve done to me! You’ve destroyed me, you villain, you’ve cut the head off my shoulders, you Judas!”

“Well, have it your own way! I don’t care,” said Petrushka in a resolute voice, retreating behind the screen.

“Come here, come here, you ruffian... .”

“I’m not coming to you now, I’m not coming at all. What do I care, I’m going to good folks... . Good folks live honestly, good folks live without falsity, and they never have doubles... .”

Mr. Golyadkin’s hands and feet went icy cold, his breath failed him... .

“Yes,” Petrushka went on, “they never have doubles. God doesn’t afflict honest folk... .”

“You worthless fellow, you are drunk! Go to sleep now, you ruffian! And tomorrow you’ll catch it,” Mr. Golyadkin added in a voice hardly audible. As for Petrushka, he muttered something more; then he could be heard getting into bed, making the bed creak. After a prolonged yawn, he stretched; and at last began snoring, and slept the sleep of the just, as they say. Mr. Golyadkin was more dead than alive. Petrushka’s

behaviour, his very strange hints, which were yet so remote that it was useless to be angry at them, especially as they were uttered by a drunken man, and, in short, the sinister turn taken by the affair altogether, all this shook Mr. Golyadkin to the depths of his being.

“And what possessed me to go for him in the middle of the night?” said our hero, trembling all over from a sickly sensation. “What the devil made me have anything to do with a drunken man! What could I expect from a drunken man? Whatever he says is a lie. But what was he hinting at, the ruffian? Lord, have mercy on us! And why did I write that letter? I’m my own enemy, I’m my own murderer! As if I couldn’t hold my tongue? I had to go scribbling nonsense! And what now! You are going to ruin, you are like an old rag, and yet you worry about your pride; you say, ‘my honour is wounded,’ you must stick up for your honour! Mr own murderer, that is what I am!”

Thus spoke Mr. Golyadkin and hardly dared to stir for terror. At last his eyes fastened upon an object which excited his interest to the utmost. In terror lest the object that caught his attention should prove to be an illusion, a deception of his fancy, he stretched out his hand to it with hope, with dread, with indescribable curiosity... . No, it was not a deception Not a delusion! It was a letter, really a letter, undoubtedly a letter, and addressed to him. Mr. Golyadkin took the letter from the table. His heart beat terribly.

“No doubt that scoundrel brought it,” he thought, “put it there, and then forgot it; no doubt that is how it happened: no doubt that is just how it happened... .”

The letter was from Vahramyev, a young fellow-clerk who had once been his friend. “I had a presentiment of this, thought,” thought our hero, “and I had a presentiment of all that there will be in the letter... .”

The letter was as follows -

“Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

“Your servant is drunk, and there is no getting any sense out of him. For that reason I prefer to reply by letter. I hasten to inform you that the commission you’ve entrusted to me - that is, to deliver a letter to a certain person you know, I agree to carry out carefully and exactly. That person, who is very well known to you and who has taken the place of a friend to me, whose name I will refrain from mentioning (because I do not wish unnecessarily to blacken the reputation of a perfectly innocent man), lodges with us at Karolina Ivanovna’s, in the room in which, when you were among us, the infantry officer from Tambov used to be. That person, however, is always to be found in the company of honest and true-hearted persons, which is more than one can say for some people. I intend from this day to break off all connection with you; it’s impossible for us to remain on friendly terms and to keep up the appearance of comradeship congruous with them. And, therefore, I beg you, dear sir, immediately on the receipt of this candid letter from me, to send me the two roubles you owe me for the razor of foreign make which I sold you seven months ago, if you will kindly remember, when you were still living with us in the lodgings of Karolina Ivanovna, a lady whom I respect from the bottom of my heart. I am acting in this way because you, from the accounts I hear

from sensible persons, have lost your dignity and reputation and have become a source of danger to the morals of the innocent and uncontaminated. For some persons are not straightforward, their words are full of falsity and their show of good intentions is suspicious. People can always be found capable of insulting Karolina Ivanovna, who is always irreproachable in her conduct, and an honest woman, and, what's more, a maiden lady, though no longer young - though, on the other hand, of a good foreign family - and this fact I've been asked to mention in this letter by several persons, and I speak also for myself. In any case you will learn all in due time, if you haven't learnt it yet, though you've made yourself notorious from one end of the town to the other, according to the accounts I hear from sensible people, and consequently might well have received intelligence relating to you, my dear sir, that a certain person you know, whose name I will not mention here, for certain honourable reasons, is highly respected by right-thinking people, and is, moreover, of lively and agreeable disposition, and is equally successful in the service and in the society of persons of common sense, is true in word and in friendship, and does not insult behind their back those with whom he is on friendly terms to their face.

"In any case, I remain

"Your obedient servant,

"N. Vahramyev."

"P.S. You had better dismiss your man: he is a drunkard and probably gives you a great deal of trouble; you had better engage Yevstafy, who used to be in service here, and is not out of a place. Your present servant is not only a drunkard, but, what's more, he's a thief, for only last week he sold a pound of sugar to Karolina Ivanovna at less than cost price, which, in my opinion, he could not have done otherwise than by robing you in a very sly way, little by little, at different times. I write this to you for your own good, although some people can do nothing but insult and deceive everybody, especially persons of honesty and good nature; what is more, they slander them behind their back and misrepresent them, simply from envy, and because they can't call themselves the same.

"V."

After reading Vahramyev's letter our hero remained for a long time sitting motionless on his sofa. A new light seemed breaking through the obscure and baffling fog which had surrounded him for the last two days. Our hero seemed to reach a partial understanding ... He tried to get up from the sofa to take a turn about the room, to rouse himself, to collect his scattered ideas, to fix them upon a certain subject and then to set himself to rights a little, to think over his position thoroughly. But as soon as he tried to stand up he fell back again at once, weak and helpless. "Yes, of course, I had a presentiment of all that; how he writes though, and what is the real meaning of his words. Supposing I do understand the meaning; but what is it leading to? He should have said straight out: this and that is wanted, and I would have done it. Things have taken such a turn, things have come to such an unpleasant pass! Oh, if only tomorrow would make haste and come, and I could make haste and get to work! I know now

what to do. I shall say this and that, I shall agree with his arguments, I won't sell my honour, but ... maybe; but he, that person we know of, that disagreeable person, how does he come to be mixed up in it? And why has he turned up here? Oh, if tomorrow would make haste and come! They'll slander me before then, they are intriguing, they are working to spite me! The great thing is not to lose time, and now, for instance, to write a letter, and to say this and that and that I agree to this and that. And as soon as it is daylight tomorrow send it off, before he can do anything ... and so checkmate them, get in before them, the darlings... . They will ruin me by their slanders, and that's the fact of the matter!"

Mr. Golyadkin drew the paper to him, took up a pen and wrote the following missive in answer to the secretary's letter -

"Dear Sir Nestor Ignatyevitch!

"With amazement mingled with heartfelt distress I have perused your insulting letter to me, for I see clearly that you are referring to me when you speak of certain discreditable persons and false friends. I see with genuine sorrow how rapidly the calumny has spread and how deeply it has taken root, to the detriment of my prosperity, my honour and my good name. And this is the more distressing and mortifying that even honest people of a genuinely noble way of thinking and, what is even more important, of straightforward and open dispositions, abandon the interests of honourable men and with all the qualities of their hearts attach themselves to the pernicious corruption, which in our difficult and immoral age has unhappily increased and multiplied so greatly and so disloyally. In conclusion, I will say that the debt of two roubles of which you remind me I regard as a sacred duty to return to you in its entirety.

"As for your hints concerning a certain person of the female sex, concerning the intentions, calculations and various designs of that person, I can only tell you, sir, that I have but a very dim and obscure understanding of those insinuations. Permit me, sir, to preserve my honourable way of thinking and my good name undefiled, in any case. I am ready to stoop to a written explanation as more secure, and I am, moreover, ready to enter into conciliatory proposals on mutual terms, of course. To that end I beg you, my dear sir, to convey to that person my readiness for a personal arrangement and, what is more, to beg her to fix the time and place of the interview. It grieved me, sir, to read your hints of my having insulted you, having been treacherous to our original friendship and having spoken ill of you. I ascribe this misunderstanding to the abominable calumny, envy and ill-will of those whom I may justly stigmatize as my bitterest foes. But I suppose they do not know that innocence is strong through its very innocence, that the shamelessness, the insolence and the revolting familiarity of some persons, sooner or later gains the stigma of universal contempt; and that such persons come to ruin through nothing but their own worthlessness and the corruption of their own hearts. In conclusion, I beg you, sir, to convey to those persons that their strange pretensions and their dishonourable and fantastic desire to squeeze others out of the position which those others occupy, by their very existence in this world, and to take their place, are deserving of contempt, amazement, compassion and, what is

more, the madhouse; moreover, such efforts are severely prohibited by law, which in my opinion is perfectly just, for every one ought to be satisfied with his own position. Every one has his fixed position, and if this is a joke it is a joke in very bad taste. I will say more: it is utterly immoral, for, I make bold to assure you, sir, my own views which I have expounded above, in regard to keeping one's own place, are purely moral.

“In any case I have the honour to remain,

“Your humble servant,

“Y. Golyadkin.”

Chapter 10

Altogether, we may say, the adventures of the previous day had thoroughly unnerved Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero passed a very bad night; that is, he did not get thoroughly off to sleep for five minutes: as though some practical joker had scattered bristles in his bed. He spent the whole night in a sort of half-sleeping state, tossing from side to side, from right to left, moaning and groaning, dozing off for a moment, waking up again a minute later, and all was accompanied by a strange misery, vague memories, hideous visions - in fact, everything disagreeable that can be imagined... .

At one moment the figure of Andrey Filippovitch appeared before him in a strange, mysterious half-light. It was a frigid, wrathful figure, with a cold, harsh eye and with stiffly polite word of blame on its lips ... and as soon as Mr. Golyadkin began going up to Andrey Filippovitch to defend himself in some way and to prove to him that he was not at all such as his enemies represented him, that he was like this and like that, that he even possessed innate virtues of his own, superior to the average - at once a person only too well known for his discreditable behaviour appeared on the scene, and by some most revolting means instantly frustrated poor Mr. Golyadkin's efforts, on the spot, almost before the latter's eyes, blackened his reputation, trampled his dignity in the mud, and then immediately took possession of his place in the service and in society.

At another time Mr. Golyadkin's head felt sore from some sort of slight blow of late conferred and humbly accepted, received either in the course of daily life or somehow in the performance of his duty, against which blow it was difficult to protest ... And while Mr. Golyadkin was racking his brains over the question of why it was difficult to protest even against such a blow, this idea of a blow gradually melted away into a different form - into the form of some familiar, trifling, or rather important piece of nastiness which he had seen, heard, or even himself committed - and frequently committed, indeed, and not on nasty ground, not from any nasty impulse, even, but just because it happened - sometimes, for instance, out of delicacy, another time owing to his absolute defencelessness - in fact, because ... because, in fact, Mr. Golyadkin knew perfectly well because of what! At this point Mr. Golyadkin blushed in his sleep, and, smothering his blushes, muttered to himself that in this case he ought to be able to show the strength of his character, he ought to be able to show in this case the remarkable strength of his character, and then wound up by asking himself, "What, after all, is strength of character? Why understand it now?" ...

But what irritated and enraged Mr. Golyadkin most of all was that invariably, at such a moment, a person well known for his undignified burlesque turned up uninvited,

and, regardless of the fact that the matter was apparently settled, he, too, would begin muttering, with an unseemly little smile "What's the use of strength of character! How could you and I, Yakov Petrovitch, have strength of character? ..."

Then Mr. Golyadkin would dream that he was in the company of a number of persons distinguished for their wit and good breeding; that he, Mr. Golyadkin, too, was conspicuous for his wit and politeness, that everybody like him, which was very agreeable to Mr. Golyadkin, too, was conspicuous for his wit and politeness, that everybody liked him, even some of his enemies who were present began to like him, which was very agreeable to Mr. Golyadkin; that every one gave him precedence, and that at last Mr. Golyadkin himself, with gratification, overheard the host, drawing one of the guests aside, speak in his, Mr. Golyadkin's praise ... and all of a sudden, apropos of nothing, there appeared again a person, notorious for his treachery and brutal impulses, in the form of Mr. Golyadkin junior, and on the spot, at once, by his very appearance on the scene, Mr. Golyadkin junior destroyed the whole triumph and glory of Mr. Golyadkin senior, eclipsed Mr. Golyadkin senior, trampled him in the mud, and, at last, proved clearly that Golyadkin senior - that is, the genuine one - was not the genuine one at all but the sham, and that he, Golyadkin junior, was the real one; that, in fact, Mr. Golyadkin senior was not at all what he appeared to be, but something very disgraceful, and that consequently he had no right to mix in the society of honourable and well-bred people. And all this was done so quickly that Mr. Golyadkin had not time to open his mouth before all of them were subjugated, body and soul, by the wicked, sham Mr. Golyadkin, and with profound contempt rejected him, the real and innocent Mr. Golyadkin. There was not one person left whose opinion the infamous Mr. Golyadkin would not have changed round. There was not left one person, even the most insignificant of the company, to whom the false and worthless Mr. Golyadkin would not make up in his blandest manner, upon whom he would not fawn in his own way, before whom he would not burn sweet and agreeable incense, so that the flattered person simply sniffed and sneezed till the tears came, in token of the intensest pleasure. And the worst of it was that all this was done in a flash: the swiftness of movement of the false and worthless Mr. Golyadkin was marvellous! he sincerely had time, for instance, to make up to one person and win his good graces - and before one could wink an eye he was at another. He stealthily fawns on another, drops a smile of benevolence, twirls on his short, round, though rather wooden-looking leg, and already he's at a third, and is cringing upon a third, he's making up to him in a friendly way; before one has time to open one's mouth, before one has time to feel surprised he's at a fourth, at the same manoeuvres with him - it was horrible: sorcery and nothing else! And every one was pleased with him and everybody liked him, and every one was exalting him, and all were proclaiming in chorus that his politeness and sarcastic wit were infinitely superior to the politeness and sarcastic wit of the real Mr. Golyadkin and putting the real and innocent Mr. Golyadkin to shame thereby and rejecting the veritable Mr. Golyadkin, and shoving and pushing out the loyal Mr.

Golyadkin, and showering blows on the man so well known for his love towards his fellow creatures! ...

In misery, in terror and in fury, the cruelly treated Mr. Golyadkin ran out into the street and began trying to take a cab in order to drive straight to his Excellency's, or, at any rate, to Andrey Filippovitch, but - horror! the cabman absolutely refused to take Mr. Golyadkin, saying, "We cannot drive two gentlemen exactly alike, sir; a good man tries to like honestly, your honour, and never has a double." Overcome with shame, the unimpeachable, honest Mr. Golyadkin looked round and did, in fact, assure himself with his own eyes that the cabman and Petrushka, who had joined them, were all quite right, for the depraved Mr. Golyadkin was actually on the spot, beside him, close at hand, and with his characteristic nastiness was again, at this critical moment, certainly preparing to do something very unseemly, and quite out of keeping with that gentlemanliness of character which is usually acquired by good breeding - that gentlemanliness of which the loathsome Mr. Golyadkin the second was always boasting on every opportunity. Beside himself with shame and despair, the utterly ruined though perfectly just Mr. Golyadkin dashed headlong away, wherever fate might lead him; but with every step he took, with every thud of his foot on the granite of the pavement, there leapt up as though out of the earth a Mr. Golyadkin precisely the same, perfectly alike, and of a revolting depravity of heart. And all these precisely similar Golyadkins set to running after one another as soon as they appeared, and stretched in a long chain like a file of geese, hobbling after the real Mr. Golyadkin, so there was nowhere to escape from these duplicates - so that Mr. Golyadkin, who was in every way deserving of compassion, was breathless with terror; so that at last a terrible multitude of duplicates had sprung into being; so that the whole town was obstructed at last by duplicate Golyadkins, and the police officer, seeing such a breach of decorum, was obliged to seize all these duplicates by the collar and to put them into the watch-house, which happened to be beside him ... Numb and chill with horror, our hero woke up, and numb and chill with horror felt that his waking state was hardly more cheerful ... It was oppressive and harrowing ... He was overcome by such anguish that it seemed as though some one were gnawing at his heart.

At last Mr. Golyadkin could endure it no longer. "This shall not be!" he cried, resolutely sitting up in bed, and after this exclamation he felt fully awake.

It seemed as though it were rather late in the day. It was unusually light in the room. The sunshine filtered through the frozen panes and flooded the room with light, which surprised Mr. Golyadkin not a little and, so far as Mr. Golyadkin could remember, at least, there had scarcely ever been such exceptions in the course of the heavenly luminary before. Our hero had hardly time to wonder at this when he heard the clock buzzing behind the partition as though it was just on the point of striking. "Now," thought Mr. Golyadkin, and he prepared to listen with painful suspense...

But to complete Mr. Golyadkin's astonishment, clock whirred and only struck once.

"What does this mean?" cried out hero, finally leaping out of bed. And, unable to believe his ears, he rushed behind the screen just as he was. It actually was one

o'clock. Mr. Golyadkin glanced at Petrushka's bed; but the room did not even smell of Petrushka: his bed had long been made and left, his boots were nowhere to be seen either - an unmistakable sign that Petrushka was not in the house. Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the door: the door was locked. "But where is he, where is Petrushka?" he went on in a whisper, conscious of intense excitement and feeling a perceptible tremor run all over him ... Suddenly a thought floated into his mind ... Mr. Golyadkin rushed to the table, looked all over it, felt all round - yes, it was true, his letter of the night before to Vahramyev was not there. Petrushka was nowhere behind the screen either, the clock had just struck one, and some new points were evident to him in Vahramyev's letter, points that were obscure at first sight though now they were fully explained. Petrushka had evidently been bribed at last! "Yes, yes, that was so!"

"So this was how the chief plot was hatched!" cried Mr. Golyadkin, slapping himself on the forehead, opening his eyes wider and wider; "so in that filthy German woman's den the whole power of evil lies hidden now! So she was only making a strategic diversion in directing me to the Ismailovsky Bridge - she was putting me off the scent, confusing me (the worthless witch), and in that way laying her mines! Yes, that is so! If one only looks at the thing from that point of view, all of this is bound to be so, and the scoundrel's appearance on the scene is fully explained: it's all part and parcel of the same thing. They've kept him in reserve a long while, they had him in readiness for the evil day. This is how it has all turned out! This is what it has come to. But there, never mind. No time has been lost so far."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin recollected with horror that it was past one in the afternoon. "What if they have succeeded by now? ..." He uttered a moan... . "But, no, they are lying, they've not had time -we shall see... ."

He dressed after a fashion, seized paper and a pen, and scribbled the following missive -

"Dear Sir Yakov Petrovitch!

"Either you or I, but both together is out of the question! And so I must inform you that your strange, absurd, and at the same time impossible desire to appear to be my twin and to give yourself out as such serves no other purpose than to bring about your complete disgrace and discomfiture. And so I beg you, for the sake of your own advantage, to step aside and make way for really honourable men of loyal aims. In the opposite case I am ready to determine upon extreme measures. I lay down my pen and await ... However, I remain ready to oblige or to meet you with pistols.

"Y. Golyadkin."

Our hero rubbed his hands energetically when he had finished the letter. Then, pulling on his greatcoat and putting on his hat, he unlocked his flat with a spare key and set off for the department. He reached the office but could not make up his mind to go in - it was by now too late. It was half-past two by Mr. Golyadkin's watch. All at once a circumstance of apparently little importance settled some doubts in Mr. Golyadkin's mind: a flushed and breathless figure suddenly made its appearance from behind the screen of the department building and with a stealthy movement like a rat

he darted up the steps and into the entry. It was a copying clerk called Ostafyev, a man Mr. Golyadkin knew very well, who was rather useful and ready to do anything for a trifle. Knowing Ostafyev's weak spot and surmising that after his brief, unavoidable absence he would probably be greedier than ever for tips, our hero made up his mind not to be sparing of them, and immediately darted up the steps, and then into the entry after him, called to him and, with a mysterious air, drew him aside into a convenient corner, behind a huge iron stove. And having led him there, our hero began questioning him.

"Well, my dear fellow, how are things going in there ... you understand me? ..."

"Yes, your honour, I wish you good health, your honour."

"All right, my good man, all right; but I'll reward you, my good fellow. Well, you see, how are things?"

"What is your honour asking?" At this point Ostafyev held his hand as though by accident before his open mouth.

"You see, my dear fellow, this is how it is ... but don't you imagine ... Come, is Andrey Filippovitch here?..."

"Yes, he is here."

"And are the clerks here?"

"Yes, sir, they are here as usual."

"And his Excellency too?"

"And his Excellency too." Here the man held his hand before his mouth again, and looked rather curiously and strangely at Mr. Golyadkin, so at least our hero fancied.

"And there's nothing special there, my good man?"

"No, sir, certainly not, sir."

"So there's nothing concerning me, my friend. Is there nothing going on there - that is, nothing more than ... eh? nothing more, you understand, my friend?"

"No, sir, I've heard nothing so far, sir." Again the man put his hand before his mouth and again looked rather strangely at Mr. Golyadkin. The fact was, Mr. Golyadkin was trying to read Ostafyev's countenance, trying to discover whether there was not something hidden in it. And, in fact, he did look as though he were hiding something: Ostafyev seemed to grow colder and more churlish, and did not enter into Mr. Golyadkin's interests with the same sympathy as at the beginning of the conversation. "He is to some extent justified," thought Mr. Golyadkin. "After all, what am I to him? Perhaps he has already been bribed by the other side, and that's why he has just been absent. but, here, I'll try him ..." Mr. Golyadkin realized that the moment for kopecks had arrived.

"Here, my dear fellow ..."

"I'm feelingly grateful for your honour's kindness."

"I'll give you more than that."

"Yes, your honour."

"I'll give you some more directly, and when the business is over I'll give you as much again. Do you understand?"

The clerk did not speak. He stood at attention and stared fixedly at Mr. Golyadkin. "Come, tell me now: have you heard nothing about me? ..."

"I think, so far, I have not ... so to say ... nothing so far." Ostafyev, like Mr. Golyadkin, spoke deliberately and preserved a mysterious air, moving his eyebrows a little, looking at the ground, trying to fall into the suitable tone, and, in fact, doing his very utmost to earn what had been promised him, for what he had received already he reckoned as already earned.

"And you know nothing?"

"So far, nothing, sir."

"Listen ... you know ... maybe you will know ..."

"Later on, of course, maybe I shall know."

"It's a poor look out," thought our hero. "Listen: here's something more, my dear fellow."

"I am truly grateful to your honour."

"Was Vahramyev here yesterday? ..."

"Yes, sir."

"And ... somebody else? ... Was he? ... Try and remember, brother."

The man ransacked his memory for a moment, and could think of nothing appropriate.

"No, sir, there wasn't anybody else."

"H'm!" a silence followed.

"Listen, brother, here's some more; tell me all, every detail."

"Yes, sir," Ostafyev had by now become as soft as silk; which was just what Mr. Golyadkin needed.

"Explain to me now, my good man, what footing is he on?"

"All right, sir, a good one, sir," answered the man, gazing open-eyed at Mr. Golyadkin.

"How do you mean, all right?"

"Well, it's just like that, sir." Here Ostafyev twitched his eyebrows significantly. But he was utterly nonplussed and didn't know what more to say.

"It's a poor look out," thought Mr. Golyadkin.

"And hasn't anything more happened ... in there ... about Vahramyev?"

"But everything is just as usual."

"Think a little."

"There is, they say ..."

"Come, what?"

Ostafyev put his hand in front of his mouth.

"Wasn't there a letter ... from here ... to me?"

"Mihyeev the attendant went to Vahramyev's lodging, to their German landlady, so I'll go and ask him if you like."

"Do me the favour, brother, for goodness' sake! ... I only mean ... you mustn't imagine anything, brother, I only mean ... Yes, you question him, brother, find out

whether they are not getting up something concerning me. Find out how he is acting. That is what I want; that is what you must find out, my dear fellow, and then I'll reward you, my good man... .”

“I will, your honour, and Ivan Semyonovitch sat in your place today, sir.”

“Ivan Semyonovitch? Oh! really, you don't say so.”

“Andrey Filippovitch told him to sit there.”

“Re-al-ly! How did that happen? You must find out, brother; for God's sake find out, brother; find it all out - and I'll reward you, my dear fellow; that's what I want to know ... and don't you imagine anything, brother... .”

“Just so, sir, just so; I'll go at once. And aren't you going in today, sir?”

“No, my friend; I only looked round, I only looked round, you know. I only came to have a look round, my friend, and I'll reward you afterwards, my friend.”

“Yes, sir.” The man ran rapidly and eagerly up the stairs and Mr. Golyadkin was left alone.

“It's a poor look out!” he thought. “Eh, it's a bad business, a bad business! Ech! things are in a bad way with us now! What does it all mean? What did that drunkard's insinuations mean, for instance, and whose trickery was it? Ah! I know whose it was. And what a thing this is. No doubt they found out and made him sit there... . But, after all, did they sit him there? It was Andrey Filippovitch sat him there and with what object? Probably they found out... . That is Vahramyev's work - that is, not Vahramyev, he is as stupid as an ashen post, Vahramyev is, and they are all at work on his behalf, and they egged that scoundrel on to come here for the same purpose, and the German woman brought up her grievance, the one-eyed hussy. I always suspected that this intrigue was not without an object and that in all this old-womanish gossip there must be something, and I said as much to Krestyan Ivanovitch, telling him they'd sworn to cut a man's throat - in a moral sense, of course - and they pounced upon Karolina Ivanovna. Yes, there are master hands at work in this, one can see! Yes, sir, there are master hands at work in this, not Vahramyev's. I've said already that Vahramyev is stupid, but ... I know who it is behind it all, it's that rascal, that impostor! It's only that he relies upon, which is partly proved by his successes in the best society. And it would certainly be desirable to know on what footing he stands now. What is he now among them? Only, why have they taken Ivan Semyonovitch? What the devil do they want with Ivan Semyonovitch? Could not they have found any one else? Though it would come to the same thing whoever it had been, and the only thing I know is that I have suspected Ivan Semyonovitch for a long time past. I noticed long ago what a nasty, horrid old man he was - they say he lends money and takes interest like any Jew. To be sure, the bear's the leading spirit in the whole affair. One can detect the bear in the whole affair. It began in this way. It began at the Ismailovsky Bridge; that's how it began ...”

At this point Mr. Golyadkin frowned, as though he had taken a bit out of a lemon, probably remembering something very unpleasant.

“But, there, it doesn’t matter,” he thought. “I keep harping on my own troubles. What will Ostafyev find out? Most likely he is staying on or has been delayed somehow. It is a good thing, in a sense, that I am intriguing like this, and am laying mines on my side too. I’ve only to give Ostafyev ten kopecks and he’s ... so to speak, on my side. Only the point is, is he really on my side? Perhaps they’ve got him on their side too ... and they are carrying on an intrigue by means of him on their side too. He looks a ruffian, the rascal, a regular ruffian; he’s hiding something, the rogue. ‘No, nothing,’ says he, ‘and I am deeply grateful to your honour.’ says he. You ruffian, you!”

He heard a noise ... Mr. Golyadkin shrank up and skipped behind the stove. Some one came down stairs and went out into the street. “Who could that be going away now?” our hero thought to himself. A minute later footsteps were audible again ... At this point Mr. Golyadkin could not resist poking the very tip of his nose out beyond his corner - he poked it out and instantly withdrew it again, as though some one had pricked it with a pin. This time some one he knew well was coming - that is the scoundrel, the intriguer and the reprobate - he was approaching with his usual mean, tripping little step, prancing and shuffling with his feet as though he were going to kick some one.

“The rascal,” said our hero to himself.

Mr. Golyadkin could not, however, help observing that the rascal had under his arm a huge green portfolio belonging to his Excellency.

“He’s on a special commission again,” thought Mr. Golyadkin, flushing crimson and shrinking into himself more than ever from vexation.

As soon as Mr. Golyadkin junior had slipped past Mr. Golyadkin senior without observing him in the least, footsteps were heard for the third time, and this time Mr. Golyadkin guessed that these were Ostafyev’s. It was, in fact, the sleek figure of a copying clerk, Pisarenko by name. This surprised Mr. Golyadkin. Why had he mixed up other people in their secret? our hero wondered. What barbarians! nothing is sacred to them! “Well, my friend?” he brought out, addressing Pisarenko: “who sent you, my friend? ...”

“I’ve come about your business. There’s no news so far from any one. But should there be any we’ll let you know.”

“And Ostafyev?”

“It was quite impossible for him to come, your honour. His Excellency has walked through the room twice, and I’ve no time to stay.”

“Thank you, my good man, thank you ... only, tell me ...”

“Upon my word, sir, I can’t stay... . They are asking for us every minute ... but if your honour will stay here, we’ll let you know if anything happens concerning your little affair.”

“No, my friend, you just tell me ...”

“Excuse me, I’ve no time to stay, sir,” said Pisarenko, tearing himself away from Mr. Golyadkin, who had clutched him by the lapel of his coat. “I really can’t. If your honour will stay here we’ll let you know.”

“In a minute, my good man, in a minute! In a minute, my good fellow! I tell you what, here’s a letter; and I’ll reward you, my good mad.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Try and give it to Mr. Golyadkin my dear fellow.”

“Golyadkin?”

“Yes, my man, to Mr. Golyadkin.”

“Very good, sir; as soon as I get off I’ll take it, and you stay here, meanwhile; no one will see you here ... “

“No, my good man, don’t imagine ... I’m not standing here to avoid being seen. But I’m not going to stay here now, my friend... I’ll be close here in the side of the street. There’s a coffee-house near here; so I’ll wait there, and if anything happens, you let me know about anything, you understand?”

“Very good, sir. Only let me go; I understand.”

“And I’ll reward you,” Mr. Golyadkin called after Pisarenko, when he had at last released him... .”

“The rogue seemed to be getting rather rude,” our hero reflected as he stealthily emerged from behind the stove. “There’s some other dodge here. That’s clear ... At first it was one thing and another ... he really was in a hurry, though; perhaps there’s a great deal to do in the office. And his Excellency had been through the room twice ... How did that happen? ... Ough! never mind! it may mean nothing, perhaps; but now we shall see... .”

At this point Mr. Golyadkin was about to open the door, intending to go out into the street, when suddenly, at that very instant, his Excellency’s carriage was opened from within and a gentleman jumped out. This gentleman was no other than Mr. Golyadkin junior, who had only gone out ten minutes before. Mr. Golyadkin senior remembered that the Director’s flat was only a couple of paces away.

“He has been out on a special commission,” our hero thought to himself.

Meanwhile, Mr. Golyadkin junior took out of the carriage a thick green portfolio and other papers. Finally, giving some orders to the coachman, he opened the door, almost ran up against Mr. Golyadkin senior, purposely avoided noticing him, acting in this way expressly to annoy him, and mounted the office staircase at a rapid canter.

“It’s a bad look out,” thought Mr. Golyadkin. “This is what it has come to now! Oh, good Lord! look at him.”

For half a minute our hero remained motionless. At last he made up his mind. Without pausing to think, though he was aware of a violent palpitation of the heart and a tremor in all his limbs, he ran up the stair after his enemy.

“Here goes; what does it matter to me? I have nothing to do with the case,” he thought, taking off his hat, his greatcoat and his goloshes in the entry.

When Mr. Golyadkin walked into his office, it was already getting dusk. Neither Andrey Filippovitch nor Anton Antonovitch were in the room. Both of them were in the Director’s room, handing in reports. The Director, so it was rumoured, was in haste to report to a still higher Excellency. In consequence of this, and also because

twilight was coming on, and the office hours were almost over, several of the clerks, especially the younger ones, were, at the moment when our hero entered, enjoying a period of inactivity; gathered together in groups, they were talking, arguing, and laughing, and some of the most youthful - that is, belonging to the lowest grades in the service, had got up a game of pitch-farthing in a corner, by a window. Knowing what was proper, and feeling at the moment a special need to conciliate and get on with them, Mr. Golyadkin immediately approached those with him he used to get on best, in order to wish them good day, and so on. But his colleagues answered his greetings rather strangely. He was unpleasantly impressed by a certain coldness, even curtness, one might almost say severity in their manner. No one shook hands with him. Some simply said, "Good day" and walked away; others barely nodded; one simply turned away and pretended not to notice him; at last some of them - and what mortified Mr. Golyadkin most of all, some of the youngsters of the lowest grades, mere lads who, as Mr. Golyadkin justly observed about them, were capable of nothing but hanging about and playing pitch-farthing at every opportunity - little by little collected round Mr. Golyadkin, formed a group round him and almost barred his way. They all looked at him with a sort of insulting curiosity.

It was a bad sign. Mr. Golyadkin felt this, and very judiciously decided not to notice it. Suddenly a quite unexpected event completely finished him off, as they say, and utterly crushed him.

At the moment most trying to Mr. Golyadkin senior, suddenly, as though by design, there appeared in the group of fellow clerks surrounding him the figure of Mr. Golyadkin junior, gay as ever, smiling a little smile as ever, nimble, too, as ever; in short, mischievous, skipping and tripping, chuckling and fawning, with sprightly tongue and sprightly toe, as always, precisely as he had been the day before at a very unpleasant moment for Mr. Golyadkin senior, for instance.

Grinning, tripping and turning with a smile that seemed to say "good evening," to every one, he squeezed his way into the group of clerks, shaking hands with one, slapping another on the shoulder, putting his arm round another, explaining to a fourth how he had come to be employed by his Excellency, where he had been, what he had done, what he had brought with him; to the fifth, probably his most intimate friend, he gave a resounding kiss - in fact, everything happened as it had in Mr. Golyadkin's dream. When he had skipped about to his heart's content, polished them all off in his usual way, disposed them all in his favour, whether he needed them or not, when he had lavished his blandishments to the delectation of all the clerks, Mr. Golyadkin junior suddenly, and most likely by mistake, for he had not yet had time to notice his senior, held out his hand to Mr. Golyadkin senior also. Probably also by mistake - though he had had time to observe the dishonourable Mr. Golyadkin junior thoroughly, our hero at once eagerly seized the hand so unexpectedly held out to him and pressed it in the warmest and friendliest way, pressed it with a strange, quite unexpected, inner feeling, with a tearful emotion. Whether our hero was misled by the first movement of his worthless foe, or was taken unawares, or, without recognizing it, felt at the bottom

of his heart how defenceless he was - it is difficult to say. The fact remains that Mr. Golyadkin senior, apparently knowing what he was doing, of his own free will, before witnesses, solemnly shook hands with him whom he called his mortal foe. But what was the amazement, the stupefaction and fury, what was the horror and the shame of Mr. Golyadkin senior, when his enemy and mortal foe, the dishonourable Mr. Golyadkin junior, noticing the mistake of that persecuted, innocent, perfidiously deceived man, without a trace of shame, of feeling, of compassion or of conscience, pulled his hand away with insufferable rudeness and insolence. What was worse, he shook the hand as though it had been polluted with something horrid; what is more, he spat aside with disgust, accompanying this with a most insulting gesture; worse still, he drew out his handkerchief and, in the most unseemly way, wiped all the fingers that had rested for one moment in the hand of Mr. Golyadkin senior. While he did this Mr. Golyadkin junior looked about him in his characteristic horrid way, took care that every one should see what he was doing, glanced into people's eyes and evidently tried to insinuate to every one everything that was most unpleasant in regard to Mr. Golyadkin senior. Mr. Golyadkin junior's revolting behaviour seemed to arouse general indignation among the clerks that surrounded them; even the frivolous youngsters showed their displeasure. A murmur of protest rose on all sides. Mr. Golyadkin could not but discern the general feeling; but suddenly - an appropriate witticism that bubbled from the lips of Mr. Golyadkin junior shattered, annihilated our hero's last hopes, and inclined the balance again in favour of his deadly and undeserving foe.

"He's our Russian Faublas, gentlemen; allow me to introduce the youthful Faublas," piped Mr. Golyadkin junior, with his characteristic insolence, pirouetting and threading his way among the clerks, and directing their attention to the petrified though genuine Mr. Golyadkin. "Let us kiss each other, darling," he went on with insufferable familiarity, addressing the man he had so treacherously insulted. Mr. Golyadkin junior's unworthy jest seemed to touch a responsive chord, for it contained an artful allusion to an incident with which all were apparently familiar. Our hero was painfully conscious of the hand of his enemies. But he had made up his mind by now. With glowing eyes, with pale face, with a fixed smile he tore himself somehow out of the crowd and with uneven, hurried steps made straight for his Excellency's private room. In the room next to the last he was met by Andrey Filippovitch, who had only just come out from seeing his Excellency, and although there were present in this room at the moment a good number of persons of whom Mr. Golyadkin knew nothing, yet our hero did not care to take such a fact into consideration. Boldly, resolutely, directly, almost wondering at himself and inwardly admiring his own courage, without loss of time he accosted Andrey Filippovitch, who was a good deal surprised by the unexpected attack.

"Ah! ... What is it ... what do you want?" asked the head of the division, not hearing Mr. Golyadkin's hesitation words.

"Andrey Filippovitch, may ... might I, Andrey Filippovitch, may I have a conversation with his Excellency at once and in private?" our hero said resolutely and distinctly, fixing the most determined glance on Andrey Filippovitch.

“What next! of course not.” Andrey Filippovitch scanned Mr. Golyadkin from head to foot.

“I say all this, Andrey Filippovitch, because I am surprised that no-one here unmasks the imposter and scoundrel.”

“Wha-a-at!”

“Scoundrel, Andrey Filippovitch!”

“Of whom are you pleased to speak in those terms?”

“Of a certain person, Andrey Filippovitch; I’m alluding, Andrey Filippovitch, to a certain person; I have the right ... I imagine, Andrey Filippovitch, that the authorities would surely encourage such action,” added Mr. Golyadkin, evidently hardly knowing what he was saying. “Andrey Filippovitch ... but no doubt you see yourself, Andrey Filippovitch, that this honourable action is a mark of my loyalty in every way - of my looking upon my superior as a father, Andrey Filippovitch; I as much as to say look upon my benevolent superior as a father and blindly trust my fate to him. It’s as much as to say ... you see ... ” At this point Mr. Golyadkin’s voice trembled and two tears ran down his eyelashes.

As Andrey Filippovitch listened to Mr. Golyadkin he was so astonished that he could not help stepping back a couple of paces. Then he looked about him uneasily ... It is difficult to say how the matter would have ended. But suddenly the door of his Excellency’s room was opened, and he himself came out, accompanied by several officials. All the persons in his room followed in a string. His Excellency called to Andrey Filippovitch and walked beside him, beginning to discuss some business details. When all had set off and gone out of the room, Mr. Golyadkin woke up. Growing calmer, he took refuge under the wing of Anton Antonovitch, who came last in the procession and who, Mr. Golyadkin fancied, looked stern and anxious. “I’ve been talking nonsense, I’ve been making a mess of it again, but there, never mind,” he thought.

“I hope, at least, that you, Anton Antonovitch will consent to listen to me and to enter into my position,” he said quietly, in a voice that still trembled a little. “Rejected by all, I appeal to you. I am still at a loss to understand what Andrey Filippovitch’s words mean, Anton Antonovitch. Explain them to me if you can ...”

“Everything will be explained in due time,” Anton Antonovitch replied sternly and emphatically, and as Mr. Golyadkin fancied with an air that give him plainly to understand that Anton Antonovitch did not wish to continue the conversation. “You will soon know all about it. You will be officially informed about everything today.”

“What do you mean by officially informed, Anton Antonovitch? Why officially?” our hero asked timidly.

“It is not for you and me to discuss what our superiors decide upon, Yakov Petrovitch.”

“Why our superiors, Anton Antonovitch?” said our hero, still more intimidate; “why our superiors? I don’t see what reason there is to trouble our superiors in the matter, Anton Antonovitch ... Perhaps you mean to say something about yesterday’s doings, Anton Antonovitch?”

“Oh no, nothing to do with yesterday; there’s something else amiss with you.”

“What is there amiss, Anton Antonovitch? I believe, Anton Antonovitch, that I have done nothing amiss.”

“Why, you were meaning to be sly with some one,” Anton Antonovitch cut in sharply, completely flabbergasting Mr. Golyadkin.

Mr. Golyadkin started, and turned as white as a pocket-handkerchief.

“Of course, Anton Antonovitch,” he said, in a voice hardly audible, “if one listens to the voice of calumny and hears one’s enemies’ tales, without heeding what the other side has to say in its defence, then, of course ... then, of course, Anton Antonovitch, one must suffer innocently and for nothing.”

“To be sure; but your unseemly conduct, in injuring the reputation of a virtuous young lady belonging to that benevolent, highly distinguished and well-known family who had befriended you ...”

“What conduct do you mean, Anton Antonovitch?”

“What I say. Do you know anything about your praiseworthy conduct in regard to that other young lady who, though poor, is of honourable foreign extraction?”

“Allow me, Anton Antonovitch ... if you would kindly listen to me, Anton Antonovitch ...”

“And your treacherous behaviour and slander of another person, your charging another person with your own sins. Ah, what do you call that?”

“I did not send him away, Anton Antonovitch,” said our hero, with a tremor; “and I’ve never instructed Petrushka, my man, to do anything of the sort ... He has eaten my bread, Anton Antonovitch, he has taken advantage of my hospitality,” our hero added expressively and with deep emotion, so much so that his chin twitched a little and tears were ready to start again.

“That is only your talk, that he has eaten your bread,” answered Anton Antonovitch, somewhat offended, and there was a perfidious note in his voice which sent a pang to Mr. Golyadkin’s heart.

“Allow me most humbly to ask you again, Anton Antonovitch, is his Excellency aware of all this business?”

“Upon my word, you must let me go now, though. I’ve not time for you now... . You’ll know everything you need to know today.”

“Allow me, for God’s sake, one minute, Anton Antonovitch.”

“Tell me afterwards...”

“No, Anton Antonovitch; I ... you see, Anton Antonovitch ... only listen ... I am not one for freethinking, Anton Antonovitch; I shun freethinking; I am quite ready for my part ... and, indeed, I’ve given up that idea... .”

“Very good, very good. I’ve heard that already.”

“No, you have not heard it, Anton Antonovitch. It is something else, Anton Antonovitch: it’s a good thing, really, a good thing and pleasant to hear ... As I’ve explained to you, Anton Antonovitch, I admit that idea, that divine Providence has created two men exactly alike, and that a benevolent government, seeing the hand of

Providence, provided a berth for two twins. That is a good thing, Anton Antonovitch, and that I am very far from freethinking. I look upon my benevolent government as a father; I say 'yes,' by all means; you are benevolent authorities, and you, of course ... A young man must be in the service ... Stand up for me, Anton Antonovitch, take my part, Anton Antonovitch ... I am all right ... Anton Antonovitch, for God's sake, one little word more... . Anton Antonovitch... ."

But by now Anton Antonovitch was far away from Mr. Golyadkin ... Our hero was so bewildered and overcome by all that had happened and all that he had heard that he did not know where he was standing, what he had heard, what he had done, what was being done to him, and what was going to be done to him.

With imploring eyes he sought for Anton Antonovitch in the crowd of clerks, that he might justify himself further in his eyes and say something to him extremely high toned and very agreeable, and creditable to himself... . By degrees, however, a new light began to break upon our hero's bewildered mind, a new and awful light that revealed at once a whole perspective of hitherto unknown and utterly unsuspected circumstances ... At that moment somebody gave our bewildered hero a poke in the ribs. He looked around. Pisarenko was standing before him.

"A letter, your honour."

"Ah, you've been taken out already, my good man?"

"No, it was brought at ten o'clock this morning. Sergey Mihyeev, the attendant, brought it from Mr. Vahramyev's lodging."

"Very good, very good, and I'll reward you now, my dear fellow."

Saying this, Mr. Golyadkin thrust the letter in his side pocket of his uniform and buttoned up every button of it; then he looked round him, and to his surprise, found that he was by now in the hall of the department in a group of clerks crowding at the outer door, for office hours were over. Mr. Golyadkin had not only failed till that moment to observe this circumstance, but had no notion how he suddenly came to be wearing his greatcoat and goloshes and to be holding his hat in his hand. All the clerks were motionless, in reverential expectation. The fact was that his Excellency was standing at the bottom of the stairs waiting for his carriage, which was for some reason late in arriving, and was carrying on a very interesting conversation with Andrey Filippovitch and two councillors. At a little distance from Andrey Filippovitch stood Anton Antonovitch and several other clerks, who were all smiles, seeing that his Excellency was graciously making a joke. The clerks who were crowded at the top of the stair were smiling too, in expectation of his Excellency's laughing again. The only one who was not smiling was Fedosyevitch, the corpulent hall-porter, who stood stiffly at attention, holding the handle of the door, waiting impatiently for the daily gratification that fell to his share - that is, the task of flinging one half of the door wide open with a swing of his arm, and then, with a low bow, reverentially making way for his Excellency to pass. But the one who seemed to be more delighted than any and to feel the most satisfaction of all was the worthless and ungentlemanly enemy of Mr. Golyadkin. At that instant he positively forgot all the clerks, and even gave

up tripping and pirouetting in his usual odious way; he even forgot to make up to anybody. He was all eyes and ears, he even doubled himself up strangely, no doubt in the strained effort to hear, and never took his eyes off his Excellency, and only from time to time his arms, legs and head twitched with faintly perceptible tremors that betrayed the secret emotions of his soul.

“Ah, isn’t he in a state!” thought our hero; “he looks like a favourite, the rascal! I should like to know how it is that he deceives society of every class. He has neither brains nor character, neither education nor feeling; he’s a lucky rogue! Mercy on us! How can a man, when you think of it, come and make friends with every one so quickly! And he’ll get on, I swear the fellow will get on, the rogue will make his way - he’s a lucky rascal! I should like to know, too, what he keeps whispering to every one - what plots he is hatching with all these people, and what secrets they are talking about? Lord, have mercy on us! If only I could ... get on with them a little too ... say this and that and the other. Hadn’t I better ask him ... tell him I won’t do it again; say ‘I’m in fault, and a young man must serve nowadays, your Excellency’? I am not going to protest in any way, either; I shall bear it all with meekness and patience, so there! Is that the way to behave? ... Though you’ll never see through him, though, the rascal; you can’t reach him with anything you say; you can’t hammer reason into his head ... We’ll make an effort, though. I may happen to hit on a good moment, so I’ll make an effort... .”

Feeling in his uneasiness, his misery and his bewilderment that he couldn’t leave things like this, that the critical moment had come, that he must explain himself to some one, our hero began to move a little towards the place where his worthless and undeserving enemy stood: but at that very moment his Excellency’s long-expected carriage rolled up into the entrance, Fedosyevitch flung open the door and, bending double, let his Excellency pass out. All the waiting clerks streamed out towards the door, and for a moment separated Mr. Golyadkin senior from Mr. Golyadkin junior.

“You shan’t get away!” said our hero, forcing his way through the crowd while he kept his eyes fixed upon the man he wanted. At last the crowd dispersed. Our hero felt he was free and flew in pursuit of his enemy.

Chapter 11

Mr. Golyadkin's breath failed him; he flew as though on wings after his rapidly retreating enemy. He was conscious of immense energy. Yet in spite of this terrible energy he might confidently have said that at that moment a humble gnat - had a gnat been able to exist in Petersburg at that time of the year - could very easily have knocked him down. He felt, too, that he was utterly weak again, that he was carried along by a peculiar outside force, that it was not he himself who was funning, but, on the contrary, that his legs were giving way under him, and refused to obey him. This all might turn out for the best, however.

"Whether it is for the best or not for the best," thought Mr. Golyadkin, almost breathless from running so quickly, "but that the game is lost there cannot be the slightest doubt now; that I am utterly done for is certain, definite, signed and ratified."

In spite of all this our hero felt as though he had risen from the dead, as though he had withstood a battalion, as though he had won a victory when he succeeded in clutching the overcoat of his enemy, who had already raised one foot to get into the cab he had engaged.

"My dear sir! My dear sir!" he shouted to the infamous Mr. Golyadkin junior, holding him by the button. "My dear sir, I hope that you ..."

"No, please do not hope for anything," Mr. Golyadkin's heartless enemy answered evasively, standing with one foot on the step of the cab and vainly waving the other leg in the air, in his efforts to get in, trying to preserve his equilibrium, and at the same time trying with all his might to wrench his coat away from Mr. Golyadkin senior, while the latter held on to it with all the strength that had been vouchsafed to him by nature.

"Yakov Petrovitch, only ten minutes ..."

"Excuse me, I've no time ..."

"You must admit, Yakov Petrovitch ... please, Yakov Petrovitch ... For God's sake, Yakov Petrovitch ... let us have it out - in a straightforward way ... one little second, Yakov Petrovitch ..."

"My dear fellow, I can't stay," answered Mr. Golyadkin's dishonourable enemy, with uncivil familiarity, disguised as good-natured heartiness; "another time, believe me, with my whole soul and all my heart; but now I really can't ..."

"Scoundrel!" thought our hero. "Yakov Petrovitch," he cried miserably. "I have never been your enemy. Spiteful people have described me unjustly ... I am ready, on my side ... Yakov Petrovitch, shall we go in here together, at once, Yakov Petrovitch? And with

all my heart, as you have so justly expressed it just now, and in straightforward, honourable language, as you have expressed it just now - here into this coffee-house; there the facts will explain themselves: they will really, Yakov Petrovitch. Then everything will certainly explain itself ...”

“Into the coffee-house? Very good. I am not against it. Let us go into the coffee-house on one condition only, my dear, on one condition - that these things shall be cleared up. We will have it out, darling,” said Mr. Golyadkin junior, getting out of the cab and shamelessly slapping our hero on the shoulder; “You friend of my heart, for your sake, Yakov Petrovitch, I am ready to go by the back street (as you were pleased to observe so aptly on one occasion, Yakov Petrovitch). Why, what a rogue he is! Upon my word, he does just what he likes with one!” Mr. Golyadkin’s false friend went on, fawning upon him and cajoling him with a little smile. The coffee-house which the two Mr. Golyadkins entered stood some distance away from the main street and was at the moment quite empty. A rather stout German woman made her appearance behind the counter. Mr. Golyadkin and his unworthy enemy went into the second room, where a puffy-looking boy with a closely shaven head was busy with a bundle of chips at the stove, trying to revive the smouldering fire. At Mr. Golyadkin junior’s request chocolate was served.

“And a sweet little lady-tart,” said Mr. Golyadkin junior, with a sly wink at Mr. Golyadkin senior.

Our hero blushed and was silent.

“Oh, yes, I forgot, I beg your pardon. I know your taste. We are sweet on charming little Germans, sir; you and I are sweet on charming and agreeable little Germans, aren’t we, you upright soul? We take their lodgings, we seduce their morals, they win our hearts with their beersoup and their milksoup, and we give them notes of different sorts, that’s what we do, you Faublas, you deceiver!” All this Mr. Golyadkin junior said, making an unworthy though villainously artful allusion to a certain personage of the female sex, while he fawned upon our hero, smiled at him with an amiable air, with a deceitful show of being delighted with him and pleased to have met him. Seeing that Mr. Golyadkin senior was by no means so stupid and deficient in breeding and the manners of good society as to believe in him, the infamous man resolved to change his tactics and to make a more upon attack upon him. After uttering his disgusting speech, the false Mr. Golyadkin ended by slapping the real and substantial Mr. Golyadkin on the shoulder, with a revolting effrontery and familiarity. Not content with that, he began playing pranks utterly unfit for well-bred society; he took it into his head to repeat his old, nauseous trick - that is, regardless of the resistance and faint cries of the indignant Mr. Golyadkin senior, he pinched the latter on the cheek. At the spectacle of such depravity our hero boiled within, but was silent ... only for the time, however.

“That is the talk of my enemies,” he answered at last, in a trembling voice, prudently restraining himself. At the same time our hero looked round uneasily towards the door. The fact was that Mr. Golyadkin junior seemed in excellent spirits, and ready for all

sorts of little jokes, unseemly in a public place, and, speaking generally, not permissible by the laws of good manners, especially in well-bred society.

“Oh, well, in that case, as you please,” Mr. Golyadkin junior gravely responded to our hero’s thought, setting down upon the table the empty cup which he had gulped down with unseemly greed. “Well, there’s no need for me to stay long with you, however... . Well, how are you getting on now, Yakov Petrovitch?”

“There’s only one thing I can tell you, Yakov Petrovitch,” our hero answered, with sangfroid and dignity; “I’ve never been your enemy.”

“H’m ... Oh, what about Petrushka? Petrushka is his name, I fancy? Yes, it is Petrushka! Well, how is he? Well? The same as ever?”

“He’s the same as ever, too, Yakov Petrovitch,” answered Mr. Golyadkin senior, somewhat amazed. “I don’t know, Yakov Petrovitch ... from my standpoint ... from a candid, honourable standpoint, Yakov Petrovitch, you must admit, Yakov Petrovitch... .”

“Yes, but you know yourself, Yakov Petrovitch,” Mr. Golyadkin junior answered in a soft and expressive voice, so posing falsely as a sorrowful man overcome with remorse and deserving compassion. “You know yourself as we live in difficult time ... I appeal to you, Yakov Petrovitch; you are an intelligent man and your reflections are just,” Mr. Golyadkin junior said in conclusion, flattering Mr. Golyadkin senior in an abject way. “Life is not a game, you know yourself, Yakov Petrovitch,” Mr. Golyadkin junior added, with vast significance, assuming the character of a clever and learned man, who is capable of passing judgements on lofty subjects.

“For my part, Yakov Petrovitch,” our hero answered warmly, “for my part, scorning to be roundabout and speaking boldly and openly, using straightforward, honourable language and putting the whole matter on an honourable basis, I tell you I can openly and honourably assert, Yakov Petrovitch, that I am absolutely pure, and that, you know it yourself, Yakov Petrovitch, the error is mutual - it may all be the world’s judgment, the opinion of the slavish crowd... . I speak openly, Yakov Petrovitch, everything is possible. I will say, too, Yakov Petrovitch, if you judge it in this way, if you look at the matter from a lofty, noble point of view, then I will boldly say, without false shame I will say, Yakov Petrovitch, it will positively be a pleasure to me to discover that I have been in error, it will positively be a pleasure to me to recognize it. You know yourself you are an intelligent man and, what is more, you are a gentleman. Without shame, without false shame, I am ready to recognize it,” he wound up with dignity and nobility.

“It is the decree of destiny, Yakov Petrovitch ... but let us drop all this,” said Mr. Golyadkin junior. “Let us rather use the brief moment of our meeting for a more pleasant and profitable conversation, as is only suitable between two colleagues in the service ... Really, I have not succeeded in saying two words to you all this time... . I am not to blame for that, Yakov Petrovitch... .”

“Nor I,” answered our hero warmly, “nor I, either! My heart tells me, Yakov Petrovitch, that I’m not to blame in all this matter. Let us blame fate for all this, Yakov

Petrovitch," added Mr. Golyadkin senior, in a quick, conciliatory tone of voice. His voice began little by little to soften and to quaver.

"Well! How are you in health?" said the sinner in a sweet voice.

"I have a little cough," answered our hero, even more sweetly.

"Take care of yourself. There is so much illness going about, you may easily get quinsy; for my part I confess I've begun to wrap myself up in flannel."

"One may, indeed, Yakov Petrovitch, very easily get quinsy," our hero pronounced after a brief silence; "Yakov Petrovitch, I see that I have made a mistake, I remember with softened feelings those happy moments which we were so fortunate as to spend together, under my poor, though I venture to say, hospitable roof ..."

"In your letter, however, you wrote something very different," said Mr. Golyadkin junior reproachfully, speaking on this occasion - though only on this occasion - quite justly.

"Yakov Petrovitch, I was in error... . I see clearly now that I was in error in my unhappy letter too. Yakov Petrovitch, I am ashamed to look at you, Yakov Petrovitch, you wouldn't believe ... Give me that letter that I may tear it to pieces before your eyes, Yakov Petrovitch, and if that is utterly impossible I entreat you to read it the other way before - precisely the other way before - that is, expressly with a friendly intention, giving the opposite sense to the whole letter. I was in error. Forgive me, Yakov Petrovitch, I was quite ... I was grievously in error, Yakov Petrovitch."

"You say so?" Mr. Golyadkin's perfidious friend inquired, rather casually and indifferently.

"I say that I was quite in error, Yakov Petrovitch, and that for my part, quite without false shame, I am ..."

"Ah, well, that's all right! That's a nice thing your being in error," answered Mr. Golyadkin junior.

"I even had an idea, Yakov Petrovitch," our candid hero answered in a gentlemanly way, completely failing to observe the horrible perfidy of his deceitful enemy; "I even had an idea that here were two people created exactly alike... ."

"Ah, is that your idea?"

At this point the notoriously worthless Mr. Golyadkin took up his hat. Still failing to observe his treachery, Mr. Golyadkin senior, too, got up and with a noble, simple-hearted smile to his false friend, tried in his innocence to be friendly to him, to encourage him, and in that way to form a new friendship with him.

"Good-bye, your Excellency," Mr. Golyadkin junior called out suddenly. Our hero started, noticing in his enemy's face something positively Bacchanalian, and, solely to get rid of him, put two fingers into the unprincipled man's outstretched hand; but then ... then his enemy's shameless ness passed all bounds. Seizing the two fingers of Mr. Golyadkin's hand and at first pressing them, the worthless fellow on the spot, before Mr. Golyadkin's eyes, had the effrontery to repeat the shameful joke of the morning. The limit of human patience was exhausted.

He had just hidden in his pocket the handkerchief with which he had wiped his fingers when Mr. Golyadkin senior recovered from the shock and dashed after him into the next room, into which his irreconcilable foe had in his usual hasty way hastened to decamp. As though perfectly innocent, he was standing at the counter eating pies, and with perfect composure, like a virtuous man, was making polite remarks to the German woman behind the counter.

“I can’t go into it before ladies,” thought our hero, and he, too, went up to the counter, so agitated that he hardly knew what he was doing.

“The tart is certainly not bad! What do you think?” Mr. Golyadkin junior began upon his unseemly sallies again, reckoning, no doubt, upon Mr. Golyadkin’s infinite patience. The stout German, for her part, looked at both her visitors with pewtery, vacant-looking eyes, smiling affably and evidently not understanding Russian. Our hero flushed red as fire at the words of the unabashed Mr. Golyadkin junior, and, unable to control himself, rushed at him with the evident intention of tearing him to pieces and finishing him off completely, but Mr. Golyadkin junior, in his usual mean way, was already far off; he took flight, he was already on the steps. It need hardly be said that, after the first moment of stupefaction with which Mr. Golyadkin senior was naturally overcome, he recovered himself and went at full speed after his insulting enemy, who had already got into a cab, whose driver was obviously in collusion with him. But at that very instant the stout German, seeing both her customers make off, shrieked and rang her bell with all her might. Our hero was on the point of flight, but he turned back, and, without asking for change, flung her money for himself and for the shameless man who had left without paying, and although thus delayed he succeeded in catching up his enemy. Hanging on to the side of the cab with all the force bestowed on him by nature, our hero was carried for some time along the street, clambering upon the vehicle, while Mr. Golyadkin junior did his utmost to dislodge him. Meanwhile the cabman, with whip, with reins, with kicks and with shouts urged on his exhausted nag, who quite unexpectedly dropped into a gallop, biting at the bit, and kicking with his hind legs in a horrid way. At last our enemy and with his back to the driver, his knees touching the knees and his right hand clutching the very shabby fur collar of his depraved and exasperated foe.

The enemies were borne along for some time in silence. Our hero could scarcely breathe. It was a bad road and he was jolted at every step and in peril of breaking his neck. Moreover, his exasperated foe still refused to acknowledge himself vanquished and was trying to shove him off into the mud. To complete the unpleasantness of his position the weather was detestable. The snow was falling in heavy flakes and doing its utmost to creep under the unfastened overcoat of the genuine Mr. Golyadkin. It was foggy and nothing could be seen. It was difficult to tell through what street and in what direction they were being taken ... It seemed to Mr. Golyadkin that what was happening to him was somehow familiar. One instant he tried to remember whether he had had a presentiment of it the day before, in a dream, for instance... .

At last his wretchedness reached the utmost pitch of agony. Leaning upon his merciless opponent, he was beginning to cry out. But his cries died away upon his lips... . There was a moment when Mr. Golyadkin forgot everything, and made up his mind that all this was of no consequence and that it was all nothing, that it was happening in some inexplicable manner, and that, therefore, to protest was effort thrown away... . But suddenly and almost at the same instant that our hero was drawing this conclusion, an unexpected jolt gave quite a new turn to the affair. Mr. Golyadkin fell off the cab like a sack of flour and rolled on the ground, quite correctly recognizing, at the moment of his fall, that his excitement had been very inappropriate. Jumping up at last, he saw that they had arrived somewhere; the cab was standing in the middle of some courtyard, and from the first glance our hero noticed that it was the courtyard of the house in which was Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. At the same instant he noticed that his enemy was mounting the steps, probably on his way to Olsufy Ivanovitch's. In indescribable misery he was about to pursue his enemy, but, fortunately for himself, prudently thought better of it. Not forgetting to pay the cabman, Mr. Golyadkin ran with all his might along the street, regardless of where he was going. The snow was falling heavily as before; as before it was muggy, wet, and dark. Our hero did not walk, but flew, coming into collision with every one on the way - men, women and children. About him and after him he heard frightened voices, squeals, screams ... But Mr. Golyadkin seemed unconscious and would pay no heed to anything... . He came to himself, however, on Semyonovsky Bridge, and then only through succeeding in tripping against and upsetting two peasant women and the wares they were selling, and tumbling over them.

"That's no matter," thought Mr. Golyadkin, "that can easily be set right," and felt in his pocket at once, intending to make up for the cakes, apples, nuts and various trifles he had scattered with a rouble. Suddenly a new light dawned upon Mr. Golyadkin; in his pocket he felt the letter given him in the morning by the clerk. Remembering that there was a tavern he knew close by, he ran to it without a moment's delay, settled himself at a little table lighted up by a tallow candle, and, taking no notice of anything, regardless of the waiter who came to ask for his orders, broke the seal and began reading the following letter, which completely astounded him -

"You noble man, who are suffering for my sake, and will be dear to my heart for ever!

"I am suffering, I am perishing - save me! The slanderer, the intriguer, notorious for the immorality of his tendencies, has entangled me in his snares and I am undone! I am lost! But he is abhorrent to me, while you! ... They have separated us, they have intercepted my letters to you - and all this has been the vicious man who has taken advantage of his one good quality - his likeness to you. A man can always be plain in appearance, yet fascinate by his intelligence, his strong feelings and his agreeable manners ... I am ruined! I am being married against my will, and the chief part in this intrigue is taken by my parent, benefactor and civil councillor, Olsufy Ivanovitch, no doubt desirous of securing me a place and relations in well-bred society... . But I

have made up my mind and I protest by all the powers bestowed on me by nature. Be waiting for me with a carriage at nine o'clock this evening at the window of Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. We are having another ball and a handsome lieutenant is coming. I will come out and we will fly. Moreover, there are other government offices in which one can be of service to one's country. In any case, remember, my friend, that innocence is strong in its very innocence. Farewell. Wait with the carriage at the entrance. I shall throw myself into the protection of your arms at two o'clock in the night.

"Yours till death,

"Klara Olsufyevna."

After reading the letter our hero remained for some minutes as though petrified. In terrible anxiety, in terrible agitation, white as a sheet, with the letter in his hand, he walked several times up and down the room; to complete the unpleasantness of his position, though our hero failed to observe it, he was at that moment the object of the exclusive attention of every one in the room, his gesticulating with both hands, perhaps some enigmatic words unconsciously addressed to the air, probably all this prejudiced Mr. Golyadkin in the opinion of the customers, and even the waiter began to look at him suspiciously. Coming to himself, Mr. Golyadkin noticed that he was standing in the middle of the room and was in an almost unseemly, discourteous manner staring at an old man of very respectable appearance who, having dined and said grace before the ikon, had sat down again and fixed his eyes upon Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero looked vaguely about him and noticed that every one, actually every one, was looking at him with a hostile and suspicious air. All at once a retired military man in a red collar asked loudly for the Police News. Mr. Golyadkin started and turned crimson: he happened to look down and saw that he was in such disorderly attire as he would not have worn even at home, much less in a public place. His boots, his trousers and the whole of his left side were covered with mud; the trouser-strap was torn off his right foot, and his coat was even torn in many places. In extreme misery our hero went up to the table at which he had read the letter, and saw that the attendant was coming up to him with a strange and impudently peremptory expression of face. Utterly disconcerted and crestfallen, our hero began to look about the table at which he was now standing. On the table stood a dirt plate, left there from somebody's dinner, a soiled table-napkin and a knife, fork and spoon that had just been used. "Who has been having dinner?" thought our hero. "Can it have been I? Anything is possible! I must have had dinner without noticing it; what am I to do?"

Raising his eyes, Mr. Golyadkin again saw beside him the waiter who was about to address him.

"How much is my bill, my lad?" our hero inquired, in a trembling voice.

A loud laugh sounded round Mr. Golyadkin, the waiter himself grinned. Mr. Golyadkin realized that he had blundered again, and had done something dreadfully stupid. He was overcome by confusion, and to avoid standing there with nothing to do he put his hand in his pocket to get out his handkerchief; but to the indescribable amazement of himself and all surrounding him, he pulled out instead of his handkerchief the bottle

of medicine which Krestyan Ivanovitch had prescribed for him four days earlier. "Get the medicine at the same chemist's," floated through Mr. Golyadkin's brain... .

Suddenly he started and almost cried out in horror. A new light dawned... . The dark reddish and repulsive liquid had a sinister gleam to Mr. Golyadkin's eyes... . The bottle dropped from his hands and was instantly smashed. Our hero cried out and stepped back a pace to avoid the spilled medicine ... he was trembling in every limb, and drops of sweat came out on to his brow and temples. "So my life is in danger!" Meantime there was a stir, a commotion in the room; every one surrounded Mr. Golyadkin, every one talked to Mr. Golyadkin, some even caught hold of Mr. Golyadkin. But our hero was dumb and motionless, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing... . At last, as though tearing himself from the place, he rushed out of the tavern, pushing away all and each who tried to detain him; almost unconscious, he got into the first cab that passed him and drove to his flat.

In the entry of his flat he met Mihyeev, an attendant from the office, with an official envelope in his hand.

"I know, my good man, I know all about it," our exhausted hero answered, in a weak, miserable voice; "it's official ..."

The envelope did, in fact, contain instructions to Mr. Golyadkin, signed by Andrey Filippovitch, to give up the business in his hands to Ivan Semyonovitch. Taking the envelope and giving ten kopecks to the man, Mr. Golyadkin went into his flat and saw that Petrushka was collecting all his odds and ends, all his things into a heap, evidently intending to abandon Mr. Golyadkin and move to the flat of Karolina Ivanovna, who had enticed him to take the place of Yevstafy.

Chapter 12

Petrushka came in swaggering, with a strangely casual manner and an air of vulgar triumph on his face. It was evident that he had some idea in his head, that he felt thoroughly within his rights, and he looked like an unconcerned spectator - that is, as though he were anybody's servant rather than Mr. Golyadkin's.

"I say, you know, my good lad," our hero began breathlessly, "what time is it?"

Without speaking, Petrushka went behind his partition, then returned, and in a rather independent tone announced that it was nearly half-past seven.

"Well, that's all right, my lad, that's all right. Come, you see, my boy ... allow me to tell you, my good lad, that everything, I fancy, is at an end between us."

Petrushka said nothing.

"Well, now as everything is over between us, tell me openly, as a friend, where you have been."

"Where I've been? To see good people, sir."

"I know, my good lad, I know. I have always been satisfied with you, and I give you a character ... Well, what are you doing with them now?"

"Why, sir! You know yourself. We all know a decent man won't teach you any harm."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know. Nowadays good people are rare, my lad; prize them, my friend. Well, how are they?"

"To be sure, they ... Only I can't serve you any longer, sir; as your honour must know."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know your zeal and devotion; I have seen it all, my lad, I've noticed it. I respect you, my friend. I respect a good and honest man, even though he's a lackey."

"Why, yes, to be sure! The like's of us, of course, as you know yourself, are as good as anybody. That's so. We all know, sir, that there's no getting on without a good man."

"Very well, very well, my boy, I feel it... . Come, here's your money and here's your character. Now we'll kiss and say good-bye, brother... . Come, now, my lad, I'll ask one service of you, one last service," said Mr. Golyadkin, in a solemn voice. "You see, my dear boy, all sorts of things happen. Sorrow is concealed in gilded palaces, and there's no escaping it. You know, my boy, I've always been kind to you, my boy."

Petrushka remained mute.

"I believe I've always been kind to you, my dear fellow ... Come, how much linen have we now, my dear boy?"

“Well, it’s all there. Linen shirts six, three pairs of socks; four shirtfronts; flannel vests; of underlinen two sets. You know all that yourself. I’ve got nothing of yours, sir... . I look after my master’s belongings, sir. I am like that, sir ... we all know ... and I’ve ... never been guilty of anything of the sort, sir, you know yourself, sir ...”

“I trust you, my lad, I trust you. I didn’t mean that, my friend, I didn’t mean that, you know, my lad; I tell you what ... “

“To be sure, sir, we know that already. Why, when I used to be in the service at general Stolnyakov’s ... I lost the lace through the family’s going away to Saratov ... they’ve an estate there ...”

“No; I didn’t mean that, my lad, I didn’t mean that; don’t think anything of the sort, my dear fellow ...”

“To be sure. It’s easy, as you know yourself, sir, to take away the character of folks like us. And I’ve always given satisfaction - ministers, generals, senators, counts - I’ve served them all. I’ve been at Prince Svintchatkin’s, at Colonel Pereborkin’s, at General Nedobarov’s - they’ve gone away too, they’ve gone to their property. As we all know ...”

“Yes, my lad, very good, my lad, very good. And now I’m going away, my friend ... A different path lies before each man, no one can tell what road he may have to take. Come, my lad, put out my clothes now, lay out my uniform too ... and my other trousers, my sheets, quilts and pillows ...”

“Am I to pack them all in the bag?”

“Yes, my lad, yes; the bag, please. Who knows what may happen to us. Come, my dear boy, you can go and find a carriage ...”

“A carriage?... “

“Yes, my lad, a carriage; a roomy one, and take it by the hour. And don’t imagine anything ...”

“Are you planning to go far away, sir?”

“I don’t know my lad, I don’t know that either. I think you had better pack my feather bed too. What do you think, my lad? I am relying on you, my dear fellow ...”

“Is your honour setting off at once?”

“Yes, my friend, yes! Circumstances have turned out so ... so it is, my dear fellow, so it is ...”

“To be sure, sir; when we were in the regiment the same thing happened to the lieutenant; they eloped from a country gentleman’s ...”

“Eloped? ... How! My dear fellow!”

“Yes, sir, eloped, and they were married in another house. Everything was got ready beforehand. There was a hue and cry after them; the late prince took their part, and so it was all settled ...”

“They were married, but ... how is it, my dear fellow ... How did you come to know, my boy?”

“Why, to be sure! The earth is full of rumours, sir. We know, sir, we’ve all ... to be sure, there’s no one without sin. Only I’ll tell you now, sir, let me speak plainly and

vulgarly, sir; since it has come to this, I must tell you, sir; you have an enemy - you've a rival, sir, a powerful rival, so there ..."

"I know, my dear fellow, I know; you know yourself, my dear fellow... . So, you see, I'm relying upon you. What are we to do now, my friend! How do you advise me?"

"Well, sir, if you are in that way now, if you've come, so to say, to such a pass, sir, you'll have to make some purchases, sir - say some sheets, pillows, another feather bed, a double one, a good quilt - here at the neighbours downstairs - she's a shopkeeper, sir - she has a good fox-fur cloak, so you might look at it and buy it, you might have a look at it at once. You'll need it now, sir; it's a good cloak, sir, satin-lined with fox ..."

"Very good, my lad, very good, I agree; I rely upon you, I rely upon you entirely; a cloak by all means, if necessary ... Only make haste, make haste! For God's sake make haste! I'll buy the cloak - only please make haste! It will soon be eight o'clock. Make haste for God's sake, my dear lad! Hurry up, my lad ..."

Petrushka ran up to gather together a bundle of linen, pillows, quilt, sheets, and all sorts of odds and ends, tied them up and rushed headlong out of the room. Meanwhile, Mr. Golyadkin seized the letter once more, but he could not read it. Clutching his devoted head, he leaned against the wall in a state of stupefaction. He could not think of anything, he could do nothing either, and could not even tell what was happening to him. At last, seeing that time was passing and neither Petrushka nor the fur cloak had made their appearance, Mr. Golyadkin made up his mind to go himself. Opening the door into the entry, he heard below noise, talk, disputing and scuffling ... Several of the women of the neighbouring flats were shouting, talking and protesting about something - Mr. Golyadkin knew what. Petrushka's voice was heard: then there was a sound of footsteps.

"My goodness! They'll bring all the world in here," moaned Mr. Golyadkin, wringing his hands in despair and rushing back into his room. Running back into his room, he fell almost senseless on the sofa with his face in the pillow. After lying a minute in this way, he jumped up and, without waiting for Petrushka, he put on his goloshes, his hat and his greatcoat, snatched up his papers and ran headlong downstairs.

"Nothing is wanted, nothing, my dear fellow! I will manage myself - everything myself. I don't need you for the time, and meantime, things may take a better turn, perhaps," Mr. Golyadkin muttered to Petrushka, meeting him on the stair; then he ran out into the yard, away from the house. There was a faintness at his heart, he had not yet made up his mind what was his position, what he was to do, how he was to act in the present critical position.

"Yes, how am I to act? Lord, have mercy on me! And that all this should happen!" he cried out at last in despair, tottering along the street at random; "that all this must needs happen! Why, but for this, but for just this, everything would have been put right; at one stroke, at one skilful, vigorous, firm stroke it would have been set right. I would have my finger cut off to have set right! And I know, indeed, how it would have been settled. This is how it would have been managed: I'd have gone on the spot ... said how it was ... 'with your permission, sir, I'm neither here nor there in it ...

things aren't done like that,' I would say, 'my dear sir, things aren't done like that, there's no accepting an imposter in our office; an imposter ... my dear sir, is a man ... who is worthless and of no service to his country. Do you understand that? Do you understand that, my dear sir,' I should say! That's how it would be ... But no ... after all, things are not like that ... not a bit like that ... I am talking nonsense, like a fool! A suicidal fool! It's not like that at all, you suicidal fool ... This is how things are done, though, you profligate man! ... Well, what am I to do with myself now? Well, what am I going to do with myself now. What am I fit for now? Come, what are you fit for now, for instance, you, Golyadkin, you, you worthless fellow! Well, what now? I must get a carriage; 'hire a carriage and bring it here,' says she, 'we shall get our feet wet without a carriage,' says she ... And who could ever have thought it! Fie, fie, my young lady! Fie, fie, a young lady of virtuous behaviour! Well, well, the girl we all thought so much of! You've distinguished yourself, madam, there's no doubt of that! you've distinguished yourself! ... And it all comes from immoral education. And now that I've looked into it and seen through it all I see that it is due to nothing else but immorality. Instead of looking after her as a child ... and the rod at times ... they stuff her with sweets and dainties, and the old man is always doting over her: saying 'my dear, my love, my beauty,' saying, 'we'll marry you to a count!' ... And now she has come forward herself and shown her cards, as though to say that's her little game! Instead of keeping her at home as a child, they sent her to a boarding school, to a French madame, and emigre, a Madame Falbalas or something, and she learned all sorts of things at that Madame Falbalas', and this is how it always turns out. 'Come,' says she, 'and be happy! Be in a carriage,' she says, 'at such a time, under the windows, and sing a sentimental serenade in the Spanish style; I await you and I know you love me, and we will fly together and live in a hut.' But the fact is it's impossible; since it has come to that, madam, it's impossible, it is against the law to abduct an innocent, respectable girl from her parents' roof without their sanction! And, if you come to that, why, what for and what need is there to do it? Come, she should marry a suitable person, the man marked out by destiny, and that would be the end of it. But I'm in the government service, I might lose my berth through it: I might be arrested for it, madam! I tell you that! If you did not know it. It's that German woman's doing. She's at the bottom of it all, the witch; she cooked the whole kettle of fish. For they've slandered a man, for they've invented a bit of womanish gossip about him, a regular performance by the advice of Andrey Filippovitch, that's what it came from. Otherwise how could Petrushka be mixed up in it? What has he to do with it? What need for the rogue to be in it? No, I cannot, madam, I cannot possibly, not on any account ... No, madam, this time you must really excuse me. It's all your doing, madam, it's not all the German's doing, it's not the witch's doing at all, but simply yours. For the witch is a good woman, for the witch is not to blame in any way; it's your fault, madam; it's you who are to blame, let me tell you! I shall not be charged with a crime through you, madam... . A man might be ruined ... a man might lose sight of himself, and not be able to restrain himself - a wedding, indeed! And how is

it all going to end? And how will it all be arranged? I would give a great deal to know all that! ...”

So our hero reflected in his despair. Coming to himself suddenly, he observed that he was standing somewhere in Liteyny Street. The weather was awful: it was a thaw; snow and rain were falling - just as at that memorable time when at the dread hour of midnight all Mr. Golyadkin’s troubles had begun. “This is a nice night for a journey!” thought Mr. Golyadkin, looking at the weather; “it’s death all round... . Good Lord! Where am I to find a carriage, for instance? I believe there’s something black there at the corner. We’ll see, we’ll investigate ... Lord, have mercy on us!” our hero went on, bending his weak and tottering steps in the direction in which he saw something that looked like a cab.

“No, I know what I’ll do; I’ll go straight and fall on my knees, if I can, and humbly beg, saying ‘I put my fate in your hands, in the hands of my superiors’; saying, ‘Your Excellency, be a protector and a benefactor’; and then I’ll say this and that, and explain how it is and that it is an unlawful act; ‘Do not destroy me, I look upon you as my father, do not abandon me ... save my dignity, my honour, my name, my reputation ... and save me from a miscreant, a vicious man... . He’s another person, your Excellency, and I’m another person too; he’s apart and I am myself by myself too; I am really myself by myself, your Excellency; really myself by myself,’ that’s what I shall say. ‘I cannot be like him. Change him, dismiss him, give orders for him to be changed and a godless, licentious impersonation to be suppressed ... that it may not be an example to others, your Excellency. I look upon you as a father’; those in authority over us, our benefactors and protectors, are bound, of course, to encourage such impulses... . There’s something chivalrous about it: I shall say, ‘I look upon you, my benefactor and superior, as a father, and trust my fate to you, and I will not say anything against it; I put myself in your hands, and retire from the affair myself’ ... that’s what I would say.”

“Well, my man, are you a cabman?”

“Yes ...”

“I want a cab for the evening ...”

“And does your honour want to go far?”

“For the evening, for the evening; wherever I have to go, my man, wherever I have to go.”

“Does your honour want to drive out of town?”

“Yes, my friend, out of town, perhaps. I don’t quite know myself yet, I can’t tell you for certain, my man. Maybe you see it will all be settled for the best. We all know, my friend ...”

“Yes, sir, of course we all know. Please God it may.”

“Yes, my friend, yes; thank you, my dear fellow; come, what’s your fare, my good man? ...”

“Do you want to set off at once?”

“Yes, at once, that is, no, you must wait at a certain place... . A little while, not long, you’ll have to wait... .”

“Well, if you hire me for the whole time, I couldn’t ask less than six roubles for weather like this ...”

“Oh, very well, my friend; and I thank you, my dear fellow. So, come, you can take me now, my good man.”

“Get in; allow me, I’ll put it straight a bit - now will your honour get in. Where shall I drive?”

“To the Ismailovsky Bridge, my friend.”

The driver plumped down on the box, with difficulty roused his pair of lean nags from the trough of hay, and was setting off for Ismailovsky Bridge. But suddenly Mr. Golyadkin pulled the cord, stopped the cab, and besought him in an imploring voice not to drive to Ismailovsky Bridge, but to turn back to another street. The driver turned into another street, and then minutes later Mr. Golyadkin’s newly hired equipage was standing before the house in which his Excellency had a flat. Mr. Golyadkin got out of the carriage, begged the driver to be sure to wait and with a sinking heart ran upstairs to the third storey and pulled the bell; the door was opened and our hero found himself in the entry of his Excellency’s flat.

“Is his Excellency graciously pleased to be at home?” said Mr. Golyadkin, addressing the man who opened the door.

“What do you want?” asked the servant, scrutinizing Mr. Golyadkin from head to foot.

“I, my friend ... I am Golyadkin, the titular councillor, Golyadkin ... To say ... something or other ... to explain ...”

“You must wait; you cannot ...”

“My friend, I cannot wait; my business is important, it’s business that admits of no delay ...”

“But from whom have you come? Have you brought papers?... “

“No, my friend, I am on my own account. Announce me, my friend, say something or other, explain. I’ll reward you, my good man ...”

“I cannot. His Excellency is not at home, he has visitors. Come at ten o’clock in the morning ...”

“Take in my name, my good man, I can’t wait - it is impossible... . You’ll have to answer for it, my good man.”

“Why, go and announce him! What’s the matter with you; want to save your shoe leather?” said another lackey who was lolling on the bench and had not uttered a word till then.

“Shoe leather! I was told not to show any one up, you know; their time is the morning.”

“Announce him, have you lost your tongue?”

“I’ll announce him all right - I’ve not lost my tongue. It’s not my orders; I’ve told you, it’s not my orders. Walk inside.”

Mr. Golyadkin went into the outermost room; there was a clock on the table. He glanced at it: it was half-past eight. His heart ached within him. Already he wanted to turn back, but at that very moment the footman standing at the door of the next room had already boomed out Mr. Golyadkin's name.

"Oh, what lungs," thought our hero in indescribable misery. "Why, you ought to have said: 'he has come most humbly and meekly to make an explanation ... something ... be graciously pleased to see him' ... Now the whole business is ruined; all my hopes are scattered to the winds. But ... however ... never mind ..."

There was no time to think, moreover. The lackey, returning, said, "Please walk in," and led Mr. Golyadkin into the study.

When our hero went in, he felt as though he were blinded, for he could see nothing at all ... But three or four figures seemed flitting before his eyes: "Oh, yes, they are the visitors," flashed through Mr. Golyadkin's mind. At last our hero could distinguish clearly the star on the black coat of his Excellency, then by degrees advanced to seeing the black coat and at last gained the power of complete vision... .

"What is it?" said a familiar voice above Mr. Golyadkin.

"The titular councillor, Golyadkin, your Excellency."

"Well?"

"I have come to make an explanation ..."

"How? ... What?"

"Why, yes. This is how it is. I've come for an explanation, your Excellency ..."

"But you ... but who are you? ..."

"M-m-m-mist-er Golyadkin, your Excellency, a titular councillor."

"Well, what is it you want?"

"Why, this is how it is, I look upon you as a father; I retire ... defend me from my enemy! ..."

"What's this? ..."

"We all know ..."

"What do we all know?"

Mr. Golyadkin was silent: his chin began twitching a little.

"Well?"

"I thought it was chivalrous, your Excellency ... 'There's something chivalrous in it,' I said, 'and I look upon my superior as a father' ... this is what I thought; 'protect me, I tear ... earfully ... b ... eg and that such imp ... impulses ought ... to ... be encouraged ..."

His excellency turned away, our hero for some minutes could distinguish nothing. There was a weight on his chest. His breathing was laboured; he did not know where he was standing ... He felt ashamed and sad. God knows what followed... Recovering himself, our hero noticed that his Excellency was talking with his guests, and seemed to be briskly and emphatically discussing something with them. One of the visitors Mr. Golyadkin recognized at once. This was Andrey Filippovitch; he knew no one else;

yet there was another person that seemed familiar - a tall, thick-set figure, middle-aged, possessed of very thick eyebrows and whiskers and a significant sharp expression. On his chest was an order and in his mouth a cigar. This gentleman was smoking and nodding significantly without taking the cigar out of his mouth, glancing from time to time at Mr. Golyadkin. Mr. Golyadkin felt awkward; he turned away his eyes and immediately saw another very strange visitor. Through a door which our hero had taken for a looking-glass, just as he had done once before - he made his appearance - we know who: a very intimate friend and acquaintance of Mr. Golyadkin's. Mr. Golyadkin junior had actually been till then in a little room close by, hurriedly writing something; now, apparently, he was needed - and he came in with papers under his arm, went up to his Excellency, and while waiting for exclusive attention to be paid him succeeded very adroitly in putting his spoke into the talk and consultation, taking his place a little behind Andrey Filippovitch's back and partly screening him from the gentleman smoking the cigar. Apparently Mr. Golyadkin junior took an intense interest in the conversation, to which he was listening now in a gentlemanly way, nodding his head, fidgeting with his feet, smiling, continually looking at his Excellency - as it were beseeching him with his eyes to let him put his word in.

"The scoundrel," thought Mr. Golyadkin, and involuntarily he took a step forward. At this moment his Excellency turned round and came rather hesitatingly towards Mr. Golyadkin.

"Well, that's all right, that's all right; well, run along, now. I'll look into your case, and give orders for you to be taken ..."

At this point his Excellency glanced at the gentleman with the thick whiskers. The latter nodded in assent.

Mr. Golyadkin felt and distinctly understood that they were taking him for something different and not looking at him in the proper light at all.

"In one way or another I must explain myself," he thought; "I must say, 'This is how it is, your Excellency.'"

At this point in his perplexity he dropped his eyes to the floor and to his great astonishment he saw a good-sized patch of something white on his Excellency's boots.

"Can there be a hole in them?" thought Mr. Golyadkin. Mr. Golyadkin was, however, soon convinced that his Excellency's boots were not split, but were only shining brilliantly - a phenomenon fully explained by the fact that they were patent leather and highly polished.

"It is what they call blick," thought our hero; "the term is used particularly in artists studios; in other places such a reflected light is called a rib of light."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin raised his eyes and saw that the time had come to speak, for things might easily end badly ...

Our hero took a step forward.

"I say this is how it is, your Excellency," he said, "and there's no accepting imposters nowadays."

His Excellency made no answer, but rang the bell violently. Our hero took another step forward.

“He is a vile, vicious man, your Excellency,” said our hero, beside himself and faint with terror, though he still pointed boldly and resolutely at his unworthy twin, who was fidgeting about near his Excellency. “I say this is how it is, and I am alluding to a well-known person.”

There was a general sensation at Mr. Golyadkin’s words. Andrey Filippovitch and the gentleman with the cigar nodded their heads; his Excellency impatiently tugged at the bell to summon the servants. At this point Mr. Golyadkin junior came forward in his turn.

“Your Excellency,” he said, “I humbly beg permission to speak.” There was something very resolute in Mr. Golyadkin junior’s voice; everything showed that he felt himself completely in the right.

“Allow me to ask you,” he began again, anticipating his Excellency’s reply in his eagerness, and this time addressing Mr. Golyadkin; “allow me to ask you, in whose presence you are making this explanation? Before whom are you standing, in whose room are you? ...”

Mr. Golyadkin junior was in a state of extraordinary excitement, flushed and glowing with wrath and indignation; there were positively tears in his eyes.

A lackey, appearing in the doorway, roared at the top of his voice the name of some new arrivals, the Bassavryukovs.

“A good aristocratic name, hailing from Little Russia,” thought Mr. Golyadkin, and at that moment he felt some one lay a very friendly hand on his back, then a second hand was laid on his back. Mr. Golyadkin’s infamous twin was tripping about in front leading the way; and our hero saw clearly that he was being led to the big doors of the room.

“Just as it was at Olsufy Ivanovitch’s,” he thought, and he found himself in the hall. Looking round, he saw beside him two of the Excellency’s lackeys and his twin.

“The greatcoat, the greatcoat, the greatcoat, the greatcoat, my friend! The greatcoat of my best friend!” whispered the depraved man, snatching the coat from one of the servants, and by way of a nasty and ungentlemanly joke flinging it straight at Mr. Golyadkin’s head. Extricating himself from under his coat, Mr. Golyadkin distinctly heard the two lackeys snigger. But without listening to anything, or paying attention to it, he went out of the hall and found himself on the lighted stairs. Mr. Golyadkin junior following him.

“Goodbye, your Excellency!” he shouted after Mr. Golyadkin senior.

“Scoundrel!” our hero exclaimed, beside himself.

“Well, scoundrel, then ...”

“Depraved man! ...”

“Well, depraved man, then ...” answered Mr. Golyadkin’s unworthy enemy, and with his characteristic baseness he looked down from the top of the stairs straight into Mr. Golyadkin’s face as though begging him to go on. Our hero spat with indignation and

ran out of the front door; he was so shattered, so crushed, that he had no recollection of how he got into the cab or who helped him in. Coming to himself, he found that he was being driven to Fontanka. "To Ismailovsky Bridge, then," thought Mr. Golyadkin. At this point Mr. Golyadkin tried to think of something else, but could not; there was something so terrible that he could not explain it ... "Well, never mind," our hero concluded, and he drove to Ismailovsky Bridge.

Chapter 13

... It seemed as though the weather meant to change for the better. The snow, which had till then been coming down in regular clouds, began growing visible and here and there tiny stars sparkled in it. It was only wet, muddy, damp and stifling, especially for Mr. Golyadkin, who could hardly breathe as it was. His greatcoat, soaked and heavy with wet, sent a sort of unpleasant warm dampness all through him and weighed down his exhausted legs. A feverish shiver sent sharp, shooting pains all over him; he was in a painful cold sweat of exhaustion, so much so that Mr. Golyadkin even forgot to repeat at every suitable occasion with his characteristic firmness and resolution his favourite phrase that "it all, maybe, most likely, indeed, might turn out for the best." "But all this does not matter for the time," our hero repeated, still staunch and not downhearted, wiping from his face the cold drops that streamed in all directions from the brim of his round hat, which was so soaked that it could hold no more water. Adding that all this was nothing so far, our hero tried to sit on a rather thick clump of wood, which was lying near a heap of logs in Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard. Of course, it was no good thinking of Spanish serenades or silken ladders, but it was quite necessary to think of a modest corner, snug and private, if not altogether warm. He felt greatly tempted, we may mention in passing, by that corner in the back entry of Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat in which he had once, almost at the beginning of this true story, stood for two hours between a cupboard and an old screen among all sorts of domestic odds and ends and useless litter. The fact is that Mr. Golyadkin had been standing waiting for two whole hours on this occasion in Olsufy Ivanovitch's yard. But in regard to that modest and snug little corner there were certain drawbacks which had not existed before. The first drawback was the fact that it was probably now a marked place and that certain precautionary measures had been taken in regard to it since the scandal at Olsufy Ivanovitch's last ball. Secondly, he had to wait for a signal from Klara Olsufyevna, for there was bound to be some such signal, it was always a feature in such cases and, "it didn't begin with us and it won't end with us."

At this point Mr. Golyadkin very appropriately remembered a novel he had read long ago in which the heroine, in precisely similar circumstances, signalled to Alfred by tying a pink ribbon to her window. But now, at night, in the climate of Petersburg, famous for its dampness and unreliability, a pink ribbon was hardly appropriate and, in fact, was utterly out of the question.

"No, it's not a matter of silk ladders," thought our hero, "and I had better stay here quietly and comfortably ... I had better stand here."

And he selected a place in the yard exactly opposite the window, near a stack of firewood. Of course, many persons, grooms and coachmen, were continually crossing the yard, and there was, besides, the rumbling of wheels and the snorting of horses and so on; yet it was a convenient place, whether he was observed or not; but now, anyway, there was the advantage of being to some extent in the shadow, and no one could see Mr. Golyadkin while he himself could see everything.

The windows were brightly lit up, there was some sort of ceremonious party at Olsufy Ivanovitch's. But he could hear no music as yet.

"So it's not a ball, but a party of some other sort," thought our hero, somewhat aghast. "Is it today?" floated the doubt through him. "Have I made a mistake in the date? Perhaps; anything is possible... . Yes, to be sure, anything is possible ... Perhaps she wrote a letter to me yesterday, and it didn't reach me, and perhaps it did not reach me because Petrushka put his spoke in, the rascal! Or it was tomorrow, that is - wait with a carriage... ."

At this point our hero turned cold all over and felt in his pocket for the letter, to make sure. But to his surprise the letter was not in his pocket.

"How's this?" muttered Mr. Golyadkin, more dead than alive. "Where did I leave it? Then I must have lost it. That is the last straw!" he moaned at last. "Oh, if it falls into evil hands! Perhaps it has already. Good Lord! What may it not lead to! It may lead to something such that ... Ach, my miserable fate!" At this point Mr. Golyadkin began trembling like a leaf at the thought that perhaps his vicious twin had thrown the greatcoat at him with the object of stealing the letter of which he had somehow got an inkling from Mr. Golyadkin's enemies.

"What's more, he's stealing it," thought our hero, "as evidence ... but why evidence! ..."

After the first shock of horror, the blood rushed to Mr. Golyadkin's head. Moaning and gnashing his teeth, he clutched his burning head, sank back on his block of wood and relapsed into brooding... . But he could form no coherent thought. Figures kept flitting through his brain, incidents came back to his memory, now vaguely, now very distinctly, the tunes of some foolish songs kept ringing in his ears... . He was in great distress, unnatural distress!

"My God, my God!" our hero thought, recovering himself a little, and suppressing a muffled sob, "give me fortitude in the immensity of my afflictions! That I am done for, utterly destroyed - of that there can be no doubt, and that's all in the natural order of things, since it cannot be otherwise. To begin with, I've lost my berth, I've certainly lost it, I must have lost it ... Well, supposing things are set right somehow. Supposing I have money enough to begin with: I must have another lodging, furniture of some sort... . In the first place, I shan't have Petrushka. I can get on without the rascal ... somehow, with help from the people of the house; well, that will be all right! I can go in and out when I like, and Petrushka won't grumble at my coming in late - yes, that is so; that's why it's a good thing to have the people in the house... . Well, supposing that's all right; but all that's nothing to do with it."

At this point the thought of the real position again dawned upon Mr. Golyadkin's memory. He looked round.

"Oh, Lord, have mercy on me, have mercy on me! What am I talking about?" he thought, growing utterly desperate and clutching his burning head in his hands... .

"Won't you soon be going, sir?" a voice pronounced above Mr. Golyadkin. Our hero started; before him stood his cabman, who was also drenched through and shivering; growing impatient, and having nothing to do, he had thought fit to take a look at Mr. Golyadkin behind the woodstack.

"I am all right, my friend ... I am coming soon, soon, very soon; you wait ..."

The cabman walked away, grumbling to himself. "What is he grumbling about?" Mr. Golyadkin wondered through his tears. "Why, I have hired him for the evening, why, I'm ... within my rights now ... that's so! I've hired him for the evening and that's the end of it. If one stands still, it's just the same. That's for me to decide. I am free to drive on or not to drive on. And my staying here by the woodstack has nothing to do with the case... and don't dare to say anything; think, the gentleman wants to stand behind the woodstack, and so he's standing behind it ... and he is not disgracing any one's honour! That's the fact of the matter.

"I tell you what it is, madam, if you care to know. Nowadays, madam, nobody lives in a hut, or anything of that sort. No, indeed. And in our industrial age there's no getting on without morality, a fact of which you are a fatal example, madam ... You say we must get a job as a register clerk and live in a hut on the sea-shore. In the first place, madam, there are no register clerks on the sea-shore, and in the second place we can't get a job as a register clerk. For supposing, for example, I send in a petition, present myself - saying a register clerk's place or something of the sort ... and defend me from my enemy ... they'll tell you, madam, they'll say, to be sure ... we've lots of register clerks, and here you are not at Madame Falbalas', where you learnt the rules of good behaviour of which you are a fatal example. Good behaviour, madam, means staying at home, honouring your father and not thinking about suitors prematurely. Suitors will come in good time, madam, that's so! Of course, you are bound to have some accomplishments, such as playing the piano sometimes, speaking French, history, geography, scripture and arithmetic, that's the truth of it! And that's all you need. Cooking, too, cooking certainly forms part of the education of a well-behaved girl! But as it is, in the first place, my fine lady, they won't let you go, they'll raise a hue and cry after you, and then they'll lock you up in a nunnery. How will it be then, madam? What will you have me do then? Would you have me, madam, follow the example of some stupid novels, and melt into tears on a neighbouring hillock, gazing at the cold walls of your prison house, and finally die, following the example of some wretched German poets and novelists. Is that it, madam? But, to begin with, allow me to tell you, as a friend, that things are not done like that, and in the second place I would have given you and your parents, too, a good thrashing for letting you read French books; for French books teach you no good. There's a poison in them ... a pernicious poison, madam! Or do you imagine, allow me to ask you, or do you imagine that we

shall elope with impunity, or something of that sort ... that was shall have a hut on the shore of the sea and so on; and that we shall begin billing and cooing and talking about our feelings, and that so we shall spend our lives in happiness and content; and then there would be little ones - so then we shall ... shall go to our father, the civil councillor, Olsufy Ivanovitch, and say, 'we've got a little one, and so, on this propitious occasion remove your curse, and bless the couple.' No, madam, I tell you again, that's not the way to do things, and for the first thing there'll be no billing and cooing and please don't reckon on it. Nowadays, madam, the husband is the master and a good, well-brought-up wife should try and please him in every way. And endearments, madam, are not in favour, nowadays, in our industrial age; the day of Jean Jacques Rousseau is over. The husband comes home, for instance, hungry from the office, and asks, 'Isn't there something to eat, my love, a drop of vodka to drink, a bit of salt fish to eat?' So then, madam, you must have the vodka and the herring ready. Your husband will eat it with relish, and he won't so much as look at you, he'll only say 'Run into the kitchen, kitten,' he'll say, 'and look after the dinner, and at most, once a week, he'll kiss you, even then rather indifferently ... That's how it will be with us, my young lady! Yes, even then indifferently... . That's how it will be, if one considers it, if it has come to one's looking at the thing in that way... . And how do I come in? Why have you mixed me up in your caprices? 'The noble man who is suffering for your sake and will be dear to your heart for ever,' and so on. but in the first place, madam, I am not suited to you, you know yourself, I'm not a great hand at compliments, I'm not fond of uttering perfumed trifles for the ladies. I'm not fond of lady-killers, and I must own I've never been a beauty to look at. You won't find any swagger or false shame in me, and I tell you so now in all sincerity. This is the fact of the matter: we can boast of nothing but a straightforward, open character and common sense; we have nothing to do with intrigues. I am not one to intrigue, I say so and I'm proud of it - that's the fact of the matter! ... I wear no mask among straightforward people, and to tell you the whole truth... ."

Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin started. The red and perfectly sopping beard of the cabman appeared round the woodstack again... .

"I am coming directly, my friend. I'm coming at once, you know," Mr. Golyadkin responded in a trembling and failing voice.

The cabman scratched his head, then stroked his beard, and moved a step forward... stood still and looked suspiciously at Mr. Golyadkin.

"I am coming directly, my friend; you see, my friend ... I ... just a little, you see, only a second! ... more ... here, you see, my friend... ."

"Aren't you coming at all?" the cabman asked at last, definitely coming up to Mr. Golyadkin.

"No, my friend, I'm coming directly. I am waiting, you see, my friend... ."

"So I see ..."

"You see, my friend, I ... What part of the country do you come from, my friend?"

"We are under a master ..."

“And have you a good master? ...”

“All right ...”

“Yes, my friend; you stay here, my friend, you see ... Have you been in Petersburg long, my friend?”

“It’s a year since I came ...”

“And are you getting on all right, my friend?”

“Middling.”

“To be sure, my friend, to be sure. You must thank Providence, my friend. You must look out for straightforward people. Straightforward people are non too common nowadays, my friend; he would give you washing, food, and drink, my good fellow, a good man would. But sometimes you see tears shed for the sake of gold, my friend ... you see a lamentable example; that’s the fact of the matter, my friend... .”

The cabman seemed to feel sorry for Mr. Golyadkin. “Well, your honour, I’ll wait. Will your honour be waiting long?”

“No, my friend, no; I ... you know ... I won’t wait any longer, my good man ... What do you think, my friend? I rely upon you. I won’t stay any longer.”

“Aren’t you going at all?”

“No, my friend, no; I’ll reward you, my friend ... that’s the fact of the matter. How much ought I to give you, my dear fellow?”

“What you hired me for, please, sir. I’ve been waiting here a long time; don’t be hard on a man, sir.”

“Well, here, my good man, here.”

At this point Mr. Golyadkin gave six roubles to the cabman, and made up his mind in earnest to waste no more time, that is, to clear off straight away, especially as the cabman was dismissed and everything was over, and so it was useless to wait longer. He rushed out of the yard, went out of the gate, turned to the left and without looking round took to his heels, breathless and rejoicing. “Perhaps it will all be for the best,” he thought, “and perhaps in this way I’ve run away from trouble.” Mr. Golyadkin suddenly became all at once light-hearted. “Oh, if only it could turn out for the best!” thought our hero, though he put little faith in his own words. “I know what I’ll do ...” he thought. “No, I know, I’d better try the other tack ... Or wouldn’t it be better to do this? ...” In this way, hesitating and seeking for the solution of his doubts, our hero ran to Semyonovsky Bridge; but while running to Semyonovsky Bridge he very rationally and conclusively decided to return.

“It will be better so,” he thought. “I had better try the other tack, that is ... I will just go - I’ll look on simply as an outsider, an outsider - and nothing more, whatever happens - it’s not my fault, that’s the fact of the matter! That’s how it shall be now.”

Deciding to return, our hero actually did return, the more readily because with this happy thought he conceived of himself now as quite an outsider.

“It’s the best thing; one’s not responsible for anything, and one will see all that’s necessary ... that’s the fact of the matter!”

It was a safe plan and that settled it. Reassured, he crept back under the peaceful shelter of his soothing and protecting woodstack, and began gazing intently at the window. This time he was not destined to gaze and wait long. Suddenly a strange commotion became apparent at all the windows. Figures appeared, curtains were drawn back, whole groups of people were crowding to the windows at Olsufy Ivanovitch's flat. All were peeping out looking for something in the yard. From the security of his woodstack, our hero, too, began with curiosity watching the general commotion, and with interest craned forward to right and to left so far as he could within the shadow of the woodstack. Suddenly he started, held his breath and almost sat down with horror. It seemed to him - in short, he realized, that they were looking for nothing and for nobody but him, Mr. Golyadkin! Every one was looking in his direction. It was impossible to escape; they saw him ... In a flutter, Mr. Golyadkin huddled as closely as he could to the woodstack, and only then noticed that the treacherous shadow had betrayed him, that it did not cover him completely. Our hero would have been delighted at that moment to creep into a mouse-hole in the woodstack, and there meekly to remain, if only it had been possible. But it was absolutely impossible. In his agony he began at last staring openly and boldly at the windows, it was the best thing to do... . And suddenly he glowed with shame. He had been fully discovered, every one was staring at him at once, they were all waving their hands, all were nodding their heads at him, all were calling to him; then several windows creaked as they opened, several voices shouted something to him at once... .

"I wonder why they don't whip these naughty girls as children," our hero muttered to himself, losing his head completely. Suddenly there an down the steps he (we know who), without his hat or greatcoat, breathless, rubbing his hands, wriggling, capering, perfidiously displaying intense joy at seeing Mr. Golyadkin.

"Yakov Petrovitch," whispered this individual, so notorious for his worthlessness, "Yakov Petrovitch, are you here? You'll catch cold. It's chilly here, Yakov Petrovitch. Come indoors."

"Yakov Petrovitch! No, I'm all right, Yakov Petrovitch," our hero muttered in a submissive voice.

"No, this won't do, Yakov Petrovitch, I beg you, I humbly beg you to wait with us. 'Make him welcome and bring him in,' they say, 'Yakov Petrovitch.'"

"No, Yakov Petrovitch, you see, I'd better ... I had better go home, Yakov Petrovitch ..." said our hero, burning at a slow fire and freezing at the same time with shame and terror.

"No - no - no - no!" whispered the loathsome person. "No - no - no, on no account! Come along," he said resolutely, and he dragged Mr. Golyadkin senior to the steps. Mr. Golyadkin senior did not at all want to go, but as every one was looking at them, it would have been stupid to struggle and resist; so our hero went - though, indeed, one cannot say that he went, because he did not know in the least what was being done with him. Though, after all, it made no difference!

Before our hero had time to recover himself and come to his senses, he found himself in the drawing-room. He was pale, dishevelled, harassed; with lustreless eyes he scanned the crowd - horror! The drawing-room, all the rooms - were full to overflowing. There were masses of people, a whole galaxy of ladies; and all were crowding round Mr. Golyadkin and he perceived clearly that they were all forcing him in one direction.

“Not towards the door,” was the thought that floated through Mr. Golyadkin’s mind.

They were, in fact, forcing him not towards the door but Olsufy Ivanovitch’s easy chair. On one side of the armchair stood Klara Olsufyevna, pale, languid, melancholy, but gorgeously dressed. Mr. Golyadkin was particularly struck by a little white flower which rested on her superb hair. On the other side of the armchair stood Vladimir Semyonovitch, clad in black, with his new order in his buttonhole. Mr. Golyadkin was led in, as we have described above, straight up to Olsufy Ivanovitch - on one side of him Mr. Golyadkin junior, who had assumed an air of great decorum and propriety, to the immense relief of our hero, while on the other side was Andrey Filippovitch, with a very solemn expression on his face.

“What can it mean?” Mr. Golyadkin wondered.

When he saw that he was being led to Olsufy Ivanovitch, an idea struck him like a flash of lightning. The thought of the intercepted letter darted through his brain. In great agony our hero stood before Olsufy Ivanovitch’s chair.

“What will he say now?” he wondered to himself. “Of course, it will be all aboveboard now, that is, straightforward and, one may say, honourable; I shall say this is how it is, and so on.”

But what our hero apparently feared did not happen. Olsufy Ivanovitch received Mr. Golyadkin very warmly, and though he did not hold out his hand to him, yet as he gazed at our hero, he shook his grey and venerable head - shook it with an air of solemn melancholy and yet of goodwill. So, at least, it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin. He even fancied that a tear glittered in Olsufy Ivanovitch’s lustreless eyes; he raised his eyes and saw that there seemed to be tears, too, on the eyelashes of Klara Olsufyevna, who was standing by - that there seemed to be something of the same sort even in the eyes of Vladimir Semyonovitch - that the unruffled and composed dignity of Andrey Filippovitch has the same significance as the general tearful sympathy - that even the young man who was so much like a civil councillor, seizing the opportunity, was sobbing bitterly... . Though perhaps this was only all Mr. Golyadkin’s fancy, because he was so much moved himself, and distinctly felt the hot tears running down his cheeks... .

Feeling reconciled with mankind and his destiny, and filled with love at the moment, not only for Olsufy Ivanovitch, not only for the whole party collected there, but even for his noxious twin (who seemed now to be by no means noxious, and not even to be his twin at all, but a person very agreeable in himself and in no way connected with him), our hero, in a voice broken with sobs, tried to express his feelings to Olsufy Ivanovitch, but was too much overcome by all that he had gone through, and could not utter a word; he could only, with an expressive gesture, point meekly to his heart...

At last, probably to spare the feelings of the old man, Andrey Filippovitch led Mr. Golyadkin a little away, though he seemed to leave him free to do as he liked. Smiling, muttering something to himself, somewhat bewildered, yet almost completely reconciled with fate and his fellow creatures, our hero began to make his way through the crowd of guests. Every one made way for him, every one looked at him with strange curiosity and with mysterious, unaccountable sympathy. Our hero went into another room; he met with the same attention everywhere; he was vaguely conscious of the whole crowd closely following him, noting every step he took, talking in undertones among themselves of something very interesting, shaking their heads, arguing and discussing in whispers. Mr. Golyadkin wanted very much to know what they were discussing in whispers. Looking round, he saw near him Mr. Golyadkin junior. Feeling an overwhelming impulse to seize his hand and draw him aside, Mr. Golyadkin begged the other Yakov Petrovitch most particularly to co-operate with him in all his future undertakings, and not to abandon him at a critical moment. Mr. Golyadkin junior nodded his head gravely and warmly pressed the hand of Mr. Golyadkin senior. Our hero's heart was quivering with the intensity of his emotion. He was gasping for breath, however; he felt so oppressed - so oppressed; he felt that all those eyes fastened upon him were oppressing and dominating him Mr. Golyadkin caught a glimpse of the councillor who wore a wig. The latter was looking at him with a stern, searching eye, not in the least softened by the general sympathy... .

Our hero made up his mind to go straight up to him in order to smile at him and have an immediate explanation, but this somehow did not come off. For one instant Mr. Golyadkin became almost unconscious, almost lost all memory, all feeling.

When he came to himself again he noticed that he was the centre of a large ring formed by the rest of the party round him. Suddenly Mr. Golyadkin's name was called from the other room; noise and excitement, all rushed to the door of the first room, almost carrying our hero along with them. In the crush the hard-hearted councillor in the wig was side by side with Mr. Golyadkin, and, taking our hero by the hand, he made him sit down opposite Olsufy Ivanovitch, at some distance from the latter, however. Every one in the room sat down; the guests were arranged in rows round Mr. Golyadkin and Olsufy Ivanovitch. Everything was hushed; every one preserved a solemn silence; every one was watching Olsufy Ivanovitch, evidently expecting something out of the ordinary. Mr. Golyadkin noticed that beside Olsufy Ivanovitch's chair and directly facing the councillor sat Mr. Golyadkin junior, with Andrey Filippovitch. The silence was prolonged; they were evidently expecting something.

"Just as it is in a family when some one is setting off on a far journey. We've only to stand up and pray now," thought our hero.

Suddenly there was a general stir which interrupted Mr. Golyadkin's reflections. Something they had been waiting for happened.

"He is coming, he is coming!" passed from one to another in the crowd.

"Who is it that is coming?" floated through Mr. Golyadkin's mind, and he shuddered at a strange sensation. "High time too!" said the councillor, looking intently at Andrey

Ivanovitch. Andrey Filippovitch, for his part, glanced at Olsufy Ivanovitch. Olsufy Ivanovitch gravely and solemnly nodded his head.

“Let us stand up,” said the councillor, and he made Mr. Golyadkin get up. All rose to their feet. Then the councillor took Mr. Golyadkin senior by the hand, and Andrey Filippovitch took Mr. Golyadkin junior, and in this way these two precisely similar persons were conducted through the expectant crowd surrounding them. Our hero looked about him in perplexity; but he was at once checked and his attention was called to Mr. Golyadkin junior, who was holding out his hand to him.

“They want to reconcile us,” thought our hero, and with emotion he held out his hand to Mr. Golyadkin junior; and then - then bent his head forward towards him. The other Mr. Golyadkin did the same... .

At this point it seemed to Mr. Golyadkin senior that his perfidious friend was smiling, that he gave a sly, hurried wink to the crowd of onlookers, and that there was something sinister in the face of the worthless Mr. Golyadkin junior, that he even made a grimace at the moment of his Judas kiss... .

There was a ringing in Mr. Golyadkin’s ears, and a darkness before his eyes; it seemed to him that an infinite multitude, an unending series of precisely similar Golyadkins were noisily bursting in at every door of the room; but it was too late... . the resounding, treacherous kiss was over, and ...

Then quite an unexpected event occurred... . The door opened noisily, and in the doorway stood a man, the very sight of whom sent a chill to Mr. Golyadkin’s heart. He stood rooted to the spot. A cry of horror died away in his choking throat. Yet Mr. Golyadkin knew it all beforehand, and had had a presentiment of something of the sort for a long time. The new arrival went up to Mr. Golyadkin gravely and solemnly. Mr. Golyadkin knew this personage very well. He had seen him before, had seen him very often, had seen him that day ... This personage was a tall, thick-set man in a black dress-coat with a good-sized cross on his breast, and was possessed of thick, very black whiskers; nothing was lacking but the cigar in the mouth to complete the picture. Yet this person’s eyes, as we have mentioned already, sent a chill to the heart of Mr. Golyadkin. With a grave and solemn air this terrible man approached the pitiable hero of our story... . Our hero held out his hand to him; the stranger took his hand and drew him along with him ... With a crushed and desperate air our hero looked about him.

“It’s ... it’s Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz, doctor of medicine and surgery; your old acquaintance, Yakov Petrovitch!” a detestable voice whispered in Mr. Golyadkin’s ear. He looked around: it was Mr. Golyadkin’s twin, so revolting in the despicable meanness of his soul. A malicious, indecent joy shone in his countenance; he was rubbing his hands with rapture, he was turning his head from side to side in ecstasy, he was fawning round every one in delight and seemed ready to dance with glee. At last he pranced forward, took a candle from one of the servants and walked in front, showing the way to Mr. Golyadkin and Krestyan Ivanovitch. Mr. Golyadkin heard the whole party in the drawing-room rush after him, crowding and squeezing one another,

and all beginning to repeat after Mr. Golyadkin himself, "It is all right, don't be afraid, Yakov Petrovitch; this is your old friend and acquaintance, you know, Krestyan Ivanovitch Rutenspitz..."

At last they came out on the brightly lighted stairs; there was a crowd of people on the stairs too. The front door was thrown open noisily, and Mr. Golyadkin found himself on the steps, together with Krestyan Ivanovitch. At the entrance stood a carriage with four horses that were snorting with impatience. The malignant Mr. Golyadkin junior in three bounds flew down the stair and opened the carriage door himself. Krestyan Ivanovitch, with an impressive gesture, asked Mr. Golyadkin to get in. There was no need of the impressive gesture, however; there were plenty of people to help him in... . Faint with horror, Mr. Golyadkin looked back. The whole of the brightly lighted staircase was crowded with people; inquisitive eyes were looking at him from all sides; Olsufy Ivanovitch himself was sitting in his easy chair on the top landing, and watching all that took place with deep interest. Every one was waiting. A murmur of impatience passed through the crowd when Mr. Golyadkin looked back.

"I hope I have done nothing ... nothing reprehensible ... or that can call for severity ... and general attention in regard to my official relations," our hero brought out in desperation. A clamour of talk rose all round him, all were shaking their head, tears started from Mr. Golyadkin's eyes.

"In that case I'm ready ... I have full confidence ... and I entrust my fate to Krestyan Ivanovitch... ."

No sooner had Mr. Golyadkin declared that he entrusted his fate to Krestyan Ivanovitch than a dreadful, deafening shout of joy came from all surrounding him and was repeated in a sinister echo through the whole of the waiting crowd. Then Krestyan Ivanovitch on one side and Andrey Filippovitch on the other helped Mr. Golyadkin into the carriage; his double, in his usual nasty way, was helping to get him in from behind. The unhappy Mr. Golyadkin senior took his last look on all and everything, and, shivering like a kitten that has been drenched with cold water - if the comparison may be permitted - got into the carriage. Krestyan Ivanovitch followed him immediately. The carriage door slammed. There was a swish of the whip on the horses' backs... the horses started off... . The crowd dashed after Mr. Golyadkin. The shrill, furious shouts of his enemies pursued him by way of good wishes for his journey. For some time several persons were still running by the carriage that bore away Mr. Golyadkin; but by degrees they were left behind, till at last they all disappeared. Mr. Golyadkin's unworthy twin kept up longer than any one. With his hands in the trouser pockets of his green uniform he ran on with a satisfied air, skipping first to one and then to the other side of the carriage, sometimes catching hold of the window-frame and hanging on by it, poking his head in at the window, and throwing farewell kisses to Mr. Golyadkin. But he began to get tired, he was less and less often to be seen, and at last vanished altogether. There was a dull ache in Mr. Golyadkin's heart; a hot rush of blood set Mr. Golyadkin's head throbbing; he felt stifled, he longed to unbutton

himself - to bare his breast, to cover it with snow and pour cold water on it. He sank at last into forgetfulness... .

When he came to himself, he saw that the horses were taking him along an unfamiliar road. There were dark patches of copse on each side of it; it was desolate and deserted. Suddenly he almost swooned; two fiery eyes were staring at him in the darkness, and those two eyes were glittering with malignant, hellish glee. "That's not Krestyan Ivanovitch! Who is it? Or is it he? It is. It is Krestyan Ivanovitch, but not the old Krestyan Ivanovitch, it's another Krestyan Ivanovitch! It's a terrible Krestyan Ivanovitch!" ...

"Krestyan Ivanovitch, I ... I believe ... I'm all right, Krestyan Ivanovitch," our hero was beginning timidly in a trembling voice, hoping by his meekness and submission to soften the terrible Krestyan Ivanovitch a little.

"You get free quarters, wood, with light, and service, the which you deserve not," Krestyan Ivanovitch's answer rang out, stern and terrible as a judge's sentence.

Our hero shrieked and clutched his head in his hands. Alas! For a long while he had been haunted by a presentiment of this.

The Gambler

Translated by CJ Hogarth

I

At length I returned from two weeks leave of absence to find that my patrons had arrived three days ago in Roulettenberg. I received from them a welcome quite different to that which I had expected. The General eyed me coldly, greeted me in rather haughty fashion, and dismissed me to pay my respects to his sister. It was clear that from SOMEWHERE money had been acquired. I thought I could even detect a certain shamefacedness in the General's glance. Maria Philipovna, too, seemed distraught, and conversed with me with an air of detachment. Nevertheless, she took the money which I handed to her, counted it, and listened to what I had to tell. To luncheon there were expected that day a Monsieur Mezentsov, a French lady, and an Englishman; for, whenever money was in hand, a banquet in Muscovite style was always given. Polina Alexandrovna, on seeing me, inquired why I had been so long away. Then, without waiting for an answer, she departed. Evidently this was not mere accident, and I felt that I must throw some light upon matters. It was high time that I did so.

I was assigned a small room on the fourth floor of the hotel (for you must know that I belonged to the General's suite). So far as I could see, the party had already gained some notoriety in the place, which had come to look upon the General as a Russian nobleman of great wealth. Indeed, even before luncheon he charged me, among other things, to get two thousand-franc notes changed for him at the hotel counter, which put us in a position to be thought millionaires at all events for a week! Later, I was about to take Mischa and Nadia for a walk when a summons reached me from the staircase that I must attend the General. He began by deigning to inquire of me where I was going to take the children; and as he did so, I could see that he failed to look me in the eyes. He WANTED to do so, but each time was met by me with such a fixed, disrespectful stare that he desisted in confusion. In pompous language, however, which jumbled one sentence into another, and at length grew disconnected, he gave me to understand that I was to lead the children altogether away from the Casino, and out into the park. Finally his anger exploded, and he added sharply:

"I suppose you would like to take them to the Casino to play roulette? Well, excuse my speaking so plainly, but I know how addicted you are to gambling. Though I am not your mentor, nor wish to be, at least I have a right to require that you shall not actually compromise me."

"I have no money for gambling," I quietly replied.

"But you will soon be in receipt of some," retorted the General, reddening a little as he dived into his writing desk and applied himself to a memorandum book. From it he saw that he had 120 roubles of mine in his keeping.

“Let us calculate,” he went on. “We must translate these roubles into thalers. Here—take 100 thalers, as a round sum. The rest will be safe in my hands.”

In silence I took the money.

“You must not be offended at what I say,” he continued. “You are too touchy about these things. What I have said I have said merely as a warning. To do so is no more than my right.”

When returning home with the children before luncheon, I met a cavalcade of our party riding to view some ruins. Two splendid carriages, magnificently horsed, with Mlle. Blanche, Maria Philipovna, and Polina Alexandrovna in one of them, and the Frenchman, the Englishman, and the General in attendance on horseback! The passers-by stopped to stare at them, for the effect was splendid—the General could not have improved upon it. I calculated that, with the 4000 francs which I had brought with me, added to what my patrons seemed already to have acquired, the party must be in possession of at least 7000 or 8000 francs—though that would be none too much for Mlle. Blanche, who, with her mother and the Frenchman, was also lodging in our hotel. The latter gentleman was called by the lacqueys “Monsieur le Comte,” and Mlle. Blanche’s mother was dubbed “Madame la Comtesse.” Perhaps in very truth they WERE “Comte et Comtesse.”

I knew that “Monsieur le Comte” would take no notice of me when we met at dinner, as also that the General would not dream of introducing us, nor of recommending me to the “Comte.” However, the latter had lived awhile in Russia, and knew that the person referred to as an “uchitel” is never looked upon as a bird of fine feather. Of course, strictly speaking, he knew me; but I was an uninvited guest at the luncheon—the General had forgotten to arrange otherwise, or I should have been dispatched to dine at the table d’hôte. Nevertheless, I presented myself in such guise that the General looked at me with a touch of approval; and, though the good Maria Philipovna was for showing me my place, the fact of my having previously met the Englishman, Mr. Astley, saved me, and thenceforward I figured as one of the company.

This strange Englishman I had met first in Prussia, where we had happened to sit vis-a-vis in a railway train in which I was travelling to overtake our party; while, later, I had run across him in France, and again in Switzerland—twice within the space of two weeks! To think, therefore, that I should suddenly encounter him again here, in Roulettenberg! Never in my life had I known a more retiring man, for he was shy to the pitch of imbecility, yet well aware of the fact (for he was no fool). At the same time, he was a gentle, amiable sort of an individual, and, even on our first encounter in Prussia I had contrived to draw him out, and he had told me that he had just been to the North Cape, and was now anxious to visit the fair at Nizhni Novgorod. How he had come to make the General’s acquaintance I do not know, but, apparently, he was much struck with Polina. Also, he was delighted that I should sit next him at table, for he appeared to look upon me as his bosom friend.

During the meal the Frenchman was in great feather: he was discursive and pompous to every one. In Moscow too, I remembered, he had blown a great many bubbles.

Interminably he discoursed on finance and Russian politics, and though, at times, the General made feints to contradict him, he did so humbly, and as though wishing not wholly to lose sight of his own dignity.

For myself, I was in a curious frame of mind. Even before luncheon was half finished I had asked myself the old, eternal question: "WHY do I continue to dance attendance upon the General, instead of having left him and his family long ago?" Every now and then I would glance at Polina Alexandrovna, but she paid me no attention; until eventually I became so irritated that I decided to play the boor.

First of all I suddenly, and for no reason whatever, plunged loudly and gratuitously into the general conversation. Above everything I wanted to pick a quarrel with the Frenchman; and, with that end in view I turned to the General, and exclaimed in an overbearing sort of way—indeed, I think that I actually interrupted him—that that summer it had been almost impossible for a Russian to dine anywhere at tables d'hote. The General bent upon me a glance of astonishment.

"If one is a man of self-respect," I went on, "one risks abuse by so doing, and is forced to put up with insults of every kind. Both at Paris and on the Rhine, and even in Switzerland—there are so many Poles, with their sympathisers, the French, at these tables d'hote that one cannot get a word in edgeways if one happens only to be a Russian."

This I said in French. The General eyed me doubtfully, for he did not know whether to be angry or merely to feel surprised that I should so far forget myself.

"Of course, one always learns SOMETHING EVERYWHERE," said the Frenchman in a careless, contemptuous sort of tone.

"In Paris, too, I had a dispute with a Pole," I continued, "and then with a French officer who supported him. After that a section of the Frenchmen present took my part. They did so as soon as I told them the story of how once I threatened to spit into Monsignor's coffee."

"To spit into it?" the General inquired with grave disapproval in his tone, and a stare, of astonishment, while the Frenchman looked at me unbelievably.

"Just so," I replied. "You must know that, on one occasion, when, for two days, I had felt certain that at any moment I might have to depart for Rome on business, I repaired to the Embassy of the Holy See in Paris, to have my passport visaed. There I encountered a sacristan of about fifty, and a man dry and cold of mien. After listening politely, but with great reserve, to my account of myself, this sacristan asked me to wait a little. I was in a great hurry to depart, but of course I sat down, pulled out a copy of L'Opinion Nationale, and fell to reading an extraordinary piece of invective against Russia which it happened to contain. As I was thus engaged I heard some one enter an adjoining room and ask for Monsignor; after which I saw the sacristan make a low bow to the visitor, and then another bow as the visitor took his leave. I ventured to remind the good man of my own business also; whereupon, with an expression of, if anything, increased dryness, he again asked me to wait. Soon a third visitor arrived who, like myself, had come on business (he was an Austrian of some sort);

and as soon as ever he had stated his errand he was conducted upstairs! This made me very angry. I rose, approached the sacristan, and told him that, since Monsignor was receiving callers, his lordship might just as well finish off my affair as well. Upon this the sacristan shrunk back in astonishment. It simply passed his understanding that any insignificant Russian should dare to compare himself with other visitors of Monsignor's! In a tone of the utmost effrontery, as though he were delighted to have a chance of insulting me, he looked me up and down, and then said: "Do you suppose that Monsignor is going to put aside his coffee for YOU?" But I only cried the louder: "Let me tell you that I am going to SPIT into that coffee! Yes, and if you do not get me my passport visaed this very minute, I shall take it to Monsignor myself."

"What? While he is engaged with a Cardinal? screeched the sacristan, again shrinking back in horror. Then, rushing to the door, he spread out his arms as though he would rather die than let me enter.

Thereupon I declared that I was a heretic and a barbarian—"Je suis heretique et barbare," I said, "and that these archbishops and cardinals and monsignors, and the rest of them, meant nothing at all to me. In a word, I showed him that I was not going to give way. He looked at me with an air of infinite resentment. Then he snatched up my passport, and departed with it upstairs. A minute later the passport had been visaed! Here it is now, if you care to see it,"—and I pulled out the document, and exhibited the Roman visa.

"But—" the General began.

"What really saved you was the fact that you proclaimed yourself a heretic and a barbarian," remarked the Frenchman with a smile. "Cela n'était pas si bete."

"But is that how Russian subjects ought to be treated? Why, when they settle here they dare not utter even a word—they are ready even to deny the fact that they are Russians! At all events, at my hotel in Paris I received far more attention from the company after I had told them about the fracas with the sacristan. A fat Polish nobleman, who had been the most offensive of all who were present at the table d'hôte, at once went upstairs, while some of the Frenchmen were simply disgusted when I told them that two years ago I had encountered a man at whom, in 1812, a French 'hero' fired for the mere fun of discharging his musket. That man was then a boy of ten and his family are still residing in Moscow."

"Impossible!" the Frenchman spluttered. "No French soldier would fire at a child!"

"Nevertheless the incident was as I say," I replied. "A very respected ex-captain told me the story, and I myself could see the scar left on his cheek."

The Frenchman then began chattering volubly, and the General supported him; but I recommended the former to read, for example, extracts from the memoirs of General Perovski, who, in 1812, was a prisoner in the hands of the French. Finally Maria Philipovna said something to interrupt the conversation. The General was furious with me for having started the altercation with the Frenchman. On the other hand, Mr. Astley seemed to take great pleasure in my brush with Monsieur, and, rising from the table, proposed that we should go and have a drink together. The same afternoon,

at four o'clock, I went to have my customary talk with Polina Alexandrovna; and, the talk soon extended to a stroll. We entered the Park, and approached the Casino, where Polina seated herself upon a bench near the fountain, and sent Nadia away to a little distance to play with some other children. Mischa also I dispatched to play by the fountain, and in this fashion we—that is to say, Polina and myself—contrived to find ourselves alone.

Of course, we began by talking on business matters. Polina seemed furious when I handed her only 700 gulden, for she had thought to receive from Paris, as the proceeds of the pledging of her diamonds, at least 2000 gulden, or even more.

“Come what may, I MUST have money,” she said. “And get it somehow I will—otherwise I shall be ruined.”

I asked her what had happened during my absence.

“Nothing; except that two pieces of news have reached us from St. Petersburg. In the first place, my grandmother is very ill, and unlikely to last another couple of days. We had this from Timothy Petrovitch himself, and he is a reliable person. Every moment we are expecting to receive news of the end.”

“All of you are on the tiptoe of expectation?” I queried.

“Of course—all of us, and every minute of the day. For a year-and-a-half now we have been looking for this.”

“Looking for it?”

“Yes, looking for it. I am not her blood relation, you know—I am merely the General's step-daughter. Yet I am certain that the old lady has remembered me in her will.”

“Yes, I believe that you WILL come in for a good deal,” I said with some assurance.

“Yes, for she is fond of me. But how come you to think so?”

I answered this question with another one. “That Marquis of yours,” I said, “—is HE also familiar with your family secrets?”

“And why are you yourself so interested in them?” was her retort as she eyed me with dry grimness.

“Never mind. If I am not mistaken, the General has succeeded in borrowing money of the Marquis.”

“It may be so.”

“Is it likely that the Marquis would have lent the money if he had not known something or other about your grandmother? Did you notice, too, that three times during luncheon, when speaking of her, he called her ‘La Baboulenka’? [Dear little Grandmother]. What loving, friendly behaviour, to be sure!”

“Yes, that is true. As soon as ever he learnt that I was likely to inherit something from her he began to pay me his addresses. I thought you ought to know that.”

“Then he has only just begun his courting? Why, I thought he had been doing so a long while!”

“You KNOW he has not,” retorted Polina angrily. “But where on earth did you pick up this Englishman?” She said this after a pause.

"I KNEW you would ask about him!" Whereupon I told her of my previous encounters with Astley while travelling.

"He is very shy," I said, "and susceptible. Also, he is in love with you.—"

"Yes, he is in love with me," she replied.

"And he is ten times richer than the Frenchman. In fact, what does the Frenchman possess? To me it seems at least doubtful that he possesses anything at all."

"Oh, no, there is no doubt about it. He does possess some chateau or other. Last night the General told me that for certain. NOW are you satisfied? "

"Nevertheless, in your place I should marry the Englishman."

"And why?" asked Polina.

"Because, though the Frenchman is the handsomer of the two, he is also the baser; whereas the Englishman is not only a man of honour, but ten times the wealthier of the pair."

"Yes? But then the Frenchman is a marquis, and the cleverer of the two," remarked Polina imperturbably.

"Is that so?" I repeated.

"Yes; absolutely."

Polina was not at all pleased at my questions; I could see that she was doing her best to irritate me with the brusquerie of her answers. But I took no notice of this.

"It amuses me to see you grow angry," she continued. "However, inasmuch as I allow you to indulge in these questions and conjectures, you ought to pay me something for the privilege."

"I consider that I have a perfect right to put these questions to you," was my calm retort; "for the reason that I am ready to pay for them, and also care little what becomes of me."

Polina giggled.

"Last time you told me—when on the Shlangenberg—that at a word from me you would be ready to jump down a thousand feet into the abyss. Some day I may remind you of that saying, in order to see if you will be as good as your word. Yes, you may depend upon it that I shall do so. I hate you because I have allowed you to go to such lengths, and I also hate you and still more—because you are so necessary to me. For the time being I want you, so I must keep you."

Then she made a movement to rise. Her tone had sounded very angry. Indeed, of late her talks with me had invariably ended on a note of temper and irritation—yes, of real temper.

"May I ask you who is this Mlle. Blanche?" I inquired (since I did not wish Polina to depart without an explanation).

"You KNOW who she is—just Mlle. Blanche. Nothing further has transpired. Probably she will soon be Madame General—that is to say, if the rumours that Grandmamma is nearing her end should prove true. Mlle. Blanche, with her mother and her cousin, the Marquis, know very well that, as things now stand, we are ruined."

"And is the General at last in love?"

“That has nothing to do with it. Listen to me. Take these 700 florins, and go and play roulette with them. Win as much for me as you can, for I am badly in need of money.

So saying, she called Nadia back to her side, and entered the Casino, where she joined the rest of our party. For myself, I took, in musing astonishment, the first path to the left. Something had seemed to strike my brain when she told me to go and play roulette. Strangely enough, that something had also seemed to make me hesitate, and to set me analysing my feelings with regard to her. In fact, during the two weeks of my absence I had felt far more at my ease than I did now, on the day of my return; although, while travelling, I had moped like an imbecile, rushed about like a man in a fever, and actually beheld her in my dreams. Indeed, on one occasion (this happened in Switzerland, when I was asleep in the train) I had spoken aloud to her, and set all my fellow-travellers laughing. Again, therefore, I put to myself the question: “Do I, or do I not love her?” and again I could return myself no answer or, rather, for the hundredth time I told myself that I detested her. Yes, I detested her; there were moments (more especially at the close of our talks together) when I would gladly have given half my life to have strangled her! I swear that, had there, at such moments, been a sharp knife ready to my hand, I would have seized that knife with pleasure, and plunged it into her breast. Yet I also swear that if, on the Shlangenberg, she had REALLY said to me, “Leap into that abyss,” I should have leapt into it, and with equal pleasure. Yes, this I knew well. One way or the other, the thing must soon be ended. She, too, knew it in some curious way; the thought that I was fully conscious of her inaccessibility, and of the impossibility of my ever realising my dreams, afforded her, I am certain, the keenest possible pleasure. Otherwise, is it likely that she, the cautious and clever woman that she was, would have indulged in this familiarity and openness with me? Hitherto (I concluded) she had looked upon me in the same light that the old Empress did upon her servant—the Empress who hesitated not to unrobe herself before her slave, since she did not account a slave a man. Yes, often Polina must have taken me for something less than a man!”

Still, she had charged me with a commission—to win what I could at roulette. Yet all the time I could not help wondering WHY it was so necessary for her to win something, and what new schemes could have sprung to birth in her ever-fertile brain. A host of new and unknown factors seemed to have arisen during the last two weeks. Well, it behoved me to divine them, and to probe them, and that as soon as possible. Yet not now: at the present moment I must repair to the roulette-table.

II

I confess I did not like it. Although I had made up my mind to play, I felt averse to doing so on behalf of some one else. In fact, it almost upset my balance, and I entered the gaming rooms with an angry feeling at my heart. At first glance the scene irritated me. Never at any time have I been able to bear the flunkeyishness which one meets in the Press of the world at large, but more especially in that of Russia, where, almost every evening, journalists write on two subjects in particular namely, on the splendour and luxury of the casinos to be found in the Rhenish towns, and on the heaps of gold which are daily to be seen lying on their tables. Those journalists are not paid for doing so: they write thus merely out of a spirit of disinterested complaisance. For there is nothing splendid about the establishments in question; and, not only are there no heaps of gold to be seen lying on their tables, but also there is very little money to be seen at all. Of course, during the season, some madman or another may make his appearance—generally an Englishman, or an Asiatic, or a Turk—and (as had happened during the summer of which I write) win or lose a great deal; but, as regards the rest of the crowd, it plays only for petty gulden, and seldom does much wealth figure on the board.

When, on the present occasion, I entered the gaming-rooms (for the first time in my life), it was several moments before I could even make up my mind to play. For one thing, the crowd oppressed me. Had I been playing for myself, I think I should have left at once, and never have embarked upon gambling at all, for I could feel my heart beginning to beat, and my heart was anything but cold-blooded. Also, I knew, I had long ago made up my mind, that never should I depart from Roulettenberg until some radical, some final, change had taken place in my fortunes. Thus, it must and would be. However ridiculous it may seem to you that I was expecting to win at roulette, I look upon the generally accepted opinion concerning the folly and the grossness of hoping to win at gambling as a thing even more absurd. For why is gambling a whit worse than any other method of acquiring money? How, for instance, is it worse than trade? True, out of a hundred persons, only one can win; yet what business is that of yours or of mine?

At all events, I confined myself at first simply to looking on, and decided to attempt nothing serious. Indeed, I felt that, if I began to do anything at all, I should do it in an absent-minded, haphazard sort of way—of that I felt certain. Also, it behoved me to learn the game itself; since, despite a thousand descriptions of roulette which I had read with ceaseless avidity, I knew nothing of its rules, and had never even seen it played.

In the first place, everything about it seemed to me so foul—so morally mean and foul. Yet I am not speaking of the hungry, restless folk who, by scores nay, even by hundreds—could be seen crowded around the gaming-tables. For in a desire to win quickly and to win much I can see nothing sordid; I have always applauded the opinion of a certain dead and gone, but cocksure, moralist who replied to the excuse that "one may always gamble moderately", by saying that to do so makes things worse, since, in that case, the profits too will always be moderate.

Insignificant profits and sumptuous profits do not stand on the same footing. No, it is all a matter of proportion. What may seem a small sum to a Rothschild may seem a large sum to me, and it is not the fault of stakes or of winnings that everywhere men can be found winning, can be found depriving their fellows of something, just as they do at roulette. As to the question whether stakes and winnings are, in themselves, immoral is another question altogether, and I wish to express no opinion upon it. Yet the very fact that I was full of a strong desire to win caused this gambling for gain, in spite of its attendant squalor, to contain, if you will, something intimate, something sympathetic, to my eyes: for it is always pleasant to see men dispensing with ceremony, and acting naturally, and in an unbuttoned mood... .

Yet, why should I so deceive myself? I could see that the whole thing was a vain and unreasoning pursuit; and what, at the first glance, seemed to me the ugliest feature in this mob of roulette players was their respect for their occupation—the seriousness, and even the humility, with which they stood around the gaming tables. Moreover, I had always drawn sharp distinctions between a game which is *de mauvais genre* and a game which is permissible to a decent man. In fact, there are two sorts of gaming—namely, the game of the gentleman and the game of the plebs—the game for gain, and the game of the herd. Herein, as said, I draw sharp distinctions. Yet how essentially base are the distinctions! For instance, a gentleman may stake, say, five or ten louis d'or—seldom more, unless he is a very rich man, when he may stake, say, a thousand francs; but, he must do this simply for the love of the game itself—simply for sport, simply in order to observe the process of winning or of losing, and, above all things, as a man who remains quite uninterested in the possibility of his issuing a winner. If he wins, he will be at liberty, perhaps, to give vent to a laugh, or to pass a remark on the circumstance to a bystander, or to stake again, or to double his stake; but, even this he must do solely out of curiosity, and for the pleasure of watching the play of chances and of calculations, and not because of any vulgar desire to win. In a word, he must look upon the gaming-table, upon roulette, and upon *trente et quarante*, as mere relaxations which have been arranged solely for his amusement. Of the existence of the lures and gains upon which the bank is founded and maintained he must profess to have not an inkling. Best of all, he ought to imagine his fellow-gamblers and the rest of the mob which stands trembling over a coin to be equally rich and gentlemanly with himself, and playing solely for recreation and pleasure. This complete ignorance of the realities, this innocent view of mankind, is what, in my opinion, constitutes the truly aristocratic. For instance, I have seen even fond mothers so far indulge their

guileless, elegant daughters—misses of fifteen or sixteen—as to give them a few gold coins and teach them how to play; and though the young ladies may have won or have lost, they have invariably laughed, and departed as though they were well pleased. In the same way, I saw our General once approach the table in a stolid, important manner. A lacquey darted to offer him a chair, but the General did not even notice him. Slowly he took out his money bags, and slowly extracted 300 francs in gold, which he staked on the black, and won. Yet he did not take up his winnings—he left them there on the table. Again the black turned up, and again he did not gather in what he had won; and when, in the third round, the RED turned up he lost, at a stroke, 1200 francs. Yet even then he rose with a smile, and thus preserved his reputation; yet I knew that his money bags must be chafing his heart, as well as that, had the stake been twice or thrice as much again, he would still have restrained himself from venting his disappointment.

On the other hand, I saw a Frenchman first win, and then lose, 30,000 francs cheerfully, and without a murmur. Yes; even if a gentleman should lose his whole substance, he must never give way to annoyance. Money must be so subservient to gentility as never to be worth a thought. Of course, the SUPREMELY aristocratic thing is to be entirely oblivious of the mire of rabble, with its setting; but sometimes a reverse course may be aristocratic to remark, to scan, and even to gape at, the mob (for preference, through a lorgnette), even as though one were taking the crowd and its squalor for a sort of raree show which had been organised specially for a gentleman's diversion. Though one may be squeezed by the crowd, one must look as though one were fully assured of being the observer—of having neither part nor lot with the observed. At the same time, to stare fixedly about one is unbecoming; for that, again, is ungentlemanly, seeing that no spectacle is worth an open stare—are no spectacles in the world which merit from a gentleman too pronounced an inspection.

However, to me personally the scene DID seem to be worth undisguised contemplation—more especially in view of the fact that I had come there not only to look at, but also to number myself sincerely and wholeheartedly with, the mob. As for my secret moral views, I had no room for them amongst my actual, practical opinions. Let that stand as written: I am writing only to relieve my conscience. Yet let me say also this: that from the first I have been consistent in having an intense aversion to any trial of my acts and thoughts by a moral standard. Another standard altogether has directed my life... .

As a matter of fact, the mob was playing in exceedingly foul fashion. Indeed, I have an idea that sheer robbery was going on around that gaming-table. The croupiers who sat at the two ends of it had not only to watch the stakes, but also to calculate the game—an immense amount of work for two men! As for the crowd itself—well, it consisted mostly of Frenchmen. Yet I was not then taking notes merely in order to be able to give you a description of roulette, but in order to get my bearings as to my behaviour when I myself should begin to play. For example, I noticed that nothing was more common than for another's hand to stretch out and grab one's winnings whenever one had won. Then there would arise a dispute, and frequently an uproar;

and it would be a case of “I beg of you to prove, and to produce witnesses to the fact, that the stake is yours.”

At first the proceedings were pure Greek to me. I could only divine and distinguish that stakes were hazarded on numbers, on “odd” or “even,” and on colours. Polina’s money I decided to risk, that evening, only to the amount of 100 gulden. The thought that I was not going to play for myself quite unnerved me. It was an unpleasant sensation, and I tried hard to banish it. I had a feeling that, once I had begun to play for Polina, I should wreck my own fortunes. Also, I wonder if any one has EVER approached a gaming-table without falling an immediate prey to superstition? I began by pulling out fifty gulden, and staking them on “even.” The wheel spun and stopped at 13. I had lost! With a feeling like a sick qualm, as though I would like to make my way out of the crowd and go home, I staked another fifty gulden—this time on the red. The red turned up. Next time I staked the 100 gulden just where they lay—and again the red turned up. Again I staked the whole sum, and again the red turned up. Clutching my 400 gulden, I placed 200 of them on twelve figures, to see what would come of it. The result was that the croupier paid me out three times my total stake! Thus from 100 gulden my store had grown to 800! Upon that such a curious, such an inexplicable, unwonted feeling overcame me that I decided to depart. Always the thought kept recurring to me that if I had been playing for myself alone I should never have had such luck. Once more I staked the whole 800 gulden on the “even.” The wheel stopped at 4. I was paid out another 800 gulden, and, snatching up my pile of 1600, departed in search of Polina Alexandrovna.

I found the whole party walking in the park, and was able to get an interview with her only after supper. This time the Frenchman was absent from the meal, and the General seemed to be in a more expansive vein. Among other things, he thought it necessary to remind me that he would be sorry to see me playing at the gaming-tables. In his opinion, such conduct would greatly compromise him—especially if I were to lose much. ” And even if you were to WIN much I should be compromised,” he added in a meaning sort of way. “Of course I have no RIGHT to order your actions, but you yourself will agree that...” As usual, he did not finish his sentence. I answered drily that I had very little money in my possession, and that, consequently, I was hardly in a position to indulge in any conspicuous play, even if I did gamble. At last, when ascending to my own room, I succeeded in handing Polina her winnings, and told her that, next time, I should not play for her.

“Why not?” she asked excitedly.

“Because I wish to play FOR MYSELF,” I replied with a feigned glance of astonishment. “That is my sole reason.”

“Then are you so certain that your roulette-playing will get us out of our difficulties?” she inquired with a quizzical smile.

I said very seriously, “Yes,” and then added: “Possibly my certainty about winning may seem to you ridiculous; yet, pray leave me in peace.”

Nonetheless she insisted that I ought to go halves with her in the day's winnings, and offered me 800 gulden on condition that henceforth, I gambled only on those terms; but I refused to do so, once and for all—stating, as my reason, that I found myself unable to play on behalf of any one else, “I am not unwilling so to do,” I added, “but in all probability I should lose.”

“Well, absurd though it be, I place great hopes on your playing of roulette,” she remarked musingly; “wherefore, you ought to play as my partner and on equal shares; wherefore, of course, you will do as I wish.”

Then she left me without listening to any further protests on my part.

III

On the morrow she said not a word to me about gambling. In fact, she purposely avoided me, although her old manner to me had not changed: the same serene coolness was hers on meeting me — a coolness that was mingled even with a spice of contempt and dislike. In short, she was at no pains to conceal her aversion to me. That I could see plainly. Also, she did not trouble to conceal from me the fact that I was necessary to her, and that she was keeping me for some end which she had in view. Consequently there became established between us relations which, to a large extent, were incomprehensible to me, considering her general pride and aloofness. For example, although she knew that I was madly in love with her, she allowed me to speak to her of my passion (though she could not well have showed her contempt for me more than by permitting me, unhindered and unrebuked, to mention to her my love).

“You see,” her attitude expressed, “how little I regard your feelings, as well as how little I care for what you say to me, or for what you feel for me.” Likewise, though she spoke as before concerning her affairs, it was never with complete frankness. In her contempt for me there were refinements. Although she knew well that I was aware of a certain circumstance in her life of something which might one day cause her trouble, she would speak to me about her affairs (whenever she had need of me for a given end) as though I were a slave or a passing acquaintance—yet tell them me only in so far as one would need to know them if one were going to be made temporary use of. Had I not known the whole chain of events, or had she not seen how much I was pained and disturbed by her teasing insistency, she would never have thought it worthwhile to soothe me with this frankness—even though, since she not infrequently used me to execute commissions that were not only troublesome, but risky, she ought, in my opinion, to have been frank in ANY case. But, forsooth, it was not worth her while to trouble about MY feelings—about the fact that I was uneasy, and, perhaps, thrice as put about by her cares and misfortunes as she was herself!

For three weeks I had known of her intention to take to roulette. She had even warned me that she would like me to play on her behalf, since it was unbecoming for her to play in person; and, from the tone of her words I had gathered that there was something on her mind besides a mere desire to win money. As if money could matter to HER! No, she had some end in view, and there were circumstances at which I could guess, but which I did not know for certain. True, the slavery and abasement in which she held me might have given me (such things often do so) the power to question her with abrupt directness (seeing that,, inasmuch as I figured in her eyes as a mere slave and nonentity, she could not very well have taken offence at any rude curiosity);

but the fact was that, though she let me question her, she never returned me a single answer, and at times did not so much as notice me. That is how matters stood.

Next day there was a good deal of talk about a telegram which, four days ago, had been sent to St. Petersburg, but to which there had come no answer. The General was visibly disturbed and moody, for the matter concerned his mother. The Frenchman, too, was excited, and after dinner the whole party talked long and seriously together—the Frenchman's tone being extraordinarily presumptuous and offhand to everybody. It almost reminded one of the proverb, "Invite a man to your table, and soon he will place his feet upon it." Even to Polina he was brusque almost to the point of rudeness. Yet still he seemed glad to join us in our walks in the Casino, or in our rides and drives about the town. I had long been aware of certain circumstances which bound the General to him; I had long been aware that in Russia they had hatched some scheme together although I did not know whether the plot had come to anything, or whether it was still only in the stage of being talked of. Likewise I was aware, in part, of a family secret—namely, that, last year, the Frenchman had bailed the General out of debt, and given him 30,000 roubles wherewith to pay his Treasury dues on retiring from the service. And now, of course, the General was in a vice — although the chief part in the affair was being played by Mlle. Blanche. Yes, of this last I had no doubt.

But WHO was this Mlle. Blanche? It was said of her that she was a Frenchwoman of good birth who, living with her mother, possessed a colossal fortune. It was also said that she was some relation to the Marquis, but only a distant one a cousin, or cousin-german, or something of the sort. Likewise I knew that, up to the time of my journey to Paris, she and the Frenchman had been more ceremonious towards our party—they had stood on a much more precise and delicate footing with them; but that now their acquaintanceship—their friendship, their intimacy—had taken on a much more off-hand and rough-and-ready air. Perhaps they thought that our means were too modest for them, and, therefore, unworthy of politeness or reticence. Also, for the last three days I had noticed certain looks which Astley had kept throwing at Mlle. Blanche and her mother; and it had occurred to me that he must have had some previous acquaintance with the pair. I had even surmised that the Frenchman too must have met Mr. Astley before. Astley was a man so shy, reserved, and taciturn in his manner that one might have looked for anything from him. At all events the Frenchman accorded him only the slightest of greetings, and scarcely even looked at him. Certainly he did not seem to be afraid of him; which was intelligible enough. But why did Mlle. Blanche also never look at the Englishman?—particularly since, a propos of something or another, the Marquis had declared the Englishman to be immensely and indubitably rich? Was not that a sufficient reason to make Mlle. Blanche look at the Englishman? Anyway the General seemed extremely uneasy; and, one could well understand what a telegram to announce the death of his mother would mean for him!

Although I thought it probable that Polina was avoiding me for a definite reason, I adopted a cold and indifferent air; for I felt pretty certain that it would not be long before she herself approached me. For two days, therefore, I devoted my attention

to Mlle. Blanche. The poor General was in despair! To fall in love at fifty-five, and with such vehemence, is indeed a misfortune! And add to that his widowerhood, his children, his ruined property, his debts, and the woman with whom he had fallen in love! Though Mlle. Blanche was extremely good-looking, I may or may not be understood when I say that she had one of those faces which one is afraid of. At all events, I myself have always feared such women. Apparently about twenty-five years of age, she was tall and broad-shouldered, with shoulders that sloped; yet though her neck and bosom were ample in their proportions, her skin was dull yellow in colour, while her hair (which was extremely abundant—sufficient to make two coiffures) was as black as Indian ink. Add to that a pair of black eyes with yellowish whites, a proud glance, gleaming teeth, and lips which were perennially pomaded and redolent of musk. As for her dress, it was invariably rich, effective, and chic, yet in good taste. Lastly, her feet and hands were astonishing, and her voice a deep contralto. Sometimes, when she laughed, she displayed her teeth, but at ordinary times her air was taciturn and haughty—especially in the presence of Polina and Maria Philipovna. Yet she seemed to me almost destitute of education, and even of wits, though cunning and suspicious. This, apparently, was not because her life had been lacking in incident. Perhaps, if all were known, the Marquis was not her kinsman at all, nor her mother, her mother; but there was evidence that, in Berlin, where we had first come across the pair, they had possessed acquaintances of good standing. As for the Marquis himself, I doubt to this day if he was a Marquis—although about the fact that he had formerly belonged to high society (for instance, in Moscow and Germany) there could be no doubt whatever. What he had formerly been in France I had not a notion. All I knew was that he was said to possess a chateau. During the last two weeks I had looked for much to transpire, but am still ignorant whether at that time anything decisive ever passed between Mademoiselle and the General. Everything seemed to depend upon our means—upon whether the General would be able to flourish sufficient money in her face. If ever the news should arrive that the grandmother was not dead, Mlle. Blanche, I felt sure, would disappear in a twinkling. Indeed, it surprised and amused me to observe what a passion for intrigue I was developing. But how I loathed it all! With what pleasure would I have given everybody and everything the go-by! Only—I could not leave Polina. How, then, could I show contempt for those who surrounded her? Espionage is a base thing, but—what have I to do with that?

Mr. Astley, too, I found a curious person. I was only sure that he had fallen in love With Polina. A remarkable and diverting circumstance is the amount which may lie in the mien of a shy and painfully modest man who has been touched with the divine passion—especially when he would rather sink into the earth than betray himself by a single word or look. Though Mr. Astley frequently met us when we were out walking, he would merely take off his hat and pass us by, though I knew he was dying to join us. Even when invited to do so, he would refuse. Again, in places of amusement—in the Casino, at concerts, or near the fountain—he was never far from the spot where we were sitting. In fact, WHEREVER we were in the Park, in the forest, or on the

Shlangenberg—one needed but to raise one’s eyes and glance around to catch sight of at least a PORTION of Mr. Astley’s frame sticking out—whether on an adjacent path or behind a bush. Yet never did he lose any chance of speaking to myself; and, one morning when we had met, and exchanged a couple of words, he burst out in his usual abrupt way, without saying “Good-morning.”

“That Mlle. Blanche,” he said. “Well, I have seen a good many women like her.”

After that he was silent as he looked me meaningly in the face. What he meant I did not know, but to my glance of inquiry he returned only a dry nod, and a reiterated “It is so.” Presently, however, he resumed:

“Does Mlle. Polina like flowers?”

” I really cannot say,” was my reply.

“What? You cannot say?” he cried in great astonishment.

“No; I have never noticed whether she does so or not,” I repeated with a smile.

“Hm! Then I have an idea in my mind,” he concluded. Lastly, with a nod, he walked away with a pleased expression on his face. The conversation had been carried on in execrable French.

IV

Today has been a day of folly, stupidity, and ineptness. The time is now eleven o'clock in the evening, and I am sitting in my room and thinking. It all began, this morning, with my being forced to go and play roulette for Polina Alexandrovna. When she handed me over her store of six hundred gulden I exacted two conditions —namely, that I should not go halves with her in her winnings, if any (that is to say, I should not take anything for myself), and that she should explain to me, that same evening, why it was so necessary for her to win, and how much was the sum which she needed. For, I could not suppose that she was doing all this merely for the sake of money. Yet clearly she did need some money, and that as soon as possible, and for a special purpose. Well, she promised to explain matters, and I departed. There was a tremendous crowd in the gaming-rooms. What an arrogant, greedy crowd it was! I pressed forward towards the middle of the room until I had secured a seat at a croupier's elbow. Then I began to play in timid fashion, venturing only twenty or thirty gulden at a time. Meanwhile, I observed and took notes. It seemed to me that calculation was superfluous, and by no means possessed of the importance which certain other players attached to it, even though they sat with ruled papers in their hands, whereon they set down the coups, calculated the chances, reckoned, staked, and—lost exactly as we more simple mortals did who played without any reckoning at all.

However, I deduced from the scene one conclusion which seemed to me reliable —namely, that in the flow of fortuitous chances there is, if not a system, at all events a sort of order. This, of course, is a very strange thing. For instance, after a dozen middle figures there would always occur a dozen or so outer ones. Suppose the ball stopped twice at a dozen outer figures; it would then pass to a dozen of the first ones, and then, again, to a dozen of the middle ciphers, and fall upon them three or four times, and then revert to a dozen outers; whence, after another couple of rounds, the ball would again pass to the first figures, strike upon them once, and then return thrice to the middle series—continuing thus for an hour and a half, or two hours. One, three, two: one, three, two. It was all very curious. Again, for the whole of a day or a morning the red would alternate with the black, but almost without any order, and from moment to moment, so that scarcely two consecutive rounds would end upon either the one or the other. Yet, next day, or, perhaps, the next evening, the red alone would turn up, and attain a run of over two score, and continue so for quite a length of time—say, for a whole day. Of these circumstances the majority were pointed out to me by Mr. Astley, who stood by the gaming-table the whole morning, yet never once staked in person.

For myself, I lost all that I had on me, and with great speed. To begin with, I staked two hundred gulden on "even," and won. Then I staked the same amount again, and won: and so on some two or three times. At one moment I must have had in my hands—gathered there within a space of five minutes—about 4000 gulden. That, of course, was the proper moment for me to have departed, but there arose in me a strange sensation as of a challenge to Fate—as of a wish to deal her a blow on the cheek, and to put out my tongue at her. Accordingly I set down the largest stake allowed by the rules—namely, 4000 gulden—and lost. Fired by this mishap, I pulled out all the money left to me, staked it all on the same venture, and—again lost! Then I rose from the table, feeling as though I were stupefied. What had happened to me I did not know; but, before luncheon I told Polina of my losses—until which time I walked about the Park.

At luncheon I was as excited as I had been at the meal three days ago. Mlle. Blanche and the Frenchman were lunching with us, and it appeared that the former had been to the Casino that morning, and had seen my exploits there. So now she showed me more attention when talking to me; while, for his part, the Frenchman approached me, and asked outright if it had been my own money that I had lost. He appeared to be suspicious as to something being on foot between Polina and myself, but I merely fired up, and replied that the money had been all my own.

At this the General seemed extremely surprised, and asked me whence I had procured it; whereupon I replied that, though I had begun only with 100 gulden, six or seven rounds had increased my capital to 5000 or 6000 gulden, and that subsequently I had lost the whole in two rounds.

All this, of course, was plausible enough. During my recital I glanced at Polina, but nothing was to be discerned on her face. However, she had allowed me to fire up without correcting me, and from that I concluded that it was my cue to fire up, and to conceal the fact that I had been playing on her behalf. "At all events," I thought to myself, "she, in her turn, has promised to give me an explanation to-night, and to reveal to me something or another."

Although the General appeared to be taking stock of me, he said nothing. Yet I could see uneasiness and annoyance in his face. Perhaps his straitened circumstances made it hard for him to have to hear of piles of gold passing through the hands of an irresponsible fool like myself within the space of a quarter of an hour. Now, I have an idea that, last night, he and the Frenchman had a sharp encounter with one another. At all events they closeted themselves together, and then had a long and vehement discussion; after which the Frenchman departed in what appeared to be a passion, but returned, early this morning, to renew the combat. On hearing of my losses, however, he only remarked with a sharp, and even a malicious, air that "a man ought to go more carefully." Next, for some reason or another, he added that, "though a great many Russians go in for gambling, they are no good at the game."

"I think that roulette was devised specially for Russians," I retorted; and when the Frenchman smiled contemptuously at my reply I further remarked that I was sure I

was right; also that, speaking of Russians in the capacity of gamblers, I had far more blame for them than praise—of that he could be quite sure.

“Upon what do you base your opinion?” he inquired.

“Upon the fact that to the virtues and merits of the civilised Westerner there has become historically added—though this is not his chief point—a capacity for acquiring capital; whereas, not only is the Russian incapable of acquiring capital, but also he exhausts it wantonly and of sheer folly. None the less we Russians often need money; wherefore, we are glad of, and greatly devoted to, a method of acquisition like roulette—whereby, in a couple of hours, one may grow rich without doing any work. This method, I repeat, has a great attraction for us, but since we play in wanton fashion, and without taking any trouble, we almost invariably lose.”

“To a certain extent that is true,” assented the Frenchman with a self-satisfied air.

“Oh no, it is not true,” put in the General sternly. “And you,” he added to me, “you ought to be ashamed of yourself for traducing your own country!”

“I beg pardon,” I said. “Yet it would be difficult to say which is the worst of the two—Russian ineptitude or the German method of growing rich through honest toil.”

“What an extraordinary idea,” cried the General.

“And what a RUSSIAN idea!” added the Frenchman.

I smiled, for I was rather glad to have a quarrel with them.

“I would rather live a wandering life in tents,” I cried, “than bow the knee to a German idol!”

“To WHAT idol?” exclaimed the General, now seriously angry.

“To the German method of heaping up riches. I have not been here very long, but I can tell you that what I have seen and verified makes my Tartar blood boil. Good Lord! I wish for no virtues of that kind. Yesterday I went for a walk of about ten versts; and, everywhere I found that things were even as we read of them in good German picture-books — that every house has its ‘Fater,’ who is horribly beneficent and extraordinarily honourable. So honourable is he that it is dreadful to have anything to do with him; and I cannot bear people of that sort. Each such ‘Fater’ has his family, and in the evenings they read improving books aloud. Over their roof-trees there murmur elms and chestnuts; the sun has sunk to his rest; a stork is roosting on the gable; and all is beautifully poetic and touching. Do not be angry, General. Let me tell you something that is even more touching than that. I can remember how, of an evening, my own father, now dead, used to sit under the lime trees in his little garden, and to read books aloud to myself and my mother. Yes, I know how things ought to be done. Yet every German family is bound to slavery and to submission to its ‘Fater.’ They work like oxen, and amass wealth like Jews. Suppose the ‘Fater’ has put by a certain number of gulden which he hands over to his eldest son, in order that the said son may acquire a trade or a small plot of land. Well, one result is to deprive the daughter of a dowry, and so leave her among the unwedded. For the same reason, the parents will have to sell the younger son into bondage or the ranks of the army, in order that he may earn more towards the family capital. Yes, such things ARE done, for I have

been making inquiries on the subject. It is all done out of sheer rectitude—out of a rectitude which is magnified to the point of the younger son believing that he has been RIGHTLY sold, and that it is simply idyllic for the victim to rejoice when he is made over into pledge. What more have I to tell? Well, this—that matters bear just as hardly upon the eldest son. Perhaps he has his Gretchen to whom his heart is bound; but he cannot marry her, for the reason that he has not yet amassed sufficient gulden. So, the pair wait on in a mood of sincere and virtuous expectation, and smilingly deposit themselves in pawn the while. Gretchen's cheeks grow sunken, and she begins to wither; until at last, after some twenty years, their substance has multiplied, and sufficient gulden have been honourably and virtuously accumulated. Then the 'Fater' blesses his forty-year-old heir and the thirty-five-year-old Gretchen with the sunken bosom and the scarlet nose; after which he bursts, into tears, reads the pair a lesson on morality, and dies. In turn the eldest son becomes a virtuous 'Fater,' and the old story begins again. In fifty or sixty years' time the grandson of the original 'Fater' will have amassed a considerable sum; and that sum he will hand over to, his son, and the latter to HIS son, and so on for several generations; until at length there will issue a Baron Rothschild, or a 'Hoppe and Company,' or the devil knows what! Is it not a beautiful spectacle—the spectacle of a century or two of inherited labour, patience, intellect, rectitude, character, perseverance, and calculation, with a stork sitting on the roof above it all? What is more; they think there can never be anything better than this; wherefore, from their point of view they begin to judge the rest of the world, and to censure all who are at fault—that is to say, who are not exactly like themselves. Yes, there you have it in a nutshell. For my own part, I would rather grow fat after the Russian manner, or squander my whole substance at roulette. I have no wish to be 'Hoppe and Company' at the end of five generations. I want the money for MYSELF, for in no way do I look upon my personality as necessary to, or meet to be given over to, capital. I may be wrong, but there you have it. Those are MY views."

"How far you may be right in what you have said I do not know," remarked the General moodily; "but I DO know that you are becoming an insufferable farceur whenever you are given the least chance."

As usual, he left his sentence unfinished. Indeed, whenever he embarked upon anything that in the least exceeded the limits of daily small-talk, he left unfinished what he was saying. The Frenchman had listened to me contemptuously, with a slight protruding of his eyes; but, he could not have understood very much of my harangue. As for Polina, she had looked on with serene indifference. She seemed to have heard neither my voice nor any other during the progress of the meal.

V

Yes, she had been extraordinarily meditative. Yet, on leaving the table, she immediately ordered me to accompany her for a walk. We took the children with us, and set out for the fountain in the Park.

I was in such an irritated frame of mind that in rude and abrupt fashion I blurted out a question as to “why our Marquis de Griers had ceased to accompany her for strolls, or to speak to her for days together.”

“Because he is a brute,” she replied in rather a curious way. It was the first time that I had heard her speak so of De Griers: consequently, I was momentarily awed into silence by this expression of resentment.

“Have you noticed, too, that today he is by no means on good terms with the General?” I went on.

“Yes— and I suppose you want to know why,” she replied with dry captiousness. “You are aware, are you not, that the General is mortgaged to the Marquis, with all his property? Consequently, if the General’s mother does not die, the Frenchman will become the absolute possessor of everything which he now holds only in pledge.”

“Then it is really the case that everything is mortgaged? I have heard rumours to that effect, but was unaware how far they might be true.”

“Yes, they ARE true. What then?”

“Why, it will be a case of ‘Farewell, Mlle. Blanche,’” I remarked; “for in such an event she would never become Madame General. Do you know, I believe the old man is so much in love with her that he will shoot himself if she should throw him over. At his age it is a dangerous thing to fall in love.”

“Yes, something, I believe, WILL happen to him,” assented Polina thoughtfully.

“And what a fine thing it all is!” I continued. “Could anything be more abominable than the way in which she has agreed to marry for money alone? Not one of the decencies has been observed; the whole affair has taken place without the least ceremony. And as for the grandmother, what could be more comical, yet more dastardly, than the sending of telegram after telegram to know if she is dead? What do you think of it, Polina Alexandrovna?”

“Yes, it is very horrible,” she interrupted with a shudder. “Consequently, I am the more surprised that YOU should be so cheerful. What are YOU so pleased about? About the fact that you have gone and lost my money?”

“What? The money that you gave me to lose? I told you I should never win for other people—least of all for you. I obeyed you simply because you ordered me to; but you

must not blame me for the result. I warned you that no good would ever come of it. You seem much depressed at having lost your money. Why do you need it so greatly?"

"Why do YOU ask me these questions?"

"Because you promised to explain matters to me. Listen. I am certain that, as soon as ever I 'begin to play for myself' (and I still have 120 gulden left), I shall win. You can then take of me what you require."

She made a contemptuous grimace.

"You must not be angry with me," I continued, "for making such a proposal. I am so conscious of being only a nonentity in your eyes that you need not mind accepting money from me. A gift from me could not possibly offend you. Moreover, it was I who lost your gulden."

She glanced at me, but, seeing that I was in an irritable, sarcastic mood, changed the subject.

"My affairs cannot possibly interest you," she said. Still, if you DO wish to know, I am in debt. I borrowed some money, and must pay it back again. I have a curious, senseless idea that I am bound to win at the gaming-tables. Why I think so I cannot tell, but I do think so, and with some assurance. Perhaps it is because of that assurance that I now find myself without any other resource."

"Or perhaps it is because it is so NECESSARY for you to win. It is like a drowning man catching at a straw. You yourself will agree that, unless he were drowning he would not mistake a straw for the trunk of a tree."

Polina looked surprised.

"What?" she said. "Do not you also hope something from it? Did you not tell me again and again, two weeks ago, that you were certain of winning at roulette if you played here? And did you not ask me not to consider you a fool for doing so? Were you joking? You cannot have been, for I remember that you spoke with a gravity which forbade the idea of your jesting."

"True," I replied gloomily. "I always felt certain that I should win. Indeed, what you say makes me ask myself—Why have my absurd, senseless losses of today raised a doubt in my mind? Yet I am still positive that, so soon as ever I begin to play for myself, I shall infallibly win."

"And why are you so certain?"

"To tell the truth, I do not know. I only know that I must win—that it is the one resource I have left. Yes, why do I feel so assured on the point?"

"Perhaps because one cannot help winning if one is fanatically certain of doing so."

"Yet I dare wager that you do not think me capable of serious feeling in the matter?"

"I do not care whether you are so or not," answered Polina with calm indifference. "Well, since you ask me, I DO doubt your ability to take anything seriously. You are capable of worrying, but not deeply. You are too ill-regulated and unsettled a person for that. But why do you want money? Not a single one of the reasons which you have given can be looked upon as serious."

“By the way,” I interrupted, “you say you want to pay off a debt. It must be a large one. Is it to the Frenchman?”

“What do you mean by asking all these questions? You are very clever today. Surely you are not drunk?”

“You know that you and I stand on no ceremony, and that sometimes I put to you very plain questions. I repeat that I am your, slave—and slaves cannot be shamed or offended.”

“You talk like a child. It is always possible to comport oneself with dignity. If one has a quarrel it ought to elevate rather than to degrade one.”

“A maxim straight from the copybook! Suppose I CANNOT comport myself with dignity. By that I mean that, though I am a man of self-respect, I am unable to carry off a situation properly. Do you know the reason? It is because we Russians are too richly and multifariously gifted to be able at once to find the proper mode of expression. It is all a question of mode. Most of us are so bounteously endowed with intellect as to require also a spice of genius to choose the right form of behaviour. And genius is lacking in us for the reason that so little genius at all exists. It belongs only to the French—though a few other Europeans have elaborated their forms so well as to be able to figure with extreme dignity, and yet be wholly undignified persons. That is why, with us, the mode is so all-important. The Frenchman may receive an insult—a real, a venomous insult: yet, he will not so much as frown. But a tweaking of the nose he cannot bear, for the reason that such an act is an infringement of the accepted, of the time-hallowed order of decorum. That is why our good ladies are so fond of Frenchmen—the Frenchman’s manners, they say, are perfect! But in my opinion there is no such thing as a Frenchman’s manners. The Frenchman is only a bird—the coq gaulois. At the same time, as I am not a woman, I do not properly understand the question. Cocks may be excellent birds. If I am wrong you must stop me. You ought to stop and correct me more often when I am speaking to you, for I am too apt to say everything that is in my head.

“You see, I have lost my manners. I agree that I have none, nor yet any dignity. I will tell you why. I set no store upon such things. Everything in me has undergone a cheek. You know the reason. I have not a single human thought in my head. For a long while I have been ignorant of what is going on in the world—here or in Russia. I have been to Dresden, yet am completely in the dark as to what Dresden is like. You know the cause of my obsession. I have no hope now, and am a mere cipher in your eyes; wherefore, I tell you outright that wherever I go I see only you—all the rest is a matter of indifference.

“Why or how I have come to love you I do not know. It may be that you are not altogether fair to look upon. Do you know, I am ignorant even as to what your face is like. In all probability, too, your heart is not comely, and it is possible that your mind is wholly ignoble.”

“And because you do not believe in my nobility of soul you think to purchase me with money?” she said.

“WHEN have I thought to do so?” was my reply.

“You are losing the thread of the argument. If you do not wish to purchase me, at all events you wish to purchase my respect.”

“Not at all. I have told you that I find it difficult to explain myself. You are hard upon me. Do not be angry at my chattering. You know why you ought not to be angry with me—that I am simply an imbecile. However, I do not mind if you ARE angry. Sitting in my room, I need but to think of you, to imagine to myself the rustle of your dress, and at once I fall almost to biting my hands. Why should you be angry with me? Because I call myself your slave? Revel, I pray you, in my slavery—revel in it. Do you know that sometimes I could kill you?—not because I do not love you, or am jealous of you, but, because I feel as though I could simply devour you... You are laughing!”

“No, I am not,” she retorted. “But I order you, nevertheless, to be silent.”

She stopped, well nigh breathless with anger. God knows, she may not have been a beautiful woman, yet I loved to see her come to a halt like this, and was therefore, the more fond of arousing her temper. Perhaps she divined this, and for that very reason gave way to rage. I said as much to her.

“What rubbish!” she cried with a shudder.

“I do not care,” I continued. “Also, do you know that it is not safe for us to take walks together? Often I have a feeling that I should like to strike you, to disfigure you, to strangle you. Are you certain that it will never come to that? You are driving me to frenzy. Am I afraid of a scandal, or of your anger? Why should I fear your anger? I love without hope, and know that hereafter I shall love you a thousand times more. If ever I should kill you I should have to kill myself too. But I shall put off doing so as long as possible, for I wish to continue enjoying the unbearable pain which your coldness gives me. Do you know a very strange thing? It is that, with every day, my love for you increases—though that would seem to be almost an impossibility. Why should I not become a fatalist? Remember how, on the third day that we ascended the Shlangenberg, I was moved to whisper in your ear: ‘Say but the word, and I will leap into the abyss.’ Had you said it, I should have leapt. Do you not believe me?”

“What stupid rubbish!” she cried.

“I care not whether it be wise or stupid,” I cried in return. “I only know that in your presence I must speak, speak, speak. Therefore, I am speaking. I lose all conceit when I am with you, and everything ceases to matter.”

“Why should I have wanted you to leap from the Shlangenberg?” she said drily, and (I think) with wilful offensiveness. “THAT would have been of no use to me.”

“Splendid!” I shouted. “I know well that you must have used the words ‘of no use’ in order to crush me. I can see through you. ‘Of no use,’ did you say? Why, to give pleasure is ALWAYS of use; and, as for barbarous, unlimited power—even if it be only over a fly—why, it is a kind of luxury. Man is a despot by nature, and loves to torture. You, in particular, love to do so.”

I remember that at this moment she looked at me in a peculiar way. The fact is that my face must have been expressing all the maze of senseless, gross sensations which

were seething within me. To this day I can remember, word for word, the conversation as I have written it down. My eyes were suffused with blood, and the foam had caked itself on my lips. Also, on my honour I swear that, had she bidden me cast myself from the summit of the Shlangenberg, I should have done it. Yes, had she bidden me in jest, or only in contempt and with a spit in my face, I should have cast myself down.

“Oh no! Why so? I believe you,” she said, but in such a manner—in the manner of which, at times, she was a mistress—and with such a note of disdain and viperish arrogance in her tone, that God knows I could have killed her.

Yes, at that moment she stood in peril. I had not lied to her about that.

“Surely you are not a coward?” suddenly she asked me.

“I do not know,” I replied. “Perhaps I am, but I do not know. I have long given up thinking about such things.”

“If I said to you, ‘Kill that man,’ would you kill him?”

“Whom?”

“Whomsoever I wish?”

“The Frenchman?”

“Do not ask me questions; return me answers. I repeat, whomsoever I wish? I desire to see if you were speaking seriously just now.”

She awaited my reply with such gravity and impatience that I found the situation unpleasant.

“Do YOU, rather, tell me,” I said, “what is going on here? Why do you seem half-afraid of me? I can see for myself what is wrong. You are the step-daughter of a ruined and insensate man who is smitten with love for this devil of a Blanche. And there is this Frenchman, too, with his mysterious influence over you. Yet, you actually ask me such a question! If you do not tell me how things stand, I shall have to put in my oar and do something. Are you ashamed to be frank with me? Are you shy of me?”

“I am not going to talk to you on that subject. I have asked you a question, and am waiting for an answer.”

“Well, then—I will kill whomsoever you wish,” I said. “But are you REALLY going to bid me do such deeds?”

“Why should you think that I am going to let you off? I shall bid you do it, or else renounce me. Could you ever do the latter? No, you know that you couldn’t. You would first kill whom I had bidden you, and then kill ME for having dared to send you away!”

Something seemed to strike upon my brain as I heard these words. Of course, at the time I took them half in jest and half as a challenge; yet, she had spoken them with great seriousness. I felt thunderstruck that she should so express herself, that she should assert such a right over me, that she should assume such authority and say outright: “Either you kill whom I bid you, or I will have nothing more to do with you.” Indeed, in what she had said there was something so cynical and unveiled as to pass all bounds. For how could she ever regard me as the same after the killing was done? This was more than slavery and abasement; it was sufficient to bring a man back to his

right senses. Yet, despite the outrageous improbability of our conversation, my heart shook within me.

Suddenly, she burst out laughing. We were seated on a bench near the spot where the children were playing—just opposite the point in the alley-way before the Casino where the carriages drew up in order to set down their occupants.

“Do you see that fat Baroness?” she cried. “It is the Baroness Burmergelm. She arrived three days ago. Just look at her husband—that tall, wizened Prussian there, with the stick in his hand. Do you remember how he stared at us the other day? Well, go to the Baroness, take off your hat to her, and say something in French.”

“Why?”

“Because you have sworn that you would leap from the Shlangenberg for my sake, and that you would kill any one whom I might bid you kill. Well, instead of such murders and tragedies, I wish only for a good laugh. Go without answering me, and let me see the Baron give you a sound thrashing with his stick.”

“Then you throw me out a challenge?—you think that I will not do it?”

“Yes, I do challenge you. Go, for such is my will.”

“Then I WILL go, however mad be your fancy. Only, look here: shall you not be doing the General a great disservice, as well as, through him, a great disservice to yourself? It is not about myself I am worrying—it is about you and the General. Why, for a mere fancy, should I go and insult a woman?”

“Ah! Then I can see that you are only a trifler,” she said contemptuously. “Your eyes are swimming with blood—but only because you have drunk a little too much at luncheon. Do I not know that what I have asked you to do is foolish and wrong, and that the General will be angry about it? But I want to have a good laugh, all the same. I want that, and nothing else. Why should you insult a woman, indeed? Well, you will be given a sound thrashing for so doing.”

I turned away, and went silently to do her bidding. Of course the thing was folly, but I could not get out of it. I remember that, as I approached the Baroness, I felt as excited as a schoolboy. I was in a frenzy, as though I were drunk.

VI

Two days have passed since that day of lunacy. What a noise and a fuss and a chattering and an uproar there was! And what a welter of unseemliness and disorder and stupidity and bad manners! And I the cause of it all! Yet part of the scene was also ridiculous—at all events to myself it was so. I am not quite sure what was the matter with me—whether I was merely stupefied or whether I purposely broke loose and ran amok. At times my mind seems all confused; while at other times I seem almost to be back in my childhood, at the school desk, and to have done the deed simply out of mischief.

It all came of Polina—yes, of Polina. But for her, there might never have been a fracas. Or perhaps I did the deed in a fit of despair (though it may be foolish of me to think so)? What there is so attractive about her I cannot think. Yet there IS something attractive about her—something passing fair, it would seem. Others besides myself she has driven to distraction. She is tall and straight, and very slim. Her body looks as though it could be tied into a knot, or bent double, like a cord. The imprint of her foot is long and narrow. It is, a maddening imprint—yes, simply a maddening one! And her hair has a reddish tint about it, and her eyes are like cat's eyes—though able also to glance with proud, disdainful mien. On the evening of my first arrival, four months ago, I remember that she was sitting and holding an animated conversation with De Griens in the salon. And the way in which she looked at him was such that later, when I retired to my own room upstairs, I kept fancying that she had smitten him in the face—that she had smitten him right on the cheek, so peculiar had been her look as she stood confronting him. Ever since that evening I have loved her.

But to my tale.

I stepped from the path into the carriage-way, and took my stand in the middle of it. There I awaited the Baron and the Baroness. When they were but a few paces distant from me I took off my hat, and bowed.

I remember that the Baroness was clad in a voluminous silk dress, pale grey in colour, and adorned with flounces and a crinoline and train. Also, she was short and inordinately stout, while her gross, flabby chin completely concealed her neck. Her face was purple, and the little eyes in it had an impudent, malicious expression. Yet she walked as though she were conferring a favour upon everybody by so doing. As for the Baron, he was tall, wizened, bony-faced after the German fashion, spectacled, and, apparently, about forty-five years of age. Also, he had legs which seemed to begin almost at his chest—or, rather, at his chin! Yet, for all his air of peacock-like conceit,

his clothes sagged a little, and his face wore a sheepish air which might have passed for profundity.

These details I noted within a space of a few seconds.

At first my bow and the fact that I had my hat in my hand barely caught their attention. The Baron only scowled a little, and the Baroness swept straight on.

“Madame la Baronne,” said I, loudly and distinctly—embroidering each word, as it were—“j’ai l’honneur d’être votre esclave.”

Then I bowed again, put on my hat, and walked past the Baron with a rude smile on my face.

Polina had ordered me merely to take off my hat: the bow and the general effrontery were of my own invention. God knows what instigated me to perpetrate the outrage! In my frenzy I felt as though I were walking on air,

“Hein!” ejaculated—or, rather, growled—the Baron as he turned towards me in angry surprise.

I too turned round, and stood waiting in pseudo-courteous expectation. Yet still I wore on my face an impudent smile as I gazed at him. He seemed to hesitate, and his brows contracted to their utmost limits. Every moment his visage was growing darker. The Baroness also turned in my direction, and gazed at me in wrathful perplexity, while some of the passers-by also began to stare at us, and others of them halted outright.

“Hein!” the Baron vociferated again, with a redoubled growl and a note of growing wrath in his voice.

“Ja wohl!” I replied, still looking him in the eyes.

“Sind sie rasend?” he exclaimed, brandishing his stick, and, apparently, beginning to feel nervous. Perhaps it was my costume which intimidated him, for I was well and fashionably dressed, after the manner of a man who belongs to indisputably good society.

“Ja wo-o-ohl!” cried I again with all my might with a longdrawn rolling of the “ohl” sound after the fashion of the Berliners (who constantly use the phrase “Ja wohl!” in conversation, and more or less prolong the syllable “ohl” according as they desire to express different shades of meaning or of mood).

At this the Baron and the Baroness faced sharply about, and almost fled in their alarm. Some of the bystanders gave vent to excited exclamations, and others remained staring at me in astonishment. But I do not remember the details very well.

Wheeling quietly about, I returned in the direction of Polina Alexandrovna. But, when I had got within a hundred paces of her seat, I saw her rise and set out with the children towards the hotel.

At the portico I caught up to her.

“I have perpetrated the—the piece of idiocy,” I said as I came level with her.

“Have you? Then you can take the consequences,” she replied without so much as looking at me. Then she moved towards the staircase.

I spent the rest of the evening walking in the park. Thence I passed into the forest, and walked on until I found myself in a neighbouring principality. At a wayside restaurant I partook of an omelette and some wine, and was charged for the idyllic repast a thaler and a half.

Not until eleven o'clock did I return home—to find a summons awaiting me from the General.

Our party occupied two suites in the hotel; each of which contained two rooms. The first (the larger suite) comprised a salon and a smoking-room, with, adjoining the latter, the General's study. It was here that he was awaiting me as he stood posed in a majestic attitude beside his writing-table. Lolling on a divan close by was De Griers.

"My good sir," the General began, "may I ask you what this is that you have gone and done?"

"I should be glad," I replied, "if we could come straight to the point. Probably you are referring to my encounter of today with a German?"

"With a German? Why, the German was the Baron Burmergelm—a most important personage! I hear that you have been rude both to him and to the Baroness?"

"No, I have not."

"But I understand that you simply terrified them, my good sir?" shouted the General.

"Not in the least," I replied. "You must know that when I was in Berlin I frequently used to hear the Berliners repeat, and repellently prolong, a certain phrase—namely, 'Ja wohl!'; and, happening to meet this couple in the carriage-drive, I found, for some reason or another, that this phrase suddenly recurred to my memory, and exercised a rousing effect upon my spirits. Moreover, on the three previous occasions that I have met the Baroness she has walked towards me as though I were a worm which could easily be crushed with the foot. Not unnaturally, I too possess a measure of self-respect; wherefore, on THIS occasion I took off my hat, and said politely (yes, I assure you it was said politely): 'Madame, j'ai l'honneur d'être votre esclave.' Then the Baron turned round, and said 'Hein!'; whereupon I felt moved to ejaculate in answer 'Ja wohl!' Twice I shouted it at him—the first time in an ordinary tone, and the second time with the greatest prolonging of the words of which I was capable. That is all."

I must confess that this puerile explanation gave me great pleasure. I felt a strong desire to overlay the incident with an even added measure of grossness; so, the further I proceeded, the more did the gusto of my proceeding increase.

"You are only making fun of me!" vociferated the General as, turning to the Frenchman, he declared that my bringing about of the incident had been gratuitous. De Griers smiled contemptuously, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Do not think THAT," I put in. "It was not so at all. I grant you that my behaviour was bad—I fully confess that it was so, and make no secret of the fact. I would even go so far as to grant you that my behaviour might well be called stupid and indecent tomfoolery; but, MORE than that it was not. Also, let me tell you that I am very sorry for my conduct. Yet there is one circumstance which, in my eyes, almost absolves me from regret in the matter. Of late—that is to say, for the last two or three weeks—I

have been feeling not at all well. That is to say, I have been in a sick, nervous, irritable, fanciful condition, so that I have periodically lost control over myself. For instance, on more than one occasion I have tried to pick a quarrel even with Monsieur le Marquise here; and, under the circumstances, he had no choice but to answer me. In short, I have recently been showing signs of ill-health. Whether the Baroness Burmergelm will take this circumstance into consideration when I come to beg her pardon (for I do intend to make her amends) I do not know; but I doubt if she will, and the less so since, so far as I know, the circumstance is one which, of late, has begun to be abused in the legal world, in that advocates in criminal cases have taken to justifying their clients on the ground that, at the moment of the crime, they (the clients) were unconscious of what they were doing—that, in short, they were out of health. ‘My client committed the murder—that is true; but he has no recollection of having committed it.’ And doctors actually support these advocates by affirming that there really is such a malady—that there really can arise temporary delusions which make a man remember nothing of a given deed, or only a half or a quarter of it! But the Baron and Baroness are members of an older generation, as well as Prussian Junkers and landowners. To them such a process in the medico-judicial world will be unknown, and therefore, they are the more unlikely to accept any such explanation. What is YOUR opinion about it, General?”

“Enough, sir!” he thundered with barely restrained fury. “Enough, I say! Once and for all I must endeavour to rid myself of you and your impertinence. To justify yourself in the eyes of the Baron and Baroness will be impossible. Any intercourse with you, even though it be confined to a begging of their pardons, they would look upon as a degradation. I may tell you that, on learning that you formed part of, my household, the Baron approached me in the Casino, and demanded of me additional satisfaction. Do you understand, then, what it is that you have entailed upon me—upon ME, my good sir? You have entailed upon me the fact of my being forced to sue humbly to the Baron, and to give him my word of honour that this very day you shall cease to belong to my establishment!”

“Excuse me, General,” I interrupted, “but did he make an express point of it that I should ‘cease to belong to your establishment,’ as you call it?”

“No; I, of my own initiative, thought that I ought to afford him that satisfaction; and, with it he was satisfied. So we must part, good sir. It is my duty to hand over to you forty gulden, three florins, as per the accompanying statement. Here is the money, and here the account, which you are at liberty to verify. Farewell. From henceforth we are strangers. From you I have never had anything but trouble and unpleasantness. I am about to call the landlord, and explain to him that from tomorrow onwards I shall no longer be responsible for your hotel expenses. Also I have the honour to remain your obedient servant.”

I took the money and the account (which was indicted in pencil), and, bowing low to the General, said to him very gravely:

“The matter cannot end here. I regret very much that you should have been put to unpleasantness at the Baron’s hands; but, the fault (pardon me) is your own. How

came you to answer for me to the Baron? And what did you mean by saying that I formed part of your household? I am merely your family tutor—not a son of yours, nor yet your ward, nor a person of any kind for whose acts you need be responsible. I am a judicially competent person, a man of twenty-five years of age, a university graduate, a gentleman, and, until I met yourself, a complete stranger to you. Only my boundless respect for your merits restrains me from demanding satisfaction at your hands, as well as a further explanation as to the reasons which have led you to take it upon yourself to answer for my conduct.”

So struck was he with my words that, spreading out his hands, he turned to the Frenchman, and interpreted to him that I had challenged himself (the General) to a duel. The Frenchman laughed aloud.

“Nor do I intend to let the Baron off,” I continued calmly, but with not a little discomfiture at De Griens’ merriment. “And since you, General, have today been so good as to listen to the Baron’s complaints, and to enter into his concerns—since you have made yourself a participator in the affair—I have the honour to inform you that, tomorrow morning at the latest, I shall, in my own name, demand of the said Baron a formal explanation as to the reasons which have led him to disregard the fact that the matter lies between him and myself alone, and to put a slight upon me by referring it to another person, as though I were unworthy to answer for my own conduct.”

Then there happened what I had foreseen. The General on hearing of this further intended outrage, showed the white feather.

“What? ” he cried. “Do you intend to go on with this damned nonsense? Do you not realise the harm that it is doing me? I beg of you not to laugh at me, sir—not to laugh at me, for we have police authorities here who, out of respect for my rank, and for that of the Baron... In short, sir, I swear to you that I will have you arrested, and marched out of the place, to prevent any further brawling on your part. Do you understand what I say?” He was almost breathless with anger, as well as in a terrible fright.

“General,” I replied with that calmness which he never could abide, “one cannot arrest a man for brawling until he has brawled. I have not so much as begun my explanations to the Baron, and you are altogether ignorant as to the form and time which my intended procedure is likely to assume. I wish but to disabuse the Baron of what is, to me, a shameful supposition—namely, that I am under the guardianship of a person who is qualified to exercise control over my free will. It is vain for you to disturb and alarm yourself.”

“For God’s sake, Alexis Ivanovitch, do put an end to this senseless scheme of yours!” he muttered, but with a sudden change from a truculent tone to one of entreaty as he caught me by the hand. “Do you know what is likely to come of it? Merely further unpleasantness. You will agree with me, I am sure, that at present I ought to move with especial care—yes, with very especial care. You cannot be fully aware of how I am situated. When we leave this place I shall be ready to receive you back into my

household; but, for the time being I— Well, I cannot tell you all my reasons.” With that he wound up in a despairing voice: ” O Alexis Ivanovitch, Alexis Ivanovitch!”

I moved towards the door—begging him to be calm, and promising that everything should be done decently and in order; whereafter I departed.

Russians, when abroad, are over-apt to play the poltroon, to watch all their words, and to wonder what people are thinking of their conduct, or whether such and such a thing is ‘comme il faut.’ In short, they are over-apt to cosset themselves, and to lay claim to great importance. Always they prefer the form of behaviour which has once and for all become accepted and established. This they will follow slavishly whether in hotels, on promenades, at meetings, or when on a journey. But the General had avowed to me that, over and above such considerations as these, there were circumstances which compelled him to “move with especial care at present”, and that the fact had actually made him poor-spirited and a coward—it had made him altogether change his tone towards me. This fact I took into my calculations, and duly noted it, for, of course, he MIGHT apply to the authorities tomorrow, and it behoved me to go carefully.

Yet it was not the General but Polina that I wanted to anger. She had treated me with such cruelty, and had got me into such a hole, that I felt a longing to force her to beseech me to stop. Of course, my tomfoolery might compromise her; yet certain other feelings and desires had begun to form themselves in my brain. If I was never to rank in her eyes as anything but a nonentity, it would not greatly matter if I figured as a draggle-tailed cockerel, and the Baron were to give me a good thrashing; but, the fact was that I desired to have the laugh of them all, and to come out myself unscathed. Let people see what they WOULD see. Let Polina, for once, have a good fright, and be forced to whistle me to heel again. But, however much she might whistle, she should see that I was at least no draggle-tailed cockerel!

.....

I have just received a surprising piece of news. I have just met our chambermaid on the stairs, and been informed by her that Maria Philipovna departed today, by the night train, to stay with a cousin at Carlsbad. What can that mean? The maid declares that Madame packed her trunks early in the day. Yet how is it that no one else seems to have been aware of the circumstance? Or is it that I have been the only person to be unaware of it? Also, the maid has just told me that, three days ago, Maria Philipovna had some high words with the General. I understand, then! Probably the words were concerning Mlle. Blanche. Certainly something decisive is approaching.

VII

In the morning I sent for the maitre d'hotel, and explained to him that, in future, my bill was to be rendered to me personally. As a matter of fact, my expenses had never been so large as to alarm me, nor to lead me to quit the hotel; while, moreover, I still had 160 gulden left to me, and—in them—yes, in them, perhaps, riches awaited me. It was a curious fact, that, though I had not yet won anything at play, I nevertheless acted, thought, and felt as though I were sure, before long, to become wealthy—since I could not imagine myself otherwise.

Next, I bethought me, despite the earliness of the hour, of going to see Mr. Astley, who was staying at the Hotel de l'Angleterre (a hostelry at no great distance from our own). But suddenly De Griens entered my room. This had never before happened, for of late that gentleman and I had stood on the most strained and distant of terms—he attempting no concealment of his contempt for me (he even made an express, point of showing it), and I having no reason to desire his company. In short, I detested him. Consequently, his entry at the present moment the more astounded me. At once I divined that something out of the way was on the carpet.

He entered with marked affability, and began by complimenting me on my room. Then, perceiving that I had my hat in my hands, he inquired whither I was going so early; and, no sooner did he hear that I was bound for Mr. Astley's than he stopped, looked grave, and seemed plunged in thought.

He was a true Frenchman insofar as that, though he could be lively and engaging when it suited him, he became insufferably dull and wearisome as soon as ever the need for being lively and engaging had passed. Seldom is a Frenchman NATURALLY civil: he is civil only as though to order and of set purpose. Also, if he thinks it incumbent upon him to be fanciful, original, and out of the way, his fancy always assumes a foolish, unnatural vein, for the reason that it is compounded of trite, hackneyed forms. In short, the natural Frenchman is a conglomeration of commonplace, petty, everyday positiveness, so that he is the most tedious person in the world.—Indeed, I believe that none but greenhorns and excessively Russian people feel an attraction towards the French; for, to any man of sensibility, such a compendium of outworn forms—a compendium which is built up of drawing-room manners, expansiveness, and gaiety—becomes at once over-noticeable and unbearable.

“I have come to see you on business,” De Griens began in a very off-hand, yet polite, tone; “nor will I seek to conceal from you the fact that I have come in the capacity of an emissary, of an intermediary, from the General. Having small knowledge of the

Russian tongue, I lost most of what was said last night; but, the General has now explained matters, and I must confess that—”

“See here, Monsieur de Griers,” I interrupted. “I understand that you have undertaken to act in this affair as an intermediary. Of course I am only ‘un utchitel,’ a tutor, and have never claimed to be an intimate of this household, nor to stand on at all familiar terms with it. Consequently, I do not know the whole of its circumstances. Yet pray explain to me this: have you yourself become one of its members, seeing that you are beginning to take such a part in everything, and are now present as an intermediary?”

The Frenchman seemed not over-pleased at my question. It was one which was too outspoken for his taste—and he had no mind to be frank with me.

“I am connected with the General,” he said drily, “partly through business affairs, and partly through special circumstances. My principal has sent me merely to ask you to forego your intentions of last evening. What you contemplate is, I have no doubt, very clever; yet he has charged me to represent to you that you have not the slightest chance of succeeding in your end, since not only will the Baron refuse to receive you, but also he (the Baron) has at his disposal every possible means for obviating further unpleasantness from you. Surely you can see that yourself? What, then, would be the good of going on with it all? On the other hand, the General promises that at the first favourable opportunity he will receive you back into his household, and, in the meantime, will credit you with your salary—with ‘vos appointements.’ Surely that will suit you, will it not?”

Very quietly I replied that he (the Frenchman) was labouring under a delusion; that perhaps, after all, I should not be expelled from the Baron’s presence, but, on the contrary, be listened to; finally, that I should be glad if Monsieur de Griers would confess that he was now visiting me merely in order to see how far I intended to go in the affair.

“Good heavens!” cried de Griers. “Seeing that the General takes such an interest in the matter, is there anything very unnatural in his desiring also to know your plans?”

Again I began my explanations, but the Frenchman only fidgeted and rolled his head about as he listened with an expression of manifest and unconcealed irony on his face. In short, he adopted a supercilious attitude. For my own part, I endeavoured to pretend that I took the affair very seriously. I declared that, since the Baron had gone and complained of me to the General, as though I were a mere servant of the General’s, he had, in the first place, lost me my post, and, in the second place, treated me like a person to whom, as to one not qualified to answer for himself, it was not even worth while to speak. Naturally, I said, I felt insulted at this. Yet, comprehending as I did, differences of years, of social status, and so forth (here I could scarcely help smiling), I was not anxious to bring about further scenes by going personally to demand or to request satisfaction of the Baron. All that I felt was that I had a right to go in person and beg the Baron’s and the Baroness’s pardon—the more so since, of late, I had been feeling unwell and unstrung, and had been in a fanciful condition. And so forth, and

so forth. Yet (I continued) the Baron's offensive behaviour to me of yesterday (that is to say, the fact of his referring the matter to the General) as well as his insistence that the General should deprive me of my post, had placed me in such a position that I could not well express my regret to him (the Baron) and to his good lady, for the reason that in all probability both he and the Baroness, with the world at large, would imagine that I was doing so merely because I hoped, by my action, to recover my post. Hence, I found myself forced to request the Baron to express to me HIS OWN regrets, as well as to express them in the most unqualified manner—to say, in fact, that he had never had any wish to insult me. After the Baron had done THAT, I should, for my part, at once feel free to express to him, whole-heartedly and without reserve, my own regrets." In short," I declared in conclusion, "my one desire is that the Baron may make it possible for me to adopt the latter course."

"Oh fie! What refinements and subtleties!" exclaimed De Griens. "Besides, what have you to express regret for? Confess, Monsieur, Monsieur—pardon me, but I have forgotten your name—confess, I say, that all this is merely a plan to annoy the General? Or perhaps, you have some other and special end in view? Eh?"

"In return you must pardon ME, mon cher Marquis, and tell me what you have to do with it."

"The General—"

"But what of the General? Last night he said that, for some reason or another, it behoved him to 'move with especial care at present;' wherefore, he was feeling nervous. But I did not understand the reference."

"Yes, there DO exist special reasons for his doing so," assented De Griens in a conciliatory tone, yet with rising anger. "You are acquainted with Mlle. de Cominges, are you not?"

"Mlle. Blanche, you mean?"

"Yes, Mlle. Blanche de Cominges. Doubtless you know also that the General is in love with this young lady, and may even be about to marry her before he leaves here? Imagine, therefore, what any scene or scandal would entail upon him!"

"I cannot see that the marriage scheme need, be affected by scenes or scandals."

"Mais le Baron est si irascible—un caractere prussien, vous savez! Enfin il fera une querelle d'Allemand."

"I do not care," I replied, "seeing that I no longer belong to his household" (of set purpose I was trying to talk as senselessly as possible). "But is it quite settled that Mlle. is to marry the General? What are they waiting for? Why should they conceal such a matter—at all events from ourselves, the General's own party?"

"I cannot tell you. The marriage is not yet a settled affair, for they are awaiting news from Russia. The General has business transactions to arrange."

"Ah! Connected, doubtless, with madame his mother?"

De Griens shot at me a glance of hatred.

"To cut things short," he interrupted, "I have complete confidence in your native politeness, as well as in your tact and good sense. I feel sure that you will do what

I suggest, even if it is only for the sake of this family which has received you as a kinsman into its bosom and has always loved and respected you.”

“Be so good as to observe,” I remarked, “that the same family has just EXPELLED me from its bosom. All that you are saying you are saying but for show; but, when people have just said to you, ‘Of course we do not wish to turn you out, yet, for the sake of appearance’s, you must PERMIT yourself to be turned out,’ nothing can matter very much.”

“Very well, then,” he said, in a sterner and more arrogant tone. “Seeing that my solicitations have had no effect upon you, it is my duty to mention that other measures will be taken. There exist here police, you must remember, and this very day they shall send you packing. Que diable! To think of a blanc bec like yourself challenging a person like the Baron to a duel! Do you suppose that you will be ALLOWED to do such things? Just try doing them, and see if any one will be afraid of you! The reason why I have asked you to desist is that I can see that your conduct is causing the General annoyance. Do you believe that the Baron could not tell his lacquey simply to put you out of doors?”

“Nevertheless I should not GO out of doors,” I retorted with absolute calm. “You are labouring under a delusion, Monsieur de Griens. The thing will be done in far better trim than you imagine. I was just about to start for Mr. Astley’s, to ask him to be my intermediary—in other words, my second. He has a strong liking for me, and I do not think that he will refuse. He will go and see the Baron on MY behalf, and the Baron will certainly not decline to receive him. Although I am only a tutor—a kind of subaltern, Mr. Astley is known to all men as the nephew of a real English lord, the Lord Piebroch, as well as a lord in his own right. Yes, you may be pretty sure that the Baron will be civil to Mr. Astley, and listen to him. Or, should he decline to do so, Mr. Astley will take the refusal as a personal affront to himself (for you know how persistent the English are?) and thereupon introduce to the Baron a friend of his own (and he has many friends in a good position). That being so, picture to yourself the issue of the affair—an affair which will not quite end as you think it will.”

This caused the Frenchman to bethink him of playing the coward. “Really things may be as this fellow says,” he evidently thought. “Really he MIGHT be able to engineer another scene.”

“Once more I beg of you to let the matter drop,” he continued in a tone that was now entirely conciliatory. “One would think that it actually PLEASED you to have scenes! Indeed, it is a brawl rather than genuine satisfaction that you are seeking. I have said that the affair may prove to be diverting, and even clever, and that possibly you may attain something by it; yet none the less I tell you” (he said this only because he saw me rise and reach for my hat) “that I have come hither also to hand you these few words from a certain person. Read them, please, for I must take her back an answer.”

So saying, he took from his pocket a small, compact, wafer-sealed note, and handed it to me. In Polina’s handwriting I read:

"I hear that you are thinking of going on with this affair. You have lost your temper now, and are beginning to play the fool! Certain circumstances, however, I may explain to you later. Pray cease from your folly, and put a check upon yourself. For folly it all is. I have need of you, and, moreover, you have promised to obey me. Remember the Shlangenberg. I ask you to be obedient. If necessary, I shall even BID you be obedient.—Your own POLINA.

"P.S.—If so be that you still bear a grudge against me for what happened last night, pray forgive me."

Everything, to my eyes, seemed to change as I read these words. My lips grew pale, and I began to tremble. Meanwhile, the cursed Frenchman was eyeing me discreetly and askance, as though he wished to avoid witnessing my confusion. It would have been better if he had laughed outright.

"Very well," I said, "you can tell Mlle. not to disturb herself. But," I added sharply, "I would also ask you why you have been so long in handing me this note? Instead of chattering about trifles, you ought to have delivered me the missive at once—if you have really come commissioned as you say."

"Well, pardon some natural haste on my part, for the situation is so strange. I wished first to gain some personal knowledge of your intentions; and, moreover, I did not know the contents of the note, and thought that it could be given you at any time."

"I understand," I replied. "So you were ordered to hand me the note only in the last resort, and if you could not otherwise appease me? Is it not so? Speak out, Monsieur de Griens."

"Perhaps," said he, assuming a look of great forbearance, but gazing at me in a meaning way.

I reached for my hat; whereupon he nodded, and went out. Yet on his lips I fancied that I could see a mocking smile. How could it have been otherwise?

"You and I are to have a reckoning later, Master Frenchman," I muttered as I descended the stairs. "Yes, we will measure our strength together." Yet my thoughts were all in confusion, for again something seemed to have struck me dizzy. Presently the air revived me a little, and, a couple of minutes later, my brain had sufficiently cleared to enable two ideas in particular to stand out in it. Firstly, I asked myself, which of the absurd, boyish, and extravagant threats which I had uttered at random last night had made everybody so alarmed? Secondly, what was the influence which this Frenchman appeared to exercise over Polina? He had but to give the word, and at once she did as he desired—at once she wrote me a note to beg of me to forbear! Of course, the relations between the pair had, from the first, been a riddle to me—they had been so ever since I had first made their acquaintance. But of late I had remarked in her a strong aversion for, even a contempt for—him, while, for his part, he had scarcely even looked at her, but had behaved towards her always in the most churlish fashion. Yes, I had noted that. Also, Polina herself had mentioned to me her dislike for him, and delivered herself of some remarkable confessions on the subject. Hence,

he must have got her into his power somehow—somehow he must be holding her as in a vice.

VIII

All at once, on the Promenade, as it was called—that is to say, in the Chestnut Avenue—I came face to face with my Englishman.

“I was just coming to see you,” he said; “and you appear to be out on a similar errand. So you have parted with your employers?”

“How do you know that?” I asked in astonishment. “Is EVERY ONE aware of the fact?”

“By no means. Not every one would consider such a fact to be of moment. Indeed, I have never heard any one speak of it.”

“Then how come you to know it?”

“Because I have had occasion to do so. Whither are you bound? I like you, and was therefore coming to pay you a visit.”

“What a splendid fellow you are, Mr. Astley!” I cried, though still wondering how he had come by his knowledge. “And since I have not yet had my coffee, and you have, in all probability, scarcely tasted yours, let us adjourn to the Casino Cafe, where we can sit and smoke and have a talk.”

The cafe in question was only a hundred paces away; so, when coffee had been brought, we seated ourselves, and I lit a cigarette. Astley was no smoker, but, taking a seat by my side, he prepared himself to listen.

“I do not intend to go away,” was my first remark. “I intend, on the contrary, to remain here.”

“That I never doubted,” he answered good-humouredly.

It is a curious fact that, on my way to see him, I had never even thought of telling him of my love for Polina. In fact, I had purposely meant to avoid any mention of the subject. Nor, during our stay in the place, had I ever made aught but the scantiest reference to it. You see, not only was Astley a man of great reserve, but also from the first I had perceived that Polina had made a great impression upon him, although he never spoke of her. But now, strangely enough, he had no sooner seated himself and bent his steely gaze upon me, than, for some reason or another, I felt moved to tell him everything—to speak to him of my love in all its phases. For an hour and a half did I discourse on the subject, and found it a pleasure to do so, even though this was the first occasion on which I had referred to the matter. Indeed, when, at certain moments, I perceived that my more ardent passages confused him, I purposely increased my ardour of narration. Yet one thing I regret: and that is that I made references to the Frenchman which were a little over-personal.

Mr. Astley sat without moving as he listened to me. Not a word nor a sound of any kind did he utter as he stared into my eyes. Suddenly, however, on my mentioning the Frenchman, he interrupted me, and inquired sternly whether I did right to speak of an extraneous matter (he had always been a strange man in his mode of propounding questions).

“No, I fear not,” I replied.

“And concerning this Marquis and Mlle. Polina you know nothing beyond surmise?”

Again I was surprised that such a categorical question should come from such a reserved individual.

“No, I know nothing FOR CERTAIN about them” was my reply. “No—nothing.”

“Then you have done very wrong to speak of them to me, or even to imagine things about them.”

“Quite so, quite so,” I interrupted in some astonishment. “I admit that. Yet that is not the question.” Whereupon I related to him in detail the incident of two days ago. I spoke of Polina’s outburst, of my encounter with the Baron, of my dismissal, of the General’s extraordinary pusillanimity, and of the call which De Griens had that morning paid me. In conclusion, I showed Astley the note which I had lately received.

“What do you make of it?” I asked. “When I met you I was just coming to ask you your opinion. For myself, I could have killed this Frenchman, and am not sure that I shall not do so even yet.”

“I feel the same about it,” said Mr. Astley. “As for Mlle. Polina—well, you yourself know that, if necessity drives, one enters into relation with people whom one simply detests. Even between this couple there may be something which, though unknown to you, depends upon extraneous circumstances. For, my own part, I think that you may reassure yourself—or at all events partially. And as for Mlle. Polina’s proceedings of two days ago, they were, of course, strange; not because she can have meant to get rid of you, or to earn for you a thrashing from the Baron’s cudgel (which for some curious reason, he did not use, although he had it ready in his hands), but because such proceedings on the part of such—well, of such a refined lady as Mlle. Polina are, to say the least of it, unbecoming. But she cannot have guessed that you would carry out her absurd wish to the letter?”

“Do you know what?” suddenly I cried as I fixed Mr. Astley with my gaze. “I believe that you have already heard the story from some one—very possibly from Mlle. Polina herself?”

In return he gave me an astonished stare.

“Your eyes look very fiery,” he said with a return of his former calm, “and in them I can read suspicion. Now, you have no right whatever to be suspicious. It is not a right which I can for a moment recognise, and I absolutely refuse to answer your questions.”

“Enough! You need say no more,” I cried with a strange emotion at my heart, yet not altogether understanding what had aroused that emotion in my breast. Indeed, when, where, and how could Polina have chosen Astley to be one of her confidants? Of late I had come rather to overlook him in this connection, even though Polina had

always been a riddle to me—so much so that now, when I had just permitted myself to tell my friend of my infatuation in all its aspects, I had found myself struck, during the very telling, with the fact that in my relations with her I could specify nothing that was explicit, nothing that was positive. On the contrary, my relations had been purely fantastic, strange, and unreal; they had been unlike anything else that I could think of.

“Very well, very well,” I replied with a warmth equal to Astley’s own. “Then I stand confounded, and have no further opinions to offer. But you are a good fellow, and I am glad to know what you think about it all, even though I do not need your advice.”

Then, after a pause, I resumed:

“For instance, what reason should you assign for the General taking fright in this way? Why should my stupid clowning have led the world to elevate it into a serious incident? Even De Griens has found it necessary to put in his oar (and he only interferes on the most important occasions), and to visit me, and to address to me the most earnest supplications. Yes, HE, De Griens, has actually been playing the suppliant to ME! And, mark you, although he came to me as early as nine o’clock, he had ready-prepared in his hand Mlle. Polina’s note. When, I would ask, was that note written? Mlle. Polina must have been aroused from sleep for the express purpose of writing it. At all events the circumstance shows that she is an absolute slave to the Frenchman, since she actually begs my pardon in the note—actually begs my pardon! Yet what is her personal concern in the matter? Why is she interested in it at all? Why, too, is the whole party so afraid of this precious Baron? And what sort of a business do you call it for the General to be going to marry Mlle. Blanche de Cominges? He told me last night that, because of the circumstance, he must ‘move with especial care at present.’ What is your opinion of it all? Your look convinces me that you know more about it than I do.”

Mr. Astley smiled and nodded.

“Yes, I think I DO know more about it than you do,” he assented. “The affair centres around this Mlle. Blanche. Of that I feel certain.”

“And what of Mlle. Blanche?” I cried impatiently (for in me there had dawned a sudden hope that this would enable me to discover something about Polina).

“Well, my belief is that at the present moment Mlle. Blanche has, in very truth, a special reason for wishing to avoid any trouble with the Baron and the Baroness. It might lead not only to some unpleasantness, but even to a scandal.”

“Oh, oh! “

“Also I may tell you that Mlle. Blanche has been in Roulettenberg before, for she was staying here three seasons ago. I myself was in the place at the time, and in those days Mlle. Blanche was not known as Mlle. de Cominges, nor was her mother, the Widow de Cominges, even in existence. In any case no one ever mentioned the latter. De Griens, too, had not materialised, and I am convinced that not only do the parties stand in no relation to one another, but also they have not long enjoyed one another’s acquaintance. Likewise, the Marquisate de Griens is of recent creation. Of that I have

reason to be sure, owing to a certain circumstance. Even the name De Griens itself may be taken to be a new invention, seeing that I have a friend who once met the said 'Marquis' under a different name altogether."

"Yet he possesses a good circle of friends?"

"Possibly. Mlle. Blanche also may possess that. Yet it is not three years since she received from the local police, at the instance of the Baroness, an invitation to leave the town. And she left it."

"But why?"

"Well, I must tell you that she first appeared here in company with an Italian—a prince of some sort, a man who bore an historic name (Barberini or something of the kind). The fellow was simply a mass of rings and diamonds — real diamonds, too — and the couple used to drive out in a marvellous carriage. At first Mlle. Blanche played 'trente et quarante' with fair success, but, later, her luck took a marked change for the worse. I distinctly remember that in a single evening she lost an enormous sum. But worse was to ensue, for one fine morning her prince disappeared—horses, carriage, and all. Also, the hotel bill which he left unpaid was enormous. Upon this Mlle. Zelma (the name which she assumed after figuring as Madame Barberini) was in despair. She shrieked and howled all over the hotel, and even tore her clothes in her frenzy. In the hotel there was staying also a Polish count (you must know that ALL travelling Poles are counts!), and the spectacle of Mlle. Zelma tearing her clothes and, catlike, scratching her face with her beautiful, scented nails produced upon him a strong impression. So the pair had a talk together, and, by luncheon time, she was consoled. Indeed, that evening the couple entered the Casino arm-in-arm — Mlle. Zelma laughing loudly, according to her custom, and showing even more expansiveness in her manners than she had before shown. For instance, she thrust her way into the file of women roulette-players in the exact fashion of those ladies who, to clear a space for themselves at the tables, push their fellow-players roughly aside. Doubtless you have noticed them?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, they are not worth noticing. To the annoyance of the decent public they are allowed to remain here—at all events such of them as daily change 4000 franc notes at the tables (though, as soon as ever these women cease to do so, they receive an invitation to depart). However, Mlle. Zelma continued to change notes of this kind, but her play grew more and more unsuccessful, despite the fact that such ladies' luck is frequently good, for they have a surprising amount of cash at their disposal. Suddenly, the Count too disappeared, even as the Prince had done, and that same evening Mlle. Zelma was forced to appear in the Casino alone. On this occasion no one offered her a greeting. Two days later she had come to the end of her resources; whereupon, after staking and losing her last louis d'or she chanced to look around her, and saw standing by her side the Baron Burmergelm, who had been eyeing her with fixed disapproval. To his distaste, however, Mlle. paid no attention, but, turning to him with her well-known smile, requested him to stake, on her behalf, ten louis on the red. Later that evening

a complaint from the Baroness led the authorities to request Mlle. not to re-enter the Casino. If you feel in any way surprised that I should know these petty and unedifying details, the reason is that I had them from a relative of mine who, later that evening, drove Mlle. Zelma in his carriage from Roulettenberg to Spa. Now, mark you, Mlle. wants to become Madame General, in order that, in future, she may be spared the receipt of such invitations from Casino authorities as she received three years ago. At present she is not playing; but that is only because, according to the signs, she is lending money to other players. Yes, that is a much more paying game. I even suspect that the unfortunate General is himself in her debt, as well as, perhaps, also De Griers. Or, it may be that the latter has entered into a partnership with her. Consequently you yourself will see that, until the marriage shall have been consummated, Mlle. would scarcely like to have the attention of the Baron and the Baroness drawn to herself. In short, to any one in her position, a scandal would be most detrimental. You form a member of the menage of these people; wherefore, any act of yours might cause such a scandal—and the more so since daily she appears in public arm in arm with the General or with Mlle. Polina. NOW do you understand?"

"No, I do not!" I shouted as I banged my fist down upon the table—banged it with such violence that a frightened waiter came running towards us. "Tell me, Mr. Astley, why, if you knew this history all along, and, consequently, always knew who this Mlle. Blanche is, you never warned either myself or the General, nor, most of all, Mlle. Polina" (who is accustomed to appear in the Casino — in public everywhere with Mlle. Blanche)." How could you do it?"

"It would have done no good to warn you," he replied quietly, "for the reason that you could have effected nothing. Against what was I to warn you? As likely as not, the General knows more about Mlle. Blanche even than I do; yet the unhappy man still walks about with her and Mlle. Polina. Only yesterday I saw this Frenchwoman riding, splendidly mounted, with De Griers, while the General was careering in their wake on a roan horse. He had said, that morning, that his legs were hurting him, yet his riding-seat was easy enough. As he passed I looked at him, and the thought occurred to me that he was a man lost for ever. However, it is no affair of mine, for I have only recently had the happiness to make Mlle. Polina's acquaintance. Also"—he added this as an afterthought—"I have already told you that I do not recognise your right to ask me certain questions, however sincere be my liking for you."

"Enough," I said, rising. "To me it is as clear as day that Mlle. Polina knows all about this Mlle. Blanche, but cannot bring herself to part with her Frenchman; wherefore, she consents also to be seen in public with Mlle. Blanche. You may be sure that nothing else would ever have induced her either to walk about with this Frenchwoman or to send me a note not to touch the Baron. Yes, it is THERE that the influence lies before which everything in the world must bow! Yet she herself it was who launched me at the Baron! The devil take it, but I was left no choice in the matter."

"You forget, in the first place, that this Mlle. de Cominges is the General's inamorata, and, in the second place, that Mlle. Polina, the General's step-daughter, has a younger

brother and sister who, though they are the General's own children, are completely neglected by this madman, and robbed as well."

"Yes, yes; that is so. For me to go and desert the children now would mean their total abandonment; whereas, if I remain, I should be able to defend their interests, and, perhaps, to save a moiety of their property. Yes, yes; that is quite true. And yet, and yet—Oh, I can well understand why they are all so interested in the General's mother!"

"In whom?" asked Mr. Astley.

"In the old woman of Moscow who declines to die, yet concerning whom they are for ever expecting telegrams to notify the fact of her death."

"Ah, then of course their interests centre around her. It is a question of succession. Let that but be settled, and the General will marry, Mlle. Polina will be set free, and De Griens—"

"Yes, and De Griens?"

"Will be repaid his money, which is what he is now waiting for."

"What? You think that he is waiting for that?"

"I know of nothing else," asserted Mr. Astley doggedly.

"But, I do, I do!" I shouted in my fury. "He is waiting also for the old woman's will, for the reason that it awards Mlle. Polina a dowry. As soon as ever the money is received, she will throw herself upon the Frenchman's neck. All women are like that. Even the proudest of them become abject slaves where marriage is concerned. What Polina is good for is to fall head over ears in love. That is MY opinion. Look at her—especially when she is sitting alone, and plunged in thought. All this was pre-ordained and foretold, and is accursed. Polina could perpetrate any mad act. She—she—But who called me by name?" I broke off. "Who is shouting for me? I heard some one calling in Russian, 'Alexis Ivanovitch!' It was a woman's voice. Listen!"

At the moment, we were approaching my hotel. We had left the cafe long ago, without even noticing that we had done so.

"Yes, I DID hear a woman's voice calling, but whose I do not know. The someone was calling you in Russian. Ah! NOW I can see whence the cries come. They come from that lady there—the one who is sitting on the settee, the one who has just been escorted to the verandah by a crowd of lacqueys. Behind her see that pile of luggage! She must have arrived by train."

"But why should she be calling ME? Hear her calling again! See! She is beckoning to us!"

"Yes, so she is," assented Mr. Astley.

"Alexis Ivanovitch, Alexis Ivanovitch! Good heavens, what a stupid fellow!" came in a despairing wail from the verandah.

We had almost reached the portico, and I was just setting foot upon the space before it, when my hands fell to my sides in limp astonishment, and my feet glued themselves to the pavement!

IX

For on the topmost tier of the hotel verandah, after being carried up the steps in an armchair amid a bevy of footmen, maid-servants, and other menials of the hotel, headed by the landlord (that functionary had actually run out to meet a visitor who arrived with so much stir and din, attended by her own retinue, and accompanied by so great a pile of trunks and portmanteaux)—on the topmost tier of the verandah, I say, there was sitting—THE GRANDMOTHER! Yes, it was she—rich, and imposing, and seventy-five years of age—Antonida Vassilievna Tarassevitcha, landowner and grande dame of Moscow—the “La Baboulenka” who had caused so many telegrams to be sent off and received—who had been dying, yet not dying—who had, in her own person, descended upon us even as snow might fall from the clouds! Though unable to walk, she had arrived borne aloft in an armchair (her mode of conveyance for the last five years), as brisk, aggressive, self-satisfied, bolt-upright, loudly imperious, and generally abusive as ever. In fact, she looked exactly as she had on the only two occasions when I had seen her since my appointment to the General’s household. Naturally enough, I stood petrified with astonishment. She had sighted me a hundred paces off! Even while she was being carried along in her chair she had recognised me, and called me by name and surname (which, as usual, after hearing once, she had remembered ever afterwards).

“And this is the woman whom they had thought to see in her grave after making her will!” I thought to myself. “Yet she will outlive us, and every one else in the hotel. Good Lord! what is going to become of us now? What on earth is to happen to the General? She will turn the place upside down!”

“My good sir,” the old woman continued in a stentorian voice, “what are you standing THERE for, with your eyes almost falling out of your head? Cannot you come and say how-do-you-do? Are you too proud to shake hands? Or do you not recognise me? Here, Potapitch!” she cried to an old servant who, dressed in a frock coat and white waistcoat, had a bald, red head (he was the chamberlain who always accompanied her on her journeys). “Just think! Alexis Ivanovitch does not recognise me! They have buried me for good and all! Yes, and after sending hosts of telegrams to know if I were dead or not! Yes, yes, I have heard the whole story. I am very much alive, though, as you may see.”

“Pardon me, Antonida Vassilievna,” I replied good humouredly as I recovered my presence of mind. “I have no reason to wish you ill. I am merely rather astonished to see you. Why should I not be so, seeing how unexpected—”

“WHY should you be astonished? I just got into my chair, and came. Things are quiet enough in the train, for there is no one there to chatter. Have you been out for a walk?”

“Yes. I have just been to the Casino.”

“Oh? Well, it is quite nice here,” she went on as she looked about her. “The place seems comfortable, and all the trees are out. I like it very well. Are your people at home? Is the General, for instance, indoors?”

“Yes; and probably all of them.”

“Do they observe the convenances, and keep up appearances? Such things always give one tone. I have heard that they are keeping a carriage, even as Russian gentlefolks ought to do. When abroad, our Russian people always cut a dash. Is Prascovia here too?”

“Yes. Polina Alexandrovna is here.”

“And the Frenchwoman? However, I will go and look for them myself. Tell me the nearest way to their rooms. Do you like being here?”

“Yes, I thank you, Antonida Vassilievna.”

“And you, Potapitch, you go and tell that fool of a landlord to reserve me a suitable suite of rooms. They must be handsomely decorated, and not too high up. Have my luggage taken up to them. But what are you tumbling over yourselves for? Why are you all tearing about? What scullions these fellows are!—Who is that with you?” she added to myself.

“A Mr. Astley,” I replied.

“And who is Mr. Astley?”

“A fellow-traveller, and my very good friend, as well as an acquaintance of the General’s.”

“Oh, an Englishman? Then that is why he stared at me without even opening his lips. However, I like Englishmen. Now, take me upstairs, direct to their rooms. Where are they lodging?”

Madame was lifted up in her chair by the lacqueys, and I preceded her up the grand staircase. Our progress was exceedingly effective, for everyone whom we met stopped to stare at the cortege. It happened that the hotel had the reputation of being the best, the most expensive, and the most aristocratic in all the spa, and at every turn on the staircase or in the corridors we encountered fine ladies and important-looking Englishmen—more than one of whom hastened downstairs to inquire of the awestruck landlord who the newcomer was. To all such questions he returned the same answer—namely, that the old lady was an influential foreigner, a Russian, a Countess, and a grande dame, and that she had taken the suite which, during the previous week, had been tenanted by the Grande Duchesse de N.

Meanwhile the cause of the sensation—the Grandmother—was being borne aloft in her armchair. Every person whom she met she scanned with an inquisitive eye, after first of all interrogating me about him or her at the top of her voice. She was stout of figure, and, though she could not leave her chair, one felt, the moment that one

first looked at her, that she was also tall of stature. Her back was as straight as a board, and never did she lean back in her seat. Also, her large grey head, with its keen, rugged features, remained always erect as she glanced about her in an imperious, challenging sort of way, with looks and gestures that clearly were unstudied. Though she had reached her seventy-sixth year, her face was still fresh, and her teeth had not decayed. Lastly, she was dressed in a black silk gown and white mobcap.

“She interests me tremendously,” whispered Mr. Astley as, still smoking, he walked by my side. Meanwhile I was reflecting that probably the old lady knew all about the telegrams, and even about De Griers, though little or nothing about Mlle. Blanche. I said as much to Mr. Astley.

But what a frail creature is man! No sooner was my first surprise abated than I found myself rejoicing in the shock which we were about to administer to the General. So much did the thought inspire me that I marched ahead in the gayest of fashions.

Our party was lodging on the third floor. Without knocking at the door, or in any way announcing our presence, I threw open the portals, and the Grandmother was borne through them in triumph. As though of set purpose, the whole party chanced at that moment to be assembled in the General’s study. The time was eleven o’clock, and it seemed that an outing of some sort (at which a portion of the party were to drive in carriages, and others to ride on horseback, accompanied by one or two extraneous acquaintances) was being planned. The General was present, and also Polina, the children, the latter’s nurses, De Griers, Mlle. Blanche (attired in a riding-habit), her mother, the young Prince, and a learned German whom I beheld for the first time. Into the midst of this assembly the lacqueys conveyed Madame in her chair, and set her down within three paces of the General!

Good heavens! Never shall I forget the spectacle which ensued! Just before our entry, the General had been holding forth to the company, with De Griers in support of him. I may also mention that, for the last two or three days, Mlle. Blanche and De Griers had been making a great deal of the young Prince, under the very nose of the poor General. In short, the company, though decorous and conventional, was in a gay, familiar mood. But no sooner did the Grandmother appear than the General stopped dead in the middle of a word, and, with jaw dropping, stared hard at the old lady—his eyes almost starting out of his head, and his expression as spellbound as though he had just seen a basilisk. In return, the Grandmother stared at him silently and without moving—though with a look of mingled challenge, triumph, and ridicule in her eyes. For ten seconds did the pair remain thus eyeing one another, amid the profound silence of the company; and even De Griers sat petrified—an extraordinary look of uneasiness dawning on his face. As for Mlle. Blanche, she too stared wildly at the Grandmother, with eyebrows raised and her lips parted—while the Prince and the German savant contemplated the tableau in profound amazement. Only Polina looked anything but perplexed or surprised. Presently, however, she too turned as white as a sheet, and then reddened to her temples. Truly the Grandmother’s arrival seemed to be a catastrophe for everybody! For my own part, I stood looking from the

Grandmother to the company, and back again, while Mr. Astley, as usual, remained in the background, and gazed calmly and decorously at the scene.

“Well, here I am—and instead of a telegram, too!” the Grandmother at last ejaculated, to dissipate the silence. “What? You were not expecting me?”

“Antonida Vassilievna! O my dearest mother! But how on earth did you, did you—?” The mutterings of the unhappy General died away.

I verily believe that if the Grandmother had held her tongue a few seconds longer she would have had a stroke.

“How on earth did I WHAT?” she exclaimed. “Why, I just got into the train and came here. What else is the railway meant for? But you thought that I had turned up my toes and left my property to the lot of you. Oh, I know ALL about the telegrams which you have been dispatching. They must have cost you a pretty sum, I should think, for telegrams are not sent from abroad for nothing. Well, I picked up my heels, and came here. Who is this Frenchman? Monsieur de Griers, I suppose?”

“Oui, madame,” assented De Griers. “Et, croyez, je suis si enchante! Votre sante—c’est un miracle vous voir ici. Une surprise charmante!”

“Just so. ‘Charmante!’ I happen to know you as a mountebank, and therefore trust you no more than THIS.” She indicated her little finger. “And who is THAT?” she went on, turning towards Mlle. Blanche. Evidently the Frenchwoman looked so becoming in her riding-habit, with her whip in her hand, that she had made an impression upon the old lady. “Who is that woman there?”

“Mlle. de Cominges,” I said. “And this is her mother, Madame de Cominges. They also are staying in the hotel.”

“Is the daughter married?” asked the old lady, without the least semblance of ceremony.

“No,” I replied as respectfully as possible, but under my breath.

“Is she good company?”

I failed to understand the question.

“I mean, is she or is she not a bore? Can she speak Russian? When this De Griers was in Moscow he soon learnt to make himself understood.”

I explained to the old lady that Mlle. Blanche had never visited Russia.

“Bonjour, then,” said Madame, with sudden brusquerie.

“Bonjour, madame,” replied Mlle. Blanche with an elegant, ceremonious bow as, under cover of an unwonted modesty, she endeavoured to express, both in face and figure, her extreme surprise at such strange behaviour on the part of the Grandmother.

“How the woman sticks out her eyes at me! How she mows and minces!” was the Grandmother’s comment. Then she turned suddenly to the General, and continued: “I have taken up my abode here, so am going to be your next-door neighbour. Are you glad to hear that, or are you not?”

“My dear mother, believe me when I say that I am. sincerely delighted,” returned the General, who had now, to a certain extent, recovered his senses; and inasmuch as, when occasion arose, he could speak with fluency, gravity, and a certain effect, he

set himself to be expansive in his remarks, and went on: "We have been so dismayed and upset by the news of your indisposition! We had received such hopeless telegrams about you! Then suddenly—"

"Fibs, fibs!" interrupted the Grandmother.

"How on earth, too, did you come to decide upon the journey?" continued the General, with raised voice as he hurried to overlook the old lady's last remark. "Surely, at your age, and in your present state of health, the thing is so unexpected that our surprise is at least intelligible. However, I am glad to see you (as indeed, are we all"—he said this with a dignified, yet conciliatory, smile), "and will use my best endeavours to render your stay here as pleasant as possible."

"Enough! All this is empty chatter. You are talking the usual nonsense. I shall know quite well how to spend my time. How did I come to undertake the journey, you ask? Well, is there anything so very surprising about it? It was done quite simply. What is every one going into ecstasies about?—How do you do, Prascovia? What are YOU doing here?"

"And how are YOU, Grandmother?" replied Polina, as she approached the old lady. "Were you long on the journey?"

"The most sensible question that I have yet been asked! Well, you shall hear for yourself how it all happened. I lay and lay, and was doctored and doctored,; until at last I drove the physicians from me, and called in an apothecary from Nicolai who had cured an old woman of a malady similar to my own—cured her merely with a little hayseed. Well, he did me a great deal of good, for on the third day I broke into a sweat, and was able to leave my bed. Then my German doctors held another consultation, put on their spectacles, and told me that if I would go abroad, and take a course of the waters, the indisposition would finally pass away. 'Why should it not?' I thought to myself. So I had got things ready, and on the following day, a Friday, set out for here. I occupied a special compartment in the train, and where ever I had to change I found at the station bearers who were ready to carry me for a few coppers. You have nice quarters here," she went on as she glanced around the room. "But where on earth did you get the money for them, my good sir? I thought that everything of yours had been mortgaged? This Frenchman alone must be your creditor for a good deal. Oh, I know all about it, all about it."

"I-I am surprised at you, my dearest mother," said the General in some confusion. "I-I am greatly surprised. But I do not need any extraneous control of my finances. Moreover, my expenses do not exceed my income, and we—"

"They do not exceed it? Fie! Why, you are robbing your children of their last kopeck—you, their guardian!"

"After this," said the General, completely taken aback, "—after what you have just said, I do not know whether—"

"You do not know what? By heavens, are you never going to drop that roulette of yours? Are you going to whistle all your property away?"

This made such an impression upon the General that he almost choked with fury.

“Roulette, indeed? I play roulette? Really, in view of my position— Recollect what you are saying, my dearest mother. You must still be unwell.”

“Rubbish, rubbish!” she retorted. “The truth is that you CANNOT be got away from that roulette. You are simply telling lies. This very day I mean to go and see for myself what roulette is like. Prascovia, tell me what there is to be seen here; and do you, Alexis Ivanovitch, show me everything; and do you, Potapitch, make me a list of excursions. What IS there to be seen?” again she inquired of Polina.

“There is a ruined castle, and the Shlangenberg.”

“The Shlangenberg? What is it? A forest?”

“No, a mountain on the summit of which there is a place fenced off. From it you can get a most beautiful view.”

“Could a chair be carried up that mountain of yours?”

“Doubtless we could find bearers for the purpose,” I interposed.

At this moment Theodosia, the nursemaid, approached the old lady with the General’s children.

“No, I DON’T want to see them,” said the Grandmother. “I hate kissing children, for their noses are always wet. How are you getting on, Theodosia?”

“I am very well, thank you, Madame,” replied the nursemaid. “And how is your ladyship? We have been feeling so anxious about you!”

“Yes, I know, you simple soul—But who are those other guests?” the old lady continued, turning again to Polina. “For instance, who is that old rascal in the spectacles?”

“Prince Nilski, Grandmamma,” whispered Polina.

“Oh, a Russian? Why, I had no idea that he could understand me! Surely he did not hear what I said? As for Mr. Astley, I have seen him already, and I see that he is here again. How do you do?” she added to the gentleman in question.

Mr. Astley bowed in silence

“Have you NOTHING to say to me?” the old lady went on. “Say something, for goodness’ sake! Translate to him, Polina.”

Polina did so.

“I have only to say,” replied Mr. Astley gravely, but also with alacrity, “that I am indeed glad to see you in such good health.” This was interpreted to the Grandmother, and she seemed much gratified.

“How well English people know how to answer one!” she remarked. “That is why I like them so much better than French. Come here,” she added to Mr. Astley. “I will try not to bore you too much. Polina, translate to him that I am staying in rooms on a lower floor. Yes, on a lower floor,” she repeated to Astley, pointing downwards with her finger.

Astley looked pleased at receiving the invitation.

Next, the old lady scanned Polina, from head to foot with minute attention.

“I could almost have liked you, Prascovia,” suddenly she remarked, “for you are a nice girl—the best of the lot. You have some character about you. I too have character. Turn round. Surely that is not false hair that you are wearing?”

“No, Grandmamma. It is my own.”

“Well, well. I do not like the stupid fashions of today. You are very good looking. I should have fallen in love with you if I had been a man. Why do you not get married? It is time now that I was going. I want to walk, yet I always have to ride. Are you still in a bad temper?” she added to the General.

“No, indeed,” rejoined the now mollified General.

“I quite understand that at your time of life—”

“Cette vieille est tombee en enfance,” De Griens whispered to me.

“But I want to look round a little,” the old lady added to the General. Will you lend me Alexis Ivanovitch for the purpose?

“As much as you like. But I myself—yes, and Polina and Monsieur de Griens too—we all of us hope to have the pleasure of escorting you.”

“Mais, madame, cela sera un plaisir,” De Griens commented with a bewitching smile.

“‘Plaisir’ indeed! Why, I look upon you as a perfect fool, monsieur.” Then she remarked to the General: “I am not going to let you have any of my money. I must be off to my rooms now, to see what they are like. Afterwards we will look round a little. Lift me up.”

Again the Grandmother was borne aloft and carried down the staircase amid a perfect bevy of followers—the General walking as though he had been hit over the head with a cudgel, and De Griens seeming to be plunged in thought. Endeavouring to be left behind, Mlle. Blanche next thought better of it, and followed the rest, with the Prince in her wake. Only the German savant and Madame de Cominges did not leave the General’s apartments.

X

At spas—and, probably, all over Europe—hotel landlords and managers are guided in their allotment of rooms to visitors, not so much by the wishes and requirements of those visitors, as by their personal estimate of the same. It may also be said that these landlords and managers seldom make a mistake. To the Grandmother, however, our landlord, for some reason or another, allotted such a sumptuous suite that he fairly overreached himself; for he assigned her a suite consisting of four magnificently appointed rooms, with bathroom, servants' quarters, a separate room for her maid, and so on. In fact, during the previous week the suite had been occupied by no less a personage than a Grand Duchess: which circumstance was duly explained to the new occupant, as an excuse for raising the price of these apartments. The Grandmother had herself carried— or, rather, wheeled—through each room in turn, in order that she might subject the whole to a close and attentive scrutiny; while the landlord—an elderly, bald-headed man—walked respectfully by her side.

What every one took the Grandmother to be I do not know, but it appeared, at least, that she was accounted a person not only of great importance, but also, and still more, of great wealth; and without delay they entered her in the hotel register as “Madame la Generale, Princesse de Tarassevitcheva,” although she had never been a princess in her life. Her retinue, her reserved compartment in the train, her pile of unnecessary trunks, portmanteaux, and strong-boxes, all helped to increase her prestige; while her wheeled chair, her sharp tone and voice, her eccentric questions (put with an air of the most overbearing and unbridled imperiousness), her whole figure—upright, rugged, and commanding as it was—completed the general awe in which she was held. As she inspected her new abode she ordered her chair to be stopped at intervals in order that, with finger extended towards some article of furniture, she might ply the respectfully smiling, yet secretly apprehensive, landlord with unexpected questions. She addressed them to him in French, although her pronunciation of the language was so bad that sometimes I had to translate them. For the most part, the landlord's answers were unsatisfactory, and failed to please her; nor were the questions themselves of a practical nature, but related, generally, to God knows what.

For instance, on one occasion she halted before a picture which, a poor copy of a well-known original, had a mythological subject.

“Of whom is this a portrait?” she inquired.

The landlord explained that it was probably that of a countess.

“But how know you that?” the old lady retorted.

“You live here, yet you cannot say for certain! And why is the picture there at all? And why do its eyes look so crooked?”

To all these questions the landlord could return no satisfactory reply, despite his floundering endeavours.

“The blockhead!” exclaimed the Grandmother in Russian.

Then she proceeded on her way—only to repeat the same story in front of a Saxon statuette which she had sighted from afar, and had commanded, for some reason or another, to be brought to her. Finally, she inquired of the landlord what was the value of the carpet in her bedroom, as well as where the said carpet had been manufactured; but, the landlord could do no more than promise to make inquiries.

“What donkeys these people are!” she commented. Next, she turned her attention to the bed.

“What a huge counterpane!” she exclaimed. “Turn it back, please.” The lacqueys did so.

“Further yet, further yet,” the old lady cried. “Turn it RIGHT back. Also, take off those pillows and bolsters, and lift up the feather bed.”

The bed was opened for her inspection.

“Mercifully it contains no bugs,” she remarked.

“Pull off the whole thing, and then put on my own pillows and sheets. The place is too luxurious for an old woman like myself. It is too large for any one person. Alexis Ivanovitch, come and see me whenever you are not teaching your pupils,”

“After tomorrow I shall no longer be in the General’s service,” I replied, “but merely living in the hotel on my own account.”

“Why so?”

“Because, the other day, there arrived from Berlin a German and his wife—persons of some importance; and, it chanced that, when taking a walk, I spoke to them in German without having properly compassed the Berlin accent.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes: and this action on my part the Baron held to be an insult, and complained about it to the General, who yesterday dismissed me from his employ.”

“But I suppose you must have threatened that precious Baron, or something of the kind? However, even if you did so, it was a matter of no moment.”

“No, I did not. The Baron was the aggressor by raising his stick at me.”

Upon that the Grandmother turned sharply to the General.

“What? You permitted yourself to treat your tutor thus, you nincompoop, and to dismiss him from his post? You are a blockhead—an utter blockhead! I can see that clearly.”

“Do not alarm yourself, my dear mother,” the General replied with a lofty air—an air in which there was also a tinge of familiarity. “I am quite capable of managing my own affairs. Moreover, Alexis Ivanovitch has not given you a true account of the matter.”

“What did you do next?” The old lady inquired of me.

"I wanted to challenge the Baron to a duel," I replied as modestly as possible; "but the General protested against my doing so."

"And WHY did you so protest?" she inquired of the General. Then she turned to the landlord, and questioned him as to whether HE would not have fought a duel, if challenged. "For," she added, "I can see no difference between you and the Baron; nor can I bear that German visage of yours." Upon this the landlord bowed and departed, though he could not have understood the Grandmother's compliment.

"Pardon me, Madame," the General continued with a sneer, "but are duels really feasible?"

"Why not? All men are crowing cocks, and that is why they quarrel. YOU, though, I perceive, are a blockhead—a man who does not even know how to carry his breeding. Lift me up. Potapitch, see to it that you always have TWO bearers ready. Go and arrange for their hire. But we shall not require more than two, for I shall need only to be carried upstairs. On the level or in the street I can be WHEELED along. Go and tell them that, and pay them in advance, so that they may show me some respect. You too, Potapitch, are always to come with me, and YOU, Alexis Ivanovitch, are to point out to me this Baron as we go along, in order that I may get a squint at the precious 'Von.' And where is that roulette played?"

I explained to her that the game was carried on in the salons of the Casino; whereupon there ensued a string of questions as to whether there were many such salons, whether many people played in them, whether those people played a whole day at a time, and whether the game was managed according to fixed rules. At length, I thought it best to say that the most advisable course would be for her to go and see it for herself, since a mere description of it would be a difficult matter.

"Then take me straight there," she said, "and do you walk on in front of me, Alexis Ivanovitch."

"What, mother? Before you have so much as rested from your journey?" the General inquired with some solicitude. Also, for some reason which I could not divine, he seemed to be growing nervous; and, indeed, the whole party was evincing signs of confusion, and exchanging glances with one another. Probably they were thinking that it would be a ticklish—even an embarrassing—business to accompany the Grandmother to the Casino, where, very likely, she would perpetrate further eccentricities, and in public too! Yet on their own initiative they had offered to escort her!

"Why should I rest?" she retorted. "I am not tired, for I have been sitting still these past five days. Let us see what your medicinal springs and waters are like, and where they are situated. What, too, about that, that—what did you call it, Prascovia?—oh, about that mountain top?"

"Yes, we are going to see it, Grandmamma."

"Very well. Is there anything else for me to see here?"

"Yes! Quite a number of things," Polina forced herself to say.

"Martha, YOU must come with me as well," went on the old lady to her maid.

“No, no, mother!” ejaculated the General. “Really she cannot come. They would not admit even Potapitch to the Casino.”

“Rubbish! Because she is my servant, is that a reason for turning her out? Why, she is only a human being like the rest of us; and as she has been travelling for a week she might like to look about her. With whom else could she go out but myself? She would never dare to show her nose in the street alone.”

“But, mother—”

“Are you ashamed to be seen with me? Stop at home, then, and you will be asked no questions. A pretty General YOU are, to be sure! I am a general’s widow myself. But, after all, why should I drag the whole party with me? I will go and see the sights with only Alexis Ivanovitch as my escort.”

De Griers strongly insisted that EVERY ONE ought to accompany her. Indeed, he launched out into a perfect shower of charming phrases concerning the pleasure of acting as her cicerone, and so forth. Every one was touched with his words.

“Mais elle est tombee en enfance,” he added aside to the General. “Seule, elle fera des betises.” More than this I could not overhear, but he seemed to have got some plan in his mind, or even to be feeling a slight return of his hopes.

The distance to the Casino was about half a verst, and our route led us through the Chestnut Avenue until we reached the square directly fronting the building. The General, I could see, was a trifle reassured by the fact that, though our progress was distinctly eccentric in its nature, it was, at least, correct and orderly. As a matter of fact, the spectacle of a person who is unable to walk is not anything to excite surprise at a spa. Yet it was clear that the General had a great fear of the Casino itself: for why should a person who had lost the use of her limbs—more especially an old woman—be going to rooms which were set apart only for roulette? On either side of the wheeled chair walked Polina and Mlle. Blanche—the latter smiling, modestly jesting, and, in short, making herself so agreeable to the Grandmother that in the end the old lady relented towards her. On the other side of the chair Polina had to answer an endless flow of petty questions—such as “Who was it passed just now?” “Who is that coming along?” “Is the town a large one?” “Are the public gardens extensive?” “What sort of trees are those?” “What is the name of those hills?” “Do I see eagles flying yonder?” “What is that absurd-looking building?” and so forth. Meanwhile Astley whispered to me, as he walked by my side, that he looked for much to happen that morning. Behind the old lady’s chair marched Potapitch and Martha—Potapitch in his frockcoat and white waistcoat, with a cloak over all, and the forty-year-old and rosy, but slightly grey-headed, Martha in a mobcap, cotton dress, and squeaking shoes. Frequently the old lady would twist herself round to converse with these servants. As for De Griers, he spoke as though he had made up his mind to do something (though it is also possible that he spoke in this manner merely in order to hearten the General, with whom he appeared to have held a conference). But, alas, the Grandmother had uttered the fatal words, “I am not going to give you any of my money;” and though De Griers might regard these words lightly, the General knew his mother better. Also, I noticed that

De Griens and Mlle. Blanche were still exchanging looks; while of the Prince and the German savant I lost sight at the end of the Avenue, where they had turned back and left us.

Into the Casino we marched in triumph. At once, both in the person of the commissioner and in the persons of the footmen, there sprang to life the same reverence as had arisen in the lacqueys of the hotel. Yet it was not without some curiosity that they eyed us.

Without loss of time, the Grandmother gave orders that she should be wheeled through every room in the establishment; of which apartments she praised a few, while to others she remained indifferent. Concerning everything, however, she asked questions. Finally we reached the gaming-salons, where a lacquey who was, acting as guard over the doors, flung them open as though he were a man possessed.

The Grandmother's entry into the roulette-salon produced a profound impression upon the public. Around the tables, and at the further end of the room where the trente-et-quarante table was set out, there may have been gathered from 150 to 200 gamblers, ranged in several rows. Those who had succeeded in pushing their way to the tables were standing with their feet firmly planted, in order to avoid having to give up their places until they should have finished their game (since merely to stand looking on—thus occupying a gambler's place for nothing—was not permitted). True, chairs were provided around the tables, but few players made use of them—more especially if there was a large attendance of the general public; since to stand allowed of a closer approach; and, therefore, of greater facilities for calculation and staking. Behind the foremost row were herded a second and a third row of people awaiting their turn; but sometimes their impatience led these people to stretch a hand through the first row, in order to deposit their stakes. Even third-row individuals would dart forward to stake; whence seldom did more than five or ten minutes pass without a scene over disputed money arising at one or another end of the table. On the other hand, the police of the Casino were an able body of men; and though to escape the crush was an impossibility, however much one might wish it, the eight croupiers apportioned to each table kept an eye upon the stakes, performed the necessary reckoning, and decided disputes as they arose.

In the last resort they always called in the Casino police, and the disputes would immediately come to an end. Policemen were stationed about the Casino in ordinary costume, and mingled with the spectators so as to make it impossible to recognise them. In particular they kept a lookout for pickpockets and swindlers, who simply swanned in the roulette salons, and reaped a rich harvest. Indeed, in every direction money was being filched from pockets or purses—though, of course, if the attempt miscarried, a great uproar ensued. One had only to approach a roulette table, begin to play, and then openly grab some one else's winnings, for a din to be raised, and the thief to start vociferating that the stake was HIS; and, if the coup had been carried out with sufficient skill, and the witnesses wavered at all in their testimony, the thief would as likely as not succeed in getting away with the money, provided that the sum was not

a large one—not large enough to have attracted the attention of the croupiers or some fellow-player. Moreover, if it were a stake of insignificant size, its true owner would sometimes decline to continue the dispute, rather than become involved in a scandal. Conversely, if the thief was detected, he was ignominiously expelled the building.

Upon all this the Grandmother gazed with open-eyed curiosity; and, on some thieves happening to be turned out of the place, she was delighted. Trente-et-quarante interested her but little; she preferred roulette, with its ever-revolving wheel. At length she expressed a wish to view the game closer; whereupon in some mysterious manner, the lacqueys and other officious agents (especially one or two ruined Poles of the kind who keep offering their services to successful gamblers and foreigners in general) at once found and cleared a space for the old lady among the crush, at the very centre of one of the tables, and next to the chief croupier; after which they wheeled her chair thither. Upon this a number of visitors who were not playing, but only looking on (particularly some Englishmen with their families), pressed closer forward towards the table, in order to watch the old lady from among the ranks of the gamblers. Many a lorgnette I saw turned in her direction, and the croupiers' hopes rose high that such an eccentric player was about to provide them with something out of the common. An old lady of seventy-five years who, though unable to walk, desired to play was not an everyday phenomenon. I too pressed forward towards the table, and ranged myself by the Grandmother's side; while Martha and Potapitch remained somewhere in the background among the crowd, and the General, Polina, and De Griens, with Mlle. Blanche, also remained hidden among the spectators.

At first the old lady did no more than watch the gamblers, and ply me, in a half-whisper, with sharp-broken questions as to who was so-and-so. Especially did her favour light upon a very young man who was plunging heavily, and had won (so it was whispered) as much as 40,000 francs, which were lying before him on the table in a heap of gold and bank-notes. His eyes kept flashing, and his hands shaking; yet all the while he staked without any sort of calculation—just what came to his hand, as he kept winning and winning, and raking and raking in his gains. Around him lacqueys fussed—placing chairs just behind where he was standing—and clearing the spectators from his vicinity, so that he should have more room, and not be crowded—the whole done, of course, in expectation of a generous largesse. From time to time other gamblers would hand him part of their winnings—being glad to let him stake for them as much as his hand could grasp; while beside him stood a Pole in a state of violent, but respectful, agitation, who, also in expectation of a generous largesse, kept whispering to him at intervals (probably telling him what to stake, and advising and directing his play). Yet never once did the player throw him a glance as he staked and staked, and raked in his winnings. Evidently, the player in question was dead to all besides.

For a few minutes the Grandmother watched him.

“Go and tell him,” suddenly she exclaimed with a nudge at my elbow, “—go and tell him to stop, and to take his money with him, and go home. Presently he will be

losing—yes, losing everything that he has now won.” She seemed almost breathless with excitement.

“Where is Potapitch?” she continued. “Send Potapitch to speak to him. No, YOU must tell him, you must tell him,”—here she nudged me again—“for I have not the least notion where Potapitch is. *Sortez, sortez,*” she shouted to the young man, until I leant over in her direction and whispered in her ear that no shouting was allowed, nor even loud speaking, since to do so disturbed the calculations of the players, and might lead to our being ejected.

“How provoking!” she retorted. “Then the young man is done for! I suppose he WISHES to be ruined. Yet I could not bear to see him have to return it all. What a fool the fellow is!” and the old lady turned sharply away.

On the left, among the players at the other half of the table, a young lady was playing, with, beside her, a dwarf. Who the dwarf may have been—whether a relative or a person whom she took with her to act as a foil—I do not know; but I had noticed her there on previous occasions, since, everyday, she entered the Casino at one o’clock precisely, and departed at two—thus playing for exactly one hour. Being well-known to the attendants, she always had a seat provided for her; and, taking some gold and a few thousand-franc notes out of her pocket—would begin quietly, coldly, and after much calculation, to stake, and mark down the figures in pencil on a paper, as though striving to work out a system according to which, at given moments, the odds might group themselves. Always she staked large coins, and either lost or won one, two, or three thousand francs a day, but not more; after which she would depart. The Grandmother took a long look at her.

“THAT woman is not losing,” she said. “To whom does she belong? Do you know her? Who is she?”

“She is, I believe, a Frenchwoman,” I replied.

“Ah! A bird of passage, evidently. Besides, I can see that she has her shoes polished. Now, explain to me the meaning of each round in the game, and the way in which one ought to stake.”

Upon this I set myself to explain the meaning of all the combinations—of “rouge et noir,” of “pair et impair,” of “manque et passe,” with, lastly, the different values in the system of numbers. The Grandmother listened attentively, took notes, put questions in various forms, and laid the whole thing to heart. Indeed, since an example of each system of stakes kept constantly occurring, a great deal of information could be assimilated with ease and celerity. The Grandmother was vastly pleased.

“But what is zero?” she inquired. “Just now I heard the flaxen-haired croupier call out ‘zero!’ And why does he keep raking in all the money that is on the table? To think that he should grab the whole pile for himself! What does zero mean?”

“Zero is what the bank takes for itself. If the wheel stops at that figure, everything lying on the table becomes the absolute property of the bank. Also, whenever the wheel has begun to turn, the bank ceases to pay out anything.”

“Then I should receive nothing if I were staking?”

“No; unless by any chance you had PURPOSELY staked on zero; in which case you would receive thirty-five times the value of your stake.”

“Why thirty-five times, when zero so often turns up? And if so, why do not more of these fools stake upon it?”

“Because the number of chances against its occurrence is thirty-six.”

“Rubbish! Potapitch, Potapitch! Come here, and I will give you some money.” The old lady took out of her pocket a tightly-clasped purse, and extracted from its depths a ten-gulden piece. “Go at once, and stake that upon zero.”

“But, Madame, zero has only this moment turned up,” I remonstrated; “wherefore, it may not do so again for ever so long. Wait a little, and you may then have a better chance.”

“Rubbish! Stake, please.”

“Pardon me, but zero might not turn up again until, say, tonight, even though you had staked thousands upon it. It often happens so.”

“Rubbish, rubbish! Who fears the wolf should never enter the forest. What? We have lost? Then stake again.”

A second ten-gulden piece did we lose, and then I put down a third. The Grandmother could scarcely remain seated in her chair, so intent was she upon the little ball as it leapt through the notches of the ever-revolving wheel. However, the third ten-gulden piece followed the first two. Upon this the Grandmother went perfectly crazy. She could no longer sit still, and actually struck the table with her fist when the croupier cried out, “Trente-six,” instead of the desiderated zero.

“To listen to him!” fumed the old lady. “When will that accursed zero ever turn up? I cannot breathe until I see it. I believe that that infernal croupier is PURPOSELY keeping it from turning up. Alexis Ivanovitch, stake TWO golden pieces this time. The moment we cease to stake, that cursed zero will come turning up, and we shall get nothing.”

“My good Madame—”

“Stake, stake! It is not YOUR money.”

Accordingly I staked two ten-gulden pieces. The ball went hopping round the wheel until it began to settle through the notches. Meanwhile the Grandmother sat as though petrified, with my hand convulsively clutched in hers.

“Zero!” called the croupier.

“There! You see, you see!” cried the old lady, as she turned and faced me, wreathed in smiles. “I told you so! It was the Lord God himself who suggested to me to stake those two coins. Now, how much ought I to receive? Why do they not pay it out to me? Potapitch! Martha! Where are they? What has become of our party? Potapitch, Potapitch!”

“Presently, Madame,” I whispered. “Potapitch is outside, and they would decline to admit him to these rooms. See! You are being paid out your money. Pray take it.” The croupiers were making up a heavy packet of coins, sealed in blue paper, and containing

fifty ten gulden pieces, together with an unsealed packet containing another twenty. I handed the whole to the old lady in a money-shovel.

“Faites le jeu, messieurs! Faites le jeu, messieurs! Rien ne va plus,” proclaimed the croupier as once more he invited the company to stake, and prepared to turn the wheel.

“We shall be too late! He is going to spin again! Stake, stake!” The Grandmother was in a perfect fever. “Do not hang back! Be quick!” She seemed almost beside herself, and nudged me as hard as she could.

“Upon what shall I stake, Madame?”

“Upon zero, upon zero! Again upon zero! Stake as much as ever you can. How much have we got? Seventy ten-gulden pieces? We shall not miss them, so stake twenty pieces at a time.”

“Think a moment, Madame. Sometimes zero does not turn up for two hundred rounds in succession. I assure you that you may lose all your capital.”

“You are wrong—utterly wrong. Stake, I tell you! What a chattering tongue you have! I know perfectly well what I am doing.” The old lady was shaking with excitement.

“But the rules do not allow of more than 120 gulden being staked upon zero at a time.”

“How ‘do not allow’? Surely you are wrong? Monsieur, monsieur—” here she nudged the croupier who was sitting on her left, and preparing to spin—“combien zero? Douze? Douze?”

I hastened to translate.

“Oui, Madame,” was the croupier’s polite reply. “No single stake must exceed four thousand florins. That is the regulation.”

“Then there is nothing else for it. We must risk in gulden.”

“Le jeu est fait!” the croupier called. The wheel revolved, and stopped at thirty. We had lost!

“Again, again, again! Stake again!” shouted the old lady. Without attempting to oppose her further, but merely shrugging my shoulders, I placed twelve more ten-gulden pieces upon the table. The wheel whirled around and around, with the Grandmother simply quaking as she watched its revolutions.

“Does she again think that zero is going to be the winning coup?” thought I, as I stared at her in astonishment. Yet an absolute assurance of winning was shining on her face; she looked perfectly convinced that zero was about to be called again. At length the ball dropped off into one of the notches.

“Zero!” cried the croupier.

“Ah!!!” screamed the old lady as she turned to me in a whirl of triumph.

I myself was at heart a gambler. At that moment I became acutely conscious both of that fact and of the fact that my hands and knees were shaking, and that the blood was beating in my brain. Of course this was a rare occasion—an occasion on which zero had turned up no less than three times within a dozen rounds; yet in such an event there was nothing so very surprising, seeing that, only three days ago, I myself had been a witness to zero turning up **THREE TIMES IN SUCCESSION**, so that one

of the players who was recording the coups on paper was moved to remark that for several days past zero had never turned up at all!

With the Grandmother, as with any one who has won a very large sum, the management settled up with great attention and respect, since she was fortunate to have to receive no less than 4200 gulden. Of these gulden the odd 200 were paid her in gold, and the remainder in bank notes.

This time the old lady did not call for Potapitch; for that she was too preoccupied. Though not outwardly shaken by the event (indeed, she seemed perfectly calm), she was trembling inwardly from head to foot. At length, completely absorbed in the game, she burst out:

“Alexis Ivanovitch, did not the croupier just say that 4000 florins were the most that could be staked at any one time? Well, take these 4000, and stake them upon the red.”

To oppose her was useless. Once more the wheel revolved.

“Rouge!” proclaimed the croupier.

Again 4000 florins—in all 8000!

“Give me them,” commanded the Grandmother, “and stake the other 4000 upon the red again.”

I did so.

“Rouge!” proclaimed the croupier.

“Twelve thousand!” cried the old lady. “Hand me the whole lot. Put the gold into this purse here, and count the bank notes. Enough! Let us go home. Wheel my chair away.”

XI

THE chair, with the old lady beaming in it, was wheeled away towards the doors at the further end of the salon, while our party hastened to crowd around her, and to offer her their congratulations. In fact, eccentric as was her conduct, it was also overshadowed by her triumph; with the result that the General no longer feared to be publicly compromised by being seen with such a strange woman, but, smiling in a condescending, cheerfully familiar way, as though he were soothing a child, he offered his greetings to the old lady. At the same time, both he and the rest of the spectators were visibly impressed. Everywhere people kept pointing to the Grandmother, and talking about her. Many people even walked beside her chair, in order to view her the better while, at a little distance, Astley was carrying on a conversation on the subject with two English acquaintances of his. De Griens was simply overflowing with smiles and compliments, and a number of fine ladies were staring at the Grandmother as though she had been something curious.

“Quelle victoire!” exclaimed De Griens.

“Mais, Madame, c’était du feu!” added Mlle. Blanche with an elusive smile.

“Yes, I have won twelve thousand florins,” replied the old lady. “And then there is all this gold. With it the total ought to come to nearly thirteen thousand. How much is that in Russian money? Six thousand roubles, I think?”

However, I calculated that the sum would exceed seven thousand roubles—or, at the present rate of exchange, even eight thousand.

“Eight thousand roubles! What a splendid thing! And to think of you simpletons sitting there and doing nothing! Potapitch! Martha! See what I have won!”

“How DID you do it, Madame?” Martha exclaimed ecstatically. “Eight thousand roubles!”

“And I am going to give you fifty gulden apiece. There they are.”

Potapitch and Martha rushed towards her to kiss her hand.

“And to each bearer also I will give a ten-gulden piece. Let them have it out of the gold, Alexis Ivanovitch. But why is this footman bowing to me, and that other man as well? Are they congratulating me? Well, let them have ten gulden apiece.”

“Madame la princesse—Un pauvre expatrié—Malheur continuel—Les princes russes sont si genereux!” said a man who for some time past had been hanging around the old lady’s chair—a personage who, dressed in a shabby frockcoat and coloured waistcoat, kept taking off his cap, and smiling pathetically.

“Give him ten gulden,” said the Grandmother. “No, give him twenty. Now, enough of that, or I shall never get done with you all. Take a moment’s rest, and then carry

me away. Prascovia, I mean to buy a new dress for you tomorrow. Yes, and for you too, Mlle. Blanche. Please translate, Prascovia.”

“*Merci, Madame,*” replied Mlle. Blanche gratefully as she twisted her face into the mocking smile which usually she kept only for the benefit of De Griens and the General. The latter looked confused, and seemed greatly relieved when we reached the Avenue.

“How surprised Theodosia too will be!” went on the Grandmother (thinking of the General’s nursemaid). “She, like yourselves, shall have the price of a new gown. Here, Alexis Ivanovitch! Give that beggar something” (a crooked-backed ragamuffin had approached to stare at us).

“But perhaps he is NOT a beggar—only a rascal,” I replied.

“Never mind, never mind. Give him a gulden.”

I approached the beggar in question, and handed him the coin. Looking at me in great astonishment, he silently accepted the gulden, while from his person there proceeded a strong smell of liquor.

“Have you never tried your luck, Alexis Ivanovitch?”

“No, Madame.”

“Yet just now I could see that you were burning to do so?”

“I do mean to try my luck presently.”

“Then stake everything upon zero. You have seen how it ought to be done? How much capital do you possess?”

“Two hundred gulden, Madame.”

“Not very much. See here; I will lend you five hundred if you wish. Take this purse of mine.” With that she added sharply to the General: “But YOU need not expect to receive any.”

This seemed to upset him, but he said nothing, and De Griens contented himself by scowling.

“*Que diable!*” he whispered to the General. “*C’est une terrible vieille.*”

“Look! Another beggar, another beggar!” exclaimed the grandmother. “Alexis Ivanovitch, go and give him a gulden.”

As she spoke I saw approaching us a grey-headed old man with a wooden leg—a man who was dressed in a blue frockcoat and carrying a staff. He looked like an old soldier. As soon as I tendered him the coin he fell back a step or two, and eyed me threateningly.

“*Was ist der Teufel!*” he cried, and appended thereto a round dozen of oaths.

“The man is a perfect fool!” exclaimed the Grandmother, waving her hand. “Move on now, for I am simply famished. When we have lunched we will return to that place.”

“What?” cried I. “You are going to play again?”

“What else do you suppose?” she retorted. “Are you going only to sit here, and grow sour, and let me look at you?”

“Madame,” said De Griens confidentially, “*les chances peuvent tourner. Une seule mauvaise chance, et vous perdrez tout—surtout avec votre jeu. C’était terrible!*”

“*Oui; vous perdrez absolument,*” put in Mlle. Blanche.

“What has that got to do with YOU?” retorted the old lady. “It is not YOUR money that I am going to lose; it is my own. And where is that Mr. Astley of yours?” she added to myself.

“He stayed behind in the Casino.”

“What a pity! He is such a nice sort of man!”

Arriving home, and meeting the landlord on the staircase, the Grandmother called him to her side, and boasted to him of her winnings—thereafter doing the same to Theodosia, and conferring upon her thirty gulden; after which she bid her serve luncheon. The meal over, Theodosia and Martha broke into a joint flood of ecstasy.

“I was watching you all the time, Madame,” quavered Martha, “and I asked Potapitch what mistress was trying to do. And, my word! the heaps and heaps of money that were lying upon the table! Never in my life have I seen so much money. And there were gentlefolk around it, and other gentlefolk sitting down. So, I asked Potapitch where all these gentry had come from; for, thought I, maybe the Holy Mother of God will help our mistress among them. Yes, I prayed for you, Madame, and my heart died within me, so that I kept trembling and trembling. The Lord be with her, I thought to myself; and in answer to my prayer He has now sent you what He has done! Even yet I tremble—I tremble to think of it all.”

“Alexis Ivanovitch,” said the old lady, “after luncheon,—that is to say, about four o’clock—get ready to go out with me again. But in the meanwhile, good-bye. Do not forget to call a doctor, for I must take the waters. Now go and get rested a little.”

I left the Grandmother’s presence in a state of bewilderment.

Vainly I endeavoured to imagine what would become of our party, or what turn the affair would next take. I could perceive that none of the party had yet recovered their presence of mind—least of all the General. The factor of the Grandmother’s appearance in place of the hourly expected telegram to announce her death (with, of course, resultant legacies) had so upset the whole scheme of intentions and projects that it was with a decided feeling of apprehension and growing paralysis that the conspirators viewed any future performances of the old lady at roulette. Yet this second factor was not quite so important as the first, since, though the Grandmother had twice declared that she did not intend to give the General any money, that declaration was not a complete ground for the abandonment of hope. Certainly De Griens, who, with the General, was up to the neck in the affair, had not wholly lost courage; and I felt sure that Mlle. Blanche also—Mlle. Blanche who was not only as deeply involved as the other two, but also expectant of becoming Madame General and an important legatee—would not lightly surrender the position, but would use her every resource of coquetry upon the old lady, in order to afford a contrast to the impetuous Polina, who was difficult to understand, and lacked the art of pleasing.

Yet now, when the Grandmother had just performed an astonishing feat at roulette; now, when the old lady’s personality had been so clearly and typically revealed as that of a rugged, arrogant woman who was “*tombee en enfance*”; now, when everything appeared to be lost,—why, now the Grandmother was as merry as a child which plays

with thistle-down. "Good Lord!" I thought with, may God forgive me, a most malicious smile, "every ten-gulden piece which the Grandmother staked must have raised a blister on the General's heart, and maddened De Griens, and driven Mlle. de Cominges almost to frenzy with the sight of this spoon dangling before her lips." Another factor is the circumstance that even when, overjoyed at winning, the Grandmother was distributing alms right and left, and taking every one to be a beggar, she again snapped out to the General that he was not going to be allowed any of her money—which meant that the old lady had quite made up her mind on the point, and was sure of it. Yes, danger loomed ahead.

All these thoughts passed through my mind during the few moments that, having left the old lady's rooms, I was ascending to my own room on the top storey. What most struck me was the fact that, though I had divined the chief, the stoutest, threads which united the various actors in the drama, I had, until now, been ignorant of the methods and secrets of the game. For Polina had never been completely open with me. Although, on occasions, it had happened that involuntarily, as it were, she had revealed to me something of her heart, I had noticed that in most cases—in fact, nearly always—she had either laughed away these revelations, or grown confused, or purposely imparted to them a false guise. Yes, she must have concealed a great deal from me. But, I had a presentiment that now the end of this strained and mysterious situation was approaching. Another stroke, and all would be finished and exposed. Of my own fortunes, interested though I was in the affair, I took no account. I was in the strange position of possessing but two hundred gulden, of being at a loose end, of lacking both a post, the means of subsistence, a shred of hope, and any plans for the future, yet of caring nothing for these things. Had not my mind been so full of Polina, I should have given myself up to the comical piquancy of the impending denouement, and laughed my fill at it. But the thought of Polina was torture to me. That her fate was settled I already had an inkling; yet that was not the thought which was giving me so much uneasiness. What I really wished for was to penetrate her secrets. I wanted her to come to me and say, "I love you," and, if she would not so come, or if to hope that she would ever do so was an unthinkable absurdity—why, then there was nothing else for me to want. Even now I do not know what I am wanting. I feel like a man who has lost his way. I yearn but to be in her presence, and within the circle of her light and splendour—to be there now, and forever, and for the whole of my life. More I do not know. How can I ever bring myself to leave her?

On reaching the third storey of the hotel I experienced a shock. I was just passing the General's suite when something caused me to look round. Out of a door about twenty paces away there was coming Polina! She hesitated for a moment on seeing me, and then beckoned me to her.

"Polina Alexandrovna!"

"Hush! Not so loud."

"Something startled me just now," I whispered, "and I looked round, and saw you. Some electrical influence seems to emanate from your form."

“Take this letter,” she went on with a frown (probably she had not even heard my words, she was so preoccupied), “and hand it personally to Mr. Astley. Go as quickly as ever you can, please. No answer will be required. He himself—” She did not finish her sentence.

“To Mr. Astley?” I asked, in some astonishment.

But she had vanished again.

Aha! So the two were carrying on a correspondence! However, I set off to search for Astley—first at his hotel, and then at the Casino, where I went the round of the salons in vain. At length, vexed, and almost in despair, I was on my way home when I ran across him among a troop of English ladies and gentlemen who had been out for a ride. Beckoning to him to stop, I handed him the letter. We had barely time even to look at one another, but I suspected that it was of set purpose that he restarted his horse so quickly.

Was jealousy, then, gnawing at me? At all events, I felt exceedingly depressed, despite the fact that I had no desire to ascertain what the correspondence was about. To think that HE should be her confidant! “My friend, mine own familiar friend!” passed through my mind. Yet WAS there any love in the matter? “Of course not,” reason whispered to me. But reason goes for little on such occasions. I felt that the matter must be cleared up, for it was becoming unpleasantly complex.

I had scarcely set foot in the hotel when the commissionaire and the landlord (the latter issuing from his room for the purpose) alike informed me that I was being searched for high and low—that three separate messages to ascertain my whereabouts had come down from the General. When I entered his study I was feeling anything but kindly disposed. I found there the General himself, De Griers, and Mlle. Blanche, but not Mlle.’s mother, who was a person whom her reputed daughter used only for show purposes, since in all matters of business the daughter fended for herself, and it is unlikely that the mother knew anything about them.

Some very heated discussion was in progress, and meanwhile the door of the study was open—an unprecedented circumstance. As I approached the portals I could hear loud voices raised, for mingled with the pert, venomous accents of De Griers were Mlle. Blanche’s excited, impudently abusive tongue and the General’s plaintive wail as, apparently, he sought to justify himself in something. But on my appearance every one stopped speaking, and tried to put a better face upon matters. De Griers smoothed his hair, and twisted his angry face into a smile—into the mean, studiously polite French smile which I so detested; while the downcast, perplexed General assumed an air of dignity—though only in a mechanical way. On the other hand, Mlle. Blanche did not trouble to conceal the wrath that was sparkling in her countenance, but bent her gaze upon me with an air of impatient expectancy. I may remark that hitherto she had treated me with absolute superciliousness, and, so far from answering my salutations, had always ignored them.

“Alexis Ivanovitch,” began the General in a tone of affectionate upbraiding, “may I say to you that I find it strange, exceedingly strange, that—In short, your conduct towards myself and my family—In a word, your-er-extremely”

” Eh! *Ce n’est pas ca,*” interrupted De Griers in a tone of impatience and contempt (evidently he was the ruling spirit of the conclave). “*Mon cher monsieur, notre general se trompe.* What he means to say is that he warns you—he begs of you most earnestly—not to ruin him. I use the expression because—”

“Why? Why?” I interjected.

“Because you have taken upon yourself to act as guide to this, to this—how shall I express it?—to this old lady, a *cette pauvre terrible vieille.* But she will only gamble away all that she has—gamble it away like thistledown. You yourself have seen her play. Once she has acquired the taste for gambling, she will never leave the roulette-table, but, of sheer perversity and temper, will stake her all, and lose it. In cases such as hers a gambler can never be torn away from the game; and then—and then—”

“And then,” asseverated the General, “you will have ruined my whole family. I and my family are her heirs, for she has no nearer relatives than ourselves. I tell you frankly that my affairs are in great—very great disorder; how much they are so you yourself are partially aware. If she should lose a large sum, or, maybe, her whole fortune, what will become of us—of my children” (here the General exchanged a glance with De Griers) or of me? “(here he looked at Mlle. Blanche, who turned her head contemptuously away). “Alexis Ivanovitch, I beg of you to save us.”

“Tell me, General, how am I to do so? On what footing do I stand here?”

“Refuse to take her about. Simply leave her alone.”

“But she would soon find some one else to take my place?”

“*Ce n’est pas ca, ce n’est pas ca,*” again interrupted De Griers. “*Que diable!* Do not leave her alone so much as advise her, persuade her, draw her away. In any case do not let her gamble; find her some counter-attraction.”

“And how am I to do that? If only you would undertake the task, Monsieur de Griers!” I said this last as innocently as possible, but at once saw a rapid glance of excited interrogation pass from Mlle. Blanche to De Griers, while in the face of the latter also there gleamed something which he could not repress.

“Well, at the present moment she would refuse to accept my services,” said he with a gesture. “But if, later—”

Here he gave Mlle. Blanche another glance which was full of meaning; whereupon she advanced towards me with a bewitching smile, and seized and pressed my hands. Devil take it, but how that devilish visage of hers could change! At the present moment it was a visage full of supplication, and as gentle in its expression as that of a smiling, roguish infant. Stealthily, she drew me apart from the rest as though the more completely to separate me from them; and, though no harm came of her doing so—for it was merely a stupid manoeuvre, and no more—I found the situation very unpleasant.

The General hastened to lend her his support.

“Alexis Ivanovitch,” he began, “pray pardon me for having said what I did just now—for having said more than I meant to do. I beg and beseech you, I kiss the hem of your garment, as our Russian saying has it, for you, and only you, can save us. I and Mlle. de Cominges, we all of us beg of you— But you understand, do you not? Surely you understand?” and with his eyes he indicated Mlle. Blanche. Truly he was cutting a pitiful figure!

At this moment three low, respectful knocks sounded at the door; which, on being opened, revealed a chambermaid, with Potapitch behind her—come from the Grandmother to request that I should attend her in her rooms. “She is in a bad humour,” added Potapitch.

The time was half-past three.

“My mistress was unable to sleep,” explained Potapitch; “so, after tossing about for a while, she suddenly rose, called for her chair, and sent me to look for you. She is now in the verandah.”

“Quelle megere!” exclaimed De Griens.

True enough, I found Madame in the hotel verandah -much put about at my delay, for she had been unable to contain herself until four o’clock.

“Lift me up,” she cried to the bearers, and once more we set out for the roulette-salons.

XII

The Grandmother was in an impatient, irritable frame of mind. Without doubt the roulette had turned her head, for she appeared to be indifferent to everything else, and, in general, seemed much distraught. For instance, she asked me no questions about objects en route, except that, when a sumptuous barouche passed us and raised a cloud of dust, she lifted her hand for a moment, and inquired, "What was that?" Yet even then she did not appear to hear my reply, although at times her abstraction was interrupted by sallies and fits of sharp, impatient fidgeting. Again, when I pointed out to her the Baron and Baroness Burmergelm walking to the Casino, she merely looked at them in an absent-minded sort of way, and said with complete indifference, "Ah!" Then, turning sharply to Potapitch and Martha, who were walking behind us, she rapped out:

"Why have YOU attached yourselves to the party? We are not going to take you with us every time. Go home at once." Then, when the servants had pulled hasty bows and departed, she added to me: "You are all the escort I need."

At the Casino the Grandmother seemed to be expected, for no time was lost in procuring her former place beside the croupier. It is my opinion that though croupiers seem such ordinary, humdrum officials—men who care nothing whether the bank wins or loses—they are, in reality, anything but indifferent to the bank's losing, and are given instructions to attract players, and to keep a watch over the bank's interests; as also, that for such services, these officials are awarded prizes and premiums. At all events, the croupiers of Roulettenberg seemed to look upon the Grandmother as their lawful prey—whereafter there befell what our party had foretold.

It happened thus:

As soon as ever we arrived the Grandmother ordered me to stake twelve ten-gulden pieces in succession upon zero. Once, twice, and thrice I did so, yet zero never turned up.

"Stake again," said the old lady with an impatient nudge of my elbow, and I obeyed.

"How many times have we lost?" she inquired—actually grinding her teeth in her excitement.

"We have lost 144 ten-gulden pieces," I replied. "I tell you, Madame, that zero may not turn up until nightfall."

"Never mind," she interrupted. "Keep on staking upon zero, and also stake a thousand gulden upon rouge. Here is a banknote with which to do so."

The red turned up, but zero missed again, and we only got our thousand gulden back.

“But you see, you see ” whispered the old lady. “We have now recovered almost all that we staked. Try zero again. Let us do so another ten times, and then leave off.”

By the fifth round, however, the Grandmother was weary of the scheme.

“To the devil with that zero!” she exclaimed. Stake four thousand gulden upon the red.”

“But, Madame, that will be so much to venture!” I remonstrated. “Suppose the red should not turn up?” The Grandmother almost struck me in her excitement. Her agitation was rapidly making her quarrelsome. Consequently, there was nothing for it but to stake the whole four thousand gulden as she had directed.

The wheel revolved while the Grandmother sat as bolt upright, and with as proud and quiet a mien, as though she had not the least doubt of winning.

“Zero!” cried the croupier.

At first the old lady failed to understand the situation; but, as soon as she saw the croupier raking in her four thousand gulden, together with everything else that happened to be lying on the table, and recognised that the zero which had been so long turning up, and on which we had lost nearly two hundred ten-gulden pieces, had at length, as though of set purpose, made a sudden reappearance—why, the poor old lady fell to cursing it, and to throwing herself about, and wailing and gesticulating at the company at large. Indeed, some people in our vicinity actually burst out laughing.

“To think that that accursed zero should have turned up NOW!” she sobbed. “The accursed, accursed thing! And, it is all YOUR fault,” she added, rounding upon me in a frenzy. “It was you who persuaded me to cease staking upon it.”

“But, Madame, I only explained the game to you. How am I to answer for every mischance which may occur in it?”

“You and your mischances!” she whispered threateningly. “Go! Away at once!”

“Farewell, then, Madame.” And I turned to depart.

“No— stay,” she put in hastily. “Where are you going to? Why should you leave me? You fool! No, no... stay here. It is I who was the fool. Tell me what I ought to do.”

“I cannot take it upon myself to advise you, for you will only blame me if I do so. Play at your own discretion. Say exactly what you wish staked, and I will stake it.”

“Very well. Stake another four thousand gulden upon the red. Take this banknote to do it with. I have still got twenty thousand roubles in actual cash.”

“But,” I whispered, “such a quantity of money—”

“Never mind. I cannot rest until I have won back my losses. Stake!”

I staked, and we lost.

“Stake again, stake again—eight thousand at a stroke!”

“I cannot, Madame. The largest stake allowed is four thousand gulden.”

“Well, then; stake four thousand.”

This time we won, and the Grandmother recovered herself a little.

“You see, you see!” she exclaimed as she nudged me. “Stake another four thousand.”

I did so, and lost. Again, and yet again, we lost. “Madame, your twelve thousand gulden are now gone,” at length I reported.

"I see they are," she replied with, as it were, the calmness of despair. "I see they are," she muttered again as she gazed straight in front of her, like a person lost in thought. "Ah well, I do not mean to rest until I have staked another four thousand."

"But you have no money with which to do it, Madame. In this satchel I can see only a few five percent bonds and some transfers—no actual cash."

"And in the purse?"

"A mere trifle."

"But there is a money-changer's office here, is there not? They told me I should be able to get any sort of paper security changed!"

"Quite so; to any amount you please. But you will lose on the transaction what would frighten even a Jew."

"Rubbish! I am DETERMINED to retrieve my losses. Take me away, and call those fools of bearers."

I wheeled the chair out of the throng, and, the bearers making their appearance, we left the Casino.

"Hurry, hurry!" commanded the Grandmother. "Show me the nearest way to the money-changer's. Is it far?"

"A couple of steps, Madame."

At the turning from the square into the Avenue we came face to face with the whole of our party—the General, De Griers, Mlle. Blanche, and her mother. Only Polina and Mr. Astley were absent.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed the Grandmother. "But we have no time to stop. What do you want? I can't talk to you here."

I dropped behind a little, and immediately was pounced upon by De Griers.

"She has lost this morning's winnings," I whispered, "and also twelve thousand gulden of her original money. At the present moment we are going to get some bonds changed."

De Griers stamped his foot with vexation, and hastened to communicate the tidings to the General. Meanwhile we continued to wheel the old lady along.

"Stop her, stop her," whispered the General in consternation.

"You had better try and stop her yourself," I returned—also in a whisper.

"My good mother," he said as he approached her, "—my good mother, pray let, let—" (his voice was beginning to tremble and sink) "—let us hire a carriage, and go for a drive. Near here there is an enchanting view to be obtained. We-we-we were just coming to invite you to go and see it."

"Begone with you and your views!" said the Grandmother angrily as she waved him away.

"And there are trees there, and we could have tea under them," continued the General—now in utter despair.

"Nous boirons du lait, sur l'herbe fraiche," added De Griers with the snarl almost of a wild beast.

“Du lait, de l’herbe fraiche”—the idyll, the ideal of the Parisian bourgeois—his whole outlook upon “la nature et la verite”!

“Have done with you and your milk!” cried the old lady. “Go and stuff YOURSELF as much as you like, but my stomach simply recoils from the idea. What are you stopping for? I have nothing to say to you.”

“Here we are, Madame,” I announced. “Here is the moneychanger’s office.”

I entered to get the securities changed, while the Grandmother remained outside in the porch, and the rest waited at a little distance, in doubt as to their best course of action. At length the old lady turned such an angry stare upon them that they departed along the road towards the Casino.

The process of changing involved complicated calculations which soon necessitated my return to the Grandmother for instructions.

“The thieves!” she exclaimed as she clapped her hands together. “Never mind, though. Get the documents cashed—No; send the banker out to me,” she added as an afterthought.

“Would one of the clerks do, Madame?”

“Yes, one of the clerks. The thieves!”

The clerk consented to come out when he perceived that he was being asked for by an old lady who was too infirm to walk; after which the Grandmother began to upbraid him at length, and with great vehemence, for his alleged usuriousness, and to bargain with him in a mixture of Russian, French, and German—I acting as interpreter. Meanwhile, the grave-faced official eyed us both, and silently nodded his head. At the Grandmother, in particular, he gazed with a curiosity which almost bordered upon rudeness. At length, too, he smiled.

“Pray recollect yourself!” cried the old lady. “And may my money choke you! Alexis Ivanovitch, tell him that we can easily repair to someone else.”

“The clerk says that others will give you even less than he.”

Of what the ultimate calculations consisted I do not exactly remember, but at all events they were alarming. Receiving twelve thousand florins in gold, I took also the statement of accounts, and carried it out to the Grandmother.

“Well, well,” she said, “I am no accountant. Let us hurry away, hurry away.” And she waved the paper aside.

“Neither upon that accursed zero, however, nor upon that equally accursed red do I mean to stake a cent,” I muttered to myself as I entered the Casino.

This time I did all I could to persuade the old lady to stake as little as possible—saying that a turn would come in the chances when she would be at liberty to stake more. But she was so impatient that, though at first she agreed to do as I suggested, nothing could stop her when once she had begun. By way of prelude she won stakes of a hundred and two hundred gulden.

“There you are!” she said as she nudged me. “See what we have won! Surely it would be worth our while to stake four thousand instead of a hundred, for we might win another four thousand, and then—! Oh, it was YOUR fault before—all your fault!”

I felt greatly put out as I watched her play, but I decided to hold my tongue, and to give her no more advice.

Suddenly De Griers appeared on the scene. It seemed that all this while he and his companions had been standing beside us— though I noticed that Mlle. Blanche had withdrawn a little from the rest, and was engaged in flirting with the Prince. Clearly the General was greatly put out at this. Indeed, he was in a perfect agony of vexation. But Mlle. was careful never to look his way, though he did his best to attract her notice. Poor General! By turns his face blanched and reddened, and he was trembling to such an extent that he could scarcely follow the old lady's play. At length Mlle. and the Prince took their departure, and the General followed them.

"Madame, Madame," sounded the honeyed accents of De Griers as he leant over to whisper in the Grandmother's ear. "That stake will never win. No, no, it is impossible," he added in Russian with a writhe. "No, no!"

"But why not?" asked the Grandmother, turning round. "Show me what I ought to do."

Instantly De Griers burst into a babble of French as he advised, jumped about, declared that such and such chances ought to be waited for, and started to make calculations of figures. All this he addressed to me in my capacity as translator— tapping the table the while with his finger, and pointing hither and thither. At length he seized a pencil, and began to reckon sums on paper until he had exhausted the Grandmother's patience.

"Away with you!" she interrupted. "You talk sheer nonsense, for, though you keep on saying 'Madame, Madame,' you haven't the least notion what ought to be done. Away with you, I say!"

"Mais, Madame," cooed De Griers—and straightway started afresh with his fussy instructions.

"Stake just ONCE, as he advises," the Grandmother said to me, "and then we shall see what we shall see. Of course, his stake MIGHT win."

As a matter of fact, De Grier's one object was to distract the old lady from staking large sums; wherefore, he now suggested to her that she should stake upon certain numbers, singly and in groups. Consequently, in accordance with his instructions, I staked a ten-gulden piece upon several odd numbers in the first twenty, and five ten-gulden pieces upon certain groups of numbers-groups of from twelve to eighteen, and from eighteen to twenty-four. The total staked amounted to 160 gulden.

The wheel revolved. "Zero!" cried the croupier.

We had lost it all!

"The fool!" cried the old lady as she turned upon De Griers. "You infernal Frenchman, to think that you should advise! Away with you! Though you fuss and fuss, you don't even know what you're talking about."

Deeply offended, De Griers shrugged his shoulders, favoured the Grandmother with a look of contempt, and departed. For some time past he had been feeling ashamed of being seen in such company, and this had proved the last straw.

An hour later we had lost everything in hand.

“Home!” cried the Grandmother.

Not until we had turned into the Avenue did she utter a word; but from that point onwards, until we arrived at the hotel, she kept venting exclamations of “What a fool I am! What a silly old fool I am, to be sure!”

Arrived at the hotel, she called for tea, and then gave orders for her luggage to be packed.

“We are off again,” she announced.

“But whither, Madame?” inquired Martha.

“What business is that of YOURS? Let the cricket stick to its hearth. [The Russian form of “Mind your own business.”] Potapitch, have everything packed, for we are returning to Moscow at once. I have fooled away fifteen thousand roubles.”

“Fifteen thousand roubles, good mistress? My God!” And Potapitch spat upon his hands—probably to show that he was ready to serve her in any way he could.

“Now then, you fool! At once you begin with your weeping and wailing! Be quiet, and pack. Also, run downstairs, and get my hotel bill.”

“The next train leaves at 9:30, Madame,” I interposed, with a view to checking her agitation.

“And what is the time now?”

“Half-past eight.”

“How vexing! But, never mind. Alexis Ivanovitch, I have not a kopeck left; I have but these two bank notes. Please run to the office and get them changed. Otherwise I shall have nothing to travel with.”

Departing on her errand, I returned half an hour later to find the whole party gathered in her rooms. It appeared that the news of her impending departure for Moscow had thrown the conspirators into consternation even greater than her losses had done. For, said they, even if her departure should save her fortune, what will become of the General later? And who is to repay De Griers? Clearly Mlle. Blanche would never consent to wait until the Grandmother was dead, but would at once elope with the Prince or someone else. So they had all gathered together—endeavouring to calm and dissuade the Grandmother. Only Polina was absent. For her part the Grandmother had nothing for the party but abuse.

“Away with you, you rascals!” she was shouting. “What have my affairs to do with you? Why, in particular, do you”—here she indicated De Griers—“come sneaking here with your goat’s beard? And what do YOU”—here she turned to Mlle. Blanche “want of me? What are YOU finicking for?”

“Diantre!” muttered Mlle. under her breath, but her eyes were flashing. Then all at once she burst into a laugh and left the room—crying to the General as she did so: “Elle vivra cent ans!”

“So you have been counting upon my death, have you?” fumed the old lady. “Away with you! Clear them out of the room, Alexis Ivanovitch. What business is it of THEIRS? It is not THEIR money that I have been squandering, but my own.”

The General shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and withdrew, with De Griens behind him.

“Call Prascovia,” commanded the Grandmother, and in five minutes Martha reappeared with Polina, who had been sitting with the children in her own room (having purposely determined not to leave it that day). Her face looked grave and careworn.

“Prascovia,” began the Grandmother, “is what I have just heard through a side wind true—namely, that this fool of a stepfather of yours is going to marry that silly whirligig of a Frenchwoman—that actress, or something worse? Tell me, is it true?”

“I do not know FOR CERTAIN, Grandmamma,” replied Polina; “but from Mlle. Blanche’s account (for she does not appear to think it necessary to conceal anything) I conclude that—”

“You need not say any more,” interrupted the Grandmother energetically. “I understand the situation. I always thought we should get something like this from him, for I always looked upon him as a futile, frivolous fellow who gave himself unconscionable airs on the fact of his being a general (though he only became one because he retired as a colonel). Yes, I know all about the sending of the telegrams to inquire whether ‘the old woman is likely to turn up her toes soon.’ Ah, they were looking for the legacies! Without money that wretched woman (what is her name?—Oh, De Cominges) would never dream of accepting the General and his false teeth—no, not even for him to be her lacquey—since she herself, they say, possesses a pile of money, and lends it on interest, and makes a good thing out of it. However, it is not you, Prascovia, that I am blaming; it was not you who sent those telegrams. Nor, for that matter, do I wish to recall old scores. True, I know that you are a vixen by nature—that you are a wasp which will sting one if one touches it—yet, my heart is sore for you, for I loved your mother, Katerina. Now, will you leave everything here, and come away with me? Otherwise, I do not know what is to become of you, and it is not right that you should continue living with these people. Nay,” she interposed, the moment that Polina attempted to speak, “I have not yet finished. I ask of you nothing in return. My house in Moscow is, as you know, large enough for a palace, and you could occupy a whole floor of it if you liked, and keep away from me for weeks together. Will you come with me or will you not?”

“First of all, let me ask of YOU,” replied Polina, “whether you are intending to depart at once?”

“What? You suppose me to be jesting? I have said that I am going, and I AM going. Today I have squandered fifteen thousand roubles at that accursed roulette of yours, and though, five years ago, I promised the people of a certain suburb of Moscow to build them a stone church in place of a wooden one, I have been fooling away my money here! However, I am going back now to build my church.”

“But what about the waters, Grandmamma? Surely you came here to take the waters?”

“You and your waters! Do not anger me, Prascovia. Surely you are trying to? Say, then: will you, or will you not, come with me?”

“Grandmamma,” Polina replied with deep feeling, “I am very, very grateful to you for the shelter which you have so kindly offered me. Also, to a certain extent you have guessed my position aright, and I am beholden to you to such an extent that it may be that I will come and live with you, and that very soon; yet there are important reasons why—why I cannot make up my mind just yet. If you would let me have, say, a couple of weeks to decide in—?”

“You mean that you are NOT coming?”

“I mean only that I cannot come just yet. At all events, I could not well leave my little brother and sister here, since, since—if I were to leave them—they would be abandoned altogether. But if, Grandmamma, you would take the little ones AND myself, then, of course, I could come with you, and would do all I could to serve you” (this she said with great earnestness). “Only, without the little ones I CANNOT come.”

“Do not make a fuss” (as a matter of fact Polina never at any time either fussed or wept). “The Great Foster—Father [Translated literally—The Great Poulterer] can find for all his chicks a place. You are not coming without the children? But see here, Prascovia. I wish you well, and nothing but well: yet I have divined the reason why you will not come. Yes, I know all, Prascovia. That Frenchman will never bring you good of any sort.”

Polina coloured hotly, and even I started. “For,” thought I to myself, “every one seems to know about that affair. Or perhaps I am the only one who does not know about it?”

“Now, now! Do not frown,” continued the Grandmother. “But I do not intend to slur things over. You will take care that no harm befalls you, will you not? For you are a girl of sense, and I am sorry for you—I regard you in a different light to the rest of them. And now, please, leave me. Good-bye.”

“But let me stay with you a little longer,” said Polina.

“No,” replied the other; “you need not. Do not bother me, for you and all of them have tired me out.”

Yet when Polina tried to kiss the Grandmother’s hand, the old lady withdrew it, and herself kissed the girl on the cheek. As she passed me, Polina gave me a momentary glance, and then as swiftly averted her eyes.

“And good-bye to you, also, Alexis Ivanovitch. The train starts in an hour’s time, and I think that you must be weary of me. Take these five hundred gulden for yourself.”

“I thank you humbly, Madame, but I am ashamed to—”

“Come, come!” cried the Grandmother so energetically, and with such an air of menace, that I did not dare refuse the money further.

“If, when in Moscow, you have no place where you can lay your head,” she added, “come and see me, and I will give you a recommendation. Now, Potapitch, get things ready.”

I ascended to my room, and lay down upon the bed. A whole hour I must have lain thus, with my head resting upon my hand. So the crisis had come! I needed time for

its consideration. To-morrow I would have a talk with Polina. Ah! The Frenchman! So, it was true? But how could it be so? Polina and De Griens! What a combination!

No, it was too improbable. Suddenly I leapt up with the idea of seeking Astley and forcing him to speak. There could be no doubt that he knew more than I did. Astley? Well, he was another problem for me to solve.

Suddenly there came a knock at the door, and I opened it to find Potapitch awaiting me.

“Sir,” he said, “my mistress is asking for you.”

“Indeed? But she is just departing, is she not? The train leaves in ten minutes’ time.”

“She is uneasy, sir; she cannot rest. Come quickly, sir; do not delay.”

I ran downstairs at once. The Grandmother was just being carried out of her rooms into the corridor. In her hands she held a roll of bank-notes.

“Alexis Ivanovitch,” she cried, “walk on ahead, and we will set out again.”

“But whither, Madame?”

“I cannot rest until I have retrieved my losses. March on ahead, and ask me no questions. Play continues until midnight, does it not?”

For a moment I stood stupefied—stood deep in thought; but it was not long before I had made up my mind.

“With your leave, Madame,” I said, “I will not go with you.”

“And why not? What do you mean? Is every one here a stupid good-for-nothing?”

“Pardon me, but I have nothing to reproach myself with. I merely will not go. I merely intend neither to witness nor to join in your play. I also beg to return you your five hundred gulden. Farewell.”

Laying the money upon a little table which the Grandmother’s chair happened to be passing, I bowed and withdrew.

“What folly!” the Grandmother shouted after me. “Very well, then. Do not come, and I will find my way alone. Potapitch, you must come with me. Lift up the chair, and carry me along.”

I failed to find Mr. Astley, and returned home. It was now growing late—it was past midnight, but I subsequently learnt from Potapitch how the Grandmother’s day had ended. She had lost all the money which, earlier in the day, I had got for her paper securities—a sum amounting to about ten thousand roubles. This she did under the direction of the Pole whom, that afternoon, she had dowered with two ten-gulden pieces. But before his arrival on the scene, she had commanded Potapitch to stake for her; until at length she had told him also to go about his business. Upon that the Pole had leapt into the breach. Not only did it happen that he knew the Russian language, but also he could speak a mixture of three different dialects, so that the pair were able to understand one another. Yet the old lady never ceased to abuse him, despite his deferential manner, and to compare him unfavourably with myself (so, at all events, Potapitch declared). “You,” the old chamberlain said to me, “treated her as a gentleman should, but he—he robbed her right and left, as I could see with my own eyes. Twice she caught him at it, and rated him soundly. On one occasion she even pulled his hair,

so that the bystanders burst out laughing. Yet she lost everything, sir—that is to say, she lost all that you had changed for her. Then we brought her home, and, after asking for some water and saying her prayers, she went to bed. So worn out was she that she fell asleep at once. May God send her dreams of angels! And this is all that foreign travel has done for us! Oh, my own Moscow! For what have we not at home there, in Moscow? Such a garden and flowers as you could never see here, and fresh air and apple-trees coming into blossom,—and a beautiful view to look upon. Ah, but what must she do but go travelling abroad? Alack, alack!”

XIII

Almost a month has passed since I last touched these notes— notes which I began under the influence of impressions at once poignant and disordered. The crisis which I then felt to be approaching has now arrived, but in a form a hundred times more extensive and unexpected than I had looked for. To me it all seems strange, uncouth, and tragic. Certain occurrences have befallen me which border upon the marvellous. At all events, that is how I view them. I view them so in one regard at least. I refer to the whirlpool of events in which, at the time, I was revolving. But the most curious feature of all is my relation to those events, for hitherto I had never clearly understood myself. Yet now the actual crisis has passed away like a dream. Even my passion for Polina is dead. Was it ever so strong and genuine as I thought? If so, what has become of it now? At times I fancy that I must be mad; that somewhere I am sitting in a madhouse; that these events have merely SEEMED to happen; that still they merely SEEM to be happening.

I have been arranging and re-perusing my notes (perhaps for the purpose of convincing myself that I am not in a madhouse). At present I am lonely and alone. Autumn is coming—already it is mellowing the leaves; and, as I sit brooding in this melancholy little town (and how melancholy the little towns of Germany can be!), I find myself taking no thought for the future, but living under the influence of passing moods, and of my recollections of the tempest which recently drew me into its vortex, and then cast me out again. At times I seem still seem to be caught within that vortex. At times, the tempest seems once more to be gathering, and, as it passes overhead, to be wrapping me in its folds, until I have lost my sense of order and reality, and continue whirling and whirling and whirling around.

Yet, it may be that I shall be able to stop myself from revolving if once I can succeed in rendering myself an exact account of what has happened within the month just past. Somehow I feel drawn towards the pen; on many and many an evening I have had nothing else in the world to do. But, curiously enough, of late I have taken to amusing myself with the works of M. Paul de Kock, which I read in German translations obtained from a wretched local library. These works I cannot abide, yet I read them, and find myself marvelling that I should be doing so. Somehow I seem to be afraid of any SERIOUS book—afraid of permitting any SERIOUS preoccupation to break the spell of the passing moment. So dear to me is the formless dream of which I have spoken, so dear to me are the impressions which it has left behind it, that I fear to touch the vision with anything new, lest it should dissolve in smoke. But is it so dear

to me? Yes, it IS dear to me, and will ever be fresh in my recollections—even forty years hence... .

So let me write of it, but only partially, and in a more abridged form than my full impressions might warrant.

First of all, let me conclude the history of the Grandmother. Next day she lost every gulden that she possessed. Things were bound to happen so, for persons of her type who have once entered upon that road descend it with ever-increasing rapidity, even as a sledge descends a toboggan-slide. All day until eight o'clock that evening did she play; and, though I personally did not witness her exploits, I learnt of them later through report.

All that day Potapitch remained in attendance upon her; but the Poles who directed her play she changed more than once. As a beginning she dismissed her Pole of the previous day—the Pole whose hair she had pulled—and took to herself another one; but the latter proved worse even than the former, and incurred dismissal in favour of the first Pole, who, during the time of his unemployment, had nevertheless hovered around the Grandmother's chair, and from time to time obtruded his head over her shoulder. At length the old lady became desperate, for the second Pole, when dismissed, imitated his predecessor by declining to go away; with the result that one Pole remained standing on the right of the victim, and the other on her left; from which vantage points the pair quarrelled, abused each other concerning the stakes and rounds, and exchanged the epithet "laidak" [Rascal] and other Polish terms of endearment. Finally, they effected a mutual reconciliation, and, tossing the money about anyhow, played simply at random. Once more quarrelling, each of them staked money on his own side of the Grandmother's chair (for instance, the one Pole staked upon the red, and the other one upon the black), until they had so confused and browbeaten the old lady that, nearly weeping, she was forced to appeal to the head croupier for protection, and to have the two Poles expelled. No time was lost in this being done, despite the rascals' cries and protestations that the old lady was in their debt, that she had cheated them, and that her general behaviour had been mean and dishonourable. The same evening the unfortunate Potapitch related the story to me with tears complaining that the two men had filled their pockets with money (he himself had seen them do it) which had been shamelessly pilfered from his mistress. For instance, one Pole demanded of the Grandmother fifty gulden for his trouble, and then staked the money by the side of her stake. She happened to win; whereupon he cried out that the winning stake was his, and hers the loser. As soon as the two Poles had been expelled, Potapitch left the room, and reported to the authorities that the men's pockets were full of gold; and, on the Grandmother also requesting the head croupier to look into the affair, the police made their appearance, and, despite the protests of the Poles (who, indeed, had been caught redhanded), their pockets were turned inside out, and the contents handed over to the Grandmother. In fact, in view of the circumstance that she lost all day, the croupiers and other authorities of the Casino showed her every attention; and on her fame spreading through the town, visitors of every nationality—even the most knowing

of them, the most distinguished—crowded to get a glimpse of “la vieille comtesse russe, tombee en enfance,” who had lost “so many millions.”

Yet with the money which the authorities restored to her from the pockets of the Poles the Grandmother effected very, very little, for there soon arrived to take his countrymen’s place, a third Pole—a man who could speak Russian fluently, was dressed like a gentleman (albeit in lacqueyish fashion), and sported a huge moustache. Though polite enough to the old lady, he took a high hand with the bystanders. In short, he offered himself less as a servant than as an ENTERTAINER. After each round he would turn to the old lady, and swear terrible oaths to the effect that he was a “Polish gentleman of honour” who would scorn to take a kopeck of her money; and, though he repeated these oaths so often that at length she grew alarmed, he had her play in hand, and began to win on her behalf; wherefore, she felt that she could not well get rid of him. An hour later the two Poles who, earlier in the day, had been expelled from the Casino, made a reappearance behind the old lady’s chair, and renewed their offers of service—even if it were only to be sent on messages; but from Potapitch I subsequently had it that between these rascals and the said “gentleman of honour” there passed a wink, as well as that the latter put something into their hands. Next, since the Grandmother had not yet lunched—she had scarcely for a moment left her chair—one of the two Poles ran to the restaurant of the Casino, and brought her thence a cup of soup, and afterwards some tea. In fact, BOTH the Poles hastened to perform this office. Finally, towards the close of the day, when it was clear that the Grandmother was about to play her last bank-note, there could be seen standing behind her chair no fewer than six natives of Poland—persons who, as yet, had been neither audible nor visible; and as soon as ever the old lady played the note in question, they took no further notice of her, but pushed their way past her chair to the table; seized the money, and staked it—shouting and disputing the while, and arguing with the “gentleman of honour” (who also had forgotten the Grandmother’s existence), as though he were their equal. Even when the Grandmother had lost her all, and was returning (about eight o’clock) to the hotel, some three or four Poles could not bring themselves to leave her, but went on running beside her chair and volubly protesting that the Grandmother had cheated them, and that she ought to be made to surrender what was not her own. Thus the party arrived at the hotel; whence, presently, the gang of rascals was ejected neck and crop.

According to Potapitch’s calculations, the Grandmother lost, that day, a total of ninety thousand roubles, in addition to the money which she had lost the day before. Every paper security which she had brought with her—five percent bonds, internal loan scrip, and what not—she had changed into cash. Also, I could not but marvel at the way in which, for seven or eight hours at a stretch, she sat in that chair of hers, almost never leaving the table. Again, Potapitch told me that there were three occasions on which she really began to win; but that, led on by false hopes, she was unable to tear herself away at the right moment. Every gambler knows how a person may sit a day and a night at cards without ever casting a glance to right or to left.

Meanwhile, that day some other very important events were passing in our hotel. As early as eleven o'clock—that is to say, before the Grandmother had quitted her rooms—the General and De Griers decided upon their last stroke. In other words, on learning that the old lady had changed her mind about departing, and was bent on setting out for the Casino again, the whole of our gang (Polina only excepted) proceeded en masse to her rooms, for the purpose of finally and frankly treating with her. But the General, quaking and greatly apprehensive as to his possible future, overdid things. After half an hour's prayers and entreaties, coupled With a full confession of his debts, and even of his passion for Mlle. Blanche (yes, he had quite lost his head), he suddenly adopted a tone of menace, and started to rage at the old lady—exclaiming that she was sulling the family honour, that she was making a public scandal of herself, and that she was smirching the fair name of Russia. The upshot was that the Grandmother turned him out of the room with her stick (it was a real stick, too!). Later in the morning he held several consultations with De Griers—the question which occupied him being: Is it in any way possible to make use of the police—to tell them that “this respected, but unfortunate, old lady has gone out of her mind, and is squandering her last kopeck,” or something of the kind? In short, is it in any way possible to engineer a species of supervision over, or of restraint upon, the old lady? De Griers, however, shrugged his shoulders at this, and laughed in the General's face, while the old warrior went on chattering volubly, and running up and down his study. Finally De Griers waved his hand, and disappeared from view; and by evening it became known that he had left the hotel, after holding a very secret and important conference with Mlle. Blanche. As for the latter, from early morning she had taken decisive measures, by completely excluding the General from her presence, and bestowing upon him not a glance. Indeed, even when the General pursued her to the Casino, and met her walking arm in arm with the Prince, he (the General) received from her and her mother not the slightest recognition. Nor did the Prince himself bow. The rest of the day Mlle. spent in probing the Prince, and trying to make him declare himself; but in this she made a woeful mistake. The little incident occurred in the evening. Suddenly Mlle. Blanche realised that the Prince had not even a copper to his name, but, on the contrary, was minded to borrow of her money wherewith to play at roulette. In high displeasure she drove him from her presence, and shut herself up in her room.

The same morning I went to see—or, rather, to look for—Mr. Astley, but was unsuccessful in my quest. Neither in his rooms nor in the Casino nor in the Park was he to be found; nor did he, that day, lunch at his hotel as usual. However, at about five o'clock I caught sight of him walking from the railway station to the Hotel d'Angleterre. He seemed to be in a great hurry and much preoccupied, though in his face I could discern no actual traces of worry or perturbation. He held out to me a friendly hand, with his usual ejaculation of “ Ah! ” but did not check his stride. I turned and walked beside him, but found, somehow, that his answers forbade any putting of definite questions. Moreover, I felt reluctant to speak to him of Polina; nor, for his part, did he ask me any questions concerning her, although, on my telling him of the

Grandmother's exploits, he listened attentively and gravely, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"She is gambling away everything that she has," I remarked.

"Indeed? She arrived at the Casino even before I had taken my departure by train, so I knew she had been playing. If I should have time I will go to the Casino to-night, and take a look at her. The thing interests me."

"Where have you been today?" I asked—surprised at myself for having, as yet, omitted to put to him that question.

"To Frankfort."

"On business?"

"On business."

What more was there to be asked after that? I accompanied him until, as we drew level with the Hotel des Quatre Saisons, he suddenly nodded to me and disappeared. For myself, I returned home, and came to the conclusion that, even had I met him at two o'clock in the afternoon, I should have learnt no more from him than I had done at five o'clock, for the reason that I had no definite question to ask. It was bound to have been so. For me to formulate the query which I really wished to put was a simple impossibility.

Polina spent the whole of that day either in walking about the park with the nurse and children or in sitting in her own room. For a long while past she had avoided the General and had scarcely had a word to say to him (scarcely a word, I mean, on any SERIOUS topic). Yes, that I had noticed. Still, even though I was aware of the position in which the General was placed, it had never occurred to me that he would have any reason to avoid HER, or to trouble her with family explanations. Indeed, when I was returning to the hotel after my conversation with Astley, and chanced to meet Polina and the children, I could see that her face was as calm as though the family disturbances had never touched her. To my salute she responded with a slight bow, and I retired to my room in a very bad humour.

Of course, since the affair with the Burmergelms I had exchanged not a word with Polina, nor had with her any kind of intercourse. Yet I had been at my wits' end, for, as time went on, there was arising in me an ever-seething dissatisfaction. Even if she did not love me she ought not to have trampled upon my feelings, nor to have accepted my confessions with such contempt, seeing that she must have been aware that I loved her (of her own accord she had allowed me to tell her as much). Of course the situation between us had arisen in a curious manner. About two months ago, I had noticed that she had a desire to make me her friend, her confidant—that she was making trial of me for the purpose; but, for some reason or another, the desired result had never come about, and we had fallen into the present strange relations, which had led me to address her as I had done. At the same time, if my love was distasteful to her, why had she not FORBIDDEN me to speak of it to her?

But she had not so forbidden me. On the contrary, there had been occasions when she had even INVITED me to speak. Of course, this might have been done out of sheer

wantonness, for I well knew—I had remarked it only too often—that, after listening to what I had to say, and angering me almost beyond endurance, she loved suddenly to torture me with some fresh outburst of contempt and aloofness! Yet she must have known that I could not live without her. Three days had elapsed since the affair with the Baron, and I could bear the severance no longer. When, that afternoon, I met her near the Casino, my heart almost made me faint, it beat so violently. She too could not live without me, for had she not said that she had NEED of me? Or had that too been spoken in jest?

That she had a secret of some kind there could be no doubt. What she had said to the Grandmother had stabbed me to the heart. On a thousand occasions I had challenged her to be open with me, nor could she have been ignorant that I was ready to give my very life for her. Yet always she had kept me at a distance with that contemptuous air of hers; or else she had demanded of me, in lieu of the life which I offered to lay at her feet, such escapades as I had perpetrated with the Baron. Ah, was it not torture to me, all this? For could it be that her whole world was bound up with the Frenchman? What, too, about Mr. Astley? The affair was inexplicable throughout. My God, what distress it caused me!

Arrived home, I, in a fit of frenzy, indited the following:

“Polina Alexandrovna, I can see that there is approaching us an exposure which will involve you too. For the last time I ask of you—have you, or have you not, any need of my life? If you have, then make such dispositions as you wish, and I shall always be discoverable in my room if required. If you have need of my life, write or send for me.”

I sealed the letter, and dispatched it by the hand of a corridor lacquey, with orders to hand it to the addressee in person. Though I expected no answer, scarcely three minutes had elapsed before the lacquey returned with “the compliments of a certain person.”

Next, about seven o’clock, I was sent for by the General. I found him in his study, apparently preparing to go out again, for his hat and stick were lying on the sofa. When I entered he was standing in the middle of the room—his feet wide apart, and his head bent down. Also, he appeared to be talking to himself. But as soon as ever he saw me at the door he came towards me in such a curious manner that involuntarily I retreated a step, and was for leaving the room; whereupon he seized me by both hands, and, drawing me towards the sofa, and seating himself thereon, he forced me to sit down on a chair opposite him. Then, without letting go of my hands, he exclaimed with quivering lips and a sparkle of tears on his eyelashes:

“Oh, Alexis Ivanovitch! Save me, save me! Have some mercy upon me!”

For a long time I could not make out what he meant, although he kept talking and talking, and constantly repeating to himself, “Have mercy, mercy!” At length, however, I divined that he was expecting me to give him something in the nature of advice—or, rather, that, deserted by every one, and overwhelmed with grief and apprehension, he had bethought himself of my existence, and sent for me to relieve his feelings by talking and talking and talking.

In fact, he was in such a confused and despondent state of mind that, clasping his hands together, he actually went down upon his knees and begged me to go to Mlle. Blanche, and beseech and advise her to return to him, and to accept him in marriage.

“But, General,” I exclaimed, “possibly Mlle. Blanche has scarcely even remarked my existence? What could I do with her?”

It was in vain that I protested, for he could understand nothing that was said to him, Next he started talking about the Grandmother, but always in a disconnected sort of fashion—his one thought being to send for the police.

“In Russia,” said he, suddenly boiling over with indignation, “or in any well-ordered State where there exists a government, old women like my mother are placed under proper guardianship. Yes, my good sir,” he went on, relapsing into a scolding tone as he leapt to his feet and started to pace the room, “do you not know this ” (he seemed to be addressing some imaginary auditor in the corner) “—do you not know this, that in Russia old women like her are subjected to restraint, the devil take them?” Again he threw himself down upon the sofa.

A minute later, though sobbing and almost breathless, he managed to gasp out that Mlle. Blanche had refused to marry him, for the reason that the Grandmother had turned up in place of a telegram, and it was therefore clear that he had no inheritance to look for. Evidently, he supposed that I had hitherto been in entire ignorance of all this. Again, when I referred to De Griens, the General made a gesture of despair. “He has gone away,” he said, “and everything which I possess is mortgaged to him. I stand stripped to my skin. Even of the money which you brought me from Paris, I know not if seven hundred francs be left. Of course that sum will do to go on with, but, as regards the future, I know nothing, I know nothing.”

“Then how will you pay your hotel bill?” I cried in consternation. “And what shall you do afterwards?”

He looked at me vaguely, but it was clear that he had not understood—perhaps had not even heard—my questions. Then I tried to get him to speak of Polina and the children, but he only returned brief answers of “ Yes, yes,” and again started to maunder about the Prince, and the likelihood of the latter marrying Mlle. Blanche. “What on earth am I to do?” he concluded. “What on earth am I to do? Is this not ingratitude? Is it not sheer ingratitude?” And he burst into tears.

Nothing could be done with such a man. Yet to leave him alone was dangerous, for something might happen to him. I withdrew from his rooms for a little while, but warned the nursemaid to keep an eye upon him, as well as exchanged a word with the corridor lacquey (a very talkative fellow), who likewise promised to remain on the look-out.

Hardly had I left the General, when Potapitch approached me with a summons from the Grandmother. It was now eight o’clock, and she had returned from the Casino after finally losing all that she possessed. I found her sitting in her chair—much distressed and evidently fatigued. Presently Martha brought her up a cup of tea and forced her

to drink it; yet, even then I could detect in the old lady's tone and manner a great change.

"Good evening, Alexis Ivanovitch," she said slowly, with her head drooping. "Pardon me for disturbing you again. Yes, you must pardon an old, old woman like myself, for I have left behind me all that I possess—nearly a hundred thousand roubles! You did quite right in declining to come with me this evening. Now I am without money—without a single groat. But I must not delay a moment; I must leave by the 9:30 train. I have sent for that English friend of yours, and am going to beg of him three thousand francs for a week. Please try and persuade him to think nothing of it, nor yet to refuse me, for I am still a rich woman who possesses three villages and a couple of mansions. Yes, the money shall be found, for I have not yet squandered EVERYTHING. I tell you this in order that he may have no doubts about—Ah, but here he is! Clearly he is a good fellow."

True enough, Astley had come hot-foot on receiving the Grandmother's appeal. Scarcely stopping even to reflect, and with scarcely a word, he counted out the three thousand francs under a note of hand which she duly signed. Then, his business done, he bowed, and lost no time in taking his departure.

"You too leave me, Alexis Ivanovitch," said the Grandmother. "All my bones are aching, and I still have an hour in which to rest. Do not be hard upon me, old fool that I am. Never again shall I blame young people for being frivolous. I should think it wrong even to blame that unhappy General of yours. Nevertheless, I do not mean to let him have any of my money (which is all that he desires), for the reason that I look upon him as a perfect blockhead, and consider myself, simpleton though I be, at least wiser than HE is. How surely does God visit old age, and punish it for its presumption! Well, good-bye. Martha, come and lift me up."

However, I had a mind to see the old lady off; and, moreover, I was in an expectant frame of mind—somehow I kept thinking that SOMETHING was going to happen; wherefore, I could not rest quietly in my room, but stepped out into the corridor, and then into the Chestnut Avenue for a few minutes' stroll. My letter to Polina had been clear and firm, and in the present crisis, I felt sure, would prove final. I had heard of De Griens' departure, and, however much Polina might reject me as a FRIEND, she might not reject me altogether as a SERVANT. She would need me to fetch and carry for her, and I was ready to do so. How could it have been otherwise?

Towards the hour of the train's departure I hastened to the station, and put the Grandmother into her compartment—she and her party occupying a reserved family saloon.

"Thanks for your disinterested assistance," she said at parting. "Oh, and please remind Prascovia of what I said to her last night. I expect soon to see her."

Then I returned home. As I was passing the door of the General's suite, I met the nursemaid, and inquired after her master. "There is nothing new to report, sir," she replied quietly. Nevertheless I decided to enter, and was just doing so when I halted thunderstruck on the threshold. For before me I beheld the General and Mlle.

Blanche—laughing gaily at one another!— while beside them, on the sofa, there was seated her mother. Clearly the General was almost out of his mind with joy, for he was talking all sorts of nonsense, and bubbling over with a long-drawn, nervous laugh—a laugh which twisted his face into innumerable wrinkles, and caused his eyes almost to disappear.

Afterwards I learnt from Mlle. Blanche herself that, after dismissing the Prince and hearing of the General's tears, she bethought her of going to comfort the old man, and had just arrived for the purpose when I entered. Fortunately, the poor General did not know that his fate had been decided—that Mlle. had long ago packed her trunks in readiness for the first morning train to Paris!

Hesitating a moment on the threshold I changed my mind as to entering, and departed unnoticed. Ascending to my own room, and opening the door, I perceived in the semi-darkness a figure seated on a chair in the corner by the window. The figure did not rise when I entered, so I approached it swiftly, peered at it closely, and felt my heart almost stop beating. The figure was Polina!

XIV

The shock made me utter an exclamation.

“What is the matter? What is the matter?” she asked in a strange voice. She was looking pale, and her eyes were dim.

“What is the matter?” I re-echoed. “Why, the fact that you are **HERE!**”

“If I am here, I have come with all that I have to bring,” she said. “Such has always been my way, as you shall presently see. Please light a candle.”

I did so; whereupon she rose, approached the table, and laid upon it an open letter.

“Read it,” she added.

“It is De Griens’ handwriting!” I cried as I seized the document. My hands were so tremulous that the lines on the pages danced before my eyes. Although, at this distance of time, I have forgotten the exact phraseology of the missive, I append, if not the precise words, at all events the general sense.

“Mademoiselle,” the document ran, “certain untoward circumstances compel me to depart in haste. Of course, you have of yourself remarked that hitherto I have always refrained from having any final explanation with you, for the reason that I could not well state the whole circumstances; and now to my difficulties the advent of the aged Grandmother, coupled with her subsequent proceedings, has put the final touch. Also, the involved state of my affairs forbids me to write with any finality concerning those hopes of ultimate bliss upon which, for a long while past, I have permitted myself to feed. I regret the past, but at the same time hope that in my conduct you have never been able to detect anything that was unworthy of a gentleman and a man of honour. Having lost, however, almost the whole of my money in debts incurred by your stepfather, I find myself driven to the necessity of saving the remainder; wherefore, I have instructed certain friends of mine in St. Petersburg to arrange for the sale of all the property which has been mortgaged to myself. At the same time, knowing that, in addition, your frivolous stepfather has squandered money which is exclusively yours, I have decided to absolve him from a certain moiety of the mortgages on his property, in order that you may be in a position to recover of him what you have lost, by suing him in legal fashion. I trust, therefore, that, as matters now stand, this action of mine may bring you some advantage. I trust also that this same action leaves me in the position of having fulfilled every obligation which is incumbent upon a man of honour and refinement. Rest assured that your memory will for ever remain graven in my heart.”

“All this is clear enough,” I commented. “Surely you did not expect aught else from him?” Somehow I was feeling annoyed.

"I expected nothing at all from him," she replied—quietly enough, to all outward seeming, yet with a note of irritation in her tone. "Long ago I made up my mind on the subject, for I could read his thoughts, and knew what he was thinking. He thought that possibly I should sue him—that one day I might become a nuisance." Here Polina halted for a moment, and stood biting her lips. "So of set purpose I redoubled my contemptuous treatment of him, and waited to see what he would do. If a telegram to say that we had become legatees had arrived from, St. Petersburg, I should have flung at him a quittance for my foolish stepfather's debts, and then dismissed him. For a long time I have hated him. Even in earlier days he was not a man; and now!— Oh, how gladly I could throw those fifty thousand roubles in his face, and spit in it, and then rub the spittle in!"

"But the document returning the fifty-thousand rouble mortgage—has the General got it? If so, possess yourself of it, and send it to De Griens."

"No, no; the General has not got it."

"Just as I expected! Well, what is the General going to do?" Then an idea suddenly occurred to me. "What about the Grandmother?" I asked.

Polina looked at me with impatience and bewilderment.

"What makes you speak of HER?" was her irritable inquiry. "I cannot go and live with her. Nor," she added hotly, "will I go down upon my knees to ANY ONE."

"Why should you?" I cried. "Yet to think that you should have loved De Griens! The villain, the villain! But I will kill him in a duel. Where is he now?"

"In Frankfort, where he will be staying for the next three days."

"Well, bid me do so, and I will go to him by the first train tomorrow," I exclaimed with enthusiasm.

She smiled.

"If you were to do that," she said, "he would merely tell you to be so good as first to return him the fifty thousand francs. What, then, would be the use of having a quarrel with him? You talk sheer nonsense."

I ground my teeth.

"The question," I went on, "is how to raise the fifty thousand francs. We cannot expect to find them lying about on the floor. Listen. What of Mr. Astley?" Even as I spoke a new and strange idea formed itself in my brain.

Her eyes flashed fire.

"What? YOU YOURSELF wish me to leave you for him?" she cried with a scornful look and a proud smile. Never before had she addressed me thus.

Then her head must have turned dizzy with emotion, for suddenly she seated herself upon the sofa, as though she were powerless any longer to stand.

A flash of lightning seemed to strike me as I stood there. I could scarcely believe my eyes or my ears. She DID love me, then! It WAS to me, and not to Mr. Astley, that she had turned! Although she, an unprotected girl, had come to me in my room—in an hotel room—and had probably compromised herself thereby, I had not understood!

Then a second mad idea flashed into my brain.

“Polina,” I said, “give me but an hour. Wait here just one hour until I return. Yes, you MUST do so. Do you not see what I mean? Just stay here for that time.”

And I rushed from the room without so much as answering her look of inquiry. She called something after me, but I did not return.

Sometimes it happens that the most insane thought, the most impossible conception, will become so fixed in one’s head that at length one believes the thought or the conception to be reality. Moreover, if with the thought or the conception there is combined a strong, a passionate, desire, one will come to look upon the said thought or conception as something fated, inevitable, and foreordained—something bound to happen. Whether by this there is connoted something in the nature of a combination of presentiments, or a great effort of will, or a self-annulment of one’s true expectations, and so on, I do not know; but, at all events that night saw happen to me (a night which I shall never forget) something in the nature of the miraculous. Although the occurrence can easily be explained by arithmetic, I still believe it to have been a miracle. Yet why did this conviction take such a hold upon me at the time, and remain with me ever since? Previously, I had thought of the idea, not as an occurrence which was ever likely to come about, but as something which NEVER could come about.

The time was a quarter past eleven o’clock when I entered the Casino in such a state of hope (though, at the same time, of agitation) as I had never before experienced. In the gaming-rooms there were still a large number of people, but not half as many as had been present in the morning.

At eleven o’clock there usually remained behind only the real, the desperate gamblers—persons for whom, at spas, there existed nothing beyond roulette, and who went thither for that alone. These gamblers took little note of what was going on around them, and were interested in none of the appurtenances of the season, but played from morning till night, and would have been ready to play through the night until dawn had that been possible. As it was, they used to disperse unwillingly when, at midnight, roulette came to an end. Likewise, as soon as ever roulette was drawing to a close and the head croupier had called “Les trois derniers coups,” most of them were ready to stake on the last three rounds all that they had in their pockets—and, for the most part, lost it. For my own part I proceeded towards the table at which the Grandmother had lately sat; and, since the crowd around it was not very large, I soon obtained standing room among the ring of gamblers, while directly in front of me, on the green cloth, I saw marked the word “Passe.”

“Passe” was a row of numbers from 19 to 36 inclusive; while a row of numbers from 1 to 18 inclusive was known as “Manque.” But what had that to do with me? I had not noticed—I had not so much as heard the numbers upon which the previous coup had fallen, and so took no bearings when I began to play, as, in my place, any SYSTEMATIC gambler would have done. No, I merely extended my stock of twenty ten-gulden pieces, and threw them down upon the space “Passe” which happened to be confronting me.

“Vingt-deux!” called the croupier.

I had won! I staked upon the same again—both my original stake and my winnings. “Trente-et-un!” called the croupier.

Again I had won, and was now in possession of eighty ten-gulden pieces. Next, I moved the whole eighty on to twelve middle numbers (a stake which, if successful, would bring me in a triple profit, but also involved a risk of two chances to one). The wheel revolved, and stopped at twenty-four. Upon this I was paid out notes and gold until I had by my side a total sum of two thousand gulden.

It was as in a fever that I moved the pile, en bloc, on to the red. Then suddenly I came to myself (though that was the only time during the evening’s play when fear cast its cold spell over me, and showed itself in a trembling of the hands and knees). For with horror I had realised that I MUST win, and that upon that stake there depended all my life.

“Rouge!” called the croupier. I drew a long breath, and hot shivers went coursing over my body. I was paid out my winnings in bank-notes—amounting, of course, to a total of four thousand florins, eight hundred gulden (I could still calculate the amounts).

After that, I remember, I again staked two thousand florins upon twelve middle numbers, and lost. Again I staked the whole of my gold, with eight hundred gulden, in notes, and lost. Then madness seemed to come upon me, and seizing my last two thousand florins, I staked them upon twelve of the first numbers—wholly by chance, and at random, and without any sort of reckoning. Upon my doing so there followed a moment of suspense only comparable to that which Madame Blanchard must have experienced when, in Paris, she was descending earthwards from a balloon.

“Quatre!” called the croupier.

Once more, with the addition of my original stake, I was in possession of six thousand florins! Once more I looked around me like a conqueror—once more I feared nothing as I threw down four thousand of these florins upon the black. The croupiers glanced around them, and exchanged a few words; the bystanders murmured expectantly.

The black turned up. After that I do not exactly remember either my calculations or the order of my stakings. I only remember that, as in a dream, I won in one round sixteen thousand florins; that in the three following rounds, I lost twelve thousand; that I moved the remainder (four thousand) on to “Passe” (though quite unconscious of what I was doing—I was merely waiting, as it were, mechanically, and without reflection, for something) and won; and that, finally, four times in succession I lost. Yes, I can remember raking in money by thousands—but most frequently on the twelve, middle numbers, to which I constantly adhered, and which kept appearing in a sort of regular order—first, three or four times running, and then, after an interval of a couple of rounds, in another break of three or four appearances. Sometimes, this astonishing regularity manifested itself in patches; a thing to upset all the calculations of note—taking gamblers who play with a pencil and a memorandum book in their hands Fortune perpetrates some terrible jests at roulette!

Since my entry not more than half an hour could have elapsed. Suddenly a croupier informed me that I had, won thirty thousand florins, as well as that, since the latter was

the limit for which, at any one time, the bank could make itself responsible, roulette at that table must close for the night. Accordingly, I caught up my pile of gold, stuffed it into my pocket, and, grasping my sheaf of bank-notes, moved to the table in an adjoining salon where a second game of roulette was in progress. The crowd followed me in a body, and cleared a place for me at the table; after which, I proceeded to stake as before—that is to say, at random and without calculating. What saved me from ruin I do not know.

Of course there were times when fragmentary reckonings DID come flashing into my brain. For instance, there were times when I attached myself for a while to certain figures and coups—though always leaving them, again before long, without knowing what I was doing.

In fact, I cannot have been in possession of all my faculties, for I can remember the croupiers correcting my play more than once, owing to my having made mistakes of the gravest order. My brows were damp with sweat, and my hands were shaking. Also, Poles came around me to proffer their services, but I heeded none of them. Nor did my luck fail me now. Suddenly, there arose around me a loud din of talking and laughter. "Bravo, bravo!" was the general shout, and some people even clapped their hands. I had raked in thirty thousand florins, and again the bank had had to close for the night!

"Go away now, go away now," a voice whispered to me on my right. The person who had spoken to me was a certain Jew of Frankfurt—a man who had been standing beside me the whole while, and occasionally helping me in my play.

"Yes, for God's sake go," whispered a second voice in my left ear. Glancing around, I perceived that the second voice had come from a modestly, plainly dressed lady of rather less than thirty—a woman whose face, though pale and sickly-looking, bore also very evident traces of former beauty. At the moment, I was stuffing the crumpled bank-notes into my pockets and collecting all the gold that was left on the table. Seizing up my last note for five hundred gulden, I contrived to insinuate it, unperceived, into the hand of the pale lady. An overpowering impulse had made me do so, and I remember how her thin little fingers pressed mine in token of her lively gratitude. The whole affair was the work of a moment.

Then, collecting my belongings, I crossed to where *trente et quarante* was being played—a game which could boast of a more aristocratic public, and was played with cards instead of with a wheel. At this diversion the bank made itself responsible for a hundred thousand thalers as the limit, but the highest stake allowable was, as in roulette, four thousand florins. Although I knew nothing of the game—and I scarcely knew the stakes, except those on black and red—I joined the ring of players, while the rest of the crowd massed itself around me. At this distance of time I cannot remember whether I ever gave a thought to Polina; I seemed only to be conscious of a vague pleasure in seizing and raking in the bank-notes which kept massing themselves in a pile before me.

But, as ever, fortune seemed to be at my back. As though of set purpose, there came to my aid a circumstance which not infrequently repeats itself in gaming. The circumstance is that not infrequently luck attaches itself to, say, the red, and does not leave it for a space of say, ten, or even fifteen, rounds in succession. Three days ago I had heard that, during the previous week there had been a run of twenty-two coups on the red—an occurrence never before known at roulette—so that men spoke of it with astonishment. Naturally enough, many deserted the red after a dozen rounds, and practically no one could now be found to stake upon it. Yet upon the black also—the antithesis of the red—no experienced gambler would stake anything, for the reason that every practised player knows the meaning of “capricious fortune.” That is to say, after the sixteenth (or so) success of the red, one would think that the seventeenth coup would inevitably fall upon the black; wherefore, novices would be apt to back the latter in the seventeenth round, and even to double or treble their stakes upon it—only, in the end, to lose.

Yet some whim or other led me, on remarking that the red had come up consecutively for seven times, to attach myself to that colour. Probably this was mostly due to self-conceit, for I wanted to astonish the bystanders with the riskiness of my play. Also, I remember that—oh, strange sensation!—I suddenly, and without any challenge from my own presumption, became obsessed with a DESIRE to take risks. If the spirit has passed through a great many sensations, possibly it can no longer be sated with them, but grows more excited, and demands more sensations, and stronger and stronger ones, until at length it falls exhausted. Certainly, if the rules of the game had permitted even of my staking fifty thousand florins at a time, I should have staked them. All of a sudden I heard exclamations arising that the whole thing was a marvel, since the red was turning up for the fourteenth time!

“Monsieur a gagne cent mille florins,” a voice exclaimed beside me.

I awoke to my senses. What? I had won a hundred thousand florins? If so, what more did I need to win? I grasped the banknotes, stuffed them into my pockets, raked in the gold without counting it, and started to leave the Casino. As I passed through the salons people smiled to see my bulging pockets and unsteady gait, for the weight which I was carrying must have amounted to half a pood! Several hands I saw stretched out in my direction, and as I passed I filled them with all the money that I could grasp in my own. At length two Jews stopped me near the exit.

“You are a bold young fellow,” one said, “but mind you depart early tomorrow—as early as you can—for if you do not you will lose everything that you have won.”

But I did not heed them. The Avenue was so dark that it was barely possible to distinguish one’s hand before one’s face, while the distance to the hotel was half a verst or so; but I feared neither pickpockets nor highwaymen. Indeed, never since my boyhood have I done that. Also, I cannot remember what I thought about on the way. I only felt a sort of fearful pleasure—the pleasure of success, of conquest, of power (how can I best express it?). Likewise, before me there flitted the image of Polina; and I kept remembering, and reminding myself, that it was to HER I was going, that it was

in HER presence I should soon be standing, that it was SHE to whom I should soon be able to relate and show everything. Scarcely once did I recall what she had lately said to me, or the reason why I had left her, or all those varied sensations which I had been experiencing a bare hour and a half ago. No, those sensations seemed to be things of the past, to be things which had righted themselves and grown old, to be things concerning which we needed to trouble ourselves no longer, since, for us, life was about to begin anew. Yet I had just reached the end of the Avenue when there DID come upon me a fear of being robbed or murdered. With each step the fear increased until, in my terror, I almost started to run. Suddenly, as I issued from the Avenue, there burst upon me the lights of the hotel, sparkling with a myriad lamps! Yes, thanks be to God, I had reached home!

Running up to my room, I flung open the door of it. Polina was still on the sofa, with a lighted candle in front of her, and her hands clasped. As I entered she stared at me in astonishment (for, at the moment, I must have presented a strange spectacle). All I did, however, was to halt before her, and fling upon the table my burden of wealth.

XV

I remember, too, how, without moving from her place, or changing her attitude, she gazed into my face.

“I have won two hundred thousand francs!” cried I as I pulled out my last sheaf of bank-notes. The pile of paper currency occupied the whole table. I could not withdraw my eyes from it. Consequently, for a moment or two Polina escaped my mind. Then I set myself to arrange the pile in order, and to sort the notes, and to mass the gold in a separate heap. That done, I left everything where it lay, and proceeded to pace the room with rapid strides as I lost myself in thought. Then I darted to the table once more, and began to recount the money; until all of a sudden, as though I had remembered something, I rushed to the door, and closed and double-locked it. Finally I came to a meditative halt before my little trunk.

“Shall I put the money there until tomorrow?” I asked, turning sharply round to Polina as the recollection of her returned to me.

She was still in her old place—still making not a sound. Yet her eyes had followed every one of my movements. Somehow in her face there was a strange expression—an expression which I did not like. I think that I shall not be wrong if I say that it indicated sheer hatred.

Impulsively I approached her.

“Polina,” I said, “here are twenty-five thousand florins—fifty thousand francs, or more. Take them, and tomorrow throw them in De Griens’ face.”

She returned no answer.

“Or, if you should prefer,” I continued, “let me take them to him myself tomorrow—yes, early tomorrow morning. Shall I?”

Then all at once she burst out laughing, and laughed for a long while. With astonishment and a feeling of offence I gazed at her. Her laughter was too like the derisive merriment which she had so often indulged in of late—merriment which had broken forth always at the time of my most passionate explanations. At length she ceased, and frowned at me from under her eyebrows.

“I am NOT going to take your money,” she said contemptuously.

“Why not?” I cried. “Why not, Polina?”

“Because I am not in the habit of receiving money for nothing.”

“But I am offering it to you as a FRIEND in the same way I would offer you my very life.”

Upon this she threw me a long, questioning glance, as though she were seeking to probe me to the depths.

“You are giving too much for me,” she remarked with a smile. “The beloved of De Griens is not worth fifty thousand francs.”

“Oh Polina, how can you speak so?” I exclaimed reproachfully. “Am I De Griens?”

“You?” she cried with her eyes suddenly flashing. “Why, I HATE you! Yes, yes, I HATE you! I love you no more than I do De Griens.”

Then she buried her face in her hands, and relapsed into hysterics. I darted to her side. Somehow I had an intuition of something having happened to her which had nothing to do with myself. She was like a person temporarily insane.

“Buy me, would you, would you? Would you buy me for fifty thousand francs as De Griens did?” she gasped between her convulsive sobs.

I clasped her in my arms, kissed her hands and feet, and fell upon my knees before her.

Presently the hysterical fit passed away, and, laying her hands upon my shoulders, she gazed for a while into my face, as though trying to read it—something I said to her, but it was clear that she did not hear it. Her face looked so dark and despondent that I began to fear for her reason. At length she drew me towards herself—a trustful smile playing over her features; and then, as suddenly, she pushed me away again as she eyed me dimly.

Finally she threw herself upon me in an embrace.

“You love me?” she said. “DO you?—you who were willing even to quarrel with the Baron at my bidding?”

Then she laughed—laughed as though something dear, but laughable, had recurred to her memory. Yes, she laughed and wept at the same time. What was I to do? I was like a man in a fever. I remember that she began to say something to me—though WHAT I do not know, since she spoke with a feverish lisp, as though she were trying to tell me something very quickly. At intervals, too, she would break off into the smile which I was beginning to dread. “No, no!” she kept repeating. “YOU are my dear one; YOU are the man I trust.” Again she laid her hands upon my shoulders, and again she gazed at me as she reiterated: “You love me, you love me? Will you ALWAYS love me?” I could not take my eyes off her. Never before had I seen her in this mood of humility and affection. True, the mood was the outcome of hysteria; but—! All of a sudden she noticed my ardent gaze, and smiled slightly. The next moment, for no apparent reason, she began to talk of Astley.

She continued talking and talking about him, but I could not make out all she said—more particularly when she was endeavouring to tell me of something or other which had happened recently. On the whole, she appeared to be laughing at Astley, for she kept repeating that he was waiting for her, and did I know whether, even at that moment, he was not standing beneath the window? “Yes, yes, he is there,” she said. “Open the window, and see if he is not.” She pushed me in that direction; yet, no sooner did I make a movement to obey her behest than she burst into laughter, and I remained beside her, and she embraced me.

“Shall we go away tomorrow?” presently she asked, as though some disturbing thought had recurred to her recollection. “How would it be if we were to try and overtake Grandmamma? I think we should do so at Berlin. And what think you she would have to say to us when we caught her up, and her eyes first lit upon us? What, too, about Mr. Astley? HE would not leap from the Shlangenberg for my sake! No! Of that I am very sure!”—and she laughed. “Do you know where he is going next year? He says he intends to go to the North Pole for scientific investigations, and has invited me to go with him! Ha, ha, ha! He also says that we Russians know nothing, can do nothing, without European help. But he is a good fellow all the same. For instance, he does not blame the General in the matter, but declares that Mlle. Blanche—that love—But no; I do not know, I do not know.” She stopped suddenly, as though she had said her say, and was feeling bewildered. “What poor creatures these people are. How sorry I am for them, and for Grandmamma! But when are you going to kill De Griers? Surely you do not intend actually to murder him? You fool! Do you suppose that I should ALLOW you to fight De Griers? Nor shall you kill the Baron.” Here she burst out laughing. “How absurd you looked when you were talking to the Burmergelms! I was watching you all the time—watching you from where I was sitting. And how unwilling you were to go when I sent you! Oh, how I laughed and laughed!”

Then she kissed and embraced me again; again she pressed her face to mine with tender passion. Yet I neither saw nor heard her, for my head was in a whirl... .

It must have been about seven o'clock in the morning when I awoke. Daylight had come, and Polina was sitting by my side—a strange expression on her face, as though she had seen a vision and was unable to collect her thoughts. She too had just awoken, and was now staring at the money on the table. My head ached; it felt heavy. I attempted to take Polina's hand, but she pushed me from her, and leapt from the sofa. The dawn was full of mist, for rain had fallen, yet she moved to the window, opened it, and, leaning her elbows upon the window-sill, thrust out her head and shoulders to take the air. In this position did she remain for several minutes, without ever looking round at me, or listening to what I was saying. Into my head there came the uneasy thought: What is to happen now? How is it all to end? Suddenly Polina rose from the window, approached the table, and, looking at me with an expression of infinite aversion, said with lips which quivered with anger:

“Well? Are you going to hand me over my fifty thousand francs?”

“Polina, you say that AGAIN, AGAIN?” I exclaimed.

“You have changed your mind, then? Ha, ha, ha! You are sorry you ever promised them?”

On the table where, the previous night, I had counted the money there still was lying the packet of twenty five thousand florins. I handed it to her.

“The francs are mine, then, are they? They are mine?” she inquired viciously as she balanced the money in her hands.

“Yes; they have ALWAYS been yours,” I said.

“Then TAKE your fifty thousand francs!” and she hurled them full in my face. The packet burst as she did so, and the floor became strewn with bank-notes. The instant that the deed was done she rushed from the room.

At that moment she cannot have been in her right mind; yet, what was the cause of her temporary aberration I cannot say. For a month past she had been unwell. Yet what had brought about this PRESENT condition of mind, above all things, this outburst? Had it come of wounded pride? Had it come of despair over her decision to come to me? Had it come of the fact that, presuming too much on my good fortune, I had seemed to be intending to desert her (even as De Griens had done) when once I had given her the fifty thousand francs? But, on my honour, I had never cherished any such intention. What was at fault, I think, was her own pride, which kept urging her not to trust me, but, rather, to insult me—even though she had not realised the fact. In her eyes I corresponded to De Griens, and therefore had been condemned for a fault not wholly my own. Her mood of late had been a sort of delirium, a sort of light-headedness—that I knew full well; yet, never had I sufficiently taken it into consideration. Perhaps she would not pardon me now? Ah, but this was THE PRESENT. What about the future? Her delirium and sickness were not likely to make her forget what she had done in bringing me De Griens’ letter. No, she must have known what she was doing when she brought it.

Somehow I contrived to stuff the pile of notes and gold under the bed, to cover them over, and then to leave the room some ten minutes after Polina. I felt sure that she had returned to her own room; wherefore, I intended quietly to follow her, and to ask the nursemaid aid who opened the door how her mistress was. Judge, therefore, of my surprise when, meeting the domestic on the stairs, she informed me that Polina had not yet returned, and that she (the domestic) was at that moment on her way to my room in quest of her!

“Mlle. left me but ten minutes ago,” I said. “What can have become of her?” The nursemaid looked at me reproachfully.

Already sundry rumours were flying about the hotel. Both in the office of the commissioner and in that of the landlord it was whispered that, at seven o’clock that morning, the Fraulein had left the hotel, and set off, despite the rain, in the direction of the Hotel d’Angleterre. From words and hints let fall I could see that the fact of Polina having spent the night in my room was now public property. Also, sundry rumours were circulating concerning the General’s family affairs. It was known that last night he had gone out of his mind, and paraded the hotel in tears; also, that the old lady who had arrived was his mother, and that she had come from Russia on purpose to forbid her son’s marriage with Mlle. de Cominges, as well as to cut him out of her will if he should disobey her; also that, because he had disobeyed her, she had squandered all her money at roulette, in order to have nothing more to leave to him. “Oh, these Russians!” exclaimed the landlord, with an angry toss of the head, while the bystanders laughed and the clerk betook himself to his accounts. Also, every one had learnt about my winnings; Karl, the corridor lacquey, was the first to congratulate me. But with

these folk I had nothing to do. My business was to set off at full speed to the Hotel d'Angleterre.

As yet it was early for Mr. Astley to receive visitors; but, as soon as he learnt that it was I who had arrived, he came out into the corridor to meet me, and stood looking at me in silence with his steel-grey eyes as he waited to hear what I had to say. I inquired after Polina.

"She is ill," he replied, still looking at me with his direct, unwavering glance.

"And she is in your rooms."

"Yes, she is in my rooms."

"Then you are minded to keep her there?"

"Yes, I am minded to keep her there."

"But, Mr. Astley, that will raise a scandal. It ought not to be allowed. Besides, she is very ill. Perhaps you had not remarked that?"

"Yes, I have. It was I who told you about it. Had she not been ill, she would not have gone and spent the night with you."

"Then you know all about it?"

"Yes; for last night she was to have accompanied me to the house of a relative of mine. Unfortunately, being ill, she made a mistake, and went to your rooms instead."

"Indeed? Then I wish you joy, Mr. Astley. Apropos, you have reminded me of something. Were you beneath my window last night? Every moment Mlle. Polina kept telling me to open the window and see if you were there; after which she always smiled."

"Indeed? No, I was not there; but I was waiting in the corridor, and walking about the hotel."

"She ought to see a doctor, you know, Mr. Astley."

"Yes, she ought. I have sent for one, and, if she dies, I shall hold you responsible."

This surprised me.

"Pardon me," I replied, "but what do you mean?"

"Never mind. Tell me if it is true that, last night, you won two hundred thousand thalers?"

"No; I won a hundred thousand florins."

"Good heavens! Then I suppose you will be off to Paris this morning?"

"Why?"

"Because all Russians who have grown rich go to Paris," explained Astley, as though he had read the fact in a book.

"But what could I do in Paris in summer time?—I LOVE her, Mr. Astley! Surely you know that?"

"Indeed? I am sure that you do NOT. Moreover, if you were to stay here, you would lose everything that you possess, and have nothing left with which to pay your expenses in Paris. Well, good-bye now. I feel sure that today will see you gone from here."

"Good-bye. But I am NOT going to Paris. Likewise—pardon me—what is to become of this family? I mean that the affair of the General and Mlle. Polina will soon be all over the town."

"I daresay; yet, I hardly suppose that that will break the General's heart. Moreover, Mlle. Polina has a perfect right to live where she chooses. In short, we may say that, as a family, this family has ceased to exist."

I departed, and found myself smiling at the Englishman's strange assurance that I should soon be leaving for Paris. "I suppose he means to shoot me in a duel, should Polina die. Yes, that is what he intends to do." Now, although I was honestly sorry for Polina, it is a fact that, from the moment when, the previous night, I had approached the gaming-table, and begun to rake in the packets of bank-notes, my love for her had entered upon a new plane. Yes, I can say that now; although, at the time, I was barely conscious of it. Was I, then, at heart a gambler? Did I, after all, love Polina not so very much? No, no! As God is my witness, I loved her! Even when I was returning home from Mr. Astley's my suffering was genuine, and my self-reproach sincere. But presently I was to go through an exceedingly strange and ugly experience.

I was proceeding to the General's rooms when I heard a door near me open, and a voice call me by name. It was Mlle.'s mother, the Widow de Cominges who was inviting me, in her daughter's name, to enter.

I did so; whereupon, I heard a laugh and a little cry proceed from the bedroom (the pair occupied a suite of two apartments), where Mlle. Blanche was just arising.

"Ah, c'est lui! Viens, donc, bete! Is it true that you have won a mountain of gold and silver? J'aimerais mieux l'or."

"Yes," I replied with a smile.

"How much?"

"A hundred thousand florins."

"Bibi, comme tu es bete! Come in here, for I can't hear you where you are now. Nous ferons bombance, n'est-ce pas?"

Entering her room, I found her lolling under a pink satin coverlet, and revealing a pair of swarthy, wonderfully healthy shoulders—shoulders such as one sees in dreams—shoulders covered over with a white cambric nightgown which, trimmed with lace, stood out, in striking relief, against the darkness of her skin.

"Mon fils, as-tu du coeur?" she cried when she saw me, and then giggled. Her laugh had always been a very cheerful one, and at times it even sounded sincere.

"Tout autre—" I began, paraphrasing Comeille.

"See here," she prattled on. "Please search for my stockings, and help me to dress. Aussi, si tu n'es pas trop bete je te prends a Paris. I am just off, let me tell you."

"This moment?"

"In half an hour."

True enough, everything stood ready-packed—trunks, portmanteaux, and all. Coffee had long been served.

"Eh bien, tu verras Paris. Dis donc, qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un 'utchitel'? Tu etais bien bete quand tu etais 'utchitel.' Where are my stockings? Please help me to dress."

And she lifted up a really ravishing foot—small, swarthy, and not misshapen like the majority of feet which look dainty only in bottines. I laughed, and started to draw

on to the foot a silk stocking, while Mlle. Blanche sat on the edge of the bed and chattered.

“Eh bien, que feras-tu si je te prends avec moi? First of all I must have fifty thousand francs, and you shall give them to me at Frankfurt. Then we will go on to Paris, where we will live together, et je te ferai voir des étoiles en plein jour. Yes, you shall see such women as your eyes have never lit upon.”

“Stop a moment. If I were to give you those fifty thousand francs, what should I have left for myself?”

“Another hundred thousand francs, please to remember. Besides, I could live with you in your rooms for a month, or even for two; or even for longer. But it would not take us more than two months to get through fifty thousand francs; for, look you, je suis bonne enfante, et tu verras des étoiles, you may be sure.”

“What? You mean to say that we should spend the whole in two months?”

“Certainly. Does that surprise you very much? Ah, vil esclave! Why, one month of that life would be better than all your previous existence. One month—et apres, le deluge! Mais tu ne peux comprendre. Va! Away, away! You are not worth it.—Ah, que fais-tu?”

For, while drawing on the other stocking, I had felt constrained to kiss her. Immediately she shrunk back, kicked me in the face with her toes, and turned me neck and prop out of the room.

“Eh bien, mon ‘utchitel’,” she called after me, “je t’attends, si tu veux. I start in a quarter of an hour’s time.”

I returned to my own room with my head in a whirl. It was not my fault that Polina had thrown a packet in my face, and preferred Mr. Astley to myself. A few bank-notes were still fluttering about the floor, and I picked them up. At that moment the door opened, and the landlord appeared—a person who, until now, had never bestowed upon me so much as a glance. He had come to know if I would prefer to move to a lower floor—to a suite which had just been tenanted by Count V.

For a moment I reflected.

“No!” I shouted. “My account, please, for in ten minutes I shall be gone.”

“To Paris, to Paris!” I added to myself. “Every man of birth must make her acquaintance.”

Within a quarter of an hour all three of us were seated in a family compartment—Mlle. Blanche, the Widow de Cominges, and myself. Mlle. kept laughing hysterically as she looked at me, and Madame re-echoed her; but I did not feel so cheerful. My life had broken in two, and yesterday had infected me with a habit of staking my all upon a card. Although it might be that I had failed to win my stake, that I had lost my senses, that I desired nothing better, I felt that the scene was to be changed only FOR A TIME. “Within a month from now,” I kept thinking to myself, “I shall be back again in Roulettenberg; and THEN I mean to have it out with you, Mr. Astley!” Yes, as now I look back at things, I remember that I felt greatly depressed, despite the absurd giggings of the egregious Blanche.

“What is the matter with you? How dull you are!” she cried at length as she interrupted her laughter to take me seriously to task.

“Come, come! We are going to spend your two hundred thousand francs for you, et tu seras heureux comme un petit roi. I myself will tie your tie for you, and introduce you to Hortense. And when we have spent your money you shall return here, and break the bank again. What did those two Jews tell you?—that the thing most needed is daring, and that you possess it? Consequently, this is not the first time that you will be hurrying to Paris with money in your pocket. Quant ... moi, je veux cinquante mille francs de rente, et alors”

“But what about the General?” I interrupted.

“The General? You know well enough that at about this hour every day he goes to buy me a bouquet. On this occasion, I took care to tell him that he must hunt for the choicest of flowers; and when he returns home, the poor fellow will find the bird flown. Possibly he may take wing in pursuit—ha, ha, ha! And if so, I shall not be sorry, for he could be useful to me in Paris, and Mr. Astley will pay his debts here.”

In this manner did I depart for the Gay City.

XVI

Of Paris what am I to say? The whole proceeding was a delirium, a madness. I spent a little over three weeks there, and, during that time, saw my hundred thousand francs come to an end. I speak only of the ONE hundred thousand francs, for the other hundred thousand I gave to Mlle. Blanche in pure cash. That is to say, I handed her fifty thousand francs at Frankfurt, and, three days later (in Paris), advanced her another fifty thousand on note of hand. Nevertheless, a week had not elapsed ere she came to me for more money. "Et les cent mille francs qui nous restent," she added, "tu les mangeras avec moi, mon utchitel." Yes, she always called me her "utchitel." A person more economical, grasping, and mean than Mlle. Blanche one could not imagine. But this was only as regards HER OWN money. MY hundred thousand francs (as she explained to me later) she needed to set up her establishment in Paris, "so that once and for all I may be on a decent footing, and proof against any stones which may be thrown at me—at all events for a long time to come." Nevertheless, I saw nothing of those hundred thousand francs, for my own purse (which she inspected daily) never managed to amass in it more than a hundred francs at a time; and, generally the sum did not reach even that figure.

"What do you want with money?" she would say to me with air of absolute simplicity; and I never disputed the point. Nevertheless, though she fitted out her flat very badly with the money, the fact did not prevent her from saying when, later, she was showing me over the rooms of her new abode: "See what care and taste can do with the most wretched of means!" However, her "wretchedness" had cost fifty thousand francs, while with the remaining fifty thousand she purchased a carriage and horses.

Also, we gave a couple of balls—evening parties attended by Hortense and Lisette and Cleopatre, who were women remarkable both for the number of their liaisons and (though only in some cases) for their good looks. At these reunions I had to play the part of host—to meet and entertain fat mercantile parvenus who were impossible by reason of their rudeness and braggadocio, colonels of various kinds, hungry authors, and journalistic hacks—all of whom disported themselves in fashionable tailcoats and pale yellow gloves, and displayed such an aggregate of conceit and gasconade as would be unthinkable even in St. Petersburg—which is saying a great deal! They used to try to make fun of me, but I would console myself by drinking champagne and then lolling in a retiring-room. Nevertheless, I found it deadly work. "C'est un utchitel," Blanche would say of me, "qui a gagne deux cent mille francs, and but for me, would have had not a notion how to spend them. Presently he will have to return to his tutoring. Does any one know of a vacant post? You know, one must do something for him."

I had the more frequent recourse to champagne in that I constantly felt depressed and bored, owing to the fact that I was living in the most bourgeois commercial milieu imaginable—a milieu wherein every sou was counted and grudged. Indeed, two weeks had not elapsed before I perceived that Blanche had no real affection for me, even though she dressed me in elegant clothes, and herself tied my tie each day. In short, she utterly despised me. But that caused me no concern. Blase and inert, I spent my evenings generally at the Chateau des Fleurs, where I would get fuddled and then dance the cancan (which, in that establishment, was a very indecent performance) with éclat. At length, the time came when Blanche had drained my purse dry. She had conceived an idea that, during the term of our residence together, it would be well if I were always to walk behind her with a paper and pencil, in order to jot down exactly what she spent, what she had saved, what she was paying out, and what she was laying by. Well, of course I could not fail to be aware that this would entail a battle over every ten francs; so, although for every possible objection that I might make she had prepared a suitable answer, she soon saw that I made no objections, and therefore, had to start disputes herself. That is to say, she would burst out into tirades which were met only with silence as I lolled on a sofa and stared fixedly at the ceiling. This greatly surprised her. At first she imagined that it was due merely to the fact that I was a fool, “un utchitel”; wherefore she would break off her harangue in the belief that, being too stupid to understand, I was a hopeless case. Then she would leave the room, but return ten minutes later to resume the contest. This continued throughout her squandering of my money—a squandering altogether out of proportion to our means. An example is the way in which she changed her first pair of horses for a pair which cost sixteen thousand francs.

“Bibi,” she said on the latter occasion as she approached me, “surely you are not angry?”

“No-o-o: I am merely tired,” was my reply as I pushed her from me. This seemed to her so curious that straightway she seated herself by my side.

“You see,” she went on, “I decided to spend so much upon these horses only because I can easily sell them again. They would go at any time for TWENTY thousand francs.”

“Yes, yes. They are splendid horses, and you have got a splendid turn-out. I am quite content. Let me hear no more of the matter.”

“Then you are not angry?”

“No. Why should I be? You are wise to provide yourself with what you need, for it will all come in handy in the future. Yes, I quite see the necessity of your establishing yourself on a good basis, for without it you will never earn your million. My hundred thousand francs I look upon merely as a beginning—as a mere drop in the bucket.”

Blanche, who had by no means expected such declarations from me, but, rather, an uproar and protests, was rather taken aback.

“Well, well, what a man you are! ” she exclaimed. ” Mais tu as l’esprit pour comprendre. Sais-tu, mon garçon, although you are a tutor, you ought to have been born a prince. Are you not sorry that your money should be going so quickly?”

"No. The quicker it goes the better."

"Mais—sais-tu-mais dis donc, are you really rich? Mais sais-tu, you have too much contempt for money. Qu'est-ce que tu feras apres, dis donc?"

"Après I shall go to Homburg, and win another hundred thousand francs."

"Oui, oui, c'est ca, c'est magnifique! Ah, I know you will win them, and bring them to me when you have done so. Dis donc—you will end by making me love you. Since you are what you are, I mean to love you all the time, and never to be unfaithful to you. You see, I have not loved you before parce que je croyais que tu n'es qu'un utchitel (quelque chose comme un lacquais, n'est-ce pas?) Yet all the time I have been true to you, parce que je suis bonne fille."

"You lie!" I interrupted. "Did I not see you, the other day, with Albert—with that black-jowled officer?"

"Oh, oh! Mais tu es—"

"Yes, you are lying right enough. But what makes you suppose that I should be angry? Rubbish! Il faut que jeunesse se passe. Even if that officer were here now, I should refrain from putting him out of the room if I thought you really cared for him. Only, mind you, do not give him any of my money. You hear?"

"You say, do you, that you would not be angry? Mais tu es un vrai philosophe, sais-tu? Oui, un vrai philosophe! Eh bien, je t'aimerai, je t'aimerai. Tu verras-tu seras content."

True enough, from that time onward she seemed to attach herself only to me, and in this manner we spent our last ten days together. The promised "etoiles" I did not see, but in other respects she, to a certain extent, kept her word. Moreover, she introduced me to Hortense, who was a remarkable woman in her way, and known among us as Therese Philosophe.

But I need not enlarge further, for to do so would require a story to itself, and entail a colouring which I am lothe to impart to the present narrative. The point is that with all my faculties I desired the episode to come to an end as speedily as possible. Unfortunately, our hundred thousand francs lasted us, as I have said, for very nearly a month—which greatly surprised me. At all events, Blanche bought herself articles to the tune of eighty thousand francs, and the rest sufficed just to meet our expenses of living. Towards the close of the affair, Blanche grew almost frank with me (at least, she scarcely lied to me at all)—declaring, amongst other things, that none of the debts which she had been obliged to incur were going to fall upon my head. "I have purposely refrained from making you responsible for my bills or borrowings," she said, "for the reason that I am sorry for you. Any other woman in my place would have done so, and have let you go to prison. See, then, how much I love you, and how good-hearted I am! Think, too, what this accursed marriage with the General is going to cost me!"

True enough, the marriage took place. It did so at the close of our month together, and I am bound to suppose that it was upon the ceremony that the last remnants of my money were spent. With it the episode—that is to say, my sojourn with the Frenchwoman—came to an end, and I formally retired from the scene.

It happened thus: A week after we had taken up our abode in Paris there arrived thither the General. He came straight to see us, and thenceforward lived with us practically as our guest, though he had a flat of his own as well. Blanche met him with merry badinage and laughter, and even threw her arms around him. In fact, she managed it so that he had to follow everywhere in her train—whether when promenading on the Boulevards, or when driving, or when going to the theatre, or when paying calls; and this use which she made of him quite satisfied the General. Still of imposing appearance and presence, as well as of fair height, he had a dyed moustache and whiskers (he had formerly been in the cuirassiers), and a handsome, though a somewhat wrinkled, face. Also, his manners were excellent, and he could carry a frockcoat well—the more so since, in Paris, he took to wearing his orders. To promenade the Boulevards with such a man was not only a thing possible, but also, so to speak, a thing advisable, and with this programme the good but foolish General had not a fault to find. The truth is that he had never counted upon this programme when he came to Paris to seek us out. On that occasion he had made his appearance nearly shaking with terror, for he had supposed that Blanche would at once raise an outcry, and have him put from the door; wherefore, he was the more enraptured at the turn that things had taken, and spent the month in a state of senseless ecstasy. Already I had learnt that, after our unexpected departure from Roulettenberg, he had had a sort of a fit—that he had fallen into a swoon, and spent a week in a species of garrulous delirium. Doctors had been summoned to him, but he had broken away from them, and suddenly taken a train to Paris. Of course Blanche's reception of him had acted as the best of all possible cures, but for long enough he carried the marks of his affliction, despite his present condition of rapture and delight. To think clearly, or even to engage in any serious conversation, had now become impossible for him; he could only ejaculate after each word "Hm!" and then nod his head in confirmation. Sometimes, also, he would laugh, but only in a nervous, hysterical sort of a fashion; while at other times he would sit for hours looking as black as night, with his heavy eyebrows knitted. Of much that went on he remained wholly oblivious, for he grew extremely absent-minded, and took to talking to himself. Only Blanche could awake him to any semblance of life. His fits of depression and moodiness in corners always meant either that he had not seen her for some while, or that she had gone out without taking him with her, or that she had omitted to caress him before departing. When in this condition, he would refuse to say what he wanted—nor had he the least idea that he was thus sulking and moping. Next, after remaining in this condition for an hour or two (this I remarked on two occasions when Blanche had gone out for the day—probably to see Albert), he would begin to look about him, and to grow uneasy, and to hurry about with an air as though he had suddenly remembered something, and must try and find it; after which, not perceiving the object of his search, nor succeeding in recalling what that object had been, he would as suddenly relapse into oblivion, and continue so until the reappearance of Blanche—merry, wanton, half-dressed, and laughing her strident laugh as she approached to pet him, and even to kiss him (though the latter reward he

seldom received). Once, he was so overjoyed at her doing so that he burst into tears. Even I myself was surprised.

From the first moment of his arrival in Paris, Blanche set herself to plead with me on his behalf; and at such times she even rose to heights of eloquence—saying that it was for ME she had abandoned him, though she had almost become his betrothed and promised to become so; that it was for HER sake he had deserted his family; that, having been in his service, I ought to remember the fact, and to feel ashamed. To all this I would say nothing, however much she chattered on; until at length I would burst out laughing, and the incident would come to an end (at first, as I have said, she had thought me a fool, but since she had come to deem me a man of sense and sensibility). In short, I had the happiness of calling her better nature into play; for though, at first, I had not deemed her so, she was, in reality, a kind-hearted woman after her own fashion. “You are good and clever,” she said to me towards the finish, “and my one regret is that you are also so wrong-headed. You will NEVER be a rich man!”

“Un vrai Russe—un Kalmuk” she usually called me.

Several times she sent me to give the General an airing in the streets, even as she might have done with a lacquey and her spaniel; but, I preferred to take him to the theatre, to the Bal Mabille, and to restaurants. For this purpose she usually allowed me some money, though the General had a little of his own, and enjoyed taking out his purse before strangers. Once I had to use actual force to prevent him from buying a phaeton at a price of seven hundred francs, after a vehicle had caught his fancy in the Palais Royal as seeming to be a desirable present for Blanche. What could SHE have done with a seven-hundred-franc phaeton?—and the General possessed in the world but a thousand francs! The origin even of those francs I could never determine, but imagined them to have emanated from Mr. Astley—the more so since the latter had paid the family’s hotel bill.

As for what view the General took of myself, I think that he never divined the footing on which I stood with Blanche. True, he had heard, in a dim sort of way, that I had won a good deal of money; but more probably he supposed me to be acting as secretary—or even as a kind of servant—to his inamorata. At all events, he continued to address me, in his old haughty style, as my superior. At times he even took it upon himself to scold me. One morning in particular, he started to sneer at me over our matutinal coffee. Though not a man prone to take offence, he suddenly, and for some reason of which to this day I am ignorant, fell out with me. Of course even he himself did not know the reason. To put things shortly, he began a speech which had neither beginning nor ending, and cried out, a batons rompus, that I was a boy whom he would soon put to rights—and so forth, and so forth. Yet no one could understand what he was saying, and at length Blanche exploded in a burst of laughter. Finally something appeased him, and he was taken out for his walk. More than once, however, I noticed that his depression was growing upon him; that he seemed to be feeling the want of somebody or something; that, despite Blanche’s presence, he was missing some person in particular. Twice, on these occasions, did he plunge into a conversation

with me, though he could not make himself intelligible, and only went on rambling about the service, his late wife, his home, and his property. Every now and then, also, some particular word would please him; whereupon he would repeat it a hundred times in the day—even though the word happened to express neither his thoughts nor his feelings. Again, I would try to get him to talk about his children, but always he cut me short in his old snappish way, and passed to another subject. “Yes, yes—my children,” was all that I could extract from him. “Yes, you are right in what you have said about them.” Only once did he disclose his real feelings. That was when we were taking him to the theatre, and suddenly he exclaimed: “My unfortunate children! Yes, sir, they are unfortunate children.” Once, too, when I chanced to mention Polina, he grew quite bitter against her. “She is an ungrateful woman!” he exclaimed. “She is a bad and ungrateful woman! She has broken up a family. If there were laws here, I would have her impaled. Yes, I would.” As for De Griens, the General would not have his name mentioned. “He has ruined me,” he would say. “He has robbed me, and cut my throat. For two years he was a perfect nightmare to me. For months at a time he never left me in my dreams. Do not speak of him again.”

It was now clear to me that Blanche and he were on the point of coming to terms; yet, true to my usual custom, I said nothing. At length, Blanche took the initiative in explaining matters. She did so a week before we parted.

“Il a du chance,” she prattled, “for the Grandmother is now REALLY ill, and therefore, bound to die. Mr. Astley has just sent a telegram to say so, and you will agree with me that the General is likely to be her heir. Even if he should not be so, he will not come amiss, since, in the first place, he has his pension, and, in the second place, he will be content to live in a back room; whereas I shall be Madame General, and get into a good circle of society” (she was always thinking of this) “and become a Russian chatelaine. Yes, I shall have a mansion of my own, and peasants, and a million of money at my back.”

“But, suppose he should prove jealous? He might demand all sorts of things, you know. Do you follow me?”

“Oh, dear no! How ridiculous that would be of him! Besides, I have taken measures to prevent it. You need not be alarmed. That is to say, I have induced him to sign notes of hand in Albert’s name. Consequently, at any time I could get him punished. Isn’t he ridiculous?”

“Very well, then. Marry him.”

And, in truth, she did so—though the marriage was a family one only, and involved no pomp or ceremony. In fact, she invited to the nuptials none but Albert and a few other friends. Hortense, Cleopatre, and the rest she kept firmly at a distance. As for the bridegroom, he took a great interest in his new position. Blanche herself tied his tie, and Blanche herself pomaded him—with the result that, in his frockcoat and white waistcoat, he looked quite *comme il faut*.

“Il est, pourtant, TRES *comme il faut*,” Blanche remarked when she issued from his room, as though the idea that he was “TRES *comme il faut*” had impressed even

her. For myself, I had so little knowledge of the minor details of the affair, and took part in it so much as a supine spectator, that I have forgotten most of what passed on this occasion. I only remember that Blanche and the Widow figured at it, not as “de Cominges,” but as “du Placet.” Why they had hitherto been “de Cominges ” I do not know— I only know that this entirely satisfied the General, that he liked the name “du Placet” even better than he had liked the name “de Cominges.” On the morning of the wedding, he paced the salon in his gala attire and kept repeating to himself with an air of great gravity and importance: ” Mlle. Blanche du Placet! Mlle. Blanche du Placet, du Placet!” He beamed with satisfaction as he did so. Both in the church and at the wedding breakfast he remained not only pleased and contented, but even proud. She too underwent a change, for now she assumed an air of added dignity.

“I must behave altogether differently,” she confided to me with a serious air. “Yet, mark you, there is a tiresome circumstance of which I had never before thought—which is, how best to pronounce my new family name. Zagorianski, Zagozianski, Madame la Generale de Sago, Madame la Generale de Fourteen Consonants—oh these infernal Russian names! The LAST of them would be the best to use, don’t you think?”

At length the time had come for us to part, and Blanche, the egregious Blanche, shed real tears as she took her leave of me. “Tu etais bon enfant” she said with a sob. “je te croyais bete et tu en avais l’air, but it suited you.” Then, having given me a final handshake, she exclaimed, “Attends!”; whereafter, running into her boudoir, she brought me thence two thousand-franc notes. I could scarcely believe my eyes! “They may come in handy for you,” she explained, “for, though you are a very learned tutor, you are a very stupid man. More than two thousand francs, however, I am not going to give you, for the reason that, if I did so, you would gamble them all away. Now good-bye. Nous serons toujours bons amis, and if you win again, do not fail to come to me, et tu seras heureux.”

I myself had still five hundred francs left, as well as a watch worth a thousand francs, a few diamond studs, and so on. Consequently, I could subsist for quite a length of time without particularly bestirring myself. Purposely I have taken up my abode where I am now partly to pull myself together, and partly to wait for Mr. Astley, who, I have learnt, will soon be here for a day or so on business. Yes, I know that, and then—and then I shall go to Homburg. But to Roulettenberg I shall not go until next year, for they say it is bad to try one’s luck twice in succession at a table. Moreover, Homburg is where the best play is carried on.

XVII

It is a year and eight months since I last looked at these notes of mine. I do so now only because, being overwhelmed with depression, I wish to distract my mind by reading them through at random. I left them off at the point where I was just going to Homburg. My God, with what a light heart (comparatively speaking) did I write the concluding lines!—though it may be not so much with a light heart, as with a measure of self-confidence and unquenchable hope. At that time had I any doubts of myself? Yet behold me now. Scarcely a year and a half have passed, yet I am in a worse position than the meanest beggar. But what is a beggar? A fig for beggary! I have ruined myself—that is all. Nor is there anything with which I can compare myself; there is no moral which it would be of any use for you to read to me. At the present moment nothing could well be more incongruous than a moral. Oh, you self-satisfied persons who, in your unctuous pride, are forever ready to mouth your maxims—if only you knew how fully I myself comprehend the sordidness of my present state, you would not trouble to wag your tongues at me! What could you say to me that I do not already know? Well, wherein lies my difficulty? It lies in the fact that by a single turn of a roulette wheel everything for me, has become changed. Yet, had things befallen otherwise, these moralists would have been among the first (yes, I feel persuaded of it) to approach me with friendly jests and congratulations. Yes, they would never have turned from me as they are doing now! A fig for all of them! What am I? I am zero—nothing. What shall I be tomorrow? I may be risen from the dead, and have begun life anew. For still, I may discover the man in myself, if only my manhood has not become utterly shattered.

I went, I say, to Homburg, but afterwards went also to Roulettenberg, as well as to Spa and Baden; in which latter place, for a time, I acted as valet to a certain rascal of a Privy Councillor, by name Heintze, who until lately was also my master here. Yes, for five months I lived my life with lacqueys! That was just after I had come out of Roulettenberg prison, where I had lain for a small debt which I owed. Out of that prison I was bailed by—by whom? By Mr. Astley? By Polina? I do not know. At all events, the debt was paid to the tune of two hundred thalers, and I sallied forth a free man. But what was I to do with myself? In my dilemma I had recourse to this Heintze, who was a young scapegrace, and the sort of man who could speak and write three languages. At first I acted as his secretary, at a salary of thirty gulden a month, but afterwards I became his lacquey, for the reason that he could not afford to keep a secretary—only an unpaid servant. I had nothing else to turn to, so I remained with him, and allowed myself to become his flunkey. But by stinting myself in meat and

drink I saved, during my five months of service, some seventy gulden; and one evening, when we were at Baden, I told him that I wished to resign my post, and then hastened to betake myself to roulette.

Oh, how my heart beat as I did so! No, it was not the money that I valued— what I wanted was to make all this mob of Heintzes, hotel proprietors, and fine ladies of Baden talk about me, recount my story, wonder at me, extol my doings, and worship my winnings. True, these were childish fancies and aspirations, but who knows but that I might meet Polina, and be able to tell her everything, and see her look of surprise at the fact that I had overcome so many adverse strokes of fortune. No, I had no desire for money for its own sake, for I was perfectly well aware that I should only squander it upon some new Blanche, and spend another three weeks in Paris after buying a pair of horses which had cost sixteen thousand francs. No, I never believed myself to be a hoarder; in fact, I knew only too well that I was a spendthrift. And already, with a sort of fear, a sort of sinking in my heart, I could hear the cries of the croupiers— “Trente et un, rouge, impair et passe,” “Quarte, noir, pair et manque. ” How greedily I gazed upon the gaming-table, with its scattered louis d’or, ten-gulden pieces, and thalers; upon the streams of gold as they issued from the croupier’s hands, and piled themselves up into heaps of gold scintillating as fire; upon the ell—long rolls of silver lying around the croupier. Even at a distance of two rooms I could hear the chink of that money—so much so that I nearly fell into convulsions.

Ah, the evening when I took those seventy gulden to the gaming table was a memorable one for me. I began by staking ten gulden upon passe. For passe I had always had a sort of predilection, yet I lost my stake upon it. This left me with sixty gulden in silver. After a moment’s thought I selected zero—beginning by staking five gulden at a time. Twice I lost, but the third round suddenly brought up the desired coup. I could almost have died with joy as I received my one hundred and seventy-five gulden. Indeed, I have been less pleased when, in former times, I have won a hundred thousand gulden. Losing no time, I staked another hundred gulden upon the red, and won; two hundred upon the red, and won; four hundred upon the black, and won; eight hundred upon manque, and won. Thus, with the addition of the remainder of my original capital, I found myself possessed, within five minutes, of seventeen hundred gulden. Ah, at such moments one forgets both oneself and one’s former failures! This I had gained by risking my very life. I had dared so to risk, and behold, again I was a member of mankind!

I went and hired a room, I shut myself up in it, and sat counting my money until three o’clock in the morning. To think that when I awoke on the morrow, I was no lacquey! I decided to leave at once for Homburg. There I should neither have to serve as a footman nor to lie in prison. Half an hour before starting, I went and ventured a couple of stakes—no more; with the result that, in all, I lost fifteen hundred florins. Nevertheless, I proceeded to Homburg, and have now been there for a month.

Of course, I am living in constant trepidation, playing for the smallest of stakes, and always looking out for something—calculating, standing whole days by the gaming-

tables to watch the play—even seeing that play in my dreams—yet seeming, the while, to be in some way stiffening, to be growing caked, as it were, in mire. But I must conclude my notes, which I finish under the impression of a recent encounter with Mr. Astley. I had not seen him since we parted at Roulettenberg, and now we met quite by accident. At the time I was walking in the public gardens, and meditating upon the fact that not only had I still some fifty olden in my possession, but also I had fully paid up my hotel bill three days ago. Consequently, I was in a position to try my luck again at roulette; and if I won anything I should be able to continue my play, whereas, if I lost what I now possessed, I should once more have to accept a lacquey's place, provided that, in the alternative, I failed to discover a Russian family which stood in need of a tutor. Plunged in these reflections, I started on my daily walk through the Park and forest towards a neighbouring principality. Sometimes, on such occasions, I spent four hours on the way, and would return to Homburg tired and hungry; but, on this particular occasion, I had scarcely left the gardens for the Park when I caught sight of Astley seated on a bench. As soon as he perceived me, he called me by name, and I went and sat down beside him; but, on noticing that he seemed a little stiff in his manner, I hastened to moderate the expression of joy which the sight of him had called forth.

“YOU here?” he said. “Well, I had an idea that I should meet you. Do not trouble to tell me anything, for I know all—yes, all. In fact, your whole life during the past twenty months lies within my knowledge.”

“How closely you watch the doings of your old friends!” I replied. “That does you infinite credit. But stop a moment. You have reminded me of something. Was it you who bailed me out of Roulettenberg prison when I was lying there for a debt of two hundred gulden? SOMEONE did so.”

“Oh dear no!—though I knew all the time that you were lying there.”

“Perhaps you could tell me who DID bail me out?”

“No; I am afraid I could not.”

“What a strange thing! For I know no Russians at all here, so it cannot have been a Russian who befriended me. In Russia we Orthodox folk DO go bail for one another, but in this case I thought it must have been done by some English stranger who was not conversant with the ways of the country.”

Mr. Astley seemed to listen to me with a sort of surprise. Evidently he had expected to see me looking more crushed and broken than I was.

“Well,” he said—not very pleasantly, “I am none the less glad to find that you retain your old independence of spirit, as well as your buoyancy.”

“Which means that you are vexed at not having found me more abased and humiliated than I am?” I retorted with a smile.

Astley was not quick to understand this, but presently did so and laughed.

“Your remarks please me as they always did,” he continued. “In those words I see the clever, triumphant, and, above all things, cynical friend of former days. Only Russians have the faculty of combining within themselves so many opposite qualities. Yes, most

men love to see their best friend in abasement; for generally it is on such abasement that friendship is founded. All thinking persons know that ancient truth. Yet, on the present occasion, I assure you, I am sincerely glad to see that you are NOT cast down. Tell me, are you never going to give up gambling?"

"Damn the gambling! Yes, I should certainly have given it up, were it not that—"

"That you are losing? I thought so. You need not tell me any more. I know how things stand, for you have said that last in despair, and therefore, truthfully. Have you no other employment than gambling?"

"No; none whatever."

Astley gave me a searching glance. At that time it was ages since I had last looked at a paper or turned the pages of a book.

"You are growing blase," he said. "You have not only renounced life, with its interests and social ties, but the duties of a citizen and a man; you have not only renounced the friends whom I know you to have had, and every aim in life but that of winning money; but you have also renounced your memory. Though I can remember you in the strong, ardent period of your life, I feel persuaded that you have now forgotten every better feeling of that period—that your present dreams and aspirations of subsistence do not rise above pair, impair rouge, noir, the twelve middle numbers, and so forth."

"Enough, Mr. Astley!" I cried with some irritation—almost in anger. "Kindly do not recall to me any more recollections, for I can remember things for myself. Only for a time have I put them out of my head. Only until I shall have rehabilitated myself, am I keeping my memory dulled. When that hour shall come, you will see me arise from the dead."

"Then you will have to be here another ten years," he replied. "Should I then be alive, I will remind you—here, on this very bench—of what I have just said. In fact, I will bet you a wager that I shall do so."

"Say no more," I interrupted impatiently. "And to show you that I have not wholly forgotten the past, may I enquire where Mlle. Polina is? If it was not you who bailed me out of prison, it must have been she. Yet never have I heard a word concerning her."

"No, I do not think it was she. At the present moment she is in Switzerland, and you will do me a favour by ceasing to ask me these questions about her." Astley said this with a firm, and even an angry, air.

"Which means that she has dealt you a serious wound?" I burst out with an involuntary sneer.

"Mlle. Polina," he continued, "is the best of all possible living beings; but, I repeat, that I shall thank you to cease questioning me about her. You never really knew her, and her name on your lips is an offence to my moral feeling."

"Indeed? On what subject, then, have I a better right to speak to you than on this? With it are bound up all your recollections and mine. However, do not be alarmed: I have no wish to probe too far into your private, your secret affairs. My interest in Mlle.

Polina does not extend beyond her outward circumstances and surroundings. About them you could tell me in two words.”

“Well, on condition that the matter shall end there, I will tell you that for a long time Mlle. Polina was ill, and still is so. My mother and sister entertained her for a while at their home in the north of England, and thereafter Mlle. Polina’s grandmother (you remember the mad old woman?) died, and left Mlle. Polina a personal legacy of seven thousand pounds sterling. That was about six months ago, and now Mlle. is travelling with my sister’s family—my sister having since married. Mlle.’s little brother and sister also benefited by the Grandmother’s will, and are now being educated in London. As for the General, he died in Paris last month, of a stroke. Mlle. Blanche did well by him, for she succeeded in having transferred to herself all that he received from the Grandmother. That, I think, concludes all that I have to tell.”

“And De Griers? Is he too travelling in Switzerland?”

“No; nor do I know where he is. Also I warn you once more that you had better avoid such hints and ignoble suppositions; otherwise you will assuredly have to reckon with me.”

“What? In spite of our old friendship?”

“Yes, in spite of our old friendship.”

“Then I beg your pardon a thousand times, Mr. Astley. I meant nothing offensive to Mlle. Polina, for I have nothing of which to accuse her. Moreover, the question of there being anything between this Frenchman and this Russian lady is not one which you and I need discuss, nor even attempt to understand.”

“If,” replied Astley, “you do not care to hear their names coupled together, may I ask you what you mean by the expressions ‘this Frenchman,’ ‘this Russian lady,’ and ‘there being anything between them’? Why do you call them so particularly a ‘Frenchman’ and a ‘Russian lady’?”

“Ah, I see you are interested, Mr. Astley. But it is a long, long story, and calls for a lengthy preface. At the same time, the question is an important one, however ridiculous it may seem at the first glance. A Frenchman, Mr. Astley, is merely a fine figure of a man. With this you, as a Britisher, may not agree. With it I also, as a Russian, may not agree—out of envy. Yet possibly our good ladies are of another opinion. For instance, one may look upon Racine as a broken-down, hobbledehoy, perfumed individual—one may even be unable to read him; and I too may think him the same, as well as, in some respects, a subject for ridicule. Yet about him, Mr. Astley, there is a certain charm, and, above all things, he is a great poet—though one might like to deny it. Yes, the Frenchman, the Parisian, as a national figure, was in process of developing into a figure of elegance before we Russians had even ceased to be bears. The Revolution bequeathed to the French nobility its heritage, and now every whippersnapper of a Parisian may possess manners, methods of expression, and even thoughts that are above reproach in form, while all the time he himself may share in that form neither in initiative nor in intellect nor in soul—his manners, and the rest, having come to him

through inheritance. Yes, taken by himself, the Frenchman is frequently a fool of fools and a villain of villains.

Per contra, there is no one in the world more worthy of confidence and respect than this young Russian lady. De Griens might so mask his face and play a part as easily to overcome her heart, for he has an imposing figure, Mr. Astley, and this young lady might easily take that figure for his real self—for the natural form of his heart and soul—instead of the mere cloak with which heredity has dowered him. And even though it may offend you, I feel bound to say that the majority also of English people are uncouth and unrefined, whereas we Russian folk can recognise beauty wherever we see it, and are always eager to cultivate the same. But to distinguish beauty of soul and personal originality there is needed far more independence and freedom than is possessed by our women, especially by our younger ladies. At all events, they need more EXPERIENCE. For instance, this Mlle. Polina—pardon me, but the name has passed my lips, and I cannot well recall it—is taking a very long time to make up her mind to prefer you to Monsieur de Griens. She may respect you, she may become your friend, she may open out her heart to you; yet over that heart there will be reigning that loathsome villain, that mean and petty usurer, De Griens. This will be due to obstinacy and self-love—to the fact that De Griens once appeared to her in the transfigured guise of a marquis, of a disenchanted and ruined liberal who was doing his best to help her family and the frivolous old General; and, although these transactions of his have since been exposed, you will find that the exposure has made no impression upon her mind. Only give her the De Griens of former days, and she will ask of you no more. The more she may detest the present De Griens, the more will she lament the De Griens of the past—even though the latter never existed but in her own imagination. You are a sugar refiner, Mr. Astley, are you not?”

“Yes, I belong to the well-known firm of Lovell and Co.”

“Then see here. On the one hand, you are a sugar refiner, while, on the other hand, you are an Apollo Belvedere. But the two characters do not mix with one another. I, again, am not even a sugar refiner; I am a mere roulette gambler who has also served as a lacquey. Of this fact Mlle. Polina is probably well aware, since she appears to have an excellent force of police at her disposal.”

“You are saying this because you are feeling bitter,” said Astley with cold indifference. “Yet there is not the least originality in your words.”

“I agree. But therein lies the horror of it all—that, however mean and farcical my accusations may be, they are none the less TRUE. But I am only wasting words.”

“Yes, you are, for you are only talking nonsense! exclaimed my companion—his voice now trembling and his eyes flashing fire. “Are you aware,” he continued, “that wretched, ignoble, petty, unfortunate man though you are, it was at HER request I came to Homburg, in order to see you, and to have a long, serious talk with you, and to report to her your feelings and thoughts and hopes—yes, and your recollections of her, too?”

“Indeed? Is that really so?” I cried—the tears beginning to well from my eyes. Never before had this happened.

“Yes, poor unfortunate,” continued Astley. “She DID love you; and I may tell you this now for the reason that now you are utterly lost. Even if I were also to tell you that she still loves you, you would none the less have to remain where you are. Yes, you have ruined yourself beyond redemption. Once upon a time you had a certain amount of talent, and you were of a lively disposition, and your good looks were not to be despised. You might even have been useful to your country, which needs men like you. Yet you remained here, and your life is now over. I am not blaming you for this—in my view all Russians resemble you, or are inclined to do so. If it is not roulette, then it is something else. The exceptions are very rare. Nor are you the first to learn what a taskmaster is yours. For roulette is not exclusively a Russian game. Hitherto, you have honourably preferred to serve as a lacquey rather than to act as a thief; but what the future may have in store for you I tremble to think. Now good-bye. You are in want of money, I suppose? Then take these ten louis d’or. More I shall not give you, for you would only gamble it away. Take care of these coins, and farewell. Once more, TAKE CARE of them.”

“No, Mr. Astley. After all that has been said I—”

“TAKE CARE of them!” repeated my friend. “I am certain you are still a gentleman, and therefore I give you the money as one gentleman may give money to another. Also, if I could be certain that you would leave both Homburg and the gaming-tables, and return to your own country, I would give you a thousand pounds down to start life afresh; but, I give you ten louis d’or instead of a thousand pounds for the reason that at the present time a thousand pounds and ten louis d’or will be all the same to you—you will lose the one as readily as you will the other. Take the money, therefore, and good-bye.”

“Yes, I WILL take it if at the same time you will embrace me.”

“With pleasure.”

So we parted—on terms of sincere affection.

.....

But he was wrong. If I was hard and undiscerning as regards Polina and De Griens, HE was hard and undiscerning as regards Russian people generally. Of myself I say nothing. Yet—yet words are only words. I need to ACT. Above all things I need to think of Switzerland. Tomorrow, tomorrow— Ah, but if only I could set things right tomorrow, and be born again, and rise again from the dead! But no—I cannot. Yet I must show her what I can do. Even if she should do no more than learn that I can still play the man, it would be worth it. Today it is too late, but TOMORROW...

Yet I have a presentiment that things can never be otherwise. I have got fifteen louis d’or in my possession, although I began with fifteen gulden. If I were to play carefully at the start—But no, no! Surely I am not such a fool as that? Yet WHY should I not rise from the dead? I should require at first but to go cautiously and patiently and the rest would follow. I should require but to put a check upon my nature for one hour,

and my fortunes would be changed entirely. Yes, my nature is my weak point. I have only to remember what happened to me some months ago at Roulettenberg, before my final ruin. What a notable instance that was of my capacity for resolution! On the occasion in question I had lost everything—everything; yet, just as I was leaving the Casino, I heard another gulden give a rattle in my pocket! “Perhaps I shall need it for a meal,” I thought to myself; but a hundred paces further on, I changed my mind, and returned. That gulden I staked upon *manque*—and there is something in the feeling that, though one is alone, and in a foreign land, and far from one’s own home and friends, and ignorant of whence one’s next meal is to come, one is nevertheless staking one’s very last coin! Well, I won the stake, and in twenty minutes had left the Casino with a hundred and seventy gulden in my pocket! That is a fact, and it shows what a last remaining gulden can do... . But what if my heart had failed me, or I had shrunk from making up my mind? ...

No: tomorrow all shall be ended!

The Idiot

Translated by Eva Martin

Part 1

I.

Towards the end of November, during a thaw, at nine o'clock one morning, a train on the Warsaw and Petersburg railway was approaching the latter city at full speed. The morning was so damp and misty that it was only with great difficulty that the day succeeded in breaking; and it was impossible to distinguish anything more than a few yards away from the carriage windows.

Some of the passengers by this particular train were returning from abroad; but the third-class carriages were the best filled, chiefly with insignificant persons of various occupations and degrees, picked up at the different stations nearer town. All of them seemed weary, and most of them had sleepy eyes and a shivering expression, while their complexions generally appeared to have taken on the colour of the fog outside.

When day dawned, two passengers in one of the third-class carriages found themselves opposite each other. Both were young fellows, both were rather poorly dressed, both had remarkable faces, and both were evidently anxious to start a conversation. If they had but known why, at this particular moment, they were both remarkable persons, they would undoubtedly have wondered at the strange chance which had set them down opposite to one another in a third-class carriage of the Warsaw Railway Company.

One of them was a young fellow of about twenty-seven, not tall, with black curling hair, and small, grey, fiery eyes. His nose was broad and flat, and he had high cheek bones; his thin lips were constantly compressed into an impudent, ironical—it might almost be called a malicious—smile; but his forehead was high and well formed, and atoned for a good deal of the ugliness of the lower part of his face. A special feature of this physiognomy was its death-like pallor, which gave to the whole man an indescribably emaciated appearance in spite of his hard look, and at the same time a sort of passionate and suffering expression which did not harmonize with his impudent, sarcastic smile and keen, self-satisfied bearing. He wore a large fur—or rather astrachan—overcoat, which had kept him warm all night, while his neighbour had been obliged to bear the full severity of a Russian November night entirely unprepared. His wide sleeveless mantle with a large cape to it—the sort of cloak one sees upon travellers during the winter months in Switzerland or North Italy—was by no means adapted to the long cold journey through Russia, from Eydkuhnen to St. Petersburg.

The wearer of this cloak was a young fellow, also of about twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, slightly above the middle height, very fair, with a thin, pointed and very light coloured beard; his eyes were large and blue, and had an intent look about them, yet that heavy expression which some people affirm to be a peculiarity, as well as evidence, of an epileptic subject. His face was decidedly a pleasant one for all that; refined, but quite colourless, except for the circumstance that at this moment it was blue with cold. He held a bundle made up of an old faded silk handkerchief that apparently contained all his travelling wardrobe, and wore thick shoes and gaiters, his whole appearance being very un-Russian.

His black-haired neighbour inspected these peculiarities, having nothing better to do, and at length remarked, with that rude enjoyment of the discomforts of others which the common classes so often show:

“Cold?”

“Very,” said his neighbour, readily. “and this is a thaw, too. Fancy if it had been a hard frost! I never thought it would be so cold in the old country. I’ve grown quite out of the way of it.”

“What, been abroad, I suppose?”

“Yes, straight from Switzerland.”

“Wheugh! my goodness!” The black-haired young fellow whistled, and then laughed.

The conversation proceeded. The readiness of the fair-haired young man in the cloak to answer all his opposite neighbour’s questions was surprising. He seemed to have no suspicion of any impertinence or inappropriateness in the fact of such questions being put to him. Replying to them, he made known to the inquirer that he certainly had been long absent from Russia, more than four years; that he had been sent abroad for his health; that he had suffered from some strange nervous malady—a kind of epilepsy, with convulsive spasms. His interlocutor burst out laughing several times at his answers; and more than ever, when to the question, “whether he had been cured?” the patient replied:

“No, they did not cure me.”

“Hey! that’s it! You stumped up your money for nothing, and we believe in those fellows, here!” remarked the black-haired individual, sarcastically.

“Gospel truth, sir, Gospel truth!” exclaimed another passenger, a shabbily dressed man of about forty, who looked like a clerk, and possessed a red nose and a very blotchy face. “Gospel truth! All they do is to get hold of our good Russian money free, gratis, and for nothing. “

“Oh, but you’re quite wrong in my particular instance,” said the Swiss patient, quietly. “Of course I can’t argue the matter, because I know only my own case; but my doctor gave me money—and he had very little—to pay my journey back, besides having kept me at his own expense, while there, for nearly two years.”

“Why? Was there no one else to pay for you?” asked the black-haired one.

“No—Mr. Pavlicheff, who had been supporting me there, died a couple of years ago. I wrote to Mrs. General Epanchin at the time (she is a distant relative of mine), but she did not answer my letter. And so eventually I came back.”

“And where have you come to?”

“That is—where am I going to stay? I—I really don’t quite know yet, I—”

Both the listeners laughed again.

“I suppose your whole set-up is in that bundle, then?” asked the first.

“I bet anything it is!” exclaimed the red-nosed passenger, with extreme satisfaction, “and that he has precious little in the luggage van!—though of course poverty is no crime—we must remember that!”

It appeared that it was indeed as they had surmised. The young fellow hastened to admit the fact with wonderful readiness.

“Your bundle has some importance, however,” continued the clerk, when they had laughed their fill (it was observable that the subject of their mirth joined in the laughter when he saw them laughing); “for though I dare say it is not stuffed full of friedrichs d’or and louis d’or—judge from your costume and gaiters—still—if you can add to your possessions such a valuable property as a relation like Mrs. General Epanchin, then your bundle becomes a significant object at once. That is, of course, if you really are a relative of Mrs. Epanchin’s, and have not made a little error through—well, absence of mind, which is very common to human beings; or, say—through a too luxuriant fancy?”

“Oh, you are right again,” said the fair-haired traveller, “for I really am ALMOST wrong when I say she and I are related. She is hardly a relation at all; so little, in fact, that I was not in the least surprised to have no answer to my letter. I expected as much.”

“H’m! you spent your postage for nothing, then. H’m! you are candid, however—and that is commendable. H’m! Mrs. Epanchin—oh yes! a most eminent person. I know her. As for Mr. Pavlicheff, who supported you in Switzerland, I know him too—at least, if it was Nicolai Andreevitch of that name? A fine fellow he was—and had a property of four thousand souls in his day.”

“Yes, Nicolai Andreevitch—that was his name,” and the young fellow looked earnestly and with curiosity at the all-knowing gentleman with the red nose.

This sort of character is met with pretty frequently in a certain class. They are people who know everyone—that is, they know where a man is employed, what his salary is, whom he knows, whom he married, what money his wife had, who are his cousins, and second cousins, etc., etc. These men generally have about a hundred pounds a year to live on, and they spend their whole time and talents in the amassing of this style of knowledge, which they reduce—or raise—to the standard of a science.

During the latter part of the conversation the black-haired young man had become very impatient. He stared out of the window, and fidgeted, and evidently longed for the end of the journey. He was very absent; he would appear to listen and heard nothing; and he would laugh of a sudden, evidently with no idea of what he was laughing about.

“Excuse me,” said the red-nosed man to the young fellow with the bundle, rather suddenly; “whom have I the honour to be talking to?”

“Prince Lef Nicolaievitch Muishkin,” replied the latter, with perfect readiness.

“Prince Muishkin? Lef Nicolaievitch? H’m! I don’t know, I’m sure! I may say I have never heard of such a person,” said the clerk, thoughtfully. “At least, the name, I admit, is historical. Karamsin must mention the family name, of course, in his history—-but as an individual—one never hears of any Prince Muishkin nowadays.”

“Of course not,” replied the prince; “there are none, except myself. I believe I am the last and only one. As to my forefathers, they have always been a poor lot; my own father was a sublieutenant in the army. I don’t know how Mrs. Epanchin comes into the Muishkin family, but she is descended from the Princess Muishkin, and she, too, is the last of her line.”

“And did you learn science and all that, with your professor over there?” asked the black-haired passenger.

“Oh yes—I did learn a little, but—”

“I’ve never learned anything whatever,” said the other.

“Oh, but I learned very little, you know!” added the prince, as though excusing himself. “They could not teach me very much on account of my illness. “

“Do you know the Rogojins?” asked his questioner, abruptly.

“No, I don’t—not at all! I hardly know anyone in Russia. Why, is that your name?”

“Yes, I am Rogojin, Parfen Rogojin.”

“Parfen Rogojin? dear me—then don’t you belong to those very Rogojins, perhaps—” began the clerk, with a very perceptible increase of civility in his tone.

“Yes—those very ones,” interrupted Rogojin, impatiently, and with scant courtesy. I may remark that he had not once taken any notice of the blotchy-faced passenger, and had hitherto addressed all his remarks direct to the prince.

“Dear me—is it possible?” observed the clerk, while his face assumed an expression of great deference and servility—if not of absolute alarm: “what, a son of that very Semen Rogojin— hereditary honourable citizen—who died a month or so ago and left two million and a half of roubles?”

“And how do YOU know that he left two million and a half of roubles?” asked Rogojin, disdainfully, and no deigning so much as to look at the other. “However, it’s true enough that my father died a month ago, and that here am I returning from Pskoff, a month after, with hardly a boot to my foot. They’ve treated me like a dog! I’ve been ill of fever at Pskoff the whole time, and not a line, nor farthing of money, have I received from my mother or my confounded brother!”

“And now you’ll have a million roubles, at least—goodness gracious me!” exclaimed the clerk, rubbing his hands.

“Five weeks since, I was just like yourself,” continued Rogojin, addressing the prince, “with nothing but a bundle and the clothes I wore. I ran away from my father and came to Pskoff to my aunt’s house, where I caved in at once with fever, and he went and died while I was away. All honour to my respected father’s memory—but he uncommonly

nearly killed me, all the same. Give you my word, prince, if I hadn't cut and run then, when I did, he'd have murdered me like a dog."

"I suppose you angered him somehow?" asked the prince, looking at the millionaire with considerable curiosity. But though there may have been something remarkable in the fact that this man was heir to millions of roubles there was something about him which surprised and interested the prince more than that. Rogojin, too, seemed to have taken up the conversation with unusual alacrity it appeared that he was still in a considerable state of excitement, if not absolutely feverish, and was in real need of someone to talk to for the mere sake of talking, as safety-valve to his agitation.

As for his red-nosed neighbour, the latter—since the information as to the identity of Rogojin—hung over him, seemed to be living on the honey of his words and in the breath of his nostrils, catching at every syllable as though it were a pearl of great price.

"Oh, yes; I angered him—I certainly did anger him," replied Rogojin. "But what puts me out so is my brother. Of course my mother couldn't do anything—she's too old—and whatever brother Senka says is law for her! But why couldn't he let me know? He sent a telegram, they say. What's the good of a telegram? It frightened my aunt so that she sent it back to the office unopened, and there it's been ever since! It's only thanks to Konief that I heard at all; he wrote me all about it. He says my brother cut off the gold tassels from my father's coffin, at night because they're worth a lot of money!' says he. Why, I can get him sent off to Siberia for that alone, if I like; it's sacrilege. Here, you—scarecrow!" he added, addressing the clerk at his side, "is it sacrilege or not, by law?"

"Sacrilege, certainly—certainly sacrilege," said the latter.

"And it's Siberia for sacrilege, isn't it?"

"Undoubtedly so; Siberia, of course!"

"They will think that I'm still ill," continued Rogojin to the prince, "but I sloped off quietly, seedy as I was, took the train and came away. Aha, brother Senka, you'll have to open your gates and let me in, my boy! I know he told tales about me to my father—I know that well enough but I certainly did rile my father about Nastasia Philipovna that's very sure, and that was my own doing."

"Nastasia Philipovna?" said the clerk, as though trying to think out something.

"Come, you know nothing about HER," said Rogojin, impatiently.

"And supposing I do know something?" observed the other, triumphantly.

"Bosh! there are plenty of Nastasia Philipovnas. And what an impertinent beast you are!" he added angrily. "I thought some creature like you would hang on to me as soon as I got hold of my money. "

"Oh, but I do know, as it happens," said the clerk in an aggravating manner. "Lebedeff knows all about her. You are pleased to reproach me, your excellency, but what if I prove that I am right after all? Nastasia Phillipovna's family name is Barashkoff—I know, you see—and she is a very well known lady, indeed, and comes of a good family, too. She is connected with one Totski, Afanasy Ivanovitch, a man of considerable

property, a director of companies, and so on, and a great friend of General Epanchin, who is interested in the same matters as he is.”

“My eyes!” said Rogojin, really surprised at last. “The devil take the fellow, how does he know that?”

“Why, he knows everything—Lebedeff knows everything! I was a month or two with Lihachof after his father died, your excellency, and while he was knocking about—he’s in the debtor’s prison now—I was with him, and he couldn’t do a thing without Lebedeff; and I got to know Nastasia Philipovna and several people at that time.”

“Nastasia Philipovna? Why, you don’t mean to say that she and Lihachof—” cried Rogojin, turning quite pale.

“No, no, no, no, no! Nothing of the sort, I assure you!” said Lebedeff, hastily. “Oh dear no, not for the world! Totski’s the only man with any chance there. Oh, no! He takes her to his box at the opera at the French theatre of an evening, and the officers and people all look at her and say, ‘By Jove, there’s the famous Nastasia Philipovna!’ but no one ever gets any further than that, for there is nothing more to say.”

“Yes, it’s quite true,” said Rogojin, frowning gloomily; “so Zaleshoff told me. I was walking about the Nefsky one fine day, prince, in my father’s old coat, when she suddenly came out of a shop and stepped into her carriage. I swear I was all of a blaze at once. Then I met Zaleshoff—looking like a hair-dresser’s assistant, got up as fine as I don’t know who, while I looked like a tinker. ‘Don’t flatter yourself, my boy,’ said he; ‘she’s not for such as you; she’s a princess, she is, and her name is Nastasia Philipovna Barashkoff, and she lives with Totski, who wishes to get rid of her because he’s growing rather old—fifty- five or so—and wants to marry a certain beauty, the loveliest woman in all Petersburg.’ And then he told me that I could see Nastasia Philipovna at the opera-house that evening, if I liked, and described which was her box. Well, I’d like to see my father allowing any of us to go to the theatre; he’d sooner have killed us, any day. However, I went for an hour or so and saw Nastasia Philipovna, and I never slept a wink all night after. Next morning my father happened to give me two government loan bonds to sell, worth nearly five thousand roubles each. ‘Sell them,’ said he, ‘and then take seven thousand five hundred roubles to the office, give them to the cashier, and bring me back the rest of the ten thousand, without looking in anywhere on the way; look sharp, I shall be waiting for you.’ Well, I sold the bonds, but I didn’t take the seven thousand roubles to the office; I went straight to the English shop and chose a pair of earrings, with a diamond the size of a nut in each. They cost four hundred roubles more than I had, so I gave my name, and they trusted me. With the earrings I went at once to Zaleshoff’s. ‘Come on!’ I said, ‘come on to Nastasia Philipovna’s,’ and off we went without more ado. I tell you I hadn’t a notion of what was about me or before me or below my feet all the way; I saw nothing whatever. We went straight into her drawing-room, and then she came out to us.

“I didn’t say right out who I was, but Zaleshoff said: ‘From Parfen Rogojin, in memory of his first meeting with you yesterday; be so kind as to accept these!’

“She opened the parcel, looked at the earrings, and laughed.

“‘Thank your friend Mr. Rogojin for his kind attention,’ says she, and bowed and went off. Why didn’t I die there on the spot? The worst of it all was, though, that the beast Zaleshoff got all the credit of it! I was short and abominably dressed, and stood and stared in her face and never said a word, because I was shy, like an ass! And there was he all in the fashion, pomaded and dressed out, with a smart tie on, bowing and scraping; and I bet anything she took him for me all the while!

“‘Look here now,’ I said, when we came out, ‘none of your interference here after this—do you understand?’ He laughed: ‘And how are you going to settle up with your father?’ says he. I thought I might as well jump into the Neva at once without going home first; but it struck me that I wouldn’t, after all, and I went home feeling like one of the damned.”

“My goodness!” shivered the clerk. “And his father,” he added, for the prince’s instruction, “and his father would have given a man a ticket to the other world for ten roubles any day—not to speak of ten thousand!”

The prince observed Rogojin with great curiosity; he seemed paler than ever at this moment.

“What do you know about it?” cried the latter. “Well, my father learned the whole story at once, and Zaleshoff blabbed it all over the town besides. So he took me upstairs and locked me up, and swore at me for an hour. ‘This is only a foretaste,’ says he; ‘wait a bit till night comes, and I’ll come back and talk to you again.’

“Well, what do you think? The old fellow went straight off to Nastasia Philipovna, touched the floor with his forehead, and began blubbering and beseeching her on his knees to give him back the diamonds. So after awhile she brought the box and flew out at him. ‘There,’ she says, ‘take your earrings, you wretched old miser; although they are ten times dearer than their value to me now that I know what it must have cost Parfen to get them! Give Parfen my compliments,’ she says, ‘and thank him very much!’ Well, I meanwhile had borrowed twenty-five roubles from a friend, and off I went to Pskoff to my aunt’s. The old woman there lectured me so that I left the house and went on a drinking tour round the public-houses of the place. I was in a high fever when I got to Pskoff, and by nightfall I was lying delirious in the streets somewhere or other!”

“Oho! we’ll make Nastasia Philipovna sing another song now!” giggled Lebedeff, rubbing his hands with glee. “Hey, my boy, we’ll get her some proper earrings now! We’ll get her such earrings that—”

“Look here,” cried Rogojin, seizing him fiercely by the arm, “look here, if you so much as name Nastasia Philipovna again, I’ll tan your hide as sure as you sit there!”

“Aha! do—by all means! if you tan my hide you won’t turn me away from your society. You’ll bind me to you, with your lash, for ever. Ha, ha! here we are at the station, though.”

Sure enough, the train was just steaming in as he spoke.

Though Rogojin had declared that he left Pskoff secretly, a large collection of friends had assembled to greet him, and did so with profuse waving of hats and shouting.

“Why, there’s Zaleshoff here, too!” he muttered, gazing at the scene with a sort of triumphant but unpleasant smile. Then he suddenly turned to the prince: “Prince, I don’t know why I have taken a fancy to you; perhaps because I met you just when I did. But no, it can’t be that, for I met this fellow ” (nodding at Lebedeff) “too, and I have not taken a fancy to him by any means. Come to see me, prince; we’ll take off those gaiters of yours and dress you up in a smart fur coat, the best we can buy. You shall have a dress coat, best quality, white waistcoat, anything you like, and your pocket shall be full of money. Come, and you shall go with me to Nastasia Philipovna’s. Now then will you come or no?”

“Accept, accept, Prince Lef Nicolaievitch” said Lebedeff solemnly; “don’t let it slip! Accept, quick!”

Prince Muishkin rose and stretched out his hand courteously, while he replied with some cordiality:

“I will come with the greatest pleasure, and thank you very much for taking a fancy to me. I dare say I may even come today if I have time, for I tell you frankly that I like you very much too. I liked you especially when you told us about the diamond earrings; but I liked you before that as well, though you have such a dark-clouded sort of face. Thanks very much for the offer of clothes and a fur coat; I certainly shall require both clothes and coat very soon. As for money, I have hardly a copeck about me at this moment.”

“You shall have lots of money; by the evening I shall have plenty; so come along!”

“That’s true enough, he’ll have lots before evening!” put in Lebedeff.

“But, look here, are you a great hand with the ladies? Let’s know that first?” asked Rogojin.

“Oh no, oh no! said the prince; “I couldn’t, you know—my illness—I hardly ever saw a soul.”

“H’m! well—here, you fellow—you can come along with me now if you like!” cried Rogojin to Lebedeff, and so they all left the carriage.

Lebedeff had his desire. He went off with the noisy group of Rogojin’s friends towards the Voznesensky, while the prince’s route lay towards the Litaynaya. It was damp and wet. The prince asked his way of passers-by, and finding that he was a couple of miles or so from his destination, he determined to take a droshky.

II.

General Epanchin lived in his own house near the Litaynaya. Besides this large residence—five-sixths of which was let in flats and lodgings—the general was owner of another enormous house in the Sadovaya bringing in even more rent than the first. Besides these houses he had a delightful little estate just out of town, and some sort of factory in another part of the city. General Epanchin, as everyone knew, had a good deal to do with certain government monopolies; he was also a voice, and an important

one, in many rich public companies of various descriptions; in fact, he enjoyed the reputation of being a well- to-do man of busy habits, many ties, and affluent means. He had made himself indispensable in several quarters, amongst others in his department of the government; and yet it was a known fact that Fedor Ivanovitch Epanchin was a man of no education whatever, and had absolutely risen from the ranks.

This last fact could, of course, reflect nothing but credit upon the general; and yet, though unquestionably a sagacious man, he had his own little weaknesses—very excusable ones,—one of which was a dislike to any allusion to the above circumstance. He was undoubtedly clever. For instance, he made a point of never asserting himself when he would gain more by keeping in the background; and in consequence many exalted personages valued him principally for his humility and simplicity, and because “he knew his place.” And yet if these good people could only have had a peep into the mind of this excellent fellow who “knew his place” so well! The fact is that, in spite of his knowledge of the world and his really remarkable abilities, he always liked to appear to be carrying out other people’s ideas rather than his own. And also, his luck seldom failed him, even at cards, for which he had a passion that he did not attempt to conceal. He played for high stakes, and moved, altogether, in very varied society.

As to age, General Epanchin was in the very prime of life; that is, about fifty-five years of age,—the flowering time of existence, when real enjoyment of life begins. His healthy appearance, good colour, sound, though discoloured teeth, sturdy figure, preoccupied air during business hours, and jolly good humour during his game at cards in the evening, all bore witness to his success in life, and combined to make existence a bed of roses to his excellency. The general was lord of a flourishing family, consisting of his wife and three grown-up daughters. He had married young, while still a lieutenant, his wife being a girl of about his own age, who possessed neither beauty nor education, and who brought him no more than fifty souls of landed property, which little estate served, however, as a nest-egg for far more important accumulations. The general never regretted his early marriage, or regarded it as a foolish youthful escapade; and he so respected and feared his wife that he was very near loving her. Mrs. Epanchin came of the princely stock of Muishkin, which if not a brilliant, was, at all events, a decidedly ancient family; and she was extremely proud of her descent.

With a few exceptions, the worthy couple had lived through their long union very happily. While still young the wife had been able to make important friends among the aristocracy, partly by virtue of her family descent, and partly by her own exertions; while, in after life, thanks to their wealth and to the position of her husband in the service, she took her place among the higher circles as by right.

During these last few years all three of the general’s daughters—Alexandra, Adelaida, and Aglaya—had grown up and matured. Of course they were only Epanchins, but their mother’s family was noble; they might expect considerable fortunes; their father had hopes of attaining to very high rank indeed in his country’s service—all of which was satisfactory. All three of the girls were decidedly pretty, even the eldest, Alexandra, who was just twenty-five years old. The middle daughter was now twenty-three, while

the youngest, Aglaya, was twenty. This youngest girl was absolutely a beauty, and had begun of late to attract considerable attention in society. But this was not all, for every one of the three was clever, well educated, and accomplished.

It was a matter of general knowledge that the three girls were very fond of one another, and supported each other in every way; it was even said that the two elder ones had made certain sacrifices for the sake of the idol of the household, Aglaya. In society they not only disliked asserting themselves, but were actually retiring. Certainly no one could blame them for being too arrogant or haughty, and yet everybody was well aware that they were proud and quite understood their own value. The eldest was musical, while the second was a clever artist, which fact she had concealed until lately. In a word, the world spoke well of the girls; but they were not without their enemies, and occasionally people talked with horror of the number of books they had read.

They were in no hurry to marry. They liked good society, but were not too keen about it. All this was the more remarkable, because everyone was well aware of the hopes and aims of their parents.

It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon when the prince rang the bell at General Epanchin's door. The general lived on the first floor or flat of the house, as modest a lodging as his position permitted. A liveried servant opened the door, and the prince was obliged to enter into long explanations with this gentleman, who, from the first glance, looked at him and his bundle with grave suspicion. At last, however, on the repeated positive assurance that he really was Prince Muishkin, and must absolutely see the general on business, the bewildered domestic showed him into a little ante-chamber leading to a waiting-room that adjoined the general's study, there handing him over to another servant, whose duty it was to be in this ante-chamber all the morning, and announce visitors to the general. This second individual wore a dress coat, and was some forty years of age; he was the general's special study servant, and well aware of his own importance.

"Wait in the next room, please; and leave your bundle here," said the door-keeper, as he sat down comfortably in his own easy-chair in the ante-chamber. He looked at the prince in severe surprise as the latter settled himself in another chair alongside, with his bundle on his knees.

"If you don't mind, I would rather sit here with you," said the prince; "I should prefer it to sitting in there."

"Oh, but you can't stay here. You are a visitor—a guest, so to speak. Is it the general himself you wish to see?"

The man evidently could not take in the idea of such a shabby-looking visitor, and had decided to ask once more.

"Yes—I have business—" began the prince.

"I do not ask you what your business may be, all I have to do is to announce you; and unless the secretary comes in here I cannot do that."

The man's suspicions seemed to increase more and more. The prince was too unlike the usual run of daily visitors; and although the general certainly did receive, on

business, all sorts and conditions of men, yet in spite of this fact the servant felt great doubts on the subject of this particular visitor. The presence of the secretary as an intermediary was, he judged, essential in this case.

“Surely you—are from abroad?” he inquired at last, in a confused sort of way. He had begun his sentence intending to say, “Surely you are not Prince Muishkin, are you?”

“Yes, straight from the train! Did not you intend to say, ‘Surely you are not Prince Muishkin?’ just now, but refrained out of politeness ?”

“H’m!” grunted the astonished servant.

“I assure you I am not deceiving you; you shall not have to answer for me. As to my being dressed like this, and carrying a bundle, there’s nothing surprising in that—the fact is, my circumstances are not particularly rosy at this moment.”

“H’m!—no, I’m not afraid of that, you see; I have to announce you, that’s all. The secretary will be out directly—that is, unless you—yes, that’s the rub—unless you—come, you must allow me to ask you—you’ve not come to beg, have you?”

“Oh dear no, you can be perfectly easy on that score. I have quite another matter on hand.”

“You must excuse my asking, you know. Your appearance led me to think—but just wait for the secretary; the general is busy now, but the secretary is sure to come out.”

“Oh—well, look here, if I have some time to wait, would you mind telling me, is there any place about where I could have a smoke? I have my pipe and tobacco with me.”

“SMOKE?” said the man, in shocked but disdainful surprise, blinking his eyes at the prince as though he could not believe his senses.” No, sir, you cannot smoke here, and I wonder you are not ashamed of the very suggestion. Ha, ha! a cool idea that, I declare!”

“Oh, I didn’t mean in this room! I know I can’t smoke here, of course. I’d adjourn to some other room, wherever you like to show me to. You see, I’m used to smoking a good deal, and now I haven’t had a puff for three hours; however, just as you like.”

“Now how on earth am I to announce a man like that?” muttered the servant. “In the first place, you’ve no right in here at all; you ought to be in the waiting-room, because you’re a sort of visitor—a guest, in fact—and I shall catch it for this. Look here, do you intend to take up you abode with us?” he added, glancing once more at the prince’s bundle, which evidently gave him no peace.

“No, I don’t think so. I don’t think I should stay even if they were to invite me. I’ve simply come to make their acquaintance, and nothing more.”

“Make their acquaintance?” asked the man, in amazement, and with redoubled suspicion. “Then why did you say you had business with the general?”

“Oh well, very little business. There is one little matter—some advice I am going to ask him for; but my principal object is simply to introduce myself, because I am Prince Muishkin, and Madame Epanchin is the last of her branch of the house, and besides herself and me there are no other Muishkins left.”

“What—you’re a relation then, are you?” asked the servant, so bewildered that he began to feel quite alarmed.

“Well, hardly so. If you stretch a point, we are relations, of course, but so distant that one cannot really take cognizance of it. I once wrote to your mistress from abroad, but she did not reply. However, I have thought it right to make acquaintance with her on my arrival. I am telling you all this in order to ease your mind, for I see you are still far from comfortable on my account. All you have to do is to announce me as Prince Muishkin, and the object of my visit will be plain enough. If I am received—very good; if not, well, very good again. But they are sure to receive me, I should think; Madame Epanchin will naturally be curious to see the only remaining representative of her family. She values her Muishkin descent very highly, if I am rightly informed.”

The prince’s conversation was artless and confiding to a degree, and the servant could not help feeling that as from visitor to common serving-man this state of things was highly improper. His conclusion was that one of two things must be the explanation— either that this was a begging impostor, or that the prince, if prince he were, was simply a fool, without the slightest ambition; for a sensible prince with any ambition would certainly not wait about in ante-rooms with servants, and talk of his own private affairs like this. In either case, how was he to announce this singular visitor?

“I really think I must request you to step into the next room!” he said, with all the insistence he could muster.

“Why? If I had been sitting there now, I should not have had the opportunity of making these personal explanations. I see you are still uneasy about me and keep eyeing my cloak and bundle. Don’t you think you might go in yourself now, without waiting for the secretary to come out?”

“No, no! I can’t announce a visitor like yourself without the secretary. Besides the general said he was not to be disturbed— he is with the Colonel C—. Gavrila Ardalionovitch goes in without announcing.”

“Who may that be? a clerk?”

“What? Gavrila Ardalionovitch? Oh no; he belongs to one of the companies. Look here, at all events put your bundle down, here.”

“Yes, I will if I may; and—can I take off my cloak?”

“Of course; you can’t go in *THERE* with it on, anyhow.”

The prince rose and took off his mantle, revealing a neat enough morning costume—a little worn, but well made. He wore a steel watch chain and from this chain there hung a silver Geneva watch. Fool the prince might be, still, the general’s servant felt that it was not correct for him to continue to converse thus with a visitor, in spite of the fact that the prince pleased him somehow.

“And what time of day does the lady receive?” the latter asked, reseating himself in his old place.

“Oh, that’s not in my province! I believe she receives at any time; it depends upon the visitors. The dressmaker goes in at eleven. Gavril Ardalionovitch is allowed much earlier than other people, too; he is even admitted to early lunch now and then.”

“It is much warmer in the rooms here than it is abroad at this season,” observed the prince; “but it is much warmer there out of doors. As for the houses—a Russian can’t live in them in the winter until he gets accustomed to them.”

“Don’t they heat them at all?”

“Well, they do heat them a little; but the houses and stoves are so different to ours.”

“H’m! were you long away?”

“Four years! and I was in the same place nearly all the time,—in one village.”

“You must have forgotten Russia, hadn’t you?”

“Yes, indeed I had—a good deal; and, would you believe it, I often wonder at myself for not having forgotten how to speak Russian? Even now, as I talk to you, I keep saying to myself ‘how well I am speaking it.’ Perhaps that is partly why I am so talkative this morning. I assure you, ever since yesterday evening I have had the strongest desire to go on and on talking Russian.”

“H’m! yes; did you live in Petersburg in former years?”

This good flunkey, in spite of his conscientious scruples, really could not resist continuing such a very genteel and agreeable conversation.

“In Petersburg? Oh no! hardly at all, and now they say so much is changed in the place that even those who did know it well are obliged to relearn what they knew. They talk a good deal about the new law courts, and changes there, don’t they?”

“H’m! yes, that’s true enough. Well now, how is the law over there, do they administer it more justly than here?”

“Oh, I don’t know about that! I’ve heard much that is good about our legal administration, too. There is no capital punishment here for one thing.”

“Is there over there?”

“Yes—I saw an execution in France—at Lyons. Schneider took me over with him to see it.”

“What, did they hang the fellow?”

“No, they cut off people’s heads in France.”

“What did the fellow do?—yell?”

“Oh no—it’s the work of an instant. They put a man inside a frame and a sort of broad knife falls by machinery—they call the thing a guillotine—it falls with fearful force and weight—the head springs off so quickly that you can’t wink your eye in between. But all the preparations are so dreadful. When they announce the sentence, you know, and prepare the criminal and tie his hands, and cart him off to the scaffold—that’s the fearful part of the business. The people all crowd round—even women—though they don’t at all approve of women looking on.”

“No, it’s not a thing for women.”

“Of course not—of course not!—bah! The criminal was a fine intelligent fearless man; Le Gros was his name; and I may tell you—believe it or not, as you like—that

when that man stepped upon the scaffold he CRIED, he did indeed,—he was as white as a bit of paper. Isn't it a dreadful idea that he should have cried —cried! Whoever heard of a grown man crying from fear—not a child, but a man who never had cried before—a grown man of forty-five years. Imagine what must have been going on in that man's mind at such a moment; what dreadful convulsions his whole spirit must have endured; it is an outrage on the soul that's what it is. Because it is said 'thou shalt not kill,' is he to be killed because he murdered some one else? No, it is not right, it's an impossible theory. I assure you, I saw the sight a month ago and it's dancing before my eyes to this moment. I dream of it, often."

The prince had grown animated as he spoke, and a tinge of colour suffused his pale face, though his way of talking was as quiet as ever. The servant followed his words with sympathetic interest. Clearly he was not at all anxious to bring the conversation to an end. Who knows? Perhaps he too was a man of imagination and with some capacity for thought.

"Well, at all events it is a good thing that there's no pain when the poor fellow's head flies off," he remarked.

"Do you know, though," cried the prince warmly, "you made that remark now, and everyone says the same thing, and the machine is designed with the purpose of avoiding pain, this guillotine I mean; but a thought came into my head then: what if it be a bad plan after all? You may laugh at my idea, perhaps—but I could not help its occurring to me all the same. Now with the rack and tortures and so on—you suffer terrible pain of course; but then your torture is bodily pain only (although no doubt you have plenty of that) until you die. But HERE I should imagine the most terrible part of the whole punishment is, not the bodily pain at all—but the certain knowledge that in an hour,—then in ten minutes, then in half a minute, then now—this very INSTANT—your soul must quit your body and that you will no longer be a man— and that this is certain, CERTAIN! That's the point—the certainty of it. Just that instant when you place your head on the block and hear the iron grate over your head—then—that quarter of a second is the most awful of all.

"This is not my own fantastical opinion—many people have thought the same; but I feel it so deeply that I'll tell you what I think. I believe that to execute a man for murder is to punish him immeasurably more dreadfully than is equivalent to his crime. A murder by sentence is far more dreadful than a murder committed by a criminal. The man who is attacked by robbers at night, in a dark wood, or anywhere, undoubtedly hopes and hopes that he may yet escape until the very moment of his death. There are plenty of instances of a man running away, or imploring for mercy—at all events hoping on in some degree—even after his throat was cut. But in the case of an execution, that last hope—having which it is so immeasurably less dreadful to die,—is taken away from the wretch and CERTAINTY substituted in its place! There is his sentence, and with it that terrible certainty that he cannot possibly escape death—which, I consider, must be the most dreadful anguish in the world. You may place a soldier before a cannon's mouth in battle, and fire upon him—and he will still hope. But read to that

same soldier his death-sentence, and he will either go mad or burst into tears. Who dares to say that any man can suffer this without going mad? No, no! it is an abuse, a shame, it is unnecessary—why should such a thing exist? Doubtless there may be men who have been sentenced, who have suffered this mental anguish for a while and then have been reprieved; perhaps such men may have been able to relate their feelings afterwards. Our Lord Christ spoke of this anguish and dread. No! no! no! No man should be treated so, no man, no man!”

The servant, though of course he could not have expressed all this as the prince did, still clearly entered into it and was greatly conciliated, as was evident from the increased amiability of his expression. “If you are really very anxious for a smoke,” he remarked, “I think it might possibly be managed, if you are very quick about it. You see they might come out and inquire for you, and you wouldn’t be on the spot. You see that door there? Go in there and you’ll find a little room on the right; you can smoke there, only open the window, because I ought not to allow it really, and—” But there was no time, after all.

A young fellow entered the ante-room at this moment, with a bundle of papers in his hand. The footman hastened to help him take off his overcoat. The new arrival glanced at the prince out of the corners of his eyes.

“This gentleman declares, Gavril Ardalionovitch,” began the man, confidentially and almost familiarly, “that he is Prince Muishkin and a relative of Madame Epanchin’s. He has just arrived from abroad, with nothing but a bundle by way of luggage—.”

The prince did not hear the rest, because at this point the servant continued his communication in a whisper.

Gavril Ardalionovitch listened attentively, and gazed at the prince with great curiosity. At last he motioned the man aside and stepped hurriedly towards the prince.

“Are you Prince Muishkin?” he asked, with the greatest courtesy and amiability.

He was a remarkably handsome young fellow of some twenty-eight summers, fair and of middle height; he wore a small beard, and his face was most intelligent. Yet his smile, in spite of its sweetness, was a little thin, if I may so call it, and showed his teeth too evenly; his gaze though decidedly good-humoured and ingenuous, was a trifle too inquisitive and intent to be altogether agreeable.

“Probably when he is alone he looks quite different, and hardly smiles at all!” thought the prince.

He explained about himself in a few words, very much the same as he had told the footman and Rogojin beforehand.

Gavril Ardalionovitch meanwhile seemed to be trying to recall something.

“Was it not you, then, who sent a letter a year or less ago—from Switzerland, I think it was—to Elizabetha Prokofievna (Mrs. Epanchin)?”

“It was.”

“Oh, then, of course they will remember who you are. You wish to see the general? I’ll tell him at once—he will be free in a minute; but you—you had better wait in the ante-chamber,—hadn’t you? Why is he here?” he added, severely, to the man.

"I tell you, sir, he wished it himself!"

At this moment the study door opened, and a military man, with a portfolio under his arm, came out talking loudly, and after bidding good-bye to someone inside, took his departure.

"You there, Gania? cried a voice from the study, "come in here, will you?"

Gavrila Ardalionovitch nodded to the prince and entered the room hastily.

A couple of minutes later the door opened again and the affable voice of Gania cried:

"Come in please, prince!"

III.

General Ivan Fedorovitch Epanchin was standing in the middle of the room, and gazed with great curiosity at the prince as he entered. He even advanced a couple of steps to meet him.

The prince came forward and introduced himself.

"Quite so," replied the general, "and what can I do for you?"

"Oh, I have no special business; my principal object was to make your acquaintance. I should not like to disturb you. I do not know your times and arrangements here, you see, but I have only just arrived. I came straight from the station. I am come direct from Switzerland."

The general very nearly smiled, but thought better of it and kept his smile back. Then he reflected, blinked his eyes, stared at his guest once more from head to foot; then abruptly motioned him to a chair, sat down himself, and waited with some impatience for the prince to speak.

Gania stood at his table in the far corner of the room, turning over papers.

"I have not much time for making acquaintances, as a rule," said the general, "but as, of course, you have your object in coming, I—"

"I felt sure you would think I had some object in view when I resolved to pay you this visit," the prince interrupted; "but I give you my word, beyond the pleasure of making your acquaintance I had no personal object whatever."

"The pleasure is, of course, mutual; but life is not all pleasure, as you are aware. There is such a thing as business, and I really do not see what possible reason there can be, or what we have in common to—"

"Oh, there is no reason, of course, and I suppose there is nothing in common between us, or very little; for if I am Prince Muishkin, and your wife happens to be a member of my house, that can hardly be called a 'reason.' I quite understand that. And yet that was my whole motive for coming. You see I have not been in Russia for four years, and knew very little about anything when I left. I had been very ill for a long time, and I feel now the need of a few good friends. In fact, I have a certain question upon which I much need advice, and do not know whom to go to for it. I thought of your family

when I was passing through Berlin. 'They are almost relations,' I said to myself, 'so I'll begin with them; perhaps we may get on with each other, I with them and they with me, if they are kind people;' and I have heard that you are very kind people!"

"Oh, thank you, thank you, I'm sure," replied the general, considerably taken aback. "May I ask where you have taken up your quarters?"

"Nowhere, as yet."

"What, straight from the station to my house? And how about your luggage?"

"I only had a small bundle, containing linen, with me, nothing more. I can carry it in my hand, easily. There will be plenty of time to take a room in some hotel by the evening."

"Oh, then you DO intend to take a room?"

"Of course."

"To judge from your words, you came straight to my house with the intention of staying there."

"That could only have been on your invitation. I confess, however, that I should not have stayed here even if you had invited me, not for any particular reason, but because it is— well, contrary to my practice and nature, somehow."

"Oh, indeed! Then it is perhaps as well that I neither DID invite you, nor DO invite you now. Excuse me, prince, but we had better make this matter clear, once for all. We have just agreed that with regard to our relationship there is not much to be said, though, of course, it would have been very delightful to us to feel that such relationship did actually exist; therefore, perhaps—"

"Therefore, perhaps I had better get up and go away?" said the prince, laughing merrily as he rose from his place; just as merrily as though the circumstances were by no means strained or difficult. "And I give you my word, general, that though I know nothing whatever of manners and customs of society, and how people live and all that, yet I felt quite sure that this visit of mine would end exactly as it has ended now. Oh, well, I suppose it's all right; especially as my letter was not answered. Well, good-bye, and forgive me for having disturbed you!"

The prince's expression was so good-natured at this moment, and so entirely free from even a suspicion of unpleasant feeling was the smile with which he looked at the general as he spoke, that the latter suddenly paused, and appeared to gaze at his guest from quite a new point of view, all in an instant.

"Do you know, prince," he said, in quite a different tone, "I do not know you at all, yet, and after all, Elizabetha Prokofievna would very likely be pleased to have a peep at a man of her own name. Wait a little, if you don't mind, and if you have time to spare?"

"Oh, I assure you I've lots of time, my time is entirely my own!" And the prince immediately replaced his soft, round hat on the table. "I confess, I thought Elizabetha Prokofievna would very likely remember that I had written her a letter. Just now your servant—outside there—was dreadfully suspicious that I had come to beg of you. I noticed that! Probably he has very strict instructions on that score; but I assure you I

did not come to beg. I came to make some friends. But I am rather bothered at having disturbed you; that's all I care about.—”

“Look here, prince,” said the general, with a cordial smile, “if you really are the sort of man you appear to be, it may be a source of great pleasure to us to make your better acquaintance; but, you see, I am a very busy man, and have to be perpetually sitting here and signing papers, or off to see his excellency, or to my department, or somewhere; so that though I should be glad to see more of people, nice people—you see, I—however, I am sure you are so well brought up that you will see at once, and—but how old are you, prince?”

“Twenty-six.”

“No? I thought you very much younger.”

“Yes, they say I have a ‘young’ face. As to disturbing you I shall soon learn to avoid doing that, for I hate disturbing people. Besides, you and I are so differently constituted, I should think, that there must be very little in common between us. Not that I will ever believe there is NOTHING in common between any two people, as some declare is the case. I am sure people make a great mistake in sorting each other into groups, by appearances; but I am boring you, I see, you—”

“Just two words: have you any means at all? Or perhaps you may be intending to undertake some sort of employment? Excuse my questioning you, but—”

“Oh, my dear sir, I esteem and understand your kindness in putting the question. No; at present I have no means whatever, and no employment either, but I hope to find some. I was living on other people abroad. Schneider, the professor who treated me and taught me, too, in Switzerland, gave me just enough money for my journey, so that now I have but a few copecks left. There certainly is one question upon which I am anxious to have advice, but—”

“Tell me, how do you intend to live now, and what are your plans?” interrupted the general.

“I wish to work, somehow or other.”

“Oh yes, but then, you see, you are a philosopher. Have you any talents, or ability in any direction—that is, any that would bring in money and bread? Excuse me again—”

“Oh, don't apologize. No, I don't think I have either talents or special abilities of any kind; on the contrary. I have always been an invalid and unable to learn much. As for bread, I should think—”

The general interrupted once more with questions; while the prince again replied with the narrative we have heard before. It appeared that the general had known Pavlicheff; but why the latter had taken an interest in the prince, that young gentleman could not explain; probably by virtue of the old friendship with his father, he thought.

The prince had been left an orphan when quite a little child, and Pavlicheff had entrusted him to an old lady, a relative of his own, living in the country, the child needing the fresh air and exercise of country life. He was educated, first by a governess, and afterwards by a tutor, but could not remember much about this time of his life. His fits were so frequent then, that they made almost an idiot of him (the prince used the

expression "idiot" himself). Pavlicheff had met Professor Schneider in Berlin, and the latter had persuaded him to send the boy to Switzerland, to Schneider's establishment there, for the cure of his epilepsy, and, five years before this time, the prince was sent off. But Pavlicheff had died two or three years since, and Schneider had himself supported the young fellow, from that day to this, at his own expense. Although he had not quite cured him, he had greatly improved his condition; and now, at last, at the prince's own desire, and because of a certain matter which came to the ears of the latter, Schneider had despatched the young man to Russia.

The general was much astonished.

"Then you have no one, absolutely NO one in Russia?" he asked.

"No one, at present; but I hope to make friends; and then I have a letter from—"

"At all events," put in the general, not listening to the news about the letter, "at all events, you must have learned SOMETHING, and your malady would not prevent your undertaking some easy work, in one of the departments, for instance?"

"Oh dear no, oh no! As for a situation, I should much like to find one for I am anxious to discover what I really am fit for. I have learned a good deal in the last four years, and, besides, I read a great many Russian books."

"Russian books, indeed? Then, of course, you can read and write quite correctly?"

"Oh dear, yes!"

"Capital! And your handwriting?"

"Ah, there I am REALLY talented! I may say I am a real calligraphist. Let me write you something, just to show you," said the prince, with some excitement.

"With pleasure! In fact, it is very necessary. I like your readiness, prince; in fact, I must say—I-I-like you very well, altogether," said the general.

"What delightful writing materials you have here, such a lot of pencils and things, and what beautiful paper! It's a charming room altogether. I know that picture, it's a Swiss view. I'm sure the artist painted it from nature, and that I have seen the very place—"

"Quite likely, though I bought it here. Gania, give the prince some paper. Here are pens and paper; now then, take this table. What's this?" the general continued to Gania, who had that moment taken a large photograph out of his portfolio, and shown it to his senior. "Halloa! Nastasia Philipovna! Did she send it you herself? Herself?" he inquired, with much curiosity and great animation.

"She gave it me just now, when I called in to congratulate her. I asked her for it long ago. I don't know whether she meant it for a hint that I had come empty-handed, without a present for her birthday, or what," added Gania, with an unpleasant smile.

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense," said the general, with decision. "What extraordinary ideas you have, Gania! As if she would hint; that's not her way at all. Besides, what could you give her, without having thousands at your disposal? You might have given her your portrait, however. Has she ever asked you for it?"

"No, not yet. Very likely she never will. I suppose you haven't forgotten about tonight, have you, Ivan Fedorovitch? You were one of those specially invited, you know."

"Oh no, I remember all right, and I shall go, of course. I should think so! She's twenty-five years old today! And, you know, Gania, you must be ready for great things; she has promised both myself and Afanasy Ivanovitch that she will give a decided answer tonight, yes or no. So be prepared!"

Gania suddenly became so ill at ease that his face grew paler than ever.

"Are you sure she said that?" he asked, and his voice seemed to quiver as he spoke.

"Yes, she promised. We both worried her so that she gave in; but she wished us to tell you nothing about it until the day. "

The general watched Gania's confusion intently, and clearly did not like it.

"Remember, Ivan Fedorovitch," said Gania, in great agitation, "that I was to be free too, until her decision; and that even then I was to have my 'yes or no' free."

"Why, don't you, aren't you—" began the general, in alarm.

"Oh, don't misunderstand—"

"But, my dear fellow, what are you doing, what do you mean?"

"Oh, I'm not rejecting her. I may have expressed myself badly, but I didn't mean that."

"Reject her! I should think not!" said the general with annoyance, and apparently not in the least anxious to conceal it. "Why, my dear fellow, it's not a question of your rejecting her, it is whether you are prepared to receive her consent joyfully, and with proper satisfaction. How are things going on at home?"

"At home? Oh, I can do as I like there, of course; only my father will make a fool of himself, as usual. He is rapidly becoming a general nuisance. I don't ever talk to him now, but I hold him in check, safe enough. I swear if it had not been for my mother, I should have shown him the way out, long ago. My mother is always crying, of course, and my sister sulks. I had to tell them at last that I intended to be master of my own destiny, and that I expect to be obeyed at home. At least, I gave my sister to understand as much, and my mother was present."

"Well, I must say, I cannot understand it!" said the general, shrugging his shoulders and dropping his hands. "You remember your mother, Nina Alexandrovna, that day she came and sat here and groaned—and when I asked her what was the matter, she says, 'Oh, it's such a DISHONOUR to us!' dishonour! Stuff and nonsense! I should like to know who can reproach Nastasia Philipovna, or who can say a word of any kind against her. Did she mean because Nastasia had been living with Totski? What nonsense it is! You would not let her come near your daughters, says Nina Alexandrovna. What next, I wonder? I don't see how she can fail to—to understand—"

"Her own position?" prompted Gania. "She does understand. Don't be annoyed with her. I have warned her not to meddle in other people's affairs. However, although there's comparative peace at home at present, the storm will break if anything is finally settled tonight."

The prince heard the whole of the foregoing conversation, as he sat at the table, writing. He finished at last, and brought the result of his labour to the general's desk.

"So this is Nastasia Philipovna," he said, looking attentively and curiously at the portrait. "How wonderfully beautiful!" he immediately added, with warmth. The picture was certainly that of an unusually lovely woman. She was photographed in a black silk dress of simple design, her hair was evidently dark and plainly arranged, her eyes were deep and thoughtful, the expression of her face passionate, but proud. She was rather thin, perhaps, and a little pale. Both Gania and the general gazed at the prince in amazement.

"How do you know it's Nastasia Philipovna?" asked the general; "you surely don't know her already, do you?"

"Yes, I do! I have only been one day in Russia, but I have heard of the great beauty!" And the prince proceeded to narrate his meeting with Rogojin in the train and the whole of the latter's story.

"There's news!" said the general in some excitement, after listening to the story with engrossed attention.

"Oh, of course it's nothing but humbug!" cried Gania, a little disturbed, however. "It's all humbug; the young merchant was pleased to indulge in a little innocent recreation! I have heard something of Rogojin!"

"Yes, so have I!" replied the general. "Nastasia Philipovna told us all about the earrings that very day. But now it is quite a different matter. You see the fellow really has a million of roubles, and he is passionately in love. The whole story smells of passion, and we all know what this class of gentry is capable of when infatuated. I am much afraid of some disagreeable scandal, I am indeed!"

"You are afraid of the million, I suppose," said Gania, grinning and showing his teeth.

"And you are NOT, I presume, eh?"

"How did he strike you, prince?" asked Gania, suddenly. "Did he seem to be a serious sort of a man, or just a common rowdy fellow? What was your own opinion about the matter?"

While Gania put this question, a new idea suddenly flashed into his brain, and blazed out, impatiently, in his eyes. The general, who was really agitated and disturbed, looked at the prince too, but did not seem to expect much from his reply.

"I really don't quite know how to tell you," replied the prince, "but it certainly did seem to me that the man was full of passion, and not, perhaps, quite healthy passion. He seemed to be still far from well. Very likely he will be in bed again in a day or two, especially if he lives fast."

"No! do you think so?" said the general, catching at the idea.

"Yes, I do think so!"

"Yes, but the sort of scandal I referred to may happen at any moment. It may be this very evening," remarked Gania to the general, with a smile.

“Of course; quite so. In that case it all depends upon what is going on in her brain at this moment.”

“You know the kind of person she is at times.”

“How? What kind of person is she?” cried the general, arrived at the limits of his patience. Look here, Gania, don’t you go annoying her tonight What you are to do is to be as agreeable towards her as ever you can. Well, what are you smiling at? You must understand, Gania, that I have no interest whatever in speaking like this. Whichever way the question is settled, it will be to my advantage. Nothing will move Totski from his resolution, so I run no risk. If there is anything I desire, you must know that it is your benefit only. Can’t you trust me? You are a sensible fellow, and I have been counting on you; for, in this matter, that, that—”

“Yes, that’s the chief thing,” said Gania, helping the general out of his difficulties again, and curling his lips in an envenomed smile, which he did not attempt to conceal. He gazed with his fevered eyes straight into those of the general, as though he were anxious that the latter might read his thoughts.

The general grew purple with anger.

“Yes, of course it is the chief thing!” he cried, looking sharply at Gania. “What a very curious man you are, Gania! You actually seem to be GLAD to hear of this millionaire fellow’s arrival- just as though you wished for an excuse to get out of the whole thing. This is an affair in which you ought to act honestly with both sides, and give due warning, to avoid compromising others. But, even now, there is still time. Do you understand me? I wish to know whether you desire this arrangement or whether you do not? If not, say so,—and-and welcome! No one is trying to force you into the snare, Gavril Ardalionovitch, if you see a snare in the matter, at least.”

“I do desire it,” murmured Gania, softly but firmly, lowering his eyes; and he relapsed into gloomy silence.

The general was satisfied. He had excited himself, and was evidently now regretting that he had gone so far. He turned to the prince, and suddenly the disagreeable thought of the latter’s presence struck him, and the certainty that he must have heard every word of the conversation. But he felt at ease in another moment; it only needed one glance at the prince to see that in that quarter there was nothing to fear.

“Oh!” cried the general, catching sight of the prince’s specimen of caligraphy, which the latter had now handed him for inspection. “Why, this is simply beautiful; look at that, Gania, there’s real talent there!”

On a sheet of thick writing-paper the prince had written in medieval characters the legend:

“The gentle Abbot Pafnute signed this.”

“There,” explained the prince, with great delight and animation, “there, that’s the abbot’s real signature—from a manuscript of the fourteenth century. All these old abbots and bishops used to write most beautifully, with such taste and so much care and diligence. Have you no copy of Pogodin, general? If you had one I could show you another type. Stop a bit—here you have the large round writing common in France

during the eighteenth century. Some of the letters are shaped quite differently from those now in use. It was the writing current then, and employed by public writers generally. I copied this from one of them, and you can see how good it is. Look at the well-rounded a and d. I have tried to translate the French character into the Russian letters— a difficult thing to do, but I think I have succeeded fairly. Here is a fine sentence, written in a good, original hand—‘Zeal triumphs over all.’ That is the script of the Russian War Office. That is how official documents addressed to important personages should be written. The letters are round, the type black, and the style somewhat remarkable. A stylist would not allow these ornaments, or attempts at flourishes—just look at these unfinished tails!—but it has distinction and really depicts the soul of the writer. He would like to give play to his imagination, and follow the inspiration of his genius, but a soldier is only at ease in the guard-room, and the pen stops half-way, a slave to discipline. How delightful! The first time I met an example of this handwriting, I was positively astonished, and where do you think I chanced to find it? In Switzerland, of all places! Now that is an ordinary English hand. It can hardly be improved, it is so refined and exquisite—almost perfection. This is an example of another kind, a mixture of styles. The copy was given me by a French commercial traveller. It is founded on the English, but the downstrokes are a little blacker, and more marked. Notice that the oval has some slight modification—it is more rounded. This writing allows for flourishes; now a flourish is a dangerous thing! Its use requires such taste, but, if successful, what a distinction it gives to the whole! It results in an incomparable type—one to fall in love with!”

“Dear me! How you have gone into all the refinements and details of the question! Why, my dear fellow, you are not a calligraphist, you are an artist! Eh, Gania?”

“Wonderful!” said Gania. “And he knows it too,” he added, with a sarcastic smile.

“You may smile,—but there’s a career in this,” said the general. “You don’t know what a great personage I shall show this to, prince. Why, you can command a situation at thirty-five roubles per month to start with. However, it’s half-past twelve,” he concluded, looking at his watch; “so to business, prince, for I must be setting to work and shall not see you again today. Sit down a minute. I have told you that I cannot receive you myself very often, but I should like to be of some assistance to you, some small assistance, of a kind that would give you satisfaction. I shall find you a place in one of the State departments, an easy place—but you will require to be accurate. Now, as to your plans—in the house, or rather in the family of Gania here—my young friend, whom I hope you will know better—his mother and sister have prepared two or three rooms for lodgers, and let them to highly recommended young fellows, with board and attendance. I am sure Nina Alexandrovna will take you in on my recommendation. There you will be comfortable and well taken care of; for I do not think, prince, that you are the sort of man to be left to the mercy of Fate in a town like Petersburg. Nina Alexandrovna, Gania’s mother, and Varvara Alexandrovna, are ladies for whom I have the highest possible esteem and respect. Nina Alexandrovna is the wife of General Ardalion Alexandrovitch, my old brother in arms, with whom, I

regret to say, on account of certain circumstances, I am no longer acquainted. I give you all this information, prince, in order to make it clear to you that I am personally recommending you to this family, and that in so doing, I am more or less taking upon myself to answer for you. The terms are most reasonable, and I trust that your salary will very shortly prove amply sufficient for your expenditure. Of course pocket-money is a necessity, if only a little; do not be angry, prince, if I strongly recommend you to avoid carrying money in your pocket. But as your purse is quite empty at the present moment, you must allow me to press these twenty-five roubles upon your acceptance, as something to begin with. Of course we will settle this little matter another time, and if you are the upright, honest man you look, I anticipate very little trouble between us on that score. Taking so much interest in you as you may perceive I do, I am not without my object, and you shall know it in good time. You see, I am perfectly candid with you. I hope, Gania, you have nothing to say against the prince's taking up his abode in your house?"

"Oh, on the contrary! my mother will be very glad," said Gania, courteously and kindly.

"I think only one of your rooms is engaged as yet, is it not? That fellow Ferd-Ferd—" "Ferdishenko."

"Yes—I don't like that Ferdishenko. I can't understand why Nastasia Philipovna encourages him so. Is he really her cousin, as he says?"

"Oh dear no, it's all a joke. No more cousin than I am."

"Well, what do you think of the arrangement, prince?"

"Thank you, general; you have behaved very kindly to me; all the more so since I did not ask you to help me. I don't say that out of pride. I certainly did not know where to lay my head tonight. Rogojin asked me to come to his house, of course, but—"

"Rogojin? No, no, my good fellow. I should strongly recommend you, paternally,—or, if you prefer it, as a friend,—to forget all about Rogojin, and, in fact, to stick to the family into which you are about to enter."

"Thank you," began the prince; "and since you are so very kind there is just one matter which I—"

"You must really excuse me," interrupted the general, "but I positively haven't another moment now. I shall just tell Elizabetha Prokofievna about you, and if she wishes to receive you at once—as I shall advise her—I strongly recommend you to ingratiate yourself with her at the first opportunity, for my wife may be of the greatest service to you in many ways. If she cannot receive you now, you must be content to wait till another time. Meanwhile you, Gania, just look over these accounts, will you? We mustn't forget to finish off that matter—"

The general left the room, and the prince never succeeded in broaching the business which he had on hand, though he had endeavoured to do so four times.

Gania lit a cigarette and offered one to the prince. The latter accepted the offer, but did not talk, being unwilling to disturb Gania's work. He commenced to examine the study and its contents. But Gania hardly so much as glanced at the papers lying

before him; he was absent and thoughtful, and his smile and general appearance struck the prince still more disagreeably now that the two were left alone together.

Suddenly Gania approached our hero who was at the moment standing over Nastasia Philipovna's portrait, gazing at it.

"Do you admire that sort of woman, prince?" he asked, looking intently at him. He seemed to have some special object in the question.

"It's a wonderful face," said the prince, "and I feel sure that her destiny is not by any means an ordinary, uneventful one. Her face is smiling enough, but she must have suffered terribly—hasn't she? Her eyes show it—those two bones there, the little points under her eyes, just where the cheek begins. It's a proud face too, terribly proud! And I—I can't say whether she is good and kind, or not. Oh, if she be but good! That would make all well!"

"And would you marry a woman like that, now?" continued Gania, never taking his excited eyes off the prince's face.

"I cannot marry at all," said the latter. "I am an invalid."

"Would Rogojin marry her, do you think?"

"Why not? Certainly he would, I should think. He would marry her tomorrow!—marry her tomorrow and murder her in a week!"

Hardly had the prince uttered the last word when Gania gave such a fearful shudder that the prince almost cried out.

"What's the matter?" said he, seizing Gania's hand.

"Your highness! His excellency begs your presence in her excellency's apartments!" announced the footman, appearing at the door.

The prince immediately followed the man out of the room.

IV.

ALL three of the Miss Epanchins were fine, healthy girls, well-grown, with good shoulders and busts, and strong—almost masculine—hands; and, of course, with all the above attributes, they enjoyed capital appetites, of which they were not in the least ashamed.

Elizabetha Prokofievna sometimes informed the girls that they were a little too candid in this matter, but in spite of their outward deference to their mother these three young women, in solemn conclave, had long agreed to modify the unquestioning obedience which they had been in the habit of according to her; and Mrs. General Epanchin had judged it better to say nothing about it, though, of course, she was well aware of the fact.

It is true that her nature sometimes rebelled against these dictates of reason, and that she grew yearly more capricious and impatient; but having a respectful and well-disciplined husband under her thumb at all times, she found it possible, as a rule, to empty any little accumulations of spleen upon his head, and therefore the harmony

of the family was kept duly balanced, and things went as smoothly as family matters can.

Mrs. Epanchin had a fair appetite herself, and generally took her share of the capital mid-day lunch which was always served for the girls, and which was nearly as good as a dinner. The young ladies used to have a cup of coffee each before this meal, at ten o'clock, while still in bed. This was a favourite and unalterable arrangement with them. At half-past twelve, the table was laid in the small dining-room, and occasionally the general himself appeared at the family gathering, if he had time.

Besides tea and coffee, cheese, honey, butter, pan-cakes of various kinds (the lady of the house loved these best), cutlets, and so on, there was generally strong beef soup, and other substantial delicacies.

On the particular morning on which our story has opened, the family had assembled in the dining-room, and were waiting the general's appearance, the latter having promised to come this day. If he had been one moment late, he would have been sent for at once; but he turned up punctually.

As he came forward to wish his wife good-morning and kiss her hands, as his custom was, he observed something in her look which boded ill. He thought he knew the reason, and had expected it, but still, he was not altogether comfortable. His daughters advanced to kiss him, too, and though they did not look exactly angry, there was something strange in their expression as well.

The general was, owing to certain circumstances, a little inclined to be too suspicious at home, and needlessly nervous; but, as an experienced father and husband, he judged it better to take measures at once to protect himself from any dangers there might be in the air.

However, I hope I shall not interfere with the proper sequence of my narrative too much, if I diverge for a moment at this point, in order to explain the mutual relations between General Epanchin's family and others acting a part in this history, at the time when we take up the thread of their destiny. I have already stated that the general, though he was a man of lowly origin, and of poor education, was, for all that, an experienced and talented husband and father. Among other things, he considered it undesirable to hurry his daughters to the matrimonial altar and to worry them too much with assurances of his paternal wishes for their happiness, as is the custom among parents of many grown-up daughters. He even succeeded in ranging his wife on his side on this question, though he found the feat very difficult to accomplish, because unnatural; but the general's arguments were conclusive, and founded upon obvious facts. The general considered that the girls' taste and good sense should be allowed to develop and mature deliberately, and that the parents' duty should merely be to keep watch, in order that no strange or undesirable choice be made; but that the selection once effected, both father and mother were bound from that moment to enter heart and soul into the cause, and to see that the matter progressed without hindrance until the altar should be happily reached.

Besides this, it was clear that the Epanchins' position gained each year, with geometrical accuracy, both as to financial solidity and social weight; and, therefore, the longer the girls waited, the better was their chance of making a brilliant match.

But again, amidst the incontrovertible facts just recorded, one more, equally significant, rose up to confront the family; and this was, that the eldest daughter, Alexandra, had imperceptibly arrived at her twenty-fifth birthday. Almost at the same moment, Afanasy Ivanovitch Totski, a man of immense wealth, high connections, and good standing, announced his intention of marrying. Afanasy Ivanovitch was a gentleman of fifty-five years of age, artistically gifted, and of most refined tastes. He wished to marry well, and, moreover, he was a keen admirer and judge of beauty.

Now, since Totski had, of late, been upon terms of great cordiality with Epanchin, which excellent relations were intensified by the fact that they were, so to speak, partners in several financial enterprises, it so happened that the former now put in a friendly request to the general for counsel with regard to the important step he meditated. Might he suggest, for instance, such a thing as a marriage between himself and one of the general's daughters?

Evidently the quiet, pleasant current of the family life of the Epanchins was about to undergo a change.

The undoubted beauty of the family, par excellence, was the youngest, Aglaya, as aforesaid. But Totski himself, though an egotist of the extremest type, realized that he had no chance there; Aglaya was clearly not for such as he.

Perhaps the sisterly love and friendship of the three girls had more or less exaggerated Aglaya's chances of happiness. In their opinion, the latter's destiny was not merely to be very happy; she was to live in a heaven on earth. Aglaya's husband was to be a compendium of all the virtues, and of all success, not to speak of fabulous wealth. The two elder sisters had agreed that all was to be sacrificed by them, if need be, for Aglaya's sake; her dowry was to be colossal and unprecedented.

The general and his wife were aware of this agreement, and, therefore, when Totski suggested himself for one of the sisters, the parents made no doubt that one of the two elder girls would probably accept the offer, since Totski would certainly make no difficulty as to dowry. The general valued the proposal very highly. He knew life, and realized what such an offer was worth.

The answer of the sisters to the communication was, if not conclusive, at least consoling and hopeful. It made known that the eldest, Alexandra, would very likely be disposed to listen to a proposal.

Alexandra was a good-natured girl, though she had a will of her own. She was intelligent and kind-hearted, and, if she were to marry Totski, she would make him a good wife. She did not care for a brilliant marriage; she was eminently a woman calculated to soothe and sweeten the life of any man; decidedly pretty, if not absolutely handsome. What better could Totski wish?

So the matter crept slowly forward. The general and Totski had agreed to avoid any hasty and irrevocable step. Alexandra's parents had not even begun to talk to

their daughters freely upon the subject, when suddenly, as it were, a dissonant chord was struck amid the harmony of the proceedings. Mrs. Epanchin began to show signs of discontent, and that was a serious matter. A certain circumstance had crept in, a disagreeable and troublesome factor, which threatened to overturn the whole business.

This circumstance had come into existence eighteen years before. Close to an estate of Totski's, in one of the central provinces of Russia, there lived, at that time, a poor gentleman whose estate was of the wretchedest description. This gentleman was noted in the district for his persistent ill-fortune; his name was Barashkoff, and, as regards family and descent, he was vastly superior to Totski, but his estate was mortgaged to the last acre. One day, when he had ridden over to the town to see a creditor, the chief peasant of his village followed him shortly after, with the news that his house had been burnt down, and that his wife had perished with it, but his children were safe.

Even Barashkoff, inured to the storms of evil fortune as he was, could not stand this last stroke. He went mad and died shortly after in the town hospital. His estate was sold for the creditors; and the little girls—two of them, of seven and eight years of age respectively,—were adopted by Totski, who undertook their maintenance and education in the kindness of his heart. They were brought up together with the children of his German bailiff. Very soon, however, there was only one of them left—Nastasia Philipovna—for the other little one died of whooping-cough. Totski, who was living abroad at this time, very soon forgot all about the child; but five years after, returning to Russia, it struck him that he would like to look over his estate and see how matters were going there, and, arrived at his bailiff's house, he was not long in discovering that among the children of the latter there now dwelt a most lovely little girl of twelve, sweet and intelligent, and bright, and promising to develop beauty of most unusual quality—as to which last Totski was an undoubted authority.

He only stayed at his country scat a few days on this occasion, but he had time to make his arrangements. Great changes took place in the child's education; a good governess was engaged, a Swiss lady of experience and culture. For four years this lady resided in the house with little Nastia, and then the education was considered complete. The governess took her departure, and another lady came down to fetch Nastia, by Totski's instructions. The child was now transported to another of Totski's estates in a distant part of the country. Here she found a delightful little house, just built, and prepared for her reception with great care and taste; and here she took up her abode together with the lady who had accompanied her from her old home. In the house there were two experienced maids, musical instruments of all sorts, a charming "young lady's library," pictures, paint-boxes, a lap-dog, and everything to make life agreeable. Within a fortnight Totski himself arrived, and from that time he appeared to have taken a great fancy to this part of the world and came down each summer, staying two and three months at a time. So passed four years peacefully and happily, in charming surroundings.

At the end of that time, and about four months after Totski's last visit (he had stayed but a fortnight on this occasion), a report reached Nastasia Philipovna that he

was about to be married in St. Petersburg, to a rich, eminent, and lovely woman. The report was only partially true, the marriage project being only in an embryo condition; but a great change now came over Nastasia Philipovna. She suddenly displayed unusual decision of character; and without wasting time in thought, she left her country home and came up to St. Petersburg, straight to Totski's house, all alone.

The latter, amazed at her conduct, began to express his displeasure; but he very soon became aware that he must change his voice, style, and everything else, with this young lady; the good old times were gone. An entirely new and different woman sat before him, between whom and the girl he had left in the country last July there seemed nothing in common.

In the first place, this new woman understood a good deal more than was usual for young people of her age; so much indeed, that Totski could not help wondering where she had picked up her knowledge. Surely not from her "young lady's library"? It even embraced legal matters, and the "world" in general, to a considerable extent.

Her character was absolutely changed. No more of the girlish alternations of timidity and petulance, the adorable naivete, the reveries, the tears, the playfulness... It was an entirely new and hitherto unknown being who now sat and laughed at him, and informed him to his face that she had never had the faintest feeling for him of any kind, except loathing and contempt— contempt which had followed closely upon her sensations of surprise and bewilderment after her first acquaintance with him.

This new woman gave him further to understand that though it was absolutely the same to her whom he married, yet she had decided to prevent this marriage—for no particular reason, but that she chose to do so, and because she wished to amuse herself at his expense for that it was "quite her turn to laugh a little now!"

Such were her words—very likely she did not give her real reason for this eccentric conduct; but, at all events, that was all the explanation she deigned to offer.

Meanwhile, Totski thought the matter over as well as his scattered ideas would permit. His meditations lasted a fortnight, however, and at the end of that time his resolution was taken. The fact was, Totski was at that time a man of fifty years of age; his position was solid and respectable; his place in society had long been firmly fixed upon safe foundations; he loved himself, his personal comforts, and his position better than all the world, as every respectable gentleman should!

At the same time his grasp of things in general soon showed Totski that he now had to deal with a being who was outside the pale of the ordinary rules of traditional behaviour, and who would not only threaten mischief but would undoubtedly carry it out, and stop for no one.

There was evidently, he concluded, something at work here; some storm of the mind, some paroxysm of romantic anger, goodness knows against whom or what, some insatiable contempt—in a word, something altogether absurd and impossible, but at the same time most dangerous to be met with by any respectable person with a position in society to keep up.

For a man of Totski's wealth and standing, it would, of course, have been the simplest possible matter to take steps which would rid him at once from all annoyance; while it was obviously impossible for Nastasia Philipovna to harm him in any way, either legally or by stirring up a scandal, for, in case of the latter danger, he could so easily remove her to a sphere of safety. However, these arguments would only hold good in case of Nastasia acting as others might in such an emergency. She was much more likely to overstep the bounds of reasonable conduct by some extraordinary eccentricity.

Here the sound judgment of Totski stood him in good stead. He realized that Nastasia Philipovna must be well aware that she could do nothing by legal means to injure him, and that her flashing eyes betrayed some entirely different intention.

Nastasia Philipovna was quite capable of ruining herself, and even of perpetrating something which would send her to Siberia, for the mere pleasure of injuring a man for whom she had developed so inhuman a sense of loathing and contempt. He had sufficient insight to understand that she valued nothing in the world—herself least of all—and he made no attempt to conceal the fact that he was a coward in some respects. For instance, if he had been told that he would be stabbed at the altar, or publicly insulted, he would undoubtedly have been frightened; but not so much at the idea of being murdered, or wounded, or insulted, as at the thought that if such things were to happen he would be made to look ridiculous in the eyes of society.

He knew well that Nastasia thoroughly understood him and where to wound him and how, and therefore, as the marriage was still only in embryo, Totski decided to conciliate her by giving it up. His decision was strengthened by the fact that Nastasia Philipovna had curiously altered of late. It would be difficult to conceive how different she was physically, at the present time, to the girl of a few years ago. She was pretty then ... but now! ... Totski laughed angrily when he thought how short-sighted he had been. In days gone by he remembered how he had looked at her beautiful eyes, how even then he had marvelled at their dark mysterious depths, and at their wondering gaze which seemed to seek an answer to some unknown riddle. Her complexion also had altered. She was now exceedingly pale, but, curiously, this change only made her more beautiful. Like most men of the world, Totski had rather despised such a cheaply-bought conquest, but of late years he had begun to think differently about it. It had struck him as long ago as last spring that he ought to be finding a good match for Nastasia; for instance, some respectable and reasonable young fellow serving in a government office in another part of the country. How maliciously Nastasia laughed at the idea of such a thing, now!

However, it appeared to Totski that he might make use of her in another way; and he determined to establish her in St. Petersburg, surrounding her with all the comforts and luxuries that his wealth could command. In this way he might gain glory in certain circles.

Five years of this Petersburg life went by, and, of course, during that time a great deal happened. Totski's position was very uncomfortable; having "funked" once, he could not totally regain his ease. He was afraid, he did not know why, but he was

simply afraid of Nastasia Philipovna. For the first two years or so he had suspected that she wished to marry him herself, and that only her vanity prevented her telling him so. He thought that she wanted him to approach her with a humble proposal from his own side, But to his great, and not entirely pleasurable amazement, he discovered that this was by no means the case, and that were he to offer himself he would be refused. He could not understand such a state of things, and was obliged to conclude that it was pride, the pride of an injured and imaginative woman, which had gone to such lengths that it preferred to sit and nurse its contempt and hatred in solitude rather than mount to heights of hitherto unattainable splendour. To make matters worse, she was quite impervious to mercenary considerations, and could not be bribed in any way.

Finally, Totski took cunning means to try to break his chains and be free. He tried to tempt her in various ways to lose her heart; he invited princes, hussars, secretaries of embassies, poets, novelists, even Socialists, to see her; but not one of them all made the faintest impression upon Nastasia. It was as though she had a pebble in place of a heart, as though her feelings and affections were dried up and withered for ever.

She lived almost entirely alone; she read, she studied, she loved music. Her principal acquaintances were poor women of various grades, a couple of actresses, and the family of a poor schoolteacher. Among these people she was much beloved.

She received four or five friends sometimes, of an evening. Totski often came. Lately, too, General Epanchin had been enabled with great difficulty to introduce himself into her circle. Gania made her acquaintance also, and others were Ferdishenko, an ill- bred, and would-be witty, young clerk, and Ptitsin, a money- lender of modest and polished manners, who had risen from poverty. In fact, Nastasia Philipovna's beauty became a thing known to all the town; but not a single man could boast of anything more than his own admiration for her; and this reputation of hers, and her wit and culture and grace, all confirmed Totski in the plan he had now prepared.

And it was at this moment that General Epanchin began to play so large and important a part in the story.

When Totski had approached the general with his request for friendly counsel as to a marriage with one of his daughters, he had made a full and candid confession. He had said that he intended to stop at no means to obtain his freedom; even if Nastasia were to promise to leave him entirely alone in future, he would not (he said) believe and trust her; words were not enough for him; he must have solid guarantees of some sort. So he and the general determined to try what an attempt to appeal to her heart would effect. Having arrived at Nastasia's house one day, with Epanchin, Totski immediately began to speak of the intolerable torment of his position. He admitted that he was to blame for all, but candidly confessed that he could not bring himself to feel any remorse for his original guilt towards herself, because he was a man of sensual passions which were inborn and ineradicable, and that he had no power over himself in this respect; but that he wished, seriously, to marry at last, and that the whole fate of the

most desirable social union which he contemplated, was in her hands; in a word, he confided his all to her generosity of heart.

General Epanchin took up his part and spoke in the character of father of a family; he spoke sensibly, and without wasting words over any attempt at sentimentality, he merely recorded his full admission of her right to be the arbiter of Totski's destiny at this moment. He then pointed out that the fate of his daughter, and very likely of both his other daughters, now hung upon her reply.

To Nastasia's question as to what they wished her to do, Totski confessed that he had been so frightened by her, five years ago, that he could never now be entirely comfortable until she herself married. He immediately added that such a suggestion from him would, of course, be absurd, unless accompanied by remarks of a more pointed nature. He very well knew, he said, that a certain young gentleman of good family, namely, Gavril Ardalionovitch Ivolgin, with whom she was acquainted, and whom she received at her house, had long loved her passionately, and would give his life for some response from her. The young fellow had confessed this love of his to him (Totski) and had also admitted it in the hearing of his benefactor, General Epanchin. Lastly, he could not help being of opinion that Nastasia must be aware of Gania's love for her, and if he (Totski) mistook not, she had looked with some favour upon it, being often lonely, and rather tired of her present life. Having remarked how difficult it was for him, of all people, to speak to her of these matters, Totski concluded by saying that he trusted Nastasia Philipovna would not look with contempt upon him if he now expressed his sincere desire to guarantee her future by a gift of seventy-five thousand roubles. He added that the sum would have been left her all the same in his will, and that therefore she must not consider the gift as in any way an indemnification to her for anything, but that there was no reason, after all, why a man should not be allowed to entertain a natural desire to lighten his conscience, etc., etc.; in fact, all that would naturally be said under the circumstances. Totski was very eloquent all through, and, in conclusion, just touched on the fact that not a soul in the world, not even General Epanchin, had ever heard a word about the above seventy-five thousand roubles, and that this was the first time he had ever given expression to his intentions in respect to them.

Nastasia Philipovna's reply to this long rigmarole astonished both the friends considerably.

Not only was there no trace of her former irony, of her old hatred and enmity, and of that dreadful laughter, the very recollection of which sent a cold chill down Totski's back to this very day; but she seemed charmed and really glad to have the opportunity of talking seriously with him for once in a way. She confessed that she had long wished to have a frank and free conversation and to ask for friendly advice, but that pride had hitherto prevented her; now, however, that the ice was broken, nothing could be more welcome to her than this opportunity.

First, with a sad smile, and then with a twinkle of merriment in her eyes, she admitted that such a storm as that of five years ago was now quite out of the question.

She said that she had long since changed her views of things, and recognized that facts must be taken into consideration in spite of the feelings of the heart. What was done was done and ended, and she could not understand why Totski should still feel alarmed.

She next turned to General Epanchin and observed, most courteously, that she had long since known of his daughters, and that she had heard none but good report; that she had learned to think of them with deep and sincere respect. The idea alone that she could in any way serve them, would be to her both a pride and a source of real happiness.

It was true that she was lonely in her present life; Totski had judged her thoughts aright. She longed to rise, if not to love, at least to family life and new hopes and objects, but as to Gavriila Ardalionovitch, she could not as yet say much. She thought it must be the case that he loved her; she felt that she too might learn to love him, if she could be sure of the firmness of his attachment to herself; but he was very young, and it was a difficult question to decide. What she specially liked about him was that he worked, and supported his family by his toil.

She had heard that he was proud and ambitious; she had heard much that was interesting of his mother and sister, she had heard of them from Mr. Ptitsin, and would much like to make their acquaintance, but—another question!—would they like to receive her into their house? At all events, though she did not reject the idea of this marriage, she desired not to be hurried. As for the seventy-five thousand roubles, Mr. Totski need not have found any difficulty or awkwardness about the matter; she quite understood the value of money, and would, of course, accept the gift. She thanked him for his delicacy, however, but saw no reason why Gavriila Ardalionovitch should not know about it.

She would not marry the latter, she said, until she felt persuaded that neither on his part nor on the part of his family did there exist any sort of concealed suspicions as to herself. She did not intend to ask forgiveness for anything in the past, which fact she desired to be known. She did not consider herself to blame for anything that had happened in former years, and she thought that Gavriila Ardalionovitch should be informed as to the relations which had existed between herself and Totski during the last five years. If she accepted this money it was not to be considered as indemnification for her misfortune as a young girl, which had not been in any degree her own fault, but merely as compensation for her ruined life.

She became so excited and agitated during all these explanations and confessions that General Epanchin was highly gratified, and considered the matter satisfactorily arranged once for all. But the once bitten Totski was twice shy, and looked for hidden snakes among the flowers. However, the special point to which the two friends particularly trusted to bring about their object (namely, Gania's attractiveness for Nastasia Philipovna), stood out more and more prominently; the pourparlers had commenced, and gradually even Totski began to believe in the possibility of success.

Before long Nastasia and Gania had talked the matter over. Very little was said—her modesty seemed to suffer under the infliction of discussing such a question. But she recognized his love, on the understanding that she bound herself to nothing whatever, and that she reserved the right to say “no” up to the very hour of the marriage ceremony. Gania was to have the same right of refusal at the last moment.

It soon became clear to Gania, after scenes of wrath and quarrellings at the domestic hearth, that his family were seriously opposed to the match, and that Nastasia was aware of this fact was equally evident. She said nothing about it, though he daily expected her to do so.

There were several rumours afloat, before long, which upset Totski’s equanimity a good deal, but we will not now stop to describe them; merely mentioning an instance or two. One was that Nastasia had entered into close and secret relations with the Epanchin girls—a most unlikely rumour; another was that Nastasia had long satisfied herself of the fact that Gania was merely marrying her for money, and that his nature was gloomy and greedy, impatient and selfish, to an extraordinary degree; and that although he had been keen enough in his desire to achieve a conquest before, yet since the two friends had agreed to exploit his passion for their own purposes, it was clear enough that he had begun to consider the whole thing a nuisance and a nightmare.

In his heart passion and hate seemed to hold divided sway, and although he had at last given his consent to marry the woman (as he said), under the stress of circumstances, yet he promised himself that he would “take it out of her,” after marriage.

Nastasia seemed to Totski to have divined all this, and to be preparing something on her own account, which frightened him to such an extent that he did not dare communicate his views even to the general. But at times he would pluck up his courage and be full of hope and good spirits again, acting, in fact, as weak men do act in such circumstances.

However, both the friends felt that the thing looked rosy indeed when one day Nastasia informed them that she would give her final answer on the evening of her birthday, which anniversary was due in a very short time.

A strange rumour began to circulate, meanwhile; no less than that the respectable and highly respected General Epanchin was himself so fascinated by Nastasia Philipovna that his feeling for her amounted almost to passion. What he thought to gain by Gania’s marriage to the girl it was difficult to imagine. Possibly he counted on Gania’s complaisance; for Totski had long suspected that there existed some secret understanding between the general and his secretary. At all events the fact was known that he had prepared a magnificent present of pearls for Nastasia’s birthday, and that he was looking forward to the occasion when he should present his gift with the greatest excitement and impatience. The day before her birthday he was in a fever of agitation.

Mrs. Epanchin, long accustomed to her husband’s infidelities, had heard of the pearls, and the rumour excited her liveliest curiosity and interest. The general remarked

her suspicions, and felt that a grand explanation must shortly take place—which fact alarmed him much.

This is the reason why he was so unwilling to take lunch (on the morning upon which we took up this narrative) with the rest of his family. Before the prince's arrival he had made up his mind to plead business, and "cut" the meal; which simply meant running away.

He was particularly anxious that this one day should be passed—especially the evening—without unpleasantness between himself and his family; and just at the right moment the prince turned up—"as though Heaven had sent him on purpose," said the general to himself, as he left the study to seek out the wife of his bosom.

V.

Mrs. General Epanchin was a proud woman by nature. What must her feelings have been when she heard that Prince Muishkin, the last of his and her line, had arrived in beggar's guise, a wretched idiot, a recipient of charity—all of which details the general gave out for greater effect! He was anxious to steal her interest at the first swoop, so as to distract her thoughts from other matters nearer home.

Mrs. Epanchin was in the habit of holding herself very straight, and staring before her, without speaking, in moments of excitement.

She was a fine woman of the same age as her husband, with a slightly hooked nose, a high, narrow forehead, thick hair turning a little grey, and a sallow complexion. Her eyes were grey and wore a very curious expression at times. She believed them to be most effective—a belief that nothing could alter.

"What, receive him! Now, at once?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, gazing vaguely at her husband as he stood fidgeting before her.

"Oh, dear me, I assure you there is no need to stand on ceremony with him," the general explained hastily. "He is quite a child, not to say a pathetic-looking creature. He has fits of some sort, and has just arrived from Switzerland, straight from the station, dressed like a German and without a farthing in his pocket. I gave him twenty-five roubles to go on with, and am going to find him some easy place in one of the government offices. I should like you to ply him well with the victuals, my dears, for I should think he must be very hungry."

"You astonish me," said the lady, gazing as before. "Fits, and hungry too! What sort of fits?"

"Oh, they don't come on frequently, besides, he's a regular child, though he seems to be fairly educated. I should like you, if possible, my dears," the general added, making slowly for the door, "to put him through his paces a bit, and see what he is good for. I think you should be kind to him; it is a good deed, you know—however, just as you like, of course—but he is a sort of relation, remember, and I thought it might interest you to see the young fellow, seeing that this is so."

“Oh, of course, mamma, if we needn’t stand on ceremony with him, we must give the poor fellow something to eat after his journey; especially as he has not the least idea where to go to,” said Alexandra, the eldest of the girls.

“Besides, he’s quite a child; we can entertain him with a little hide-and-seek, in case of need,” said Adelaida.

“Hide-and-seek? What do you mean?” inquired Mrs. Epanchin.

“Oh, do stop pretending, mamma,” cried Aglaya, in vexation. “Send him up, father; mother allows.”

The general rang the bell and gave orders that the prince should be shown in.

“Only on condition that he has a napkin under his chin at lunch, then,” said Mrs. Epanchin, “and let Fedor, or Mavra, stand behind him while he eats. Is he quiet when he has these fits? He doesn’t show violence, does he?”

“On the contrary, he seems to be very well brought up. His manners are excellent—but here he is himself. Here you are, prince—let me introduce you, the last of the Muishkins, a relative of your own, my dear, or at least of the same name. Receive him kindly, please. They’ll bring in lunch directly, prince; you must stop and have some, but you must excuse me. I’m in a hurry, I must be off—”

“We all know where YOU must be off to!” said Mrs. Epanchin, in a meaning voice.

“Yes, yes—I must hurry away, I’m late! Look here, dears, let him write you something in your albums; you’ve no idea what a wonderful calligraphist he is, wonderful talent! He has just written out ‘Abbot Pafnute signed this’ for me. Well, au revoir!”

“Stop a minute; where are you off to? Who is this abbot?” cried Mrs. Epanchin to her retreating husband in a tone of excited annoyance.

“Yes, my dear, it was an old abbot of that name—I must be off to see the count, he’s waiting for me, I’m late—Good-bye! Au revoir, prince!”—and the general bolted at full speed.

“Oh, yes—I know what count you’re going to see!” remarked his wife in a cutting manner, as she turned her angry eyes on the prince. “Now then, what’s all this about?—What abbot—Who’s Pafnute?” she added, brusquely.

“Mamma!” said Alexandra, shocked at her rudeness.

Aglaya stamped her foot.

“Nonsense! Let me alone!” said the angry mother. “Now then, prince, sit down here, no, nearer, come nearer the light! I want to have a good look at you. So, now then, who is this abbot?”

“Abbot Pafnute,” said our friend, seriously and with deference.

“Pafnute, yes. And who was he?”

Mrs. Epanchin put these questions hastily and brusquely, and when the prince answered she nodded her head sagely at each word he said.

“The Abbot Pafnute lived in the fourteenth century,” began the prince; “he was in charge of one of the monasteries on the Volga, about where our present Kostroma government lies. He went to Oreol and helped in the great matters then going on in the religious world; he signed an edict there, and I have seen a print of his signature; it

struck me, so I copied it. When the general asked me, in his study, to write something for him, to show my handwriting, I wrote 'The Abbot Pafnute signed this,' in the exact handwriting of the abbot. The general liked it very much, and that's why he recalled it just now. "

"Aglaya, make a note of 'Pafnute,' or we shall forget him. H'm! and where is this signature?"

"I think it was left on the general's table."

"Let it be sent for at once!"

"Oh, I'll write you a new one in half a minute," said the prince, "if you like!"

"Of course, mamma!" said Alexandra. "But let's have lunch now, we are all hungry!"

"Yes; come along, prince," said the mother, "are you very hungry?"

"Yes; I must say that I am pretty hungry, thanks very much."

"H'm! I like to see that you know your manners; and you are by no means such a person as the general thought fit to describe you. Come along; you sit here, opposite to me," she continued, "I wish to be able to see your face. Alexandra, Adelaida, look after the prince! He doesn't seem so very ill, does he? I don't think he requires a napkin under his chin, after all; are you accustomed to having one on, prince?"

"Formerly, when I was seven years old or so. I believe I wore one; but now I usually hold my napkin on my knee when I eat."

"Of course, of course! And about your fits?"

"Fits?" asked the prince, slightly surprised. "I very seldom have fits nowadays. I don't know how it may be here, though; they say the climate may be bad for me. "

"He talks very well, you know!" said Mrs. Epanchin, who still continued to nod at each word the prince spoke. "I really did not expect it at all; in fact, I suppose it was all stuff and nonsense on the general's part, as usual. Eat away, prince, and tell me where you were born, and where you were brought up. I wish to know all about you, you interest me very much!"

The prince expressed his thanks once more, and eating heartily the while, recommenced the narrative of his life in Switzerland, all of which we have heard before. Mrs. Epanchin became more and more pleased with her guest; the girls, too, listened with considerable attention. In talking over the question of relationship it turned out that the prince was very well up in the matter and knew his pedigree off by heart. It was found that scarcely any connection existed between himself and Mrs. Epanchin, but the talk, and the opportunity of conversing about her family tree, gratified the latter exceedingly, and she rose from the table in great good humour.

"Let's all go to my boudoir," she said, "and they shall bring some coffee in there. That's the room where we all assemble and busy ourselves as we like best," she explained. "Alexandra, my eldest, here, plays the piano, or reads or sews; Adelaida paints landscapes and portraits (but never finishes any); and Aglaya sits and does nothing. I don't work too much, either. Here we are, now; sit down, prince, near the fire and talk to us. I want to hear you relate something. I wish to make sure of you first and then

tell my old friend, Princess Bielokonski, about you. I wish you to know all the good people and to interest them. Now then, begin!"

"Mamma, it's rather a strange order, that!" said Adelaida, who was fussing among her paints and paint-brushes at the easel. Aglaya and Alexandra had settled themselves with folded hands on a sofa, evidently meaning to be listeners. The prince felt that the general attention was concentrated upon himself.

"I should refuse to say a word if I were ordered to tell a story like that!" observed Aglaya.

"Why? what's there strange about it? He has a tongue. Why shouldn't he tell us something? I want to judge whether he is a good story-teller; anything you like, prince—how you liked Switzerland, what was your first impression, anything. You'll see, he'll begin directly and tell us all about it beautifully."

"The impression was forcible—" the prince began.

"There, you see, girls," said the impatient lady, "he has begun, you see."

"Well, then, LET him talk, mamma," said Alexandra. "This prince is a great humbug and by no means an idiot," she whispered to Aglaya.

"Oh, I saw that at once," replied the latter. "I don't think it at all nice of him to play a part. What does he wish to gain by it, I wonder?"

"My first impression was a very strong one," repeated the prince. "When they took me away from Russia, I remember I passed through many German towns and looked out of the windows, but did not trouble so much as to ask questions about them. This was after a long series of fits. I always used to fall into a sort of torpid condition after such a series, and lost my memory almost entirely; and though I was not altogether without reason at such times, yet I had no logical power of thought. This would continue for three or four days, and then I would recover myself again. I remember my melancholy was intolerable; I felt inclined to cry; I sat and wondered and wondered uncomfortably; the consciousness that everything was strange weighed terribly upon me; I could understand that it was all foreign and strange. I recollect I awoke from this state for the first time at Basle, one evening; the bray of a donkey aroused me, a donkey in the town market. I saw the donkey and was extremely pleased with it, and from that moment my head seemed to clear."

"A donkey? How strange! Yet it is not strange. Anyone of us might fall in love with a donkey! It happened in mythological times," said Madame Epanchin, looking wrathfully at her daughters, who had begun to laugh. "Go on, prince."

"Since that evening I have been specially fond of donkeys. I began to ask questions about them, for I had never seen one before; and I at once came to the conclusion that this must be one of the most useful of animals—strong, willing, patient, cheap; and, thanks to this donkey, I began to like the whole country I was travelling through; and my melancholy passed away."

"All this is very strange and interesting," said Mrs. Epanchin. "Now let's leave the donkey and go on to other matters. What are you laughing at, Aglaya? and you too,

Adelaida? The prince told us his experiences very cleverly; he saw the donkey himself, and what have you ever seen? YOU have never been abroad.”

“I have seen a donkey though, mamma!” said Aglaya.

“And I’ve heard one!” said Adelaida. All three of the girls laughed out loud, and the prince laughed with them.

“Well, it’s too bad of you,” said mamma. “You must forgive them, prince; they are good girls. I am very fond of them, though I often have to be scolding them; they are all as silly and mad as march hares.”

“Oh, why shouldn’t they laugh?” said the prince. “I shouldn’t have let the chance go by in their place, I know. But I stick up for the donkey, all the same; he’s a patient, good-natured fellow.”

“Are you a patient man, prince? I ask out of curiosity,” said Mrs. Epanchin.

All laughed again.

“Oh, that wretched donkey again, I see!” cried the lady. “I assure you, prince, I was not guilty of the least—”

“Insinuation? Oh! I assure you, I take your word for it.” And the prince continued laughing merrily.

“I must say it’s very nice of you to laugh. I see you really are a kind-hearted fellow,” said Mrs. Epanchin.

“I’m not always kind, though.”

“I am kind myself, and ALWAYS kind too, if you please!” she retorted, unexpectedly; “and that is my chief fault, for one ought not to be always kind. I am often angry with these girls and their father; but the worst of it is, I am always kindest when I am cross. I was very angry just before you came, and Aglaya there read me a lesson—thanks, Aglaya, dear—come and kiss me—there—that’s enough” she added, as Aglaya came forward and kissed her lips and then her hand. “Now then, go on, prince. Perhaps you can think of something more exciting than about the donkey, eh?”

“I must say, again, I can’t understand how you can expect anyone to tell you stories straight away, so,” said Adelaida. “I know I never could!”

“Yes, but the prince can, because he is clever—cleverer than you are by ten or twenty times, if you like. There, that’s so, prince; and seriously, let’s drop the donkey now—what else did you see abroad, besides the donkey?”

“Yes, but the prince told us about the donkey very cleverly, all the same,” said Alexandra. “I have always been most interested to hear how people go mad and get well again, and that sort of thing. Especially when it happens suddenly.”

“Quite so, quite so!” cried Mrs. Epanchin, delighted. “I see you CAN be sensible now and then, Alexandra. You were speaking of Switzerland, prince?”

“Yes. We came to Lucerne, and I was taken out in a boat. I felt how lovely it was, but the loveliness weighed upon me somehow or other, and made me feel melancholy.”

“Why?” asked Alexandra.

“I don’t know; I always feel like that when I look at the beauties of nature for the first time; but then, I was ill at that time, of course!”

“Oh, but I should like to see it!” said Adelaida; “and I don’t know WHEN we shall ever go abroad. I’ve been two years looking out for a good subject for a picture. I’ve done all I know. ‘The North and South I know by heart,’ as our poet observes. Do help me to a subject, prince.”

“Oh, but I know nothing about painting. It seems to me one only has to look, and paint what one sees.”

“But I don’t know HOW to see!”

“Nonsense, what rubbish you talk!” the mother struck in. “Not know how to see! Open your eyes and look! If you can’t see here, you won’t see abroad either. Tell us what you saw yourself, prince!”

“Yes, that’s better,” said Adelaida; “the prince learned to see abroad.”

“Oh, I hardly know! You see, I only went to restore my health. I don’t know whether I learned to see, exactly. I was very happy, however, nearly all the time.”

“Happy! you can be happy?” cried Aglaya. “Then how can you say you did not learn to see? I should think you could teach us to see!”

“Oh! DO teach us,” laughed Adelaida.

“Oh! I can’t do that,” said the prince, laughing too. “I lived almost all the while in one little Swiss village; what can I teach you? At first I was only just not absolutely dull; then my health began to improve—then every day became dearer and more precious to me, and the longer I stayed, the dearer became the time to me; so much so that I could not help observing it; but why this was so, it would be difficult to say.”

“So that you didn’t care to go away anywhere else?”

“Well, at first I did; I was restless; I didn’t know however I should manage to support life—you know there are such moments, especially in solitude. There was a waterfall near us, such a lovely thin streak of water, like a thread but white and moving. It fell from a great height, but it looked quite low, and it was half a mile away, though it did not seem fifty paces. I loved to listen to it at night, but it was then that I became so restless. Sometimes I went and climbed the mountain and stood there in the midst of the tall pines, all alone in the terrible silence, with our little village in the distance, and the sky so blue, and the sun so bright, and an old ruined castle on the mountain-side, far away. I used to watch the line where earth and sky met, and longed to go and seek there the key of all mysteries, thinking that I might find there a new life, perhaps some great city where life should be grander and richer—and then it struck me that life may be grand enough even in a prison.”

“I read that last most praiseworthy thought in my manual, when I was twelve years old,” said Aglaya.

“All this is pure philosophy,” said Adelaida. “You are a philosopher, prince, and have come here to instruct us in your views.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said the prince, smiling. “I think I am a philosopher, perhaps, and who knows, perhaps I do wish to teach my views of things to those I meet with?”

“Your philosophy is rather like that of an old woman we know, who is rich and yet does nothing but try how little she can spend. She talks of nothing but money all day.

Your great philosophical idea of a grand life in a prison and your four happy years in that Swiss village are like this, rather," said Aglaya.

"As to life in a prison, of course there may be two opinions," said the prince. "I once heard the story of a man who lived twelve years in a prison—I heard it from the man himself. He was one of the persons under treatment with my professor; he had fits, and attacks of melancholy, then he would weep, and once he tried to commit suicide. HIS life in prison was sad enough; his only acquaintances were spiders and a tree that grew outside his grating—but I think I had better tell you of another man I met last year. There was a very strange feature in this case, strange because of its extremely rare occurrence. This man had once been brought to the scaffold in company with several others, and had had the sentence of death by shooting passed upon him for some political crime. Twenty minutes later he had been reprieved and some other punishment substituted; but the interval between the two sentences, twenty minutes, or at least a quarter of an hour, had been passed in the certainty that within a few minutes he must die. I was very anxious to hear him speak of his impressions during that dreadful time, and I several times inquired of him as to what he thought and felt. He remembered everything with the most accurate and extraordinary distinctness, and declared that he would never forget a single iota of the experience.

"About twenty paces from the scaffold, where he had stood to hear the sentence, were three posts, fixed in the ground, to which to fasten the criminals (of whom there were several). The first three criminals were taken to the posts, dressed in long white tunics, with white caps drawn over their faces, so that they could not see the rifles pointed at them. Then a group of soldiers took their stand opposite to each post. My friend was the eighth on the list, and therefore he would have been among the third lot to go up. A priest went about among them with a cross: and there was about five minutes of time left for him to live.

"He said that those five minutes seemed to him to be a most interminable period, an enormous wealth of time; he seemed to be living, in these minutes, so many lives that there was no need as yet to think of that last moment, so that he made several arrangements, dividing up the time into portions—one for saying farewell to his companions, two minutes for that; then a couple more for thinking over his own life and career and all about himself; and another minute for a last look around. He remembered having divided his time like this quite well. While saying good-bye to his friends he recollected asking one of them some very usual everyday question, and being much interested in the answer. Then having bade farewell, he embarked upon those two minutes which he had allotted to looking into himself; he knew beforehand what he was going to think about. He wished to put it to himself as quickly and clearly as possible, that here was he, a living, thinking man, and that in three minutes he would be nobody; or if somebody or something, then what and where? He thought he would decide this question once for all in these last three minutes. A little way off there stood a church, and its gilded spire glittered in the sun. He remembered staring stubbornly at this spire, and at the rays of light sparkling from it. He could not tear his eyes from these

rays of light; he got the idea that these rays were his new nature, and that in three minutes he would become one of them, amalgamated somehow with them.

“The repugnance to what must ensue almost immediately, and the uncertainty, were dreadful, he said; but worst of all was the idea, ‘What should I do if I were not to die now? What if I were to return to life again? What an eternity of days, and all mine! How I should grudge and count up every minute of it, so as to waste not a single instant!’ He said that this thought weighed so upon him and became such a terrible burden upon his brain that he could not bear it, and wished they would shoot him quickly and have done with it.”

The prince paused and all waited, expecting him to go on again and finish the story.

“Is that all?” asked Aglaya.

“All? Yes,” said the prince, emerging from a momentary reverie.

“And why did you tell us this?”

“Oh, I happened to recall it, that’s all! It fitted into the conversation—”

“You probably wish to deduce, prince,” said Alexandra, “that moments of time cannot be reckoned by money value, and that sometimes five minutes are worth priceless treasures. All this is very praiseworthy; but may I ask about this friend of yours, who told you the terrible experience of his life? He was reprieved, you say; in other words, they did restore to him that ‘eternity of days.’ What did he do with these riches of time? Did he keep careful account of his minutes?”

“Oh no, he didn’t! I asked him myself. He said that he had not lived a bit as he had intended, and had wasted many, and many a minute.”

“Very well, then there’s an experiment, and the thing is proved; one cannot live and count each moment; say what you like, but one CANNOT.”

“That is true,” said the prince, “I have thought so myself. And yet, why shouldn’t one do it?”

“You think, then, that you could live more wisely than other people?” said Aglaya.

“I have had that idea.”

“And you have it still?”

“Yes—I have it still,” the prince replied.

He had contemplated Aglaya until now, with a pleasant though rather timid smile, but as the last words fell from his lips he began to laugh, and looked at her merrily.

“You are not very modest!” said she.

“But how brave you are!” said he. “You are laughing, and I— that man’s tale impressed me so much, that I dreamt of it afterwards; yes, I dreamt of those five minutes ...”

He looked at his listeners again with that same serious, searching expression.

“You are not angry with me?” he asked suddenly, and with a kind of nervous hurry, although he looked them straight in the face.

“Why should we be angry?” they cried.

“Only because I seem to be giving you a lecture, all the time!”

At this they laughed heartily.

"Please don't be angry with me," continued the prince. "I know very well that I have seen less of life than other people, and have less knowledge of it. I must appear to speak strangely sometimes ..."

He said the last words nervously.

"You say you have been happy, and that proves you have lived, not less, but more than other people. Why make all these excuses?" interrupted Aglaya in a mocking tone of voice. "Besides, you need not mind about lecturing us; you have nothing to boast of. With your quietism, one could live happily for a hundred years at least. One might show you the execution of a felon, or show you one's little finger. You could draw a moral from either, and be quite satisfied. That sort of existence is easy enough."

"I can't understand why you always fly into a temper," said Mrs. Epanchin, who had been listening to the conversation and examining the faces of the speakers in turn. "I do not understand what you mean. What has your little finger to do with it? The prince talks well, though he is not amusing. He began all right, but now he seems sad."

"Never mind, mamma! Prince, I wish you had seen an execution," said Aglaya. "I should like to ask you a question about that, if you had."

"I have seen an execution," said the prince.

"You have!" cried Aglaya. "I might have guessed it. That's a fitting crown to the rest of the story. If you have seen an execution, how can you say you lived happily all the while?"

"But is there capital punishment where you were?" asked Adelaida.

"I saw it at Lyons. Schneider took us there, and as soon as we arrived we came in for that."

"Well, and did you like it very much? Was it very edifying and instructive?" asked Aglaya.

"No, I didn't like it at all, and was ill after seeing it; but I confess I stared as though my eyes were fixed to the sight. I could not tear them away."

"I, too, should have been unable to tear my eyes away," said Aglaya.

"They do not at all approve of women going to see an execution there. The women who do go are condemned for it afterwards in the newspapers."

"That is, by contending that it is not a sight for women they admit that it is a sight for men. I congratulate them on the deduction. I suppose you quite agree with them, prince?"

"Tell us about the execution," put in Adelaida.

"I would much rather not, just now," said the prince, a little disturbed and frowning slightly;

"You don't seem to want to tell us," said Aglaya, with a mocking air.

"No,—the thing is, I was telling all about the execution a little while ago, and—"

"Whom did you tell about it?"

"The man-servant, while I was waiting to see the general."

"Our man-servant?" exclaimed several voices at once.

"Yes, the one who waits in the entrance hall, a greyish, red-faced man—"

“The prince is clearly a democrat,” remarked Aglaya.

“Well, if you could tell Aleksey about it, surely you can tell us too.”

“I do so want to hear about it,” repeated Adelaida.

“Just now, I confess,” began the prince, with more animation, “when you asked me for a subject for a picture, I confess I had serious thoughts of giving you one. I thought of asking you to draw the face of a criminal, one minute before the fall of the guillotine, while the wretched man is still standing on the scaffold, preparatory to placing his neck on the block.”

“What, his face? only his face?” asked Adelaida. “That would be a strange subject indeed. And what sort of a picture would that make?”

“Oh, why not?” the prince insisted, with some warmth. “When I was in Basle I saw a picture very much in that style—I should like to tell you about it; I will some time or other; it struck me very forcibly.”

“Oh, you shall tell us about the Basle picture another time; now we must have all about the execution,” said Adelaida. “Tell us about that face as; it appeared to your imagination—how should it be drawn?—just the face alone, do you mean?”

“It was just a minute before the execution,” began the prince, readily, carried away by the recollection and evidently forgetting everything else in a moment; “just at the instant when he stepped off the ladder on to the scaffold. He happened to look in my direction: I saw his eyes and understood all, at once—but how am I to describe it? I do so wish you or somebody else could draw it, you, if possible. I thought at the time what a picture it would make. You must imagine all that went before, of course, all—all. He had lived in the prison for some time and had not expected that the execution would take place for at least a week yet—he had counted on all the formalities and so on taking time; but it so happened that his papers had been got ready quickly. At five o’clock in the morning he was asleep—it was October, and at five in the morning it was cold and dark. The governor of the prison comes in on tip-toe and touches the sleeping man’s shoulder gently. He starts up. ‘What is it?’ he says. ‘The execution is fixed for ten o’clock.’ He was only just awake, and would not believe at first, but began to argue that his papers would not be out for a week, and so on. When he was wide awake and realized the truth, he became very silent and argued no more—so they say; but after a bit he said: ‘It comes very hard on one so suddenly’ and then he was silent again and said nothing.

“The three or four hours went by, of course, in necessary preparations—the priest, breakfast, (coffee, meat, and some wine they gave him; doesn’t it seem ridiculous?) And yet I believe these people give them a good breakfast out of pure kindness of heart, and believe that they are doing a good action. Then he is dressed, and then begins the procession through the town to the scaffold. I think he, too, must feel that he has an age to live still while they cart him along. Probably he thought, on the way, ‘Oh, I have a long, long time yet. Three streets of life yet! When we’ve passed this street there’ll be that other one; and then that one where the baker’s shop is on the right; and when shall we get there? It’s ages, ages!’ Around him are crowds shouting,

yelling—ten thousand faces, twenty thousand eyes. All this has to be endured, and especially the thought: ‘Here are ten thousand men, and not one of them is going to be executed, and yet I am to die.’ Well, all that is preparatory.

“At the scaffold there is a ladder, and just there he burst into tears—and this was a strong man, and a terribly wicked one, they say! There was a priest with him the whole time, talking; even in the cart as they drove along, he talked and talked. Probably the other heard nothing; he would begin to listen now and then, and at the third word or so he had forgotten all about it.

“At last he began to mount the steps; his legs were tied, so that he had to take very small steps. The priest, who seemed to be a wise man, had stopped talking now, and only held the cross for the wretched fellow to kiss. At the foot of the ladder he had been pale enough; but when he set foot on the scaffold at the top, his face suddenly became the colour of paper, positively like white notepaper. His legs must have become suddenly feeble and helpless, and he felt a choking in his throat—you know the sudden feeling one has in moments of terrible fear, when one does not lose one’s wits, but is absolutely powerless to move? If some dreadful thing were suddenly to happen; if a house were just about to fall on one;—don’t you know how one would long to sit down and shut one’s eyes and wait, and wait? Well, when this terrible feeling came over him, the priest quickly pressed the cross to his lips, without a word—a little silver cross it was— and he kept on pressing it to the man’s lips every second. And whenever the cross touched his lips, the eyes would open for a moment, and the legs moved once, and he kissed the cross greedily, hurriedly—just as though he were anxious to catch hold of something in case of its being useful to him afterwards, though he could hardly have had any connected religious thoughts at the time. And so up to the very block.

“How strange that criminals seldom swoon at such a moment! On the contrary, the brain is especially active, and works incessantly— probably hard, hard, hard—like an engine at full pressure. I imagine that various thoughts must beat loud and fast through his head—all unfinished ones, and strange, funny thoughts, very likely!—like this, for instance: ‘That man is looking at me, and he has a wart on his forehead! and the executioner has burst one of his buttons, and the lowest one is all rusty!’ And meanwhile he notices and remembers everything. There is one point that cannot be forgotten, round which everything else dances and turns about; and because of this point he cannot faint, and this lasts until the very final quarter of a second, when the wretched neck is on the block and the victim listens and waits and KNOWS— that’s the point, he KNOWS that he is just NOW about to die, and listens for the rasp of the iron over his head. If I lay there, I should certainly listen for that grating sound, and hear it, too! There would probably be but the tenth part of an instant left to hear it in, but one would certainly hear it. And imagine, some people declare that when the head flies off it is CONSCIOUS of having flown off! Just imagine what a thing to realize! Fancy if consciousness were to last for even five seconds!

“Draw the scaffold so that only the top step of the ladder comes in clearly. The criminal must be just stepping on to it, his face as white as note-paper. The priest

is holding the cross to his blue lips, and the criminal kisses it, and knows and sees and understands everything. The cross and the head—there's your picture; the priest and the executioner, with his two assistants, and a few heads and eyes below. Those might come in as subordinate accessories—a sort of mist. There's a picture for you." The prince paused, and looked around.

"Certainly that isn't much like quietism," murmured Alexandra, half to herself.

"Now tell us about your love affairs," said Adelaida, after a moment's pause.

The prince gazed at her in amazement.

"You know," Adelaida continued, "you owe us a description of the Basle picture; but first I wish to hear how you fell in love. Don't deny the fact, for you did, of course. Besides, you stop philosophizing when you are telling about anything."

"Why are you ashamed of your stories the moment after you have told them?" asked Aglaya, suddenly.

"How silly you are!" said Mrs. Epanchin, looking indignantly towards the last speaker.

"Yes, that wasn't a clever remark," said Alexandra.

"Don't listen to her, prince," said Mrs. Epanchin; "she says that sort of thing out of mischief. Don't think anything of their nonsense, it means nothing. They love to chaff, but they like you. I can see it in their faces—I know their faces."

"I know their faces, too," said the prince, with a peculiar stress on the words.

"How so?" asked Adelaida, with curiosity.

"What do YOU know about our faces?" exclaimed the other two, in chorus.

But the prince was silent and serious. All awaited his reply.

"I'll tell you afterwards," he said quietly.

"Ah, you want to arouse our curiosity!" said Aglaya. "And how terribly solemn you are about it!"

"Very well," interrupted Adelaida, "then if you can read faces so well, you must have been in love. Come now; I've guessed—let's have the secret!"

"I have not been in love," said the prince, as quietly and seriously as before. "I have been happy in another way."

"How, how?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the prince, apparently in a deep reverie.

VI.

"Here you all are," began the prince, "settling yourselves down to listen to me with so much curiosity, that if I do not satisfy you you will probably be angry with me. No, no! I'm only joking!" he added, hastily, with a smile.

"Well, then—they were all children there, and I was always among children and only with children. They were the children of the village in which I lived, and they went to the school there—all of them. I did not teach them, oh no; there was a master for

that, one Jules Thibaut. I may have taught them some things, but I was among them just as an outsider, and I passed all four years of my life there among them. I wished for nothing better; I used to tell them everything and hid nothing from them. Their fathers and relations were very angry with me, because the children could do nothing without me at last, and used to throng after me at all times. The schoolmaster was my greatest enemy in the end! I had many enemies, and all because of the children. Even Schneider reproached me. What were they afraid of? One can tell a child everything, anything. I have often been struck by the fact that parents know their children so little. They should not conceal so much from them. How well even little children understand that their parents conceal things from them, because they consider them too young to understand! Children are capable of giving advice in the most important matters. How can one deceive these dear little birds, when they look at one so sweetly and confidingly? I call them birds because there is nothing in the world better than birds!

“However, most of the people were angry with me about one and the same thing; but Thibaut simply was jealous of me. At first he had wagged his head and wondered how it was that the children understood what I told them so well, and could not learn from him; and he laughed like anything when I replied that neither he nor I could teach them very much, but that **THEY** might teach us a good deal.

“How he could hate me and tell scandalous stories about me, living among children as he did, is what I cannot understand. Children soothe and heal the wounded heart. I remember there was one poor fellow at our professor’s who was being treated for madness, and you have no idea what those children did for him, eventually. I don’t think he was mad, but only terribly unhappy. But I’ll tell you all about him another day. Now I must get on with this story.

“The children did not love me at first; I was such a sickly, awkward kind of a fellow then—and I know I am ugly. Besides, I was a foreigner. The children used to laugh at me, at first; and they even went so far as to throw stones at me, when they saw me kiss Marie. I only kissed her once in my life—no, no, don’t laugh!” The prince hastened to suppress the smiles of his audience at this point. “It was not a matter of **LOVE** at all! If only you knew what a miserable creature she was, you would have pitied her, just as I did. She belonged to our village. Her mother was an old, old woman, and they used to sell string and thread, and soap and tobacco, out of the window of their little house, and lived on the pittance they gained by this trade. The old woman was ill and very old, and could hardly move. Marie was her daughter, a girl of twenty, weak and thin and consumptive; but still she did heavy work at the houses around, day by day. Well, one fine day a commercial traveller betrayed her and carried her off; and a week later he deserted her. She came home dirty, draggled, and shoeless; she had walked for a whole week without shoes; she had slept in the fields, and caught a terrible cold; her feet were swollen and sore, and her hands torn and scratched all over. She never had been pretty even before; but her eyes were quiet, innocent, kind eyes.

“She was very quiet always—and I remember once, when she had suddenly begun singing at her work, everyone said, ‘Marie tried to sing today!’ and she got so chaffed

that she was silent for ever after. She had been treated kindly in the place before; but when she came back now—ill and shunned and miserable—not one of them all had the slightest sympathy for her. Cruel people! Oh, what hazy understandings they have on such matters! Her mother was the first to show the way. She received her wrathfully, unkindly, and with contempt. ‘You have disgraced me,’ she said. She was the first to cast her into ignominy; but when they all heard that Marie had returned to the village, they ran out to see her and crowded into the little cottage—old men, children, women, girls—such a hurrying, stamping, greedy crowd. Marie was lying on the floor at the old woman’s feet, hungry, torn, draggled, crying, miserable.

“When everyone crowded into the room she hid her face in her dishevelled hair and lay cowering on the floor. Everyone looked at her as though she were a piece of dirt off the road. The old men scolded and condemned, and the young ones laughed at her. The women condemned her too, and looked at her contemptuously, just as though she were some loathsome insect.

“Her mother allowed all this to go on, and nodded her head and encouraged them. The old woman was very ill at that time, and knew she was dying (she really did die a couple of months later), and though she felt the end approaching she never thought of forgiving her daughter, to the very day of her death. She would not even speak to her. She made her sleep on straw in a shed, and hardly gave her food enough to support life.

“Marie was very gentle to her mother, and nursed her, and did everything for her; but the old woman accepted all her services without a word and never showed her the slightest kindness. Marie bore all this; and I could see when I got to know her that she thought it quite right and fitting, considering herself the lowest and meanest of creatures.

“When the old woman took to her bed finally, the other old women in the village sat with her by turns, as the custom is there; and then Marie was quite driven out of the house. They gave her no food at all, and she could not get any work in the village; none would employ her. The men seemed to consider her no longer a woman, they said such dreadful things to her. Sometimes on Sundays, if they were drunk enough, they used to throw her a penny or two, into the mud, and Marie would silently pick up the money. She had begun to spit blood at that time.

“At last her rags became so tattered and torn that she was ashamed of appearing in the village any longer. The children used to pelt her with mud; so she begged to be taken on as assistant cowherd, but the cowherd would not have her. Then she took to helping him without leave; and he saw how valuable her assistance was to him, and did not drive her away again; on the contrary, he occasionally gave her the remnants of his dinner, bread and cheese. He considered that he was being very kind. When the mother died, the village parson was not ashamed to hold Marie up to public derision and shame. Marie was standing at the coffin’s head, in all her rags, crying.

“A crowd of people had collected to see how she would cry. The parson, a young fellow ambitious of becoming a great preacher, began his sermon and pointed to Marie.

‘There,’ he said, ‘there is the cause of the death of this venerable woman’—(which was a lie, because she had been ill for at least two years)—‘there she stands before you, and dares not lift her eyes from the ground, because she knows that the finger of God is upon her. Look at her tatters and rags—the badge of those who lose their virtue. Who is she? her daughter!’ and so on to the end.

“And just fancy, this infamy pleased them, all of them, nearly. Only the children had altered—for then they were all on my side and had learned to love Marie.

“This is how it was: I had wished to do something for Marie; I longed to give her some money, but I never had a farthing while I was there. But I had a little diamond pin, and this I sold to a travelling pedlar; he gave me eight francs for it—it was worth at least forty.

“I long sought to meet Marie alone; and at last I did meet her, on the hillside beyond the village. I gave her the eight francs and asked her to take care of the money because I could get no more; and then I kissed her and said that she was not to suppose I kissed her with any evil motives or because I was in love with her, for that I did so solely out of pity for her, and because from the first I had not accounted her as guilty so much as unfortunate. I longed to console and encourage her somehow, and to assure her that she was not the low, base thing which she and others strove to make out; but I don’t think she understood me. She stood before me, dreadfully ashamed of herself, and with downcast eyes; and when I had finished she kissed my hand. I would have kissed hers, but she drew it away. Just at this moment the whole troop of children saw us. (I found out afterwards that they had long kept a watch upon me.) They all began whistling and clapping their hands, and laughing at us. Marie ran away at once; and when I tried to talk to them, they threw stones at me. All the village heard of it the same day, and Marie’s position became worse than ever. The children would not let her pass now in the streets, but annoyed her and threw dirt at her more than before. They used to run after her—she racing away with her poor feeble lungs panting and gasping, and they pelting her and shouting abuse at her.

“Once I had to interfere by force; and after that I took to speaking to them every day and whenever I could. Occasionally they stopped and listened; but they teased Marie all the same.

“I told them how unhappy Marie was, and after a while they stopped their abuse of her, and let her go by silently. Little by little we got into the way of conversing together, the children and I. I concealed nothing from them, I told them all. They listened very attentively and soon began to be sorry for Marie. At last some of them took to saying ‘Good-morning’ to her, kindly, when they met her. It is the custom there to salute anyone you meet with ‘Good-morning’ whether acquainted or not. I can imagine how astonished Marie was at these first greetings from the children.

“Once two little girls got hold of some food and took it to her, and came back and told me. They said she had burst into tears, and that they loved her very much now. Very soon after that they all became fond of Marie, and at the same time they began to develop the greatest affection for myself. They often came to me and begged me

to tell them stories. I think I must have told stories well, for they did so love to hear them. At last I took to reading up interesting things on purpose to pass them on to the little ones, and this went on for all the rest of my time there, three years. Later, when everyone—even Schneider—was angry with me for hiding nothing from the children, I pointed out how foolish it was, for they always knew things, only they learnt them in a way that soiled their minds but not so from me. One has only to remember one's own childhood to admit the truth of this. But nobody was convinced... It was two weeks before her mother died that I had kissed Marie; and when the clergyman preached that sermon the children were all on my side.

“When I told them what a shame it was of the parson to talk as he had done, and explained my reason, they were so angry that some of them went and broke his windows with stones. Of course I stopped them, for that was not right, but all the village heard of it, and how I caught it for spoiling the children! Everyone discovered now that the little ones had taken to being fond of Marie, and their parents were terribly alarmed; but Marie was so happy. The children were forbidden to meet her; but they used to run out of the village to the herd and take her food and things; and sometimes just ran off there and kissed her, and said, ‘Je vous aime, Marie!’ and then trotted back again. They imagined that I was in love with Marie, and this was the only point on which I did not undeceive them, for they got such enjoyment out of it. And what delicacy and tenderness they showed!

“In the evening I used to walk to the waterfall. There was a spot there which was quite closed in and hidden from view by large trees; and to this spot the children used to come to me. They could not bear that their dear Leon should love a poor girl without shoes to her feet and dressed all in rags and tatters. So, would you believe it, they actually clubbed together, somehow, and bought her shoes and stockings, and some linen, and even a dress! I can't understand how they managed it, but they did it, all together. When I asked them about it they only laughed and shouted, and the little girls clapped their hands and kissed me. I sometimes went to see Marie secretly, too. She had become very ill, and could hardly walk. She still went with the herd, but could not help the herdsman any longer. She used to sit on a stone near, and wait there almost motionless all day, till the herd went home. Her consumption was so advanced, and she was so weak, that she used to sit with closed eyes, breathing heavily. Her face was as thin as a skeleton's, and sweat used to stand on her white brow in large drops. I always found her sitting just like that. I used to come up quietly to look at her; but Marie would hear me, open her eyes, and tremble violently as she kissed my hands. I did not take my hand away because it made her happy to have it, and so she would sit and cry quietly. Sometimes she tried to speak; but it was very difficult to understand her. She was almost like a madwoman, with excitement and ecstasy, whenever I came. Occasionally the children came with me; when they did so, they would stand some way off and keep guard over us, so as to tell me if anybody came near. This was a great pleasure to them.

“When we left her, Marie used to relapse at once into her old condition, and sit with closed eyes and motionless limbs. One day she could not go out at all, and remained at home all alone in the empty hut; but the children very soon became aware of the fact, and nearly all of them visited her that day as she lay alone and helpless in her miserable bed.

“For two days the children looked after her, and then, when the village people got to know that Marie was really dying, some of the old women came and took it in turns to sit by her and look after her a bit. I think they began to be a little sorry for her in the village at last; at all events they did not interfere with the children any more, on her account.

“Marie lay in a state of uncomfortable delirium the whole while; she coughed dreadfully. The old women would not let the children stay in the room; but they all collected outside the window each morning, if only for a moment, and shouted ‘Bon jour, notre bonne Marie!’ and Marie no sooner caught sight of, or heard them, and she became quite animated at once, and, in spite of the old women, would try to sit up and nod her head and smile at them, and thank them. The little ones used to bring her nice things and sweets to eat, but she could hardly touch anything. Thanks to them, I assure you, the girl died almost perfectly happy. She almost forgot her misery, and seemed to accept their love as a sort of symbol of pardon for her offence, though she never ceased to consider herself a dreadful sinner. They used to flutter at her window just like little birds, calling out: ‘Nous t’aimons, Marie!’

“She died very soon; I had thought she would live much longer. The day before her death I went to see her for the last time, just before sunset. I think she recognized me, for she pressed my hand.

“Next morning they came and told me that Marie was dead. The children could not be restrained now; they went and covered her coffin with flowers, and put a wreath of lovely blossoms on her head. The pastor did not throw any more shameful words at the poor dead woman; but there were very few people at the funeral. However, when it came to carrying the coffin, all the children rushed up, to carry it themselves. Of course they could not do it alone, but they insisted on helping, and walked alongside and behind, crying.

“They have planted roses all round her grave, and every year they look alter the flowers and make Marie’s resting-place as beautiful as they can. I was in ill odour after all this with the parents of the children, and especially with the parson and schoolmaster. Schneider was obliged to promise that I should not meet them and talk to them; but we conversed from a distance by signs, and they used to write me sweet little notes. Afterwards I came closer than ever to those little souls, but even then it was very dear to me, to have them so fond of me.

“Schneider said that I did the children great harm by my pernicious ‘system’; what nonsense that was! And what did he mean by my system? He said afterwards that he believed I was a child myself—just before I came away. ‘You have the form and face of an adult’ he said, ‘but as regards soul, and character, and perhaps even intelligence,

you are a child in the completest sense of the word, and always will be, if you live to be sixty.' I laughed very much, for of course that is nonsense. But it is a fact that I do not care to be among grown-up people and much prefer the society of children. However kind people may be to me, I never feel quite at home with them, and am always glad to get back to my little companions. Now my companions have always been children, not because I was a child myself once, but because young things attract me. On one of the first days of my stay in Switzerland, I was strolling about alone and miserable, when I came upon the children rushing noisily out of school, with their slates and bags, and books, their games, their laughter and shouts—and my soul went out to them. I stopped and laughed happily as I watched their little feet moving so quickly. Girls and boys, laughing and crying; for as they went home many of them found time to fight and make peace, to weep and play. I forgot my troubles in looking at them. And then, all those three years, I tried to understand why men should be for ever tormenting themselves. I lived the life of a child there, and thought I should never leave the little village; indeed, I was far from thinking that I should ever return to Russia. But at last I recognized the fact that Schneider could not keep me any longer. And then something so important happened, that Schneider himself urged me to depart. I am going to see now if I can get good advice about it. Perhaps my lot in life will be changed; but that is not the principal thing. The principal thing is the entire change that has already come over me. I left many things behind me—too many. They have gone. On the journey I said to myself, 'I am going into the world of men. I don't know much, perhaps, but a new life has begun for me.' I made up my mind to be honest, and steadfast in accomplishing my task. Perhaps I shall meet with troubles and many disappointments, but I have made up my mind to be polite and sincere to everyone; more cannot be asked of me. People may consider me a child if they like. I am often called an idiot, and at one time I certainly was so ill that I was nearly as bad as an idiot; but I am not an idiot now. How can I possibly be so when I know myself that I am considered one?

"When I received a letter from those dear little souls, while passing through Berlin, I only then realized how much I loved them. It was very, very painful, getting that first little letter. How melancholy they had been when they saw me off! For a month before, they had been talking of my departure and sorrowing over it; and at the waterfall, of an evening, when we parted for the night, they would hug me so tight and kiss me so warmly, far more so than before. And every now and then they would turn up one by one when I was alone, just to give me a kiss and a hug, to show their love for me. The whole flock went with me to the station, which was about a mile from the village, and every now and then one of them would stop to throw his arms round me, and all the little girls had tears in their voices, though they tried hard not to cry. As the train steamed out of the station, I saw them all standing on the platform waving to me and crying 'Hurrah!' till they were lost in the distance.

"I assure you, when I came in here just now and saw your kind faces (I can read faces well) my heart felt light for the first time since that moment of parting. I think

I must be one of those who are born to be in luck, for one does not often meet with people whom one feels he can love from the first sight of their faces; and yet, no sooner do I step out of the railway carriage than I happen upon you!

“I know it is more or less a shamefaced thing to speak of one’s feelings before others; and yet here am I talking like this to you, and am not a bit ashamed or shy. I am an unsociable sort of fellow and shall very likely not come to see you again for some time; but don’t think the worse of me for that. It is not that I do not value your society; and you must never suppose that I have taken offence at anything.

“You asked me about your faces, and what I could read in them; I will tell you with the greatest pleasure. You, Adelaida Ivanovna, have a very happy face; it is the most sympathetic of the three. Not to speak of your natural beauty, one can look at your face and say to one’s self, ‘She has the face of a kind sister.’ You are simple and merry, but you can see into another’s heart very quickly. That’s what I read in your face.

“You too, Alexandra Ivanovna, have a very lovely face; but I think you may have some secret sorrow. Your heart is undoubtedly a kind, good one, but you are not merry. There is a certain suspicion of ‘shadow’ in your face, like in that of Holbein’s Madonna in Dresden. So much for your face. Have I guessed right?

“As for your face, Lizabetha Prokofievna, I not only think, but am perfectly SURE, that you are an absolute child—in all, in all, mind, both good and bad—and in spite of your years. Don’t be angry with me for saying so; you know what my feelings for children are. And do not suppose that I am so candid out of pure simplicity of soul. Oh dear no, it is by no means the case! Perhaps I have my own very profound object in view.”

VII.

When the prince ceased speaking all were gazing merrily at him— even Aglaya; but Lizabetha Prokofievna looked the jolliest of all.

“Well!” she cried, “we HAVE ‘put him through his paces,’ with a vengeance! My dears, you imagined, I believe, that you were about to patronize this young gentleman, like some poor protege picked up somewhere, and taken under your magnificent protection. What fools we were, and what a specially big fool is your father! Well done, prince! I assure you the general actually asked me to put you through your paces, and examine you. As to what you said about my face, you are absolutely correct in your judgment. I am a child, and know it. I knew it long before you said so; you have expressed my own thoughts. I think your nature and mine must be extremely alike, and I am very glad of it. We are like two drops of water, only you are a man and I a woman, and I’ve not been to Switzerland, and that is all the difference between us.”

“Don’t be in a hurry, mother; the prince says that he has some motive behind his simplicity,” cried Aglaya.

“Yes, yes, so he does,” laughed the others.

"Oh, don't you begin bantering him," said mamma. "He is probably a good deal cleverer than all three of you girls put together. We shall see. Only you haven't told us anything about Aglaya yet, prince; and Aglaya and I are both waiting to hear."

"I cannot say anything at present. I'll tell you afterwards."

"Why? Her face is clear enough, isn't it?"

"Oh yes, of course. You are very beautiful, Aglaya Ivanovna, so beautiful that one is afraid to look at you."

"Is that all? What about her character?" persisted Mrs. Epanchin.

"It is difficult to judge when such beauty is concerned. I have not prepared my judgment. Beauty is a riddle."

"That means that you have set Aglaya a riddle!" said Adelaida. "Guess it, Aglaya! But she's pretty, prince, isn't she?"

"Most wonderfully so," said the latter, warmly, gazing at Aglaya with admiration. "Almost as lovely as Nastasia Philipovna, but quite a different type."

All present exchanged looks of surprise.

"As lovely as WHO?" said Mrs. Epanchin. "As NASTASIA PHILIPOVNA? Where have you seen Nastasia Philipovna? What Nastasia Philipovna?"

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch showed the general her portrait just now."

"How so? Did he bring the portrait for my husband?"

"Only to show it. Nastasia Philipovna gave it to Gavrila Ardalionovitch today, and the latter brought it here to show to the general."

"I must see it!" cried Mrs. Epanchin. "Where is the portrait? If she gave it to him, he must have it; and he is still in the study. He never leaves before four o'clock on Wednesdays. Send for Gavrila Ardalionovitch at once. No, I don't long to see HIM so much. Look here, dear prince, BE so kind, will you? Just step to the study and fetch this portrait! Say we want to look at it. Please do this for me, will you?"

"He is a nice fellow, but a little too simple," said Adelaida, as the prince left the room.

"He is, indeed," said Alexandra; "almost laughably so at times."

Neither one nor the other seemed to give expression to her full thoughts.

"He got out of it very neatly about our faces, though," said Aglaya. "He flattered us all round, even mamma."

"Nonsense" cried the latter. "He did not flatter me. It was I who found his appreciation flattering. I think you are a great deal more foolish than he is. He is simple, of course, but also very knowing. Just like myself."

"How stupid of me to speak of the portrait," thought the prince as he entered the study, with a feeling of guilt at his heart, "and yet, perhaps I was right after all." He had an idea, unformed as yet, but a strange idea.

Gavrila Ardalionovitch was still sitting in the study, buried in a mass of papers. He looked as though he did not take his salary from the public company, whose servant he was, for a sinecure.

He grew very wroth and confused when the prince asked for the portrait, and explained how it came about that he had spoken of it.

“Oh, curse it all,” he said; “what on earth must you go blabbing for? You know nothing about the thing, and yet—idiot!” he added, muttering the last word to himself in irrepressible rage.

“I am very sorry; I was not thinking at the time. I merely said that Aglaya was almost as beautiful as Nastasia Philipovna.”

Gania asked for further details; and the prince once more repeated the conversation. Gania looked at him with ironical contempt the while.

“Nastasia Philipovna,” he began, and there paused; he was clearly much agitated and annoyed. The prince reminded him of the portrait.

“Listen, prince,” said Gania, as though an idea had just struck him, “I wish to ask you a great favour, and yet I really don’t know—”

He paused again, he was trying to make up his mind to something, and was turning the matter over. The prince waited quietly. Once more Gania fixed him with intent and questioning eyes.

“Prince,” he began again, “they are rather angry with me, in there, owing to a circumstance which I need not explain, so that I do not care to go in at present without an invitation. I particularly wish to speak to Aglaya, but I have written a few words in case I shall not have the chance of seeing her” (here the prince observed a small note in his hand), “and I do not know how to get my communication to her. Don’t you think you could undertake to give it to her at once, but only to her, mind, and so that no one else should see you give it? It isn’t much of a secret, but still—Well, will you do it?”

“I don’t quite like it,” replied the prince.

“Oh, but it is absolutely necessary for me,” Gania entreated. “Believe me, if it were not so, I would not ask you; how else am I to get it to her? It is most important, dreadfully important!”

Gania was evidently much alarmed at the idea that the prince would not consent to take his note, and he looked at him now with an expression of absolute entreaty.

“Well, I will take it then.”

“But mind, nobody is to see!” cried the delighted Gania “And of course I may rely on your word of honour, eh?”

“I won’t show it to anyone,” said the prince.

“The letter is not sealed—” continued Gania, and paused in confusion.

“Oh, I won’t read it,” said the prince, quite simply.

He took up the portrait, and went out of the room.

Gania, left alone, clutched his head with his hands.

“One word from her,” he said, “one word from her, and I may yet be free.”

He could not settle himself to his papers again, for agitation and excitement, but began walking up and down the room from corner to corner.

The prince walked along, musing. He did not like his commission, and disliked the idea of Gania sending a note to Aglaya at all; but when he was two rooms distant from the drawing-room, where they all were, he stopped a though recalling something; went to the window, nearer the light, and began to examine the portrait in his hand.

He longed to solve the mystery of something in the face Nastasia Philipovna, something which had struck him as he looked at the portrait for the first time; the impression had not left him. It was partly the fact of her marvellous beauty that struck him, and partly something else. There was a suggestion of immense pride and disdain in the face almost of hatred, and at the same time something confiding and very full of simplicity. The contrast aroused a deep sympathy in his heart as he looked at the lovely face. The blinding loveliness of it was almost intolerable, this pale thin face with its flaming eyes; it was a strange beauty.

The prince gazed at it for a minute or two, then glanced around him, and hurriedly raised the portrait to his lips. When, a minute after, he reached the drawing-room door, his face was quite composed. But just as he reached the door he met Aglaya coming out alone.

“Gavrila Ardalionovitch begged me to give you this,” he said, handing her the note.

Aglaya stopped, took the letter, and gazed strangely into the prince’s eyes. There was no confusion in her face; a little surprise, perhaps, but that was all. By her look she seemed merely to challenge the prince to an explanation as to how he and Gania happened to be connected in this matter. But her expression was perfectly cool and quiet, and even condescending.

So they stood for a moment or two, confronting one another. At length a faint smile passed over her face, and she passed by him without a word.

Mrs. Epanchin examined the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna for some little while, holding it critically at arm’s length.

“Yes, she is pretty,” she said at last, “even very pretty. I have seen her twice, but only at a distance. So you admire this kind of beauty, do you?” she asked the prince, suddenly.

“Yes, I do—this kind.”

“Do you mean especially this kind?”

“Yes, especially this kind.”

“Why?”

“There is much suffering in this face,” murmured the prince, more as though talking to himself than answering the question.

“I think you are wandering a little, prince,” Mrs. Epanchin decided, after a lengthened survey of his face; and she tossed the portrait on to the table, haughtily.

Alexandra took it, and Adelaida came up, and both the girls examined the photograph. Just then Aglaya entered the room.

“What a power!” cried Adelaida suddenly, as she earnestly examined the portrait over her sister’s shoulder.

“Whom? What power?” asked her mother, crossly.

“Such beauty is real power,” said Adelaida. “With such beauty as that one might overthrow the world.” She returned to her easel thoughtfully.

Aglaya merely glanced at the portrait—frowned, and put out her underlip; then went and sat down on the sofa with folded hands. Mrs. Epanchin rang the bell.

“Ask Gavril Ardalionovitch to step this way,” said she to the man who answered.

“Mamma!” cried Alexandra, significantly.

“I shall just say two words to him, that’s all,” said her mother, silencing all objection by her manner; she was evidently seriously put out. “You see, prince, it is all secrets with us, just now—all secrets. It seems to be the etiquette of the house, for some reason or, other. Stupid nonsense, and in a matter which ought to be approached with all candour and open-heartedness. There is a marriage being talked of, and I don’t like this marriage—”

“Mamma, what are you saying?” said Alexandra again, hurriedly.

“Well, what, my dear girl? As if you can possibly like it yourself? The heart is the great thing, and the rest is all rubbish—though one must have sense as well. Perhaps sense is really the great thing. Don’t smile like that, Aglaya. I don’t contradict myself. A fool with a heart and no brains is just as unhappy as a fool with brains and no heart. I am one and you are the other, and therefore both of us suffer, both of us are unhappy.”

“Why are you so unhappy, mother?” asked Adelaida, who alone of all the company seemed to have preserved her good temper and spirits up to now.

“In the first place, because of my carefully brought-up daughters,” said Mrs. Epanchin, cuttingly; “and as that is the best reason I can give you we need not bother about any other at present. Enough of words, now! We shall see how both of you (I don’t count Aglaya) will manage your business, and whether you, most revered Alexandra Ivanovna, will be happy with your fine mate.”

“Ah!” she added, as Gania suddenly entered the room, “here’s another marrying subject. How do you do?” she continued, in response to Gania’s bow; but she did not invite him to sit down. “You are going to be married?”

“Married? how—what marriage?” murmured Gania, overwhelmed with confusion.

“Are you about to take a wife? I ask,—if you prefer that expression.”

“No, no I-I—no!” said Gania, bringing out his lie with a tell-tale blush of shame. He glanced keenly at Aglaya, who was sitting some way off, and dropped his eyes immediately.

Aglaya gazed coldly, intently, and composedly at him, without taking her eyes off his face, and watched his confusion.

“No? You say no, do you?” continued the pitiless Mrs. General. “Very well, I shall remember that you told me this Wednesday morning, in answer to my question, that you are not going to be married. What day is it, Wednesday, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I think so!” said Adelaida.

“You never know the day of the week; what’s the day of the month?”

“Twenty-seventh!” said Gania.

“Twenty-seventh; very well. Good-bye now; you have a good deal to do, I’m sure, and I must dress and go out. Take your portrait. Give my respects to your unfortunate mother, Nina Alexandrovna. Au revoir, dear prince, come in and see us often, do; and I shall tell old Princess Bielokonski about you. I shall go and see her on purpose. And listen, my dear boy, I feel sure that God has sent you to Petersburg from Switzerland on purpose for me. Maybe you will have other things to do, besides, but you are sent chiefly for my sake, I feel sure of it. God sent you to me! Au revoir! Alexandra, come with me, my dear.”

Mrs. Epanchin left the room.

Gania—confused, annoyed, furious—took up his portrait, and turned to the prince with a nasty smile on his face.

“Prince,” he said, “I am just going home. If you have not changed your mind as to living with us, perhaps you would like to come with me. You don’t know the address, I believe?”

“Wait a minute, prince,” said Aglaya, suddenly rising from her seat, “do write something in my album first, will you? Father says you are a most talented caligraphist; I’ll bring you my book in a minute.” She left the room.

“Well, au revoir, prince,” said Adelaida, “I must be going too.” She pressed the prince’s hand warmly, and gave him a friendly smile as she left the room. She did not so much as look at Gania.

“This is your doing, prince,” said Gania, turning on the latter so soon as the others were all out of the room. “This is your doing, sir! YOU have been telling them that I am going to be married!” He said this in a hurried whisper, his eyes flashing with rage and his face ablaze. “You shameless tattler!”

“I assure you, you are under a delusion,” said the prince, calmly and politely. “I did not even know that you were to be married.”

“You heard me talking about it, the general and me. You heard me say that everything was to be settled today at Nastasia Philipovna’s, and you went and blurted it out here. You lie if you deny it. Who else could have told them Devil take it, sir, who could have told them except yourself? Didn’t the old woman as good as hint as much to me?”

“If she hinted to you who told her you must know best, of course; but I never said a word about it.”

“Did you give my note? Is there an answer?” interrupted Gania, impatiently.

But at this moment Aglaya came back, and the prince had no time to reply.

“There, prince,” said she, “there’s my album. Now choose a page and write me something, will you? There’s a pen, a new one; do you mind a steel one? I have heard that you caligraphists don’t like steel pens.”

Conversing with the prince, Aglaya did not even seem to notice that Gania was in the room. But while the prince was getting his pen ready, finding a page, and making his preparations to write, Gania came up to the fireplace where Aglaya was standing, to the right of the prince, and in trembling, broken accents said, almost in her ear:

“One word, just one word from you, and I’m saved.”

The prince turned sharply round and looked at both of them. Gania’s face was full of real despair; he seemed to have said the words almost unconsciously and on the impulse of the moment.

Aglaya gazed at him for some seconds with precisely the same composure and calm astonishment as she had shown a little while before, when the prince handed her the note, and it appeared that this calm surprise and seemingly absolute incomprehension of what was said to her, were more terribly overwhelming to Gania than even the most plainly expressed disdain would have been.

“What shall I write?” asked the prince.

“I’ll dictate to you,” said Aglaya, coming up to the table. “Now then, are you ready? Write, ‘I never condescend to bargain!’ Now put your name and the date. Let me see it.”

The prince handed her the album.

“Capital! How beautifully you have written it! Thanks so much. Au revoir, prince. Wait a minute,”; she added, “I want to give you something for a keepsake. Come with me this way, will you?”

The prince followed her. Arrived at the dining-room, she stopped.

“Read this,” she said, handing him Gania’s note.

The prince took it from her hand, but gazed at her in bewilderment.

“Oh! I KNOW you haven’t read it, and that you could never be that man’s accomplice. Read it, I wish you to read it.”

The letter had evidently been written in a hurry:

“My fate is to be decided today” (it ran), “you know how. This day I must give my word irrevocably. I have no right to ask your help, and I dare not allow myself to indulge in any hopes; but once you said just one word, and that word lighted up the night of my life, and became the beacon of my days. Say one more such word, and save me from utter ruin. Only tell me, ‘break off the whole thing!’ and I will do so this very day. Oh! what can it cost you to say just this one word? In doing so you will but be giving me a sign of your sympathy for me, and of your pity; only this, only this; nothing more, NOTHING. I dare not indulge in any hope, because I am unworthy of it. But if you say but this word, I will take up my cross again with joy, and return once more to my battle with poverty. I shall meet the storm and be glad of it; I shall rise up with renewed strength.

“Send me back then this one word of sympathy, only sympathy, I swear to you; and oh! do not be angry with the audacity of despair, with the drowning man who has dared to make this last effort to save himself from perishing beneath the waters.

“G.L.”

“This man assures me,” said Aglaya, scornfully, when the prince had finished reading the letter, “that the words ‘break off everything’ do not commit me to anything whatever; and himself gives me a written guarantee to that effect, in this letter. Observe how ingenuously he underlines certain words, and how crudely he glosses over his

hidden thoughts. He must know that if he 'broke off everything,' FIRST, by himself, and without telling me a word about it or having the slightest hope on my account, that in that case I should perhaps be able to change my opinion of him, and even accept his—friendship. He must know that, but his soul is such a wretched thing. He knows it and cannot make up his mind; he knows it and yet asks for guarantees. He cannot bring himself to TRUST, he wants me to give him hopes of myself before he lets go of his hundred thousand roubles. As to the 'former word' which he declares 'lighted up the night of his life,' he is simply an impudent liar; I merely pitied him once. But he is audacious and shameless. He immediately began to hope, at that very moment. I saw it. He has tried to catch me ever since; he is still fishing for me. Well, enough of this. Take the letter and give it back to him, as soon as you have left our house; not before, of course."

"And what shall I tell him by way of answer?"

"Nothing—of course! That's the best answer. Is it the case that you are going to live in his house?"

"Yes, your father kindly recommended me to him."

"Then look out for him, I warn you! He won't forgive you easily, for taking back the letter."

Aglaya pressed the prince's hand and left the room. Her face was serious and frowning; she did not even smile as she nodded good-bye to him at the door.

"I'll just get my parcel and we'll go," said the prince to Gania, as he re-entered the drawing-room. Gania stamped his foot with impatience. His face looked dark and gloomy with rage.

At last they left the house behind them, the prince carrying his bundle.

"The answer—quick—the answer!" said Gania, the instant they were outside. "What did she say? Did you give the letter?" The prince silently held out the note. Gania was struck motionless with amazement.

"How, what? my letter?" he cried. "He never delivered it! I might have guessed it, oh! curse him! Of course she did not understand what I meant, naturally! Why-why-WHY didn't you give her the note, you—"

"Excuse me; I was able to deliver it almost immediately after receiving your commission, and I gave it, too, just as you asked me to. It has come into my hands now because Aglaya Ivanovna has just returned it to me."

"How? When?"

"As soon as I finished writing in her album for her, and when she asked me to come out of the room with her (you heard?), we went into the dining-room, and she gave me your letter to read, and then told me to return it."

"To READ?" cried Gania, almost at the top of his voice; "to READ, and you read it?"

And again he stood like a log in the middle of the pavement; so amazed that his mouth remained open after the last word had left it.

"Yes, I have just read it."

“And she gave it you to read herself—HERSELF?”

“Yes, herself; and you may believe me when I tell you that I would not have read it for anything without her permission.”

Gania was silent for a minute or two, as though thinking out some problem. Suddenly he cried:

“It’s impossible, she cannot have given it to you to read! You are lying. You read it yourself!”

“I am telling you the truth,” said the prince in his former composed tone of voice; “and believe me, I am extremely sorry that the circumstance should have made such an unpleasant impression upon you!”

“But, you wretched man, at least she must have said something? There must be SOME answer from her!”

“Yes, of course, she did say something!”

“Out with it then, damn it! Out with it at once!” and Gania stamped his foot twice on the pavement.

“As soon as I had finished reading it, she told me that you were fishing for her; that you wished to compromise her so far as to receive some hopes from her, trusting to which hopes you might break with the prospect of receiving a hundred thousand roubles. She said that if you had done this without bargaining with her, if you had broken with the money prospects without trying to force a guarantee out of her first, she might have been your friend. That’s all, I think. Oh no, when I asked her what I was to say, as I took the letter, she replied that ‘no answer is the best answer.’ I think that was it. Forgive me if I do not use her exact expressions. I tell you the sense as I understood it myself.”

Ungovernable rage and madness took entire possession of Gania, and his fury burst out without the least attempt at restraint.

“Oh! that’s it, is it!” he yelled. “She throws my letters out of the window, does she! Oh! and she does not condescend to bargain, while I DO, eh? We shall see, we shall see! I shall pay her out for this.”

He twisted himself about with rage, and grew paler and paler; he shook his fist. So the pair walked along a few steps. Gania did not stand on ceremony with the prince; he behaved just as though he were alone in his room. He clearly counted the latter as a nonentity. But suddenly he seemed to have an idea, and recollected himself.

“But how was it?” he asked, “how was it that you (idiot that you are),” he added to himself, “were so very confidential a couple of hours after your first meeting with these people? How was that, eh?”

Up to this moment jealousy had not been one of his torments; now it suddenly gnawed at his heart.

“That is a thing I cannot undertake to explain,” replied the prince. Gania looked at him with angry contempt.

“Oh! I suppose the present she wished to make to you, when she took you into the dining-room, was her confidence, eh?”

"I suppose that was it; I cannot explain it otherwise?"

"But why, WHY? Devil take it, what did you do in there? Why did they fancy you? Look here, can't you remember exactly what you said to them, from the very beginning? Can't you remember?"

"Oh, we talked of a great many things. When first I went in we began to speak of Switzerland."

"Oh, the devil take Switzerland!"

"Then about executions."

"Executions?"

"Yes—at least about one. Then I told the whole three years' story of my life, and the history of a poor peasant girl—"

"Oh, damn the peasant girl! go on, go on!" said Gania, impatiently.

"Then how Schneider told me about my childish nature, and—"

"Oh, CURSE Schneider and his dirty opinions! Go on."

"Then I began to talk about faces, at least about the EXPRESSIONS of faces, and said that Aglaya Ivanovna was nearly as lovely as Nastasia Philipovna. It was then I blurted out about the portrait—"

"But you didn't repeat what you heard in the study? You didn't repeat that—eh?"

"No, I tell you I did NOT."

"Then how did they—look here! Did Aglaya show my letter to the old lady?"

"Oh, there I can give you my fullest assurance that she did NOT. I was there all the while—she had no time to do it!"

"But perhaps you may not have observed it, oh, you damned idiot, you!" he shouted, quite beside himself with fury. "You can't even describe what went on."

Gania having once descended to abuse, and receiving no check, very soon knew no bounds or limit to his licence, as is often the way in such cases. His rage so blinded him that he had not even been able to detect that this "idiot," whom he was abusing to such an extent, was very far from being slow of comprehension, and had a way of taking in an impression, and afterwards giving it out again, which was very un-idiotic indeed. But something a little unforeseen now occurred.

"I think I ought to tell you, Gavriila Ardalionovitch," said the prince, suddenly, "that though I once was so ill that I really was little better than an idiot, yet now I am almost recovered, and that, therefore, it is not altogether pleasant to be called an idiot to my face. Of course your anger is excusable, considering the treatment you have just experienced; but I must remind you that you have twice abused me rather rudely. I do not like this sort of thing, and especially so at the first time of meeting a man, and, therefore, as we happen to be at this moment standing at a crossroad, don't you think we had better part, you to the left, homewards, and I to the right, here? I have twenty-five roubles, and I shall easily find a lodging."

Gania was much confused, and blushed for shame "Do forgive me, prince!" he cried, suddenly changing his abusive tone for one of great courtesy. "For Heaven's sake, forgive me! You see what a miserable plight I am in, but you hardly know anything of the

facts of the case as yet. If you did, I am sure you would forgive me, at least partially. Of course it was inexcusable of me, I know, but—”

“Oh, dear me, I really do not require such profuse apologies,” replied the prince, hastily. “I quite understand how unpleasant your position is, and that is what made you abuse me. So come along to your house, after all. I shall be delighted—”

“I am not going to let him go like this,” thought Gania, glancing angrily at the prince as they walked along. “The fellow has sucked everything out of me, and now he takes off his mask— there’s something more than appears, here we shall see. It shall all be as clear as water by tonight, everything!”

But by this time they had reached Gania’s house.

VIII.

The flat occupied by Gania and his family was on the third floor of the house. It was reached by a clean light staircase, and consisted of seven rooms, a nice enough lodging, and one would have thought a little too good for a clerk on two thousand roubles a year. But it was designed to accommodate a few lodgers on board terms, and had been taken a few months since, much to the disgust of Gania, at the urgent request of his mother and his sister, Varvara Ardalionovna, who longed to do something to increase the family income a little, and fixed their hopes upon letting lodgings. Gania frowned upon the idea. He thought it *infra dig*, and did not quite like appearing in society afterwards—that society in which he had been accustomed to pose up to now as a young man of rather brilliant prospects. All these concessions and rebuffs of fortune, of late, had wounded his spirit severely, and his temper had become extremely irritable, his wrath being generally quite out of proportion to the cause. But if he had made up his mind to put up with this sort of life for a while, it was only on the plain understanding with his inner self that he would very soon change it all, and have things as he chose again. Yet the very means by which he hoped to make this change threatened to involve him in even greater difficulties than he had had before.

The flat was divided by a passage which led straight out of the entrance-hall. Along one side of this corridor lay the three rooms which were designed for the accommodation of the “highly recommended” lodgers. Besides these three rooms there was another small one at the end of the passage, close to the kitchen, which was allotted to General Ivolgin, the nominal master of the house, who slept on a wide sofa, and was obliged to pass into and out of his room through the kitchen, and up or down the back stairs. Colia, Gania’s young brother, a school-boy of thirteen, shared this room with his father. He, too, had to sleep on an old sofa, a narrow, uncomfortable thing with a torn rug over it; his chief duty being to look after his father, who needed to be watched more and more every day.

The prince was given the middle room of the three, the first being occupied by one Ferdishenko, while the third was empty.

But Gania first conducted the prince to the family apartments. These consisted of a "salon," which became the dining-room when required; a drawing-room, which was only a drawing-room in the morning, and became Gania's study in the evening, and his bedroom at night; and lastly Nina Alexandrovna's and Varvara's bedroom, a small, close chamber which they shared together.

In a word, the whole place was confined, and a "tight fit" for the party. Gania used to grind his teeth with rage over the state of affairs; though he was anxious to be dutiful and polite to his mother. However, it was very soon apparent to anyone coming into the house, that Gania was the tyrant of the family.

Nina Alexandrovna and her daughter were both seated in the drawing-room, engaged in knitting, and talking to a visitor, Ivan Petrovitch Ptitsin.

The lady of the house appeared to be a woman of about fifty years of age, thin-faced, and with black lines under the eyes. She looked ill and rather sad; but her face was a pleasant one for all that; and from the first word that fell from her lips, any stranger would at once conclude that she was of a serious and particularly sincere nature. In spite of her sorrowful expression, she gave the idea of possessing considerable firmness and decision.

Her dress was modest and simple to a degree, dark and elderly in style; but both her face and appearance gave evidence that she had seen better days.

Varvara was a girl of some twenty-three summers, of middle height, thin, but possessing a face which, without being actually beautiful, had the rare quality of charm, and might fascinate even to the extent of passionate regard.

She was very like her mother: she even dressed like her, which proved that she had no taste for smart clothes. The expression of her grey eyes was merry and gentle, when it was not, as lately, too full of thought and anxiety. The same decision and firmness was to be observed in her face as in her mother's, but her strength seemed to be more vigorous than that of Nina Alexandrovna. She was subject to outbursts of temper, of which even her brother was a little afraid.

The present visitor, Ptitsin, was also afraid of her. This was a young fellow of something under thirty, dressed plainly, but neatly. His manners were good, but rather ponderously so. His dark beard bore evidence to the fact that he was not in any government employ. He could speak well, but preferred silence. On the whole he made a decidedly agreeable impression. He was clearly attracted by Varvara, and made no secret of his feelings. She trusted him in a friendly way, but had not shown him any decided encouragement as yet, which fact did not quell his ardour in the least.

Nina Alexandrovna was very fond of him, and had grown quite confidential with him of late. Ptitsin, as was well known, was engaged in the business of lending out money on good security, and at a good rate of interest. He was a great friend of Gania's.

After a formal introduction by Gania (who greeted his mother very shortly, took no notice of his sister, and immediately marched Ptitsin out of the room), Nina Alexandrovna addressed a few kind words to the prince and forthwith requested Colia, who had just appeared at the door, to show him to the "middle room."

Colia was a nice-looking boy. His expression was simple and confiding, and his manners were very polite and engaging.

“Where’s your luggage?” he asked, as he led the prince away to his room.

“I had a bundle; it’s in the entrance hall.”

“I’ll bring it you directly. We only have a cook and one maid, so I have to help as much as I can. Varia looks after things, generally, and loses her temper over it. Gania says you have only just arrived from Switzerland? “

“Yes.”

“Is it jolly there?”

“Very.”

“Mountains?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll go and get your bundle.”

Here Varvara joined them.

“The maid shall bring your bed-linen directly. Have you a portmanteau?”

“No; a bundle—your brother has just gone to the hall for it.”

“There’s nothing there except this,” said Colia, returning at this moment. “Where did you put it?”

“Oh! but that’s all I have,” said the prince, taking it.

“Ah! I thought perhaps Ferdishenko had taken it.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” said Varia, severely. She seemed put out, and was only just polite with the prince.

“Oho!” laughed the boy, “you can be nicer than that to ME, you know—I’m not Ptitsin!”

“You ought to be whipped, Colia, you silly boy. If you want anything” (to the prince) “please apply to the servant. We dine at half-past four. You can take your dinner with us, or have it in your room, just as you please. Come along, Colia, don’t disturb the prince.”

At the door they met Gania coming in.

“Is father in?” he asked. Colia whispered something in his ear and went out.

“Just a couple of words, prince, if you’ll excuse me. Don’t blab over THERE about what you may see here, or in this house as to all that about Aglaya and me, you know. Things are not altogether pleasant in this establishment—devil take it all! You’ll see. At all events keep your tongue to yourself for TODAY.”

“I assure you I ‘blabbed’ a great deal less than you seem to suppose,” said the prince, with some annoyance. Clearly the relations between Gania and himself were by no means improving.

“Oh I well; I caught it quite hot enough today, thanks to you. However, I forgive you.”

“I think you might fairly remember that I was not in any way bound, I had no reason to be silent about that portrait. You never asked me not to mention it.”

“Pfu! what a wretched room this is—dark, and the window looking into the yard. Your coming to our house is, in no respect, opportune. However, it’s not MY affair. I don’t keep the lodgings.”

Ptitsin here looked in and beckoned to Gania, who hastily left the room, in spite of the fact that he had evidently wished to say something more and had only made the remark about the room to gain time. The prince had hardly had time to wash and tidy himself a little when the door opened once more, and another figure appeared.

This was a gentleman of about thirty, tall, broadshouldered, and red-haired; his face was red, too, and he possessed a pair of thick lips, a wide nose, small eyes, rather bloodshot, and with an ironical expression in them; as though he were perpetually winking at someone. His whole appearance gave one the idea of impudence; his dress was shabby.

He opened the door just enough to let his head in. His head remained so placed for a few seconds while he quietly scrutinized the room; the door then opened enough to admit his body; but still he did not enter. He stood on the threshold and examined the prince carefully. At last he gave the door a final shove, entered, approached the prince, took his hand and seated himself and the owner of the room on two chairs side by side.

“Ferdishenko,” he said, gazing intently and inquiringly into the prince’s eyes.

“Very well, what next?” said the latter, almost laughing in his face.

“A lodger here,” continued the other, staring as before.

“Do you wish to make acquaintance?” asked the prince.

“Ah!” said the visitor, passing his fingers through his hair and sighing. He then looked over to the other side of the room and around it. “Got any money?” he asked, suddenly.

“Not much.”

“How much?”

“Twenty-five roubles.”

“Let’s see it.”

The prince took his banknote out and showed it to Ferdishenko. The latter unfolded it and looked at it; then he turned it round and examined the other side; then he held it up to the light.

“How strange that it should have browned so,” he said, reflectively. “These twenty-five rouble notes brown in a most extraordinary way, while other notes often grow paler. Take it.”

The prince took his note. Ferdishenko rose.

“I came here to warn you,” he said. “In the first place, don’t lend me any money, for I shall certainly ask you to.”

“Very well.”

“Shall you pay here?”

“Yes, I intend to.”

“Oh! I DON’T intend to. Thanks. I live here, next door to you; you noticed a room, did you? Don’t come to me very often; I shall see you here quite often enough. Have you seen the general?”

“No.”

“Nor heard him?”

“No; of course not.”

“Well, you’ll both hear and see him soon; he even tries to borrow money from me. Avis au lecteur. Good-bye; do you think a man can possibly live with a name like Ferdishenko?”

“Why not?”

“Good-bye.”

And so he departed. The prince found out afterwards that this gentleman made it his business to amaze people with his originality and wit, but that it did not as a rule “come off.” He even produced a bad impression on some people, which grieved him sorely; but he did not change his ways for all that.

As he went out of the prince’s room, he collided with yet another visitor coming in. Ferdishenko took the opportunity of making several warning gestures to the prince from behind the new arrival’s back, and left the room in conscious pride.

This next arrival was a tall red-faced man of about fifty-five, with greyish hair and whiskers, and large eyes which stood out of their sockets. His appearance would have been distinguished had it not been that he gave the idea of being rather dirty. He was dressed in an old coat, and he smelled of vodka when he came near. His walk was effective, and he clearly did his best to appear dignified, and to impress people by his manner.

This gentleman now approached the prince slowly, and with a most courteous smile; silently took his hand and held it in his own, as he examined the prince’s features as though searching for familiar traits therein.

“‘Tis he, ‘tis he!” he said at last, quietly, but with much solemnity. “As though he were alive once more. I heard the familiar name—the dear familiar name—and, oh, I how it reminded me of the irrevocable past—Prince Muishkin, I believe ?”

“Exactly so.”

“General Ivolgin—retired and unfortunate. May I ask your Christian and generic names?”

“Lef Nicolaievitch.”

“So, so—the son of my old, I may say my childhood’s friend, Nicolai Petrovitch.”

“My father’s name was Nicolai Lvovitch.”

“Lvovitch,” repeated the general without the slightest haste, and with perfect confidence, just as though he had not committed himself the least in the world, but merely made a little slip of the tongue. He sat down, and taking the prince’s hand, drew him to a seat next to himself.

“I carried you in my arms as a baby,” he observed.

“Really?” asked the prince. “Why, it’s twenty years since my father died.”

“Yes, yes—twenty years and three months. We were educated together; I went straight into the army, and he—”

“My father went into the army, too. He was a sub-lieutenant in the Vasiliefsky regiment.”

“No, sir—in the Bielomirsky; he changed into the latter shortly before his death. I was at his bedside when he died, and gave him my blessing for eternity. Your mother—” The general paused, as though overcome with emotion.

“She died a few months later, from a cold,” said the prince.

“Oh, not cold—believe an old man—not from a cold, but from grief for her prince. Oh—your mother, your mother! heigh-ho! Youth—youth! Your father and I—old friends as we were—nearly murdered each other for her sake.”

The prince began to be a little incredulous.

“I was passionately in love with her when she was engaged—engaged to my friend. The prince noticed the fact and was furious. He came and woke me at seven o’clock one morning. I rise and dress in amazement; silence on both sides. I understand it all. He takes a couple of pistols out of his pocket—across a handkerchief—without witnesses. Why invite witnesses when both of us would be walking in eternity in a couple of minutes? The pistols are loaded; we stretch the handkerchief and stand opposite one another. We aim the pistols at each other’s hearts. Suddenly tears start to our eyes, our hands shake; we weep, we embrace—the battle is one of self-sacrifice now! The prince shouts, ‘She is yours;’ I cry, ‘She is yours—’ in a word, in a word—You’ve come to live with us, hey?”

“Yes—yes—for a while, I think,” stammered the prince.

“Prince, mother begs you to come to her,” said Colia, appearing at the door.

The prince rose to go, but the general once more laid his hand in a friendly manner on his shoulder, and dragged him down on to the sofa.

“As the true friend of your father, I wish to say a few words to you,” he began. “I have suffered—there was a catastrophe. I suffered without a trial; I had no trial. Nina Alexandrovna my wife, is an excellent woman, so is my daughter Varvara. We have to let lodgings because we are poor—a dreadful, unheard-of come-down for us—for me, who should have been a governor-general; but we are very glad to have YOU, at all events. Meanwhile there is a tragedy in the house.”

The prince looked inquiringly at the other.

“Yes, a marriage is being arranged—a marriage between a questionable woman and a young fellow who might be a flunkey. They wish to bring this woman into the house where my wife and daughter reside, but while I live and breathe she shall never enter my doors. I shall lie at the threshold, and she shall trample me underfoot if she does. I hardly talk to Gania now, and avoid him as much as I can. I warn you of this beforehand, but you cannot fail to observe it. But you are the son of my old friend, and I hope—”

“Prince, be so kind as to come to me for a moment in the drawing-room,” said Nina Alexandrovna herself, appearing at the door.

"Imagine, my dear," cried the general, "it turns out that I have nursed the prince on my knee in the old days." His wife looked searchingly at him, and glanced at the prince, but said nothing. The prince rose and followed her; but hardly had they reached the drawing-room, and Nina Alexandrovna had begun to talk hurriedly, when in came the general. She immediately relapsed into silence. The master of the house may have observed this, but at all events he did not take any notice of it; he was in high good humour.

"A son of my old friend, dear," he cried; "surely you must remember Prince Nicolai Lvovitch? You saw him at—at Tver."

"I don't remember any Nicolai Lvovitch, Was that your father?" she inquired of the prince.

"Yes, but he died at Elizabethgrad, not at Tver," said the prince, rather timidly. "So Pavlicheff told me."

"No, Tver," insisted the general; "he removed just before his death. You were very small and cannot remember; and Pavlicheff, though an excellent fellow, may have made a mistake."

"You knew Pavlicheff then?"

"Oh, yes—a wonderful fellow; but I was present myself. I gave him my blessing."

"My father was just about to be tried when he died," said the prince, "although I never knew of what he was accused. He died in hospital."

"Oh! it was the Kolpakoff business, and of course he would have been acquitted."

"Yes? Do you know that for a fact?" asked the prince, whose curiosity was aroused by the general's words.

"I should think so indeed!" cried the latter. "The court-martial came to no decision. It was a mysterious, an impossible business, one might say! Captain Larionoff, commander of the company, had died; his command was handed over to the prince for the moment. Very well. This soldier, Kolpakoff, stole some leather from one of his comrades, intending to sell it, and spent the money on drink. Well! The prince—you understand that what follows took place in the presence of the sergeant-major, and a corporal—the prince rated Kolpakoff soundly, and threatened to have him flogged. Well, Kolpakoff went back to the barracks, lay down on a camp bedstead, and in a quarter of an hour was dead: you quite understand? It was, as I said, a strange, almost impossible, affair. In due course Kolpakoff was buried; the prince wrote his report, the deceased's name was removed from the roll. All as it should be, is it not? But exactly three months later at the inspection of the brigade, the man Kolpakoff was found in the third company of the second battalion of infantry, Novozemlianski division, just as if nothing had happened!"

"What?" said the prince, much astonished.

"It did not occur—it's a mistake!" said Nina Alexandrovna quickly, looking, at the prince rather anxiously. "Mon mari se trompe," she added, speaking in French.

"My dear, 'se trompe' is easily said. Do you remember any case at all like it? Everybody was at their wits' end. I should be the first to say 'qu'on se trompe,' but

unfortunately I was an eye-witness, and was also on the commission of inquiry. Everything proved that it was really he, the very same soldier Kolpakoff who had been given the usual military funeral to the sound of the drum. It is of course a most curious case—nearly an impossible one. I recognize that ... but—”

“Father, your dinner is ready,” said Varvara at this point, putting her head in at the door.

“Very glad, I’m particularly hungry. Yes, yes, a strange coincidence—almost a psychological—”

“Your soup’ll be cold; do come.”

“Coming, coming” said the general. “Son of my old friend—” he was heard muttering as he went down the passage.

“You will have to excuse very much in my husband, if you stay with us,” said Nina Alexandrovna; “but he will not disturb you often. He dines alone. Everyone has his little peculiarities, you know, and some people perhaps have more than those who are most pointed at and laughed at. One thing I must beg of you—if my husband applies to you for payment for board and lodging, tell him that you have already paid me. Of course anything paid by you to the general would be as fully settled as if paid to me, so far as you are concerned; but I wish it to be so, if you please, for convenience’ sake. What is it, Varia?”

Varia had quietly entered the room, and was holding out the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna to her mother.

Nina Alexandrovna started, and examined the photograph intently, gazing at it long and sadly. At last she looked up inquiringly at Varia.

“It’s a present from herself to him,” said Varia; “the question is to be finally decided this evening.”

“This evening!” repeated her mother in a tone of despair, but softly, as though to herself. “Then it’s all settled, of course, and there’s no hope left to us. She has anticipated her answer by the present of her portrait. Did he show it you himself?” she added, in some surprise.

“You know we have hardly spoken to each other for a whole month. Ptitsin told me all about it; and the photo was lying under the table, and I picked it up.”

“Prince,” asked Nina Alexandrovna, “I wanted to inquire whether you have known my son long? I think he said that you had only arrived today from somewhere.”

The prince gave a short narrative of what we have heard before, leaving out the greater part. The two ladies listened intently.

“I did not ask about Gania out of curiosity,” said the elder, at last. “I wish to know how much you know about him, because he said just now that we need not stand on ceremony with you. What, exactly, does that mean?”

At this moment Gania and Ptitsin entered the room together, and Nina Alexandrovna immediately became silent again. The prince remained seated next to her, but Varia moved to the other end of the room; the portrait of Nastasia Philipovna remained lying as before on the work-table. Gania observed it there, and with a frown

of annoyance snatched it up and threw it across to his writing-table, which stood at the other end of the room.

“Is it today, Gania?” asked Nina Alexandrovna, at last.

“Is what today?” cried the former. Then suddenly recollecting himself, he turned sharply on the prince. “Oh,” he growled, “I see, you are here, that explains it! Is it a disease, or what, that you can’t hold your tongue? Look here, understand once for all, prince—”

“I am to blame in this, Gania—no one else,” said Ptitsin.

Gania glanced inquiringly at the speaker.

“It’s better so, you know, Gania—especially as, from one point of view, the matter may be considered as settled,” said Ptitsin; and sitting down a little way from the table he began to study a paper covered with pencil writing.

Gania stood and frowned, he expected a family scene. He never thought of apologizing to the prince, however.

“If it’s all settled, Gania, then of course Mr. Ptitsin is right,” said Nina Alexandrovna. “Don’t frown. You need not worry yourself, Gania; I shall ask you no questions. You need not tell me anything you don’t like. I assure you I have quite submitted to your will.” She said all this, knitting away the while as though perfectly calm and composed.

Gania was surprised, but cautiously kept silence and looked at his mother, hoping that she would express herself more clearly. Nina Alexandrovna observed his cautiousness and added, with a bitter smile:

“You are still suspicious, I see, and do not believe me; but you may be quite at your ease. There shall be no more tears, nor questions—not from my side, at all events. All I wish is that you may be happy, you know that. I have submitted to my fate; but my heart will always be with you, whether we remain united, or whether we part. Of course I only answer for myself—you can hardly expect your sister—”

“My sister again,” cried Gania, looking at her with contempt and almost hate. “Look here, mother, I have already given you my word that I shall always respect you fully and absolutely, and so shall everyone else in this house, be it who it may, who shall cross this threshold.”

Gania was so much relieved that he gazed at his mother almost affectionately.

“I was not at all afraid for myself, Gania, as you know well. It was not for my own sake that I have been so anxious and worried all this time! They say it is all to be settled to-day. What is to be settled?”

“She has promised to tell me tonight at her own house whether she consents or not,” replied Gania.

“We have been silent on this subject for three weeks,” said his mother, “and it was better so; and now I will only ask you one question. How can she give her consent and make you a present of her portrait when you do not love her? How can such a—such a—”

“Practised hand—eh?”

“I was not going to express myself so. But how could you so blind her?”

Nina Alexandrovna's question betrayed intense annoyance. Gania waited a moment and then said, without taking the trouble to conceal the irony of his tone:

"There you are, mother, you are always like that. You begin by promising that there are to be no reproaches or insinuations or questions, and here you are beginning them at once. We had better drop the subject—we had, really. I shall never leave you, mother; any other man would cut and run from such a sister as this. See how she is looking at me at this moment! Besides, how do you know that I am blinding Nastasia Philipovna? As for Varia, I don't care—she can do just as she pleases. There, that's quite enough!"

Gania's irritation increased with every word he uttered, as he walked up and down the room. These conversations always touched the family sores before long.

"I have said already that the moment she comes in I go out, and I shall keep my word," remarked Varia.

"Out of obstinacy" shouted Gania. "You haven't married, either, thanks to your obstinacy. Oh, you needn't frown at me, Varvara! You can go at once for all I care; I am sick enough of your company. What, you are going to leave us are you, too?" he cried, turning to the prince, who was rising from his chair.

Gania's voice was full of the most uncontrolled and uncontrollable irritation.

The prince turned at the door to say something, but perceiving in Gania's expression that there was but that one drop wanting to make the cup overflow, he changed his mind and left the room without a word. A few minutes later he was aware from the noisy voices in the drawing room, that the conversation had become more quarrelsome than ever after his departure.

He crossed the salon and the entrance-hall, so as to pass down the corridor into his own room. As he came near the front door he heard someone outside vainly endeavouring to ring the bell, which was evidently broken, and only shook a little, without emitting any sound.

The prince took down the chain and opened the door. He started back in amazement—for there stood Nastasia Philipovna. He knew her at once from her photograph. Her eyes blazed with anger as she looked at him. She quickly pushed by him into the hall, shouldering him out of her way, and said, furiously, as she threw off her fur cloak:

"If you are too lazy to mend your bell, you should at least wait in the hall to let people in when they rattle the bell handle. There, now, you've dropped my fur cloak—dummy!"

Sure enough the cloak was lying on the ground. Nastasia had thrown it off her towards the prince, expecting him to catch it, but the prince had missed it.

"Now then—announce me, quick!"

The prince wanted to say something, but was so confused and astonished that he could not. However, he moved off towards the drawing-room with the cloak over his arm.

"Now then, where are you taking my cloak to? Ha, ha, ha! Are you mad?"

The prince turned and came back, more confused than ever. When she burst out laughing, he smiled, but his tongue could not form a word as yet. At first, when he had opened the door and saw her standing before him, he had become as pale as death; but now the red blood had rushed back to his cheeks in a torrent.

“Why, what an idiot it is!” cried Nastasia, stamping her foot with irritation. “Go on, do! Whom are you going to announce?”

“Nastasia Philipovna,” murmured the prince.

“And how do you know that?” she asked him, sharply.

“I have never seen you before!”

“Go on, announce me—what’s that noise?”

“They are quarrelling,” said the prince, and entered the drawing-room, just as matters in there had almost reached a crisis. Nina Alexandrovna had forgotten that she had “submitted to everything!” She was defending Varia. Ptitsin was taking her part, too. Not that Varia was afraid of standing up for herself. She was by no means that sort of a girl; but her brother was becoming ruder and more intolerable every moment. Her usual practice in such cases as the present was to say nothing, but stare at him, without taking her eyes off his face for an instant. This manoeuvre, as she well knew, could drive Gania distracted.

Just at this moment the door opened and the prince entered, announcing:

“Nastasia Philipovna!”

IX.

Silence immediately fell on the room; all looked at the prince as though they neither understood, nor hoped to understand. Gania was motionless with horror.

Nastasia’s arrival was a most unexpected and overwhelming event to all parties. In the first place, she had never been before. Up to now she had been so haughty that she had never even asked Gania to introduce her to his parents. Of late she had not so much as mentioned them. Gania was partly glad of this; but still he had put it to her debit in the account to be settled after marriage.

He would have borne anything from her rather than this visit. But one thing seemed to him quite clear—her visit now, and the present of her portrait on this particular day, pointed out plainly enough which way she intended to make her decision!

The incredulous amazement with which all regarded the prince did not last long, for Nastasia herself appeared at the door and passed in, pushing by the prince again.

“At last I’ve stormed the citadel! Why do you tie up your bell?” she said, merrily, as she pressed Gania’s hand, the latter having rushed up to her as soon as she made her appearance. “What are you looking so upset about? Introduce me, please!”

The bewildered Gania introduced her first to Varia, and both women, before shaking hands, exchanged looks of strange import. Nastasia, however, smiled amiably; but Varia did not try to look amiable, and kept her gloomy expression. She did not even vouchsafe

the usual courteous smile of etiquette. Gania darted a terrible glance of wrath at her for this, but Nina Alexandrovna, mended matters a little when Gania introduced her at last. Hardly, however, had the old lady begun about her "highly gratified feelings," and so on, when Nastasia left her, and flounced into a chair by Gania's side in the corner by the window, and cried: "Where's your study? and where are the—the lodgers? You do take in lodgers, don't you?"

Gania looked dreadfully put out, and tried to say something in reply, but Nastasia interrupted him:

"Why, where are you going to squeeze lodgers in here? Don't you use a study? Does this sort of thing pay?" she added, turning to Nina Alexandrovna.

"Well, it is troublesome, rather," said the latter; "but I suppose it will 'pay' pretty well. We have only just begun, however—"

Again Nastasia Philipovna did not hear the sentence out. She glanced at Gania, and cried, laughing, "What a face! My goodness, what a face you have on at this moment!"

Indeed, Gania did not look in the least like himself. His bewilderment and his alarmed perplexity passed off, however, and his lips now twitched with rage as he continued to stare evilly at his laughing guest, while his countenance became absolutely livid.

There was another witness, who, though standing at the door motionless and bewildered himself, still managed to remark Gania's death-like pallor, and the dreadful change that had come over his face. This witness was the prince, who now advanced in alarm and muttered to Gania:

"Drink some water, and don't look like that!"

It was clear that he came out with these words quite spontaneously, on the spur of the moment. But his speech was productive of much—for it appeared that all. Gania's rage now overflowed upon the prince. He seized him by the shoulder and gazed with an intensity of loathing and revenge at him, but said nothing—as though his feelings were too strong to permit of words.

General agitation prevailed. Nina Alexandrovna gave a little cry of anxiety; Ptitsin took a step forward in alarm; Colia and Ferdishenko stood stock still at the door in amazement;—only Varia remained coolly watching the scene from under her eyelashes. She did not sit down, but stood by her mother with folded hands. However, Gania recollected himself almost immediately. He let go of the prince and burst out laughing.

"Why, are you a doctor, prince, or what?" he asked, as naturally as possible. "I declare you quite frightened me! Nastasia Philipovna, let me introduce this interesting character to you— though I have only known him myself since the morning."

Nastasia gazed at the prince in bewilderment. "Prince? He a Prince? Why, I took him for the footman, just now, and sent him in to announce me! Ha, ha, ha, isn't that good!"

"Not bad that, not bad at all!" put in Ferdishenko, "se non e vero—"

"I rather think I pitched into you, too, didn't I? Forgive me—do! Who is he, did you say? What prince? Muishkin?" she added, addressing Gania.

"He is a lodger of ours," explained the latter.

"An idiot!"—the prince distinctly heard the word half whispered from behind him. This was Ferdishenko's voluntary information for Nastasia's benefit.

"Tell me, why didn't you put me right when I made such a dreadful mistake just now?" continued the latter, examining the prince from head to foot without the slightest ceremony. She awaited the answer as though convinced that it would be so foolish that she must inevitably fail to restrain her laughter over it.

"I was astonished, seeing you so suddenly—" murmured the prince.

"How did you know who I was? Where had you seen me before? And why were you so struck dumb at the sight of me? What was there so overwhelming about me?"

"Oho! ho, ho, ho!" cried Ferdishenko. "NOW then, prince! My word, what things I would say if I had such a chance as that! My goodness, prince—go on!"

"So should I, in your place, I've no doubt!" laughed the prince to Ferdishenko; then continued, addressing Nastasia: "Your portrait struck me very forcibly this morning; then I was talking about you to the Epanchins; and then, in the train, before I reached Petersburg, Parfen Rogojin told me a good deal about you; and at the very moment that I opened the door to you I happened to be thinking of you, when—there you stood before me!"

"And how did you recognize me?"

"From the portrait!"

"What else?"

"I seemed to imagine you exactly as you are—I seemed to have seen you somewhere."

"Where—where?"

"I seem to have seen your eyes somewhere; but it cannot be! I have not seen you—I never was here before. I may have dreamed of you, I don't know."

The prince said all this with manifest effort—in broken sentences, and with many drawings of breath. He was evidently much agitated. Nastasia Philipovna looked at him inquisitively, but did not laugh.

"Bravo, prince!" cried Ferdishenko, delighted.

At this moment a loud voice from behind the group which hedged in the prince and Nastasia Philipovna, divided the crowd, as it were, and before them stood the head of the family, General Ivolgin. He was dressed in evening clothes; his moustache was dyed.

This apparition was too much for Gania. Vain and ambitious almost to morbidity, he had had much to put up with in the last two months, and was seeking feverishly for some means of enabling himself to lead a more presentable kind of existence. At home, he now adopted an attitude of absolute cynicism, but he could not keep this up before Nastasia Philipovna, although he had sworn to make her pay after marriage for all he suffered now. He was experiencing a last humiliation, the bitterest of all, at this moment—the humiliation of blushing for his own kindred in his own house. A question flashed through his mind as to whether the game was really worth the candle.

For that had happened at this moment, which for two months had been his nightmare; which had filled his soul with dread and shame—the meeting between his father and Nastasia Philipovna. He had often tried to imagine such an event, but had found the picture too mortifying and exasperating, and had quietly dropped it. Very likely he anticipated far worse things than was at all necessary; it is often so with vain persons. He had long since determined, therefore, to get his father out of the way, anywhere, before his marriage, in order to avoid such a meeting; but when Nastasia entered the room just now, he had been so overwhelmed with astonishment, that he had not thought of his father, and had made no arrangements to keep him out of the way. And now it was too late—there he was, and got up, too, in a dress coat and white tie, and Nastasia in the very humour to heap ridicule on him and his family circle; of this last fact, he felt quite persuaded. What else had she come for? There were his mother and his sister sitting before her, and she seemed to have forgotten their very existence already; and if she behaved like that, he thought, she must have some object in view.

Ferdishenko led the general up to Nastasia Philipovna.

“Ardalion Alexandrovitch Ivolgin,” said the smiling general, with a low bow of great dignity, “an old soldier, unfortunate, and the father of this family; but happy in the hope of including in that family so exquisite—”

He did not finish his sentence, for at this moment Ferdishenko pushed a chair up from behind, and the general, not very firm on his legs, at this post-prandial hour, flopped into it backwards. It was always a difficult thing to put this warrior to confusion, and his sudden descent left him as composed as before. He had sat down just opposite to Nastasia, whose fingers he now took, and raised to his lips with great elegance, and much courtesy. The general had once belonged to a very select circle of society, but he had been turned out of it two or three years since on account of certain weaknesses, in which he now indulged with all the less restraint; but his good manners remained with him to this day, in spite of all.

Nastasia Philipovna seemed delighted at the appearance of this latest arrival, of whom she had of course heard a good deal by report.

“I have heard that my son—” began Ardalion Alexandrovitch.

“Your son, indeed! A nice papa you are! YOU might have come to see me anyhow, without compromising anyone. Do you hide yourself, or does your son hide you?”

“The children of the nineteenth century, and their parents—” began the general, again.

“Nastasia Philipovna, will you excuse the general for a moment? Someone is inquiring for him,” said Nina Alexandrovna in a loud voice, interrupting the conversation.

“Excuse him? Oh no, I have wished to see him too long for that. Why, what business can he have? He has retired, hasn’t he? You won’t leave me, general, will you?”

“I give you my word that he shall come and see you—but he—he needs rest just now.”

“General, they say you require rest,” said Nastasia Philipovna, with the melancholy face of a child whose toy is taken away.

Ardalion Alexandrovitch immediately did his best to make his foolish position a great deal worse.

“My dear, my dear!” he said, solemnly and reproachfully, looking at his wife, with one hand on his heart.

“Won’t you leave the room, mamma?” asked Varia, aloud.

“No, Varia, I shall sit it out to the end.”

Nastasia must have overheard both question and reply, but her vivacity was not in the least damped. On the contrary, it seemed to increase. She immediately overwhelmed the general once more with questions, and within five minutes that gentleman was as happy as a king, and holding forth at the top of his voice, amid the laughter of almost all who heard him.

Colia jogged the prince’s arm.

“Can’t YOU get him out of the room, somehow? DO, please,” and tears of annoyance stood in the boy’s eyes. “Curse that Gania!” he muttered, between his teeth.

“Oh yes, I knew General Epanchin well,” General Ivolgin was saying at this moment; “he and Prince Nicolai Ivanovitch Muishkin—whose son I have this day embraced after an absence of twenty years—and I, were three inseparables. Alas one is in the grave, torn to pieces by calumnies and bullets; another is now before you, still battling with calumnies and bullets—”

“Bullets?” cried Nastasia.

“Yes, here in my chest. I received them at the siege of Kars, and I feel them in bad weather now. And as to the third of our trio, Epanchin, of course after that little affair with the poodle in the railway carriage, it was all UP between us.”

“Poodle? What was that? And in a railway carriage? Dear me,” said Nastasia, thoughtfully, as though trying to recall something to mind.

“Oh, just a silly, little occurrence, really not worth telling, about Princess Bielokon-ski’s governess, Miss Smith, and—oh, it is really not worth telling!”

“No, no, we must have it!” cried Nastasia merrily.

“Yes, of course,” said Ferdishenko. “C’est du nouveau.”

“Ardalion,” said Nina Alexandrovitch, entreatingly.

“Papa, you are wanted!” cried Colia.

“Well, it is a silly little story, in a few words,” began the delighted general. “A couple of years ago, soon after the new railway was opened, I had to go somewhere or other on business. Well, I took a first-class ticket, sat down, and began to smoke, or rather CONTINUED to smoke, for I had lighted up before. I was alone in the carriage. Smoking is not allowed, but is not prohibited either; it is half allowed—so to speak, winked at. I had the window open.”

“Suddenly, just before the whistle, in came two ladies with a little poodle, and sat down opposite to me; not bad-looking women; one was in light blue, the other in black silk. The poodle, a beauty with a silver collar, lay on light blue’s knee. They looked

haughtily about, and talked English together. I took no notice, just went on smoking. I observed that the ladies were getting angry—over my cigar, doubtless. One looked at me through her tortoise-shell eyeglass.

“I took no notice, because they never said a word. If they didn’t like the cigar, why couldn’t they say so? Not a word, not a hint! Suddenly, and without the very slightest suspicion of warning, ‘light blue’ seizes my cigar from between my fingers, and, wheugh! out of the window with it! Well, on flew the train, and I sat bewildered, and the young woman, tall and fair, and rather red in the face, too red, glared at me with flashing eyes.

“I didn’t say a word, but with extreme courtesy, I may say with most refined courtesy, I reached my finger and thumb over towards the poodle, took it up delicately by the nape of the neck, and chucked it out of the window, after the cigar. The train went flying on, and the poodle’s yells were lost in the distance.”

“Oh, you naughty man!” cried Nastasia, laughing and clapping her hands like a child.

“Bravo!” said Ferdishenko. Ptitsin laughed too, though he had been very sorry to see the general appear. Even Colia laughed and said, “Bravo!”

“And I was right, truly right,” cried the general, with warmth and solemnity, “for if cigars are forbidden in railway carriages, poodles are much more so.”

“Well, and what did the lady do?” asked Nastasia, impatiently.

” She—ah, that’s where all the mischief of it lies!” replied Ivolgin, frowning. “Without a word, as it were, of warning, she slapped me on the cheek! An extraordinary woman!”

“And you?”

The general dropped his eyes, and elevated his brows; shrugged his shoulders, tightened his lips, spread his hands, and remained silent. At last he blurted out:

“I lost my head!”

“Did you hit her?”

“No, oh no!—there was a great flare-up, but I didn’t hit her! I had to struggle a little, purely to defend myself; but the very devil was in the business. It turned out that ‘light blue’ was an Englishwoman, governess or something, at Princess Bielokonski’s, and the other woman was one of the old-maid princesses Bielokonski. Well, everybody knows what great friends the princess and Mrs. Epanchin are, so there was a pretty kettle of fish. All the Bielokonskis went into mourning for the poodle. Six princesses in tears, and the Englishwoman shrieking!

“Of course I wrote an apology, and called, but they would not receive either me or my apology, and the Epanchins cut me, too!”

“But wait,” said Nastasia. “How is it that, five or six days since, I read exactly the same story in the paper, as happening between a Frenchman and an English girl? The cigar was snatched away exactly as you describe, and the poodle was chucked out of the window after it. The slapping came off, too, as in your case; and the girl’s dress was light blue!”

The general blushed dreadfully; Colia blushed too; and Ptitsin turned hastily away. Ferdishenko was the only one who laughed as gaily as before. As to Gania, I need not say that he was miserable; he stood dumb and wretched and took no notice of anybody.

"I assure you," said the general, "that exactly the same thing happened to myself!"

"I remembered there was some quarrel between father and Miss Smith, the Bielokon-ski's governess," said Colia.

"How very curious, point for point the same anecdote, and happening at different ends of Europe! Even the light blue dress the same," continued the pitiless Nastasia. "I must really send you the paper."

"You must observe," insisted the general, "that my experience was two years earlier."

"Ah! that's it, no doubt!"

Nastasia Philipovna laughed hysterically.

"Father, will you hear a word from me outside!" said Gania, his voice shaking with agitation, as he seized his father by the shoulder. His eyes shone with a blaze of hatred.

At this moment there was a terrific bang at the front door, almost enough to break it down. Some most unusual visitor must have arrived. Colia ran to open.

X.

THE entrance-hall suddenly became full of noise and people. To judge from the sounds which penetrated to the drawing-room, a number of people had already come in, and the stampede continued. Several voices were talking and shouting at once; others were talking and shouting on the stairs outside; it was evidently a most extraordinary visit that was about to take place.

Everyone exchanged startled glances. Gania rushed out towards the dining-room, but a number of men had already made their way in, and met him.

"Ah! here he is, the Judas!" cried a voice which the prince recognized at once. "How d'ye do, Gania, you old blackguard?"

"Yes, that's the man!" said another voice.

There was no room for doubt in the prince's mind: one of the voices was Rogojin's, and the other Lebedeff's.

Gania stood at the door like a block and looked on in silence, putting no obstacle in the way of their entrance, and ten or a dozen men marched in behind Parfen Rogojin. They were a decidedly mixed-looking collection, and some of them came in in their furs and caps. None of them were quite drunk, but all appeared to be considerably excited.

They seemed to need each other's support, morally, before they dared come in; not one of them would have entered alone but with the rest each one was brave enough. Even Rogojin entered rather cautiously at the head of his troop; but he was evidently preoccupied. He appeared to be gloomy and morose, and had clearly come with some

end in view. All the rest were merely chorus, brought in to support the chief character. Besides Lebedeff there was the dandy Zalesheff, who came in without his coat and hat, two or three others followed his example; the rest were more uncouth. They included a couple of young merchants, a man in a great-coat, a medical student, a little Pole, a small fat man who laughed continuously, and an enormously tall stout one who apparently put great faith in the strength of his fists. A couple of "ladies" of some sort put their heads in at the front door, but did not dare come any farther. Colia promptly banged the door in their faces and locked it.

"Hallo, Gania, you blackguard! You didn't expect Rogojin, eh?" said the latter, entering the drawing-room, and stopping before Gania.

But at this moment he saw, seated before him, Nastasia Philipovna. He had not dreamed of meeting her here, evidently, for her appearance produced a marvellous effect upon him. He grew pale, and his lips became actually blue.

"I suppose it is true, then!" he muttered to himself, and his face took on an expression of despair. "So that's the end of it! Now you, sir, will you answer me or not?" he went on suddenly, gazing at Gania with ineffable malice. "Now then, you—"

He panted, and could hardly speak for agitation. He advanced into the room mechanically; but perceiving Nina Alexandrovna and Varia he became more or less embarrassed, in spite of his excitement. His followers entered after him, and all paused a moment at sight of the ladies. Of course their modesty was not fated to be long-lived, but for a moment they were abashed. Once let them begin to shout, however, and nothing on earth should disconcert them.

"What, you here too, prince?" said Rogojin, absently, but a little surprised all the same. "Still in your gaiters, eh?" He sighed, and forgot the prince next moment, and his wild eyes wandered over to Nastasia again, as though attracted in that direction by some magnetic force.

Nastasia looked at the new arrivals with great curiosity. Gania recollected himself at last.

"Excuse me, sirs," he said, loudly, "but what does all this mean?" He glared at the advancing crowd generally, but addressed his remarks especially to their captain, Rogojin. "You are not in a stable, gentlemen, though you may think it—my mother and sister are present."

"Yes, I see your mother and sister," muttered Rogojin, through his teeth; and Lebedeff seemed to feel himself called upon to second the statement.

"At all events, I must request you to step into the salon," said Gania, his rage rising quite out of proportion to his words, "and then I shall inquire—"

"What, he doesn't know me!" said Rogojin, showing his teeth disagreeably. "He doesn't recognize Rogojin!" He did not move an inch, however.

"I have met you somewhere, I believe, but—"

"Met me somewhere, pfu! Why, it's only three months since I lost two hundred roubles of my father's money to you, at cards. The old fellow died before he found out. Ptitsin knows all about it. Why, I've only to pull out a three-rouble note and show it

to you, and you'd crawl on your hands and knees to the other end of the town for it; that's the sort of man you are. Why, I've come now, at this moment, to buy you up! Oh, you needn't think that because I wear these boots I have no money. I have lots of money, my beauty,—enough to buy up you and all yours together. So I shall, if I like to! I'll buy you up! I will!" he yelled, apparently growing more and more intoxicated and excited." Oh, Nastasia Philipovna! don't turn me out! Say one word, do! Are you going to marry this man, or not?"

Rogojin asked his question like a lost soul appealing to some divinity, with the reckless daring of one appointed to die, who has nothing to lose.

He awaited the reply in deadly anxiety.

Nastasia Philipovna gazed at him with a haughty, ironical. expression of face; but when she glanced at Nina Alexandrovna and Varia, and from them to Gania, she changed her tone, all of a sudden.

"Certainly not; what are you thinking of? What could have induced you to ask such a question?" she replied, quietly and seriously, and even, apparently, with some astonishment.

"No? No?" shouted Rogojin, almost out of his mind with joy. "You are not going to, after all? And they told me—oh, Nastasia Philipovna—they said you had promised to marry him, HIM! As if you COULD do it!—him—pooh! I don't mind saying it to everyone— I'd buy him off for a hundred roubles, any day pfu! Give him a thousand, or three if he likes, poor devil' and he'd cut and run the day before his wedding, and leave his bride to me! Wouldn't you, Gania, you blackguard? You'd take three thousand, wouldn't you? Here's the money! Look, I've come on purpose to pay you off and get your receipt, formally. I said I'd buy you up, and so I will."

"Get out of this, you drunken beast!" cried Gania, who was red and white by turns.

Rogojin's troop, who were only waiting for an excuse, set up a howl at this. Lebedeff stepped forward and whispered something in Parfen's ear.

"You're right, clerk," said the latter, "you're right, tipsy spirit—you're right!—Nastasia Philipovna," he added, looking at her like some lunatic, harmless generally, but suddenly wound up to a pitch of audacity, "here are eighteen thousand roubles, and—and you shall have more—" Here he threw a packet of bank- notes tied up in white paper, on the table before her, not daring to say all he wished to say.

"No-no-no!" muttered Lebedeff, clutching at his arm. He was clearly aghast at the largeness of the sum, and thought a far smaller amount should have been tried first.

"No, you fool—you don't know whom you are dealing with—and it appears I am a fool, too!" said Parfen, trembling beneath the flashing glance of Nastasia. "Oh, curse it all! What a fool I was to listen to you!" he added, with profound melancholy.

Nastasia Philipovna, observing his woe-begone expression, suddenly burst out laughing.

"Eighteen thousand roubles, for me? Why, you declare yourself a fool at once," she said, with impudent familiarity, as she rose from the sofa and prepared to go. Gania watched the whole scene with a sinking of the heart.

“Forty thousand, then—forty thousand roubles instead of eighteen! Ptitsin and another have promised to find me forty thousand roubles by seven o’clock tonight. Forty thousand roubles—paid down on the nail!”

The scene was growing more and more disgraceful; but Nastasia Philipovna continued to laugh and did not go away. Nina Alexandrovna and Varia had both risen from their places and were waiting, in silent horror, to see what would happen. Varia’s eyes were all ablaze with anger; but the scene had a different effect on Nina Alexandrovna. She paled and trembled, and looked more and more like fainting every moment.

“Very well then, a HUNDRED thousand! a hundred thousand! paid this very day. Ptitsin! find it for me. A good share shall stick to your fingers—come!”

“You are mad!” said Ptitsin, coming up quickly and seizing him by the hand. “You’re drunk—the police will be sent for if you don’t look out. Think where you are.”

“Yes, he’s boasting like a drunkard,” added Nastasia, as though with the sole intention of goading him.

“I do NOT boast! You shall have a hundred thousand, this very day. Ptitsin, get the money, you gay usurer! Take what you like for it, but get it by the evening! I’ll show that I’m in earnest!” cried Rogojin, working himself up into a frenzy of excitement.

“Come, come; what’s all this?” cried General Ivolgin, suddenly and angrily, coming close up to Rogojin. The unexpectedness of this sally on the part of the hitherto silent old man caused some laughter among the intruders.

“Halloa! what’s this now?” laughed Rogojin. “You come along with me, old fellow! You shall have as much to drink as you like.”

“Oh, it’s too horrible!” cried poor Colia, sobbing with shame and annoyance.

“Surely there must be someone among all of you here who will turn this shameless creature out of the room?” cried Varia, suddenly. She was shaking and trembling with rage.

“That’s me, I suppose. I’m the shameless creature!” cried Nastasia Philipovna, with amused indifference. “Dear me, and I came—like a fool, as I am—to invite them over to my house for the evening! Look how your sister treats me, Gavril Ardalionovitch.”

For some moments Gania stood as if stunned or struck by lightning, after his sister’s speech. But seeing that Nastasia Philipovna was really about to leave the room this time, he sprang at Varia and seized her by the arm like a madman.

“What have you done?” he hissed, glaring at her as though he would like to annihilate her on the spot. He was quite beside himself, and could hardly articulate his words for rage.

“What have I done? Where are you dragging me to?”

“Do you wish me to beg pardon of this creature because she has come here to insult our mother and disgrace the whole household, you low, base wretch?” cried Varia, looking back at her brother with proud defiance.

A few moments passed as they stood there face to face, Gania still holding her wrist tightly. Varia struggled once—twice—to get free; then could restrain herself no longer, and spat in his face.

"There's a girl for you!" cried Nastasia Philipovna. "Mr. Ptitsin, I congratulate you on your choice."

Gania lost his head. Forgetful of everything he aimed a blow at Varia, which would inevitably have laid her low, but suddenly another hand caught his. Between him and Varia stood the prince.

"Enough—enough!" said the latter, with insistence, but all of a tremble with excitement.

"Are you going to cross my path for ever, damn you!" cried Gania; and, loosening his hold on Varia, he slapped the prince's face with all his force.

Exclamations of horror arose on all sides. The prince grew pale as death; he gazed into Gania's eyes with a strange, wild, reproachful look; his lips trembled and vainly endeavoured to form some words; then his mouth twisted into an incongruous smile.

"Very well—never mind about me; but I shall not allow you to strike her!" he said, at last, quietly. Then, suddenly, he could bear it no longer, and covering his face with his hands, turned to the wall, and murmured in broken accents:

"Oh! how ashamed you will be of this afterwards!"

Gania certainly did look dreadfully abashed. Colia rushed up to comfort the prince, and after him crowded Varia, Rogojin and all, even the general.

"It's nothing, it's nothing!" said the prince, and again he wore the smile which was so inconsistent with the circumstances.

"Yes, he will be ashamed!" cried Rogojin. "You will be properly ashamed of yourself for having injured such a—such a sheep" (he could not find a better word). "Prince, my dear fellow, leave this and come away with me. I'll show you how Rogojin shows his affection for his friends."

Nastasia Philipovna was also much impressed, both with Gania's action and with the prince's reply.

Her usually thoughtful, pale face, which all this while had been so little in harmony with the jests and laughter which she had seemed to put on for the occasion, was now evidently agitated by new feelings, though she tried to conceal the fact and to look as though she were as ready as ever for jesting and irony.

"I really think I must have seen him somewhere!" she murmured seriously enough.

"Oh, aren't you ashamed of yourself—aren't you ashamed? Are you really the sort of woman you are trying to represent yourself to be? Is it possible?" The prince was now addressing Nastasia, in a tone of reproach, which evidently came from his very heart.

Nastasia Philipovna looked surprised, and smiled, but evidently concealed something beneath her smile and with some confusion and a glance at Gania she left the room.

However, she had not reached the outer hall when she turned round, walked quickly up to Nina Alexandrovna, seized her hand and lifted it to her lips.

"He guessed quite right. I am not that sort of woman," she whispered hurriedly, flushing red all over. Then she turned again and left the room so quickly that no one

could imagine what she had come back for. All they saw was that she said something to Nina Alexandrovna in a hurried whisper, and seemed to kiss her hand. Varia, however, both saw and heard all, and watched Nastasia out of the room with an expression of wonder.

Gania recollected himself in time to rush after her in order to show her out, but she had gone. He followed her to the stairs.

“Don’t come with me,” she cried, “Au revoir, till the evening—do you hear? Au revoir!”

He returned thoughtful and confused; the riddle lay heavier than ever on his soul. He was troubled about the prince, too, and so bewildered that he did not even observe Rogojin’s rowdy band crowd past him and step on his toes, at the door as they went out. They were all talking at once. Rogojin went ahead of the others, talking to Ptitsin, and apparently insisting vehemently upon something very important

“You’ve lost the game, Gania” he cried, as he passed the latter.

Gania gazed after him uneasily, but said nothing.

XI.

THE prince now left the room and shut himself up in his own chamber. Colia followed him almost at once, anxious to do what he could to console him. The poor boy seemed to be already so attached to him that he could hardly leave him.

“You were quite right to go away!” he said. “The row will rage there worse than ever now; and it’s like this every day with us— and all through that Nastasia Philipovna.”

“You have so many sources of trouble here, Colia,” said the prince.

“Yes, indeed, and it is all our own fault. But I have a great friend who is much worse off even than we are. Would you like to know him?”

“Yes, very much. Is he one of your school-fellows?”

“Well, not exactly. I will tell you all about him some day... . What do you think of Nastasia Philipovna? She is beautiful, isn’t she? I had never seen her before, though I had a great wish to do so. She fascinated me. I could forgive Gania if he were to marry her for love, but for money! Oh dear! that is horrible!”

“Yes, your brother does not attract me much.”

“I am not surprised at that. After what you ... But I do hate that way of looking at things! Because some fool, or a rogue pretending to be a fool, strikes a man, that man is to be dishonoured for his whole life, unless he wipes out the disgrace with blood, or makes his assailant beg forgiveness on his knees! I think that so very absurd and tyrannical. Lermontoff’s *Bal Masque* is based on that idea—a stupid and unnatural one, in my opinion; but he was hardly more than a child when he wrote it.”

“I like your sister very much.”

“Did you see how she spat in Gania’s face! Varia is afraid of no one. But you did not follow her example, and yet I am sure it was not through cowardice. Here she

comes! Speak of a wolf and you see his tail! I felt sure that she would come. She is very generous, though of course she has her faults.”

Varia pounced upon her brother.

“This is not the place for you,” said she. “Go to father. Is he plaguing you, prince?”

“Not in the least; on the contrary, he interests me.”

“Scolding as usual, Varia! It is the worst thing about her. After all, I believe father may have started off with Rogojin. No doubt he is sorry now. Perhaps I had better go and see what he is doing,” added Colia, running off.

“Thank God, I have got mother away, and put her to bed without another scene! Gania is worried—and ashamed—not without reason! What a spectacle! I have come to thank you once more, prince, and to ask you if you knew Nastasia Philipovna before

“No, I have never known her.”

“Then what did you mean, when you said straight out to her that she was not really ‘like that’? You guessed right, I fancy. It is quite possible she was not herself at the moment, though I cannot fathom her meaning. Evidently she meant to hurt and insult us. I have heard curious tales about her before now, but if she came to invite us to her house, why did she behave so to my mother? Ptitsin knows her very well; he says he could not understand her today. With Rogojin, too! No one with a spark of self-respect could have talked like that in the house of her... Mother is extremely vexed on your account, too...”

“That is nothing!” said the prince, waving his hand.

“But how meek she was when you spoke to her!”

“Meek! What do you mean?”

“You told her it was a shame for her to behave so, and her manner changed at once; she was like another person. You have some influence over her, prince,” added Varia, smiling a little.

The door opened at this point, and in came Gania most unexpectedly.

He was not in the least disconcerted to see Varia there, but he stood a moment at the door, and then approached the prince quietly.

“Prince,” he said, with feeling, “I was a blackguard. Forgive me!” His face gave evidence of suffering. The prince was considerably amazed, and did not reply at once. “Oh, come, forgive me, forgive me!” Gania insisted, rather impatiently. “If you like, I’ll kiss your hand. There!”

The prince was touched; he took Gania’s hands, and embraced him heartily, while each kissed the other.

“I never, never thought you were like that,” said Muishkin, drawing a deep breath. “I thought you—you weren’t capable of—”

“Of what? Apologizing, eh? And where on earth did I get the idea that you were an idiot? You always observe what other people pass by unnoticed; one could talk sense to you, but—”

“Here is another to whom you should apologize,” said the prince, pointing to Varia.

“No, no! they are all enemies! I’ve tried them often enough, believe me,” and Gania turned his back on Varia with these words.

“But if I beg you to make it up?” said Varia.

“And you’ll go to Nastasia Philipovna’s this evening—”

“If you insist: but, judge for yourself, can I go, ought I to go?”

“But she is not that sort of woman, I tell you!” said Gania, angrily. “She was only acting.”

“I know that—I know that; but what a part to play! And think what she must take YOU for, Gania! I know she kissed mother’s hand, and all that, but she laughed at you, all the same. All this is not good enough for seventy-five thousand roubles, my dear boy. You are capable of honourable feelings still, and that’s why I am talking to you so. Oh! DO take care what you are doing! Don’t you know yourself that it will end badly, Gania?”

So saying, and in a state of violent agitation, Varia left the room.

“There, they are all like that,” said Gania, laughing, “just as if I do not know all about it much better than they do.”

He sat down with these words, evidently intending to prolong his visit.

“If you know it so well,” said the prince a little timidly, “why do you choose all this worry for the sake of the seventy-five thousand, which, you confess, does not cover it?”

“I didn’t mean that,” said Gania; “but while we are upon the subject, let me hear your opinion. Is all this worry worth seventy-five thousand or not?”

“Certainly not.”

“Of course! And it would be a disgrace to marry so, eh?”

“A great disgrace.”

“Oh, well, then you may know that I shall certainly do it, now. I shall certainly marry her. I was not quite sure of myself before, but now I am. Don’t say a word: I know what you want to tell me—”

“No. I was only going to say that what surprises me most of all is your extraordinary confidence.”

“How so? What in?”

“That Nastasia Philipovna will accept you, and that the question is as good as settled; and secondly, that even if she did, you would be able to pocket the money. Of course, I know very little about it, but that’s my view. When a man marries for money it often happens that the wife keeps the money in her own hands.”

“Of course, you don’t know all; but, I assure you, you needn’t be afraid, it won’t be like that in our case. There are circumstances,” said Gania, rather excitedly. “And as to her answer to me, there’s no doubt about that. Why should you suppose she will refuse me?”

“Oh, I only judge by what I see. Varvara Ardalionovna said just now—”

“Oh she—they don’t know anything about it! Nastasia was only chaffing Rogojin. I was alarmed at first, but I have thought better of it now; she was simply laughing at him. She looks on me as a fool because I show that I meant her money, and doesn’t

realize that there are other men who would deceive her in far worse fashion. I'm not going to pretend anything, and you'll see she'll marry me, all right. If she likes to live quietly, so she shall; but if she gives me any of her nonsense, I shall leave her at once, but I shall keep the money. I'm not going to look a fool; that's the first thing, not to look a fool."

"But Nastasia Philipovna seems to me to be such a SENSIBLE woman, and, as such, why should she run blindly into this business? That's what puzzles me so," said the prince.

"You don't know all, you see; I tell you there are things—and besides, I'm sure that she is persuaded that I love her to distraction, and I give you my word I have a strong suspicion that she loves me, too—in her own way, of course. She thinks she will be able to make a sort of slave of me all my life; but I shall prepare a little surprise for her. I don't know whether I ought to be confidential with you, prince; but, I assure you, you are the only decent fellow I have come across. I have not spoken so sincerely as I am doing at this moment for years. There are uncommonly few honest people about, prince; there isn't one honester than Ptitsin, he's the best of the lot. Are you laughing? You don't know, perhaps, that blackguards like honest people, and being one myself I like you. WHY am I a blackguard? Tell me honestly, now. They all call me a blackguard because of her, and I have got into the way of thinking myself one. That's what is so bad about the business."

"I for one shall never think you a blackguard again," said the prince. "I confess I had a poor opinion of you at first, but I have been so joyfully surprised about you just now; it's a good lesson for me. I shall never judge again without a thorough trial. I see now that you are riot only not a blackguard, but are not even quite spoiled. I see that you are quite an ordinary man, not original in the least degree, but rather weak."

Gania laughed sarcastically, but said nothing. The prince, seeing that he did not quite like the last remark, blushed, and was silent too.

"Has my father asked you for money?" asked Gania, suddenly.

"No."

"Don't give it to him if he does. Fancy, he was a decent, respectable man once! He was received in the best society; he was not always the liar he is now. Of course, wine is at the bottom of it all; but he is a good deal worse than an innocent liar now. Do you know that he keeps a mistress? I can't understand how mother is so long-suffering. Did he tell you the story of the siege of Kars? Or perhaps the one about his grey horse that talked? He loves, to enlarge on these absurd histories." And Gania burst into a fit of laughter. Suddenly he turned to the prince and asked: "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I am surprised to see you laugh in that way, like a child. You came to make friends with me again just now, and you said, 'I will kiss your hand, if you like,' just as a child would have said it. And then, all at once you are talking of this mad project—of these seventy-five thousand roubles! It all seems so absurd and impossible."

"Well, what conclusion have you reached?"

“That you are rushing madly into the undertaking, and that you would do well to think it over again. It is more than possible that Varvara Ardalionovna is right.”

“Ah! now you begin to moralize! I know that I am only a child, very well,” replied Gania impatiently. “That is proved by my having this conversation with you. It is not for money only, prince, that I am rushing into this affair,” he continued, hardly master of his words, so closely had his vanity been touched. “If I reckoned on that I should certainly be deceived, for I am still too weak in mind and character. I am obeying a passion, an impulse perhaps, because I have but one aim, one that overmasters all else. You imagine that once I am in possession of these seventy-five thousand roubles, I shall rush to buy a carriage... No, I shall go on wearing the old overcoat I have worn for three years, and I shall give up my club. I shall follow the example of men who have made their fortunes. When Ptitsin was seventeen he slept in the street, he sold pen-knives, and began with a copeck; now he has sixty thousand roubles, but to get them, what has he not done? Well, I shall be spared such a hard beginning, and shall start with a little capital. In fifteen years people will say, ‘Look, that’s Ivolgin, the king of the Jews!’ You say that I have no originality. Now mark this, prince— there is nothing so offensive to a man of our time and race than to be told that he is wanting in originality, that he is weak in character, has no particular talent, and is, in short, an ordinary person. You have not even done me the honour of looking upon me as a rogue. Do you know, I could have knocked you down for that just now! You wounded me more cruelly than Epanchin, who thinks me capable of selling him my wife! Observe, it was a perfectly gratuitous idea on his part, seeing there has never been any discussion of it between us! This has exasperated me, and I am determined to make a fortune! I will do it! Once I am rich, I shall be a genius, an extremely original man. One of the vilest and most hateful things connected with money is that it can buy even talent; and will do so as long as the world lasts. You will say that this is childish—or romantic. Well, that will be all the better for me, but the thing shall be done. I will carry it through. He laughs most, who laughs last. Why does Epanchin insult me? Simply because, socially, I am a nobody. However, enough for the present. Colia has put his nose in to tell us dinner is ready, twice. I’m dining out. I shall come and talk to you now and then; you shall be comfortable enough with us. They are sure to make you one of the family. I think you and I will either be great friends or enemies. Look here now, supposing I had kissed your hand just now, as I offered to do in all sincerity, should I have hated you for it afterwards?”

“Certainly, but not always. You would not have been able to keep it up, and would have ended by forgiving me,” said the prince, after a pause for reflection, and with a pleasant smile.

“Oho, how careful one has to be with you, prince! Haven’t you put a drop of poison in that remark now, eh? By the way—ha, ha, ha!— I forgot to ask, was I right in believing that you were a good deal struck yourself with Nastasia Philipovna

“Ye-yes.”

“Are you in love with her?”

“N-no.”

“And yet you flush up as red as a rosebud! Come—it’s all right. I’m not going to laugh at you. Do you know she is a very virtuous woman? Believe it or not, as you like. You think she and Totski— not a bit of it, not a bit of it! Not for ever so long! Au revoir!”

Gania left the room in great good humour. The prince stayed behind, and meditated alone for a few minutes. At length, Colia popped his head in once more.

“I don’t want any dinner, thanks, Colia. I had too good a lunch at General Ep-anchin’s.”

Colia came into the room and gave the prince a note; it was from the general and was carefully sealed up. It was clear from Colia’s face how painful it was to him to deliver the missive. The prince read it, rose, and took his hat.

“It’s only a couple of yards,” said Colia, blushing.

“He’s sitting there over his bottle—and how they can give him credit, I cannot understand. Don’t tell mother I brought you the note, prince; I have sworn not to do it a thousand times, but I’m always so sorry for him. Don’t stand on ceremony, give him some trifle, and let that end it.”

“Come along, Colia, I want to see your father. I have an idea,” said the prince.

XII.

Colia took the prince to a public-house in the Litaynaya, not far off. In one of the side rooms there sat at a table—looking like one of the regular guests of the establishment—Ardalion Alexandrovitch, with a bottle before him, and a newspaper on his knee. He was waiting for the prince, and no sooner did the latter appear than he began a long harangue about something or other; but so far gone was he that the prince could hardly understand a word.

“I have not got a ten-rouble note,” said the prince; “but here is a twenty-five. Change it and give me back the fifteen, or I shall be left without a farthing myself.”

“Oh, of course, of course; and you quite understand that I—”

“Yes; and I have another request to make, general. Have you ever been at Nastasia Philipovna’s?”

“I? I? Do you mean me? Often, my friend, often! I only pretended I had not in order to avoid a painful subject. You saw today, you were a witness, that I did all that a kind, an indulgent father could do. Now a father of altogether another type shall step into the scene. You shall see; the old soldier shall lay bare this intrigue, or a shameless woman will force her way into a respectable and noble family.”

“Yes, quite so. I wished to ask you whether you could show me the way to Nastasia Philipovna’s tonight. I must go; I have business with her; I was not invited but I was introduced. Anyhow I am ready to trespass the laws of propriety if only I can get in somehow or other.”

“My dear young friend, you have hit on my very idea. It was not for this rubbish I asked you to come over here” (he pocketed the money, however, at this point), “it was to invite your alliance in the campaign against Nastasia Philipovna tonight. How well it sounds, ‘General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin.’ That’ll fetch her, I think, eh? Capital! We’ll go at nine; there’s time yet.”

“Where does she live?”

“Oh, a long way off, near the Great Theatre, just in the square there—It won’t be a large party.”

The general sat on and on. He had ordered a fresh bottle when the prince arrived; this took him an hour to drink, and then he had another, and another, during the consumption of which he told pretty nearly the whole story of his life. The prince was in despair. He felt that though he had but applied to this miserable old drunkard because he saw no other way of getting to Nastasia Philipovna’s, yet he had been very wrong to put the slightest confidence in such a man.

At last he rose and declared that he would wait no longer. The general rose too, drank the last drops that he could squeeze out of the bottle, and staggered into the street.

Muishkin began to despair. He could not imagine how he had been so foolish as to trust this man. He only wanted one thing, and that was to get to Nastasia Philipovna’s, even at the cost of a certain amount of impropriety. But now the scandal threatened to be more than he had bargained for. By this time Ardalion Alexandrovitch was quite intoxicated, and he kept his companion listening while he discoursed eloquently and pathetically on subjects of all kinds, interspersed with torrents of recrimination against the members of his family. He insisted that all his troubles were caused by their bad conduct, and time alone would put an end to them.

At last they reached the Litaynaya. The thaw increased steadily, a warm, unhealthy wind blew through the streets, vehicles splashed through the mud, and the iron shoes of horses and mules rang on the paving stones. Crowds of melancholy people plodded wearily along the footpaths, with here and there a drunken man among them.

“Do you see those brightly-lighted windows?” said the general. “Many of my old comrades-in-arms live about here, and I, who served longer, and suffered more than any of them, am walking on foot to the house of a woman of rather questionable reputation! A man, look you, who has thirteen bullets on his breast! ... You don’t believe it? Well, I can assure you it was entirely on my account that Pirogoff telegraphed to Paris, and left Sebastopol at the greatest risk during the siege. Nelaton, the Tuileries surgeon, demanded a safe conduct, in the name of science, into the besieged city in order to attend my wounds. The government knows all about it. ‘That’s the Ivolgin with thirteen bullets in him!’ That’s how they speak of me.... Do you see that house, prince? One of my old friends lives on the first floor, with his large family. In this and five other houses, three overlooking Nevsky, two in the Morskaya, are all that remain of my personal friends. Nina Alexandrovna gave them up long ago, but I keep in touch with them still... I may say I find refreshment in this little coterie, in thus meeting

my old acquaintances and subordinates, who worship me still, in spite of all. General Sokolovitch (by the way, I have not called on him lately, or seen Anna Fedorovna)... You know, my dear prince, when a person does not receive company himself, he gives up going to other people's houses involuntarily. And yet ... well ... you look as if you didn't believe me.... Well now, why should I not present the son of my old friend and companion to this delightful family—General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin? You will see a lovely girl—what am I saying—a lovely girl? No, indeed, two, three! Ornaments of this city and of society: beauty, education, culture—the woman question—poetry—everything! Added to which is the fact that each one will have a dot of at least eighty thousand roubles. No bad thing, eh? ... In a word I absolutely must introduce you to them: it is a duty, an obligation. General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin. Tableau!”

“At once? Now? You must have forgotten ... ” began the prince.

“No, I have forgotten nothing. Come! This is the house—up this magnificent staircase. I am surprised not to see the porter, but it is a holiday ... and the man has gone off ... Drunken fool! Why have they not got rid of him? Sokolovitch owes all the happiness he has had in the service and in his private life to me, and me alone, but ... here we are.”

The prince followed quietly, making no further objection for fear of irritating the old man. At the same time he fervently hoped that General Sokolovitch and his family would fade away like a mirage in the desert, so that the visitors could escape, by merely returning downstairs. But to his horror he saw that General Ivolgin was quite familiar with the house, and really seemed to have friends there. At every step he named some topographical or biographical detail that left nothing to be desired on the score of accuracy. When they arrived at last, on the first floor, and the general turned to ring the bell to the right, the prince decided to run away, but a curious incident stopped him momentarily.

“You have made a mistake, general,” said he. ” The name on the door is Koulakoff, and you were going to see General Sokolovitch.”

“Koulakoff ... Koulakoff means nothing. This is Sokolovitch's flat, and I am ringing at his door.... What do I care for Koulakoff? ... Here comes someone to open.”

In fact, the door opened directly, and the footman informed the visitors that the family were all away.

“What a pity! What a pity! It's just my luck!” repeated Ardalion Alexandrovitch over and over again, in regretful tones. ” When your master and mistress return, my man, tell them that General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin desired to present themselves, and that they were extremely sorry, excessively grieved ...”

Just then another person belonging to the household was seen at the back of the hall. It was a woman of some forty years, dressed in sombre colours, probably a housekeeper or a governess. Hearing the names she came forward with a look of suspicion on her face.

“Marie Alexandrovna is not at home,” said she, staring hard at the general. “She has gone to her mother's, with Alexandra Michailovna.”

“Alexandra Michailovna out, too! How disappointing! Would you believe it, I am always so unfortunate! May I most respectfully ask you to present my compliments to Alexandra Michailovna, and remind her ... tell her, that with my whole heart I wish for her what she wished for herself on Thursday evening, while she was listening to Chopin’s Ballade. She will remember. I wish it with all sincerity. General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin!”

The woman’s face changed; she lost her suspicious expression.

“I will not fail to deliver your message,” she replied, and bowed them out.

As they went downstairs the general regretted repeatedly that he had failed to introduce the prince to his friends.

“You know I am a bit of a poet,” said he. “Have you noticed it? The poetic soul, you know.” Then he added suddenly—“But after all ... after all I believe we made a mistake this time! I remember that the Sokolovitch’s live in another house, and what is more, they are just now in Moscow. Yes, I certainly was at fault. However, it is of no consequence.”

“Just tell me,” said the prince in reply, “may I count still on your assistance? Or shall I go on alone to see Nastasia Philipovna?”

“Count on my assistance? Go alone? How can you ask me that question, when it is a matter on which the fate of my family so largely depends? You don’t know Ivolgin, my friend. To trust Ivolgin is to trust a rock; that’s how the first squadron I commanded spoke of me. ‘Depend upon Ivolgin,’ said they all, ‘he is as steady as a rock.’ But, excuse me, I must just call at a house on our way, a house where I have found consolation and help in all my trials for years.”

“You are going home?”

“No ... I wish ... to visit Madame Terentieff, the widow of Captain Terentieff, my old subordinate and friend. She helps me to keep up my courage, and to bear the trials of my domestic life, and as I have an extra burden on my mind today ...”

“It seems to me,” interrupted the prince, “that I was foolish to trouble you just now. However, at present you ... Good-bye!”

“Indeed, you must not go away like that, young man, you must not!” cried the general. “My friend here is a widow, the mother of a family; her words come straight from her heart, and find an echo in mine. A visit to her is merely an affair of a few minutes; I am quite at home in her house. I will have a wash, and dress, and then we can drive to the Grand Theatre. Make up your mind to spend the evening with me.... We are just there—that’s the house... Why, Colia! you here! Well, is Marfa Borisovna at home or have you only just come?”

“Oh no! I have been here a long while,” replied Colia, who was at the front door when the general met him. “I am keeping Hippolyte company. He is worse, and has been in bed all day. I came down to buy some cards. Marfa Borisovna expects you. But what a state you are in, father!” added the boy, noticing his father’s unsteady gait. “Well, let us go in.”

On meeting Colia the prince determined to accompany the general, though he made up his mind to stay as short a time as possible. He wanted Colia, but firmly resolved to leave the general behind. He could not forgive himself for being so simple as to imagine that Ivolgin would be of any use. The three climbed up the long staircase until they reached the fourth floor where Madame Terentieff lived.

“You intend to introduce the prince?” asked Colia, as they went up.

“Yes, my boy. I wish to present him: General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin! But what’s the matter? ... what? ... How is Marfa Borisovna?”

“You know, father, you would have done much better not to come at all! She is ready to eat you up! You have not shown yourself since the day before yesterday and she is expecting the money. Why did you promise her any? You are always the same! Well, now you will have to get out of it as best you can.”

They stopped before a somewhat low doorway on the fourth floor. Ardalion Alexandrovitch, evidently much out of countenance, pushed Muishkin in front.

“I will wait here,” he stammered. “I should like to surprise her.”

Colia entered first, and as the door stood open, the mistress of the house peeped out. The surprise of the general’s imagination fell very flat, for she at once began to address him in terms of reproach.

Marfa Borisovna was about forty years of age. She wore a dressing-jacket, her feet were in slippers, her face painted, and her hair was in dozens of small plaits. No sooner did she catch sight of Ardalion Alexandrovitch than she screamed:

“There he is, that wicked, mean wretch! I knew it was he! My heart misgave me!”

The old man tried to put a good face on the affair.

“Come, let us go in—it’s all right,” he whispered in the prince’s ear.

But it was more serious than he wished to think. As soon as the visitors had crossed the low dark hall, and entered the narrow reception-room, furnished with half a dozen cane chairs, and two small card-tables, Madame Terentieff, in the shrill tones habitual to her, continued her stream of invectives.

“Are you not ashamed? Are you not ashamed? You barbarian! You tyrant! You have robbed me of all I possessed—you have sucked my bones to the marrow. How long shall I be your victim? Shameless, dishonourable man!”

“Marfa Borisovna! Marfa Borisovna! Here is ... the Prince Muishkin! General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin,” stammered the disconcerted old man.

“Would you believe,” said the mistress of the house, suddenly addressing the prince, “would you believe that that man has not even spared my orphan children? He has stolen everything I possessed, sold everything, pawned everything; he has left me nothing—nothing! What am I to do with your IOU’s, you cunning, unscrupulous rogue? Answer, devourer I answer, heart of stone! How shall I feed my orphans? with what shall I nourish them? And now he has come, he is drunk! He can scarcely stand. How, oh how, have I offended the Almighty, that He should bring this curse upon me! Answer, you worthless villain, answer!”

But this was too much for the general.

“Here are twenty-five roubles, Marfa Borisovna ... it is all that I can give ... and I owe even these to the prince’s generosity—my noble friend. I have been cruelly deceived. Such is ... life ... Now ... Excuse me, I am very weak,” he continued, standing in the centre of the room, and bowing to all sides. “I am faint; excuse me! Lenotchka ... a cushion ... my dear!”

Lenotchka, a little girl of eight, ran to fetch the cushion at once, and placed it on the rickety old sofa. The general meant to have said much more, but as soon as he had stretched himself out, he turned his face to the wall, and slept the sleep of the just.

With a grave and ceremonious air, Marfa Borisovna motioned the prince to a chair at one of the card-tables. She seated herself opposite, leaned her right cheek on her hand, and sat in silence, her eyes fixed on Muishkin, now and again sighing deeply. The three children, two little girls and a boy, Lenotchka being the eldest, came and leant on the table and also stared steadily at him. Presently Colia appeared from the adjoining room.

“I am very glad indeed to have met you here, Colia,” said the prince. “Can you do something for me? I must see Nastasia Philipovna, and I asked Ardalion Alexandrovitch just now to take me to her house, but he has gone to sleep, as you see. Will you show me the way, for I do not know the street? I have the address, though; it is close to the Grand Theatre.”

“Nastasia Philipovna? She does not live there, and to tell you the truth my father has never been to her house! It is strange that you should have depended on him! She lives near Wladimir Street, at the Five Corners, and it is quite close by. Will you go directly? It is just half-past nine. I will show you the way with pleasure.”

Colia and the prince went off together. Alas! the latter had no money to pay for a cab, so they were obliged to walk.

“I should have liked to have taken you to see Hippolyte,” said Colia. “He is the eldest son of the lady you met just now, and was in the next room. He is ill, and has been in bed all day. But he is rather strange, and extremely sensitive, and I thought he might be upset considering the circumstances in which you came ... Somehow it touches me less, as it concerns my father, while it is HIS mother. That, of course, makes a great difference. What is a terrible disgrace to a woman, does not disgrace a man, at least not in the same way. Perhaps public opinion is wrong in condemning one sex, and excusing the other. Hippolyte is an extremely clever boy, but so prejudiced. He is really a slave to his opinions.”

“Do you say he is consumptive?”

“Yes. It really would be happier for him to die young. If I were in his place I should certainly long for death. He is unhappy about his brother and sisters, the children you saw. If it were possible, if we only had a little money, we should leave our respective families, and live together in a little apartment of our own. It is our dream. But, do you know, when I was talking over your affair with him, he was angry, and said that anyone who did not call out a man who had given him a blow was a coward. He is very

irritable to-day, and I left off arguing the matter with him. So Nastasia Philipovna has invited you to go and see her?"

"To tell the truth, she has not."

"Then how do you come to be going there?" cried Colia, so much astonished that he stopped short in the middle of the pavement. "And ... and are you going to her At Home in that costume?"

"I don't know, really, whether I shall be allowed in at all. If she will receive me, so much the better. If not, the matter is ended. As to my clothes—what can I do?"

"Are you going there for some particular reason, or only as a way of getting into her society, and that of her friends?"

"No, I have really an object in going ... That is, I am going on business it is difficult to explain, but..."

"Well, whether you go on business or not is your affair, I do not want to know. The only important thing, in my eyes, is that you should not be going there simply for the pleasure of spending your evening in such company—cocottes, generals, usurers! If that were the case I should despise and laugh at you. There are terribly few honest people here, and hardly any whom one can respect, although people put on airs—Varia especially! Have you noticed, prince, how many adventurers there are nowadays? Especially here, in our dear Russia. How it has happened I never can understand. There used to be a certain amount of solidity in all things, but now what happens? Everything is exposed to the public gaze, veils are thrown back, every wound is probed by careless fingers. We are for ever present at an orgy of scandalous revelations. Parents blush when they remember their old-fashioned morality. At Moscow lately a father was heard urging his son to stop at nothing—at nothing, mind you!—to get money! The press seized upon the story, of course, and now it is public property. Look at my father, the general! See what he is, and yet, I assure you, he is an honest man! Only ... he drinks too much, and his morals are not all we could desire. Yes, that's true! I pity him, to tell the truth, but I dare not say so, because everybody would laugh at me—but I do pity him! And who are the really clever men, after all? Money-grubbers, every one of them, from the first to the last. Hippolyte finds excuses for money-lending, and says it is a necessity. He talks about the economic movement, and the ebb and flow of capital; the devil knows what he means. It makes me angry to hear him talk so, but he is soured by his troubles. Just imagine—the general keeps his mother—but she lends him money! She lends it for a week or ten days at very high interest! Isn't it disgusting? And then, you would hardly believe it, but my mother—Nina Alexandrovna—helps Hippolyte in all sorts of ways, sends him money and clothes. She even goes as far as helping the children, through Hippolyte, because their mother cares nothing about them, and Varia does the same."

"Well, just now you said there were no honest nor good people about, that there were only money-grubbers—and here they are quite close at hand, these honest and good people, your mother and Varia! I think there is a good deal of moral strength in helping people in such circumstances."

“Varia does it from pride, and likes showing off, and giving herself airs. As to my mother, I really do admire her—yes, and honour her. Hippolyte, hardened as he is, feels it. He laughed at first, and thought it vulgar of her—but now, he is sometimes quite touched and overcome by her kindness. H’m! You call that being strong and good? I will remember that! Gania knows nothing about it. He would say that it was encouraging vice.”

“Ah, Gania knows nothing about it? It seems there are many things that Gania does not know,” exclaimed the prince, as he considered Colia’s last words.

“Do you know, I like you very much indeed, prince? I shall never forget about this afternoon.”

“I like you too, Colia.”

“Listen to me! You are going to live here, are you not?” said Colia. “I mean to get something to do directly, and earn money. Then shall we three live together? You, and I, and Hippolyte? We will hire a flat, and let the general come and visit us. What do you say?”

“It would be very pleasant,” returned the prince. “But we must see. I am really rather worried just now. What! are we there already? Is that the house? What a long flight of steps! And there’s a porter! Well, Colia I don’t know what will come of it all.”

The prince seemed quite distracted for the moment.

“You must tell me all about it tomorrow! Don’t be afraid. I wish you success; we agree so entirely I that can do so, although I do not understand why you are here. Good-bye!” cried Colia excitedly. “Now I will rush back and tell Hippolyte all about our plans and proposals! But as to your getting in—don’t be in the least afraid. You will see her. She is so original about everything. It’s the first floor. The porter will show you.”

XIII.

THE prince was very nervous as he reached the outer door; but he did his best to encourage himself with the reflection that the worst thing that could happen to him would be that he would not be received, or, perhaps, received, then laughed at for coming.

But there was another question, which terrified him considerably, and that was: what was he going to do when he DID get in? And to this question he could fashion no satisfactory reply.

If only he could find an opportunity of coming close up to Nastasia Philipovna and saying to her: “Don’t ruin yourself by marrying this man. He does not love you, he only loves your money. He told me so himself, and so did Aglaya Ivanovna, and I have come on purpose to warn you”—but even that did not seem quite a legitimate or practicable thing to do. Then, again, there was another delicate question, to which he could not find an answer; dared not, in fact, think of it; but at the very idea of which

he trembled and blushed. However, in spite of all his fears and heart-quakings he went in, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna.

Nastasia occupied a medium-sized, but distinctly tasteful, flat, beautifully furnished and arranged. At one period of these five years of Petersburg life, Totski had certainly not spared his expenditure upon her. He had calculated upon her eventual love, and tried to tempt her with a lavish outlay upon comforts and luxuries, knowing too well how easily the heart accustoms itself to comforts, and how difficult it is to tear one's self away from luxuries which have become habitual and, little by little, indispensable.

Nastasia did not reject all this, she even loved her comforts and luxuries, but, strangely enough, never became, in the least degree, dependent upon them, and always gave the impression that she could do just as well without them. In fact, she went so far as to inform Totski on several occasions that such was the case, which the latter gentleman considered a very unpleasant communication indeed.

But, of late, Totski had observed many strange and original features and characteristics in Nastasia, which he had neither known nor reckoned upon in former times, and some of these fascinated him, even now, in spite of the fact that all his old calculations with regard to her were long ago cast to the winds.

A maid opened the door for the prince (Nastasia's servants were all females) and, to his surprise, received his request to announce him to her mistress without any astonishment. Neither his dirty boots, nor his wide-brimmed hat, nor his sleeveless cloak, nor his evident confusion of manner, produced the least impression upon her. She helped him off with his cloak, and begged him to wait a moment in the ante-room while she announced him.

The company assembled at Nastasia Philipovna's consisted of none but her most intimate friends, and formed a very small party in comparison with her usual gatherings on this anniversary.

In the first place there were present Totski, and General Epanchin. They were both highly amiable, but both appeared to be labouring under a half-hidden feeling of anxiety as to the result of Nastasia's deliberations with regard to Gania, which result was to be made public this evening.

Then, of course, there was Gania who was by no means so amiable as his elders, but stood apart, gloomy, and miserable, and silent. He had determined not to bring Varia with him; but Nastasia had not even asked after her, though no sooner had he arrived than she had reminded him of the episode between himself and the prince. The general, who had heard nothing of it before, began to listen with some interest, while Gania, drily, but with perfect candour, went through the whole history, including the fact of his apology to the prince. He finished by declaring that the prince was a most extraordinary man, and goodness knows why he had been considered an idiot hitherto, for he was very far from being one.

Nastasia listened to all this with great interest; but the conversation soon turned to Rogojin and his visit, and this theme proved of the greatest attraction to both Totski and the general.

Ptitsin was able to afford some particulars as to Rogojin's conduct since the afternoon. He declared that he had been busy finding money for the latter ever since, and up to nine o'clock, Rogojin having declared that he must absolutely have a hundred thousand roubles by the evening. He added that Rogojin was drunk, of course; but that he thought the money would be forthcoming, for the excited and intoxicated rapture of the fellow impelled him to give any interest or premium that was asked of him, and there were several others engaged in beating up the money, also.

All this news was received by the company with somewhat gloomy interest. Nastasia was silent, and would not say what she thought about it. Gania was equally uncommunicative. The general seemed the most anxious of all, and decidedly uneasy. The present of pearls which he had prepared with so much joy in the morning had been accepted but coldly, and Nastasia had smiled rather disagreeably as she took it from him. Ferdishenko was the only person present in good spirits.

Totski himself, who had the reputation of being a capital talker, and was usually the life and soul of these entertainments, was as silent as any on this occasion, and sat in a state of, for him, most uncommon perturbation.

The rest of the guests (an old tutor or schoolmaster, goodness knows why invited; a young man, very timid, and shy and silent; a rather loud woman of about forty, apparently an actress; and a very pretty, well-dressed German lady who hardly said a word all the evening) not only had no gift for enlivening the proceedings, but hardly knew what to say for themselves when addressed. Under these circumstances the arrival of the prince came almost as a godsend.

The announcement of his name gave rise to some surprise and to some smiles, especially when it became evident, from Nastasia's astonished look, that she had not thought of inviting him. But her astonishment once over, Nastasia showed such satisfaction that all prepared to greet the prince with cordial smiles of welcome.

"Of course," remarked General Epanchin, "he does this out of pure innocence. It's a little dangerous, perhaps, to encourage this sort of freedom; but it is rather a good thing that he has arrived just at this moment. He may enliven us a little with his originalities."

"Especially as he asked himself," said Ferdishenko.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked the general, who loathed Ferdishenko.

"Why, he must pay toll for his entrance," explained the latter.

"H'm! Prince Muishkin is not Ferdishenko," said the general, impatiently. This worthy gentleman could never quite reconcile himself to the idea of meeting Ferdishenko in society, and on an equal footing.

"Oh general, spare Ferdishenko!" replied the other, smiling. "I have special privileges."

"What do you mean by special privileges?"

"Once before I had the honour of stating them to the company. I will repeat the explanation to-day for your excellency's benefit. You see, excellency, all the world is witty and clever except myself. I am neither. As a kind of compensation I am allowed to

tell the truth, for it is a well-known fact that only stupid people tell 'the truth. Added to this, I am a spiteful man, just because I am not clever. If I am offended or injured I bear it quite patiently until the man injuring me meets with some misfortune. Then I remember, and take my revenge. I return the injury sevenfold, as Ivan Petrovitch Ptitsin says. (Of course he never does so himself.) Excellency, no doubt you recollect Kryloff's fable, 'The Lion and the Ass'? Well now, that's you and I. That fable was written precisely for us."

"You seem to be talking nonsense again, Ferdishenko," growled the general.

"What is the matter, excellency? I know how to keep my place. When I said just now that we, you and I, were the lion and the ass of Kryloff's fable, of course it is understood that I take the role of the ass. Your excellency is the lion of which the fable remarks:

'A mighty lion, terror of the woods, Was shorn of his great prowess by old age.'
And I, your excellency, am the ass."

"I am of your opinion on that last point," said Ivan Fedorovitch, with ill-concealed irritation.

All this was no doubt extremely coarse, and moreover it was premeditated, but after all Ferdishenko had persuaded everyone to accept him as a buffoon.

"If I am admitted and tolerated here," he had said one day, "it is simply because I talk in this way. How can anyone possibly receive such a man as I am? I quite understand. Now, could I, a Ferdishenko, be allowed to sit shoulder to shoulder with a clever man like Afanasy Ivanovitch? There is one explanation, only one. I am given the position because it is so entirely inconceivable!"

But these vulgarities seemed to please Nastasia Philipovna, although too often they were both rude and offensive. Those who wished to go to her house were forced to put up with Ferdishenko. Possibly the latter was not mistaken in imagining that he was received simply in order to annoy Totski, who disliked him extremely. Gania also was often made the butt of the jester's sarcasms, who used this method of keeping in Nastasia Philipovna's good graces.

"The prince will begin by singing us a fashionable ditty," remarked Ferdishenko, and looked at the mistress of the house, to see what she would say.

"I don't think so, Ferdishenko; please be quiet," answered Nastasia Philipovna dryly.

"A-ah! if he is to be under special patronage, I withdraw my claws."

But Nastasia Philipovna had now risen and advanced to meet the prince.

"I was so sorry to have forgotten to ask you to come, when I saw you," she said, "and I am delighted to be able to thank you personally now, and to express my pleasure at your resolution."

So saying she gazed into his eyes, longing to see whether she could make any guess as to the explanation of his motive in coming to her house. The prince would very likely have made some reply to her kind words, but he was so dazzled by her appearance that he could not speak.

Nastasia noticed this with satisfaction. She was in full dress this evening; and her appearance was certainly calculated to impress all beholders. She took his hand and led him towards her other guests. But just before they reached the drawing-room door, the prince stopped her, and hurriedly and in great agitation whispered to her:

“You are altogether perfection; even your pallor and thinness are perfect; one could not wish you otherwise. I did so wish to come and see you. I—forgive me, please—”

“Don’t apologize,” said Nastasia, laughing; “you spoil the whole originality of the thing. I think what they say about you must be true, that you are so original.—So you think me perfection, do you?”

“Yes.”

“H’m! Well, you may be a good reader of riddles but you are wrong THERE, at all events. I’ll remind you of this, tonight.”

Nastasia introduced the prince to her guests, to most of whom he was already known.

Totski immediately made some amiable remark. Al seemed to brighten up at once, and the conversation became general. Nastasia made the prince sit down next to herself.

“Dear me, there’s nothing so very curious about the prince dropping in, after all,” remarked Ferdishenko.

“It’s quite a clear case,” said the hitherto silent Gania. I have watched the prince almost all day, ever since the moment when he first saw Nastasia Philipovna’s portrait, at General Epanchin’s. I remember thinking at the time what I am now pretty sure of; and what, I may say in passing, the prince confessed to myself.”

Gania said all this perfectly seriously, and without the slightest appearance of joking; indeed, he seemed strangely gloomy.

“I did not confess anything to you,” said the prince, blushing. “I only answered your question.”

“Bravo! That’s frank, at any rate!” shouted Ferdishenko, and there was general laughter.

“Oh prince, prince! I never should have thought it of you;” said General Epanchin. “And I imagined you a philosopher! Oh, you silent fellows!”

“Judging from the fact that the prince blushed at this innocent joke, like a young girl, I should think that he must, as an honourable man, harbour the noblest intentions,” said the old toothless schoolmaster, most unexpectedly; he had not so much as opened his mouth before. This remark provoked general mirth, and the old fellow himself laughed loudest of the lot, but ended with a stupendous fit of coughing.

Nastasia Philipovna, who loved originality and drollery of all kinds, was apparently very fond of this old man, and rang the bell for more tea to stop his coughing. It was now half-past ten o’clock.

“Gentlemen, wouldn’t you like a little champagne now?” she asked. “I have it all ready; it will cheer us up—do now—no ceremony!”

This invitation to drink, couched, as it was, in such informal terms, came very strangely from Nastasia Philipovna. Her usual entertainments were not quite like this;

there was more style about them. However, the wine was not refused; each guest took a glass excepting Gania, who drank nothing.

It was extremely difficult to account for Nastasia's strange condition of mind, which became more evident each moment, and which none could avoid noticing.

She took her glass, and vowed she would empty it three times that evening. She was hysterical, and laughed aloud every other minute with no apparent reason—the next moment relapsing into gloom and thoughtfulness.

Some of her guests suspected that she must be ill; but concluded at last that she was expecting something, for she continued to look at her watch impatiently and unceasingly; she was most absent and strange.

"You seem to be a little feverish tonight," said the actress.

"Yes; I feel quite ill. I have been obliged to put on this shawl—I feel so cold," replied Nastasia. She certainly had grown very pale, and every now and then she tried to suppress a trembling in her limbs.

"Had we not better allow our hostess to retire?" asked Totski of the general.

"Not at all, gentlemen, not at all! Your presence is absolutely necessary to me tonight," said Nastasia, significantly.

As most of those present were aware that this evening a certain very important decision was to be taken, these words of Nastasia Philipovna's appeared to be fraught with much hidden interest. The general and Totski exchanged looks; Gania fidgeted convulsively in his chair.

"Let's play at some game!" suggested the actress.

"I know a new and most delightful game, added Ferdishenko.

"What is it?" asked the actress.

"Well, when we tried it we were a party of people, like this, for instance; and somebody proposed that each of us, without leaving his place at the table, should relate something about himself. It had to be something that he really and honestly considered the very worst action he had ever committed in his life. But he was to be honest—that was the chief point! He wasn't to be allowed to lie."

"What an extraordinary idea!" said the general.

"That's the beauty of it, general!"

"It's a funny notion," said Totski, "and yet quite natural—it's only a new way of boasting."

"Perhaps that is just what was so fascinating about it."

"Why, it would be a game to cry over—not to laugh at!" said the actress.

"Did it succeed?" asked Nastasia Philipovna. "Come, let's try it, let's try it; we really are not quite so jolly as we might be—let's try it! We may like it; it's original, at all events!"

"Yes," said Ferdishenko; "it's a good idea—come along—the men begin. Of course no one need tell a story if he prefers to be disobliging. We must draw lots! Throw your slips of paper, gentlemen, into this hat, and the prince shall draw for turns. It's a very

simple game; all you have to do is to tell the story of the worst action of your life. It's as simple as anything. I'll prompt anyone who forgets the rules!"

No one liked the idea much. Some smiled, some frowned some objected, but faintly, not wishing to oppose Nastasia's wishes; for this new idea seemed to be rather well received by her. She was still in an excited, hysterical state, laughing convulsively at nothing and everything. Her eyes were blazing, and her cheeks showed two bright red spots against the white. The melancholy appearance of some of her guests seemed to add to her sarcastic humour, and perhaps the very cynicism and cruelty of the game proposed by Ferdishenko pleased her. At all events she was attracted by the idea, and gradually her guests came round to her side; the thing was original, at least, and might turn out to be amusing. "And supposing it's something that one—one can't speak about before ladies?" asked the timid and silent young man.

"Why, then of course, you won't say anything about it. As if there are not plenty of sins to your score without the need of those!" said Ferdishenko.

"But I really don't know which of my actions is the worst," said the lively actress.

"Ladies are exempted if they like."

"And how are you to know that one isn't lying? And if one lies the whole point of the game is lost," said Gania.

"Oh, but think how delightful to hear how one's friends lie! Besides you needn't be afraid, Gania; everybody knows what your worst action is without the need of any lying on your part. Only think, gentlemen,"—and Ferdishenko here grew quite enthusiastic, "only think with what eyes we shall observe one another tomorrow, after our tales have been told!"

"But surely this is a joke, Nastasia Philipovna?" asked Totski. "You don't really mean us to play this game."

"Whoever is afraid of wolves had better not go into the wood," said Nastasia, smiling.

"But, pardon me, Mr. Ferdishenko, is it possible to make a game out of this kind of thing?" persisted Totski, growing more and more uneasy. "I assure you it can't be a success."

"And why not? Why, the last time I simply told straight off about how I stole three roubles."

"Perhaps so; but it is hardly possible that you told it so that it seemed like truth, or so that you were believed. And, as Gavrila Ardalionovitch has said, the least suggestion of a falsehood takes all point out of the game. It seems to me that sincerity, on the other hand, is only possible if combined with a kind of bad taste that would be utterly out of place here."

"How subtle you are, Afanasy Ivanovitch! You astonish me," cried Ferdishenko. "You will remark, gentleman, that in saying that I could not recount the story of my theft so as to be believed, Afanasy Ivanovitch has very ingeniously implied that I am not capable of thieving—(it would have been bad taste to say so openly); and all the time he is probably firmly convinced, in his own mind, that I am very well capable of it! But now, gentlemen, to business! Put in your slips, ladies and gentlemen—is yours in,

Mr. Totski? So—then we are all ready; now prince, draw, please.” The prince silently put his hand into the hat, and drew the names. Ferdishenko was first, then Ptitsin, then the general, Totski next, his own fifth, then Gania, and so on; the ladies did not draw.

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” cried Ferdishenko. “I did so hope the prince would come out first, and then the general. Well, gentlemen, I suppose I must set a good example! What vexes me much is that I am such an insignificant creature that it matters nothing to anybody whether I have done bad actions or not! Besides, which am I to choose? It’s an *embarras de richesse*. Shall I tell how I became a thief on one occasion only, to convince Afanasy Ivanovitch that it is possible to steal without being a thief?”

“Do go on, Ferdishenko, and don’t make unnecessary preface, or you’ll never finish,” said Nastasia Philipovna. All observed how irritable and cross she had become since her last burst of laughter; but none the less obstinately did she stick to her absurd whim about this new game. Totski sat looking miserable enough. The general lingered over his champagne, and seemed to be thinking of some story for the time when his turn should come.

XIV.

“I have no wit, Nastasia Philipovna,” began Ferdishenko, “and therefore I talk too much, perhaps. Were I as witty, now, as Mr. Totski or the general, I should probably have sat silent all the evening, as they have. Now, prince, what do you think?—are there not far more thieves than honest men in this world? Don’t you think we may say there does not exist a single person so honest that he has never stolen anything whatever in his life?”

“What a silly idea,” said the actress. “Of course it is not the case. I have never stolen anything, for one.”

“H’m! very well, Daria Alexeyevna; you have not stolen anything— agreed. But how about the prince, now—look how he is blushing!”

“I think you are partially right, but you exaggerate,” said the prince, who had certainly blushed up, of a sudden, for some reason or other.

“Ferdishenko—either tell us your story, or be quiet, and mind your own business. You exhaust all patience,” cuttingly and irritably remarked Nastasia Philipovna.

“Immediately, immediately! As for my story, gentlemen, it is too stupid and absurd to tell you.

“I assure you I am not a thief, and yet I have stolen; I cannot explain why. It was at Semeon Ivanovitch Ishenka’s country house, one Sunday. He had a dinner party. After dinner the men stayed at the table over their wine. It struck me to ask the daughter of the house to play something on the piano; so I passed through the corner room to join the ladies. In that room, on Maria Ivanovna’s writing-table, I observed a three-rouble note. She must have taken it out for some purpose, and left it lying there. There was

no one about. I took up the note and put it in my pocket; why, I can't say. I don't know what possessed me to do it, but it was done, and I went quickly back to the dining-room and reseated myself at the dinner-table. I sat and waited there in a great state of excitement. I talked hard, and told lots of stories, and laughed like mad; then I joined the ladies.

"In half an hour or so the loss was discovered, and the servants were being put under examination. Daria, the housemaid was suspected. I exhibited the greatest interest and sympathy, and I remember that poor Daria quite lost her head, and that I began assuring her, before everyone, that I would guarantee her forgiveness on the part of her mistress, if she would confess her guilt. They all stared at the girl, and I remember a wonderful attraction in the reflection that here was I sermonizing away, with the money in my own pocket all the while. I went and spent the three roubles that very evening at a restaurant. I went in and asked for a bottle of Lafite, and drank it up; I wanted to be rid of the money.

"I did not feel much remorse either then or afterwards; but I would not repeat the performance—believe it or not as you please. There—that's all."

"Only, of course that's not nearly your worst action," said the actress, with evident dislike in her face.

"That was a psychological phenomenon, not an action," remarked Totski.

"And what about the maid?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, with undisguised contempt.

"Oh, she was turned out next day, of course. It's a very strict household, there!"

"And you allowed it?"

"I should think so, rather! I was not going to return and confess next day," laughed Ferdishenko, who seemed a little surprised at the disagreeable impression which his story had made on all parties.

"How mean you were!" said Nastasia.

"Bah! you wish to hear a man tell of his worst actions, and you expect the story to come out goody-goody! One's worst actions always are mean. We shall see what the general has to say for himself now. All is not gold that glitters, you know; and because a man keeps his carriage he need not be specially virtuous, I assure you, all sorts of people keep carriages. And by what means?"

In a word, Ferdishenko was very angry and rapidly forgetting himself; his whole face was drawn with passion. Strange as it may appear, he had expected much better success for his story. These little errors of taste on Ferdishenko's part occurred very frequently. Nastasia trembled with rage, and looked fixedly at him, whereupon he relapsed into alarmed silence. He realized that he had gone a little too far.

"Had we not better end this game?" asked Totski.

"It's my turn, but I plead exemption," said Ptitsin.

"You don't care to oblige us?" asked Nastasia.

"I cannot, I assure you. I confess I do not understand how anyone can play this game."

“Then, general, it’s your turn,” continued Nastasia Philipovna, “and if you refuse, the whole game will fall through, which will disappoint me very much, for I was looking forward to relating a certain ‘page of my own life.’ I am only waiting for you and Afanasy Ivanovitch to have your turns, for I require the support of your example,” she added, smiling.

“Oh, if you put it in that way ” cried the general, excitedly, “I’m ready to tell the whole story of my life, but I must confess that I prepared a little story in anticipation of my turn.”

Nastasia smiled amiably at him; but evidently her depression and irritability were increasing with every moment. Totski was dreadfully alarmed to hear her promise a revelation out of her own life.

“I, like everyone else,” began the general, “have committed certain not altogether graceful actions, so to speak, during the course of my life. But the strangest thing of all in my case is, that I should consider the little anecdote which I am now about to give you as a confession of the worst of my ‘bad actions.’ It is thirty-five years since it all happened, and yet I cannot to this very day recall the circumstances without, as it were, a sudden pang at the heart.

“It was a silly affair—I was an ensign at the time. You know ensigns—their blood is boiling water, their circumstances generally penurious. Well, I had a servant Nikifor who used to do everything for me in my quarters, economized and managed for me, and even laid hands on anything he could find (belonging to other people), in order to augment our household goods; but a faithful, honest fellow all the same.

“I was strict, but just by nature. At that time we were stationed in a small town. I was quartered at an old widow’s house, a lieutenant’s widow of eighty years of age. She lived in a wretched little wooden house, and had not even a servant, so poor was she.

“Her relations had all died off—her husband was dead and buried forty years since; and a niece, who had lived with her and bullied her up to three years ago, was dead too; so that she was quite alone.

“Well, I was precious dull with her, especially as she was so childish that there was nothing to be got out of her. Eventually, she stole a fowl of mine; the business is a mystery to this day; but it could have been no one but herself. I requested to be quartered somewhere else, and was shifted to the other end of the town, to the house of a merchant with a large family, and a long beard, as I remember him. Nikifor and I were delighted to go; but the old lady was not pleased at our departure.

“Well, a day or two afterwards, when I returned from drill, Nikifor says to me: ‘We oughtn’t to have left our tureen with the old lady, I’ve nothing to serve the soup in.’

“I asked how it came about that the tureen had been left. Nikifor explained that the old lady refused to give it up, because, she said, we had broken her bowl, and she must have our tureen in place of it; she had declared that I had so arranged the matter with herself.

“This baseness on her part of course aroused my young blood to fever heat; I jumped up, and away I flew.

“I arrived at the old woman’s house beside myself. She was sitting in a corner all alone, leaning her face on her hand. I fell on her like a clap of thunder. ‘You old wretch!’ I yelled and all that sort of thing, in real Russian style. Well, when I began cursing at her, a strange thing happened. I looked at her, and she stared back with her eyes starting out of her head, but she did not say a word. She seemed to sway about as she sat, and looked and looked at me in the strangest way. Well, I soon stopped swearing and looked closer at her, asked her questions, but not a word could I get out of her. The flies were buzzing about the room and only this sound broke the silence; the sun was setting outside; I didn’t know what to make of it, so I went away.

“Before I reached home I was met and summoned to the major’s, so that it was some while before I actually got there. When I came in, Nikifor met me. ‘Have you heard, sir, that our old lady is dead?’ ‘DEAD, when?’ ‘Oh, an hour and a half ago.’ That meant nothing more nor less than that she was dying at the moment when I pounced on her and began abusing her.

“This produced a great effect upon me. I used to dream of the poor old woman at nights. I really am not superstitious, but two days after, I went to her funeral, and as time went on I thought more and more about her. I said to myself, ‘This woman, this human being, lived to a great age. She had children, a husband and family, friends and relations; her household was busy and cheerful; she was surrounded by smiling faces; and then suddenly they are gone, and she is left alone like a solitary fly ... like a fly, cursed with the burden of her age. At last, God calls her to Himself. At sunset, on a lovely summer’s evening, my little old woman passes away—a thought, you will notice, which offers much food for reflection—and behold! instead of tears and prayers to start her on her last journey, she has insults and jeers from a young ensign, who stands before her with his hands in his pockets, making a terrible row about a soup tureen!’ Of course I was to blame, and even now that I have time to look back at it calmly, I pity the poor old thing no less. I repeat that I wonder at myself, for after all I was not really responsible. Why did she take it into her head to die at that moment? But the more I thought of it, the more I felt the weight of it upon my mind; and I never got quite rid of the impression until I put a couple of old women into an almshouse and kept them there at my own expense. There, that’s all. I repeat I dare say I have committed many a grievous sin in my day; but I cannot help always looking back upon this as the worst action I have ever perpetrated.”

“H’m! and instead of a bad action, your excellency has detailed one of your noblest deeds,” said Ferdishenko. “Ferdishenko is ‘done.’”

“Dear me, general,” said Nastasia Philipovna, absently, “I really never imagined you had such a good heart.”

The general laughed with great satisfaction, and applied himself once more to the champagne.

It was now Totski's turn, and his story was awaited with great curiosity—while all eyes turned on Nastasia Philipovna, as though anticipating that his revelation must be connected somehow with her. Nastasia, during the whole of his story, pulled at the lace trimming of her sleeve, and never once glanced at the speaker. Totski was a handsome man, rather stout, with a very polite and dignified manner. He was always well dressed, and his linen was exquisite. He had plump white hands, and wore a magnificent diamond ring on one finger.

“What simplifies the duty before me considerably, in my opinion,” he began, “is that I am bound to recall and relate the very worst action of my life. In such circumstances there can, of course, be no doubt. One's conscience very soon informs one what is the proper narrative to tell. I admit, that among the many silly and thoughtless actions of my life, the memory of one comes prominently forward and reminds me that it lay long like a stone on my heart. Some twenty years since, I paid a visit to Platon Ordintzeff at his country-house. He had just been elected marshal of the nobility, and had come there with his young wife for the winter holidays. Anfisa Alexeyevna's birthday came off just then, too, and there were two balls arranged. At that time Dumas-fils' beautiful work, *La Dame aux Camélias*—a novel which I consider imperishable—had just come into fashion. In the provinces all the ladies were in raptures over it, those who had read it, at least. Camélias were all the fashion. Everyone inquired for them, everybody wanted them; and a grand lot of camélias are to be got in a country town—as you all know—and two balls to provide for!

“Poor Peter Volhofskoi was desperately in love with Anfisa Alexeyevna. I don't know whether there was anything—I mean I don't know whether he could possibly have indulged in any hope. The poor fellow was beside himself to get her a bouquet of camélias. Countess Sotski and Sophia Bessalova, as everyone knew, were coming with white camellia bouquets. Anfisa wished for red ones, for effect. Well, her husband Platon was driven desperate to find some. And the day before the ball, Anfisa's rival snapped up the only red camélias to be had in the place, from under Platon's nose, and Platon—wretched man—was done for. Now if Peter had only been able to step in at this moment with a red bouquet, his little hopes might have made gigantic strides. A woman's gratitude under such circumstances would have been boundless—but it was practically an impossibility.

“The night before the ball I met Peter, looking radiant. ‘What is it?’ I ask. ‘I've found them, Eureka!’ ‘No! where, where?’ ‘At Ekshaisk (a little town fifteen miles off) there's a rich old merchant, who keeps a lot of canaries, has no children, and he and his wife are devoted to flowers. He's got some camélias.’ ‘And what if he won't let you have them?’ ‘I'll go on my knees and implore till I get them. I won't go away.’ ‘When shall you start?’ ‘Tomorrow morning at five o'clock.’ ‘Go on,’ I said, ‘and good luck to you.’

“I was glad for the poor fellow, and went home. But an idea got hold of me somehow. I don't know how. It was nearly two in the morning. I rang the bell and ordered the coachman to be waked up and sent to me. He came. I gave him a tip of fifteen roubles,

and told him to get the carriage ready at once. In half an hour it was at the door. I got in and off we went.

“By five I drew up at the Ekshaisky inn. I waited there till dawn, and soon after six I was off, and at the old merchant Trepalaf’s.

“‘Camellias!’ I said, ‘father, save me, save me, let me have some camellias!’ He was a tall, grey old man—a terrible-looking old gentleman. ‘Not a bit of it,’ he says. ‘I won’t.’ Down I went on my knees. ‘Don’t say so, don’t—think what you’re doing!’ I cried; ‘it’s a matter of life and death!’ ‘If that’s the case, take them,’ says he. So up I get, and cut such a bouquet of red camellias! He had a whole greenhouse full of them—lovely ones. The old fellow sighs. I pull out a hundred roubles. ‘No, no!’ says he, ‘don’t insult me that way.’ ‘Oh, if that’s the case, give it to the village hospital,’ I say. ‘Ah,’ he says, ‘that’s quite a different matter; that’s good of you and generous. I’ll pay it in there for you with pleasure.’ I liked that old fellow, Russian to the core, *de la vraie souche*. I went home in raptures, but took another road in order to avoid Peter. Immediately on arriving I sent up the bouquet for Anfisa to see when she awoke.

“You may imagine her ecstasy, her gratitude. The wretched Platon, who had almost died since yesterday of the reproaches showered upon him, wept on my shoulder. Of course poor Peter had no chance after this.

“I thought he would cut my throat at first, and went about armed ready to meet him. But he took it differently; he fainted, and had brain fever and convulsions. A month after, when he had hardly recovered, he went off to the Crimea, and there he was shot.

“I assure you this business left me no peace for many a long year. Why did I do it? I was not in love with her myself; I’m afraid it was simply mischief—pure ‘cussedness’ on my part.

“If I hadn’t seized that bouquet from under his nose he might have been alive now, and a happy man. He might have been successful in life, and never have gone to fight the Turks.”

Totski ended his tale with the same dignity that had characterized its commencement.

Nastasia Philipovna’s eyes were flashing in a most unmistakable way, now; and her lips were all a-quiver by the time Totski finished his story.

All present watched both of them with curiosity.

“You were right, Totski,” said Nastasia, “it is a dull game and a stupid one. I’ll just tell my story, as I promised, and then we’ll play cards.”

“Yes, but let’s have the story first!” cried the general.

“Prince,” said Nastasia Philipovna, unexpectedly turning to Muishkin, “here are my old friends, Totski and General Epanchin, who wish to marry me off. Tell me what you think. Shall I marry or not? As you decide, so shall it be.”

Totski grew white as a sheet. The general was struck dumb. All present started and listened intently. Gania sat rooted to his chair.

“Marry whom?” asked the prince, faintly.

“Gavrila Ardalionovitch Ivolgin,” said Nastasia, firmly and evenly.

There were a few seconds of dead silence.

The prince tried to speak, but could not form his words; a great weight seemed to lie upon his breast and suffocate him.

“N-no! don’t marry him!” he whispered at last, drawing his breath with an effort.

“So be it, then. Gavrila Ardalionovitch,” she spoke solemnly and forcibly, “you hear the prince’s decision? Take it as my decision; and let that be the end of the matter for good and all.”

“Nastasia Philipovna!” cried Totski, in a quaking voice.

“Nastasia Philipovna!” said the general, in persuasive but agitated tones.

Everyone in the room fidgeted in their places, and waited to see what was coming next.

“Well, gentlemen!” she continued, gazing around in apparent astonishment; “what do you all look so alarmed about? Why are you so upset?”

“But—recollect, Nastasia Philipovna.” stammered Totski, “you gave a promise, quite a free one, and—and you might have spared us this. I am confused and bewildered, I know; but, in a word, at such a moment, and before company, and all so-so-irregular, finishing off a game with a serious matter like this, a matter of honour, and of heart, and—”

“I don’t follow you, Afanasy Ivanovitch; you are losing your head. In the first place, what do you mean by ‘before company’? Isn’t the company good enough for you? And what’s all that about ‘a game’? I wished to tell my little story, and I told it! Don’t you like it? You heard what I said to the prince? ‘As you decide, so it shall be!’ If he had said ‘yes,’ I should have given my consent! But he said ‘no,’ so I refused. Here was my whole life hanging on his one word! Surely I was serious enough?”

“The prince! What on earth has the prince got to do with it? Who the deuce is the prince?” cried the general, who could conceal his wrath no longer.

“The prince has this to do with it—that I see in him. for the first time in all my life, a man endowed with real truthfulness of spirit, and I trust him. He trusted me at first sight, and I trust him!”

“It only remains for me, then, to thank Nastasia Philipovna for the great delicacy with which she has treated me,” said Gania, as pale as death, and with quivering lips. “That is my plain duty, of course; but the prince—what has he to do in the matter?”

“I see what you are driving at,” said Nastasia Philipovna. “You imply that the prince is after the seventy-five thousand roubles—I quite understand you. Mr. Totski, I forgot to say, ‘Take your seventy-five thousand roubles’—I don’t want them. I let you go free for nothing take your freedom! You must need it. Nine years and three months’ captivity is enough for anybody. Tomorrow I shall start afresh—today I am a free agent for the first time in my life.

“General, you must take your pearls back, too—give them to your wife—here they are! Tomorrow I shall leave this flat altogether, and then there’ll be no more of these pleasant little social gatherings, ladies and gentlemen.”

So saying, she scornfully rose from her seat as though to depart.

“Nastasia Philipovna! Nastasia Philipovna!”

The words burst involuntarily from every mouth. All present started up in bewildered excitement; all surrounded her; all had listened uneasily to her wild, disconnected sentences. All felt that something had happened, something had gone very far wrong indeed, but no one could make head or tail of the matter.

At this moment there was a furious ring at the bell, and a great knock at the door—exactly similar to the one which had startled the company at Gania’s house in the afternoon.

“Ah, ah! here’s the climax at last, at half-past twelve!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. “Sit down, gentlemen, I beg you. Something is about to happen.”

So saying, she reseated herself; a strange smile played on her lips. She sat quite still, but watched the door in a fever of impatience.

“Rogojin and his hundred thousand roubles, no doubt of it,” muttered Ptitsin to himself.

XV.

Katia, the maid-servant, made her appearance, terribly frightened.

“Goodness knows what it means, ma’am,” she said. “There is a whole collection of men come—all tipsy—and want to see you. They say that ‘it’s Rogojin, and she knows all about it.’”

“It’s all right, Katia, let them all in at once.”

“Surely not ALL, ma’am? They seem so disorderly—it’s dreadful to see them.”

“Yes ALL, Katia, all—every one of them. Let them in, or they’ll come in whether you like or no. Listen! what a noise they are making! Perhaps you are offended, gentlemen, that I should receive such guests in your presence? I am very sorry, and ask your forgiveness, but it cannot be helped—and I should be very grateful if you could all stay and witness this climax. However, just as you please, of course.”

The guests exchanged glances; they were annoyed and bewildered by the episode; but it was clear enough that all this had been pre-arranged and expected by Nastasia Philipovna, and that there was no use in trying to stop her now—for she was little short of insane.

Besides, they were naturally inquisitive to see what was to happen. There was nobody who would be likely to feel much alarm. There were but two ladies present; one of whom was the lively actress, who was not easily frightened, and the other the silent German beauty who, it turned out, did not understand a word of Russian, and seemed to be as stupid as she was lovely.

Her acquaintances invited her to their “At Homes” because she was so decorative. She was exhibited to their guests like a valuable picture, or vase, or statue, or firescreen. As for the men, Ptitsin was one of Rogojin’s friends; Ferdishenko was as much at home as

a fish in the sea, Gania, not yet recovered from his amazement, appeared to be chained to a pillory. The old professor did not in the least understand what was happening; but when he noticed how extremely agitated the mistress of the house, and her friends, seemed, he nearly wept, and trembled with fright: but he would rather have died than leave Nastasia Philipovna at such a crisis, for he loved her as if she were his own granddaughter. Afanasy Ivanovitch greatly disliked having anything to do with the affair, but he was too much interested to leave, in spite of the mad turn things had taken; and a few words that had dropped from the lips of Nastasia puzzled him so much, that he felt he could not go without an explanation. He resolved therefore, to see it out, and to adopt the attitude of silent spectator, as most suited to his dignity. Genera Epanchin alone determined to depart. He was annoyed at the manner in which his gift had been returned, an though he had condescended, under the influence of passion, to place himself on a level with Ptitsin and Ferdishenko, his self-respect and sense of duty now returned together with a consciousness of what was due to his social rank and official importance. In short, he plainly showed his conviction that a man in his position could have nothing to do with Rogojin and his companions. But Nastasia interrupted him at his first words.

“Ah, general!” she cried, “I was forgetting! If I had only foreseen this unpleasantness! I won’t insist on keeping you against your will, although I should have liked you to be beside me now. In any case, I am most grateful to you for your visit, and flattering attention ... but if you are afraid ...”

“Excuse me, Nastasia Philipovna,” interrupted the general, with chivalric generosity. “To whom are you speaking? I have remained until now simply because of my devotion to you, and as for danger, I am only afraid that the carpets may be ruined, and the furniture smashed! ... You should shut the door on the lot, in my opinion. But I confess that I am extremely curious to see how it ends.”

“Rogojin!” announced Ferdishenko.

“What do you think about it?” said the general in a low voice to Totski. “Is she mad? I mean mad in the medical sense of the word eh?”

“I’ve always said she was predisposed to it,” whispered Afanasy Ivanovitch slyly. “Perhaps it is a fever!”

Since their visit to Gania’s home, Rogojin’s followers had been increased by two new recruits—a dissolute old man, the hero of some ancient scandal, and a retired sub-lieutenant. A laughable story was told of the former. He possessed, it was said, a set of false teeth, and one day when he wanted money for a drinking orgy, he pawned them, and was never able to reclaim them! The officer appeared to be a rival of the gentleman who was so proud of his fists. He was known to none of Rogojin’s followers, but as they passed by the Nevsky, where he stood begging, he had joined their ranks. His claim for the charity he desired seemed based on the fact that in the days of his prosperity he had given away as much as fifteen roubles at a time. The rivals seemed more than a little jealous of one another. The athlete appeared injured at the admission of the “beggar” into the company. By nature taciturn, he now merely growled occasionally like a bear,

and glared contemptuously upon the "beggar," who, being somewhat of a man of the world, and a diplomatist, tried to insinuate himself into the bear's good graces. He was a much smaller man than the athlete, and doubtless was conscious that he must tread warily. Gently and without argument he alluded to the advantages of the English style in boxing, and showed himself a firm believer in Western institutions. The athlete's lips curled disdainfully, and without honouring his adversary with a formal denial, he exhibited, as if by accident, that peculiarly Russian object—an enormous fist, clenched, muscular, and covered with red hairs! The sight of this pre-eminently national attribute was enough to convince anybody, without words, that it was a serious matter for those who should happen to come into contact with it.

None of the band were very drunk, for the leader had kept his intended visit to Nastasia in view all day, and had done his best to prevent his followers from drinking too much. He was sober himself, but the excitement of this chaotic day—the strangest day of his life—had affected him so that he was in a dazed, wild condition, which almost resembled drunkenness.

He had kept but one idea before him all day, and for that he had worked in an agony of anxiety and a fever of suspense. His lieutenants had worked so hard from five o'clock until eleven, that they actually had collected a hundred thousand roubles for him, but at such terrific expense, that the rate of interest was only mentioned among them in whispers and with bated breath.

As before, Rogojin walked in advance of his troop, who followed him with mingled self-assertion and timidity. They were specially frightened of Nastasia Philipovna herself, for some reason.

Many of them expected to be thrown downstairs at once, without further ceremony, the elegant arid irresistible Zaleshoff among them. But the party led by the athlete, without openly showing their hostile intentions, silently nursed contempt and even hatred for Nastasia Philipovna, and marched into her house as they would have marched into an enemy's fortress. Arrived there, the luxury of the rooms seemed to inspire them with a kind of respect, not unmixed with alarm. So many things were entirely new to their experience—the choice furniture, the pictures, the great statue of Venus. They followed their chief into the salon, however, with a kind of impudent curiosity. There, the sight of General Epanchin among the guests, caused many of them to beat a hasty retreat into the adjoining room, the "boxer" and "beggar" being among the first to go. A few only, of whom Lebedeff made one, stood their ground; he had contrived to walk side by side with Rogojin, for he quite understood the importance of a man who had a fortune of a million odd roubles, and who at this moment carried a hundred thousand in his hand. It may be added that the whole company, not excepting Lebedeff, had the vaguest idea of the extent of their powers, and of how far they could safely go. At some moments Lebedeff was sure that right was on their side; at others he tried uneasily to remember various cheering and reassuring articles of the Civil Code.

Rogojin, when he stepped into the room, and his eyes fell upon Nastasia, stopped short, grew white as a sheet, and stood staring; it was clear that his heart was beating

painfully. So he stood, gazing intently, but timidly, for a few seconds. Suddenly, as though bereft of his senses, he moved forward, staggering helplessly, towards the table. On his way he collided against Ptitsin's chair, and put his dirty foot on the lace skirt of the silent lady's dress; but he neither apologized for this, nor even noticed it.

On reaching the table, he placed upon it a strange-looking object, which he had carried with him into the drawing-room. This was a paper packet, some six or seven inches thick, and eight or nine in length, wrapped in an old newspaper, and tied round three or four times with string.

Having placed this before her, he stood with drooped arms and head, as though awaiting his sentence.

His costume was the same as it had been in the morning, except for a new silk handkerchief round his neck, bright green and red, fastened with a huge diamond pin, and an enormous diamond ring on his dirty forefinger.

Lebedeff stood two or three paces behind his chief; and the rest of the band waited about near the door.

The two maid-servants were both peeping in, frightened and amazed at this unusual and disorderly scene.

"What is that?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, gazing intently at Rogojin, and indicating the paper packet.

"A hundred thousand," replied the latter, almost in a whisper.

"Oh! so he kept his word—there's a man for you! Well, sit down, please—take that chair. I shall have something to say to you presently. Who are all these with you? The same party? Let them come in and sit down. There's room on that sofa, there are some chairs and there's another sofa! Well, why don't they sit down?"

Sure enough, some of the brave fellows entirely lost their heads at this point, and retreated into the next room. Others, however, took the hint and sat down, as far as they could from the table, however; feeling braver in proportion to their distance from Nastasia.

Rogojin took the chair offered him, but he did not sit long; he soon stood up again, and did not reseat himself. Little by little he began to look around him and discern the other guests. Seeing Gania, he smiled venomously and muttered to himself, "Look at that!"

He gazed at Totski and the general with no apparent confusion, and with very little curiosity. But when he observed that the prince was seated beside Nastasia Philipovna, he could not take his eyes off him for a long while, and was clearly amazed. He could not account for the prince's presence there. It was not in the least surprising that Rogojin should be, at this time, in a more or less delirious condition; for not to speak of the excitements of the day, he had spent the night before in the train, and had not slept more than a wink for forty-eight hours.

"This, gentlemen, is a hundred thousand roubles," said Nastasia Philipovna, addressing the company in general, "here, in this dirty parcel. This afternoon Rogojin yelled, like a madman, that he would bring me a hundred thousand in the evening, and I have

been waiting for him all the while. He was bargaining for me, you know; first he offered me eighteen thousand; then he rose to forty, and then to a hundred thousand. And he has kept his word, see! My goodness, how white he is! All this happened this afternoon, at Gania's. I had gone to pay his mother a visit—my future family, you know! And his sister said to my very face, surely somebody will turn this shameless creature out. After which she spat in her brother Gania's face—a girl of character, that!"

"Nastasia Philipovna!" began the general, reproachfully. He was beginning to put his own interpretation on the affair.

"Well, what, general? Not quite good form, eh? Oh, nonsense! Here have I been sitting in my box at the French theatre for the last five years like a statue of inaccessible virtue, and kept out of the way of all admirers, like a silly little idiot! Now, there's this man, who comes and pays down his hundred thousand on the table, before you all, in spite of my five years of innocence and proud virtue, and I dare be sworn he has his sledge outside waiting to carry me off. He values me at a hundred thousand! I see you are still angry with me, Gania! Why, surely you never really wished to take ME into your family? ME, Rogojin's mistress! What did the prince say just now?"

"I never said you were Rogojin's mistress—you are NOT!" said the prince, in trembling accents.

"Nastasia Philipovna, dear soul!" cried the actress, impatiently, "do be calm, dear! If it annoys you so—all this—do go away and rest! Of course you would never go with this wretched fellow, in spite of his hundred thousand roubles! Take his money and kick him out of the house; that's the way to treat him and the likes of him! Upon my word, if it were my business, I'd soon clear them all out!"

The actress was a kind-hearted woman, and highly impressionable. She was very angry now.

"Don't be cross, Daria Alexeyevna!" laughed Nastasia. "I was not angry when I spoke; I wasn't reproaching Gania. I don't know how it was that I ever could have indulged the whim of entering an honest family like his. I saw his mother—and kissed her hand, too. I came and stirred up all that fuss, Gania, this afternoon, on purpose to see how much you could swallow—you surprised me, my friend—you did, indeed. Surely you could not marry a woman who accepts pearls like those you knew the general was going to give me, on the very eve of her marriage? And Rogojin! Why, in your own house and before your own brother and sister, he bargained with me! Yet you could come here and expect to be betrothed to me before you left the house! You almost brought your sister, too. Surely what Rogojin said about you is not really true: that you would crawl all the way to the other end of the town, on hands and knees, for three roubles?"

"Yes, he would!" said Rogojin, quietly, but with an air of absolute conviction.

"H'm! and he receives a good salary, I'm told. Well, what should you get but disgrace and misery if you took a wife you hated into your family (for I know very well that you do hate me)? No, no! I believe now that a man like you would murder anyone for money—sharpen a razor and come up behind his best friend and cut his throat like a

sheep—I've read of such people. Everyone seems money-mad nowadays. No, no! I may be shameless, but you are far worse. I don't say a word about that other—"

"Nastasia Philipovna, is this really you? You, once so refined and delicate of speech. Oh, what a tongue! What dreadful things you are saying," cried the general, wringing his hands in real grief.

"I am intoxicated, general. I am having a day out, you know—it's my birthday! I have long looked forward to this happy occasion. Daria Alexeyevna, you see that nosegay-man, that Monsieur aux Camelias, sitting there laughing at us?"

"I am not laughing, Nastasia Philipovna; I am only listening with all my attention," said Totski, with dignity.

"Well, why have I worried him, for five years, and never let him go free? Is he worth it? He is only just what he ought to be— nothing particular. He thinks I am to blame, too. He gave me my education, kept me like a countess. Money—my word! What a lot of money he spent over me! And he tried to find me an honest husband first, and then this Gania, here. And what do you think? All these five years I did not live with him, and yet I took his money, and considered I was quite justified.

"You say, take the hundred thousand and kick that man out. It is true, it is an abominable business, as you say. I might have married long ago, not Gania—Oh, no!—but that would have been abominable too.

"Would you believe it, I had some thoughts of marrying Totski, four years ago! I meant mischief, I confess—but I could have had him, I give you my word; he asked me himself. But I thought, no! it's not worthwhile to take such advantage of him. No! I had better go on to the streets, or accept Rogojin, or become a washerwoman or something—for I have nothing of my own, you know. I shall go away and leave everything behind, to the last rag—he shall have it all back. And who would take me without anything? Ask Gania, there, whether he would. Why, even Ferdishenko wouldn't have me!"

"No, Ferdishenko would not; he is a candid fellow, Nastasia Philipovna," said that worthy. "But the prince would. You sit here making complaints, but just look at the prince. I've been observing him for a long while."

Nastasia Philipovna looked keenly round at the prince.

"Is that true?" she asked.

"Quite true," whispered the prince.

"You'll take me as I am, with nothing?"

"I will, Nastasia Philipovna."

"Here's a pretty business!" cried the general. "However, it might have been expected of him."

The prince continued to regard Nastasia with a sorrowful, but intent and piercing, gaze.

"Here's another alternative for me," said Nastasia, turning once more to the actress; "and he does it out of pure kindness of heart. I know him. I've found a benefactor. Perhaps, though, what they say about him may be true—that he's an—we know what.

And what shall you live on, if you are really so madly in love with Rogojin's mistress, that you are ready to marry her —eh?"

"I take you as a good, honest woman, Nastasia Philipovna—not as Rogojin's mistress."

"Who? I?—good and honest?"

"Yes, you."

"Oh, you get those ideas out of novels, you know. Times are changed now, dear prince; the world sees things as they really are. That's all nonsense. Besides, how can you marry? You need a nurse, not a wife."

The prince rose and began to speak in a trembling, timid tone, but with the air of a man absolutely sure of the truth of his words.

"I know nothing, Nastasia Philipovna. I have seen nothing. You are right so far; but I consider that you would be honouring me, and not I you. I am a nobody. You have suffered, you have passed through hell and emerged pure, and that is very much. Why do you shame yourself by desiring to go with Rogojin? You are delirious. You have returned to Mr. Totski his seventy-five thousand roubles, and declared that you will leave this house and all that is in it, which is a line of conduct that not one person here would imitate. Nastasia Philipovna, I love you! I would die for you. I shall never let any man say one word against you, Nastasia Philipovna! and if we are poor, I can work for both."

As the prince spoke these last words a titter was heard from Ferdishenko; Lebedeff laughed too. The general grunted with irritation; Ptitsin and Totski barely restrained their smiles. The rest all sat listening, open-mouthed with wonder.

"But perhaps we shall not be poor; we may be very rich, Nastasia Philipovna." continued the prince, in the same timid, quivering tones. "I don't know for certain, and I'm sorry to say I haven't had an opportunity of finding out all day; but I received a letter from Moscow, while I was in Switzerland, from a Mr. Salaskin, and he acquaints me with the fact that I am entitled to a very large inheritance. This letter—"

The prince pulled a letter out of his pocket.

"Is he raving?" said the general. "Are we really in a mad-house?"

There was silence for a moment. Then Ptitsin spoke.

"I think you said, prince, that your letter was from Salaskin? Salaskin is a very eminent man, indeed, in his own world; he is a wonderfully clever solicitor, and if he really tells you this, I think you may be pretty sure that he is right. It so happens, luckily, that I know his handwriting, for I have lately had business with him. If you would allow me to see it, I should perhaps be able to tell you."

The prince held out the letter silently, but with a shaking hand.

"What, what?" said the general, much agitated.

"What's all this? Is he really heir to anything?"

All present concentrated their attention upon Ptitsin, reading the prince's letter. The general curiosity had received a new fillip. Ferdishenko could not sit still. Rogojin fixed his eyes first on the prince, and then on Ptitsin, and then back again; he was

extremely agitated. Lebedeff could not stand it. He crept up and read over Ptitsin's shoulder, with the air of a naughty boy who expects a box on the ear every moment for his indiscretion.

XVI.

"It's good business," said Ptitsin, at last, folding the letter and handing it back to the prince. "You will receive, without the slightest trouble, by the last will and testament of your aunt, a very large sum of money indeed."

"Impossible!" cried the general, starting up as if he had been shot.

Ptitsin explained, for the benefit of the company, that the prince's aunt had died five months since. He had never known her, but she was his mother's own sister, the daughter of a Moscow merchant, one Paparchin, who had died a bankrupt. But the elder brother of this same Paparchin, had been an eminent and very rich merchant. A year since it had so happened that his only two sons had both died within the same month. This sad event had so affected the old man that he, too, had died very shortly after. He was a widower, and had no relations left, excepting the prince's aunt, a poor woman living on charity, who was herself at the point of death from dropsy; but who had time, before she died, to set Salaskin to work to find her nephew, and to make her will bequeathing her newly-acquired fortune to him.

It appeared that neither the prince, nor the doctor with whom he lived in Switzerland, had thought of waiting for further communications; but the prince had started straight away with Salaskin's letter in his pocket.

"One thing I may tell you, for certain," concluded Ptitsin, addressing the prince, "that there is no question about the authenticity of this matter. Anything that Salaskin writes you as regards your unquestionable right to this inheritance, you may look upon as so much money in your pocket. I congratulate you, prince; you may receive a million and a half of roubles, perhaps more; I don't know. All I DO know is that Paparchin was a very rich merchant indeed."

"Hurrah!" cried Lebedeff, in a drunken voice. "Hurrah for the last of the Muishkins!"

"My goodness me! and I gave him twenty-five roubles this morning as though he were a beggar," blurted out the general, half senseless with amazement. "Well, I congratulate you, I congratulate you!" And the general rose from his seat and solemnly embraced the prince. All came forward with congratulations; even those of Rogojin's party who had retreated into the next room, now crept softly back to look on. For the moment even Nastasia Philipovna was forgotten.

But gradually the consciousness crept back into the minds of each one present that the prince had just made her an offer of marriage. The situation had, therefore, become three times as fantastic as before.

Totski sat and shrugged his shoulders, bewildered. He was the only guest left sitting at this time; the others had thronged round the table in disorder, and were all talking at once.

It was generally agreed, afterwards, in recalling that evening, that from this moment Nastasia Philipovna seemed entirely to lose her senses. She continued to sit still in her place, looking around at her guests with a strange, bewildered expression, as though she were trying to collect her thoughts, and could not. Then she suddenly turned to the prince, and glared at him with frowning brows; but this only lasted one moment. Perhaps it suddenly struck her that all this was a jest, but his face seemed to reassure her. She reflected, and smiled again, vaguely.

“So I am really a princess,” she whispered to herself, ironically, and glancing accidentally at Daria Alexeyevna’s face, she burst out laughing.

“Ha, ha, ha!” she cried, “this is an unexpected climax, after all. I didn’t expect this. What are you all standing up for, gentlemen? Sit down; congratulate me and the prince! Ferdishenko, just step out and order some more champagne, will you? Katia, Pasha,” she added suddenly, seeing the servants at the door, “come here! I’m going to be married, did you hear? To the prince. He has a million and a half of roubles; he is Prince Muishkin, and has asked me to marry him. Here, prince, come and sit by me; and here comes the wine. Now then, ladies and gentlemen, where are your congratulations?”

“Hurrah!” cried a number of voices. A rush was made for the wine by Rogojin’s followers, though, even among them, there seemed some sort of realization that the situation had changed. Rogojin stood and looked on, with an incredulous smile, screwing up one side of his mouth.

“Prince, my dear fellow, do remember what you are about,” said the general, approaching Muishkin, and pulling him by the coat sleeve.

Nastasia Philipovna overheard the remark, and burst out laughing.

“No, no, general!” she cried. “You had better look out! I am the princess now, you know. The prince won’t let you insult me. Afanasy Ivanovitch, why don’t you congratulate me? I shall be able to sit at table with your new wife, now. Aha! you see what I gain by marrying a prince! A million and a half, and a prince, and an idiot into the bargain, they say. What better could I wish for? Life is only just about to commence for me in earnest. Rogojin, you are a little too late. Away with your paper parcel! I’m going to marry the prince; I’m richer than you are now.”

But Rogojin understood how things were tending, at last. An inexpressibly painful expression came over his face. He wrung his hands; a groan made its way up from the depths of his soul.

“Surrender her, for God’s sake!” he said to the prince.

All around burst out laughing.

“What? Surrender her to YOU?” cried Daria Alexeyevna. “To a fellow who comes and bargains for a wife like a moujik! The prince wishes to marry her, and you—”

“So do I, so do I! This moment, if I could! I’d give every farthing I have to do it.”

“You drunken moujik,” said Daria Alexeyevna, once more. “You ought to be kicked out of the place.”

The laughter became louder than ever.

“Do you hear, prince?” said Nastasia Philipovna. “Do you hear how this moujik of a fellow goes on bargaining for your bride?”

“He is drunk,” said the prince, quietly, “and he loves you very much.”

“Won’t you be ashamed, afterwards, to reflect that your wife very nearly ran away with Rogojin?”

“Oh, you were raving, you were in a fever; you are still half delirious.”

“And won’t you be ashamed when they tell you, afterwards, that your wife lived at Totski’s expense so many years?”

“No; I shall not be ashamed of that. You did not so live by your own will.”

“And you’ll never reproach me with it?”

“Never.”

“Take care, don’t commit yourself for a whole lifetime.”

“Nastasia Philipovna,” said the prince, quietly, and with deep emotion, “I said before that I shall esteem your consent to be my wife as a great honour to myself, and shall consider that it is you who will honour me, not I you, by our marriage. You laughed at these words, and others around us laughed as well; I heard them. Very likely I expressed myself funnily, and I may have looked funny, but, for all that, I believe I understand where honour lies, and what I said was but the literal truth. You were about to ruin yourself just now, irrevocably; you would never have forgiven yourself for so doing afterwards; and yet, you are absolutely blameless. It is impossible that your life should be altogether ruined at your age. What matter that Rogojin came bargaining here, and that Gavriila Ardalionovitch would have deceived you if he could? Why do you continually remind us of these facts? I assure you once more that very few could find it in them to act as you have acted this day. As for your wish to go with Rogojin, that was simply the idea of a delirious and suffering brain. You are still quite feverish; you ought to be in bed, not here. You know quite well that if you had gone with Rogojin, you would have become a washer-woman next day, rather than stay with him. You are proud, Nastasia Philipovna, and perhaps you have really suffered so much that you imagine yourself to be a desperately guilty woman. You require a great deal of petting and looking after, Nastasia Philipovna, and I will do this. I saw your portrait this morning, and it seemed quite a familiar face to me; it seemed to me that the portrait-face was calling to me for help. I-I shall respect you all my life, Nastasia Philipovna,” concluded the prince, as though suddenly recollecting himself, and blushing to think of the sort of company before whom he had said all this.

Ptitsin bowed his head and looked at the ground, overcome by a mixture of feelings. Totski muttered to himself: “He may be an idiot, but he knows that flattery is the best road to success here.”

The prince observed Gania’s eyes flashing at him, as though they would gladly annihilate him then and there.

"That's a kind-hearted man, if you like," said Daria Alexeyevna, whose wrath was quickly evaporating.

"A refined man, but—lost," murmured the general.

Totski took his hat and rose to go. He and the general exchanged glances, making a private arrangement, thereby, to leave the house together.

"Thank you, prince; no one has ever spoken to me like that before," began Nastasia Philipovna. "Men have always bargained for me, before this; and not a single respectable man has ever proposed to marry me. Do you hear, Afanasy Ivanovitch? What do YOU think of what the prince has just been saying? It was almost immodest, wasn't it? You, Rogojin, wait a moment, don't go yet! I see you don't intend to move however. Perhaps I may go with you yet. Where did you mean to take me to?"

"To Ekaterinhof," replied Lebedeff. Rogojin simply stood staring, with trembling lips, not daring to believe his ears. He was stunned, as though from a blow on the head.

"What are you thinking of, my dear Nastasia?" said Daria Alexeyevna in alarm. "What are you saying?" "You are not going mad, are you?"

Nastasia Philipovna burst out laughing and jumped up from the sofa.

"You thought I should accept this good child's invitation to ruin him, did you?" she cried. "That's Totski's way, not mine. He's fond of children. Come along, Rogojin, get your money ready! We won't talk about marrying just at this moment, but let's see the money at all events. Come! I may not marry you, either. I don't know. I suppose you thought you'd keep the money, if I did! Ha, ha, ha! nonsense! I have no sense of shame left. I tell you I have been Totski's concubine. Prince, you must marry Aglaya Ivanovna, not Nastasia Philipovna, or this fellow Ferdishenko will always be pointing the finger of scorn at you. You aren't afraid, I know; but I should always be afraid that I had ruined you, and that you would reproach me for it. As for what you say about my doing you honour by marrying you-well, Totski can tell you all about that. You had your eye on Aglaya, Gania, you know you had; and you might have married her if you had not come bargaining. You are all like this. You should choose, once for all, between disreputable women, and respectable ones, or you are sure to get mixed. Look at the general, how he's staring at me!"

"This is too horrible," said the general, starting to his feet. All were standing up now. Nastasia was absolutely beside herself.

"I am very proud, in spite of what I am," she continued. "You called me 'perfection' just now, prince. A nice sort of perfection to throw up a prince and a million and a half of roubles in order to be able to boast of the fact afterwards! What sort of a wife should I make for you, after all I have said? Afanasy Ivanovitch, do you observe I have really and truly thrown away a million of roubles? And you thought that I should consider your wretched seventy-five thousand, with Gania thrown in for a husband, a paradise of bliss! Take your seventy-five thousand back, sir; you did not reach the hundred thousand. Rogojin cut a better dash than you did. I'll console Gania myself;

I have an idea about that. But now I must be off! I've been in prison for ten years. I'm free at last! Well, Rogojin, what are you waiting for? Let's get ready and go."

"Come along!" shouted Rogojin, beside himself with joy. "Hey! all of you fellows! Wine! Round with it! Fill the glasses!"

"Get away!" he shouted frantically, observing that Daria Alexeyevna was approaching to protest against Nastasia's conduct. "Get away, she's mine, everything's mine! She's a queen, get away!"

He was panting with ecstasy. He walked round and round Nastasia Philipovna and told everybody to "keep their distance."

All the Rogojin company were now collected in the drawing-room; some were drinking, some laughed and talked: all were in the highest and wildest spirits. Ferdishenko was doing his best to unite himself to them; the general and Totski again made an attempt to go. Gania, too stood hat in hand ready to go; but seemed to be unable to tear his eyes away from the scene before him

"Get out, keep your distance!" shouted Rogojin.

"What are you shouting about there!" cried Nastasia "I'm not yours yet. I may kick you out for all you know I haven't taken your money yet; there it all is on the table Here, give me over that packet! Is there a hundred thousand roubles in that one packet? Pfu! what abominable stuff it looks! Oh! nonsense, Daria Alexeyevna; you surely did not expect me to ruin HIM?" (indicating the prince). "Fancy him nursing me! Why, he needs a nurse himself! The general, there, will be his nurse now, you'll see. Here, prince, look here! Your bride is accepting money. What a disreputable woman she must be! And you wished to marry her! What are you crying about? Is it a bitter dose? Never mind, you shall laugh yet. Trust to time." (In spite of these words there were two large tears rolling down Nastasia's own cheeks.) "It's far better to think twice of it now than afterwards. Oh! you mustn't cry like that! There's Katia crying, too. What is it, Katia, dear? I shall leave you and Pasha a lot of things, I've laid them out for you already; but good-bye, now. I made an honest girl like you serve a low woman like myself. It's better so, prince, it is indeed. You'd begin to despise me afterwards—we should never be happy. Oh! you needn't swear, prince, I shan't believe you, you know. How foolish it would be, too! No, no; we'd better say good-bye and part friends. I am a bit of a dreamer myself, and I used to dream of you once. Very often during those five years down at his estate I used to dream and think, and I always imagined just such a good, honest, foolish fellow as you, one who should come and say to me: 'You are an innocent woman, Nastasia Philipovna, and I adore you.' I dreamt of you often. I used to think so much down there that I nearly went mad; and then this fellow here would come down. He would stay a couple of months out of the twelve, and disgrace and insult and deprave me, and then go; so that I longed to drown myself in the pond a thousand times over; but I did not dare do it. I hadn't the heart, and now—well, are you ready, Rogojin?"

"Ready—keep your distance, all of you!"

"We're all ready," said several of his friends. "The troikas [Sledges drawn by three horses abreast.] are at the door, bells and all."

Nastasia Philipovna seized the packet of bank-notes.

"Gania, I have an idea. I wish to recompense you—why should you lose all? Rogojin, would he crawl for three roubles as far as the Vassiliostrof?"

"Oh, wouldn't he just!"

"Well, look here, Gania. I wish to look into your heart once more, for the last time. You've worried me for the last three months—now it's my turn. Do you see this packet? It contains a hundred thousand roubles. Now, I'm going to throw it into the fire, here—before all these witnesses. As soon as the fire catches hold of it, you put your hands into the fire and pick it out—without gloves, you know. You must have bare hands, and you must turn your sleeves up. Pull it out, I say, and it's all yours. You may burn your fingers a little, of course; but then it's a hundred thousand roubles, remember—it won't take you long to lay hold of it and snatch it out. I shall so much admire you if you put your hands into the fire for my money. All here present may be witnesses that the whole packet of money is yours if you get it out. If you don't get it out, it shall burn. I will let no one else come; away—get away, all of you—it's my money! Rogojin has bought me with it. Is it my money, Rogojin?"

"Yes, my queen; it's your own money, my joy."

"Get away then, all of you. I shall do as I like with my own— don't meddle! Ferdishenko, make up the fire, quick!"

"Nastasia Philipovna, I can't; my hands won't obey me," said Ferdishenko, astounded and helpless with bewilderment.

"Nonsense," cried Nastasia Philipovna, seizing the poker and raking a couple of logs together. No sooner did a tongue of flame burst out than she threw the packet of notes upon it.

Everyone gasped; some even crossed themselves.

"She's mad—she's mad!" was the cry.

"Oughtn't-oughtn't we to secure her?" asked the general of Ptitsin, in a whisper; "or shall we send for the authorities? Why, she's mad, isn't she—isn't she, eh?"

"N-no, I hardly think she is actually mad," whispered Ptitsin, who was as white as his handkerchief, and trembling like a leaf. He could not take his eyes off the smouldering packet.

"She's mad surely, isn't she?" the general appealed to Totski.

"I told you she wasn't an ordinary woman," replied the latter, who was as pale as anyone.

"Oh, but, positively, you know—a hundred thousand roubles!"

"Goodness gracious! good heavens!" came from all quarters of the room.

All now crowded round the fire and thronged to see what was going on; everyone lamented and gave vent to exclamations of horror and woe. Some jumped up on chairs in order to get a better view. Daria Alexeyevna ran into the next room and whispered excitedly to Katia and Pasha. The beautiful German disappeared altogether.

“My lady! my sovereign!” lamented Lebedeff, falling on his knees before Nastasia Philipovna, and stretching out his hands towards the fire; “it’s a hundred thousand roubles, it is indeed, I packed it up myself, I saw the money! My queen, let me get into the fire after it—say the word—I’ll put my whole grey head into the fire for it! I have a poor lame wife and thirteen children. My father died of starvation last week. Nastasia Philipovna, Nastasia Philipovna!” The wretched little man wept, and groaned, and crawled towards the fire.

“Away, out of the way!” cried Nastasia. “Make room, all of you! Gania, what are you standing there for? Don’t stand on ceremony. Put in your hand! There’s your whole happiness smouldering away, look! Quick!”

But Gania had borne too much that day, and especially this evening, and he was not prepared for this last, quite unexpected trial.

The crowd parted on each side of him and he was left face to face with Nastasia Philipovna, three paces from her. She stood by the fire and waited, with her intent gaze fixed upon him.

Gania stood before her, in his evening clothes, holding his white gloves and hat in his hand, speechless and motionless, with arms folded and eyes fixed on the fire.

A silly, meaningless smile played on his white, death-like lips. He could not take his eyes off the smouldering packet; but it appeared that something new had come to birth in his soul—as though he were vowing to himself that he would bear this trial. He did not move from his place. In a few seconds it became evident to all that he did not intend to rescue the money.

“Hey! look at it, it’ll burn in another minute or two!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. “You’ll hang yourself afterwards, you know, if it does! I’m not joking.”

The fire, choked between a couple of smouldering pieces of wood, had died down for the first few moments after the packet was thrown upon it. But a little tongue of fire now began to lick the paper from below, and soon, gathering courage, mounted the sides of the parcel, and crept around it. In another moment, the whole of it burst into flames, and the exclamations of woe and horror were redoubled.

“Nastasia Philipovna!” lamented Lebedeff again, straining towards the fireplace; but Rogojin dragged him away, and pushed him to the rear once more.

The whole of Rogojin’s being was concentrated in one rapturous gaze of ecstasy. He could not take his eyes off Nastasia. He stood drinking her in, as it were. He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

“Oh, what a queen she is!” he ejaculated, every other minute, throwing out the remark for anyone who liked to catch it. “That’s the sort of woman for me! Which of you would think of doing a thing like that, you blackguards, eh?” he yelled. He was hopelessly and wildly beside himself with ecstasy.

The prince watched the whole scene, silent and dejected.

“I’ll pull it out with my teeth for one thousand,” said Ferdishenko.

“So would I,” said another, from behind, “with pleasure. Devil take the thing!” he added, in a tempest of despair, “it will all be burnt up in a minute—It’s burning, it’s burning!”

“It’s burning, it’s burning!” cried all, thronging nearer and nearer to the fire in their excitement.

“Gania, don’t be a fool! I tell you for the last time.”

“Get on, quick!” shrieked Ferdishenko, rushing wildly up to Gania, and trying to drag him to the fire by the sleeve of his coat. “Get it, you dummy, it’s burning away fast! Oh—DAMN the thing!”

Gania hurled Ferdishenko from him; then he turned sharp round and made for the door. But he had not gone a couple of steps when he tottered and fell to the ground.

“He’s fainted!” the cry went round.

“And the money’s burning still,” Lebedeff lamented.

“Burning for nothing,” shouted others.

“Katia-Pasha! Bring him some water!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. Then she took the tongs and fished out the packet.

Nearly the whole of the outer covering was burned away, but it was soon evident that the contents were hardly touched. The packet had been wrapped in a threefold covering of newspaper, and the notes were safe. All breathed more freely.

“Some dirty little thousand or so may be touched,” said Lebedeff, immensely relieved, “but there’s very little harm done, after all.”

“It’s all his—the whole packet is for him, do you hear—all of you?” cried Nastasia Philipovna, placing the packet by the side of Gania. “He restrained himself, and didn’t go after it; so his self-respect is greater than his thirst for money. All right— he’ll come to directly—he must have the packet or he’ll cut his throat afterwards. There! He’s coming to himself. General, Totski, all of you, did you hear me? The money is all Gania’s. I give it to him, fully conscious of my action, as recompense for— well, for anything he thinks best. Tell him so. Let it lie here beside him. Off we go, Rogojin! Goodbye, prince. I have seen a man for the first time in my life. Goodbye, Afanasy Ivanovitch— and thanks!”

The Rogojin gang followed their leader and Nastasia Philipovna to the entrance-hall, laughing and shouting and whistling.

In the hall the servants were waiting, and handed her her fur cloak. Martha, the cook, ran in from the kitchen. Nastasia kissed them all round.

“Are you really throwing us all over, little mother? Where, where are you going to? And on your birthday, too!” cried the four girls, crying over her and kissing her hands.

“I am going out into the world, Katia; perhaps I shall be a laundress. I don’t know. No more of Afanasy Ivanovitch, anyhow. Give him my respects. Don’t think badly of me, girls.”

The prince hurried down to the front gate where the party were settling into the troikas, all the bells tinkling a merry accompaniment the while. The general caught him up on the stairs:

“Prince, prince!” he cried, seizing hold of his arm, “recollect yourself! Drop her, prince! You see what sort of a woman she is. I am speaking to you like a father.”

The prince glanced at him, but said nothing. He shook himself free, and rushed on downstairs.

The general was just in time to see the prince take the first sledge he could get, and, giving the order to Ekaterinhof, start off in pursuit of the troikas. Then the general’s fine grey horse dragged that worthy home, with some new thoughts, and some new hopes and calculations developing in his brain, and with the pearls in his pocket, for he had not forgotten to bring them along with him, being a man of business. Amid his new thoughts and ideas there came, once or twice, the image of Nastasia Philipovna. The general sighed.

“I’m sorry, really sorry,” he muttered. “She’s a ruined woman. Mad! mad! However, the prince is not for Nastasia Philipovna now,—perhaps it’s as well.”

Two more of Nastasia’s guests, who walked a short distance together, indulged in high moral sentiments of a similar nature.

“Do you know, Totski, this is all very like what they say goes on among the Japanese?” said Ptitsin. “The offended party there, they say, marches off to his insulter and says to him, ‘You insulted me, so I have come to rip myself open before your eyes;’ and with these words he does actually rip his stomach open before his enemy, and considers, doubtless, that he is having all possible and necessary satisfaction and revenge. There are strange characters in the world, sir!”

“H’m! and you think there was something of this sort here, do you? Dear me—a very remarkable comparison, you know! But you must have observed, my dear Ptitsin, that I did all I possibly could. I could do no more than I did. And you must admit that there are some rare qualities in this woman. I felt I could not speak in that Bedlam, or I should have been tempted to cry out, when she reproached me, that she herself was my best justification. Such a woman could make anyone forget all reason—everything! Even that moujik, Rogojin, you saw, brought her a hundred thousand roubles! Of course, all that happened tonight was ephemeral, fantastic, unseemly—yet it lacked neither colour nor originality. My God! What might not have been made of such a character combined with such beauty! Yet in spite of all efforts—in spite of all education, even—all those gifts are wasted! She is an uncut diamond.... I have often said so.”

And Afanasy Ivanovitch heaved a deep sigh.

Part 2

I.

Two days after the strange conclusion to Nastasia Philipovna's birthday party, with the record of which we concluded the first part of this story, Prince Muishkin hurriedly left St. Petersburg for Moscow, in order to see after some business connected with the receipt of his unexpected fortune.

It was said that there were other reasons for his hurried departure; but as to this, and as to his movements in Moscow, and as to his prolonged absence from St. Petersburg, we are able to give very little information.

The prince was away for six months, and even those who were most interested in his destiny were able to pick up very little news about him all that while. True, certain rumours did reach his friends, but these were both strange and rare, and each one contradicted the last.

Of course the Epanchin family was much interested in his movements, though he had not had time to bid them farewell before his departure. The general, however, had had an opportunity of seeing him once or twice since the eventful evening, and had spoken very seriously with him; but though he had seen the prince, as I say, he told his family nothing about the circumstance. In fact, for a month or so after his departure it was considered not the thing to mention the prince's name in the Epanchin household. Only Mrs. Epanchin, at the commencement of this period, had announced that she had been "cruelly mistaken in the prince!" and a day or two after, she had added, evidently alluding to him, but not mentioning his name, that it was an unalterable characteristic of hers to be mistaken in people. Then once more, ten days later, after some passage of arms with one of her daughters, she had remarked sententiously. "We have had enough of mistakes. I shall be more careful in future!" However, it was impossible to avoid remarking that there was some sense of oppression in the household—something unspoken, but felt; something strained. All the members of the family wore frowning looks. The general was unusually busy; his family hardly ever saw him.

As to the girls, nothing was said openly, at all events; and probably very little in private. They were proud damsels, and were not always perfectly confidential even among themselves. But they understood each other thoroughly at the first word on all occasions; very often at the first glance, so that there was no need of much talking as a rule.

One fact, at least, would have been perfectly plain to an outsider, had any such person been on the spot; and that was, that the prince had made a very considerable impression upon the family, in spite of the fact that he had but once been inside the house, and then only for a short time. Of course, if analyzed, this impression might have proved to be nothing more than a feeling of curiosity; but be it what it might, there it undoubtedly was.

Little by little, the rumours spread about town became lost in a maze of uncertainty. It was said that some foolish young prince, name unknown, had suddenly come into possession of a gigantic fortune, and had married a French ballet dancer. This was contradicted, and the rumour circulated that it was a young merchant who had come into the enormous fortune and married the great ballet dancer, and that at the wedding the drunken young fool had burned seventy thousand roubles at a candle out of pure bravado.

However, all these rumours soon died down, to which circumstance certain facts largely contributed. For instance, the whole of the Rogojin troop had departed, with him at their head, for Moscow. This was exactly a week after a dreadful orgy at the Ekaterinhof gardens, where Nastasia Philipovna had been present. It became known that after this orgy Nastasia Philipovna had entirely disappeared, and that she had since been traced to Moscow; so that the exodus of the Rogojin band was found consistent with this report.

There were rumours current as to Gania, too; but circumstances soon contradicted these. He had fallen seriously ill, and his illness precluded his appearance in society, and even at business, for over a month. As soon as he had recovered, however, he threw up his situation in the public company under General Epanchin's direction, for some unknown reason, and the post was given to another. He never went near the Epanchins' house at all, and was exceedingly irritable and depressed.

Varvara Ardalionovna married Ptitsin this winter, and it was said that the fact of Gania's retirement from business was the ultimate cause of the marriage, since Gania was now not only unable to support his family, but even required help himself.

We may mention that Gania was no longer mentioned in the Epanchin household any more than the prince was; but that a certain circumstance in connection with the fatal evening at Nastasia's house became known to the general, and, in fact, to all the family the very next day. This fact was that Gania had come home that night, but had refused to go to bed. He had awaited the prince's return from Ekaterinhof with feverish impatience.

On the latter's arrival, at six in the morning, Gania had gone to him in his room, bringing with him the singed packet of money, which he had insisted that the prince should return to Nastasia Philipovna without delay. It was said that when Gania entered the prince's room, he came with anything but friendly feelings, and in a condition of despair and misery; but that after a short conversation, he had stayed on for a couple of hours with him, sobbing continuously and bitterly the whole time. They had parted upon terms of cordial friendship.

The Epanchins heard about this, as well as about the episode at Nastasia Philipovna's. It was strange, perhaps, that the facts should become so quickly, and fairly accurately, known. As far as Gania was concerned, it might have been supposed that the news had come through Varvara Ardalionovna, who had suddenly become a frequent visitor of the Epanchin girls, greatly to their mother's surprise. But though Varvara had seen fit, for some reason, to make friends with them, it was not likely that she would have talked to them about her brother. She had plenty of pride, in spite of the fact that in thus acting she was seeking intimacy with people who had practically shown her brother the door. She and the Epanchin girls had been acquainted in childhood, although of late they had met but rarely. Even now Varvara hardly ever appeared in the drawing-room, but would slip in by a back way. Lizabetha Prokofievna, who disliked Varvara, although she had a great respect for her mother, was much annoyed by this sudden intimacy, and put it down to the general "contrariness" of her daughters, who were "always on the lookout for some new way of opposing her." Nevertheless, Varvara continued her visits.

A month after Muishkin's departure, Mrs. Epanchin received a letter from her old friend Princess Bielokonski (who had lately left for Moscow), which letter put her into the greatest good humour. She did not divulge its contents either to her daughters or the general, but her conduct towards the former became affectionate in the extreme. She even made some sort of confession to them, but they were unable to understand what it was about. She actually relaxed towards the general a little—he had been long disgraced—and though she managed to quarrel with them all the next day, yet she soon came round, and from her general behaviour it was to be concluded that she had had good news of some sort, which she would like, but could not make up her mind, to disclose.

However, a week later she received another letter from the same source, and at last resolved to speak.

She solemnly announced that she had heard from old Princess Bielokonski, who had given her most comforting news about "that queer young prince." Her friend had hunted him up, and found that all was going well with him. He had since called in person upon her, making an extremely favourable impression, for the princess had received him each day since, and had introduced him into several good houses.

The girls could see that their mother concealed a great deal from them, and left out large pieces of the letter in reading it to them.

However, the ice was broken, and it suddenly became possible to mention the prince's name again. And again it became evident how very strong was the impression the young man had made in the household by his one visit there. Mrs. Epanchin was surprised at the effect which the news from Moscow had upon the girls, and they were no less surprised that after solemnly remarking that her most striking characteristic was "being mistaken in people" she should have troubled to obtain for the prince the favour and protection of so powerful an old lady as the Princess Bielokonski. As soon as the ice was thus broken, the general lost no time in showing that he, too, took

the greatest interest in the subject. He admitted that he was interested, but said that it was merely in the business side of the question. It appeared that, in the interests of the prince, he had made arrangements in Moscow for a careful watch to be kept upon the prince's business affairs, and especially upon Salaskin. All that had been said as to the prince being an undoubted heir to a fortune turned out to be perfectly true; but the fortune proved to be much smaller than was at first reported. The estate was considerably encumbered with debts; creditors turned up on all sides, and the prince, in spite of all advice and entreaty, insisted upon managing all matters of claim himself—which, of course, meant satisfying everybody all round, although half the claims were absolutely fraudulent.

Mrs. Epanchin confirmed all this. She said the princess had written to much the same effect, and added that there was no curing a fool. But it was plain, from her expression of face, how strongly she approved of this particular young fool's doings. In conclusion, the general observed that his wife took as great an interest in the prince as though he were her own son; and that she had commenced to be especially affectionate towards Aglaya was a self-evident fact.

All this caused the general to look grave and important. But, alas! this agreeable state of affairs very soon changed once more.

A couple of weeks went by, and suddenly the general and his wife were once more gloomy and silent, and the ice was as firm as ever. The fact was, the general, who had heard first, how Nastasia Philipovna had fled to Moscow and had been discovered there by Rogojin; that she had then disappeared once more, and been found again by Rogojin, and how after that she had almost promised to marry him, now received news that she had once more disappeared, almost on the very day fixed for her wedding, flying somewhere into the interior of Russia this time, and that Prince Muishkin had left all his affairs in the hands of Salaskin and disappeared also—but whether he was with Nastasia, or had only set off in search of her, was unknown.

Lizabetha Prokofievna received confirmatory news from the princess—and alas, two months after the prince's first departure from St. Petersburg, darkness and mystery once more enveloped his whereabouts and actions, and in the Epanchin family the ice of silence once more formed over the subject. Varia, however, informed the girls of what had happened, she having received the news from Ptitsin, who generally knew more than most people.

To make an end, we may say that there were many changes in the Epanchin household in the spring, so that it was not difficult to forget the prince, who sent no news of himself.

The Epanchin family had at last made up their minds to spend the summer abroad, all except the general, who could not waste time in "travelling for enjoyment," of course. This arrangement was brought about by the persistence of the girls, who insisted that they were never allowed to go abroad because their parents were too anxious to marry them off. Perhaps their parents had at last come to the conclusion that husbands might be found abroad, and that a summer's travel might bear fruit. The marriage

between Alexandra and Totski had been broken off. Since the prince's departure from St. Petersburg no more had been said about it; the subject had been dropped without ceremony, much to the joy of Mrs. General, who, announced that she was "ready to cross herself with both hands" in gratitude for the escape. The general, however, regretted Totski for a long while. "Such a fortune!" he sighed, "and such a good, easy-going fellow!"

After a time it became known that Totski had married a French marquise, and was to be carried off by her to Paris, and then to Brittany.

"Oh, well," thought the general, "he's lost to us for good, now."

So the Epanchins prepared to depart for the summer.

But now another circumstance occurred, which changed all the plans once more, and again the intended journey was put off, much to the delight of the general and his spouse.

A certain Prince S— arrived in St. Petersburg from Moscow, an eminent and honourable young man. He was one of those active persons who always find some good work with which to employ themselves. Without forcing himself upon the public notice, modest and unobtrusive, this young prince was concerned with much that happened in the world in general.

He had served, at first, in one of the civil departments, had then attended to matters connected with the local government of provincial towns, and had of late been a corresponding member of several important scientific societies. He was a man of excellent family and solid means, about thirty-five years of age.

Prince S— made the acquaintance of the general's family, and Adelaida, the second girl, made a great impression upon him. Towards the spring he proposed to her, and she accepted him. The general and his wife were delighted. The journey abroad was put off, and the wedding was fixed for a day not very distant.

The trip abroad might have been enjoyed later on by Mrs. Epanchin and her two remaining daughters, but for another circumstance.

It so happened that Prince S— introduced a distant relation of his own into the Epanchin family—one Evgenie Pavlovitch, a young officer of about twenty-eight years of age, whose conquests among the ladies in Moscow had been proverbial. This young gentleman no sooner set eyes on Aglaya than he became a frequent visitor at the house. He was witty, well-educated, and extremely wealthy, as the general very soon discovered. His past reputation was the only thing against him.

Nothing was said; there were not even any hints dropped; but still, it seemed better to the parents to say nothing more about going abroad this season, at all events. Aglaya herself perhaps was of a different opinion.

All this happened just before the second appearance of our hero upon the scene.

By this time, to judge from appearances, poor Prince Muishkin had been quite forgotten in St. Petersburg. If he had appeared suddenly among his acquaintances, he would have been received as one from the skies; but we must just glance at one more fact before we conclude this preface.

Colia Ivolgin, for some time after the prince's departure, continued his old life. That is, he went to school, looked after his father, helped Varia in the house, and ran her errands, and went frequently to see his friend, Hippolyte.

The lodgers had disappeared very quickly—Ferdishenko soon after the events at Nastasia Philipovna's, while the prince went to Moscow, as we know. Gania and his mother went to live with Varia and Ptitsin immediately after the latter's wedding, while the general was housed in a debtor's prison by reason of certain IOU's given to the captain's widow under the impression that they would never be formally used against him. This unkind action much surprised poor Ardalion Alexandrovitch, the victim, as he called himself, of an "unbounded trust in the nobility of the human heart."

When he signed those notes of hand, he never dreamt that they would be a source of future trouble. The event showed that he was mistaken. "Trust in anyone after this! Have the least confidence in man or woman!" he cried in bitter tones, as he sat with his new friends in prison, and recounted to them his favourite stories of the siege of Kars, and the resuscitated soldier. On the whole, he accommodated himself very well to his new position. Ptitsin and Varia declared that he was in the right place, and Gania was of the same opinion. The only person who deplored his fate was poor Nina Alexandrovna, who wept bitter tears over him, to the great surprise of her household, and, though always in feeble health, made a point of going to see him as often as possible.

Since the general's "mishap," as Colia called it, and the marriage of his sister, the boy had quietly possessed himself of far more freedom. His relations saw little of him, for he rarely slept at home. He made many new friends; and was moreover, a frequent visitor at the debtor's prison, to which he invariably accompanied his mother. Varia, who used to be always correcting him, never spoke to him now on the subject of his frequent absences, and the whole household was surprised to see Gania, in spite of his depression, on quite friendly terms with his brother. This was something new, for Gania had been wont to look upon Colia as a kind of errand-boy, treating him with contempt, threatening to "pull his ears," and in general driving him almost wild with irritation. It seemed now that Gania really needed his brother, and the latter, for his part, felt as if he could forgive Gania much since he had returned the hundred thousand roubles offered to him by Nastasia Philipovna. Three months after the departure of the prince, the Ivolgin family discovered that Colia had made acquaintance with the Epanchins, and was on very friendly terms with the daughters. Varia heard of it first, though Colia had not asked her to introduce him. Little by little the family grew quite fond of him. Madame Epanchin at first looked on him with disdain, and received him coldly, but in a short time he grew to please her, because, as she said, he "was candid and no flatterer" — a very true description. From the first he put himself on an equality with his new friends, and though he sometimes read newspapers and books to the mistress of the house, it was simply because he liked to be useful.

One day, however, he and Lizabetha Prokofievna quarrelled seriously about the "woman question," in the course of a lively discussion on that burning subject. He told

her that she was a tyrant, and that he would never set foot in her house again. It may seem incredible, but a day or two after, Madame Epanchin sent a servant with a note begging him to return, and Colia, without standing on his dignity, did so at once.

Aglaya was the only one of the family whose good graces he could not gain, and who always spoke to him haughtily, but it so happened that the boy one day succeeded in giving the proud maiden a surprise.

It was about Easter, when, taking advantage of a momentary tete- a-tete Colia handed Aglaya a letter, remarking that he "had orders to deliver it to her privately." She stared at him in amazement, but he did not wait to hear what she had to say, and went out. Aglaya broke the seal, and read as follows:

"Once you did me the honour of giving me your confidence. Perhaps you have quite forgotten me now! How is it that I am writing to you? I do not know; but I am conscious of an irresistible desire to remind you of my existence, especially you. How many times I have needed all three of you; but only you have dwelt always in my mind's eye. I need you—I need you very much. I will not write about myself. I have nothing to tell you. But I long for you to be happy. ARE you happy? That is all I wished to say to you—Your brother,

"PR. L. MUICHKIN."

On reading this short and disconnected note, Aglaya suddenly blushed all over, and became very thoughtful.

It would be difficult to describe her thoughts at that moment. One of them was, "Shall I show it to anyone?" But she was ashamed to show it. So she ended by hiding it in her table drawer, with a very strange, ironical smile upon her lips.

Next day, she took it out, and put it into a large book, as she usually did with papers which she wanted to be able to find easily. She laughed when, about a week later, she happened to notice the name of the book, and saw that it was Don Quixote, but it would be difficult to say exactly why.

I cannot say, either, whether she showed the letter to her sisters.

But when she had read it herself once more, it suddenly struck her that surely that conceited boy, Colia, had not been the one chosen correspondent of the prince all this while. She determined to ask him, and did so with an exaggerated show of carelessness. He informed her haughtily that though he had given the prince his permanent address when the latter left town, and had offered his services, the prince had never before given him any commission to perform, nor had he written until the following lines arrived, with Aglaya's letter. Aglaya took the note, and read it.

"DEAR COLIA,—Please be so kind as to give the enclosed sealed letter to Aglaya Ivanovna. Keep well—Ever your loving, "PR. L. MUICHKIN."

"It seems absurd to trust a little pepper-box like you," said Aglaya, as she returned the note, and walked past the "pepper- box" with an expression of great contempt.

This was more than Colia could bear. He had actually borrowed Gania's new green tie for the occasion, without saying why he wanted it, in order to impress her. He was very deeply mortified.

II

IT was the beginning of June, and for a whole week the weather in St. Petersburg had been magnificent. The Epanchins had a luxurious country-house at Pavlofsk, [One of the fashionable summer resorts near St. Petersburg.] and to this spot Mrs. Epanchin determined to proceed without further delay. In a couple of days all was ready, and the family had left town. A day or two after this removal to Pavlofsk, Prince Muishkin arrived in St. Petersburg by the morning train from Moscow. No one met him; but, as he stepped out of the carriage, he suddenly became aware of two strangely glowing eyes fixed upon him from among the crowd that met the train. On endeavouring to re-discover the eyes, and see to whom they belonged, he could find nothing to guide him. It must have been a hallucination. But the disagreeable impression remained, and without this, the prince was sad and thoughtful already, and seemed to be much preoccupied.

His cab took him to a small and bad hotel near the Litaynaya. Here he engaged a couple of rooms, dark and badly furnished. He washed and changed, and hurriedly left the hotel again, as though anxious to waste no time. Anyone who now saw him for the first time since he left Petersburg would judge that he had improved vastly so far as his exterior was concerned. His clothes certainly were very different; they were more fashionable, perhaps even too much so, and anyone inclined to mockery might have found something to smile at in his appearance. But what is there that people will not smile at?

The prince took a cab and drove to a street near the Nativity, where he soon discovered the house he was seeking. It was a small wooden villa, and he was struck by its attractive and clean appearance; it stood in a pleasant little garden, full of flowers. The windows looking on the street were open, and the sound of a voice, reading aloud or making a speech, came through them. It rose at times to a shout, and was interrupted occasionally by bursts of laughter.

Prince Muishkin entered the court-yard, and ascended the steps. A cook with her sleeves turned up to the elbows opened the door. The visitor asked if Mr. Lebedeff were at home.

“He is in there,” said she, pointing to the salon.

The room had a blue wall-paper, and was well, almost pretentiously, furnished, with its round table, its divan, and its bronze clock under a glass shade. There was a narrow pier-glass against the wall, and a chandelier adorned with lustres hung by a bronze chain from the ceiling.

When the prince entered, Lebedeff was standing in the middle of the room, his back to the door. He was in his shirt-sleeves, on account of the extreme heat, and he seemed to have just reached the peroration of his speech, and was impressively beating his breast.

His audience consisted of a youth of about fifteen years of age with a clever face, who had a book in his hand, though he was not reading; a young lady of twenty, in deep

mourning, stood near him with an infant in her arms; another girl of thirteen, also in black, was laughing loudly, her mouth wide open; and on the sofa lay a handsome young man, with black hair and eyes, and a suspicion of beard and whiskers. He frequently interrupted the speaker and argued with him, to the great delight of the others.

“Lukian Timofeyovitch! Lukian Timofeyovitch! Here’s someone to see you! Look here! ... a gentleman to speak to you! ... Well, it’s not my fault!” and the cook turned and went away red with anger.

Lebedeff started, and at sight of the prince stood like a statue for a moment. Then he moved up to him with an ingratiating smile, but stopped short again.

“Prince! ex-ex-excellency!” he stammered. Then suddenly he ran towards the girl with the infant, a movement so unexpected by her that she staggered and fell back, but next moment he was threatening the other child, who was standing, still laughing, in the doorway. She screamed, and ran towards the kitchen. Lebedeff stamped his foot angrily; then, seeing the prince regarding him with amazement, he murmured apologetically—“Pardon to show respect! ... he-he!”

” You are quite wrong ...” began the prince.

“At once ... at once ... in one moment!”

He rushed like a whirlwind from the room, and Muishkin looked inquiringly at the others.

They were all laughing, and the guest joined in the chorus.

“He has gone to get his coat,” said the boy.

“How annoying!” exclaimed the prince. “I thought ... Tell me, is he ...”

“You think he is drunk?” cried the young man on the sofa. ” Not in the least. He’s only had three or four small glasses, perhaps five; but what is that? The usual thing!”

As the prince opened his mouth to answer, he was interrupted by the girl, whose sweet face wore an expression of absolute frankness.

“He never drinks much in the morning; if you have come to talk business with him, do it now. It is the best time. He sometimes comes back drunk in the evening; but just now he passes the greater part of the evening in tears, and reads passages of Holy Scripture aloud, because our mother died five weeks ago.”

“No doubt he ran off because he did not know what to say to you,” said the youth on the divan. “I bet he is trying to cheat you, and is thinking how best to do it.”

Just then Lebedeff returned, having put on his coat.

“Five weeks!” said he, wiping his eyes. “Only five weeks! Poor orphans!”

“But why wear a coat in holes,” asked the girl, “when your new one is hanging behind the door? Did you not see it?”

“Hold your tongue, dragon-fly!” he scolded. “What a plague you are!” He stamped his foot irritably, but she only laughed, and answered:

“Are you trying to frighten me? I am not Tania, you know, and I don’t intend to run away. Look, you are waking Lubotchka, and she will have convulsions again. Why do you shout like that?”

“Well, well! I won’t again,” said the master of the house his anxiety getting the better of his temper. He went up to his daughter, and looked at the child in her arms, anxiously making the sign of the cross over her three times. “God bless her! God bless her!” he cried with emotion. “This little creature is my daughter Luboff,” addressing the prince. “My wife, Helena, died— at her birth; and this is my big daughter Vera, in mourning, as you see; and this, this, oh, this pointing to the young man on the divan

...

“Well, go on! never mind me!” mocked the other. “Don’t be afraid!”

“Excellency! Have you read that account of the murder of the Zemarin family, in the newspaper?” cried Lebedeff, all of a sudden.

“Yes,” said Muishkin, with some surprise.

“Well, that is the murderer! It is he—in fact—”

“What do you mean?” asked the visitor.

“I am speaking allegorically, of course; but he will be the murderer of a Zemarin family in the future. He is getting ready... .”

They all laughed, and the thought crossed the prince’s mind that perhaps Lebedeff was really trifling in this way because he foresaw inconvenient questions, and wanted to gain time.

“He is a traitor! a conspirator!” shouted Lebedeff, who seemed to have lost all control over himself. “A monster! a slanderer! Ought I to treat him as a nephew, the son of my sister Anisia?”

“Oh! do be quiet! You must be drunk! He has taken it into his head to play the lawyer, prince, and he practices speechifying, and is always repeating his eloquent pleadings to his children. And who do you think was his last client? An old woman who had been robbed of five hundred roubles, her all, by some rogue of a usurer, besought him to take up her case, instead of which he defended the usurer himself, a Jew named Zeidler, because this Jew promised to give him fifty roubles... .”

“It was to be fifty if I won the case, only five if I lost,” interrupted Lebedeff, speaking in a low tone, a great contrast to his earlier manner.

“Well! naturally he came to grief: the law is not administered as it used to be, and he only got laughed at for his pains. But he was much pleased with himself in spite of that. ‘Most learned judge!’ said he, ‘picture this unhappy man, crippled by age and infirmities, who gains his living by honourable toil—picture him, I repeat, robbed of his all, of his last mouthful; remember, I entreat you, the words of that learned legislator, “Let mercy and justice alike rule the courts of law.”’ Now, would you believe it, excellency, every morning he recites this speech to us from beginning to end, exactly as he spoke it before the magistrate. To-day we have heard it for the fifth time. He was just starting again when you arrived, so much does he admire it. He is now preparing to undertake another case. I think, by the way, that you are Prince Muishkin? Colia tells me you are the cleverest man he has ever known... .”

“The cleverest in the world,” interrupted his uncle hastily.

"I do not pay much attention to that opinion," continued the young man calmly. "Colia is very fond of you, but he," pointing to Lebedeff, "is flattering you. I can assure you I have no intention of flattering you, or anyone else, but at least you have some common-sense. Well, will you judge between us? Shall we ask the prince to act as arbitrator?" he went on, addressing his uncle.

"I am so glad you chanced to come here, prince."

"I agree," said Lebedeff, firmly, looking round involuntarily at his daughter, who had come nearer, and was listening attentively to the conversation.

"What is it all about?" asked the prince, frowning. His head ached, and he felt sure that Lebedeff was trying to cheat him in some way, and only talking to put off the explanation that he had come for.

"I will tell you all the story. I am his nephew; he did speak the truth there, although he is generally telling lies. I am at the University, and have not yet finished my course. I mean to do so, and I shall, for I have a determined character. I must, however, find something to do for the present, and therefore I have got employment on the railway at twenty-four roubles a month. I admit that my uncle has helped me once or twice before. Well, I had twenty roubles in my pocket, and I gambled them away. Can you believe that I should be so low, so base, as to lose money in that way?"

"And the man who won it is a rogue, a rogue whom you ought not to have paid!" cried Lebedeff.

"Yes, he is a rogue, but I was obliged to pay him," said the young man. "As to his being a rogue, he is assuredly that, and I am not saying it because he beat you. He is an ex-lieutenant, prince, dismissed from the service, a teacher of boxing, and one of Rogojin's followers. They are all lounging about the pavements now that Rogojin has turned them off. Of course, the worst of it is that, knowing he was a rascal, and a card-sharper, I none the less played palki with him, and risked my last rouble. To tell the truth, I thought to myself, 'If I lose, I will go to my uncle, and I am sure he will not refuse to help me.' Now that was base-cowardly and base!"

"That is so," observed Lebedeff quietly; "cowardly and base."

"Well, wait a bit, before you begin to triumph," said the nephew viciously; for the words seemed to irritate him. "He is delighted! I came to him here and told him everything: I acted honourably, for I did not excuse myself. I spoke most severely of my conduct, as everyone here can witness. But I must smarten myself up before I take up my new post, for I am really like a tramp. Just look at my boots! I cannot possibly appear like this, and if I am not at the bureau at the time appointed, the job will be given to someone else; and I shall have to try for another. Now I only beg for fifteen roubles, and I give my word that I will never ask him for anything again. I am also ready to promise to repay my debt in three months' time, and I will keep my word, even if I have to live on bread and water. My salary will amount to seventy-five roubles in three months. The sum I now ask, added to what I have borrowed already, will make a total of about thirty-five roubles, so you see I shall have enough to pay him and confound him! if he wants interest, he shall have that, too! Haven't I always

paid back the money he lent me before? Why should he be so mean now? He grudges my having paid that lieutenant; there can be no other reason! That's the kind he is—a dog in the manger!"

"And he won't go away!" cried Lebedeff. "He has installed himself here, and here he remains!"

"I have told you already, that I will not go away until I have got what I ask. Why are you smiling, prince? You look as if you disapproved of me."

"I am not smiling, but I really think you are in the wrong, somewhat," replied Muishkin, reluctantly.

"Don't shuffle! Say plainly that you think that I am quite wrong, without any 'somewhat'! Why 'somewhat'?"

"I will say you are quite wrong, if you wish."

"If I wish! That's good, I must say! Do you think I am deceived as to the flagrant impropriety of my conduct? I am quite aware that his money is his own, and that my action -As much like an attempt at extortion. But you-you don't know what life is! If people don't learn by experience, they never understand. They must be taught. My intentions are perfectly honest; on my conscience he will lose nothing, and I will pay back the money with interest. Added to which he has had the moral satisfaction of seeing me disgraced. What does he want more? and what is he good for if he never helps anyone? Look what he does himself! just ask him about his dealings with others, how he deceives people! How did he manage to buy this house? You may cut off my head if he has not let you in for something-and if he is not trying to cheat you again. You are smiling. You don't believe me?"

"It seems to me that all this has nothing to do with your affairs," remarked the prince.

"I have lain here now for three days," cried the young man without noticing, "and I have seen a lot! Fancy! he suspects his daughter, that angel, that orphan, my cousin—he suspects her, and every evening he searches her room, to see if she has a lover hidden in it! He comes here too on tiptoe, creeping softly—oh, so softly—and looks under the sofa—my bed, you know. He is mad with suspicion, and sees a thief in every corner. He runs about all night long; he was up at least seven times last night, to satisfy himself that the windows and doors were barred, and to peep into the oven. That man who appears in court for scoundrels, rushes in here in the night and prays, lying prostrate, banging his head on the ground by the half-hour—and for whom do you think he prays? Who are the sinners figuring in his drunken petitions? I have heard him with my own ears praying for the repose of the soul of the Countess du Barry! Colia heard it too. He is as mad as a March hare!"

"You hear how he slanders me, prince," said Lebedeff, almost beside himself with rage. "I may be a drunkard, an evil-doer, a thief, but at least I can say one thing for myself. He does not know—how should he, mocker that he is?—that when he came into the world it was I who washed him, and dressed him in his swathing-bands, for my sister Anisia had lost her husband, and was in great poverty. I was very little better off

than she, but I sat up night after night with her, and nursed both mother and child; I used to go downstairs and steal wood for them from the house-porter. How often did I sing him to sleep when I was half dead with hunger! In short, I was more than a father to him, and now—now he jeers at me! Even if I did cross myself, and pray for the repose of the soul of the Comtesse du Barry, what does it matter? Three days ago, for the first time in my life, I read her biography in an historical dictionary. Do you know who she was? You there!” addressing his nephew. “Speak! do you know?”

“Of course no one knows anything about her but you,” muttered the young man in a would-be jeering tone.

“She was a Countess who rose from shame to reign like a Queen. An Empress wrote to her, with her own hand, as ‘Ma chere cousine.’ At a lever-du-roi one morning (do you know what a lever-du-roi was?)—a Cardinal, a Papal legate, offered to put on her stockings; a high and holy person like that looked on it as an honour! Did you know this? I see by your expression that you did not! Well, how did she die? Answer!”

“Oh! do stop—you are too absurd!”

“This is how she died. After all this honour and glory, after having been almost a Queen, she was guillotined by that butcher, Samson. She was quite innocent, but it had to be done, for the satisfaction of the fishwives of Paris. She was so terrified, that she did not understand what was happening. But when Samson seized her head, and pushed her under the knife with his foot, she cried out: ‘Wait a moment! wait a moment, monsieur!’ Well, because of that moment of bitter suffering, perhaps the Saviour will pardon her other faults, for one cannot imagine a greater agony. As I read the story my heart bled for her. And what does it matter to you, little worm, if I implored the Divine mercy for her, great sinner as she was, as I said my evening prayer? I might have done it because I doubted if anyone had ever crossed himself for her sake before. It may be that in the other world she will rejoice to think that a sinner like herself has cried to heaven for the salvation of her soul. Why are you laughing? You believe nothing, atheist! And your story was not even correct! If you had listened to what I was saying, you would have heard that I did not only pray for the Comtesse du Barry. I said, ‘Oh Lord! give rest to the soul of that great sinner, the Comtesse du Barry, and to all unhappy ones like her.’ You see that is quite a different thing, for how many sinners there are, how many women, who have passed through the trials of this life, are now suffering and groaning in purgatory! I prayed for you, too, in spite of your insolence and impudence, also for your fellows, as it seems that you claim to know how I pray...”

“Oh! that’s enough in all conscience! Pray for whom you choose, and the devil take them and you! We have a scholar here; you did not know that, prince?” he continued, with a sneer. “He reads all sorts of books and memoirs now.”

“At any rate, your uncle has a kind heart,” remarked the prince, who really had to force himself to speak to the nephew, so much did he dislike him.

“Oh, now you are going to praise him! He will be set up! He puts his hand on his heart, and he is delighted! I never said he was a man without heart, but he is a rascal—

that's the pity of it. And then, he is addicted to drink, and his mind is unhinged, like that of most people who have taken more than is good for them for years. He loves his children—oh, I know that well enough! He respected my aunt, his late wife ... and he even has a sort of affection for me. He has remembered me in his will."

"I shall leave you nothing!" exclaimed his uncle angrily.

"Listen to me, Lebedeff," said the prince in a decided voice, turning his back on the young man. "I know by experience that when you choose, you can be business-like. . I . I have very little time to spare, and if you ... By the way—excuse me—what is your Christian name? I have forgotten it."

"Ti-Ti-Timofey."

"And?"

"Lukianovitch."

Everyone in the room began to laugh.

"He is telling lies!" cried the nephew. "Even now he cannot speak the truth. He is not called Timofey Lukianovitch, prince, but Lukian Timofeyovitch. Now do tell us why you must needs lie about it? Lukian or Timofey, it is all the same to you, and what difference can it make to the prince? He tells lies without the least necessity, simply by force of habit, I assure you."

"Is that true?" said the prince impatiently.

"My name really is Lukian Timofeyovitch," acknowledged Lebedeff, lowering his eyes, and putting his hand on his heart.

"Well, for God's sake, what made you say the other?"

"To humble myself," murmured Lebedeff.

"What on earth do you mean? Oh I if only I knew where Colia was at this moment!" cried the prince, standing up, as if to go.

"I can tell you all about Colia," said the young man

"Oh! no, no!" said Lebedeff, hurriedly.

"Colia spent the night here, and this morning went after his father, whom you let out of prison by paying his debts—Heaven only knows why! Yesterday the general promised to come and lodge here, but he did not appear. Most probably he slept at the hotel close by. No doubt Colia is there, unless he has gone to Pavlofsk to see the Epanchins. He had a little money, and was intending to go there yesterday. He must be either at the hotel or at Pavlofsk."

"At Pavlofsk! He is at Pavlofsk, undoubtedly!" interrupted Lebedeff... . "But come—let us go into the garden—we will have coffee there... ." And Lebedeff seized the prince's arm, and led him from the room. They went across the yard, and found themselves in a delightful little garden with the trees already in their summer dress of green, thanks to the unusually fine weather. Lebedeff invited his guest to sit down on a green seat before a table of the same colour fixed in the earth, and took a seat facing him. In a few minutes the coffee appeared, and the prince did not refuse it. The host kept his eyes fixed on Muishkin, with an expression of passionate servility.

"I knew nothing about your home before," said the prince absently, as if he were thinking of something else.

"Poor orphans," began Lebedeff, his face assuming a mournful air, but he stopped short, for the other looked at him inattentively, as if he had already forgotten his own remark. They waited a few minutes in silence, while Lebedeff sat with his eyes fixed mournfully on the young man's face.

"Well!" said the latter, at last rousing himself. "Ah! yes! You know why I came, Lebedeff. Your letter brought me. Speak! Tell me all about it."

The clerk, rather confused, tried to say something, hesitated, began to speak, and again stopped. The prince looked at him gravely.

"I think I understand, Lukian Timofeyovitch: you were not sure that I should come. You did not think I should start at the first word from you, and you merely wrote to relieve your conscience. However, you see now that I have come, and I have had enough of trickery. Give up serving, or trying to serve, two masters. Rogojin has been here these three weeks. Have you managed to sell her to him as you did before? Tell me the truth."

"He discovered everything, the monster ... himself"

"Don't abuse him; though I dare say you have something to complain of... ."

"He beat me, he thrashed me unmercifully!" replied Lebedeff vehemently. "He set a dog on me in Moscow, a bloodhound, a terrible beast that chased me all down the street."

"You seem to take me for a child, Lebedeff. Tell me, is it a fact that she left him while they were in Moscow?"

"Yes, it is a fact, and this time, let me tell you, on the very eve of their marriage! It was a question of minutes when she slipped off to Petersburg. She came to me directly she arrived— 'Save me, Lukian! find me some refuge, and say nothing to the prince!' She is afraid of you, even more than she is of him, and in that she shows her wisdom!" And Lebedeff slyly put his finger to his brow as he said the last words.

"And now it is you who have brought them together again?"

"Excellency, how could I, how could I prevent it?"

"That will do. I can find out for myself. Only tell me, where is she now? At his house? With him?"

"Oh no! Certainly not! 'I am free,' she says; you know how she insists on that point. 'I am entirely free.' She repeats it over and over again. She is living in Petersburgskaia, with my sister-in-law, as I told you in my letter."

"She is there at this moment?"

"Yes, unless she has gone to Pavlofsk: the fine weather may have tempted her, perhaps, into the country, with Daria Alexeyevna. 'I am quite free,' she says. Only yesterday she boasted of her freedom to Nicolai Ardalionovitch—a bad sign," added Lebedeff, smiling.

"Colia goes to see her often, does he not?"

"He is a strange boy, thoughtless, and inclined to be indiscreet."

“Is it long since you saw her?”

“I go to see her every day, every day.”

“Then you were there yesterday?”

“N-no: I have not been these three last days.”

“It is a pity you have taken too much wine, Lebedeff I want to ask you something ... but...”

“All right! all right! I am not drunk,” replied the clerk, preparing to listen.

“Tell me, how was she when you left her?”

“She is a woman who is seeking... “

“Seeking?”

“She seems always to be searching about, as if she had lost something. The mere idea of her coming marriage disgusts her; she looks on it as an insult. She cares as much for HIM as for a piece of orange-peel—not more. Yet I am much mistaken if she does not look on him with fear and trembling. She forbids his name to be mentioned before her, and they only meet when unavoidable. He understands, well enough! But it must be gone through She is restless, mocking, deceitful, violent....”

“Deceitful and violent?”

“Yes, violent. I can give you a proof of it. A few days ago she tried to pull my hair because I said something that annoyed her. I tried to soothe her by reading the Apocalypse aloud.”

“What?” exclaimed the prince, thinking he had not heard aright.

“By reading the Apocalypse. The lady has a restless imagination, he-he! She has a liking for conversation on serious subjects, of any kind; in fact they please her so much, that it flatters her to discuss them. Now for fifteen years at least I have studied the Apocalypse, and she agrees with me in thinking that the present is the epoch represented by the third horse, the black one whose rider holds a measure in his hand. It seems to me that everything is ruled by measure in our century; all men are clamouring for their rights; ‘a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.’ But, added to this, men desire freedom of mind and body, a pure heart, a healthy life, and all God’s good gifts. Now by pleading their rights alone, they will never attain all this, so the white horse, with his rider Death, comes next, and is followed by Hell. We talked about this matter when we met, and it impressed her very much.”

“Do you believe all this?” asked Muishkin, looking curiously at his companion.

“I both believe it and explain it. I am but a poor creature, a beggar, an atom in the scale of humanity. Who has the least respect for Lebedeff? He is a target for all the world, the butt of any fool who chooses to kick him. But in interpreting revelation I am the equal of anyone, great as he may be! Such is the power of the mind and the spirit. I have made a lordly personage tremble, as he sat in his armchair ... only by talking to him of things concerning the spirit. Two years ago, on Easter Eve, His Excellency Nil Alexeyovitch, whose subordinate I was then, wished to hear what I had to say, and sent a message by Peter Zakkaritch to ask me to go to his private room. ‘They tell

me you expound the prophecies relating to Antichrist,' said he, when we were alone. 'Is that so?' ' Yes,' I answered unhesitatingly, and I began to give some comments on the Apostle's allegorical vision. At first he smiled, but when we reached the numerical computations and correspondences, he trembled, and turned pale. Then he begged me to close the book, and sent me away, promising to put my name on the reward list. That took place as I said on the eve of Easter, and eight days later his soul returned to God."

"What?"

"It is the truth. One evening after dinner he stumbled as he stepped out of his carriage. He fell, and struck his head on the curb, and died immediately. He was seventy-three years of age, and had a red face, and white hair; he deluged himself with scent, and was always smiling like a child. Peter Zakkaritch recalled my interview with him, and said, 'YOU FORETOLD HIS DEATH.'"

The prince rose from his seat, and Lebedeff, surprised to see his guest preparing to go so soon, remarked: "You are not interested?" in a respectful tone.

"I am not very well, and my head aches. Doubtless the effect of the journey," replied the prince, frowning.

"You should go into the country," said Lebedeff timidly.

The prince seemed to be considering the suggestion.

"You see, I am going into the country myself in three days, with my children and belongings. The little one is delicate; she needs change of air; and during our absence this house will be done up. I am going to Pavlofsk."

"You are going to Pavlofsk too?" asked the prince sharply. "Everybody seems to be going there. Have you a house in that neighbourhood?"

"I don't know of many people going to Pavlofsk, and as for the house, Ivan Ptitsin has let me one of his villas rather cheaply. It is a pleasant place, lying on a hill surrounded by trees, and one can live there for a mere song. There is good music to be heard, so no wonder it is popular. I shall stay in the lodge. As to the villa itself. . ."

"Have you let it?"

"N-no—not exactly."

"Let it to me," said the prince.

Now this was precisely what Lebedeff had made up his mind to do in the last three minutes. Not that he had any difficulty in finding a tenant; in fact the house was occupied at present by a chance visitor, who had told Lebedeff that he would perhaps take it for the summer months. The clerk knew very well that this "PERHAPS" meant "CERTAINLY," but as he thought he could make more out of a tenant like the prince, he felt justified in speaking vaguely about the present inhabitant's intentions. "This is quite a coincidence," thought he, and when the subject of price was mentioned, he made a gesture with his hand, as if to waive away a question of so little importance.

"Oh well, as you like!" said Muishkin. "I will think it over. You shall lose nothing!"

They were walking slowly across the garden.

“But if you ... I could ...” stammered Lebedeff, “if...if you please, prince, tell you something on the subject which would interest you, I am sure.” He spoke in wheedling tones, and wriggled as he walked along.

Muishkin stopped short.

“Daria Alexeyevna also has a villa at Pavlofsk.”

“Well?”

“A certain person is very friendly with her, and intends to visit her pretty often.”

Well?”

“Aglaya Ivanovna...”

“Oh stop, Lebedeff!” interposed Muishkin, feeling as if he had been touched on an open wound. “That ... that has nothing to do with me. I should like to know when you are going to start. The sooner the better as far as I am concerned, for I am at an hotel.”

They had left the garden now, and were crossing the yard on their way to the gate.

“Well, leave your hotel at once and come here; then we can all go together to Pavlofsk the day after tomorrow.”

“I will think about it,” said the prince dreamily, and went off.

The clerk stood looking after his guest, struck by his sudden absent-mindedness. He had not even remembered to say goodbye, and Lebedeff was the more surprised at the omission, as he knew by experience how courteous the prince usually was.

III

It was now close on twelve o'clock.

The prince knew that if he called at the Epanchins' now he would only find the general, and that the latter might probably carry him straight off to Pavlofsk with him; whereas there was one visit he was most anxious to make without delay.

So at the risk of missing General Epanchin altogether, and thus postponing his visit to Pavlofsk for a day, at least, the prince decided to go and look for the house he desired to find.

The visit he was about to pay was, in some respects, a risky one. He was in two minds about it, but knowing that the house was in the Gorohovaya, not far from the Sadovaya, he determined to go in that direction, and to try to make up his mind on the way.

Arrived at the point where the Gorohovaya crosses the Sadovaya, he was surprised to find how excessively agitated he was. He had no idea that his heart could beat so painfully.

One house in the Gorohovaya began to attract his attention long before he reached it, and the prince remembered afterwards that he had said to himself: “That is the house, I'm sure of it.” He came up to it quite curious to discover whether he had guessed right, and felt that he would be disagreeably impressed to find that he had actually done

so. The house was a large gloomy- looking structure, without the slightest claim to architectural beauty, in colour a dirty green. There are a few of these old houses, built towards the end of the last century, still standing in that part of St. Petersburg, and showing little change from their original form and colour. They are solidly built, and are remarkable for the thickness of their walls, and for the fewness of their windows, many of which are covered by gratings. On the ground-floor there is usually a money-changer's shop, and the owner lives over it. Without as well as within, the houses seem inhospitable and mysterious—an impression which is difficult to explain, unless it has something to do with the actual architectural style. These houses are almost exclusively inhabited by the merchant class.

Arrived at the gate, the prince looked up at the legend over it, which ran:

“House of Rogojin, hereditary and honourable citizen.”

He hesitated no longer; but opened the glazed door at the bottom of the outer stairs and made his way up to the second storey. The place was dark and gloomy-looking; the walls of the stone staircase were painted a dull red. Rogojin and his mother and brother occupied the whole of the second floor. The servant who opened the door to Muishkin led him, without taking his name, through several rooms and up and down many steps until they arrived at a door, where he knocked.

Parfen Rogojin opened the door himself.

On seeing the prince he became deadly white, and apparently fixed to the ground, so that he was more like a marble statue than a human being. The prince had expected some surprise, but Rogojin evidently considered his visit an impossible and miraculous event. He stared with an expression almost of terror, and his lips twisted into a bewildered smile.

“Parfen! perhaps my visit is ill-timed. I-I can go away again if you like,” said Muishkin at last, rather embarrassed.

“No, no; it's all right, come in,” said Parfen, recollecting himself.

They were evidently on quite familiar terms. In Moscow they had had many occasions of meeting; indeed, some few of those meetings were but too vividly impressed upon their memories. They had not met now, however, for three months.

The deathlike pallor, and a sort of slight convulsion about the lips, had not left Rogojin's face. Though he welcomed his guest, he was still obviously much disturbed. As he invited the prince to sit down near the table, the latter happened to turn towards him, and was startled by the strange expression on his face. A painful recollection flashed into his mind. He stood for a time, looking straight at Rogojin, whose eyes seemed to blaze like fire. At last Rogojin smiled, though he still looked agitated and shaken.

“What are you staring at me like that for?” he muttered. “Sit down.”

The prince took a chair.

“Parfen,” he said, “tell me honestly, did you know that I was coming to Petersburg or no?”

“Oh, I supposed you were coming,” the other replied, smiling sarcastically, and I was right in my supposition, you see; but how was I to know that you would come TODAY?”

A certain strangeness and impatience in his manner impressed the prince very forcibly.

“And if you had known that I was coming today, why be so irritated about it?” he asked, in quiet surprise.

“Why did you ask me?”

“Because when I jumped out of the train this morning, two eyes glared at me just as yours did a moment since.”

“Ha! and whose eyes may they have been?” said Rogojin, suspiciously. It seemed to the prince that he was trembling.

“I don’t know; I thought it was a hallucination. I often have hallucinations nowadays. I feel just as I did five years ago when my fits were about to come on.”

“Well, perhaps it was a hallucination, I don’t know,” said Parfen.

He tried to give the prince an affectionate smile, and it seemed to the latter as though in this smile of his something had broken, and that he could not mend it, try as he would.

“Shall you go abroad again then?” he asked, and suddenly added, “Do you remember how we came up in the train from Pskoff together? You and your cloak and leggings, eh?”

And Rogojin burst out laughing, this time with unconcealed malice, as though he were glad that he had been able to find an opportunity for giving vent to it.

“Have you quite taken up your quarters here?” asked the prince

“Yes, I’m at home. Where else should I go to?”

“We haven’t met for some time. Meanwhile I have heard things about you which I should not have believed to be possible.”

“What of that? People will say anything,” said Rogojin drily.

“At all events, you’ve disbanded your troop—and you are living in your own house instead of being fast and loose about the place; that’s all very good. Is this house all yours, or joint property?”

“It is my mother’s. You get to her apartments by that passage.”

“Where’s your brother?”

“In the other wing.”

“Is he married?”

“Widower. Why do you want to know all this?”

The prince looked at him, but said nothing. He had suddenly relapsed into musing, and had probably not heard the question at all. Rogojin did not insist upon an answer, and there was silence for a few moments.

“I guessed which was your house from a hundred yards off,” said the prince at last.

“Why so?”

"I don't quite know. Your house has the aspect of yourself and all your family; it bears the stamp of the Rogojin life; but ask me why I think so, and I can tell you nothing. It is nonsense, of course. I am nervous about this kind of thing troubling me so much. I had never before imagined what sort of a house you would live in, and yet no sooner did I set eyes on this one than I said to myself that it must be yours."

"Really!" said Rogojin vaguely, not taking in what the prince meant by his rather obscure remarks.

The room they were now sitting in was a large one, lofty but dark, well furnished, principally with writing-tables and desks covered with papers and books. A wide sofa covered with red morocco evidently served Rogojin for a bed. On the table beside which the prince had been invited to seat himself lay some books; one containing a marker where the reader had left off, was a volume of Solovieff's History. Some oil-paintings in worn gilded frames hung on the walls, but it was impossible to make out what subjects they represented, so blackened were they by smoke and age. One, a life-sized portrait, attracted the prince's attention. It showed a man of about fifty, wearing a long riding-coat of German cut. He had two medals on his breast; his beard was white, short and thin; his face yellow and wrinkled, with a sly, suspicious expression in the eyes.

"That is your father, is it not?" asked the prince.

"Yes, it is," replied Rogojin with an unpleasant smile, as if he had expected his guest to ask the question, and then to make some disagreeable remark.

"Was he one of the Old Believers?"

"No, he went to church, but to tell the truth he really preferred the old religion. This was his study and is now mine. Why did you ask if he were an Old Believer?"

"Are you going to be married here?"

"Ye-yes!" replied Rogojin, starting at the unexpected question.

"Soon?"

"You know yourself it does not depend on me."

"Parfen, I am not your enemy, and I do not intend to oppose your intentions in any way. I repeat this to you now just as I said it to you once before on a very similar occasion. When you were arranging for your projected marriage in Moscow, I did not interfere with you—you know I did not. That first time she fled to me from you, from the very altar almost, and begged me to 'save her from you.' Afterwards she ran away from me again, and you found her and arranged your marriage with her once more; and now, I hear, she has run away from you and come to Petersburg. Is it true? Lebedeff wrote me to this effect, and that's why I came here. That you had once more arranged matters with Nastasia Philipovna I only learned last night in the train from a friend of yours, Zaleshoff—if you wish to know.

"I confess I came here with an object. I wished to persuade Nastasia to go abroad for her health; she requires it. Both mind and body need a change badly. I did not intend to take her abroad myself. I was going to arrange for her to go without me. Now I tell you honestly, Parfen, if it is true that all is made up between you, I will not so much as set eyes upon her, and I will never even come to see you again.

“You know quite well that I am telling the truth, because I have always been frank with you. I have never concealed my own opinion from you. I have always told you that I consider a marriage between you and her would be ruin to her. You would also be ruined, and perhaps even more hopelessly. If this marriage were to be broken off again, I admit I should be greatly pleased; but at the same time I have not the slightest intention of trying to part you. You may be quite easy in your mind, and you need not suspect me. You know yourself whether I was ever really your rival or not, even when she ran away and came to me.

“There, you are laughing at me—I know why you laugh. It is perfectly true that we lived apart from one another all the time, in different towns. I told you before that I did not love her with love, but with pity! You said then that you understood me; did you really understand me or not? What hatred there is in your eyes at this moment! I came to relieve your mind, because you are dear to me also. I love you very much, Parfen; and now I shall go away and never come back again. Goodbye.”

The prince rose.

“Stay a little,” said Parfen, not leaving his chair and resting his head on his right hand. “I haven’t seen you for a long time.”

The prince sat down again. Both were silent for a few moments.

“When you are not with me I hate you, Lef Nicolaievitch. I have loathed you every day of these three months since I last saw you. By heaven I have!” said Rogojin.” I could have poisoned you at any minute. Now, you have been with me but a quarter of an hour, and all my malice seems to have melted away, and you are as dear to me as ever. Stay here a little longer.”

“When I am with you you trust me; but as soon as my back is turned you suspect me,” said the prince, smiling, and trying to hide his emotion.

“I trust your voice, when I hear you speak. I quite understand that you and I cannot be put on a level, of course.”

“Why did you add that?—There! Now you are cross again,” said the prince, wondering.

“We were not asked, you see. We were made different, with different tastes and feelings, without being consulted. You say you love her with pity. I have no pity for her. She hates me—that’s the plain truth of the matter. I dream of her every night, and always that she is laughing at me with another man. And so she does laugh at me. She thinks no more of marrying me than if she were changing her shoe. Would you believe it, I haven’t seen her for five days, and I daren’t go near her. She asks me what I come for, as if she were not content with having disgraced me—”

“Disgraced you! How?”

“Just as though you didn’t know! Why, she ran away from me, and went to you. You admitted it yourself, just now.”

“But surely you do not believe that she...”

“That she did not disgrace me at Moscow with that officer. Zemtuznikoff? I know for certain she did, after having fixed our marriage-day herself!”

“Impossible!” cried the prince.

“I know it for a fact,” replied Rogojin, with conviction.

“It is not like her, you say? My friend, that’s absurd. Perhaps such an act would horrify her, if she were with you, but it is quite different where I am concerned. She looks on me as vermin. Her affair with Keller was simply to make a laughing-stock of me. You don’t know what a fool she made of me in Moscow; and the money I spent over her! The money! the money!”

“And you can marry her now, Parfen! What will come of it all?” said the prince, with dread in his voice.

Rogojin gazed back gloomily, and with a terrible expression in his eyes, but said nothing.

“I haven’t been to see her for five days,” he repeated, after a slight pause. “I’m afraid of being turned out. She says she’s still her own mistress, and may turn me off altogether, and go abroad. She told me this herself,” he said, with a peculiar glance at Muishkin. “I think she often does it merely to frighten me. She is always laughing at me, for some reason or other; but at other times she’s angry, and won’t say a word, and that’s what I’m afraid of. I took her a shawl one day, the like of which she might never have seen, although she did live in luxury and she gave it away to her maid, Katia. Sometimes when I can keep away no longer, I steal past the house on the sly, and once I watched at the gate till dawn—I thought something was going on—and she saw me from the window. She asked me what I should do if I found she had deceived me. I said, ‘You know well enough.’”

“What did she know?” cried the prince.

“How was I to tell?” replied Rogojin, with an angry laugh. “I did my best to catch her tripping in Moscow, but did not succeed. However, I caught hold of her one day, and said: ‘You are engaged to be married into a respectable family, and do you know what sort of a woman you are? THAT’S the sort of woman you are,’ I said.”

“You told her that?”

“Yes.”

“Well, go on.”

“She said, ‘I wouldn’t even have you for a footman now, much less for a husband.’ ‘I shan’t leave the house,’ I said, ‘so it doesn’t matter.’ ‘Then I shall call somebody and have you kicked out,’ she cried. So then I rushed at her, and beat her till she was bruised all over.”

“Impossible!” cried the prince, aghast.

“I tell you it’s true,” said Rogojin quietly, but with eyes ablaze with passion.

“Then for a day and a half I neither slept, nor ate, nor drank, and would not leave her. I knelt at her feet: ‘I shall die here,’ I said, ‘if you don’t forgive me; and if you have me turned out, I shall drown myself; because, what should I be without you now?’ She was like a madwoman all that day; now she would cry; now she would threaten me with a knife; now she would abuse me. She called in Zaleshoff and Keller, and showed me to them, shamed me in their presence. ‘Let’s all go to the theatre,’ she says, ‘and

leave him here if he won't go—it's not my business. They'll give you some tea, Parfen Semeonovitch, while I am away, for you must be hungry.' She came back from the theatre alone. 'Those cowards wouldn't come,' she said. 'They are afraid of you, and tried to frighten me, too. "He won't go away as he came," they said, "he'll cut your throat—see if he doesn't." Now, I shall go to my bedroom, and I shall not even lock my door, just to show you how much I am afraid of you. You must be shown that once for all. Did you have tea?' 'No,' I said, 'and I don't intend to.' 'Ha, ha! you are playing off your pride against your stomach! That sort of heroism doesn't sit well on you,' she said.

"With that she did as she had said she would; she went to bed, and did not lock her door. In the morning she came out. 'Are you quite mad?' she said, sharply. 'Why, you'll die of hunger like this.' 'Forgive me,' I said. 'No, I won't, and I won't marry you. I've said it. Surely you haven't sat in this chair all night without sleeping?' 'I didn't sleep,' I said. 'H'm! how sensible of you. And are you going to have no breakfast or dinner today?' 'I told you I wouldn't. Forgive me!' 'You've no idea how unbecoming this sort of thing is to you,' she said, 'it's like putting a saddle on a cow's back. Do you think you are frightening me? My word, what a dreadful thing that you should sit here and eat no food! How terribly frightened I am!' She wasn't angry long, and didn't seem to remember my offence at all. I was surprised, for she is a vindictive, resentful woman—but then I thought that perhaps she despised me too much to feel any resentment against me. And that's the truth.

"She came up to me and said, 'Do you know who the Pope of Rome is?' 'I've heard of him,' I said. 'I suppose you've read the Universal History, Parfen Semeonovitch, haven't you?' she asked. 'I've learned nothing at all,' I said. 'Then I'll lend it to you to read. You must know there was a Roman Pope once, and he was very angry with a certain Emperor; so the Emperor came and neither ate nor drank, but knelt before the Pope's palace till he should be forgiven. And what sort of vows do you think that Emperor was making during all those days on his knees? Stop, I'll read it to you!' Then she read me a lot of verses, where it said that the Emperor spent all the time vowing vengeance against the Pope. 'You don't mean to say you don't approve of the poem, Parfen Semeonovitch,' she says. 'All you have read out is perfectly true,' say I. 'Aha!' says she, 'you admit it's true, do you? And you are making vows to yourself that if I marry you, you will remind me of all this, and take it out of me.' 'I don't know,' I say, 'perhaps I was thinking like that, and perhaps I was not. I'm not thinking of anything just now.' 'What are your thoughts, then?' 'I'm thinking that when you rise from your chair and go past me, I watch you, and follow you with my eyes; if your dress does but rustle, my heart sinks; if you leave the room, I remember every little word and action, and what your voice sounded like, and what you said. I thought of nothing all last night, but sat here listening to your sleeping breath, and heard you move a little, twice.' 'And as for your attack upon me,' she says, 'I suppose you never once thought of THAT?' 'Perhaps I did think of it, and perhaps not,' I say. And what if I don't either forgive you or marry, you' 'I tell you I shall go and drown myself.' 'H'm!'

she said, and then relapsed into silence. Then she got angry, and went out. 'I suppose you'd murder me before you drowned yourself, though!' she cried as she left the room.

"An hour later, she came to me again, looking melancholy. 'I will marry you, Parfen Semeonovitch,' she says, not because I'm frightened of you, but because it's all the same to me how I ruin myself. And how can I do it better? Sit down; they'll bring you some dinner directly. And if I do marry you, I'll be a faithful wife to you—you need not doubt that.' Then she thought a bit, and said, 'At all events, you are not a flunkey; at first, I thought you were no better than a flunkey.' And she arranged the wedding and fixed the day straight away on the spot.

"Then, in another week, she had run away again, and came here to Lebedeff's; and when I found her here, she said to me, 'I'm not going to renounce you altogether, but I wish to put off the wedding a bit longer yet—just as long as I like—for I am still my own mistress; so you may wait, if you like.' That's how the matter stands between us now. What do you think of all this, Lef Nicolaievitch?"

"What do you think of it yourself?" replied the prince, looking sadly at Rogojin.

"As if I can think anything about it! I—" He was about to say more, but stopped in despair.

The prince rose again, as if he would leave.

"At all events, I shall not interfere with you!" he murmured, as though making answer to some secret thought of his own.

"I'll tell you what!" cried Rogojin, and his eyes flashed fire. "I can't understand your yielding her to me like this; I don't understand it. Have you given up loving her altogether? At first you suffered badly—I know it—I saw it. Besides, why did you come post-haste after us? Out of pity, eh? He, he, he!" His mouth curved in a mocking smile.

"Do you think I am deceiving you?" asked the prince.

"No! I trust you—but I can't understand. It seems to me that your pity is greater than my love." A hungry longing to speak his mind out seemed to flash in the man's eyes, combined with an intense anger.

"Your love is mingled with hatred, and therefore, when your love passes, there will be the greater misery," said the prince. "I tell you this, Parfen—"

"What! that I'll cut her throat, you mean?"

The prince shuddered.

"You'll hate her afterwards for all your present love, and for all the torment you are suffering on her account now. What seems to me the most extraordinary thing is, that she can again consent to marry you, after all that has passed between you. When I heard the news yesterday, I could hardly bring myself to believe it. Why, she has run twice from you, from the very altar rails, as it were. She must have some presentiment of evil. What can she want with you now? Your money? Nonsense! Besides, I should think you must have made a fairly large hole in your fortune already. Surely it is not because she is so very anxious to find a husband? She could find many a one besides yourself. Anyone would be better than you, because you will murder her, and I feel sure she must know that but too well by now. Is it because you love her so passionately?"

Indeed, that may be it. I have heard that there are women who want just that kind of love ... but still ...” The prince paused, reflectively.

“What are you grinning at my father’s portrait again for?” asked Rogojin, suddenly. He was carefully observing every change in the expression of the prince’s face.

“I smiled because the idea came into my head that if it were not for this unhappy passion of yours you might have, and would have, become just such a man as your father, and that very quickly, too. You’d have settled down in this house of yours with some silent and obedient wife. You would have spoken rarely, trusted no one, heeded no one, and thought of nothing but making money.”

“Laugh away! She said exactly the same, almost word for word, when she saw my father’s portrait. It’s remarkable how entirely you and she are at one now-a-days.”

“What, has she been here?” asked the prince with curiosity.

“Yes! She looked long at the portrait and asked all about my father. ‘You’d be just such another,’ she said at last, and laughed. ‘You have such strong passions, Parfen,’ she said, ‘that they’d have taken you to Siberia in no time if you had not, luckily, intelligence as well. For you have a good deal of intelligence.’ (She said this—believe it or not. The first time I ever heard anything of that sort from her.) ‘You’d soon have thrown up all this rowdyism that you indulge in now, and you’d have settled down to quiet, steady money-making, because you have little education; and here you’d have stayed just like your father before you. And you’d have loved your money so that you’d amass not two million, like him, but ten million; and you’d have died of hunger on your money bags to finish up with, for you carry everything to extremes.’ There, that’s exactly word for word as she said it to me. She never talked to me like that before. She always talks nonsense and laughs when she’s with me. We went all over this old house together. ‘I shall change all this,’ I said, ‘or else I’ll buy a new house for the wedding.’ ‘No, no!’ she said, ‘don’t touch anything; leave it all as it is; I shall live with your mother when I marry you.’

“I took her to see my mother, and she was as respectful and kind as though she were her own daughter. Mother has been almost demented ever since father died—she’s an old woman. She sits and bows from her chair to everyone she sees. If you left her alone and didn’t feed her for three days, I don’t believe she would notice it. Well, I took her hand, and I said, ‘Give your blessing to this lady, mother, she’s going to be my wife.’ So Nastasia kissed mother’s hand with great feeling. ‘She must have suffered terribly, hasn’t she?’ she said. She saw this book here lying before me. ‘What! have you begun to read Russian history?’ she asked. She told me once in Moscow, you know, that I had better get Solovieff’s Russian History and read it, because I knew nothing. ‘That’s good,’ she said, ‘you go on like that, reading books. I’ll make you a list myself of the books you ought to read first—shall I?’ She had never once spoken to me like this before; it was the first time I felt I could breathe before her like a living creature.”

“I’m very, very glad to hear of this, Parfen,” said the prince, with real feeling. “Who knows? Maybe God will yet bring you near to one another.”

“Never, never!” cried Rogojin, excitedly.

“Look here, Parfen; if you love her so much, surely you must be anxious to earn her respect? And if you do so wish, surely you may hope to? I said just now that I considered it extraordinary that she could still be ready to marry you. Well, though I cannot yet understand it, I feel sure she must have some good reason, or she wouldn’t do it. She is sure of your love; but besides that, she must attribute SOMETHING else to you—some good qualities, otherwise the thing would not be. What you have just said confirms my words. You say yourself that she found it possible to speak to you quite differently from her usual manner. You are suspicious, you know, and jealous, therefore when anything annoying happens to you, you exaggerate its significance. Of course, of course, she does not think so ill of you as you say. Why, if she did, she would simply be walking to death by drowning or by the knife, with her eyes wide open, when she married you. It is impossible! As if anybody would go to their death deliberately!”

Rogojin listened to the prince’s excited words with a bitter smile. His conviction was, apparently, unalterable.

“How dreadfully you look at me, Parfen!” said the prince, with a feeling of dread.

“Water or the knife?” said the latter, at last. “Ha, ha—that’s exactly why she is going to marry me, because she knows for certain that the knife awaits her. Prince, can it be that you don’t even yet see what’s at the root of it all?”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Perhaps he really doesn’t understand me! They do say that you are a—you know what! She loves another—there, you can understand that much! Just as I love her, exactly so she loves another man. And that other man is—do you know who? It’s you. There—you didn’t know that, eh?”

“I?”

“You, you! She has loved you ever since that day, her birthday! Only she thinks she cannot marry you, because it would be the ruin of you. ‘Everybody knows what sort of a woman I am,’ she says. She told me all this herself, to my very face! She’s afraid of disgracing and ruining you, she says, but it doesn’t matter about me. She can marry me all right! Notice how much consideration she shows for me!”

“But why did she run away to me, and then again from me to—”

“From you to me? Ha, ha! that’s nothing! Why, she always acts as though she were in a delirium now-a-days! Either she says, ‘Come on, I’ll marry you! Let’s have the wedding quickly!’ and fixes the day, and seems in a hurry for it, and when it begins to come near she feels frightened; or else some other idea gets into her head—goodness knows! you’ve seen her—you know how she goes on—laughing and crying and raving! There’s nothing extraordinary about her having run away from you! She ran away because she found out how dearly she loved you. She could not bear to be near you. You said just now that I had found her at Moscow, when she ran away from you. I didn’t do anything of the sort; she came to me herself, straight from you. ‘Name the day—I’m ready!’ she said. ‘Let’s have some champagne, and go and hear the gipsies sing!’ I tell you she’d have thrown herself into the water long ago if it were not for me!

She doesn't do it because I am, perhaps, even more dreadful to her than the water! She's marrying me out of spite; if she marries me, I tell you, it will be for spite!"

"But how do you, how can you—" began the prince, gazing with dread and horror at Rogojin.

"Why don't you finish your sentence? Shall I tell you what you were thinking to yourself just then? You were thinking, 'How can she marry him after this? How can it possibly be permitted?' Oh, I know what you were thinking about!"

"I didn't come here for that purpose, Parfen. That was not in my mind—"

"That may be! Perhaps you didn't COME with the idea, but the idea is certainly there NOW! Ha, ha! well, that's enough! What are you upset about? Didn't you really know it all before? You astonish me!"

"All this is mere jealousy—it is some malady of yours, Parfen! You exaggerate everything," said the prince, excessively agitated. "What are you doing?"

"Let go of it!" said Parfen, seizing from the prince's hand a knife which the latter had at that moment taken up from the table, where it lay beside the history. Parfen replaced it where it had been.

"I seemed to know it—I felt it, when I was coming back to Petersburg," continued the prince, "I did not want to come, I wished to forget all this, to uproot it from my memory altogether! Well, good-bye—what is the matter?"

He had absently taken up the knife a second time, and again Rogojin snatched it from his hand, and threw it down on the table. It was a plainlooking knife, with a bone handle, a blade about eight inches long, and broad in proportion, it did not clasp.

Seeing that the prince was considerably struck by the fact that he had twice seized this knife out of his hand, Rogojin caught it up with some irritation, put it inside the book, and threw the latter across to another table.

"Do you cut your pages with it, or what?" asked Muishkin, still rather absently, as though unable to throw off a deep preoccupation into which the conversation had thrown him.

"Yes."

"It's a garden knife, isn't it?"

"Yes. Can't one cut pages with a garden knife?"

"It's quite new."

"Well, what of that? Can't I buy a new knife if I like?" shouted Rogojin furiously, his irritation growing with every word.

The prince shuddered, and gazed fixedly at Parfen. Suddenly he burst out laughing.

"Why, what an idea!" he said. "I didn't mean to ask you any of these questions; I was thinking of something quite different! But my head is heavy, and I seem so absent-minded nowadays! Well, good-bye—I can't remember what I wanted to say—good-bye!"

"Not that way," said Rogojin.

"There, I've forgotten that too!"

"This way—come along—I'll show you."

IV.

THEY passed through the same rooms which the prince had traversed on his arrival. In the largest there were pictures on the walls, portraits and landscapes of little interest. Over the door, however, there was one of strange and rather striking shape; it was six or seven feet in length, and not more than a foot in height. It represented the Saviour just taken from the cross.

The prince glanced at it, but took no further notice. He moved on hastily, as though anxious to get out of the house. But Rogojin suddenly stopped underneath the picture.

"My father picked up all these pictures very cheap at auctions, and so on," he said; "they are all rubbish, except the one over the door, and that is valuable. A man offered five hundred roubles for it last week."

"Yes—that's a copy of a Holbein," said the prince, looking at it again, "and a good copy, too, so far as I am able to judge. I saw the picture abroad, and could not forget it—what's the matter?"

Rogojin had dropped the subject of the picture and walked on. Of course his strange frame of mind was sufficient to account for his conduct; but, still, it seemed queer to the prince that he should so abruptly drop a conversation commenced by himself. Rogojin did not take any notice of his question.

"Lef Nicolaievitch," said Rogojin, after a pause, during which the two walked along a little further, "I have long wished to ask you, do you believe in God?"

"How strangely you speak, and how odd you look!" said the other, involuntarily.

"I like looking at that picture," muttered Rogojin, not noticing, apparently, that the prince had not answered his question.

"That picture! That picture!" cried Muishkin, struck by a sudden idea. "Why, a man's faith might be ruined by looking at that picture!"

"So it is!" said Rogojin, unexpectedly. They had now reached the front door.

The prince stopped.

"How?" he said. "What do you mean? I was half joking, and you took me up quite seriously! Why do you ask me whether I believe in God?"

"Oh, no particular reason. I meant to ask you before—many people are unbelievers nowadays, especially Russians, I have been told. You ought to know—you've lived abroad."

Rogojin laughed bitterly as he said these words, and opening the door, held it for the prince to pass out. Muishkin looked surprised, but went out. The other followed him as far as the landing of the outer stairs, and shut the door behind him. They both now stood facing one another, as though oblivious of where they were, or what they had to do next.

"Well, good-bye!" said the prince, holding out his hand.

"Good-bye," said Rogojin, pressing it hard, but quite mechanically.

The prince made one step forward, and then turned round.

“As to faith,” he said, smiling, and evidently unwilling to leave Rogojin in this state—“as to faith, I had four curious conversations in two days, a week or so ago. One morning I met a man in the train, and made acquaintance with him at once. I had often heard of him as a very learned man, but an atheist; and I was very glad of the opportunity of conversing with so eminent and clever a person. He doesn’t believe in God, and he talked a good deal about it, but all the while it appeared to me that he was speaking OUTSIDE THE SUBJECT. And it has always struck me, both in speaking to such men and in reading their books, that they do not seem really to be touching on that at all, though on the surface they may appear to do so. I told him this, but I dare say I did not clearly express what I meant, for he could not understand me.

“That same evening I stopped at a small provincial hotel, and it so happened that a dreadful murder had been committed there the night before, and everybody was talking about it. Two peasants—elderly men and old friends—had had tea together there the night before, and were to occupy the same bedroom. They were not drunk but one of them had noticed for the first time that his friend possessed a silver watch which he was wearing on a chain. He was by no means a thief, and was, as peasants go, a rich man; but this watch so fascinated him that he could not restrain himself. He took a knife, and when his friend turned his back, he came up softly behind, raised his eyes to heaven, crossed himself, and saying earnestly—‘God forgive me, for Christ’s sake!’ he cut his friend’s throat like a sheep, and took the watch.”

Rogojin roared with laughter. He laughed as though he were in a sort of fit. It was strange to see him laughing so after the sombre mood he had been in just before.

“Oh, I like that! That beats anything!” he cried convulsively, panting for breath. “One is an absolute unbeliever; the other is such a thorough—going believer that he murders his friend to the tune of a prayer! Oh, prince, prince, that’s too good for anything! You can’t have invented it. It’s the best thing I’ve heard!”

“Next morning I went out for a stroll through the town,” continued the prince, so soon as Rogojin was a little quieter, though his laughter still burst out at intervals, “and soon observed a drunken-looking soldier staggering about the pavement. He came up to me and said, ‘Buy my silver cross, sir! You shall have it for fourpence—it’s real silver.’ I looked, and there he held a cross, just taken off his own neck, evidently, a large tin one, made after the Byzantine pattern. I fished out fourpence, and put his cross on my own neck, and I could see by his face that he was as pleased as he could be at the thought that he had succeeded in cheating a foolish gentleman, and away he went to drink the value of his cross. At that time everything that I saw made a tremendous impression upon me. I had understood nothing about Russia before, and had only vague and fantastic memories of it. So I thought, ‘I will wait awhile before I condemn this Judas. Only God knows what may be hidden in the hearts of drunkards.’

“Well, I went homewards, and near the hotel I came across a poor woman, carrying a child—a baby of some six weeks old. The mother was quite a girl herself. The baby was smiling up at her, for the first time in its life, just at that moment; and while I

watched the woman she suddenly crossed herself, oh, so devoutly! 'What is it, my good woman I asked her. (I was never but asking questions then!) Exactly as is a mother's joy when her baby smiles for the first time into her eyes, so is God's joy when one of His children turns and prays to Him for the first time, with all his heart!' This is what that poor woman said to me, almost word for word; and such a deep, refined, truly religious thought it was—a thought in which the whole essence of Christianity was expressed in one flash—that is, the recognition of God as our Father, and of God's joy in men as His own children, which is the chief idea of Christ. She was a simple country-woman—a mother, it's true— and perhaps, who knows, she may have been the wife of the drunken soldier!

"Listen, Parfen; you put a question to me just now. This is my reply. The essence of religious feeling has nothing to do with reason, or atheism, or crime, or acts of any kind—it has nothing to do with these things—and never had. There is something besides all this, something which the arguments of the atheists can never touch. But the principal thing, and the conclusion of my argument, is that this is most clearly seen in the heart of a Russian. This is a conviction which I have gained while I have been in this Russia of ours. Yes, Parfen! there is work to be done; there is work to be done in this Russian world! Remember what talks we used to have in Moscow! And I never wished to come here at all; and I never thought to meet you like this, Parfen! Well, well—good-bye—good-bye! God be with you!"

He turned and went downstairs.

"Lef Nicolaievitch!" cried Parfen, before he had reached the next landing. "Have you got that cross you bought from the soldier with you?"

"Yes, I have," and the prince stopped again.

"Show it me, will you?"

A new fancy! The prince reflected, and then mounted the stairs once more. He pulled out the cross without taking it off his neck.

"Give it to me," said Parfen.

"Why? do you—"

The prince would rather have kept this particular cross.

"I'll wear it; and you shall have mine. I'll take it off at once."

"You wish to exchange crosses? Very well, Parfen, if that's the case, I'm glad enough—that makes us brothers, you know."

The prince took off his tin cross, Parfen his gold one, and the exchange was made.

Parfen was silent. With sad surprise the prince observed that the look of distrust, the bitter, ironical smile, had still not altogether left his newly-adopted brother's face. At moments, at all events, it showed itself but too plainly,

At last Rogojin took the prince's hand, and stood so for some moments, as though he could not make up his mind. Then he drew him along, murmuring almost inaudibly,

"Come!"

They stopped on the landing, and rang the bell at a door opposite to Parfen's own lodging.

An old woman opened to them and bowed low to Parfen, who asked her some questions hurriedly, but did not wait to hear her answer. He led the prince on through several dark, cold-looking rooms, spotlessly clean, with white covers over all the furniture.

Without the ceremony of knocking, Parfen entered a small apartment, furnished like a drawing-room, but with a polished mahogany partition dividing one half of it from what was probably a bedroom. In one corner of this room sat an old woman in an arm-chair, close to the stove. She did not look very old, and her face was a pleasant, round one; but she was white-haired and, as one could detect at the first glance, quite in her second childhood. She wore a black woollen dress, with a black handkerchief round her neck and shoulders, and a white cap with black ribbons. Her feet were raised on a footstool. Beside her sat another old woman, also dressed in mourning, and silently knitting a stocking; this was evidently a companion. They both looked as though they never broke the silence. The first old woman, so soon as she saw Rogojin and the prince, smiled and bowed courteously several times, in token of her gratification at their visit.

“Mother,” said Rogojin, kissing her hand, “here is my great friend, Prince Muishkin; we have exchanged crosses; he was like a real brother to me at Moscow at one time, and did a great deal for me. Bless him, mother, as you would bless your own son. Wait a moment, let me arrange your hands for you.”

But the old lady, before Parfen had time to touch her, raised her right hand, and, with three fingers held up, devoutly made the sign of the cross three times over the prince. She then nodded her head kindly at him once more.

“There, come along, Lef Nicolaievitch; that’s all I brought you here for,” said Rogojin.

When they reached the stairs again he added:

“She understood nothing of what I said to her, and did not know what I wanted her to do, and yet she blessed you; that shows she wished to do so herself. Well, goodbye; it’s time you went, and I must go too.”

He opened his own door.

“Well, let me at least embrace you and say goodbye, you strange fellow!” cried the prince, looking with gentle reproach at Rogojin, and advancing towards him. But the latter had hardly raised his arms when he dropped them again. He could not make up his mind to it; he turned away from the prince in order to avoid looking at him. He could not embrace him.

“Don’t be afraid,” he muttered, indistinctly, “though I have taken your cross, I shall not murder you for your watch.” So saying, he laughed suddenly, and strangely. Then in a moment his face became transfigured; he grew deadly white, his lips trembled, his eyes burned like fire. He stretched out his arms and held the prince tightly to him, and said in a strangled voice:

“Well, take her! It’s Fate! She’s yours. I surrender her.... Remember Rogojin!” And pushing the prince from him, without looking back at him, he hurriedly entered his own flat, and banged the door.

V.

IT was late now, nearly half-past two, and the prince did not find General Epanchin at home. He left a card, and determined to look up Colia, who had a room at a small hotel near. Colia was not in, but he was informed that he might be back shortly, and had left word that if he were not in by half-past three it was to be understood that he had gone to Pavlofsk to General Epanchin's, and would dine there. The prince decided to wait till half-past three, and ordered some dinner. At half-past three there was no sign of Colia. The prince waited until four o'clock, and then strolled off mechanically wherever his feet should carry him.

In early summer there are often magnificent days in St. Petersburg—bright, hot and still. This happened to be such a day.

For some time the prince wandered about without aim or object. He did not know the town well. He stopped to look about him on bridges, at street corners. He entered a confectioner's shop to rest, once. He was in a state of nervous excitement and perturbation; he noticed nothing and no one; and he felt a craving for solitude, to be alone with his thoughts and his emotions, and to give himself up to them passively. He loathed the idea of trying to answer the questions that would rise up in his heart and mind. "I am not to blame for all this," he thought to himself, half unconsciously.

Towards six o'clock he found himself at the station of the Tsarsko-Selski railway.

He was tired of solitude now; a new rush of feeling took hold of him, and a flood of light chased away the gloom, for a moment, from his soul. He took a ticket to Pavlofsk, and determined to get there as fast as he could, but something stopped him; a reality, and not a fantasy, as he was inclined to think it. He was about to take his place in a carriage, when he suddenly threw away his ticket and came out again, disturbed and thoughtful. A few moments later, in the street, he recalled something that had bothered him all the afternoon. He caught himself engaged in a strange occupation which he now recollected he had taken up at odd moments for the last few hours—it was looking about all around him for something, he did not know what. He had forgotten it for a while, half an hour or so, and now, suddenly, the uneasy search had recommenced.

But he had hardly become conscious of this curious phenomenon, when another recollection suddenly swam through his brain, interesting him for the moment, exceedingly. He remembered that the last time he had been engaged in looking around him for the unknown something, he was standing before a cutler's shop, in the window of which were exposed certain goods for sale. He was extremely anxious now to discover whether this shop and these goods really existed, or whether the whole thing had been a hallucination.

He felt in a very curious condition today, a condition similar to that which had preceded his fits in bygone years.

He remembered that at such times he had been particularly absentminded, and could not discriminate between objects and persons unless he concentrated special attention upon them.

He remembered seeing something in the window marked at sixty copecks. Therefore, if the shop existed and if this object were really in the window, it would prove that he had been able to concentrate his attention on this article at a moment when, as a general rule, his absence of mind would have been too great to admit of any such concentration; in fact, very shortly after he had left the railway station in such a state of agitation.

So he walked back looking about him for the shop, and his heart beat with intolerable impatience. Ah! here was the very shop, and there was the article marked 60 cop." "Of course, it's sixty copecks," he thought, and certainly worth no more." This idea amused him and he laughed.

But it was a hysterical laugh; he was feeling terribly oppressed. He remembered clearly that just here, standing before this window, he had suddenly turned round, just as earlier in the day he had turned and found the dreadful eyes of Rogojin fixed upon him. Convinced, therefore, that in this respect at all events he had been under no delusion, he left the shop and went on.

This must be thought out; it was clear that there had been no hallucination at the station then, either; something had actually happened to him, on both occasions; there was no doubt of it. But again a loathing for all mental exertion overmastered him; he would not think it out now, he would put it off and think of something else. He remembered that during his epileptic fits, or rather immediately preceding them, he had always experienced a moment or two when his whole heart, and mind, and body seemed to wake up to vigour and light; when he became filled with joy and hope, and all his anxieties seemed to be swept away for ever; these moments were but presentiments, as it were, of the one final second (it was never more than a second) in which the fit came upon him. That second, of course, was inexpressible. When his attack was over, and the prince reflected on his symptoms, he used to say to himself: "These moments, short as they are, when I feel such extreme consciousness of myself, and consequently more of life than at other times, are due only to the disease—to the sudden rupture of normal conditions. Therefore they are not really a higher kind of life, but a lower." This reasoning, however, seemed to end in a paradox, and lead to the further consideration:—"What matter though it be only disease, an abnormal tension of the brain, if when I recall and analyze the moment, it seems to have been one of harmony and beauty in the highest degree—an instant of deepest sensation, overflowing with unbounded joy and rapture, ecstatic devotion, and completest life?" Vague though this sounds, it was perfectly comprehensible to Muishkin, though he knew that it was but a feeble expression of his sensations.

That there was, indeed, beauty and harmony in those abnormal moments, that they really contained the highest synthesis of life, he could not doubt, nor even admit the possibility of doubt. He felt that they were not analogous to the fantastic and unreal

dreams due to intoxication by hashish, opium or wine. Of that he could judge, when the attack was over. These instants were characterized—to define it in a word—by an intense quickening of the sense of personality. Since, in the last conscious moment preceding the attack, he could say to himself, with full understanding of his words: “I would give my whole life for this one instant,” then doubtless to him it really was worth a lifetime. For the rest, he thought the dialectical part of his argument of little worth; he saw only too clearly that the result of these ecstatic moments was stupefaction, mental darkness, idiocy. No argument was possible on that point. His conclusion, his estimate of the “moment,” doubtless contained some error, yet the reality of the sensation troubled him. What’s more unanswerable than a fact? And this fact had occurred. The prince had confessed unreservedly to himself that the feeling of intense beatitude in that crowded moment made the moment worth a lifetime. “I feel then,” he said one day to Rogojin in Moscow, “I feel then as if I understood those amazing words—‘There shall be no more time.’” And he added with a smile: “No doubt the epileptic Mahomet refers to that same moment when he says that he visited all the dwellings of Allah, in less time than was needed to empty his pitcher of water.” Yes, he had often met Rogojin in Moscow, and many were the subjects they discussed. “He told me I had been a brother to him,” thought the prince. “He said so today, for the first time.”

He was sitting in the Summer Garden on a seat under a tree, and his mind dwelt on the matter. It was about seven o’clock, and the place was empty. The stifling atmosphere foretold a storm, and the prince felt a certain charm in the contemplative mood which possessed him. He found pleasure, too, in gazing at the exterior objects around him. All the time he was trying to forget some thing, to escape from some idea that haunted him; but melancholy thoughts came back, though he would so willingly have escaped from them. He remembered suddenly how he had been talking to the waiter, while he dined, about a recently committed murder which the whole town was discussing, and as he thought of it something strange came over him. He was seized all at once by a violent desire, almost a temptation, against which he strove in vain.

He jumped up and walked off as fast as he could towards the “Petersburg Side.” [One of the quarters of St. Petersburg.] He had asked someone, a little while before, to show him which was the Petersburg Side, on the banks of the Neva. He had not gone there, however; and he knew very well that it was of no use to go now, for he would certainly not find Lebedeff’s relation at home. He had the address, but she must certainly have gone to Pavlofsk, or Colia would have let him know. If he were to go now, it would merely be out of curiosity, but a sudden, new idea had come into his head.

However, it was something to move on and know where he was going. A minute later he was still moving on, but without knowing anything. He could no longer think out his new idea. He tried to take an interest in all he saw; in the sky, in the Neva. He spoke to some children he met. He felt his epileptic condition becoming more and more developed. The evening was very close; thunder was heard some way off.

The prince was haunted all that day by the face of Lebedeff's nephew whom he had seen for the first time that morning, just as one is haunted at times by some persistent musical refrain. By a curious association of ideas, the young man always appeared as the murderer of whom Lebedeff had spoken when introducing him to Muishkin. Yes, he had read something about the murder, and that quite recently. Since he came to Russia, he had heard many stories of this kind, and was interested in them. His conversation with the waiter, an hour ago, chanced to be on the subject of this murder of the Zemarins, and the latter had agreed with him about it. He thought of the waiter again, and decided that he was no fool, but a steady, intelligent man: though, said he to himself, "God knows what he may really be; in a country with which one is unfamiliar it is difficult to understand the people one meets." He was beginning to have a passionate faith in the Russian soul, however, and what discoveries he had made in the last six months, what unexpected discoveries! But every soul is a mystery, and depths of mystery lie in the soul of a Russian. He had been intimate with Rogojin, for example, and a brotherly friendship had sprung up between them—yet did he really know him? What chaos and ugliness fills the world at times! What a self-satisfied rascal is that nephew of Lebedeff's! "But what am I thinking," continued the prince to himself. "Can he really have committed that crime? Did he kill those six persons? I seem to be confusing things ... how strange it all is... My head goes round... And Lebedeff's daughter—how sympathetic and charming her face was as she held the child in her arms! What an innocent look and child-like laugh she had! It is curious that I had forgotten her until now. I expect Lebedeff adores her—and I really believe, when I think of it, that as sure as two and two make four, he is fond of that nephew, too!"

Well, why should he judge them so hastily! Could he really say what they were, after one short visit? Even Lebedeff seemed an enigma today. Did he expect to find him so? He had never seen him like that before. Lebedeff and the Comtesse du Barry! Good Heavens! If Rogojin should really kill someone, it would not, at any rate, be such a senseless, chaotic affair. A knife made to a special pattern, and six people killed in a kind of delirium. But Rogojin also had a knife made to a special pattern. Can it be that Rogojin wishes to murder anyone? The prince began to tremble violently. "It is a crime on my part to imagine anything so base, with such cynical frankness." His face reddened with shame at the thought; and then there came across him as in a flash the memory of the incidents at the Pavlofsk station, and at the other station in the morning; and the question asked him by Rogojin about THE EYES and Rogojin's cross, that he was even now wearing; and the benediction of Rogojin's mother; and his embrace on the darkened staircase—that last supreme renunciation—and now, to find himself full of this new "idea," staring into shop-windows, and looking round for things—how base he was!

Despair overmastered his soul; he would not go on, he would go back to his hotel; he even turned and went the other way; but a moment after he changed his mind again and went on in the old direction.

Why, here he was on the Petersburg Side already, quite close to the house! Where was his "idea"? He was marching along without it now. Yes, his malady was coming back, it was clear enough; all this gloom and heaviness, all these "ideas," were nothing more nor less than a fit coming on; perhaps he would have a fit this very day.

But just now all the gloom and darkness had fled, his heart felt full of joy and hope, there was no such thing as doubt. And yes, he hadn't seen her for so long; he really must see her. He wished he could meet Rogojin; he would take his hand, and they would go to her together. His heart was pure, he was no rival of Parfen's. Tomorrow, he would go and tell him that he had seen her. Why, he had only come for the sole purpose of seeing her, all the way from Moscow! Perhaps she might be here still, who knows? She might not have gone away to Pavlofsk yet.

Yes, all this must be put straight and above-board, there must be no more passionate renouncements, such as Rogojin's. It must all be clear as day. Cannot Rogojin's soul bear the light? He said he did not love her with sympathy and pity; true, he added that "your pity is greater than my love," but he was not quite fair on himself there. Kin! Rogojin reading a book—wasn't that sympathy beginning? Did it not show that he comprehended his relations with her? And his story of waiting day and night for her forgiveness? That didn't look quite like passion alone.

And as to her face, could it inspire nothing but passion? Could her face inspire passion at all now? Oh, it inspired suffering, grief, overwhelming grief of the soul! A poignant, agonizing memory swept over the prince's heart.

Yes, agonizing. He remembered how he had suffered that first day when he thought he observed in her the symptoms of madness. He had almost fallen into despair. How could he have lost his hold upon her when she ran away from him to Rogojin? He ought to have run after her himself, rather than wait for news as he had done. Can Rogojin have failed to observe, up to now, that she is mad? Rogojin attributes her strangeness to other causes, to passion! What insane jealousy! What was it he had hinted at in that suggestion of his? The prince suddenly blushed, and shuddered to his very heart.

But why recall all this? There was insanity on both sides. For him, the prince, to love this woman with passion, was unthinkable. It would be cruel and inhuman. Yes. Rogojin is not fair to himself; he has a large heart; he has aptitude for sympathy. When he learns the truth, and finds what a pitiable being is this injured, broken, half-insane creature, he will forgive her all the torment she has caused him. He will become her slave, her brother, her friend. Compassion will teach even Rogojin, it will show him how to reason. Compassion is the chief law of human existence. Oh, how guilty he felt towards Rogojin! And, for a few warm, hasty words spoken in Moscow, Parfen had called him "brother," while he—but no, this was delirium! It would all come right! That gloomy Parfen had implied that his faith was waning; he must suffer dreadfully. He said he liked to look at that picture; it was not that he liked it, but he felt the need of looking at it. Rogojin was not merely a passionate soul; he was a fighter. He was fighting for the restoration of his dying faith. He must have something to hold on to

and believe, and someone to believe in. What a strange picture that of Holbein's is! Why, this is the street, and here's the house, No. 16.

The prince rang the bell, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna. The lady of the house came out, and stated that Nastasia had gone to stay with Daria Alexeyevna at Pavlofsk, and might be there some days.

Madame Filisoff was a little woman of forty, with a cunning face, and crafty, piercing eyes. When, with an air of mystery, she asked her visitor's name, he refused at first to answer, but in a moment he changed his mind, and left strict instructions that it should be given to Nastasia Philipovna. The urgency of his request seemed to impress Madame Filisoff, and she put on a knowing expression, as if to say, "You need not be afraid, I quite understand." The prince's name evidently was a great surprise to her. He stood and looked absently at her for a moment, then turned, and took the road back to his hotel. But he went away not as he came. A great change had suddenly come over him. He went blindly forward; his knees shook under him; he was tormented by "ideas"; his lips were blue, and trembled with a feeble, meaningless smile. His demon was upon him once more.

What had happened to him? Why was his brow clammy with drops of moisture, his knees shaking beneath him, and his soul oppressed with a cold gloom? Was it because he had just seen these dreadful eyes again? Why, he had left the Summer Garden on purpose to see them; that had been his "idea." He had wished to assure himself that he would see them once more at that house. Then why was he so overwhelmed now, having seen them as he expected? just as though he had not expected to see them! Yes, they were the very same eyes; and no doubt about it. The same that he had seen in the crowd that morning at the station, the same that he had surprised in Rogojin's rooms some hours later, when the latter had replied to his inquiry with a sneering laugh, "Well, whose eyes were they?" Then for the third time they had appeared just as he was getting into the train on his way to see Aglaya. He had had a strong impulse to rush up to Rogojin, and repeat his words of the morning "Whose eyes are they?" Instead he had fled from the station, and knew nothing more, until he found himself gazing into the window of a cutler's shop, and wondering if a knife with a staghorn handle would cost more than sixty copecks. And as the prince sat dreaming in the Summer Garden under a lime-tree, a wicked demon had come and whispered in his ear: "Rogojin has been spying upon you and watching you all the morning in a frenzy of desperation. When he finds you have not gone to Pavlofsk—a terrible discovery for him—he will surely go at once to that house in Petersburg Side, and watch for you there, although only this morning you gave your word of honour not to see HER, and swore that you had not come to Petersburg for that purpose." And thereupon the prince had hastened off to that house, and what was there in the fact that he had met Rogojin there? He had only seen a wretched, suffering creature, whose state of mind was gloomy and miserable, but most comprehensible. In the morning Rogojin had seemed to be trying to keep out of the way; but at the station this afternoon he had stood out, he had concealed himself, indeed, less than the prince himself; at the

house, now, he had stood fifty yards off on the other side of the road, with folded hands, watching, plainly in view and apparently desirous of being seen. He had stood there like an accuser, like a judge, not like a—a what?

And why had not the prince approached him and spoken to him, instead of turning away and pretending he had seen nothing, although their eyes met? (Yes, their eyes had met, and they had looked at each other.) Why, he had himself wished to take Rogojin by the hand and go in together, he had himself determined to go to him on the morrow and tell him that he had seen her, he had repudiated the demon as he walked to the house, and his heart had been full of joy.

Was there something in the whole aspect of the man, today, sufficient to justify the prince's terror, and the awful suspicions of his demon? Something seen, but indescribable, which filled him with dreadful presentiments? Yes, he was convinced of it—convinced of what? (Oh, how mean and hideous of him to feel this conviction, this presentiment! How he blamed himself for it!) "Speak if you dare, and tell me, what is the presentiment?" he repeated to himself, over and over again. "Put it into words, speak out clearly and distinctly. Oh, miserable coward that I am!" The prince flushed with shame for his own baseness. "How shall I ever look this man in the face again? My God, what a day! And what a nightmare, what a nightmare!"

There was a moment, during this long, wretched walk back from the Petersburg Side, when the prince felt an irresistible desire to go straight to Rogojin's, wait for him, embrace him with tears of shame and contrition, and tell him of his distrust, and finish with it—once for all.

But here he was back at his hotel.

How often during the day he had thought of this hotel with loathing—its corridor, its rooms, its stairs. How he had dreaded coming back to it, for some reason.

"What a regular old woman I am today," he had said to himself each time, with annoyance. "I believe in every foolish presentiment that comes into my head."

He stopped for a moment at the door; a great flush of shame came over him. "I am a coward, a wretched coward," he said, and moved forward again; but once more he paused.

Among all the incidents of the day, one recurred to his mind to the exclusion of the rest; although now that his self-control was regained, and he was no longer under the influence of a nightmare, he was able to think of it calmly. It concerned the knife on Rogojin's table. "Why should not Rogojin have as many knives on his table as he chooses?" thought the prince, wondering at his suspicions, as he had done when he found himself looking into the cutler's window. "What could it have to do with me?" he said to himself again, and stopped as if rooted to the ground by a kind of paralysis of limb such as attacks people under the stress of some humiliating recollection.

The doorway was dark and gloomy at any time; but just at this moment it was rendered doubly so by the fact that the thunder-storm had just broken, and the rain was coming down in torrents.

And in the semi-darkness the prince distinguished a man standing close to the stairs, apparently waiting.

There was nothing particularly significant in the fact that a man was standing back in the doorway, waiting to come out or go upstairs; but the prince felt an irresistible conviction that he knew this man, and that it was Rogojin. The man moved on up the stairs; a moment later the prince passed up them, too. His heart froze within him. "In a minute or two I shall know all," he thought.

The staircase led to the first and second corridors of the hotel, along which lay the guests' bedrooms. As is often the case in Petersburg houses, it was narrow and very dark, and turned around a massive stone column.

On the first landing, which was as small as the necessary turn of the stairs allowed, there was a niche in the column, about half a yard wide, and in this niche the prince felt convinced that a man stood concealed. He thought he could distinguish a figure standing there. He would pass by quickly and not look. He took a step forward, but could bear the uncertainty no longer and turned his head.

The eyes—the same two eyes—met his! The man concealed in the niche had also taken a step forward. For one second they stood face to face.

Suddenly the prince caught the man by the shoulder and twisted him round towards the light, so that he might see his face more clearly.

Rogojin's eyes flashed, and a smile of insanity distorted his countenance. His right hand was raised, and something glittered in it. The prince did not think of trying to stop it. All he could remember afterwards was that he seemed to have called out:

"Parfen! I won't believe it."

Next moment something appeared to burst open before him: a wonderful inner light illuminated his soul. This lasted perhaps half a second, yet he distinctly remembered hearing the beginning of the wail, the strange, dreadful wail, which burst from his lips of its own accord, and which no effort of will on his part could suppress.

Next moment he was absolutely unconscious; black darkness blotted out everything. He had fallen in an epileptic fit.

.... .

As is well known, these fits occur instantaneously. The face, especially the eyes, become terribly disfigured, convulsions seize the limbs, a terrible cry breaks from the sufferer, a wail from which everything human seems to be blotted out, so that it is impossible to believe that the man who has just fallen is the same who emitted the dreadful cry. It seems more as though some other being, inside the stricken one, had cried. Many people have borne witness to this impression; and many cannot behold an epileptic fit without a feeling of mysterious terror and dread.

Such a feeling, we must suppose, overtook Rogojin at this moment, and saved the prince's life. Not knowing that it was a fit, and seeing his victim disappear head foremost into the darkness, hearing his head strike the stone steps below with a crash, Rogojin rushed downstairs, skirting the body, and flung himself headlong out of the hotel, like a raving madman.

The prince's body slipped convulsively down the steps till it rested at the bottom. Very soon, in five minutes or so, he was discovered, and a crowd collected around him.

A pool of blood on the steps near his head gave rise to grave fears. Was it a case of accident, or had there been a crime? It was, however, soon recognized as a case of epilepsy, and identification and proper measures for restoration followed one another, owing to a fortunate circumstance. Colia Ivolgin had come back to his hotel about seven o'clock, owing to a sudden impulse which made him refuse to dine at the Epanchins', and, finding a note from the prince awaiting him, had sped away to the latter's address. Arrived there, he ordered a cup of tea and sat sipping it in the coffee-room. While there he heard excited whispers of someone just found at the bottom of the stairs in a fit; upon which he had hurried to the spot, with a presentiment of evil, and at once recognized the prince.

The sufferer was immediately taken to his room, and though he partially regained consciousness, he lay long in a semi-dazed condition.

The doctor stated that there was no danger to be apprehended from the wound on the head, and as soon as the prince could understand what was going on around him, Colia hired a carriage and took him away to Lebedeff's. There he was received with much cordiality, and the departure to the country was hastened on his account. Three days later they were all at Pavlofsk.

VI.

LEBEDEFF'S country-house was not large, but it was pretty and convenient, especially the part which was let to the prince.

A row of orange and lemon trees and jasmines, planted in green tubs, stood on the fairly wide terrace. According to Lebedeff, these trees gave the house a most delightful aspect. Some were there when he bought it, and he was so charmed with the effect that he promptly added to their number. When the tubs containing these plants arrived at the villa and were set in their places, Lebedeff kept running into the street to enjoy the view of the house, and every time he did so the rent to be demanded from the future tenant went up with a bound.

This country villa pleased the prince very much in his state of physical and mental exhaustion. On the day that they left for Pavlofsk, that is the day after his attack, he appeared almost well, though in reality he felt very far from it. The faces of those around him for the last three days had made a pleasant impression. He was pleased to see, not only Colia, who had become his inseparable companion, but Lebedeff himself and all the family, except the nephew, who had left the house. He was also glad to receive a visit from General Ivolgin, before leaving St. Petersburg.

It was getting late when the party arrived at Pavlofsk, but several people called to see the prince, and assembled in the verandah. Gania was the first to arrive. He had grown so pale and thin that the prince could hardly recognize him. Then came

Varia and Ptitsin, who were rustivating in the neighbourhood. As to General Ivolgin, he scarcely budged from Lebedeff's house, and seemed to have moved to Pavlofsk with him. Lebedeff did his best to keep Ardalion Alexandrovitch by him, and to prevent him from invading the prince's quarters. He chatted with him confidentially, so that they might have been taken for old friends. During those three days the prince had noticed that they frequently held long conversations; he often heard their voices raised in argument on deep and learned subjects, which evidently pleased Lebedeff. He seemed as if he could not do without the general. But it was not only Ardalion Alexandrovitch whom Lebedeff kept out of the prince's way. Since they had come to the villa, he treated his own family the same. Upon the pretext that his tenant needed quiet, he kept him almost in isolation, and Muishkin protested in vain against this excess of zeal. Lebedeff stamped his feet at his daughters and drove them away if they attempted to join the prince on the terrace; not even Vera was excepted.

"They will lose all respect if they are allowed to be so free and easy; besides it is not proper for them," he declared at last, in answer to a direct question from the prince.

"Why on earth not?" asked the latter. "Really, you know, you are making yourself a nuisance, by keeping guard over me like this. I get bored all by myself; I have told you so over and over again, and you get on my nerves more than ever by waving your hands and creeping in and out in the mysterious way you do."

It was a fact that Lebedeff, though he was so anxious to keep everyone else from disturbing the patient, was continually in and out of the prince's room himself. He invariably began by opening the door a crack and peering in to see if the prince was there, or if he had escaped; then he would creep softly up to the arm-chair, sometimes making Muishkin jump by his sudden appearance. He always asked if the patient wanted anything, and when the latter replied that he only wanted to be left in peace, he would turn away obediently and make for the door on tip-toe, with deprecatory gestures to imply that he had only just looked in, that he would not speak a word, and would go away and not intrude again; which did not prevent him from reappearing in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Colia had free access to the prince, at which Lebedeff was quite disgusted and indignant. He would listen at the door for half an hour at a time while the two were talking. Colia found this out, and naturally told the prince of his discovery.

"Do you think yourself my master, that you try to keep me under lock and key like this?" said the prince to Lebedeff. "In the country, at least, I intend to be free, and you may make up your mind that I mean to see whom I like, and go where I please."

"Why, of course," replied the clerk, gesticulating with his hands.

The prince looked him sternly up and down.

"Well, Lukian Timofeyovitch, have you brought the little cupboard that you had at the head of your bed with you here?"

"No, I left it where it was."

"Impossible!"

"It cannot be moved; you would have to pull the wall down, it is so firmly fixed."

"Perhaps you have one like it here?"

"I have one that is even better, much better; that is really why I bought this house."

"Ah! What visitor did you turn away from my door, about an hour ago?"

"The-the general. I would not let him in; there is no need for him to visit you, prince... I have the deepest esteem for him, he is a—a great man. You don't believe it? Well, you will see, and yet, most excellent prince, you had much better not receive him."

"May I ask why? and also why you walk about on tiptoe and always seem as if you were going to whisper a secret in my ear whenever you come near me?"

"I am vile, vile; I know it!" cried Lebedeff, beating his breast with a contrite air. "But will not the general be too hospitable for you?"

"Too hospitable?"

"Yes. First, he proposes to come and live in my house. Well and good; but he sticks at nothing; he immediately makes himself one of the family. We have talked over our respective relations several times, and discovered that we are connected by marriage. It seems also that you are a sort of nephew on his mother's side; he was explaining it to me again only yesterday. If you are his nephew, it follows that I must also be a relation of yours, most excellent prince. Never mind about that, it is only a foible; but just now he assured me that all his life, from the day he was made an ensign to the 11th of last June, he has entertained at least two hundred guests at his table every day. Finally, he went so far as to say that they never rose from the table; they dined, supped, and had tea, for fifteen hours at a stretch. This went on for thirty years without a break; there was barely time to change the table-cloth; directly one person left, another took his place. On feast-days he entertained as many as three hundred guests, and they numbered seven hundred on the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of the Russian Empire. It amounts to a passion with him; it makes one uneasy to hear of it. It is terrible to have to entertain people who do things on such a scale. That is why I wonder whether such a man is not too hospitable for you and me."

"But you seem to be on the best of terms with him?"

"Quite fraternal—I look upon it as a joke. Let us be brothers-in-law, it is all the same to me,—rather an honour than not. But in spite of the two hundred guests and the thousandth anniversary of the Russian Empire, I can see that he is a very remarkable man. I am quite sincere. You said just now that I always looked as if I was going to tell you a secret; you are right. I have a secret to tell you: a certain person has just let me know that she is very anxious for a secret interview with you."

"Why should it be secret? Not at all; I will call on her myself tomorrow."

"No, oh no!" cried Lebedeff, waving his arms; "if she is afraid, it is not for the reason you think. By the way, do you know that the monster comes every day to inquire after your health?"

"You call him a monster so often that it makes me suspicious."

“You must have no suspicions, none whatever,” said Lebedeff quickly. “I only want you to know that the person in question is not afraid of him, but of something quite, quite different.”

“What on earth is she afraid of, then? Tell me plainly, without any more beating about the bush,” said the prince, exasperated by the other’s mysterious grimaces.

“Ah that is the secret,” said Lebedeff, with a smile.

“Whose secret?”

“Yours. You forbade me yourself to mention it before you, most excellent prince,” murmured Lebedeff. Then, satisfied that he had worked up Muishkin’s curiosity to the highest pitch, he added abruptly: “She is afraid of Aglaya Ivanovna.”

The prince frowned for a moment in silence, and then said suddenly:

“Really, Lebedeff, I must leave your house. Where are Gavril Ardalionovitch and the Ptitsins? Are they here? Have you chased them away, too?”

“They are coming, they are coming; and the general as well. I will open all the doors; I will call all my daughters, all of them, this very minute,” said Lebedeff in a low voice, thoroughly frightened, and waving his hands as he ran from door to door.

At that moment Colia appeared on the terrace; he announced that Lizabetha Prokofievna and her three daughters were close behind him.

Moved by this news, Lebedeff hurried up to the prince.

“Shall I call the Ptitsins, and Gavril Ardalionovitch? Shall I let the general in?” he asked.

“Why not? Let in anyone who wants to see me. I assure you, Lebedeff, you have misunderstood my position from the very first; you have been wrong all along. I have not the slightest reason to hide myself from anyone,” replied the prince gaily.

Seeing him laugh, Lebedeff thought fit to laugh also, and though much agitated his satisfaction was quite visible.

Colia was right; the Epanchin ladies were only a few steps behind him. As they approached the terrace other visitors appeared from Lebedeff’s side of the house—the Ptitsins, Gania, and Ardalion Alexandrovitch.

The Epanchins had only just heard of the prince’s illness and of his presence in Pavlofsk, from Colia; and up to this time had been in a state of considerable bewilderment about him. The general brought the prince’s card down from town, and Mrs. Epanchin had felt convinced that he himself would follow his card at once; she was much excited.

In vain the girls assured her that a man who had not written for six months would not be in such a dreadful hurry, and that probably he had enough to do in town without needing to bustle down to Pavlofsk to see them. Their mother was quite angry at the very idea of such a thing, and announced her absolute conviction that he would turn up the next day at latest.

So next day the prince was expected all the morning, and at dinner, tea, and supper; and when he did not appear in the evening, Mrs. Epanchin quarrelled with everyone

in the house, finding plenty of pretexts without so much as mentioning the prince's name.

On the third day there was no talk of him at all, until Aglaya remarked at dinner: "Mamma is cross because the prince hasn't turned up," to which the general replied that it was not his fault.

Mrs. Epanchin misunderstood the observation, and rising from her place she left the room in majestic wrath. In the evening, however, Colia came with the story of the prince's adventures, so far as he knew them. Mrs. Epanchin was triumphant; although Colia had to listen to a long lecture. "He idles about here the whole day long, one can't get rid of him; and then when he is wanted he does not come. He might have sent a line if he did not wish to inconvenience himself."

At the words "one can't get rid of him," Colia was very angry, and nearly flew into a rage; but he resolved to be quiet for the time and show his resentment later. If the words had been less offensive he might have forgiven them, so pleased was he to see Lizabetha Prokofievna worried and anxious about the prince's illness.

She would have insisted on sending to Petersburg at once, for a certain great medical celebrity; but her daughters dissuaded her, though they were not willing to stay behind when she at once prepared to go and visit the invalid. Aglaya, however, suggested that it was a little unceremonious to go en masse to see him.

"Very well then, stay at home," said Mrs. Epanchin, and a good thing too, for Evgenie Pavlovitch is coming down and there will be no one at home to receive him."

Of course, after this, Aglaya went with the rest. In fact, she had never had the slightest intention of doing otherwise.

Prince S., who was in the house, was requested to escort the ladies. He had been much interested when he first heard of the prince from the Epanchins. It appeared that they had known one another before, and had spent some time together in a little provincial town three months ago. Prince S. had greatly taken to him, and was delighted with the opportunity of meeting him again,

The general had not come down from town as yet, nor had Evgenie Pavlovitch arrived.

It was not more than two or three hundred yards from the Epanchins' house to Lebedeff's. The first disagreeable impression experienced by Mrs. Epanchin was to find the prince surrounded by a whole assembly of other guests—not to mention the fact that some of those present were particularly detestable in her eyes. The next annoying circumstance was when an apparently strong and healthy young fellow, well dressed, and smiling, came forward to meet her on the terrace, instead of the half-dying unfortunate whom she had expected to see.

She was astonished and vexed, and her disappointment pleased Colia immensely. Of course he could have undeceived her before she started, but the mischievous boy had been careful not to do that, foreseeing the probably laughable disgust that she would experience when she found her dear friend, the prince, in good health. Colia was indelicate enough to voice the delight he felt at his success in managing to annoy

Lizabetha Prokofievna, with whom, in spite of their really amicable relations, he was constantly sparring.

“Just wait a while, my boy!” said she; “don’t be too certain of your triumph.” And she sat down heavily, in the arm-chair pushed forward by the prince.

Lebedeff, Ptitsin, and General Ivolgin hastened to find chairs for the young ladies. Varia greeted them joyfully, and they exchanged confidences in ecstatic whispers.

“I must admit, prince, I was a little put out to see you up and about like this—I expected to find you in bed; but I give you my word, I was only annoyed for an instant, before I collected my thoughts properly. I am always wiser on second thoughts, and I dare say you are the same. I assure you I am as glad to see you well as though you were my own son,—yes, and more; and if you don’t believe me the more shame to you, and it’s not my fault. But that spiteful boy delights in playing all sorts of tricks. You are his patron, it seems. Well, I warn you that one fine morning I shall deprive myself of the pleasure of his further acquaintance.”

“What have I done wrong now?” cried Colia. “What was the good of telling you that the prince was nearly well again? You would not have believed me; it was so much more interesting to picture him on his death-bed.”

“How long do you remain here, prince?” asked Madame Epanchin.

“All the summer, and perhaps longer.”

“You are alone, aren’t you,—not married?”

“No, I’m not married!” replied the prince, smiling at the ingenuousness of this little feeler.

“Oh, you needn’t laugh! These things do happen, you know! Now then—why didn’t you come to us? We have a wing quite empty. But just as you like, of course. Do you lease it from HIM?—this fellow, I mean,” she added, nodding towards Lebedeff. “And why does he always wriggle so?”

At that moment Vera, carrying the baby in her arms as usual, came out of the house, on to the terrace. Lebedeff kept fidgeting among the chairs, and did not seem to know what to do with himself, though he had no intention of going away. He no sooner caught sight of his daughter, than he rushed in her direction, waving his arms to keep her away; he even forgot himself so far as to stamp his foot.

“Is he mad?” asked Madame Epanchin suddenly.

“No, he ...”

“Perhaps he is drunk? Your company is rather peculiar,” she added, with a glance at the other guests....

“But what a pretty girl! Who is she?”

“That is Lebedeff’s daughter—Vera Lukianovna.”

“Indeed? She looks very sweet. I should like to make her acquaintance.”

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when Lebedeff dragged Vera forward, in order to present her.

“Orphans, poor orphans!” he began in a pathetic voice.

"The child she carries is an orphan, too. She is Vera's sister, my daughter Luboff. The day this babe was born, six weeks ago, my wife died, by the will of God Almighty. ... Yes... Vera takes her mother's place, though she is but her sister... nothing more ... nothing more..."

"And you! You are nothing more than a fool, if you'll excuse me! Well! well! you know that yourself, I expect," said the lady indignantly.

Lebedeff bowed low. "It is the truth," he replied, with extreme respect.

"Oh, Mr. Lebedeff, I am told you lecture on the Apocalypse. Is it true?" asked Aglaya.

"Yes, that is so ... for the last fifteen years."

"I have heard of you, and I think read of you in the newspapers."

"No, that was another commentator, whom the papers named. He is dead, however, and I have taken his place," said the other, much delighted.

"We are neighbours, so will you be so kind as to come over one day and explain the Apocalypse to me?" said Aglaya. "I do not understand it in the least."

"Allow me to warn you," interposed General Ivolgin, that he is the greatest charlatan on earth." He had taken the chair next to the girl, and was impatient to begin talking. "No doubt there are pleasures and amusements peculiar to the country," he continued, "and to listen to a pretended student holding forth on the book of the Revelations may be as good as any other. It may even be original. But ... you seem to be looking at me with some surprise—may I introduce myself—General Ivolgin—I carried you in my arms as a baby—"

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Aglaya; "I am acquainted with Varvara Ardalionovna and Nina Alexandrovna." She was trying hard to restrain herself from laughing.

Mrs. Epanchin flushed up; some accumulation of spleen in her suddenly needed an outlet. She could not bear this General Ivolgin whom she had once known, long ago—in society.

"You are deviating from the truth, sir, as usual!" she remarked, boiling over with indignation; "you never carried her in your life!"

"You have forgotten, mother," said Aglaya, suddenly. "He really did carry me about,—in Tver, you know. I was six years old, I remember. He made me a bow and arrow, and I shot a pigeon. Don't you remember shooting a pigeon, you and I, one day?"

"Yes, and he made me a cardboard helmet, and a little wooden sword—I remember!" said Adelaida.

"Yes, I remember too!" said Alexandra. "You quarrelled about the wounded pigeon, and Adelaida was put in the corner, and stood there with her helmet and sword and all."

The poor general had merely made the remark about having carried Aglaya in his arms because he always did so begin a conversation with young people. But it happened that this time he had really hit upon the truth, though he had himself entirely forgotten the fact. But when Adelaida and Aglaya recalled the episode of the pigeon, his mind

became filled with memories, and it is impossible to describe how this poor old man, usually half drunk, was moved by the recollection.

“I remember—I remember it all!” he cried. “I was captain then. You were such a lovely little thing—Nina Alexandrovna!—Gania, listen! I was received then by General Epanchin.”

“Yes, and look what you have come to now!” interrupted Mrs. Epanchin. “However, I see you have not quite drunk your better feelings away. But you’ve broken your wife’s heart, sir—and instead of looking after your children, you have spent your time in public-houses and debtors’ prisons! Go away, my friend, stand in some corner and weep, and bemoan your fallen dignity, and perhaps God will forgive you yet! Go, go! I’m serious! There’s nothing so favourable for repentance as to think of the past with feelings of remorse!”

There was no need to repeat that she was serious. The general, like all drunkards, was extremely emotional and easily touched by recollections of his better days. He rose and walked quietly to the door, so meekly that Mrs. Epanchin was instantly sorry for him.

“Ardalion Alexandrovitch,” she cried after him, “wait a moment, we are all sinners! When you feel that your conscience reproaches you a little less, come over to me and we’ll have a talk about the past! I dare say I am fifty times more of a sinner than you are! And now go, go, good-bye, you had better not stay here!” she added, in alarm, as he turned as though to come back.

“Don’t go after him just now, Colia, or he’ll be vexed, and the benefit of this moment will be lost!” said the prince, as the boy was hurrying out of the room.

“Quite true! Much better to go in half an hour or so said Mrs. Epanchin.

“That’s what comes of telling the truth for once in one’s life!” said Lebedeff. “It reduced him to tears.”

“Come, come! the less YOU say about it the better—to judge from all I have heard about you!” replied Mrs. Epanchin.

The prince took the first opportunity of informing the Epanchin ladies that he had intended to pay them a visit that day, if they had not themselves come this afternoon, and Lizabetha Prokofievna replied that she hoped he would still do so.

By this time some of the visitors had disappeared.

Ptitsin had tactfully retreated to Lebedeff’s wing; and Gania soon followed him.

The latter had behaved modestly, but with dignity, on this occasion of his first meeting with the Epanchins since the rupture. Twice Mrs. Epanchin had deliberately examined him from head to foot; but he had stood fire without flinching. He was certainly much changed, as anyone could see who had not met him for some time; and this fact seemed to afford Aglaya a good deal of satisfaction.

“That was Gavriila Ardalionovitch, who just went out, wasn’t it?” she asked suddenly, interrupting somebody else’s conversation to make the remark.

“Yes, it was,” said the prince.

“I hardly knew him; he is much changed, and for the better!”

"I am very glad," said the prince.

"He has been very ill," added Varia.

"How has he changed for the better?" asked Mrs. Epanchin. "I don't see any change for the better! What's better in him? Where did you get THAT idea from? WHAT'S better?"

"There's nothing better than the 'poor knight!'" said Colia, who was standing near the last speaker's chair.

"I quite agree with you there!" said Prince S., laughing.

"So do I," said Adelaida, solemnly.

"WHAT poor knight?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, looking round at the face of each of the speakers in turn. Seeing, however, that Aglaya was blushing, she added, angrily:

"What nonsense you are all talking! What do you mean by poor knight?"

"It's not the first time this urchin, your favourite, has shown his impudence by twisting other people's words," said Aglaya, haughtily.

Every time that Aglaya showed temper (and this was very often), there was so much childish pouting, such "school-girlishness," as it were, in her apparent wrath, that it was impossible to avoid smiling at her, to her own unutterable indignation. On these occasions she would say, "How can they, how DARE they laugh at me?"

This time everyone laughed at her, her sisters, Prince S., Prince Muishkin (though he himself had flushed for some reason), and Colia. Aglaya was dreadfully indignant, and looked twice as pretty in her wrath.

"He's always twisting round what one says," she cried.

"I am only repeating your own exclamation!" said Colia. "A month ago you were turning over the pages of your Don Quixote, and suddenly called out 'there is nothing better than the poor knight.' I don't know whom you were referring to, of course, whether to Don Quixote, or Evgenie Pavlovitch, or someone else, but you certainly said these words, and afterwards there was a long conversation ... "

"You are inclined to go a little too far, my good boy, with your guesses," said Mrs. Epanchin, with some show of annoyance.

"But it's not I alone," cried Colia. "They all talked about it, and they do still. Why, just now Prince S. and Adelaida Ivanovna declared that they upheld 'the poor knight'; so evidently there does exist a 'poor knight'; and if it were not for Adelaida Ivanovna, we should have known long ago who the 'poor knight' was."

"Why, how am I to blame?" asked Adelaida, smiling.

"You wouldn't draw his portrait for us, that's why you are to blame! Aglaya Ivanovna asked you to draw his portrait, and gave you the whole subject of the picture. She invented it herself; and you wouldn't."

"What was I to draw? According to the lines she quoted:

"From his face he never lifted That eternal mask of steel."

"What sort of a face was I to draw? I couldn't draw a mask."

"I don't know what you are driving at; what mask do you mean?" said Mrs. Epanchin, irritably. She began to see pretty clearly though what it meant, and whom they referred

to by the generally accepted title of "poor knight." But what specially annoyed her was that the prince was looking so uncomfortable, and blushing like a ten-year-old child.

"Well, have you finished your silly joke?" she added, and am I to be told what this 'poor knight' means, or is it a solemn secret which cannot be approached lightly?"

But they all laughed on.

"It's simply that there is a Russian poem," began Prince S., evidently anxious to change the conversation, "a strange thing, without beginning or end, and all about a 'poor knight.' A month or so ago, we were all talking and laughing, and looking up a subject for one of Adelaida's pictures—you know it is the principal business of this family to find subjects for Adelaida's pictures. Well, we happened upon this 'poor knight.' I don't remember who thought of it first—"

"Oh! Aglaya Ivanovna did," said Colia.

"Very likely—I don't recollect," continued Prince S.

"Some of us laughed at the subject; some liked it; but she declared that, in order to make a picture of the gentleman, she must first see his face. We then began to think over all our friends' faces to see if any of them would do, and none suited us, and so the matter stood; that's all. I don't know why Nicolai Ardalionovitch has brought up the joke now. What was appropriate and funny then, has quite lost all interest by this time."

"Probably there's some new silliness about it," said Mrs. Epanchin, sarcastically.

"There is no silliness about it at all—only the profoundest respect," said Aglaya, very seriously. She had quite recovered her temper; in fact, from certain signs, it was fair to conclude that she was delighted to see this joke going so far; and a careful observer might have remarked that her satisfaction dated from the moment when the fact of the prince's confusion became apparent to all.

"'Profoundest respect!' What nonsense! First, insane giggling, and then, all of a sudden, a display of 'profoundest respect.' Why respect? Tell me at once, why have you suddenly developed this 'profound respect,' eh?"

"Because," replied Aglaya gravely, "in the poem the knight is described as a man capable of living up to an ideal all his life. That sort of thing is not to be found every day among the men of our times. In the poem it is not stated exactly what the ideal was, but it was evidently some vision, some revelation of pure Beauty, and the knight wore round his neck, instead of a scarf, a rosary. A device—A. N. B.—the meaning of which is not explained, was inscribed on his shield—"

"No, A. N. D.," corrected Colia.

"I say A. N. B., and so it shall be!" cried Aglaya, irritably. "Anyway, the 'poor knight' did not care what his lady was, or what she did. He had chosen his ideal, and he was bound to serve her, and break lances for her, and acknowledge her as the ideal of pure Beauty, whatever she might say or do afterwards. If she had taken to stealing, he would have championed her just the same. I think the poet desired to embody in this one picture the whole spirit of medieval chivalry and the platonic love of a pure and high-souled knight. Of course it's all an ideal, and in the 'poor knight' that spirit

reached the utmost limit of asceticism. He is a Don Quixote, only serious and not comical. I used not to understand him, and laughed at him, but now I love the 'poor knight,' and respect his actions."

So ended Aglaya; and, to look at her, it was difficult, indeed, to judge whether she was joking or in earnest.

"Pooh! he was a fool, and his actions were the actions of a fool," said Mrs. Epanchin; "and as for you, young woman, you ought to know better. At all events, you are not to talk like that again. What poem is it? Recite it! I want to hear this poem! I have hated poetry all my life. Prince, you must excuse this nonsense. We neither of us like this sort of thing! Be patient!"

They certainly were put out, both of them.

The prince tried to say something, but he was too confused, and could not get his words out. Aglaya, who had taken such liberties in her little speech, was the only person present, perhaps, who was not in the least embarrassed. She seemed, in fact, quite pleased.

She now rose solemnly from her seat, walked to the centre of the terrace, and stood in front of the prince's chair. All looked on with some surprise, and Prince S. and her sisters with feelings of decided alarm, to see what new frolic she was up to; it had gone quite far enough already, they thought. But Aglaya evidently thoroughly enjoyed the affectation and ceremony with which she was introducing her recitation of the poem.

Mrs. Epanchin was just wondering whether she would not forbid the performance after all, when, at the very moment that Aglaya commenced her declamation, two new guests, both talking loudly, entered from the street. The new arrivals were General Epanchin and a young man.

Their entrance caused some slight commotion.

VII.

THE young fellow accompanying the general was about twenty-eight, tall, and well built, with a handsome and clever face, and bright black eyes, full of fun and intelligence.

Aglaya did not so much as glance at the new arrivals, but went on with her recitation, gazing at the prince the while in an affected manner, and at him alone. It was clear to him that she was doing all this with some special object.

But the new guests at least somewhat eased his strained and uncomfortable position. Seeing them approaching, he rose from his chair, and nodding amicably to the general, signed to him not to interrupt the recitation. He then got behind his chair, and stood there with his left hand resting on the back of it. Thanks to this change of position, he was able to listen to the ballad with far less embarrassment than before. Mrs. Epanchin had also twice motioned to the new arrivals to be quiet, and stay where they were.

The prince was much interested in the young man who had just entered. He easily concluded that this was Evgenie Pavlovitch Radomski, of whom he had already heard mention several times. He was puzzled, however, by the young man's plain clothes, for he had always heard of Evgenie Pavlovitch as a military man. An ironical smile played on Evgenie's lips all the while the recitation was proceeding, which showed that he, too, was probably in the secret of the 'poor knight' joke. But it had become quite a different matter with Aglaya. All the affectation of manner which she had displayed at the beginning disappeared as the ballad proceeded. She spoke the lines in so serious and exalted a manner, and with so much taste, that she even seemed to justify the exaggerated solemnity with which she had stepped forward. It was impossible to discern in her now anything but a deep feeling for the spirit of the poem which she had undertaken to interpret.

Her eyes were aglow with inspiration, and a slight tremor of rapture passed over her lovely features once or twice. She continued to recite:

"Once there came a vision glorious, Mystic, dreadful, wondrous fair; Burned itself into his spirit, And abode for ever there!

"Never more—from that sweet moment— Gazed he on womankind; He was dumb to love and wooing And to all their graces blind.

"Full of love for that sweet vision, Brave and pure he took the field; With his blood he stained the letters N. P. B. upon his shield.

"'Lumen caeli, sancta Rosa!' Shouting on the foe he fell, And like thunder rang his war-cry O'er the cowering infidel.

"Then within his distant castle, Home returned, he dreamed his days- Silent, sad,— and when death took him He was mad, the legend says."

When recalling all this afterwards the prince could not for the life of him understand how to reconcile the beautiful, sincere, pure nature of the girl with the irony of this jest. That it was a jest there was no doubt whatever; he knew that well enough, and had good reason, too, for his conviction; for during her recitation of the ballad Aglaya had deliberately changed the letters A. N. B. into N. P. B. He was quite sure she had not done this by accident, and that his ears had not deceived him. At all events her performance—which was a joke, of course, if rather a crude one,—was premeditated. They had evidently talked (and laughed) over the 'poor knight' for more than a month.

Yet Aglaya had brought out these letters N. P. B. not only without the slightest appearance of irony, or even any particular accentuation, but with so even and unbroken an appearance of seriousness that assuredly anyone might have supposed that these initials were the original ones written in the ballad. The thing made an uncomfortable impression upon the prince. Of course Mrs. Epanchin saw nothing either in the change of initials or in the insinuation embodied therein. General Epanchin only knew that there was a recitation of verses going on, and took no further interest in the matter. Of the rest of the audience, many had understood the allusion and wondered both at the daring of the lady and at the motive underlying it, but tried to show no sign of their feelings. But Evgenie Pavlovitch (as the prince was ready to wager) both compre-

hended and tried his best to show that he comprehended; his smile was too mocking to leave any doubt on that point.

“How beautiful that is!” cried Mrs. Epanchin, with sincere admiration. “Whose is it?”

“Pushkin’s, mama, of course! Don’t disgrace us all by showing your ignorance,” said Adelaida.

“As soon as we reach home give it to me to read.”

“I don’t think we have a copy of Pushkin in the house.”

“There are a couple of torn volumes somewhere; they have been lying about from time immemorial,” added Alexandra.

“Send Feodor or Alexey up by the very first train to buy a copy, then.—Aglaya, come here—kiss me, dear, you recited beautifully! but,” she added in a whisper, “if you were sincere I am sorry for you. If it was a joke, I do not approve of the feelings which prompted you to do it, and in any case you would have done far better not to recite it at all. Do you understand?—Now come along, young woman; we’ve sat here too long. I’ll speak to you about this another time.”

Meanwhile the prince took the opportunity of greeting General Epanchin, and the general introduced Evgenie Pavlovitch to him.

“I caught him up on the way to your house,” explained the general. “He had heard that we were all here.”

“Yes, and I heard that you were here, too,” added Evgenie Pavlovitch; “and since I had long promised myself the pleasure of seeking not only your acquaintance but your friendship, I did not wish to waste time, but came straight on. I am sorry to hear that you are unwell.”

“Oh, but I’m quite well now, thank you, and very glad to make your acquaintance. Prince S. has often spoken to me about you,” said Muishkin, and for an instant the two men looked intently into one another’s eyes.

The prince remarked that Evgenie Pavlovitch’s plain clothes had evidently made a great impression upon the company present, so much so that all other interests seemed to be effaced before this surprising fact.

His change of dress was evidently a matter of some importance. Adelaida and Alexandra poured out a stream of questions; Prince S., a relative of the young man, appeared annoyed; and Ivan Fedorovitch quite excited. Aglaya alone was not interested. She merely looked closely at Evgenie for a minute, curious perhaps as to whether civil or military clothes became him best, then turned away and paid no more attention to him or his costume. Lizabetha Prokofievna asked no questions, but it was clear that she was uneasy, and the prince fancied that Evgenie was not in her good graces.

“He has astonished me,” said Ivan Fedorovitch. “I nearly fell down with surprise. I could hardly believe my eyes when I met him in Petersburg just now. Why this haste? That’s what I want to know. He has always said himself that there is no need to break windows.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch remarked here that he had spoken of his intention of leaving the service long ago. He had, however, always made more or less of a joke about it, so no one had taken him seriously. For that matter he joked about everything, and his friends never knew what to believe, especially if he did not wish them to understand him.

"I have only retired for a time," said he, laughing. "For a few months; at most for a year."

"But there is no necessity for you to retire at all," complained the general, "as far as I know."

"I want to go and look after my country estates. You advised me to do that yourself," was the reply. "And then I wish to go abroad."

After a few more expostulations, the conversation drifted into other channels, but the prince, who had been an attentive listener, thought all this excitement about so small a matter very curious. "There must be more in it than appears," he said to himself.

"I see the 'poor knight' has come on the scene again," said Evgenie Pavlovitch, stepping to Aglaya's side.

To the amazement of the prince, who overheard the remark, Aglaya looked haughtily and inquiringly at the questioner, as though she would give him to know, once for all, that there could be no talk between them about the 'poor knight,' and that she did not understand his question.

"But not now! It is too late to send to town for a Pushkin now. It is much too late, I say!" Colia was exclaiming in a loud voice. "I have told you so at least a hundred times."

"Yes, it is really much too late to send to town now," said Evgenie Pavlovitch, who had escaped from Aglaya as rapidly as possible. "I am sure the shops are shut in Petersburg; it is past eight o'clock," he added, looking at his watch.

"We have done without him so far," interrupted Adelaida in her turn. "Surely we can wait until to-morrow."

"Besides," said Colia, "it is quite unusual, almost improper, for people in our position to take any interest in literature. Ask Evgenie Pavlovitch if I am not right. It is much more fashionable to drive a waggonette with red wheels."

"You got that from some magazine, Colia," remarked Adelaida.

"He gets most of his conversation in that way," laughed Evgenie Pavlovitch. "He borrows whole phrases from the reviews. I have long had the pleasure of knowing both Nicholai Ardalionovitch and his conversational methods, but this time he was not repeating something he had read; he was alluding, no doubt, to my yellow waggonette, which has, or had, red wheels. But I have exchanged it, so you are rather behind the times, Colia."

The prince had been listening attentively to Radomski's words, and thought his manner very pleasant. When Colia chaffed him about his waggonette he had replied with perfect equality and in a friendly fashion. This pleased Muishkin.

At this moment Vera came up to Lizabetha Prokofievna, carrying several large and beautifully bound books, apparently quite new.

“What is it?” demanded the lady.

“This is Pushkin,” replied the girl. “Papa told me to offer it to you.”

“What? Impossible!” exclaimed Mrs. Epanchin.

“Not as a present, not as a present! I should not have taken the liberty,” said Lebedeff, appearing suddenly from behind his daughter. “It is our own Pushkin, our family copy, Annenkoff’s edition; it could not be bought now. I beg to suggest, with great respect, that your excellency should buy it, and thus quench the noble literary thirst which is consuming you at this moment,” he concluded grandiloquently.

“Oh! if you will sell it, very good—and thank you. You shall not be a loser! But for goodness’ sake, don’t twist about like that, sir! I have heard of you; they tell me you are a very learned person. We must have a talk one of these days. You will bring me the books yourself?”

“With the greatest respect ... and ... and veneration,” replied Lebedeff, making extraordinary grimaces.

“Well, bring them, with or without respect, provided always you do not drop them on the way; but on the condition,” went on the lady, looking full at him, “that you do not cross my threshold. I do not intend to receive you today. You may send your daughter Vera at once, if you like. I am much pleased with her.”

“Why don’t you tell him about them?” said Vera impatiently to her father. “They will come in, whether you announce them or not, and they are beginning to make a row. Lef Nicolaievitch,”—she addressed herself to the prince—“four men are here asking for you. They have waited some time, and are beginning to make a fuss, and papa will not bring them in.”

“Who are these people?” said the prince.

“They say that they have come on business, and they are the kind of men, who, if you do not see them here, will follow you about the street. It would be better to receive them, and then you will get rid of them. Gavril Ardalionovitch and Ptitsin are both there, trying to make them hear reason.”

“Pavlicheff’s son! It is not worth while!” cried Lebedeff. “There is no necessity to see them, and it would be most unpleasant for your excellency. They do not deserve ...”

“What? Pavlicheff’s son!” cried the prince, much perturbed. “I know ... I know—but I entrusted this matter to Gavril Ardalionovitch. He told me ...”

At that moment Gania, accompanied by Ptitsin, came out to the terrace. From an adjoining room came a noise of angry voices, and General Ivolgin, in loud tones, seemed to be trying to shout them down. Colia rushed off at once to investigate the cause of the uproar.

“This is most interesting!” observed Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“I expect he knows all about it!” thought the prince.

“What, the son of Pavlicheff? And who may this son of Pavlicheff be?” asked General Epanchin with surprise; and looking curiously around him, he discovered that he alone

had no clue to the mystery. Expectation and suspense were on every face, with the exception of that of the prince, who stood gravely wondering how an affair so entirely personal could have awakened such lively and widespread interest in so short a time.

Aglaya went up to him with a peculiarly serious look

“It will be well,” she said, “if you put an end to this affair yourself AT ONCE: but you must allow us to be your witnesses. They want to throw mud at you, prince, and you must be triumphantly vindicated. I give you joy beforehand!”

“And I also wish for justice to be done, once for all,” cried Madame Epanchin, “about this impudent claim. Deal with them promptly, prince, and don’t spare them! I am sick of hearing about the affair, and many a quarrel I have had in your cause. But I confess I am anxious to see what happens, so do make them come out here, and we will remain. You have heard people talking about it, no doubt?” she added, turning to Prince S.

“Of course,” said he. “I have heard it spoken about at your house, and I am anxious to see these young men!”

“They are Nihilists, are they not?”

“No, they are not Nihilists,” explained Lebedeff, who seemed much excited. “This is another lot—a special group. According to my nephew they are more advanced even than the Nihilists. You are quite wrong, excellency, if you think that your presence will intimidate them; nothing intimidates them. Educated men, learned men even, are to be found among Nihilists; these go further, in that they are men of action. The movement is, properly speaking, a derivative from Nihilism—though they are only known indirectly, and by hearsay, for they never advertise their doings in the papers. They go straight to the point. For them, it is not a question of showing that Pushkin is stupid, or that Russia must be torn in pieces. No; but if they have a great desire for anything, they believe they have a right to get it even at the cost of the lives, say, of eight persons. They are checked by no obstacles. In fact, prince, I should not advise you ...”

But Muishkin had risen, and was on his way to open the door for his visitors.

“You are slandering them, Lebedeff,” said he, smiling.

“You are always thinking about your nephew’s conduct. Don’t believe him, Lizabetha Prokofievna. I can assure you Gorsky and Daniloff are exceptions—and that these are only ... mistaken. However, I do not care about receiving them here, in public. Excuse me, Lizabetha Prokofievna. They are coming, and you can see them, and then I will take them away. Please come in, gentlemen!”

Another thought tormented him: He wondered was this an arranged business—arranged to happen when he had guests in his house, and in anticipation of his humiliation rather than of his triumph? But he reproached himself bitterly for such a thought, and felt as if he should die of shame if it were discovered. When his new visitors appeared, he was quite ready to believe himself infinitely less to be respected than any of them.

Four persons entered, led by General Ivolgin, in a state of great excitement, and talking eloquently.

“He is for me, undoubtedly!” thought the prince, with a smile. Colia also had joined the party, and was talking with animation to Hippolyte, who listened with a jeering smile on his lips.

The prince begged the visitors to sit down. They were all so young that it made the proceedings seem even more extraordinary. Ivan Fedorovitch, who really understood nothing of what was going on, felt indignant at the sight of these youths, and would have interfered in some way had it not been for the extreme interest shown by his wife in the affair. He therefore remained, partly through curiosity, partly through good-nature, hoping that his presence might be of some use. But the bow with which General Ivolgin greeted him irritated him anew; he frowned, and decided to be absolutely silent.

As to the rest, one was a man of thirty, the retired officer, now a boxer, who had been with Rogojin, and in his happier days had given fifteen roubles at a time to beggars. Evidently he had joined the others as a comrade to give them moral, and if necessary material, support. The man who had been spoken of as “Pavlicheff’s son,” although he gave the name of Antip Burdovsky, was about twenty-two years of age, fair, thin and rather tall. He was remarkable for the poverty, not to say uncleanness, of his personal appearance: the sleeves of his overcoat were greasy; his dirty waistcoat, buttoned up to his neck, showed not a trace of linen; a filthy black silk scarf, twisted till it resembled a cord, was round his neck, and his hands were unwashed. He looked round with an air of insolent effrontery. His face, covered with pimples, was neither thoughtful nor even contemptuous; it wore an expression of complacent satisfaction in demanding his rights and in being an aggrieved party. His voice trembled, and he spoke so fast, and with such stammerings, that he might have been taken for a foreigner, though the purest Russian blood ran in his veins. Lebedeff’s nephew, whom the reader has seen already, accompanied him, and also the youth named Hippolyte Terentieff. The latter was only seventeen or eighteen. He had an intelligent face, though it was usually irritated and fretful in expression. His skeleton-like figure, his ghastly complexion, the brightness of his eyes, and the red spots of colour on his cheeks, betrayed the victim of consumption to the most casual glance. He coughed persistently, and panted for breath; it looked as though he had but a few weeks more to live. He was nearly dead with fatigue, and fell, rather than sat, into a chair. The rest bowed as they came in; and being more or less abashed, put on an air of extreme self-assurance. In short, their attitude was not that which one would have expected in men who professed to despise all trivialities, all foolish mundane conventions, and indeed everything, except their own personal interests.

“Antip Burdovsky,” stuttered the son of Pavlicheff.

“Vladimir Doktorenko,” said Lebedeff’s nephew briskly, and with a certain pride, as if he boasted of his name.

“Keller,” murmured the retired officer.

“Hippolyte Terentieff,” cried the last-named, in a shrill voice.

They sat now in a row facing the prince, and frowned, and played with their caps. All appeared ready to speak, and yet all were silent; the defiant expression on their faces seemed to say, "No, sir, you don't take us in!" It could be felt that the first word spoken by anyone present would bring a torrent of speech from the whole deputation.

VIII.

"I DID not expect you, gentlemen," began the prince. I have been ill until to-day. A month ago," he continued, addressing himself to Antip Burdovsky, "I put your business into Gavriila Ardalionovitch Ivolgin's hands, as I told you then. I do not in the least object to having a personal interview ... but you will agree with me that this is hardly the time ... I propose that we go into another room, if you will not keep me long... As you see, I have friends here, and believe me ..."

"Friends as many as you please, but allow me," interrupted the harsh voice of Lebedeff's nephew—"allow me to tell you that you might have treated us rather more politely, and not have kept us waiting at least two hours ..."

"No doubt ... and I ... is that acting like a prince? And you ... you may be a general! But I ... I am not your valet! And I ... I..." stammered Antip Burdovsky.

He was extremely excited; his lips trembled, and the resentment of an embittered soul was in his voice. But he spoke so indistinctly that hardly a dozen words could be gathered.

"It was a princely action!" sneered Hippolyte.

"If anyone had treated me so," grumbled the boxer.

"I mean to say that if I had been in Burdovsky's place...I..."

"Gentlemen, I did not know you were there; I have only just been informed, I assure you," repeated Muishkin.

"We are not afraid of your friends, prince," remarked Lebedeff's nephew, "for we are within our rights."

The shrill tones of Hippolyte interrupted him. "What right have you ... by what right do you demand us to submit this matter, about Burdovsky ... to the judgment of your friends? We know only too well what the judgment of your friends will be! ..."

This beginning gave promise of a stormy discussion. The prince was much discouraged, but at last he managed to make himself heard amid the vociferations of his excited visitors.

"If you," he said, addressing Burdovsky—"if you prefer not to speak here, I offer again to go into another room with you ... and as to your waiting to see me, I repeat that I only this instant heard ..."

"Well, you have no right, you have no right, no right at all!... Your friends indeed!..." gabbled Burdovsky, defiantly examining the faces round him, and becoming more and more excited. "You have no right!..." As he ended thus abruptly, he leant forward, star-

ing at the prince with his short-sighted, bloodshot eyes. The latter was so astonished, that he did not reply, but looked steadily at him in return.

“Lef Nicolaievitch!” interposed Madame Epanchin, suddenly, “read this at once, this very moment! It is about this business.”

She held out a weekly comic paper, pointing to an article on one of its pages. Just as the visitors were coming in, Lebedeff, wishing to ingratiate himself with the great lady, had pulled this paper from his pocket, and presented it to her, indicating a few columns marked in pencil. Lizabetha Prokofievna had had time to read some of it, and was greatly upset.

“Would it not be better to peruse it alone ...” later asked the prince, nervously.

“No, no, read it—read it at once directly, and aloud, aloud!” cried she, calling Colia to her and giving him the journal.—“Read it aloud, so that everyone may hear it!”

An impetuous woman, Lizabetha Prokofievna sometimes weighed her anchors and put out to sea quite regardless of the possible storms she might encounter. Ivan Fedorovitch felt a sudden pang of alarm, but the others were merely curious, and somewhat surprised. Colia unfolded the paper, and began to read, in his clear, high-pitched voice, the following article:

“Proletarians and scions of nobility! An episode of the brigandage of today and every day! Progress! Reform! Justice!”

“Strange things are going on in our so-called Holy Russia in this age of reform and great enterprises; this age of patriotism in which hundreds of millions are yearly sent abroad; in which industry is encouraged, and the hands of Labour paralyzed, etc.; there is no end to this, gentlemen, so let us come to the point. A strange thing has happened to a scion of our defunct aristocracy. (DE PROFUNDIS!) The grandfathers of these scions ruined themselves at the gaming-tables; their fathers were forced to serve as officers or subalterns; some have died just as they were about to be tried for innocent thoughtlessness in the handling of public funds. Their children are sometimes congenital idiots, like the hero of our story; sometimes they are found in the dock at the Assizes, where they are generally acquitted by the jury for edifying motives; sometimes they distinguish themselves by one of those burning scandals that amaze the public and add another blot to the stained record of our age. Six months ago—that is, last winter—this particular scion returned to Russia, wearing gaiters like a foreigner, and shivering with cold in an old scantily-lined cloak. He had come from Switzerland, where he had just undergone a successful course of treatment for idiocy (SIC!). Certainly Fortune favoured him, for, apart from the interesting malady of which he was cured in Switzerland (can there be a cure for idiocy?) his story proves the truth of the Russian proverb that ‘happiness is the right of certain classes!’ Judge for yourselves. Our subject was an infant in arms when he lost his father, an officer who died just as he was about to be court-martialled for gambling away the funds of his company, and perhaps also for flogging a subordinate to excess (remember the good old days, gentlemen). The orphan was brought up by the charity of a very rich Russian landowner. In the good old days, this man, whom we will call P—, owned

four thousand souls as serfs (souls as serfs!—can you understand such an expression, gentlemen? I cannot; it must be looked up in a dictionary before one can understand it; these things of a bygone day are already unintelligible to us). He appears to have been one of those Russian parasites who lead an idle existence abroad, spending the summer at some spa, and the winter in Paris, to the greater profit of the organizers of public balls. It may safely be said that the manager of the Chateau des Fleurs (lucky man!) pocketed at least a third of the money paid by Russian peasants to their lords in the days of serfdom. However this may be, the gay P— brought up the orphan like a prince, provided him with tutors and governesses (pretty, of course!) whom he chose himself in Paris. But the little aristocrat, the last of his noble race, was an idiot. The governesses, recruited at the Chateau des Fleurs, laboured in vain; at twenty years of age their pupil could not speak in any language, not even Russian. But ignorance of the latter was still excusable. At last P— was seized with a strange notion; he imagined that in Switzerland they could change an idiot into a man of sense. After all, the idea was quite logical; a parasite and landowner naturally supposed that intelligence was a marketable commodity like everything else, and that in Switzerland especially it could be bought for money. The case was entrusted to a celebrated Swiss professor, and cost thousands of roubles; the treatment lasted five years. Needless to say, the idiot did not become intelligent, but it is alleged that he grew into something more or less resembling a man. At this stage P— died suddenly, and, as usual, he had made no will and left his affairs in disorder. A crowd of eager claimants arose, who cared nothing about any last scion of a noble race undergoing treatment in Switzerland, at the expense of the deceased, as a congenital idiot. Idiot though he was, the noble scion tried to cheat his professor, and they say he succeeded in getting him to continue the treatment gratis for two years, by concealing the death of his benefactor. But the professor himself was a charlatan. Getting anxious at last when no money was forthcoming, and alarmed above all by his patient's appetite, he presented him with a pair of old gaiters and a shabby cloak and packed him off to Russia, third class. It would seem that Fortune had turned her back upon our hero. Not at all; Fortune, who lets whole populations die of hunger, showered all her gifts at once upon the little aristocrat, like Kryloff's Cloud which passes over an arid plain and empties itself into the sea. He had scarcely arrived in St. Petersburg, when a relation of his mother's (who was of bourgeois origin, of course), died at Moscow. He was a merchant, an Old Believer, and he had no children. He left a fortune of several millions in good current coin, and everything came to our noble scion, our gaitered baron, formerly treated for idiocy in a Swiss lunatic asylum. Instantly the scene changed, crowds of friends gathered round our baron, who meanwhile had lost his head over a celebrated demi-mondaine; he even discovered some relations; moreover a number of young girls of high birth burned to be united to him in lawful matrimony. Could anyone possibly imagine a better match? Aristocrat, millionaire, and idiot, he has every advantage! One might hunt in vain for his equal, even with the lantern of Diogenes; his like is not to be had even by getting it made to order!"

“Oh, I don’t know what this means” cried Ivan Fedorovitch, transported with indignation.

“Leave off, Colia,” begged the prince. Exclamations arose on all sides.

“Let him go on reading at all costs!” ordered Lizabetha Prokofievna, evidently preserving her composure by a desperate effort. “Prince, if the reading is stopped, you and I will quarrel.”

Colia had no choice but to obey. With crimson cheeks he read on unsteadily:

“But while our young millionaire dwelt as it were in the Emyrean, something new occurred. One fine morning a man called upon him, calm and severe of aspect, distinguished, but plainly dressed. Politely, but in dignified terms, as befitted his errand, he briefly explained the motive for his visit. He was a lawyer of enlightened views; his client was a young man who had consulted him in confidence. This young man was no other than the son of P—, though he bears another name. In his youth P—, the sensualist, had seduced a young girl, poor but respectable. She was a serf, but had received a European education. Finding that a child was expected, he hastened her marriage with a man of noble character who had loved her for a long time. He helped the young couple for a time, but he was soon obliged to give up, for the high-minded husband refused to accept anything from him. Soon the careless nobleman forgot all about his former mistress and the child she had borne him; then, as we know, he died intestate. P—’s son, born after his mother’s marriage, found a true father in the generous man whose name he bore. But when he also died, the orphan was left to provide for himself, his mother now being an invalid who had lost the use of her limbs. Leaving her in a distant province, he came to the capital in search of pupils. By dint of daily toil he earned enough to enable him to follow the college courses, and at last to enter the university. But what can one earn by teaching the children of Russian merchants at ten copecks a lesson, especially with an invalid mother to keep? Even her death did not much diminish the hardships of the young man’s struggle for existence. Now this is the question: how, in the name of justice, should our scion have argued the case? Our readers will think, no doubt, that he would say to himself: ‘P— showered benefits upon me all my life; he spent tens of thousands of roubles to educate me, to provide me with governesses, and to keep me under treatment in Switzerland. Now I am a millionaire, and P—’s son, a noble young man who is not responsible for the faults of his careless and forgetful father, is wearing himself out giving ill-paid lessons. According to justice, all that was done for me ought to have been done for him. The enormous sums spent upon me were not really mine; they came to me by an error of blind Fortune, when they ought to have gone to P—’s son. They should have gone to benefit him, not me, in whom P— interested himself by a mere caprice, instead of doing his duty as a father. If I wished to behave nobly, justly, and with delicacy, I ought to bestow half my fortune upon the son of my benefactor; but as economy is my favourite virtue, and I know this is not a case in which the law can intervene, I will not give up half my millions. But it would be too openly vile, too flagrantly infamous, if I did not at least restore to P—’s son the tens of thousands of roubles spent in curing

my idiocy. This is simply a case of conscience and of strict justice. Whatever would have become of me if P— had not looked after my education, and had taken care of his own son instead of me?’

“No, gentlemen, our scions of the nobility do not reason thus. The lawyer, who had taken up the matter purely out of friendship to the young man, and almost against his will, invoked every consideration of justice, delicacy, honour, and even plain figures; in vain, the ex-patient of the Swiss lunatic asylum was inflexible. All this might pass, but the sequel is absolutely unpardonable, and not to be excused by any interesting malady. This millionaire, having but just discarded the old gaiters of his professor, could not even understand that the noble young man slaving away at his lessons was not asking for charitable help, but for his rightful due, though the debt was not a legal one; that, correctly speaking, he was not asking for anything, but it was merely his friends who had thought fit to bestir themselves on his behalf. With the cool insolence of a bloated capitalist, secure in his millions, he majestically drew a banknote for fifty roubles from his pocket-book and sent it to the noble young man as a humiliating piece of charity. You can hardly believe it, gentlemen! You are scandalized and disgusted; you cry out in indignation! But that is what he did! Needless to say, the money was returned, or rather flung back in his face. The case is not within the province of the law, it must be referred to the tribunal of public opinion; this is what we now do, guaranteeing the truth of all the details which we have related.”

When Colia had finished reading, he handed the paper to the prince, and retired silently to a corner of the room, hiding his face in his hands. He was overcome by a feeling of inexpressible shame; his boyish sensitiveness was wounded beyond endurance. It seemed to him that something extraordinary, some sudden catastrophe had occurred, and that he was almost the cause of it, because he had read the article aloud.

Yet all the others were similarly affected. The girls were uncomfortable and ashamed. Lizabetha Prokofievna restrained her violent anger by a great effort; perhaps she bitterly regretted her interference in the matter; for the present she kept silence. The prince felt as very shy people often do in such a case; he was so ashamed of the conduct of other people, so humiliated for his guests, that he dared not look them in the face. Ptitsin, Varia, Gania, and Lebedeff himself, all looked rather confused. Stranger still, Hippolyte and the “son of Pavlicheff” also seemed slightly surprised, and Lebedeff’s nephew was obviously far from pleased. The boxer alone was perfectly calm; he twisted his moustaches with affected dignity, and if his eyes were cast down it was certainly not in confusion, but rather in noble modesty, as if he did not wish to be insolent in his triumph. It was evident that he was delighted with the article.

“The devil knows what it means,” growled Ivan Fedorovitch, under his breath; “it must have taken the united wits of fifty footmen to write it.”

“May I ask your reason for such an insulting supposition, sir?” said Hippolyte, trembling with rage.

You will admit yourself, general, that for an honourable man, if the author is an honourable man, that is an—an insult,” growled the boxer suddenly, with convulsive jerkings of his shoulders.

“In the first place, it is not for you to address me as ‘sir,’ and, in the second place, I refuse to give you any explanation,” said Ivan Fedorovitch vehemently; and he rose without another word, and went and stood on the first step of the flight that led from the verandah to the street, turning his back on the company. He was indignant with Lizabetha Prokofievna, who did not think of moving even now.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen, let me speak at last,” cried the prince, anxious and agitated. “Please let us understand one another. I say nothing about the article, gentlemen, except that every word is false; I say this because you know it as well as I do. It is shameful. I should be surprised if any one of you could have written it.”

“I did not know of its existence till this moment,” declared Hippolyte. “I do not approve of it.”

“I knew it had been written, but I would not have advised its publication,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, “because it is premature.”

“I knew it, but I have a right. I... I ...” stammered the “son of Pavlicheff.”

“What! Did you write all that yourself? Is it possible?” asked the prince, regarding Burdovsky with curiosity.

“One might dispute your right to ask such questions,” observed Lebedeff’s nephew.

“I was only surprised that Mr. Burdovsky should have—however, this is what I have to say. Since you had already given the matter publicity, why did you object just now, when I began to speak of it to my friends?”

“At last!” murmured Lizabetha Prokofievna indignantly.

Lebedeff could restrain himself no longer; he made his way through the row of chairs.

“Prince,” he cried, “you are forgetting that if you consented to receive and hear them, it was only because of your kind heart which has no equal, for they had not the least right to demand it, especially as you had placed the matter in the hands of Gavrila Ardalionovitch, which was also extremely kind of you. You are also forgetting, most excellent prince, that you are with friends, a select company; you cannot sacrifice them to these gentlemen, and it is only for you to have them turned out this instant. As the master of the house I shall have great pleasure ...”

“Quite right!” agreed General Ivolgin in a loud voice.

“That will do, Lebedeff, that will do—” began the prince, when an indignant outcry drowned his words.

“Excuse me, prince, excuse me, but now that will not do,” shouted Lebedeff’s nephew, his voice dominating all the others. “The matter must be clearly stated, for it is obviously not properly understood. They are calling in some legal chicanery, and upon that ground they are threatening to turn us out of the house! Really, prince, do you think we are such fools as not to be aware that this matter does not come within the law, and that legally we cannot claim a rouble from you? But we are also aware that if actual law is not on our side, human law is for us, natural law, the law of common-sense and

conscience, which is no less binding upon every noble and honest man—that is, every man of sane judgment—because it is not to be found in miserable legal codes. If we come here without fear of being turned out (as was threatened just now) because of the imperative tone of our demand, and the unseemliness of such a visit at this late hour (though it was not late when we arrived, we were kept waiting in your anteroom), if, I say, we came in without fear, it is just because we expected to find you a man of sense; I mean, a man of honour and conscience. It is quite true that we did not present ourselves humbly, like your flatterers and parasites, but holding up our heads as befits independent men. We present no petition, but a proud and free demand (note it well, we do not beseech, we demand!). We ask you fairly and squarely in a dignified manner. Do you believe that in this affair of Burdovsky you have right on your side? Do you admit that Pavlicheff overwhelmed you with benefits, and perhaps saved your life? If you admit it (which we take for granted), do you intend, now that you are a millionaire, and do you not think it in conformity with justice, to indemnify Burdovsky? Yes or no? If it is yes, or, in other words, if you possess what you call honour and conscience, and we more justly call common-sense, then accede to our demand, and the matter is at an end. Give us satisfaction, without entreaties or thanks from us; do not expect thanks from us, for what you do will be done not for our sake, but for the sake of justice. If you refuse to satisfy us, that is, if your answer is no, we will go away at once, and there will be an end of the matter. But we will tell you to your face before the present company that you are a man of vulgar and undeveloped mind; we will openly deny you the right to speak in future of your honour and conscience, for you have not paid the fair price of such a right. I have no more to say—I have put the question before you. Now turn us out if you dare. You can do it; force is on your side. But remember that we do not beseech, we demand! We do not beseech, we demand!”

With these last excited words, Lebedeff’s nephew was silent.

“We demand, we demand, we demand, we do not beseech,” spluttered Burdovsky, red as a lobster.

The speech of Lebedeff’s nephew caused a certain stir among the company; murmurs arose, though with the exception of Lebedeff, who was still very much excited, everyone was careful not to interfere in the matter. Strangely enough, Lebedeff, although on the prince’s side, seemed quite proud of his nephew’s eloquence. Gratified vanity was visible in the glances he cast upon the assembled company.

“In my opinion, Mr. Doktorenko,” said the prince, in rather a low voice, “you are quite right in at least half of what you say. I would go further and say that you are altogether right, and that I quite agree with you, if there were not something lacking in your speech. I cannot undertake to say precisely what it is, but you have certainly omitted something, and you cannot be quite just while there is something lacking. But let us put that aside and return to the point. Tell me what induced you to publish this article. Every word of it is a calumny, and I think, gentlemen, that you have been guilty of a mean action.”

“Allow me—”

“Sir—”

“What? What? What?” cried all the visitors at once, in violent agitation.

“As to the article,” said Hippolyte in his croaking voice, “I have told you already that we none of us approve of it! There is the writer,” he added, pointing to the boxer, who sat beside him. “I quite admit that he has written it in his old regimental manner, with an equal disregard for style and decency. I know he is a cross between a fool and an adventurer; I make no bones about telling him so to his face every day. But after all he is half justified; publicity is the lawful right of every man; consequently, Burdovsky is not excepted. Let him answer for his own blunders. As to the objection which I made just now in the name of all, to the presence of your friends, I think I ought to explain, gentlemen, that I only did so to assert our rights, though we really wished to have witnesses; we had agreed unanimously upon the point before we came in. We do not care who your witnesses may be, or whether they are your friends or not. As they cannot fail to recognize Burdovsky’s right (seeing that it is mathematically demonstrable), it is just as well that the witnesses should be your friends. The truth will only be more plainly evident.”

“It is quite true; we had agreed upon that point,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, in confirmation.

“If that is the case, why did you begin by making such a fuss about it?” asked the astonished prince.

The boxer was dying to get in a few words; owing, no doubt, to the presence of the ladies, he was becoming quite jovial.

“As to the article, prince,” he said, “I admit that I wrote it, in spite of the severe criticism of my poor friend, in whom I always overlook many things because of his unfortunate state of health. But I wrote and published it in the form of a letter, in the paper of a friend. I showed it to no one but Burdovsky, and I did not read it all through, even to him. He immediately gave me permission to publish it, but you will admit that I might have done so without his consent. Publicity is a noble, beneficent, and universal right. I hope, prince, that you are too progressive to deny this?”

“I deny nothing, but you must confess that your article—”

“Is a bit thick, you mean? Well, in a way that is in the public interest; you will admit that yourself, and after all one cannot overlook a blatant fact. So much the worse for the guilty parties, but the public welfare must come before everything. As to certain inaccuracies and figures of speech, so to speak, you will also admit that the motive, aim, and intention, are the chief thing. It is a question, above all, of making a wholesome example; the individual case can be examined afterwards; and as to the style—well, the thing was meant to be humorous, so to speak, and, after all, everybody writes like that; you must admit it yourself! Ha, ha!”

“But, gentlemen, I assure you that you are quite astray,” exclaimed the prince. “You have published this article upon the supposition that I would never consent to satisfy Mr. Burdovsky. Acting on that conviction, you have tried to intimidate me by this publication and to be revenged for my supposed refusal. But what did you know of

my intentions? It may be that I have resolved to satisfy Mr. Burdovsky's claim. I now declare openly, in the presence of these witnesses, that I will do so."

"The noble and intelligent word of an intelligent and most noble man, at last!" exclaimed the boxer.

"Good God!" exclaimed Lizabetha Prokofievna involuntarily.

"This is intolerable," growled the general.

"Allow me, gentlemen, allow me," urged the prince.

"I will explain matters to you. Five weeks ago I received a visit from Tchebaroff, your agent, Mr. Burdovsky. You have given a very flattering description of him in your article, Mr. Keller," he continued, turning to the boxer with a smile, "but he did not please me at all. I saw at once that Tchebaroff was the moving spirit in the matter, and, to speak frankly, I thought he might have induced you, Mr. Burdovsky, to make this claim, by taking advantage of your simplicity."

"You have no right.... I am not simple," stammered Burdovsky, much agitated.

"You have no sort of right to suppose such things," said Lebedeff's nephew in a tone of authority.

"It is most offensive!" shrieked Hippolyte; "it is an insulting suggestion, false, and most ill-timed."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen; please excuse me," said the prince. "I thought absolute frankness on both sides would be best, but have it your own way. I told Tchebaroff that, as I was not in Petersburg, I would commission a friend to look into the matter without delay, and that I would let you know, Mr. Burdovsky. Gentlemen, I have no hesitation in telling you that it was the fact of Tchebaroff's intervention that made me suspect a fraud. Oh! do not take offence at my words, gentlemen, for Heaven's sake do not be so touchy!" cried the prince, seeing that Burdovsky was getting excited again, and that the rest were preparing to protest. "If I say I suspected a fraud, there is nothing personal in that. I had never seen any of you then; I did not even know your names; I only judged by Tchebaroff; I am speaking quite generally—if you only knew how I have been 'done' since I came into my fortune!"

"You are shockingly naive, prince," said Lebedeff's nephew in mocking tones.

"Besides, though you are a prince and a millionaire, and even though you may really be simple and good-hearted, you can hardly be outside the general law," Hippolyte declared loudly.

"Perhaps not; it is very possible," the prince agreed hastily, "though I do not know what general law you allude to. I will go on—only please do not take offence without good cause. I assure you I do not mean to offend you in the least. Really, it is impossible to speak three words sincerely without your flying into a rage! At first I was amazed when Tchebaroff told me that Pavlicheff had a son, and that he was in such a miserable position. Pavlicheff was my benefactor, and my father's friend. Oh, Mr. Keller, why does your article impute things to my father without the slightest foundation? He never squandered the funds of his company nor ill-treated his subordinates, I am absolutely certain of it; I cannot imagine how you could bring yourself to write such a calumny!"

But your assertions concerning Pavlicheff are absolutely intolerable! You do not scruple to make a libertine of that noble man; you call him a sensualist as coolly as if you were speaking the truth, and yet it would not be possible to find a chaster man. He was even a scholar of note, and in correspondence with several celebrated scientists, and spent large sums in the interests of science. As to his kind heart and his good actions, you were right indeed when you said that I was almost an idiot at that time, and could hardly understand anything—(I could speak and understand Russian, though),—but now I can appreciate what I remember—”

“Excuse me,” interrupted Hippolyte, “is not this rather sentimental? You said you wished to come to the point; please remember that it is after nine o’clock.”

“Very well, gentlemen—very well,” replied the prince. “At first I received the news with mistrust, then I said to myself that I might be mistaken, and that Pavlicheff might possibly have had a son. But I was absolutely amazed at the readiness with which the son had revealed the secret of his birth at the expense of his mother’s honour. For Tchebaroff had already menaced me with publicity in our interview... .”

“What nonsense!” Lebedeff’s nephew interrupted violently.

“You have no right—you have no right!” cried Burdovsky.

“The son is not responsible for the misdeeds of his father; and the mother is not to blame,” added Hippolyte, with warmth.

“That seems to me all the more reason for sparing her,” said the prince timidly.

“Prince, you are not only simple, but your simplicity is almost past the limit,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, with a sarcastic smile.

“But what right had you?” said Hippolyte in a very strange tone.

“None—none whatever,” agreed the prince hastily. “I admit you are right there, but it was involuntary, and I immediately said to myself that my personal feelings had nothing to do with it,— that if I thought it right to satisfy the demands of Mr. Burdovsky, out of respect for the memory of Pavlicheff, I ought to do so in any case, whether I esteemed Mr. Burdovsky or not. I only mentioned this, gentlemen, because it seemed so unnatural to me for a son to betray his mother’s secret in such a way. In short, that is what convinced me that Tchebaroff must be a rogue, and that he had induced Mr. Burdovsky to attempt this fraud.”

“But this is intolerable!” cried the visitors, some of them starting to their feet.

“Gentlemen, I supposed from this that poor Mr. Burdovsky must be a simple-minded man, quite defenceless, and an easy tool in the hands of rogues. That is why I thought it my duty to try and help him as ‘Pavlicheff’s son’; in the first place by rescuing him from the influence of Tchebaroff, and secondly by making myself his friend. I have resolved to give him ten thousand roubles; that is about the sum which I calculate that Pavlicheff must have spent on me.”

“What, only ten thousand!” cried Hippolyte.

“Well, prince, your arithmetic is not up to much, or else you are mighty clever at it, though you affect the air of a simpleton,” said Lebedeff’s nephew.

“I will not accept ten thousand roubles,” said Burdovsky.

“Accept, Antip,” whispered the boxer eagerly, leaning past the back of Hippolyte’s chair to give his friend this piece of advice. “Take it for the present; we can see about more later on.”

“Look here, Mr. Muishkin,” shouted Hippolyte, “please understand that we are not fools, nor idiots, as your guests seem to imagine; these ladies who look upon us with such scorn, and especially this fine gentleman” (pointing to Evgenie Pavlovitch) “whom I have not the honour of knowing, though I think I have heard some talk about him—”

“Really, really, gentlemen,” cried the prince in great agitation, “you are misunderstanding me again. In the first place, Mr. Keller, you have greatly overestimated my fortune in your article. I am far from being a millionaire. I have barely a tenth of what you suppose. Secondly, my treatment in Switzerland was very far from costing tens of thousands of roubles. Schneider received six hundred roubles a year, and he was only paid for the first three years. As to the pretty governesses whom Pavlicheff is supposed to have brought from Paris, they only exist in Mr. Keller’s imagination; it is another calumny. According to my calculations, the sum spent on me was very considerably under ten thousand roubles, but I decided on that sum, and you must admit that in paying a debt I could not offer Mr. Burdovsky more, however kindly disposed I might be towards him; delicacy forbids it; I should seem to be offering him charity instead of rightful payment. I don’t know how you cannot see that, gentlemen! Besides, I had no intention of leaving the matter there. I meant to intervene amicably later on and help to improve poor Mr. Burdovsky’s position. It is clear that he has been deceived, or he would never have agreed to anything so vile as the scandalous revelations about his mother in Mr. Keller’s article. But, gentlemen, why are you getting angry again? Are we never to come to an understanding? Well, the event has proved me right! I have just seen with my own eyes the proof that my conjecture was correct!” he added, with increasing eagerness.

He meant to calm his hearers, and did not perceive that his words had only increased their irritation.

“What do you mean? What are you convinced of?” they demanded angrily.

“In the first place, I have had the opportunity of getting a correct idea of Mr. Burdovsky. I see what he is for myself. He is an innocent man, deceived by everyone! A defenceless victim, who deserves indulgence! Secondly, Gavrila Ardalionovitch, in whose hands I had placed the matter, had his first interview with me barely an hour ago. I had not heard from him for some time, as I was away, and have been ill for three days since my return to St. Petersburg. He tells me that he has exposed the designs of Tchebaroff and has proof that justifies my opinion of him. I know, gentlemen, that many people think me an idiot. Counting upon my reputation as a man whose purse-strings are easily loosened, Tchebaroff thought it would be a simple matter to fleece me, especially by trading on my gratitude to Pavlicheff. But the main point is—listen, gentlemen, let me finish!—the main point is that Mr. Burdovsky is not Pavlicheff’s son at all. Gavrila Ardalionovitch has just told me of his discovery, and assures me that he has positive proofs. Well, what do you think of that? It is scarcely credible, even after

all the tricks that have been played upon me. Please note that we have positive proofs! I can hardly believe it myself, I assure you; I do not yet believe it; I am still doubtful, because Gavrilá Ardalionovitch has not had time to go into details; but there can be no further doubt that Tchebaroff is a rogue! He has deceived poor Mr. Burdovsky, and all of you, gentlemen, who have come forward so nobly to support your friend—(he evidently needs support, I quite see that!). He has abused your credulity and involved you all in an attempted fraud, for when all is said and done this claim is nothing else!”

“What! a fraud? What, he is not Pavlicheff’s son? Impossible!”

These exclamations but feebly expressed the profound bewilderment into which the prince’s words had plunged Burdovsky’s companions.

“Certainly it is a fraud! Since Mr. Burdovsky is not Pavlicheff’s son, his claim is neither more nor less than attempted fraud (supposing, of course, that he had known the truth), but the fact is that he has been deceived. I insist on this point in order to justify him; I repeat that his simple-mindedness makes him worthy of pity, and that he cannot stand alone; otherwise he would have behaved like a scoundrel in this matter. But I feel certain that he does not understand it! I was just the same myself before I went to Switzerland; I stammered incoherently; one tries to express oneself and cannot. I understand that. I am all the better able to pity Mr. Burdovsky, because I know from experience what it is to be like that, and so I have a right to speak. Well, though there is no such person as ‘Pavlicheff’s son,’ and it is all nothing but a humbug, yet I will keep to my decision, and I am prepared to give up ten thousand roubles in memory of Pavlicheff. Before Mr. Burdovsky made this claim, I proposed to found a school with this money, in memory of my benefactor, but I shall honour his memory quite as well by giving the ten thousand roubles to Mr. Burdovsky, because, though he was not Pavlicheff’s son, he was treated almost as though he were. That is what gave a rogue the opportunity of deceiving him; he really did think himself Pavlicheff’s son. Listen, gentlemen; this matter must be settled; keep calm; do not get angry; and sit down! Gavrilá Ardalionovitch will explain everything to you at once, and I confess that I am very anxious to hear all the details myself. He says that he has even been to Pskoff to see your mother, Mr. Burdovsky; she is not dead, as the article which was just read to us makes out. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down!”

The prince sat down, and at length prevailed upon Burdovsky’s company to do likewise. During the last ten or twenty minutes, exasperated by continual interruptions, he had raised his voice, and spoken with great vehemence. Now, no doubt, he bitterly regretted several words and expressions which had escaped him in his excitement. If he had not been driven beyond the limits of endurance, he would not have ventured to express certain conjectures so openly. He had no sooner sat down than his heart was torn by sharp remorse. Besides insulting Burdovsky with the supposition, made in the presence of witnesses, that he was suffering from the complaint for which he had himself been treated in Switzerland, he reproached himself with the grossest indelicacy in having offered him the ten thousand roubles before everyone. “I ought to have waited till to-morrow and offered him the money when we were alone,” thought Muishkin. “Now

it is too late, the mischief is done! Yes, I am an idiot, an absolute idiot!" he said to himself, overcome with shame and regret.

Till then Gavril Ardalionovitch had sat apart in silence. When the prince called upon him, he came and stood by his side, and in a calm, clear voice began to render an account of the mission confided to him. All conversation ceased instantly. Everyone, especially the Burdovsky party, listened with the utmost curiosity.

IX.

"You will not deny, I am sure," said Gavril Ardalionovitch, turning to Burdovsky, who sat looking at him with wide-open eyes, perplexed and astonished. You will not deny, seriously, that you were born just two years after your mother's legal marriage to Mr. Burdovsky, your father. Nothing would be easier than to prove the date of your birth from well-known facts; we can only look on Mr. Keller's version as a work of imagination, and one, moreover, extremely offensive both to you and your mother. Of course he distorted the truth in order to strengthen your claim, and to serve your interests. Mr. Keller said that he previously consulted you about his article in the paper, but did not read it to you as a whole. Certainly he could not have read that passage.

"As a matter of fact, I did not read it," interrupted the boxer, "but its contents had been given me on unimpeachable authority, and I ..."

"Excuse me, Mr. Keller," interposed Gavril Ardalionovitch. "Allow me to speak. I assure you your article shall be mentioned in its proper place, and you can then explain everything, but for the moment I would rather not anticipate. Quite accidentally, with the help of my sister, Varvara Ardalionovna Ptitsin, I obtained from one of her intimate friends, Madame Zoubkoff, a letter written to her twenty-five years ago, by Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlicheff, then abroad. After getting into communication with this lady, I went by her advice to Timofei Fedorovitch Viazovkin, a retired colonel, and one of Pavlicheff's oldest friends. He gave me two more letters written by the latter when he was still in foreign parts. These three documents, their dates, and the facts mentioned in them, prove in the most undeniable manner, that eighteen months before your birth, Nicolai Andreevitch went abroad, where he remained for three consecutive years. Your mother, as you are well aware, has never been out of Russia... . It is too late to read the letters now; I am content to state the fact. But if you desire it, come to me tomorrow morning, bring witnesses and writing experts with you, and I will prove the absolute truth of my story. From that moment the question will be decided."

These words caused a sensation among the listeners, and there was a general movement of relief. Burdovsky got up abruptly.

"If that is true," said he, "I have been deceived, grossly deceived, but not by Tchebaroff: and for a long time past, a long time. I do not wish for experts, not I, nor

to go to see you. I believe you. I give it up.... But I refuse the ten thousand roubles. Good-bye.”

“Wait five minutes more, Mr. Burdovsky,” said Gavril Ardalionovitch pleasantly. “I have more to say. Some rather curious and important facts have come to light, and it is absolutely necessary, in my opinion, that you should hear them. You will not regret, I fancy, to have the whole matter thoroughly cleared up.”

Burdovsky silently resumed his seat, and bent his head as though in profound thought. His friend, Lebedeff’s nephew, who had risen to accompany him, also sat down again. He seemed much disappointed, though as self-confident as ever. Hippolyte looked dejected and sulky, as well as surprised. He had just been attacked by a violent fit of coughing, so that his handkerchief was stained with blood. The boxer looked thoroughly frightened.

“Oh, Antip!” cried he in a miserable voice, “I did say to you the other day—the day before yesterday—that perhaps you were not really Pavlicheff’s son!”

There were sounds of half-smothered laughter at this.

“Now, that is a valuable piece of information, Mr. Keller,” replied Gania. “However that may be, I have private information which convinces me that Mr. Burdovsky, though doubtless aware of the date of his birth, knew nothing at all about Pavlicheff’s sojourn abroad. Indeed, he passed the greater part of his life out of Russia, returning at intervals for short visits. The journey in question is in itself too unimportant for his friends to recollect it after more than twenty years; and of course Mr. Burdovsky could have known nothing about it, for he was not born. As the event has proved, it was not impossible to find evidence of his absence, though I must confess that chance has helped me in a quest which might very well have come to nothing. It was really almost impossible for Burdovsky or Tchubaroff to discover these facts, even if it had entered their heads to try. Naturally they never dreamt...

Here the voice of Hippolyte suddenly intervened.

“Allow me, Mr. Ivolgin,” he said irritably. “What is the good of all this rigmarole? Pardon me. All is now clear, and we acknowledge the truth of your main point. Why go into these tedious details? You wish perhaps to boast of the cleverness of your investigation, to cry up your talents as detective? Or perhaps your intention is to excuse Burdovsky, by roving that he took up the matter in ignorance? Well, I consider that extremely impudent on your part! You ought to know that Burdovsky has no need of being excused or justified by you or anyone else! It is an insult! The affair is quite painful enough for him without that. Will nothing make you understand?”

“Enough! enough! Mr. Terentieff,” interrupted Gania.

“Don’t excite yourself; you seem very ill, and I am sorry for that. I am almost done, but there are a few facts to which I must briefly refer, as I am convinced that they ought to be clearly explained once for all... .” A movement of impatience was noticed in his audience as he resumed: “I merely wish to state, for the information of all concerned, that the reason for Mr. Pavlicheff’s interest in your mother, Mr. Burdovsky, was simply that she was the sister of a serf-girl with whom he was deeply in love in his youth, and

whom most certainly he would have married but for her sudden death. I have proofs that this circumstance is almost, if not quite, forgotten. I may add that when your mother was about ten years old, Pavlicheff took her under his care, gave her a good education, and later, a considerable dowry. His relations were alarmed, and feared he might go so far as to marry her, but she gave her hand to a young land-surveyor named Burdovsky when she reached the age of twenty. I can even say definitely that it was a marriage of affection. After his wedding your father gave up his occupation as land-surveyor, and with his wife's dowry of fifteen thousand roubles went in for commercial speculations. As he had had no experience, he was cheated on all sides, and took to drink in order to forget his troubles. He shortened his life by his excesses, and eight years after his marriage he died. Your mother says herself that she was left in the direst poverty, and would have died of starvation had it not been for Pavlicheff, who generously allowed her a yearly pension of six hundred roubles. Many people recall his extreme fondness for you as a little boy. Your mother confirms this, and agrees with others in thinking that he loved you the more because you were a sickly child, stammering in your speech, and almost deformed—for it is known that all his life Nicolai Andreevitch had a partiality for unfortunates of every kind, especially children. In my opinion this is most important. I may add that I discovered yet another fact, the last on which I employed my detective powers. Seeing how fond Pavlicheff was of you,—it was thanks to him you went to school, and also had the advantage of special teachers—his relations and servants grew to believe that you were his son, and that your father had been betrayed by his wife. I may point out that this idea was only accredited generally during the last years of Pavlicheff's life, when his next-of-kin were trembling about the succession, when the earlier story was quite forgotten, and when all opportunity for discovering the truth had seemingly passed away. No doubt you, Mr. Burdovsky, heard this conjecture, and did not hesitate to accept it as true. I have had the honour of making your mother's acquaintance, and I find that she knows all about these reports. What she does not know is that you, her son, should have listened to them so complaisantly. I found your respected mother at Pskoff, ill and in deep poverty, as she has been ever since the death of your benefactor. She told me with tears of gratitude how you had supported her; she expects much of you, and believes fervently in your future success..”

“Oh, this is unbearable!” said Lebedeff's nephew impatiently. “What is the good of all this romancing?”

“It is revolting and unseemly!” cried Hippolyte, jumping up in a fury.

Burdovsky alone sat silent and motionless.

“What is the good of it?” repeated Gavril Ardalionovitch, with pretended surprise. “Well, firstly, because now perhaps Mr. Burdovsky is quite convinced that Mr. Pavlicheff's love for him came simply from generosity of soul, and not from paternal duty. It was most necessary to impress this fact upon his mind, considering that he approved of the article written by Mr. Keller. I speak thus because I look on you, Mr. Burdovsky, as an honourable man. Secondly, it appears that there was no intention of cheating in

this case, even on the part of Tchebaroff. I wish to say this quite plainly, because the prince hinted a while ago that I too thought it an attempt at robbery and extortion. On the contrary, everyone has been quite sincere in the matter, and although Tchebaroff may be somewhat of a rogue, in this business he has acted simply as any sharp lawyer would do under the circumstances. He looked at it as a case that might bring him in a lot of money, and he did not calculate badly; because on the one hand he speculated on the generosity of the prince, and his gratitude to the late Mr. Pavlicheff, and on the other to his chivalrous ideas as to the obligations of honour and conscience. As to Mr. Burdovsky, allowing for his principles, we may acknowledge that he engaged in the business with very little personal aim in view. At the instigation of Tchebaroff and his other friends, he decided to make the attempt in the service of truth, progress, and humanity. In short, the conclusion may be drawn that, in spite of all appearances, Mr. Burdovsky is a man of irreproachable character, and thus the prince can all the more readily offer him his friendship, and the assistance of which he spoke just now..."

"Hush! hush! Gavriła Ardalionovitch!" cried Muishkin in dismay, but it was too late.

"I said, and I have repeated it over and over again," shouted Burdovsky furiously, "that I did not want the money. I will not take it... why... I will not... I am going away!"

He was rushing hurriedly from the terrace, when Lebedeff's nephew seized his arms, and said something to him in a low voice. Burdovsky turned quickly, and drawing an addressed but unsealed envelope from his pocket, he threw it down on a little table beside the prince.

"There's the money!... How dare you?... The money!"

"Those are the two hundred and fifty roubles you dared to send him as a charity, by the hands of Tchebaroff," explained Doktorenko.

"The article in the newspaper put it at fifty!" cried Colia.

"I beg your pardon," said the prince, going up to Burdovsky. "I have done you a great wrong, but I did not send you that money as a charity, believe me. And now I am again to blame. I offended you just now." (The prince was much distressed; he seemed worn out with fatigue, and spoke almost incoherently.) "I spoke of swindling... but I did not apply that to you. I was deceived ... I said you were... afflicted... like me... But you are not like me... you give lessons... you support your mother. I said you had dishonoured your mother, but you love her. She says so herself... I did not know... Gavriła Ardalionovitch did not tell me that... Forgive me! I dared to offer you ten thousand roubles, but I was wrong. I ought to have done it differently, and now... there is no way of doing it, for you despise me..."

"I declare, this is a lunatic asylum!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

"Of course it is a lunatic asylum!" repeated Aglaya sharply, but her words were overpowered by other voices. Everybody was talking loudly, making remarks and comments; some discussed the affair gravely, others laughed. Ivan Fedorovitch Epanchin was extremely indignant. He stood waiting for his wife with an air of offended dignity. Lebedeff's nephew took up the word again.

“Well, prince, to do you justice, you certainly know how to make the most of your—let us call it infirmity, for the sake of politeness; you have set about offering your money and friendship in such a way that no self-respecting man could possibly accept them. This is an excess of ingenuousness or of malice—you ought to know better than anyone which word best fits the case.”

“Allow me, gentlemen,” said Gavrila Ardalionovitch, who had just examined the contents of the envelope, “there are only a hundred roubles here, not two hundred and fifty. I point this out, prince, to prevent misunderstanding.”

“Never mind, never mind,” said the prince, signing to him to keep quiet.

“But we do mind,” said Lebedeff’s nephew vehemently. “Prince, your ‘never mind’ is an insult to us. We have nothing to hide; our actions can bear daylight. It is true that there are only a hundred roubles instead of two hundred and fifty, but it is all the same.”

“Why, no, it is hardly the same,” remarked Gavrila Ardalionovitch, with an air of ingenuous surprise.

“Don’t interrupt, we are not such fools as you think, Mr. Lawyer,” cried Lebedeff’s nephew angrily. “Of course there is a difference between a hundred roubles and two hundred and fifty, but in this case the principle is the main point, and that a hundred and fifty roubles are missing is only a side issue. The point to be emphasized is that Burdovsky will not accept your highness’s charity; he flings it back in your face, and it scarcely matters if there are a hundred roubles or two hundred and fifty. Burdovsky has refused ten thousand roubles; you heard him. He would not have returned even a hundred roubles if he was dishonest! The hundred and fifty roubles were paid to Tchebaroff for his travelling expenses. You may jeer at our stupidity and at our inexperience in business matters; you have done all you could already to make us look ridiculous; but do not dare to call us dishonest. The four of us will club together every day to repay the hundred and fifty roubles to the prince, if we have to pay it in instalments of a rouble at a time, but we will repay it, with interest. Burdovsky is poor, he has no millions. After his journey to see the prince Tchebaroff sent in his bill. We counted on winning... Who would not have done the same in such a case?”

“Who indeed?” exclaimed Prince S.

“I shall certainly go mad, if I stay here!” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“It reminds me,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing, “of the famous plea of a certain lawyer who lately defended a man for murdering six people in order to rob them. He excused his client on the score of poverty. ‘It is quite natural,’ he said in conclusion, ‘considering the state of misery he was in, that he should have thought of murdering these six people; which of you, gentlemen, would not have done the same in his place?’”

“Enough,” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna abruptly, trembling with anger, “we have had enough of this balderdash!”

In a state of terrible excitement she threw back her head, with flaming eyes, casting looks of contempt and defiance upon the whole company, in which she could no longer distinguish friend from foe. She had restrained herself so long that she felt forced to

vent her rage on somebody. Those who knew Lizabetha Prokofievna saw at once how it was with her. "She flies into these rages sometimes," said Ivan Fedorovitch to Prince S. the next day, "but she is not often so violent as she was yesterday; it does not happen more than once in three years."

"Be quiet, Ivan Fedorovitch! Leave me alone!" cried Mrs. Epanchin. "Why do you offer me your arm now? You had not sense enough to take me away before. You are my husband, you are a father, it was your duty to drag me away by force, if in my folly I refused to obey you and go quietly. You might at least have thought of your daughters. We can find our way out now without your help. Here is shame enough for a year! Wait a moment 'till I thank the prince! Thank you, prince, for the entertainment you have given us! It was most amusing to hear these young men... It is vile, vile! A chaos, a scandal, worse than a nightmare! Is it possible that there can be many such people on earth? Be quiet, Aglaya! Be quiet, Alexandra! It is none of your business! Don't fuss round me like that, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you exasperate me! So, my dear," she cried, addressing the prince, "you go so far as to beg their pardon! He says, 'Forgive me for offering you a fortune.' And you, you mountebank, what are you laughing at?" she cried, turning suddenly on Lebedeff's nephew. "'We refuse ten thousand roubles; we do not beseech, we demand!' As if he did not know that this idiot will call on them tomorrow to renew his offers of money and friendship. You will, won't you? You will? Come, will you, or won't you?"

"I shall," said the prince, with gentle humility.

"You hear him! You count upon it, too," she continued, turning upon Doktorenko. "You are as sure of him now as if you had the money in your pocket. And there you are playing the swaggerer to throw dust in our eyes! No, my dear sir, you may take other people in! I can see through all your airs and graces, I see your game!"

"Lizabetha Prokofievna!" exclaimed the prince.

"Come, Lizabetha Prokofievna, it is quite time for us to be going, we will take the prince with us," said Prince S. with a smile, in the coolest possible way.

The girls stood apart, almost frightened; their father was positively horrified. Mrs. Epanchin's language astonished everybody. Some who stood a little way off smiled furtively, and talked in whispers. Lebedeff wore an expression of utmost ecstasy.

"Chaos and scandal are to be found everywhere, madame," remarked Doktorenko, who was considerably put out of countenance.

"Not like this! Nothing like the spectacle you have just given us, sir," answered Lizabetha Prokofievna, with a sort of hysterical rage. "Leave me alone, will you?" she cried violently to those around her, who were trying to keep her quiet. "No, Evgenie Pavlovitch, if, as you said yourself just now, a lawyer said in open court that he found it quite natural that a man should murder six people because he was in misery, the world must be coming to an end. I had not heard of it before. Now I understand everything. And this stutterer, won't he turn out a murderer?" she cried, pointing to Burdovsky, who was staring at her with stupefaction. "I bet he will! He will have none of your money, possibly, he will refuse it because his conscience will not allow him to

accept it, but he will go murdering you by night and walking off with your cashbox, with a clear conscience! He does not call it a dishonest action but ‘the impulse of a noble despair’; ‘a negation’; or the devil knows what! Bah! everything is upside down, everyone walks head downwards. A young girl, brought up at home, suddenly jumps into a cab in the middle of the street, saying: ‘Good-bye, mother, I married Karlitch, or Ivanitch, the other day!’ And you think it quite right? You call such conduct estimable and natural? The ‘woman question’? Look here,” she continued, pointing to Colia, “the other day that whippersnapper told me that this was the whole meaning of the ‘woman question.’ But even supposing that your mother is a fool, you are none the less, bound to treat her with humanity. Why did you come here tonight so insolently? ‘Give us our rights, but don’t dare to speak in our presence. Show us every mark of deepest respect, while we treat you like the scum of the earth.’ The miscreants have written a tissue of calumny in their article, and these are the men who seek for truth, and do battle for the right! ‘We do not beseech, we demand, you will get no thanks from us, because you will be acting to satisfy your own conscience!’ What morality! But, good. heavens! if you declare that the prince’s generosity will, excite no gratitude in you, he might answer that he is not, bound to be grateful to Pavlicheff, who also was only satisfying his own conscience. But you counted on the prince’s, gratitude towards Pavlicheff; you never lent him any money; he owes you nothing; then what were you counting upon if not on his gratitude? And if you appeal to that sentiment in others, why should you expect to be exempted from it? They are mad! They say society is savage and inhuman because it despises a young girl who has been seduced. But if you call society inhuman you imply that the young girl is made to suffer by its censure. How then, can you hold her up to the scorn of society in the newspapers without realizing that you are making her suffering, still greater? Madmen! Vain fools! They don’t believe in God, they don’t believe in Christ! But you are so eaten. up by pride and vanity, that you will end by devouring each other—that is my prophecy! Is not this absurd? Is it not monstrous chaos? And after all this, that shameless creature will go and beg their pardon! Are there many people like you? What are you smiling at? Because I am not ashamed to disgrace myself before you?—Yes, I am disgraced—it can’t be helped now! But don’t you jeer at me, you scum!” (this was aimed at Hippolyte). “He is almost at his last gasp, yet he corrupts others. You, have got hold of this lad “—(she pointed to Colia); “you, have turned his head, you have taught him to be an atheist, you don’t believe in God, and you are not too old to be whipped, sir! A plague upon you! And so, Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, you will call on them tomorrow, will you?” she asked the prince breathlessly, for the second time.

“Yes.”

“Then I will never speak to you again.” She made a sudden movement to go, and then turned quickly back. “And you will call on that atheist?” she continued, pointing to Hippolyte. “How dare you grin at me like that?” she shouted furiously, rushing at the invalid, whose mocking smile drove her to distraction.

Exclamations arose on all sides.

"Lizabetha Prokofievna! Lizabetha Prokofievna! Lizabetha Prokofievna!"

"Mother, this is disgraceful!" cried Aglaya.

Mrs. Epanchin had approached Hippolyte and seized him firmly by the arm, while her eyes, blazing with fury, were fixed upon his face.

"Do not distress yourself, Aglaya Ivanovitch," he answered calmly; "your mother knows that one cannot strike a dying man. I am ready to explain why I was laughing. I shall be delighted if you will let me—"

A violent fit of coughing, which lasted a full minute, prevented him from finishing his sentence.

"He is dying, yet he will not stop holding forth!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna. She loosed her hold on his arm, almost terrified, as she saw him wiping the blood from his lips. "Why do you talk? You ought to go home to bed."

"So I will," he whispered hoarsely. "As soon as I get home I will go to bed at once; and I know I shall be dead in a fortnight; Botkine told me so himself last week. That is why I should like to say a few farewell words, if you will let me."

"But you must be mad! It is ridiculous! You should take care of yourself; what is the use of holding a conversation now? Go home to bed, do!" cried Mrs. Epanchin in horror.

"When I do go to bed I shall never get up again," said Hippolyte, with a smile. "I meant to take to my bed yesterday and stay there till I died, but as my legs can still carry me, I put it off for two days, so as to come here with them to-day—but I am very tired."

"Oh, sit down, sit down, why are you standing?"

Lizabetha Prokofievna placed a chair for him with her own hands.

"Thank you," he said gently. "Sit opposite to me, and let us talk. We must have a talk now, Lizabetha Prokofievna; I am very anxious for it." He smiled at her once more. "Remember that today, for the last time, I am out in the air, and in the company of my fellow-men, and that in a fortnight I shall I certainly be no longer in this world. So, in a way, this is my farewell to nature and to men. I am not very sentimental, but do you know, I am quite glad that all this has happened at Pavlofsk, where at least one can see a green tree."

"But why talk now?" replied Lizabetha Prokofievna, more and more alarmed; "are quite feverish. Just now you would not stop shouting, and now you can hardly breathe. You are gasping."

"I shall have time to rest. Why will you not grant my last wish? Do you know, Lizabetha Prokofievna, that I have dreamed of meeting you for a long while? I had often heard of you from Colia; he is almost the only person who still comes to see me. You are an original and eccentric woman; I have seen that for myself—Do you know, I have even been rather fond of you?"

"Good heavens! And I very nearly struck him!"

"You were prevented by Aglaya Ivanovna. I think I am not mistaken? That is your daughter, Aglaya Ivanovna? She is so beautiful that I recognized her directly, although

I had never seen her before. Let me, at least, look on beauty for the last time in my life," he said with a wry smile. "You are here with the prince, and your husband, and a large company. Why should you refuse to gratify my last wish?"

"Give me a chair!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, but she seized one for herself and sat down opposite to Hippolyte. "Colia, you must go home with him," she commanded and tomorrow I will come my self. "

"Will you let me ask the prince for a cup of tea?... I am exhausted. Do you know what you might do, Lizabetha Prokofievna? I think you wanted to take the prince home with you for tea. Stay here, and let us spend the evening together. I am sure the prince will give us all some tea. Forgive me for being so free and easy— but I know you are kind, and the prince is kind, too. In fact, we are all good-natured people—it is really quite comical."

The prince bestirred himself to give orders. Lebedeff hurried out, followed by Vera.

"It is quite true," said Mrs. Epanchin decisively. "Talk, but not too loud, and don't excite yourself. You have made me sorry for you. Prince, you don't deserve that I should stay and have tea with you, yet I will, all the same, but I won't apologize. I apologize to nobody! Nobody! It is absurd! However, forgive me, prince, if I blew you up—that is, if you like, of course. But please don't let me keep anyone," she added suddenly to her husband and daughters, in a tone of resentment, as though they had grievously offended her. "I can come home alone quite well."

But they did not let her finish, and gathered round her eagerly. The prince immediately invited everyone to stay for tea, and apologized for not having thought of it before. The general murmured a few polite words, and asked Lizabetha Prokofievna if she did not feel cold on the terrace. He very nearly asked Hippolyte how long he had been at the University, but stopped himself in time. Evgenie Pavlovitch and Prince S. suddenly grew extremely gay and amiable. Adelaida and Alexandra had not recovered from their surprise, but it was now mingled with satisfaction; in short, everyone seemed very much relieved that Lizabetha Prokofievna had got over her paroxysm. Aglaya alone still frowned, and sat apart in silence. All the other guests stayed on as well; no one wanted to go, not even General Ivolgin, but Lebedeff said something to him in passing which did not seem to please him, for he immediately went and sulked in a corner. The prince took care to offer tea to Burdovsky and his friends as well as the rest. The invitation made them rather uncomfortable. They muttered that they would wait for Hippolyte, and went and sat by themselves in a distant corner of the verandah. Tea was served at once; Lebedeff had no doubt ordered it for himself and his family before the others arrived. It was striking eleven.

X.

AFTER moistening his lips with the tea which Vera Lebedeff brought him, Hippolyte set the cup down on the table, and glanced round. He seemed confused and almost at a loss.

“Just look, Lizabetha Prokofievna,” he began, with a kind of feverish haste; “these china cups are supposed to be extremely valuable. Lebedeff always keeps them locked up in his china-cupboard; they were part of his wife’s dowry. Yet he has brought them out tonight—in your honour, of course! He is so pleased—” He was about to add something else, but could not find the words.

“There, he is feeling embarrassed; I expected as much,” whispered Evgenie Pavlovitch suddenly in the prince’s ear. “It is a bad sign; what do you think? Now, out of spite, he will come out with something so outrageous that even Lizabetha Prokofievna will not be able to stand it.”

Muishkin looked at him inquiringly.

“You do not care if he does?” added Evgenie Pavlovitch. “Neither do I; in fact, I should be glad, merely as a proper punishment for our dear Lizabetha Prokofievna. I am very anxious that she should get it, without delay, and I shall stay till she does. You seem feverish.”

“Never mind; by-and-by; yes, I am not feeling well,” said the prince impatiently, hardly listening. He had just heard Hippolyte mention his own name.

“You don’t believe it?” said the invalid, with a nervous laugh. “I don’t wonder, but the prince will have no difficulty in believing it; he will not be at all surprised.”

“Do you hear, prince—do you hear that?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, turning towards him.

There was laughter in the group around her, and Lebedeff stood before her gesticulating wildly.

“He declares that your humbug of a landlord revised this gentleman’s article—the article that was read aloud just now—in which you got such a charming dressing-down.”

The prince regarded Lebedeff with astonishment.

“Why don’t you say something?” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, stamping her foot.

“Well,” murmured the prince, with his eyes still fixed on Lebedeff, “I can see now that he did.”

“Is it true?” she asked eagerly.

“Absolutely, your excellency,” said Lebedeff, without the least hesitation.

Mrs. Epanchin almost sprang up in amazement at his answer, and at the assurance of his tone.

“He actually seems to boast of it!” she cried.

“I am base—base!” muttered Lebedeff, beating his breast, and hanging his head.

“What do I care if you are base or not? He thinks he has only to say, ‘I am base,’ and there is an end of it. As to you, prince, are you not ashamed?—I repeat, are you not ashamed, to mix with such riff-raff? I will never forgive you!”

"The prince will forgive me!" said Lebedeff with emotional conviction.

Keller suddenly left his seat, and approached Lizabetha. Prokofievna.

"It was only out of generosity, madame," he said in a resonant voice, "and because I would not betray a friend in an awkward position, that I did not mention this revision before; though you heard him yourself threatening to kick us down the steps. To clear the matter up, I declare now that I did have recourse to his assistance, and that I paid him six roubles for it. But I did not ask him to correct my style; I simply went to him for information concerning the facts, of which I was ignorant to a great extent, and which he was competent to give. The story of the gaiters, the appetite in the Swiss professor's house, the substitution of fifty roubles for two hundred and fifty—all such details, in fact, were got from him. I paid him six roubles for them; but he did not correct the style."

"I must state that I only revised the first part of the article," interposed Lebedeff with feverish impatience, while laughter rose from all around him; "but we fell out in the middle over one idea, so I never corrected the second part. Therefore I cannot be held responsible for the numerous grammatical blunders in it."

"That is all he thinks of!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

"May I ask when this article was revised?" said Evgenie Pavlovitch to Keller.

"Yesterday morning," he replied, "we had an interview which we all gave our word of honour to keep secret."

"The very time when he was cringing before you and making protestations of devotion! Oh, the mean wretches! I will have nothing to do with your Pushkin, and your daughter shall not set foot in my house!"

Lizabetha Prokofievna was about to rise, when she saw Hippolyte laughing, and turned upon him with irritation.

"Well, sir, I suppose you wanted to make me look ridiculous?"

"Heaven forbid!" he answered, with a forced smile. "But I am more than ever struck by your eccentricity, Lizabetha Prokofievna. I admit that I told you of Lebedeff's duplicity, on purpose. I knew the effect it would have on you,—on you alone, for the prince will forgive him. He has probably forgiven him already, and is racking his brains to find some excuse for him—is not that the truth, prince?"

He gasped as he spoke, and his strange agitation seemed to increase.

"Well?" said Mrs. Epanchin angrily, surprised at his tone; "well, what more?"

"I have heard many things of the kind about you ...they delighted me... I have learned to hold you in the highest esteem," continued Hippolyte.

His words seemed tinged with a kind of sarcastic mockery, yet he was extremely agitated, casting suspicious glances around him, growing confused, and constantly losing the thread of his ideas. All this, together with his consumptive appearance, and the frenzied expression of his blazing eyes, naturally attracted the attention of everyone present.

"I might have been surprised (though I admit I know nothing of the world), not only that you should have stayed on just now in the company of such people as myself and

my friends, who are not of your class, but that you should let these ... young ladies listen to such a scandalous affair, though no doubt novel-reading has taught them all there is to know. I may be mistaken; I hardly know what I am saying; but surely no one but you would have stayed to please a whippersnapper (yes, a whippersnapper; I admit it) to spend the evening and take part in everything—only to be ashamed of it tomorrow. (I know I express myself badly.) I admire and appreciate it all extremely, though the expression on the face of his excellency, your husband, shows that he thinks it very improper. He-he!” He burst out laughing, and was seized with a fit of coughing which lasted for two minutes and prevented him from speaking.

“He has lost his breath now!” said Lizabetha Prokofievna coldly, looking at him with more curiosity than pity: “Come, my dear boy, that is quite enough—let us make an end of this.”

Ivan Fedorovitch, now quite out of patience, interrupted suddenly. “Let me remark in my turn, sir,” he said in tones of deep annoyance, “that my wife is here as the guest of Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, our friend and neighbour, and that in any case, young man, it is not for you to pass judgment on the conduct of Lizabetha Prokofievna, or to make remarks aloud in my presence concerning what feelings you think may be read in my face. Yes, my wife stayed here,” continued the general, with increasing irritation, “more out of amazement than anything else. Everyone can understand that a collection of such strange young men would attract the attention of a person interested in contemporary life. I stayed myself, just as I sometimes stop to look on in the street when I see something that may be regarded as-as-as—”

“As a curiosity,” suggested Evgenie Pavlovitch, seeing his excellency involved in a comparison which he could not complete.

“That is exactly the word I wanted,” said the general with satisfaction—” a curiosity. However, the most astonishing and, if I may so express myself, the most painful, thing in this matter, is that you cannot even understand, young man, that Lizabetha Prokofievna, only stayed with you because you are ill, —if you really are dying—moved by the pity awakened by your plaintive appeal, and that her name, character, and social position place her above all risk of contamination. Lizabetha Prokofievna!” he continued, now crimson with rage, “if you are coming, we will say goodnight to the prince, and—”

“Thank you for the lesson, general,” said Hippolyte, with unexpected gravity, regarding him thoughtfully.

“Two minutes more, if you please, dear Ivan Fedorovitch,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna to her husband; “it seems to me that he is in a fever and delirious; you can see by his eyes what a state he is in; it is impossible to let him go back to Petersburg tonight. Can you put him up, Lef Nicolaievitch? I hope you are not bored, dear prince,” she added suddenly to Prince S. “Alexandra, my dear, come here! Your hair is coming down.”

She arranged her daughter’s hair, which was not in the least disordered, and gave her a kiss. This was all that she had called her for.

“I thought you were capable of development,” said Hippolyte, coming out of his fit of abstraction. “Yes, that is what I meant to say,” he added, with the satisfaction of one who suddenly remembers something he had forgotten. “Here is Burdovsky, sincerely anxious to protect his mother; is not that so? And he himself is the cause of her disgrace. The prince is anxious to help Burdovsky and offers him friendship and a large sum of money, in the sincerity of his heart. And here they stand like two sworn enemies—ha, ha, ha! You all hate Burdovsky because his behaviour with regard to his mother is shocking and repugnant to you; do you not? Is not that true? Is it not true? You all have a passion for beauty and distinction in outward forms; that is all you care for, isn’t it? I have suspected for a long time that you cared for nothing else! Well, let me tell you that perhaps there is not one of you who loved your mother as Burdovsky loved his. As to you, prince, I know that you have sent money secretly to Burdovsky’s mother through Gania. Well, I bet now,” he continued with an hysterical laugh, “that Burdovsky will accuse you of indelicacy, and reproach you with a want of respect for his mother! Yes, that is quite certain! Ha, ha, ha!”

He caught his breath, and began to cough once more.

“Come, that is enough! That is all now; you have no more to say? Now go to bed; you are burning with fever,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna impatiently. Her anxious eyes had never left the invalid. “Good heavens, he is going to begin again!”

“You are laughing, I think? Why do you keep laughing at me?” said Hippolyte irritably to Evgenie Pavlovitch, who certainly was laughing.

“I only want to know, Mr. Hippolyte—excuse me, I forget your surname.”

“Mr. Terentieff,” said the prince.

“Oh yes, Mr. Terentieff. Thank you prince. I heard it just now, but had forgotten it. I want to know, Mr. Terentieff, if what I have heard about you is true. It seems you are convinced that if you could speak to the people from a window for a quarter of an hour, you could make them all adopt your views and follow you?”

“I may have said so,” answered Hippolyte, as if trying to remember. “Yes, I certainly said so,” he continued with sudden animation, fixing an unflinching glance on his questioner. “What of it?”

“Nothing. I was only seeking further information, to put the finishing touch.” Evgenie Pavlovitch was silent, but Hippolyte kept his eyes fixed upon him, waiting impatiently for more.

“Well, have you finished?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna to Evgenie. “Make haste, sir; it is time he went to bed. Have you more to say?” She was very angry.

“Yes, I have a little more,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, with a smile. “It seems to me that all you and your friends have said, Mr. Terentieff, and all you have just put forward with such undeniable talent, may be summed up in the triumph of right above all, independent of everything else, to the exclusion of everything else; perhaps even before having discovered what constitutes the right. I may be mistaken?”

“You are certainly mistaken; I do not even understand you. What else?”

Murmurs arose in the neighbourhood of Burdovsky and his companions; Lebedeff's nephew protested under his breath.

"I have nearly finished," replied Evgenie Pavlovitch.

"I will only remark that from these premisses one could conclude that might is right—I mean the right of the clenched fist, and of personal inclination. Indeed, the world has often come to that conclusion. Prudhon upheld that might is right. In the American War some of the most advanced Liberals took sides with the planters on the score that the blacks were an inferior race to the whites, and that might was the right of the white race."

"Well?"

"You mean, no doubt, that you do not deny that might is right?"

"What then?"

"You are at least logical. I would only point out that from the right of might, to the right of tigers and crocodiles, or even Daniloff and Gorsky, is but a step."

"I know nothing about that; what else?"

Hippolyte was scarcely listening. He kept saying well?" and "what else?" mechanically, without the least curiosity, and by mere force of habit.

"Why, nothing else; that is all."

"However, I bear you no grudge," said Hippolyte suddenly, and, hardly conscious of what he was doing, he held out his hand with a smile. The gesture took Evgenie Pavlovitch by surprise, but with the utmost gravity he touched the hand that was offered him in token of forgiveness.

"I can but thank you," he said, in a tone too respectful to be sincere, "for your kindness in letting me speak, for I have often noticed that our Liberals never allow other people to have an opinion of their own, and immediately answer their opponents with abuse, if they do not have recourse to arguments of a still more unpleasant nature."

"What you say is quite true," observed General Epanchin; then, clasping his hands behind his back, he returned to his place on the terrace steps, where he yawned with an air of boredom.

"Come, sir, that will do; you weary me," said Lizabetha Prokofievna suddenly to Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Hippolyte rose all at once, looking troubled and almost frightened.

"It is time for me to go," he said, glancing round in perplexity. "I have detained you... I wanted to tell you everything... I thought you all ... for the last time ... it was a whim..."

He evidently had sudden fits of returning animation, when he awoke from his semi-delirium; then, recovering full self-possession for a few moments, he would speak, in disconnected phrases which had perhaps haunted him for a long while on his bed of suffering, during weary, sleepless nights.

"Well, good-bye," he said abruptly. "You think it is easy for me to say good-bye to you? Ha, ha!"

Feeling that his question was somewhat gauche, he smiled angrily. Then as if vexed that he could not ever express what he really meant, he said irritably, in a loud voice:

“Excellency, I have the honour of inviting you to my funeral; that is, if you will deign to honour it with your presence. I invite you all, gentlemen, as well as the general.”

He burst out laughing again, but it was the laughter of a madman. Lizabetha Prokofievna approached him anxiously and seized his arm. He stared at her for a moment, still laughing, but soon his face grew serious.

“Do you know that I came here to see those trees?” pointing to the trees in the park. “It is not ridiculous, is it? Say that it is not ridiculous!” he demanded urgently of Lizabetha Prokofievna. Then he seemed to be plunged in thought. A moment later he raised his head, and his eyes sought for someone. He was looking for Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was close by on his right as before, but he had forgotten this, and his eyes ranged over the assembled company. “Ah! you have not gone!” he said, when he caught sight of him at last. “You kept on laughing just now, because I thought of speaking to the people from the window for a quarter of an hour. But I am not eighteen, you know; lying on that bed, and looking out of that window, I have thought of all sorts of things for such a long time that ... a dead man has no age, you know. I was saying that to myself only last week, when I was awake in the night. Do you know what you fear most? You fear our sincerity more than anything, although you despise us! The idea crossed my mind that night... You thought I was making fun of you just now, Lizabetha Prokofievna? No, the idea of mockery was far from me; I only meant to praise you. Colia told me the prince called you a child—very well—but let me see, I had something else to say...” He covered his face with his hands and tried to collect his thoughts.

“Ah, yes—you were going away just now, and I thought to myself: ‘I shall never see these people again—never again! This is the last time I shall see the trees, too. I shall see nothing after this but the red brick wall of Meyer’s house opposite my window. Tell them about it—try to tell them,’ I thought. ‘Here is a beautiful young girl—you are a dead man; make them understand that. Tell them that a dead man may say anything—and Mrs. Grundy will not be angry—ha-ha! You are not laughing?’” He looked anxiously around. “But you know I get so many queer ideas, lying there in bed. I have grown convinced that nature is full of mockery—you called me an atheist just now, but you know this nature ... why are you laughing again? You are very cruel!” he added suddenly, regarding them all with mournful reproach. “I have not corrupted Colia,” he concluded in a different and very serious tone, as if remembering something again.

“Nobody here is laughing at you. Calm yourself” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, much moved. “You shall see a new doctor tomorrow; the other was mistaken; but sit down, do not stand like that! You are delirious—Oh, what shall we do with him she cried in anguish, as she made him sit down again in the arm-chair.

A tear glistened on her cheek. At the sight of it Hippolyte seemed amazed. He lifted his hand timidly and, touched the tear with his finger, smiling like a child.

"I ... you," he began joyfully. "You cannot tell how I ... he always spoke so enthusiastically of you, Colia here; I liked his enthusiasm. I was not corrupting him! But I must leave him, too— I wanted to leave them all—there was not one of them—not one! I wanted to be a man of action—I had a right to be. Oh! what a lot of things I wanted! Now I want nothing; I renounce all my wants; I swore to myself that I would want nothing; let them seek the truth without me! Yes, nature is full of mockery! Why"—he continued with sudden warmth—"does she create the choicest beings only to mock at them? The only human being who is recognized as perfect, when nature showed him to mankind, was given the mission to say things which have caused the shedding of so much blood that it would have drowned mankind if it had all been shed at once! Oh! it is better for me to die! I should tell some dreadful lie too; nature would so contrive it! I have corrupted nobody. I wanted to live for the happiness of all men, to find and spread the truth. I used to look out of my window at the wall of Meyer's house, and say to myself that if I could speak for a quarter of an hour I would convince the whole world, and now for once in my life I have come into contact with ... you—if not with the others! And what is the result? Nothing! The sole result is that you despise me! Therefore I must be a fool, I am useless, it is time I disappeared! And I shall leave not even a memory! Not a sound, not a trace, not a single deed! I have not spread a single truth! ... Do not laugh at the fool! Forget him! Forget him forever! I beseech you, do not be so cruel as to remember! Do you know that if I were not consumptive, I would kill myself?"

Though he seemed to wish to say much more, he became silent. He fell back into his chair, and, covering his face with his hands, began to sob like a little child.

"Oh! what on earth are we to do with him?" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna. She hastened to him and pressed his head against her bosom, while he sobbed convulsively.

"Come, come, come! There, you must not cry, that will do. You are a good child! God will forgive you, because you knew no better. Come now, be a man! You know presently you will be ashamed."

Hippolyte raised his head with an effort, saying:

"I have little brothers and sisters, over there, poor avid innocent. She will corrupt them! You are a saint! You are a child yourself—save them! Snatch them from that ... she is ... it is shameful! Oh! help them! God will repay you a hundredfold. For the love of God, for the love of Christ!"

"Speak, Ivan Fedorovitch! What are we to do?" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, irritably. "Please break your majestic silence! I tell you, if you cannot come to some decision, I will stay here all night myself. You have tyrannized over me enough, you autocrat!"

She spoke angrily, and in great excitement, and expected an immediate reply. But in such a case, no matter how many are present, all prefer to keep silence: no one will take the initiative, but all reserve their comments till afterwards. There were some present—Varvara Ardalionovna, for instance—who would have willingly sat there till morning without saying a word. Varvara had sat apart all the evening without opening

her lips, but she listened to everything with the closest attention; perhaps she had her reasons for so doing.

“My dear,” said the general, “it seems to me that a sick-nurse would be of more use here than an excitable person like you. Perhaps it would be as well to get some sober, reliable man for the night. In any case we must consult the prince, and leave the patient to rest at once. Tomorrow we can see what can be done for him.”

“It is nearly midnight; we are going. Will he come with us, or is he to stay here?” Doktorenko asked crossly of the prince.

“You can stay with him if you like,” said Muishkin.

“There is plenty of room here.”

Suddenly, to the astonishment of all, Keller went quickly up to the general.

“Excellency,” he said, impulsively, “if you want a reliable man for the night, I am ready to sacrifice myself for my friend—such a soul as he has! I have long thought him a great man, excellency! My article showed my lack of education, but when he criticizes he scatters pearls!”

Ivan Fedorovitch turned from the boxer with a gesture of despair.

“I shall be delighted if he will stay; it would certainly be difficult for him to get back to Petersburg,” said the prince, in answer to the eager questions of Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“But you are half asleep, are you not? If you don’t want him, I will take him back to my house! Why, good gracious! He can hardly stand up himself! What is it? Are you ill?”

Not finding the prince on his death-bed, Lizabetha Prokofievna had been misled by his appearance to think him much better than he was. But his recent illness, the painful memories attached to it, the fatigue of this evening, the incident with “Pavlicheff’s son,” and now this scene with Hippolyte, had all so worked on his oversensitive nature that he was now almost in a fever. Moreover, anew trouble, almost a fear, showed itself in his eyes; he watched Hippolyte anxiously as if expecting something further.

Suddenly Hippolyte arose. His face, shockingly pale, was that of a man overwhelmed with shame and despair. This was shown chiefly in the look of fear and hatred which he cast upon the assembled company, and in the wild smile upon his trembling lips. Then he cast down his eyes, and with the same smile, staggered towards Burdovsky and Doktorenko, who stood at the entrance to the verandah. He had decided to go with them.

“There! that is what I feared!” cried the prince. “It was inevitable!”

Hippolyte turned upon him, a prey to maniacal rage, which set all the muscles of his face quivering.

“Ah! that is what you feared! It was inevitable, you say! Well, let me tell you that if I hate anyone here—I hate you all,” he cried, in a hoarse, strained voice—“but you, you, with your jesuitical soul, your soul of sickly sweetness, idiot, beneficent millionaire—I hate you worse than anything or anyone on earth! I saw through you and hated you long ago; from the day I first heard of you. I hated you with my whole heart. You have

contrived all this! You have driven me into this state! You have made a dying man disgrace himself. You, you, you are the cause of my abject cowardice! I would kill you if I remained alive! I do not want your benefits; I will accept none from anyone; do you hear? Not from any one! I want nothing! I was delirious, do not dare to triumph! I curse every one of you, once for all!"

Breath failed him here, and he was obliged to stop.

"He is ashamed of his tears!" whispered Lebedeff to Lizabetha Prokofievna. "It was inevitable. Ah! what a wonderful man the prince is! He read his very soul."

But Mrs. Epanchin would not deign to look at Lebedeff. Drawn up haughtily, with her head held high, she gazed at the "riff-raff," with scornful curiosity. When Hippolyte had finished, Ivan Fedorovitch shrugged his shoulders, and his wife looked him angrily up and down, as if to demand the meaning of his movement. Then she turned to the prince.

"Thanks, prince, many thanks, eccentric friend of the family, for the pleasant evening you have provided for us. I am sure you are quite pleased that you have managed to mix us up with your extraordinary affairs. It is quite enough, dear family friend; thank you for giving us an opportunity of getting to know you so well."

She arranged her cloak with hands that trembled with anger as she waited for the "riff-raff" to go. The cab which Lebedeff's son had gone to fetch a quarter of an hour ago, by Doktorenko's order, arrived at that moment. The general thought fit to put in a word after his wife.

"Really, prince, I hardly expected after—after all our friendly intercourse—and you see, Lizabetha Prokofievna—"

"Papa, how can you?" cried Adelaida, walking quickly up to the prince and holding out her hand.

He smiled absently at her; then suddenly he felt a burning sensation in his ear as an angry voice whispered:

"If you do not turn those dreadful people out of the house this very instant, I shall hate you all my life—all my life!" It was Aglaya. She seemed almost in a frenzy, but she turned away before the prince could look at her. However, there was no one left to turn out of the house, for they had managed meanwhile to get Hippolyte into the cab, and it had driven off.

"Well, how much longer is this going to last, Ivan Fedorovitch? What do you think? Shall I soon be delivered from these odious youths?"

"My dear, I am quite ready; naturally ... the prince."

Ivan Fedorovitch held out his hand to Muishkin, but ran after his wife, who was leaving with every sign of violent indignation, before he had time to shake it. Adelaida, her fiance, and Alexandra, said good-bye to their host with sincere friendliness. Evgenie Pavlovitch did the same, and he alone seemed in good spirits.

"What I expected has happened! But I am sorry, you poor fellow, that you should have had to suffer for it," he murmured, with a most charming smile.

Aglaya left without saying good-bye. But the evening was not to end without a last adventure. An unexpected meeting was yet in store for Lizabetha Prokofievna.

She had scarcely descended the terrace steps leading to the high road that skirts the park at Pavlofsk, when suddenly there dashed by a smart open carriage, drawn by a pair of beautiful white horses. Having passed some ten yards beyond the house, the carriage suddenly drew up, and one of the two ladies seated in it turned sharp round as though she had just caught sight of some acquaintance whom she particularly wished to see.

“Evgenie Pavlovitch! Is that you?” cried a clear, sweet voice, which caused the prince, and perhaps someone else, to tremble. “Well, I AM glad I’ve found you at last! I’ve sent to town for you twice today myself! My messengers have been searching for you everywhere!”

Evgenie Pavlovitch stood on the steps like one struck by lightning. Mrs. Epanchin stood still too, but not with the petrified expression of Evgenie. She gazed haughtily at the audacious person who had addressed her companion, and then turned a look of astonishment upon Evgenie himself.

“There’s news!” continued the clear voice. “You need not be anxious about Kupferof’s IOU’s—Rogojin has bought them up. I persuaded him to!—I dare say we shall settle Biscup too, so it’s all right, you see! Au revoir, tomorrow! And don’t worry!” The carriage moved on, and disappeared.

“The woman’s mad!” cried Evgenie, at last, crimson with anger, and looking confusedly around. “I don’t know what she’s talking about! What IOU’s? Who is she?” Mrs. Epanchin continued to watch his face for a couple of seconds; then she marched briskly and haughtily away towards her own house, the rest following her.

A minute afterwards, Evgenie Pavlovitch reappeared on the terrace, in great agitation.

“Prince,” he said, “tell me the truth; do you know what all this means?”

“I know nothing whatever about it!” replied the latter, who was, himself, in a state of nervous excitement.

“No?”

“No?”

“Well, nor do I!” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing suddenly. “I haven’t the slightest knowledge of any such IOU’s as she mentioned, I swear I haven’t—What’s the matter, are you fainting?”

“Oh, no-no-I’m all right, I assure you!”

XI.

THE anger of the Epanchin family was unappeased for three days. As usual the prince reproached himself, and had expected punishment, but he was inwardly convinced that Lizabetha Prokofievna could not be seriously angry with him, and that

she probably was more angry with herself. He was painfully surprised, therefore, when three days passed with no word from her. Other things also troubled and perplexed him, and one of these grew more important in his eyes as the days went by. He had begun to blame himself for two opposite tendencies—on the one hand to extreme, almost “senseless,” confidence in his fellows, on the other to a “vile, gloomy suspiciousness.”

By the end of the third day the incident of the eccentric lady and Evgenie Pavlovitch had attained enormous and mysterious proportions in his mind. He sorrowfully asked himself whether he had been the cause of this new “monstrosity,” or was it ... but he refrained from saying who else might be in fault. As for the letters N.P.B., he looked on that as a harmless joke, a mere childish piece of mischief—so childish that he felt it would be shameful, almost dishonourable, to attach any importance to it.

The day after these scandalous events, however, the prince had the honour of receiving a visit from Adelaida and her fiance, Prince S. They came, ostensibly, to inquire after his health. They had wandered out for a walk, and called in “by accident,” and talked for almost the whole of the time they were with him about a certain most lovely tree in the park, which Adelaida had set her heart upon for a picture. This, and a little amiable conversation on Prince S.’s part, occupied the time, and not a word was said about last evening’s episodes. At length Adelaida burst out laughing, apologized, and explained that they had come incognito; from which, and from the circumstance that they said nothing about the prince’s either walking back with them or coming to see them later on, the latter inferred that he was in Mrs. Epanchin’s black books. Adelaida mentioned a watercolour that she would much like to show him, and explained that she would either send it by Colia, or bring it herself the next day— which to the prince seemed very suggestive.

At length, however, just as the visitors were on the point of departing, Prince S. seemed suddenly to recollect himself. “Oh yes, by-the-by,” he said, “do you happen to know, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, who that lady was who called out to Evgenie Pavlovitch last night, from the carriage?”

“It was Nastasia Philipovna,” said the prince; “didn’t you know that? I cannot tell you who her companion was.”

“But what on earth did she mean? I assure you it is a real riddle to me—to me, and to others, too!” Prince S. seemed to be under the influence of sincere astonishment.

“She spoke of some bills of Evgenie Pavlovitch’s,” said the prince, simply, “which Rogojin had bought up from someone; and implied that Rogojin would not press him.”

“Oh, I heard that much, my dear fellow! But the thing is so impossibly absurd! A man of property like Evgenie to give IOU’s to a money-lender, and to be worried about them! It is ridiculous. Besides, he cannot possibly be on such intimate terms with Nastasia Philipovna as she gave us to understand; that’s the principal part of the mystery! He has given me his word that he knows nothing whatever about the matter, and of course I believe him. Well, the question is, my dear prince, do you know anything about it? Has any sort of suspicion of the meaning of it come across you?”

“No, I know nothing whatever about it. I assure you I had nothing at all to do with it.”

“Oh, prince, how strange you have become! I assure you, I hardly know you for your old self. How can you suppose that I ever suggested you could have had a finger in such a business? But you are not quite yourself today, I can see.” He embraced the prince, and kissed him.

“What do you mean, though,” asked Muishkin, “‘by such a business’? I don’t see any particular ‘business’ about it at all!”

“Oh, undoubtedly, this person wished somehow, and for some reason, to do Evgenie Pavlovitch a bad turn, by attributing to him—before witnesses—qualities which he neither has nor can have,” replied Prince S. drily enough.

Muiskhin looked disturbed, but continued to gaze intently and questioningly into Prince S.’s face. The latter, however, remained silent.

“Then it was not simply a matter of bills?” Muishkin said at last, with some impatience. “It was not as she said?”

“But I ask you, my dear sir, how can there be anything in common between Evgenie Pavlovitch, and—her, and again Rogojin? I tell you he is a man of immense wealth—as I know for a fact; and he has further expectations from his uncle. Simply Nastasia Philipovna—”

Prince S. paused, as though unwilling to continue talking about Nastasia Philipovna.

“Then at all events he knows her!” remarked the prince, after a moment’s silence.

“Oh, that may be. He may have known her some time ago—two or three years, at least. He used to know Totski. But it is impossible that there should be any intimacy between them. She has not even been in the place—many people don’t even know that she has returned from Moscow! I have only observed her carriage about for the last three days or so.”

“It’s a lovely carriage,” said Adelaida.

“Yes, it was a beautiful turn-out, certainly!”

The visitors left the house, however, on no less friendly terms than before. But the visit was of the greatest importance to the prince, from his own point of view. Admitting that he had his suspicions, from the moment of the occurrence of last night, perhaps even before, that Nastasia had some mysterious end in view, yet this visit confirmed his suspicions and justified his fears. It was all clear to him; Prince S. was wrong, perhaps, in his view of the matter, but he was somewhere near the truth, and was right in so far as that he understood there to be an intrigue of some sort going on. Perhaps Prince S. saw it all more clearly than he had allowed his hearers to understand. At all events, nothing could be plainer than that he and Adelaida had come for the express purpose of obtaining explanations, and that they suspected him of being concerned in the affair. And if all this were so, then SHE must have some terrible object in view! What was it? There was no stopping HER, as Muishkin knew from experience, in the performance of anything she had set her mind on! “Oh, she is mad, mad!” thought the poor prince.

But there were many other puzzling occurrences that day, which required immediate explanation, and the prince felt very sad. A visit from Vera Lebedeff distracted him a little. She brought the infant Lubotchka with her as usual, and talked cheerfully for some time. Then came her younger sister, and later the brother, who attended a school close by. He informed Muishkin that his father had lately found a new interpretation of the star called "wormwood," which fell upon the water-springs, as described in the Apocalypse. He had decided that it meant the network of railroads spread over the face of Europe at the present time. The prince refused to believe that Lebedeff could have given such an interpretation, and they decided to ask him about it at the earliest opportunity. Vera related how Keller had taken up his abode with them on the previous evening. She thought he would remain for some time, as he was greatly pleased with the society of General Ivolgin and of the whole family. But he declared that he had only come to them in order to complete his education! The prince always enjoyed the company of Lebedeff's children, and today it was especially welcome, for Colia did not appear all day. Early that morning he had started for Petersburg. Lebedeff also was away on business. But Gavriila Ardalionovitch had promised to visit Muishkin, who eagerly awaited his coming.

About seven in the evening, soon after dinner, he arrived. At the first glance it struck the prince that he, at any rate, must know all the details of last night's affair. Indeed, it would have been impossible for him to remain in ignorance considering the intimate relationship between him, Varvara Ardalionovna, and Ptitsin. But although he and the prince were intimate, in a sense, and although the latter had placed the Burdovsky affair in his hands—and this was not the only mark of confidence he had received—it seemed curious how many matters there were that were tacitly avoided in their conversations. Muishkin thought that Gania at times appeared to desire more cordiality and frankness. It was apparent now, when he entered, that he, was convinced that the moment for breaking the ice between them had come at last.

But all the same Gania was in haste, for his sister was waiting at Lebedeff's to consult him on an urgent matter of business. If he had anticipated impatient questions, or impulsive confidences, he was soon undeceived. The prince was thoughtful, reserved, even a little absent-minded, and asked none of the questions—one in particular—that Gania had expected. So he imitated the prince's demeanour, and talked fast and brilliantly upon all subjects but the one on which their thoughts were engaged. Among other things Gania told his host that Nastasia Philipovna had been only four days in Pavlofsk, and that everyone was talking about her already. She was staying with Daria Alexeyevna, in an ugly little house in Mattrossky Street, but drove about in the smartest carriage in the place. A crowd of followers had pursued her from the first, young and old. Some escorted her on horse-back when she took the air in her carriage.

She was as capricious as ever in the choice of her acquaintances, and admitted few into her narrow circle. Yet she already had a numerous following and many champions on whom she could depend in time of need. One gentleman on his holiday had broken

off his engagement on her account, and an old general had quarrelled with his only son for the same reason.

She was accompanied sometimes in her carriage by a girl of sixteen, a distant relative of her hostess. This young lady sang very well; in fact, her music had given a kind of notoriety to their little house. Nastasia, however, was behaving with great discretion on the whole. She dressed quietly, though with such taste as to drive all the ladies in Pavlofsk mad with envy, of that, as well as of her beauty and her carriage and horses.

“As for yesterday’s episode,” continued Gania, “of course it was pre-arranged.” Here he paused, as though expecting to be asked how he knew that. But the prince did not inquire. Concerning Evgenie Pavlovitch, Gania stated, without being asked, that he believed the former had not known Nastasia Philipovna in past years, but that he had probably been introduced to her by somebody in the park during these four days. As to the question of the IOU’s she had spoken of, there might easily be something in that; for though Evgenie was undoubtedly a man of wealth, yet certain of his affairs were equally undoubtedly in disorder. Arrived at this interesting point, Gania suddenly broke off, and said no more about Nastasia’s prank of the previous evening.

At last Varvara Ardalionovna came in search of her brother, and remained for a few minutes. Without Muishkin’s asking her, she informed him that Evgenie Pavlovitch was spending the day in Petersburg, and perhaps would remain there over tomorrow; and that her husband had also gone to town, probably in connection with Evgenie Pavlovitch’s affairs.

“Lizabetha Prokofievna is in a really fiendish temper today,” she added, as she went out, “but the most curious thing is that Aglaya has quarrelled with her whole family; not only with her father and mother, but with her sisters also. It is not a good sign.” She said all this quite casually, though it was extremely important in the eyes of the prince, and went off with her brother. Regarding the episode of “Pavlicheff’s son,” Gania had been absolutely silent, partly from a kind of false modesty, partly, perhaps, to “spare the prince’s feelings.” The latter, however, thanked him again for the trouble he had taken in the affair.

Muishkin was glad enough to be left alone. He went out of the garden, crossed the road, and entered the park. He wished to reflect, and to make up his mind as to a certain “step.” This step was one of those things, however, which are not thought out, as a rule, but decided for or against hastily, and without much reflection. The fact is, he felt a longing to leave all this and go away—go anywhere, if only it were far enough, and at once, without bidding farewell to anyone. He felt a presentiment that if he remained but a few days more in this place, and among these people, he would be fixed there irrevocably and permanently. However, in a very few minutes he decided that to run away was impossible; that it would be cowardly; that great problems lay before him, and that he had no right to leave them unsolved, or at least to refuse to give all his energy and strength to the attempt to solve them. Having come to this determination, he turned and went home, his walk having lasted less than a quarter of an hour. At that moment he was thoroughly unhappy.

Lebedeff had not returned, so towards evening Keller managed to penetrate into the prince's apartments. He was not drunk, but in a confidential and talkative mood. He announced that he had come to tell the story of his life to Muishkin, and had only remained at Pavlofsk for that purpose. There was no means of turning him out; nothing short of an earthquake would have removed him.

In the manner of one with long hours before him, he began his history; but after a few incoherent words he jumped to the conclusion, which was that "having ceased to believe in God Almighty, he had lost every vestige of morality, and had gone so far as to commit a theft." "Could you imagine such a thing?" said he.

"Listen to me, Keller," returned the prince. "If I were in your place, I should not acknowledge that unless it were absolutely necessary for some reason. But perhaps you are making yourself out to be worse than you are, purposely?"

"I should tell it to no one but yourself, prince, and I only name it now as a help to my soul's evolution. When I die, that secret will die with me! But, excellency, if you knew, if you only had the least idea, how difficult it is to get money nowadays! Where to find it is the question. Ask for a loan, the answer is always the same: 'Give us gold, jewels, or diamonds, and it will be quite easy.' Exactly what one has not got! Can you picture that to yourself? I got angry at last, and said, 'I suppose you would accept emeralds?' 'Certainly, we accept emeralds with pleasure. Yes!' 'Well, that's all right,' said I. 'Go to the devil, you den of thieves!' And with that I seized my hat, and walked out."

"Had you any emeralds?" asked the prince.

"What? I have emeralds? Oh, prince! with what simplicity, with what almost pastoral simplicity, you look upon life!"

Could not something be made of this man under good influences? asked the prince of himself, for he began to feel a kind of pity for his visitor. He thought little of the value of his own personal influence, not from a sense of humility, but from his peculiar way of looking at things in general. Imperceptibly the conversation grew more animated and more interesting, so that neither of the two felt anxious to bring it to a close. Keller confessed, with apparent sincerity, to having been guilty of many acts of such a nature that it astonished the prince that he could mention them, even to him. At every fresh avowal he professed the deepest repentance, and described himself as being "bathed in tears"; but this did not prevent him from putting on a boastful air at times, and some of his stories were so absurdly comical that both he and the prince laughed like madmen.

"One point in your favour is that you seem to have a child-like mind, and extreme truthfulness," said the prince at last. "Do you know that that atones for much?"

"I am assuredly noble-minded, and chivalrous to a degree!" said Keller, much softened. "But, do you know, this nobility of mind exists in a dream, if one may put it so? It never appears in practice or deed. Now, why is that? I can never understand."

“Do not despair. I think we may say without fear of deceiving ourselves, that you have now given a fairly exact account of your life. I, at least, think it would be impossible to add much to what you have just told me.”

“Impossible?” cried Keller, almost pityingly. “Oh prince, how little you really seem to understand human nature!”

“Is there really much more to be added?” asked the prince, with mild surprise. “Well, what is it you really want of me? Speak out; tell me why you came to make your confession to me?”

“What did I want? Well, to begin with, it is good to meet a man like you. It is a pleasure to talk over my faults with you. I know you for one of the best of men ... and then ... then ...”

He hesitated, and appeared so much embarrassed that the prince helped him out.

“Then you wanted me to lend you money?”

The words were spoken in a grave tone, and even somewhat shyly.

Keller started, gave an astonished look at the speaker, and thumped the table with his fist.

“Well, prince, that’s enough to knock me down! It astounds me! Here you are, as simple and innocent as a knight of the golden age, and yet ... yet ... you read a man’s soul like a psychologist! Now, do explain it to me, prince, because I ... I really do not understand! ... Of course, my aim was to borrow money all along, and you ... you asked the question as if there was nothing blameable in it—as if you thought it quite natural.”

“Yes ... from you it is quite natural.”

“And you are not offended?”

“Why should I be offended?”

“Well, just listen, prince. I remained here last evening, partly because I have a great admiration for the French archbishop Bourdaloue. I enjoyed a discussion over him till three o’clock in the morning, with Lebedeff; and then ... then—I swear by all I hold sacred that I am telling you the truth—then I wished to develop my soul in this frank and heartfelt confession to you. This was my thought as I was sobbing myself to sleep at dawn. Just as I was losing consciousness, tears in my soul, tears on my face (I remember how I lay there sobbing), an idea from hell struck me. ‘Why not, after confessing, borrow money from him?’ You see, this confession was a kind of masterstroke; I intended to use it as a means to your good grace and favour—and then—then I meant to walk off with a hundred and fifty roubles. Now, do you not call that base?”

“It is hardly an exact statement of the case,” said the prince in reply. “You have confused your motives and ideas, as I need scarcely say too often happens to myself. I can assure you, Keller, I reproach myself bitterly for it sometimes. When you were talking just now I seemed to be listening to something about myself. At times I have imagined that all men were the same,” he continued earnestly, for he appeared to be much interested in the conversation, “and that consoled me in a certain degree, for a

DOUBLE motive is a thing most difficult to fight against. I have tried, and I know. God knows whence they arise, these ideas that you speak of as base. I fear these double motives more than ever just now, but I am not your judge, and in my opinion it is going too far to give the name of baseness to it—what do you think? You were going to employ your tears as a ruse in order to borrow money, but you also say—in fact, you have sworn to the fact—that independently of this your confession was made with an honourable motive. As for the money, you want it for drink, do you not? After your confession, that is weakness, of course; but, after all, how can anyone give up a bad habit at a moment's notice? It is impossible. What can we do? It is best, I think, to leave the matter to your own conscience. How does it seem to you?" As he concluded the prince looked curiously at Keller; evidently this problem of double motives had often been considered by him before.

"Well, how anybody can call you an idiot after that, is more than I can understand!" cried the boxer.

The prince reddened slightly.

"Bourdaloue, the archbishop, would not have spared a man like me," Keller continued, "but you, you have judged me with humanity. To show how grateful I am, and as a punishment, I will not accept a hundred and fifty roubles. Give me twenty-five—that will be enough; it is all I really need, for a fortnight at least. I will not ask you for more for a fortnight. I should like to have given Agatha a present, but she does not really deserve it. Oh, my dear prince, God bless you!"

At this moment Lebedeff appeared, having just arrived from Petersburg. He frowned when he saw the twenty-five rouble note in Keller's hand, but the latter, having got the money, went away at once. Lebedeff began to abuse him.

"You are unjust; I found him sincerely repentant," observed the prince, after listening for a time.

"What is the good of repentance like that? It is the same exactly as mine yesterday, when I said, 'I am base, I am base,'—words, and nothing more!"

"Then they were only words on your part? I thought, on the contrary..."

"Well, I don't mind telling you the truth—you only! Because you see through a man somehow. Words and actions, truth and falsehood, are all jumbled up together in me, and yet I am perfectly sincere. I feel the deepest repentance, believe it or not, as you choose; but words and lies come out in the infernal craving to get the better of other people. It is always there—the notion of cheating people, and of using my repentant tears to my own advantage! I assure you this is the truth, prince! I would not tell any other man for the world! He would laugh and jeer at me—but you, you judge a man humanely."

"Why, Keller said the same thing to me nearly word for word a few minutes ago!" cried Muishkin. "And you both seem inclined to boast about it! You astonish me, but I think he is more sincere than you, for you make a regular trade of it. Oh, don't put on that pathetic expression, and don't put your hand on your heart! Have you anything to say to me? You have not come for nothing..."

Lebedeff grinned and wriggled.

“I have been waiting all day for you, because I want to ask you a question; and, for once in your life, please tell me the truth at once. Had you anything to do with that affair of the carriage yesterday?”

Lebedeff began to grin again, rubbed his hands, sneezed, but spoke not a word in reply.

“I see you had something to do with it.”

“Indirectly, quite indirectly! I am speaking the truth—I am indeed! I merely told a certain person that I had people in my house, and that such and such personages might be found among them.”

“I am aware that you sent your son to that house—he told me so himself just now, but what is this intrigue?” said the prince, impatiently.

“It is not my intrigue!” cried Lebedeff, waving his hand.

“It was engineered by other people, and is, properly speaking, rather a fantasy than an intrigue!”

“But what is it all about? Tell me, for Heaven’s sake! Cannot you understand how nearly it touches me? Why are they blackening Evgenie Pavlovitch’s reputation?”

Lebedeff grimaced and wriggled again.

“Prince!” said he. “Excellency! You won’t let me tell you the whole truth; I have tried to explain; more than once I have begun, but you have not allowed me to go on...”

The prince gave no answer, and sat deep in thought. Evidently he was struggling to decide.

“Very well! Tell me the truth,” he said, dejectedly.

“Aglaya Ivanovna ...” began Lebedeff, promptly.

“Be silent! At once!” interrupted the prince, red with indignation, and perhaps with shame, too. “It is impossible and absurd! All that has been invented by you, or fools like you! Let me never hear you say a word again on that subject!”

Late in the evening Colia came in with a whole budget of Petersburg and Pavlofsk news. He did not dwell much on the Petersburg part of it, which consisted chiefly of intelligence about his friend Hippolyte, but passed quickly to the Pavlofsk tidings. He had gone straight to the Epanchins’ from the station.

“There’s the deuce and all going on there!” he said. “First of all about the row last night, and I think there must be something new as well, though I didn’t like to ask. Not a word about YOU, prince, the whole time!” The most interesting fact was that Aglaya had been quarrelling with her people about Gania. Colia did not know any details, except that it had been a terrible quarrel! Also Evgenie Pavlovitch had called, and met with an excellent reception all round. And another curious thing: Mrs. Epanchin was so angry that she called Varia to her—Varia was talking to the girls—and turned her out of the house “once for all” she said. “I heard it from Varia herself—Mrs. Epanchin was quite polite, but firm; and when Varia said good-bye to the girls, she told them nothing about it, and they didn’t know they were saying goodbye for the

last time. I'm sorry for Varia, and for Gania too; he isn't half a bad fellow, in spite of his faults, and I shall never forgive myself for not liking him before! I don't know whether I ought to continue to go to the Epanchins' now," concluded Colia—"I like to be quite independent of others, and of other people's quarrels if I can; but I must think over it."

"I don't think you need break your heart over Gania," said the prince; "for if what you say is true, he must be considered dangerous in the Epanchin household, and if so, certain hopes of his must have been encouraged."

"What? What hopes?" cried Colia; "you surely don't mean Aglaya?—oh, no!—"

"You're a dreadful sceptic, prince," he continued, after a moment's silence. "I have observed of late that you have grown sceptical about everything. You don't seem to believe in people as you did, and are always attributing motives and so on—am I using the word 'sceptic' in its proper sense?"

"I believe so; but I'm not sure."

"Well, I'll change it, right or wrong; I'll say that you are not sceptical, but JEALOUS. There! you are deadly jealous of Gania, over a certain proud damsel! Come!" Colia jumped up, with these words, and burst out laughing. He laughed as he had perhaps never laughed before, and still more when he saw the prince flushing up to his temples. He was delighted that the prince should be jealous about Aglaya. However, he stopped immediately on seeing that the other was really hurt, and the conversation continued, very earnestly, for an hour or more.

Next day the prince had to go to town, on business. Returning in the afternoon, he happened upon General Epanchin at the station. The latter seized his hand, glancing around nervously, as if he were afraid of being caught in wrong-doing, and dragged him into a first-class compartment. He was burning to speak about something of importance.

"In the first place, my dear prince, don't be angry with me. I would have come to see you yesterday, but I didn't know how Lizabetha Prokofievna would take it. My dear fellow, my house is simply a hell just now, a sort of sphinx has taken up its abode there. We live in an atmosphere of riddles; I can't make head or tail of anything. As for you, I feel sure you are the least to blame of any of us, though you certainly have been the cause of a good deal of trouble. You see, it's all very pleasant to be a philanthropist; but it can be carried too far. Of course I admire kind-heartedness, and I esteem my wife, but—"

The general wandered on in this disconnected way for a long time; it was clear that he was much disturbed by some circumstance which he could make nothing of.

"It is plain to me, that YOU are not in it at all," he continued, at last, a little less vaguely, "but perhaps you had better not come to our house for a little while. I ask you in the friendliest manner, mind; just till the wind changes again. As for Evgenie Pavlovitch," he continued with some excitement, "the whole thing is a calumny, a dirty calumny. It is simply a plot, an intrigue, to upset our plans and to stir up a quarrel. You see, prince, I'll tell you privately, Evgenie and ourselves have not said a word

yet, we have no formal understanding, we are in no way bound on either side, but the word may be said very soon, don't you see, VERY soon, and all this is most injurious, and is meant to be so. Why? I'm sure I can't tell you. She's an extraordinary woman, you see, an eccentric woman; I tell you I am so frightened of that woman that I can't sleep. What a carriage that was, and where did it come from, eh? I declare, I was base enough to suspect Evgenie at first; but it seems certain that that cannot be the case, and if so, why is she interfering here? That's the riddle, what does she want? Is it to keep Evgenie to herself? But, my dear fellow, I swear to you, I swear he doesn't even KNOW her, and as for those bills, why, the whole thing is an invention! And the familiarity of the woman! It's quite clear we must treat the impudent creature's attempt with disdain, and redouble our courtesy towards Evgenie. I told my wife so.

"Now I'll tell you my secret conviction. I'm certain that she's doing this to revenge herself on me, on account of the past, though I assure you that all the time I was blameless. I blush at the very idea. And now she turns up again like this, when I thought she had finally disappeared! Where's Rogojin all this time? I thought she was Mrs. Rogojin, long ago."

The old man was in a state of great mental perturbation. The whole of the journey, which occupied nearly an hour, he continued in this strain, putting questions and answering them himself, shrugging his shoulders, pressing the prince's hand, and assuring the latter that, at all events, he had no suspicion whatever of HIM. This last assurance was satisfactory, at all events. The general finished by informing him that Evgenie's uncle was head of one of the civil service departments, and rich, very rich, and a gourmand. "And, well, Heaven preserve him, of course—but Evgenie gets his money, don't you see? But, for all this, I'm uncomfortable, I don't know why. There's something in the air, I feel there's something nasty in the air, like a bat, and I'm by no means comfortable."

And it was not until the third day that the formal reconciliation between the prince and the Epanchins took place, as said before.

XII.

IT was seven in the evening, and the prince was just preparing to go out for a walk in the park, when suddenly Mrs. Epanchin appeared on the terrace.

"In the first place, don't dare to suppose," she began, "that I am going to apologize. Nonsense! You were entirely to blame."

The prince remained silent.

"Were you to blame, or not?"

"No, certainly not, no more than yourself, though at first I thought I was."

"Oh, very well, let's sit down, at all events, for I don't intend to stand up all day. And remember, if you say, one word about 'mischievous urchins,' I shall go away and

break with you altogether. Now then, did you, or did you not, send a letter to Aglaya, a couple of months or so ago, about Easter-tide?"

"Yes!"

"What for? What was your object? Show me the letter." Mrs. Epanchin's eyes flashed; she was almost trembling with impatience.

"I have not got the letter," said the prince, timidly, extremely surprised at the turn the conversation had taken. "If anyone has it, if it still exists, Aglaya Ivanovna must have it."

"No finessing, please. What did you write about?"

"I am not finessing, and I am not in the least afraid of telling you; but I don't see the slightest reason why I should not have written."

"Be quiet, you can talk afterwards! What was the letter about? Why are you blushing?"

The prince was silent. At last he spoke.

"I don't understand your thoughts, Lizabetha Prokofievna; but I can see that the fact of my having written is for some reason repugnant to you. You must admit that I have a perfect right to refuse to answer your questions; but, in order to show you that I am neither ashamed of the letter, nor sorry that I wrote it, and that I am not in the least inclined to blush about it "(here the prince's blushes redoubled), "I will repeat the substance of my letter, for I think I know it almost by heart."

So saying, the prince repeated the letter almost word for word, as he had written it.

"My goodness, what utter twaddle, and what may all this nonsense have signified, pray? If it had any meaning at all!" said Mrs. Epanchin, cuttingly, after having listened with great attention.

"I really don't absolutely know myself; I know my feeling was very sincere. I had moments at that time full of life and hope."

"What sort of hope?"

"It is difficult to explain, but certainly not the hopes you have in your mind. Hopes—well, in a word, hopes for the future, and a feeling of joy that THERE, at all events, I was not entirely a stranger and a foreigner. I felt an ecstasy in being in my native land once more; and one sunny morning I took up a pen and wrote her that letter, but why to HER, I don't quite know. Sometimes one longs to have a friend near, and I evidently felt the need of one then," added the prince, and paused.

"Are you in love with her?"

"N-no! I wrote to her as to a sister; I signed myself her brother."

"Oh yes, of course, on purpose! I quite understand."

"It is very painful to me to answer these questions, Lizabetha Prokofievna."

"I dare say it is; but that's no affair of mine. Now then, assure me truly as before Heaven, are you lying to me or not?"

"No, I am not lying."

"Are you telling the truth when you say you are not in love?"

"I believe it is the absolute truth."

"I believe,' indeed! Did that mischievous urchin give it to her?"

"I asked Nicolai Ardalionovitch ..."

"The urchin! the urchin!" interrupted Lizabetha Prokofievna in an angry voice. "I do not want to know if it were Nicolai Ardalionovitch! The urchin!"

"Nicolai Ardalionovitch ..."

"The urchin, I tell you!"

"No, it was not the urchin: it was Nicolai Ardalionovitch," said the prince very firmly, but without raising his voice.

"Well, all right! All right, my dear! I shall put that down to your account."

She was silent a moment to get breath, and to recover her composure.

"Well!—and what's the meaning of the 'poor knight,' eh?"

"I don't know in the least; I wasn't present when the joke was made. It IS a joke. I suppose, and that's all."

"Well, that's a comfort, at all events. You don't suppose she could take any interest in you, do you? Why, she called you an 'idiot' herself."

"I think you might have spared me that," murmured the prince reproachfully, almost in a whisper.

"Don't be angry; she is a wilful, mad, spoilt girl. If she likes a person she will pitch into him, and chaff him. I used to be just such another. But for all that you needn't flatter yourself, my boy; she is not for you. I don't believe it, and it is not to be. I tell you so at once, so that you may take proper precautions. Now, I want to hear you swear that you are not married to that woman?"

"Lizabetha Prokofievna, what are you thinking of?" cried the prince, almost leaping to his feet in amazement.

"Why? You very nearly were, anyhow."

"Yes—I nearly was," whispered the prince, hanging his head.

"Well then, have you come here for HER? Are you in love with HER? With THAT creature?"

"I did not come to marry at all," replied the prince.

"Is there anything you hold sacred?"

"There is."

"Then swear by it that you did not come here to marry HER!"

"I'll swear it by whatever you please."

"I believe you. You may kiss me; I breathe freely at last. But you must know, my dear friend, Aglaya does not love you, and she shall never be your wife while I am out of my grave. So be warned in time. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear."

The prince flushed up so much that he could not look her in the face.

"I have waited for you with the greatest impatience (not that you were worth it). Every night I have drenched my pillow with tears, not for you, my friend, not for you, don't flatter yourself! I have my own grief, always the same, always the same. But I'll

tell you why I have been awaiting you so impatiently, because I believe that Providence itself sent you to be a friend and a brother to me. I haven't a friend in the world except Princess Bielokonski, and she is growing as stupid as a sheep from old age. Now then, tell me, yes or no? Do you know why she called out from her carriage the other night?"

"I give you my word of honour that I had nothing to do with the matter and know nothing about it."

"Very well, I believe you. I have my own ideas about it. Up to yesterday morning I thought it was really Evgenie Pavlovitch who was to blame; now I cannot help agreeing with the others. But why he was made such a fool of I cannot understand. However, he is not going to marry Aglaya, I can tell you that. He may be a very excellent fellow, but—so it shall be. I was not at all sure of accepting him before, but now I have quite made up my mind that I won't have him. 'Put me in my coffin first and then into my grave, and then you may marry my daughter to whomsoever you please,' so I said to the general this very morning. You see how I trust you, my boy."

"Yes, I see and understand."

Mrs. Epanchin gazed keenly into the prince's eyes. She was anxious to see what impression the news as to Evgenie Pavlovitch had made upon him.

"Do you know anything about Gavrila Ardalionovitch?" she asked at last.

"Oh yes, I know a good deal."

"Did you know he had communications with Aglaya?"

"No, I didn't," said the prince, trembling a little, and in great agitation. "You say Gavrila Ardalionovitch has private communications with Aglaya?—Impossible!"

"Only quite lately. His sister has been working like a rat to clear the way for him all the winter."

"I don't believe it!" said the prince abruptly, after a short pause. "Had it been so I should have known long ago."

"Oh, of course, yes; he would have come and wept out his secret on your bosom. Oh, you simpleton—you simpleton! Anyone can deceive you and take you in like a—like a,—aren't you ashamed to trust him? Can't you see that he humbugs you just as much as ever he pleases?"

"I know very well that he does deceive me occasionally, and he knows that I know it, but—" The prince did not finish his sentence.

"And that's why you trust him, eh? So I should have supposed. Good Lord, was there ever such a man as you? Tfu! and are you aware, sir, that this Gania, or his sister Varia, have brought her into correspondence with Nastasia Philipovna?"

"Brought whom?" cried Muishkin.

"Aglaya."

"I don't believe it! It's impossible! What object could they have?" He jumped up from his chair in his excitement.

"Nor do I believe it, in spite of the proofs. The girl is self-willed and fantastic, and insane! She's wicked, wicked! I'll repeat it for a thousand years that she's wicked; they ALL are, just now, all my daughters, even that 'wet hen' Alexandra. And yet I don't

believe it. Because I don't choose to believe it, perhaps; but I don't. Why haven't you been?" she turned on the prince suddenly. "Why didn't you come near us all these three days, eh?"

The prince began to give his reasons, but she interrupted him again.

"Everybody takes you in and deceives you; you went to town yesterday. I dare swear you went down on your knees to that rogue, and begged him to accept your ten thousand roubles!"

"I never thought of doing any such thing. I have not seen him, and he is not a rogue, in my opinion. I have had a letter from him."

"Show it me!"

The prince took a paper from his pocket-book, and handed it to Lizabetha Prokofievna. It ran as follows:

"SIR,

"In the eyes of the world I am sure that I have no cause for pride or self-esteem. I am much too insignificant for that. But what may be so to other men's eyes is not so to yours. I am convinced that you are better than other people. Doktorenko disagrees with me, but I am content to differ from him on this point. I will never accept one single copeck from you, but you have helped my mother, and I am bound to be grateful to you for that, however weak it may seem. At any rate, I have changed my opinion about you, and I think right to inform you of the fact; but I also suppose that there can be no further inter course between us " ANTIP BURDOVSKY.

"P.S.—The two hundred roubles I owe you shall certainly be repaid in time."

"How extremely stupid!" cried Mrs. Epanchin, giving back the letter abruptly. "It was not worth the trouble of reading. Why are you smiling?"

"Confess that you are pleased to have read it."

"What! Pleased with all that nonsense! Why, cannot you see that they are all infatuated with pride and vanity?"

"He has acknowledged himself to be in the wrong. Don't you see that the greater his vanity, the more difficult this admission must have been on his part? Oh, what a little child you are, Lizabetha Prokofievna!"

"Are you tempting me to box your ears for you, or what?"

"Not at all. I am only proving that you are glad about the letter. Why conceal your real feelings? You always like to do it."

"Never come near my house again!" cried Mrs. Epanchin, pale with rage. "Don't let me see as much as a SHADOW of you about the place! Do you hear?"

"Oh yes, and in three days you'll come and invite me yourself. Aren't you ashamed now? These are your best feelings; you are only tormenting yourself."

"I'll die before I invite you! I shall forget your very name! I've forgotten it already!"

She marched towards the door.

"But I'm forbidden your house as it is, without your added threats!" cried the prince after her.

"What? Who forbade you?"

She turned round so suddenly that one might have supposed a needle had been stuck into her.

The prince hesitated. He perceived that he had said too much now.

“WHO forbade you?” cried Mrs. Epanchin once more.

“Aglaya Ivanovna told me—”

“When? Speak—quick!”

“She sent to say, yesterday morning, that I was never to dare to come near the house again.”

Lizabetha Prokofievna stood like a stone.

“What did she send? Whom? Was it that boy? Was it a message?- quick!”

“I had a note,” said the prince.

“Where is it? Give it here, at once.”

The prince thought a moment. Then he pulled out of his waistcoat pocket an untidy slip of paper, on which was scrawled:

“PRINCE LEF NICOLAIEVITCH,—If you think fit, after all that has passed, to honour our house with a visit, I can assure you you will not find me among the number of those who are in any way delighted to see you.

“AGLAYA EPANCHIN.”

Mrs. Epanchin reflected a moment. The next minute she flew at the prince, seized his hand, and dragged him after her to the door.

“Quick—come along!” she cried, breathless with agitation and impatience. “Come along with me this moment!”

“But you declared I wasn’t—”

“Don’t be a simpleton. You behave just as though you weren’t a man at all. Come on! I shall see, now, with my own eyes. I shall see all.”

“Well, let me get my hat, at least.”

“Here’s your miserable hat He couldn’t even choose a respectable shape for his hat! Come on! She did that because I took your part and said you ought to have come—little vixen!—else she would never have sent you that silly note. It’s a most improper note, I call it; most improper for such an intelligent, well-brought-up girl to write. H’m! I dare say she was annoyed that you didn’t come; but she ought to have known that one can’t write like that to an idiot like you, for you’d be sure to take it literally.” Mrs. Epanchin was dragging the prince along with her all the time, and never let go of his hand for an instant. “What are you listening for?” she added, seeing that she had committed herself a little. “She wants a clown like you—she hasn’t seen one for some time—to play with. That’s why she is anxious for you to come to the house. And right glad I am that she’ll make a thorough good fool of you. You deserve it; and she can do it—oh! she can, indeed!—as well as most people.”

Part 3

I.

THE Epanchin family, or at least the more serious members of it, were sometimes grieved because they seemed so unlike the rest of the world. They were not quite certain, but had at times a strong suspicion that things did not happen to them as they did to other people. Others led a quiet, uneventful life, while they were subject to continual upheavals. Others kept on the rails without difficulty; they ran off at the slightest obstacle. Other houses were governed by a timid routine; theirs was somehow different. Perhaps Lizabetha Prokofievna was alone in making these fretful observations; the girls, though not wanting in intelligence, were still young; the general was intelligent, too, but narrow, and in any difficulty he was content to say, "H'm!" and leave the matter to his wife. Consequently, on her fell the responsibility. It was not that they distinguished themselves as a family by any particular originality, or that their excursions off the track led to any breach of the proprieties. Oh no.

There was nothing premeditated, there was not even any conscious purpose in it all, and yet, in spite of everything, the family, although highly respected, was not quite what every highly respected family ought to be. For a long time now Lizabetha Prokofievna had had it in her mind that all the trouble was owing to her "unfortunate character," and this added to her distress. She blamed her own stupid unconventional "eccentricity." Always restless, always on the go, she constantly seemed to lose her way, and to get into trouble over the simplest and more ordinary affairs of life.

We said at the beginning of our story, that the Epanchins were liked and esteemed by their neighbours. In spite of his humble origin, Ivan Fedorovitch himself was received everywhere with respect. He deserved this, partly on account of his wealth and position, partly because, though limited, he was really a very good fellow. But a certain limitation of mind seems to be an indispensable asset, if not to all public personages, at least to all serious financiers. Added to this, his manner was modest and unassuming; he knew when to be silent, yet never allowed himself to be trampled upon. Also—and this was more important than all— he had the advantage of being under exalted patronage.

As to Lizabetha Prokofievna, she, as the reader knows, belonged to an aristocratic family. True, Russians think more of influential friends than of birth, but she had both. She was esteemed and even loved by people of consequence in society, whose example in receiving her was therefore followed by others. It seems hardly necessary to remark that

her family worries and anxieties had little or no foundation, or that her imagination increased them to an absurd degree; but if you have a wart on your forehead or nose, you imagine that all the world is looking at it, and that people would make fun of you because of it, even if you had discovered America! Doubtless Lizabetha Prokofievna was considered “eccentric” in society, but she was none the less esteemed: the pity was that she was ceasing to believe in that esteem. When she thought of her daughters, she said to herself sorrowfully that she was a hindrance rather than a help to their future, that her character and temper were absurd, ridiculous, insupportable. Naturally, she put the blame on her surroundings, and from morning to night was quarrelling with her husband and children, whom she really loved to the point of self-sacrifice, even, one might say, of passion.

She was, above all distressed by the idea that her daughters might grow up “eccentric,” like herself; she believed that no other society girls were like them. “They are growing into Nihilists!” she repeated over and over again. For years she had tormented herself with this idea, and with the question: “Why don’t they get married?”

“It is to annoy their mother; that is their one aim in life; it can be nothing else. The fact is it is all of a piece with these modern ideas, that wretched woman’s question! Six months ago Aglaya took a fancy to cut off her magnificent hair. Why, even I, when I was young, had nothing like it! The scissors were in her hand, and I had to go down on my knees and implore her... She did it, I know, from sheer mischief, to spite her mother, for she is a naughty, capricious girl, a real spoiled child spiteful and mischievous to a degree! And then Alexandra wanted to shave her head, not from caprice or mischief, but, like a little fool, simply because Aglaya persuaded her she would sleep better without her hair, and not suffer from headache! And how many suitors have they not had during the last five years! Excellent offers, too! What more do they want? Why don’t they get married? For no other reason than to vex their mother—none—none!”

But Lizabetha Prokofievna felt somewhat consoled when she could say that one of her girls, Adelaida, was settled at last. “It will be one off our hands!” she declared aloud, though in private she expressed herself with greater tenderness. The engagement was both happy and suitable, and was therefore approved in society. Prince S. was a distinguished man, he had money, and his future wife was devoted to him; what more could be desired? Lizabetha Prokofievna had felt less anxious about this daughter, however, although she considered her artistic tastes suspicious. But to make up for them she was, as her mother expressed it, “merry,” and had plenty of “common-sense.” It was Aglaya’s future which disturbed her most. With regard to her eldest daughter, Alexandra, the mother never quite knew whether there was cause for anxiety or not. Sometimes she felt as if there was nothing to be expected from her. She was twenty-five now, and must be fated to be an old maid, and “with such beauty, too!” The mother spent whole nights in weeping and lamenting, while all the time the cause of her grief slumbered peacefully. “What is the matter with her? Is she a Nihilist, or simply a fool?”

But Lizabetha Prokofievna knew perfectly well how unnecessary was the last question. She set a high value on Alexandra Ivanovna’s judgment, and often consulted her

in difficulties; but that she was a 'wet hen' she never for a moment doubted. "She is so calm; nothing rouses her—though wet hens are not always calm! Oh! I can't understand it!" Her eldest daughter inspired Lizabetha with a kind of puzzled compassion. She did not feel this in Aglaya's case, though the latter was her idol. It may be said that these outbursts and epithets, such as "wet hen" (in which the maternal solicitude usually showed itself), only made Alexandra laugh. Sometimes the most trivial thing annoyed Mrs. Epanchin, and drove her into a frenzy. For instance, Alexandra Ivanovna liked to sleep late, and was always dreaming, though her dreams had the peculiarity of being as innocent and naive as those of a child of seven; and the very innocence of her dreams annoyed her mother. Once she dreamt of nine hens, and this was the cause of quite a serious quarrel—no one knew why. Another time she had—it was most unusual—a dream with a spark of originality in it. She dreamt of a monk in a dark room, into which she was too frightened to go. Adelaida and Aglaya rushed off with shrieks of laughter to relate this to their mother, but she was quite angry, and said her daughters were all fools.

"H'm! she is as stupid as a fool! A veritable 'wet hen'! Nothing excites her; and yet she is not happy; some days it makes one miserable only to look at her! Why is she unhappy, I wonder?" At times Lizabetha Prokofievna put this question to her husband, and as usual she spoke in the threatening tone of one who demands an immediate answer. Ivan Fedorovitch would frown, shrug his shoulders, and at last give his opinion: "She needs a husband!"

"God forbid that he should share your ideas, Ivan Fedorovitch!" his wife flashed back. "Or that he should be as gross and churlish as you!"

The general promptly made his escape, and Lizabetha Prokofievna after a while grew calm again. That evening, of course, she would be unusually attentive, gentle, and respectful to her "gross and churlish" husband, her "dear, kind Ivan Fedorovitch," for she had never left off loving him. She was even still "in love" with him. He knew it well, and for his part held her in the greatest esteem.

But the mother's great and continual anxiety was Aglaya. "She is exactly like me—my image in everything," said Mrs. Epanchin to herself. "A tyrant! A real little demon! A Nihilist! Eccentric, senseless and mischievous! Good Lord, how unhappy she will be!"

But as we said before, the fact of Adelaida's approaching marriage was balm to the mother. For a whole month she forgot her fears and worries.

Adelaida's fate was settled; and with her name that of Aglaya's was linked, in society gossip. People whispered that Aglaya, too, was "as good as engaged;" and Aglaya always looked so sweet and behaved so well (during this period), that the mother's heart was full of joy. Of course, Evgenie Pavlovitch must be thoroughly studied first, before the final step should be taken; but, really, how lovely dear Aglaya had become—she actually grew more beautiful every day! And then—Yes, and then—this abominable prince showed his face again, and everything went topsy-turvy at once, and everyone seemed as mad as March hares.

What had really happened?

If it had been any other family than the Epanchins', nothing particular would have happened. But, thanks to Mrs. Epanchin's invariable fussiness and anxiety, there could not be the slightest hitch in the simplest matters of everyday life, but she immediately foresaw the most dreadful and alarming consequences, and suffered accordingly.

What then must have been her condition, when, among all the imaginary anxieties and calamities which so constantly beset her, she now saw looming ahead a serious cause for annoyance— something really likely to arouse doubts and suspicions!

“How dared they, how DARED they write that hateful anonymous letter informing me that Aglaya is in communication with Nastasia Philipovna?” she thought, as she dragged the prince along towards her own house, and again when she sat him down at the round table where the family was already assembled. “How dared they so much as THINK of such a thing? I should DIE with shame if I thought there was a particle of truth in it, or if I were to show the letter to Aglaya herself! Who dares play these jokes upon US, the Epanchins? WHY didn't we go to the Yelagin instead of coming down here? I TOLD you we had better go to the Yelagin this summer, Ivan Fedorovitch. It's all your fault. I dare say it was that Varia who sent the letter. It's all Ivan Fedorovitch. THAT woman is doing it all for him, I know she is, to show she can make a fool of him now just as she did when he used to give her pearls.

“But after all is said, we are mixed up in it. Your daughters are mixed up in it, Ivan Fedorovitch; young ladies in society, young ladies at an age to be married; they were present, they heard everything there was to hear. They were mixed up with that other scene, too, with those dreadful youths. You must be pleased to remember they heard it all. I cannot forgive that wretched prince. I never shall forgive him! And why, if you please, has Aglaya had an attack of nerves for these last three days? Why has she all but quarrelled with her sisters, even with Alexandra— whom she respects so much that she always kisses her hands as though she were her mother? What are all these riddles of hers that we have to guess? What has Gavril Ardalionovitch to do with it? Why did she take upon herself to champion him this morning, and burst into tears over it? Why is there an allusion to that cursed 'poor knight' in the anonymous letter? And why did I rush off to him just now like a lunatic, and drag him back here? I do believe I've gone mad at last. What on earth have I done now? To talk to a young man about my daughter's secrets—and secrets having to do with himself, too! Thank goodness, he's an idiot, and a friend of the house! Surely Aglaya hasn't fallen in love with such a gaby! What an idea! Pfu! we ought all to be put under glass cases—myself first of all—and be shown off as curiosities, at ten copecks a peep!”

“I shall never forgive you for all this, Ivan Fedorovitch—never! Look at her now. Why doesn't she make fun of him? She said she would, and she doesn't. Look there! She stares at him with all her eyes, and doesn't move; and yet she told him not to come. He looks pale enough; and that abominable chatterbox, Evgenie Pavlovitch, monopolizes the whole of the conversation. Nobody else can get a word in. I could soon find out all about everything if I could only change the subject.”

The prince certainly was very pale. He sat at the table and seemed to be feeling, by turns, sensations of alarm and rapture.

Oh, how frightened he was of looking to one side—one particular corner—whence he knew very well that a pair of dark eyes were watching him intently, and how happy he was to think that he was once more among them, and occasionally hearing that well-known voice, although she had written and forbidden him to come again!

“What on earth will she say to me, I wonder?” he thought to himself.

He had not said a word yet; he sat silent and listened to Evgenie Pavlovitch’s eloquence. The latter had never appeared so happy and excited as on this evening. The prince listened to him, but for a long time did not take in a word he said.

Excepting Ivan Fedorovitch, who had not as yet returned from town, the whole family was present. Prince S. was there; and they all intended to go out to hear the band very soon.

Colia arrived presently and joined the circle. “So he is received as usual, after all,” thought the prince.

The Epanchins’ country-house was a charming building, built after the model of a Swiss chalet, and covered with creepers. It was surrounded on all sides by a flower garden, and the family sat, as a rule, on the open verandah as at the prince’s house.

The subject under discussion did not appear to be very popular with the assembly, and some would have been delighted to change it; but Evgenie would not stop holding forth, and the prince’s arrival seemed to spur him on to still further oratorical efforts.

Lizabetha Prokofievna frowned, but had not as yet grasped the subject, which seemed to have arisen out of a heated argument. Aglaya sat apart, almost in the corner, listening in stubborn silence.

“Excuse me,” continued Evgenie Pavlovitch hotly, “I don’t say a word against liberalism. Liberalism is not a sin, it is a necessary part of a great whole, which whole would collapse and fall to pieces without it. Liberalism has just as much right to exist as has the most moral conservatism; but I am attacking RUSSIAN liberalism; and I attack it for the simple reason that a Russian liberal is not a Russian liberal, he is a non-Russian liberal. Show me a real Russian liberal, and I’ll kiss him before you all, with pleasure.”

“If he cared to kiss you, that is,” said Alexandra, whose cheeks were red with irritation and excitement.

“Look at that, now,” thought the mother to herself, “she does nothing but sleep and eat for a year at a time, and then suddenly flies out in the most incomprehensible way!”

The prince observed that Alexandra appeared to be angry with Evgenie, because he spoke on a serious subject in a frivolous manner, pretending to be in earnest, but with an under-current of irony.

“I was saying just now, before you came in, prince, that there has been nothing national up to now, about our liberalism, and nothing the liberals do, or have done, is

in the least degree national. They are drawn from two classes only, the old landowning class, and clerical families—”

“How, nothing that they have done is Russian?” asked Prince S.

“It may be Russian, but it is not national. Our liberals are not Russian, nor are our conservatives, and you may be sure that the nation does not recognize anything that has been done by the landed gentry, or by the seminarists, or what is to be done either.”

“Come, that’s good! How can you maintain such a paradox? If you are serious, that is. I cannot allow such a statement about the landed proprietors to pass unchallenged. Why, you are a landed proprietor yourself!” cried Prince S. hotly.

“I suppose you’ll say there is nothing national about our literature either?” said Alexandra.

“Well, I am not a great authority on literary questions, but I certainly do hold that Russian literature is not Russian, except perhaps Lomonosoff, Pouschkin and Gogol.”

“In the first place, that is a considerable admission, and in the second place, one of the above was a peasant, and the other two were both landed proprietors!”

“Quite so, but don’t be in such a hurry! For since it has been the part of these three men, and only these three, to say something absolutely their own, not borrowed, so by this very fact these three men become really national. If any Russian shall have done or said anything really and absolutely original, he is to be called national from that moment, though he may not be able to talk the Russian language; still he is a national Russian. I consider that an axiom. But we were not speaking of literature; we began by discussing the socialists. Very well then, I insist that there does not exist one single Russian socialist. There does not, and there has never existed such a one, because all socialists are derived from the two classes—the landed proprietors, and the seminarists. All our eminent socialists are merely old liberals of the class of landed proprietors, men who were liberals in the days of serfdom. Why do you laugh? Give me their books, give me their studies, their memoirs, and though I am not a literary critic, yet I will prove as clear as day that every chapter and every word of their writings has been the work of a former landed proprietor of the old school. You’ll find that all their raptures, all their generous transports are proprietary, all their woes and their tears, proprietary; all proprietary or seminarist! You are laughing again, and you, prince, are smiling too. Don’t you agree with me?”

It was true enough that everybody was laughing, the prince among them.

“I cannot tell you on the instant whether I agree with you or not,” said the latter, suddenly stopping his laughter, and starting like a schoolboy caught at mischief. “But, I assure you, I am listening to you with extreme gratification.”

So saying, he almost panted with agitation, and a cold sweat stood upon his forehead. These were his first words since he had entered the house; he tried to lift his eyes, and look around, but dared not; Evgenie Pavlovitch noticed his confusion, and smiled.

“I’ll just tell you one fact, ladies and gentlemen,” continued the latter, with apparent seriousness and even exaltation of manner, but with a suggestion of “chaff” behind

every word, as though he were laughing in his sleeve at his own nonsense—"a fact, the discovery of which, I believe, I may claim to have made by myself alone. At all events, no other has ever said or written a word about it; and in this fact is expressed the whole essence of Russian liberalism of the sort which I am now considering.

"In the first place, what is liberalism, speaking generally, but an attack (whether mistaken or reasonable, is quite another question) upon the existing order of things? Is this so? Yes. Very well. Then my 'fact' consists in this, that RUSSIAN liberalism is not an attack upon the existing order of things, but an attack upon the very essence of things themselves—indeed, on the things themselves; not an attack on the Russian order of things, but on Russia itself. My Russian liberal goes so far as to reject Russia; that is, he hates and strikes his own mother. Every misfortune and mishap of the mother-country fills him with mirth, and even with ecstasy. He hates the national customs, Russian history, and everything. If he has a justification, it is that he does not know what he is doing, and believes that his hatred of Russia is the grandest and most profitable kind of liberalism. (You will often find a liberal who is applauded and esteemed by his fellows, but who is in reality the dreariest, blindest, dullest of conservatives, and is not aware of the fact.) This hatred for Russia has been mistaken by some of our 'Russian liberals' for sincere love of their country, and they boast that they see better than their neighbours what real love of one's country should consist in. But of late they have grown, more candid and are ashamed of the expression 'love of country,' and have annihilated the very spirit of the words as something injurious and petty and undignified. This is the truth, and I hold by it; but at the same time it is a phenomenon which has not been repeated at any other time or place; and therefore, though I hold to it as a fact, yet I recognize that it is an accidental phenomenon, and may likely enough pass away. There can be no such thing anywhere else as a liberal who really hates his country; and how is this fact to be explained among US? By my original statement that a Russian liberal is NOT a RUSSIAN liberal—that's the only explanation that I can see."

"I take all that you have said as a joke," said Prince S. seriously.

"I have not seen all kinds of liberals, and cannot, therefore, set myself up as a judge," said Alexandra, "but I have heard all you have said with indignation. You have taken some accidental case and twisted it into a universal law, which is unjust."

"Accidental case!" said Evgenie Pavlovitch. "Do you consider it an accidental case, prince?"

"I must also admit," said the prince, "that I have not seen much, or been very far into the question; but I cannot help thinking that you are more or less right, and that Russian liberalism— that phase of it which you are considering, at least—really is sometimes inclined to hate Russia itself, and not only its existing order of things in general. Of course this is only PARTIALLY the truth; you cannot lay down the law for all..."

The prince blushed and broke off, without finishing what he meant to say.

In spite of his shyness and agitation, he could not help being greatly interested in the conversation. A special characteristic of his was the naive candour with which he always listened to arguments which interested him, and with which he answered any questions put to him on the subject at issue. In the very expression of his face this naivete was unmistakably evident, this disbelief in the insincerity of others, and unsuspecting disregard of irony or humour in their words.

But though Evgenie Pavlovitch had put his questions to the prince with no other purpose but to enjoy the joke of his simple-minded seriousness, yet now, at his answer, he was surprised into some seriousness himself, and looked gravely at Muishkin as though he had not expected that sort of answer at all.

“Why, how strange!” he ejaculated. “You didn’t answer me seriously, surely, did you?”

“Did not you ask me the question seriously?” inquired the prince, in amazement.

Everybody laughed.

“Oh, trust HIM for that!” said Adelaida. “Evgenie Pavlovitch turns everything and everybody he can lay hold of to ridicule. You should hear the things he says sometimes, apparently in perfect seriousness.”

“In my opinion the conversation has been a painful one throughout, and we ought never to have begun it,” said Alexandra. “We were all going for a walk—”

“Come along then,” said Evgenie; “it’s a glorious evening. But, to prove that this time I was speaking absolutely seriously, and especially to prove this to the prince (for you, prince, have interested me exceedingly, and I swear to you that I am not quite such an ass as I like to appear sometimes, although I am rather an ass, I admit), and—well, ladies and gentlemen, will you allow me to put just one more question to the prince, out of pure curiosity? It shall be the last. This question came into my mind a couple of hours since (you see, prince, I do think seriously at times), and I made my own decision upon it; now I wish to hear what the prince will say to it.”

“We have just used the expression ‘accidental case.’ This is a significant phrase; we often hear it. Well, not long since everyone was talking and reading about that terrible murder of six people on the part of a—young fellow, and of the extraordinary speech of the counsel for the defence, who observed that in the poverty-stricken condition of the criminal it must have come NATURALLY into his head to kill these six people. I do not quote his words, but that is the sense of them, or something very like it. Now, in my opinion, the barrister who put forward this extraordinary plea was probably absolutely convinced that he was stating the most liberal, the most humane, the most enlightened view of the case that could possibly be brought forward in these days. Now, was this distortion, this capacity for a perverted way of viewing things, a special or accidental case, or is such a general rule?”

Everyone laughed at this.

“A special case—accidental, of course!” cried Alexandra and Adelaida.

“Let me remind you once more, Evgenie,” said Prince S., “that your joke is getting a little threadbare.”

“What do you think about it, prince?” asked Evgenie, taking no notice of the last remark, and observing Muishkin’s serious eyes fixed upon his face. “What do you think—was it a special or a usual case—the rule, or an exception? I confess I put the question especially for you.”

“No, I don’t think it was a special case,” said the prince, quietly, but firmly.

“My dear fellow!” cried Prince S., with some annoyance, “don’t you see that he is chaffing you? He is simply laughing at you, and wants to make game of you.”

“I thought Evgenie Pavlovitch was talking seriously,” said the prince, blushing and dropping his eyes.

“My dear prince,” continued Prince S. “remember what you and I were saying two or three months ago. We spoke of the fact that in our newly opened Law Courts one could already lay one’s finger upon so many talented and remarkable young barristers. How pleased you were with the state of things as we found it, and how glad I was to observe your delight! We both said it was a matter to be proud of; but this clumsy defence that Evgenie mentions, this strange argument CAN, of course, only be an accidental case—one in a thousand!”

The prince reflected a little, but very soon he replied, with absolute conviction in his tone, though he still spoke somewhat shyly and timidly:

“I only wished to say that this ‘distortion,’ as Evgenie Pavlovitch expressed it, is met with very often, and is far more the general rule than the exception, unfortunately for Russia. So much so, that if this distortion were not the general rule, perhaps these dreadful crimes would be less frequent.”

“Dreadful crimes? But I can assure you that crimes just as dreadful, and probably more horrible, have occurred before our times, and at all times, and not only here in Russia, but everywhere else as well. And in my opinion it is not at all likely that such murders will cease to occur for a very long time to come. The only difference is that in former times there was less publicity, while now everyone talks and writes freely about such things—which fact gives the impression that such crimes have only now sprung into existence. That is where your mistake lies—an extremely natural mistake, I assure you, my dear fellow!” said Prince S.

“I know that there were just as many, and just as terrible, crimes before our times. Not long since I visited a convict prison and made acquaintance with some of the criminals. There were some even more dreadful criminals than this one we have been speaking of—men who have murdered a dozen of their fellow- creatures, and feel no remorse whatever. But what I especially noticed was this, that the very most hopeless and remorseless murderer—however hardened a criminal he may be—still KNOWS THAT HE IS A CRIMINAL; that is, he is conscious that he has acted wickedly, though he may feel no remorse whatever. And they were all like this. Those of whom Evgenie Pavlovitch has spoken, do not admit that they are criminals at all; they think they had a right to do what they did, and that they were even doing a good deed, perhaps. I consider there is the greatest difference between the two cases. And recollect—it was

a YOUTH, at the particular age which is most helplessly susceptible to the distortion of ideas!"

Prince S. was now no longer smiling; he gazed at the prince in bewilderment.

Alexandra, who had seemed to wish to put in her word when the prince began, now sat silent, as though some sudden thought had caused her to change her mind about speaking.

Evgenie Pavlovitch gazed at him in real surprise, and this time his expression of face had no mockery in it whatever.

"What are you looking so surprised about, my friend?" asked Mrs. Epanchin, suddenly. "Did you suppose he was stupider than yourself, and was incapable of forming his own opinions, or what?"

"No! Oh no! Not at all!" said Evgenie. "But—how is it, prince, that you—(excuse the question, will you?)—if you are capable of observing and seeing things as you evidently do, how is it that you saw nothing distorted or perverted in that claim upon your property, which you acknowledged a day or two since; and which was full of arguments founded upon the most distorted views of right and wrong?"

"I'll tell you what, my friend," cried Mrs. Epanchin, of a sudden, "here are we all sitting here and imagining we are very clever, and perhaps laughing at the prince, some of us, and meanwhile he has received a letter this very day in which that same claimant renounces his claim, and begs the prince's pardon. There I we don't often get that sort of letter; and yet we are not ashamed to walk with our noses in the air before him."

"And Hippolyte has come down here to stay," said Colia, suddenly.

"What! has he arrived?" said the prince, starting up.

"Yes, I brought him down from town just after you had left the house."

"There now! It's just like him," cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, boiling over once more, and entirely oblivious of the fact that she had just taken the prince's part. "I dare swear that you went up to town yesterday on purpose to get the little wretch to do you the great honour of coming to stay at your house. You did go up to town, you know you did—you said so yourself! Now then, did you, or did you not, go down on your knees and beg him to come, confess!"

"No, he didn't, for I saw it all myself," said Colia. "On the contrary, Hippolyte kissed his hand twice and thanked him; and all the prince said was that he thought Hippolyte might feel better here in the country!"

"Don't, Colia,—what is the use of saying all that?" cried the prince, rising and taking his hat.

"Where are you going to now?" cried Mrs. Epanchin.

"Never mind about him now, prince," said Colia. "He is all right and taking a nap after the journey. He is very happy to be here; but I think perhaps it would be better if you let him alone for today,—he is very sensitive now that he is so ill—and he might be embarrassed if you show him too much attention at first. He is decidedly better

today, and says he has not felt so well for the last six months, and has coughed much less, too.”

The prince observed that Aglaya came out of her corner and approached the table at this point.

He did not dare look at her, but he was conscious, to the very tips of his fingers, that she was gazing at him, perhaps angrily; and that she had probably flushed up with a look of fiery indignation in her black eyes.

“It seems to me, Mr. Colia, that you were very foolish to bring your young friend down—if he is the same consumptive boy who wept so profusely, and invited us all to his own funeral,” remarked Evgenie Pavlovitch. “He talked so eloquently about the blank wall outside his bedroom window, that I’m sure he will never support life here without it.”

“I think so too,” said Mrs. Epanchin; “he will quarrel with you, and be off,” and she drew her workbox towards her with an air of dignity, quite oblivious of the fact that the family was about to start for a walk in the park.

“Yes, I remember he boasted about the blank wall in an extraordinary way,” continued Evgenie, “and I feel that without that blank wall he will never be able to die eloquently; and he does so long to die eloquently!”

“Oh, you must forgive him the blank wall,” said the prince, quietly. “He has come down to see a few trees now, poor fellow.”

“Oh, I forgive him with all my heart; you may tell him so if you like,” laughed Evgenie.

“I don’t think you should take it quite like that,” said the prince, quietly, and without removing his eyes from the carpet. “I think it is more a case of his forgiving you “

“Forgiving me! why so? What have I done to need his forgiveness?”

“If you don’t understand, then—but of course, you do understand. He wished—he wished to bless you all round and to have your blessing—before he died—that’s all.”

“My dear prince,” began Prince S., hurriedly, exchanging glances with some of those present, “you will not easily find heaven on earth, and yet you seem to expect to. Heaven is a difficult thing to find anywhere, prince; far more difficult than appears to that good heart of yours. Better stop this conversation, or we shall all be growing quite disturbed in our minds, and—”

“Let’s go and hear the band, then,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, angrily rising from her place.

The rest of the company followed her example.

II.

THE prince suddenly approached Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“Evgenie Pavlovitch,” he said, with strange excitement and seizing the latter’s hand in his own, “be assured that I esteem you as a generous and honourable man, in spite of everything. Be assured of that.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch fell back a step in astonishment. For one moment it was all he could do to restrain himself from bursting out laughing; but, looking closer, he observed that the prince did not seem to be quite himself; at all events, he was in a very curious state.

“I wouldn’t mind betting, prince,” he cried, “that you did not in the least mean to say that, and very likely you meant to address someone else altogether. What is it? Are you feeling unwell or anything?”

“Very likely, extremely likely, and you must be a very close observer to detect the fact that perhaps I did not intend to come up to YOU at all.”

So saying he smiled strangely; but suddenly and excitedly he began again:

“Don’t remind me of what I have done or said. Don’t! I am very much ashamed of myself, I—”

“Why, what have you done? I don’t understand you.”

“I see you are ashamed of me, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you are blushing for me; that’s a sign of a good heart. Don’t be afraid; I shall go away directly.”

“What’s the matter with him? Do his fits begin like that?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, in a high state of alarm, addressing Colia.

“No, no, Lizabetha Prokofievna, take no notice of me. I am not going to have a fit. I will go away directly; but I know I am afflicted. I was twenty-four years an invalid, you see—the first twenty-four years of my life—so take all I do and say as the sayings and actions of an invalid. I’m going away directly, I really am—don’t be afraid. I am not blushing, for I don’t think I need blush about it, need I? But I see that I am out of place in society—society is better without me. It’s not vanity, I assure you. I have thought over it all these last three days, and I have made up my mind that I ought to unbosom myself candidly before you at the first opportunity. There are certain things, certain great ideas, which I must not so much as approach, as Prince S. has just reminded me, or I shall make you all laugh. I have no sense of proportion, I know; my words and gestures do not express my ideas—they are a humiliation and abasement of the ideas, and therefore, I have no right—and I am too sensitive. Still, I believe I am beloved in this household, and esteemed far more than I deserve. But I can’t help knowing that after twenty-four years of illness there must be some trace left, so that it is impossible for people to refrain from laughing at me sometimes; don’t you think so?”

He seemed to pause for a reply, for some verdict, as it were, and looked humbly around him.

All present stood rooted to the earth with amazement at this unexpected and apparently uncalled-for outbreak; but the poor prince’s painful and rambling speech gave rise to a strange episode.

“Why do you say all this here?” cried Aglaya, suddenly. “Why do you talk like this to THEM?”

She appeared to be in the last stages of wrath and irritation; her eyes flashed. The prince stood dumbly and blindly before her, and suddenly grew pale.

“There is not one of them all who is worthy of these words of yours,” continued Aglaya. “Not one of them is worth your little finger, not one of them has heart or head to compare with yours! You are more honest than all, and better, nobler, kinder, wiser than all. There are some here who are unworthy to bend and pick up the handkerchief you have just dropped. Why do you humiliate yourself like this, and place yourself lower than these people? Why do you debase yourself before them? Why have you no pride?”

“My God! Who would ever have believed this?” cried Mrs. Epanchin, wringing her hands.

“Hurrah for the ‘poor knight’!” cried Colia.

“Be quiet! How dare they laugh at me in your house?” said Aglaya, turning sharply on her mother in that hysterical frame of mind that rides recklessly over every obstacle and plunges blindly through proprieties. “Why does everyone, everyone worry and torment me? Why have they all been bullying me these three days about you, prince? I will not marry you—never, and under no circumstances! Know that once and for all; as if anyone could marry an absurd creature like you! Just look in the glass and see what you look like, this very moment! Why, WHY do they torment me and say I am going to marry you? You must know it; you are in the plot with them!”

“No one ever tormented you on the subject,” murmured Adelaida, aghast.

“No one ever thought of such a thing! There has never been a word said about it!” cried Alexandra.

“Who has been annoying her? Who has been tormenting the child? Who could have said such a thing to her? Is she raving?” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, trembling with rage, to the company in general.

“Every one of them has been saying it—every one of them—all these three days! And I will never, never marry him!”

So saying, Aglaya burst into bitter tears, and, hiding her face in her handkerchief, sank back into a chair.

“But he has never even—”

“I have never asked you to marry me, Aglaya Ivanovna!” said the prince, of a sudden.

“WHAT?” cried Mrs. Epanchin, raising her hands in horror. “WHAT’S that?”

She could not believe her ears.

“I meant to say—I only meant to say,” said the prince, faltering, “I merely meant to explain to Aglaya Ivanovna—to have the honour to explain, as it were—that I had no intention—never had—to ask the honour of her hand. I assure you I am not guilty, Aglaya Ivanovna, I am not, indeed. I never did wish to—I never thought of it at all—and never shall—you’ll see it yourself—you may be quite assured of it. Some wicked person has been maligning me to you; but it’s all right. Don’t worry about it.”

So saying, the prince approached Aglaya.

She took the handkerchief from her face, glanced keenly at him, took in what he had said, and burst out laughing—such a merry, unrestrained laugh, so hearty and gay, that. Adelaida could not contain herself. She, too, glanced at the prince's panic-stricken countenance, then rushed at her sister, threw her arms round her neck, and burst into as merry a fit of laughter as Aglaya's own. They laughed together like a couple of school-girls. Hearing and seeing this, the prince smiled happily, and in accents of relief and joy, he exclaimed "Well, thank God—thank God!"

Alexandra now joined in, and it looked as though the three sisters were going to laugh on for ever.

"They are insane," muttered Lizabetha Prokofievna. "Either they frighten one out of one's wits, or else—"

But Prince S. was laughing now, too, so was Evgenie Pavlovitch, so was Colia, and so was the prince himself, who caught the infection as he looked round radiantly upon the others.

"Come along, let's go out for a walk!" cried Adelaida. "We'll all go together, and the prince must absolutely go with us. You needn't go away, you dear good fellow! ISN'T he a dear, Aglaya? Isn't he, mother? I must really give him a kiss for—for his explanation to Aglaya just now. Mother, dear, I may kiss him, mayn't I? Aglaya, may I kiss YOUR prince?" cried the young rogue, and sure enough she skipped up to the prince and kissed his forehead.

He seized her hands, and pressed them so hard that Adelaida nearly cried out; he then gazed with delight into her eyes, and raising her right hand to his lips with enthusiasm, kissed it three times.

"Come along," said Aglaya. "Prince, you must walk with me. May he, mother? This young cavalier, who won't have me? You said you would NEVER have me, didn't you, prince? No-no, not like that; THAT'S not the way to give your arm. Don't you know how to give your arm to a lady yet? There—so. Now, come along, you and I will lead the way. Would you like to lead the way with me alone, tete-a-tete?"

She went on talking and chatting without a pause, with occasional little bursts of laughter between.

"Thank God—thank God!" said Lizabetha Prokofievna to herself, without quite knowing why she felt so relieved.

"What extraordinary people they are!" thought Prince S., for perhaps the hundredth time since he had entered into intimate relations with the family; but—he liked these "extraordinary people," all the same. As for Prince Lef Nicolaievitch himself, Prince S. did not seem quite to like him, somehow. He was decidedly preoccupied and a little disturbed as they all started off.

Evgenie Pavlovitch seemed to be in a lively humour. He made Adelaida and Alexandra laugh all the way to the Vauxhall; but they both laughed so very really and promptly that the worthy Evgenie began at last to suspect that they were not listening to him at all.

At this idea, he burst out laughing all at once, in quite unaffected mirth, and without giving any explanation.

The sisters, who also appeared to be in high spirits, never tired of glancing at Aglaya and the prince, who were walking in front. It was evident that their younger sister was a thorough puzzle to them both.

Prince S. tried hard to get up a conversation with Mrs. Epanchin upon outside subjects, probably with the good intention of distracting and amusing her; but he bored her dreadfully. She was absent-minded to a degree, and answered at cross purposes, and sometimes not at all.

But the puzzle and mystery of Aglaya was not yet over for the evening. The last exhibition fell to the lot of the prince alone. When they had proceeded some hundred paces or so from the house, Aglaya said to her obstinately silent cavalier in a quick half-whisper:

“Look to the right!”

The prince glanced in the direction indicated.

“Look closer. Do you see that bench, in the park there, just by those three big trees—that green bench?”

The prince replied that he saw it.

“Do you like the position of it? Sometimes of a morning early, at seven o’clock, when all the rest are still asleep, I come out and sit there alone.”

The prince muttered that the spot was a lovely one.

“Now, go away, I don’t wish to have your arm any longer; or perhaps, better, continue to give me your arm, and walk along beside me, but don’t speak a word to me. I wish to think by myself.”

The warning was certainly unnecessary; for the prince would not have said a word all the rest of the time whether forbidden to speak or not. His heart beat loud and painfully when Aglaya spoke of the bench; could she—but no! he banished the thought, after an instant’s deliberation.

At Pavlofsk, on weekdays, the public is more select than it is on Sundays and Saturdays, when the townfolk come down to walk about and enjoy the park.

The ladies dress elegantly, on these days, and it is the fashion to gather round the band, which is probably the best of our pleasure-garden bands, and plays the newest pieces. The behaviour of the public is most correct and proper, and there is an appearance of friendly intimacy among the usual frequenters. Many come for nothing but to look at their acquaintances, but there are others who come for the sake of the music. It is very seldom that anything happens to break the harmony of the proceedings, though, of course, accidents will happen everywhere.

On this particular evening the weather was lovely, and there were a large number of people present. All the places anywhere near the orchestra were occupied.

Our friends took chairs near the side exit. The crowd and the music cheered Mrs. Epanchin a little, and amused the girls; they bowed and shook hands with some of

their friends and nodded at a distance to others; they examined the ladies' dresses, noticed comicalities and eccentricities among the people, and laughed and talked among themselves. Evgenie Pavlovitch, too, found plenty of friends to bow to. Several people noticed Aglaya and the prince, who were still together.

Before very long two or three young men had come up, and one or two remained to talk; all of these young men appeared to be on intimate terms with Evgenie Pavlovitch. Among them was a young officer, a remarkably handsome fellow—very good-natured and a great chatterbox. He tried to get up a conversation with Aglaya, and did his best to secure her attention. Aglaya behaved very graciously to him, and chatted and laughed merrily. Evgenie Pavlovitch begged the prince's leave to introduce their friend to him. The prince hardly realized what was wanted of him, but the introduction came off; the two men bowed and shook hands.

Evgenie Pavlovitch's friend asked the prince some question, but the latter did not reply, or if he did, he muttered something so strangely indistinct that there was nothing to be made of it. The officer stared intently at him, then glanced at Evgenie, divined why the latter had introduced him, and gave his undivided attention to Aglaya again. Only Evgenie Pavlovitch observed that Aglaya flushed up for a moment at this.

The prince did not notice that others were talking and making themselves agreeable to Aglaya; in fact, at moments, he almost forgot that he was sitting by her himself. At other moments he felt a longing to go away somewhere and be alone with his thoughts, and to feel that no one knew where he was.

Or if that were impossible he would like to be alone at home, on the terrace—without either Lebedeff or his children, or anyone else about him, and to lie there and think—a day and night and another day again! He thought of the mountains—and especially of a certain spot which he used to frequent, whence he would look down upon the distant valleys and fields, and see the waterfall, far off, like a little silver thread, and the old ruined castle in the distance. Oh! how he longed to be there now—alone with his thoughts—to think of one thing all his life—one thing! A thousand years would not be too much time! And let everyone here forget him—forget him utterly! How much better it would have been if they had never known him—if all this could but prove to be a dream. Perhaps it was a dream!

Now and then he looked at Aglaya for five minutes at a time, without taking his eyes off her face; but his expression was very strange; he would gaze at her as though she were an object a couple of miles distant, or as though he were looking at her portrait and not at herself at all.

“Why do you look at me like that, prince?” she asked suddenly, breaking off her merry conversation and laughter with those about her. “I'm afraid of you! You look as though you were just going to put out your hand and touch my face to see if it's real! Doesn't he, Evgenie Pavlovitch—doesn't he look like that?”

The prince seemed surprised that he should have been addressed at all; he reflected a moment, but did not seem to take in what had been said to him; at all events, he did

not answer. But observing that she and the others had begun to laugh, he too opened his mouth and laughed with them.

The laughter became general, and the young officer, who seemed a particularly lively sort of person, simply shook with mirth.

Aglaya suddenly whispered angrily to herself the word—

“Idiot!”

“My goodness—surely she is not in love with such a—surely she isn’t mad!” groaned Mrs. Epanchin, under her breath.

“It’s all a joke, mamma; it’s just a joke like the ‘poor knight’—nothing more whatever, I assure you!” Alexandra whispered in her ear. “She is chaffing him—making a fool of him, after her own private fashion, that’s all! But she carries it just a little too far—she is a regular little actress. How she frightened us just now—didn’t she?—and all for a lark!”

“Well, it’s lucky she has happened upon an idiot, then, that’s all I can say!” whispered Lizabetha Prokofievna, who was somewhat comforted, however, by her daughter’s remark.

The prince had heard himself referred to as “idiot,” and had shuddered at the moment; but his shudder, it so happened, was not caused by the word applied to him. The fact was that in the crowd, not far from where he was sitting, a pale familiar face, with curly black hair, and a well-known smile and expression, had flashed across his vision for a moment, and disappeared again. Very likely he had imagined it! There only remained to him the impression of a strange smile, two eyes, and a bright green tie. Whether the man had disappeared among the crowd, or whether he had turned towards the Vauxhall, the prince could not say.

But a moment or two afterwards he began to glance keenly about him. That first vision might only too likely be the forerunner of a second; it was almost certain to be so. Surely he had not forgotten the possibility of such a meeting when he came to the Vauxhall? True enough, he had not remarked where he was coming to when he set out with Aglaya; he had not been in a condition to remark anything at all.

Had he been more careful to observe his companion, he would have seen that for the last quarter of an hour Aglaya had also been glancing around in apparent anxiety, as though she expected to see someone, or something particular, among the crowd of people. Now, at the moment when his own anxiety became so marked, her excitement also increased visibly, and when he looked about him, she did the same.

The reason for their anxiety soon became apparent. From that very side entrance to the Vauxhall, near which the prince and all the Epanchin party were seated, there suddenly appeared quite a large knot of persons, at least a dozen.

Heading this little band walked three ladies, two of whom were remarkably lovely; and there was nothing surprising in the fact that they should have had a large troop of admirers following in their wake.

But there was something in the appearance of both the ladies and their admirers which was peculiar, quite different for that of the rest of the public assembled around the orchestra.

Nearly everyone observed the little band advancing, and all pretended not to see or notice them, except a few young fellows who exchanged glances and smiled, saying something to one another in whispers.

It was impossible to avoid noticing them, however, in reality, for they made their presence only too conspicuous by laughing and talking loudly. It was to be supposed that some of them were more than half drunk, although they were well enough dressed, some even particularly well. There were one or two, however, who were very strange-looking creatures, with flushed faces and extraordinary clothes; some were military men; not all were quite young; one or two were middle-aged gentlemen of decidedly disagreeable appearance, men who are avoided in society like the plague, decked out in large gold studs and rings, and magnificently "got up," generally.

Among our suburban resorts there are some which enjoy a specially high reputation for respectability and fashion; but the most careful individual is not absolutely exempt from the danger of a tile falling suddenly upon his head from his neighbour's roof.

Such a tile was about to descend upon the elegant and decorous public now assembled to hear the music.

In order to pass from the Vauxhall to the band-stand, the visitor has to descend two or three steps. Just at these steps the group paused, as though it feared to proceed further; but very quickly one of the three ladies, who formed its apex, stepped forward into the charmed circle, followed by two members of her suite.

One of these was a middle-aged man of very respectable appearance, but with the stamp of parvenu upon him, a man whom nobody knew, and who evidently knew nobody. The other follower was younger and far less respectable-looking.

No one else followed the eccentric lady; but as she descended the steps she did not even look behind her, as though it were absolutely the same to her whether anyone were following or not. She laughed and talked loudly, however, just as before. She was dressed with great taste, but with rather more magnificence than was needed for the occasion, perhaps.

She walked past the orchestra, to where an open carriage was waiting, near the road.

The prince had not seen HER for more than three months. All these days since his arrival from Petersburg he had intended to pay her a visit, but some mysterious presentiment had restrained him. He could not picture to himself what impression this meeting with her would make upon him, though he had often tried to imagine it, with fear and trembling. One fact was quite certain, and that was that the meeting would be painful.

Several times during the last six months he had recalled the effect which the first sight of this face had had upon him, when he only saw its portrait. He recollected well that even the portrait face had left but too painful an impression.

That month in the provinces, when he had seen this woman nearly every day, had affected him so deeply that he could not now look back upon it calmly. In the very look of this woman there was something which tortured him. In conversation with Rogojin he had attributed this sensation to pity—immeasurable pity, and this was the truth. The sight of the portrait face alone had filled his heart full of the agony of real sympathy; and this feeling of sympathy, nay, of actual SUFFERING, for her, had never left his heart since that hour, and was still in full force. Oh yes, and more powerful than ever!

But the prince was not satisfied with what he had said to Rogojin. Only at this moment, when she suddenly made her appearance before him, did he realize to the full the exact emotion which she called up in him, and which he had not described correctly to Rogojin.

And, indeed, there were no words in which he could have expressed his horror, yes, HORROR, for he was now fully convinced from his own private knowledge of her, that the woman was mad.

If, loving a woman above everything in the world, or at least having a foretaste of the possibility of such love for her, one were suddenly to behold her on a chain, behind bars and under the lash of a keeper, one would feel something like what the poor prince now felt.

“What’s the matter?” asked Aglaya, in a whisper, giving his sleeve a little tug.

He turned his head towards her and glanced at her black and (for some reason) flashing eyes, tried to smile, and then, apparently forgetting her in an instant, turned to the right once more, and continued to watch the startling apparition before him.

Nastasia Philipovna was at this moment passing the young ladies’ chairs.

Evgenie Pavlovitch continued some apparently extremely funny and interesting anecdote to Alexandra, speaking quickly and with much animation. The prince remembered that at this moment Aglaya remarked in a half-whisper:

“WHAT a—”

She did not finish her indefinite sentence; she restrained herself in a moment; but it was enough.

Nastasia Philipovna, who up to now had been walking along as though she had not noticed the Epanchin party, suddenly turned her head in their direction, as though she had just observed Evgenie Pavlovitch sitting there for the first time.

“Why, I declare, here he is!” she cried, stopping suddenly. “The man one can’t find with all one’s messengers sent about the place, sitting just under one’s nose, exactly where one never thought of looking! I thought you were sure to be at your uncle’s by this time.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch flushed up and looked angrily at Nastasia Philipovna, then turned his back on her.

“What I don’t you know about it yet? He doesn’t know—imagine that! Why, he’s shot himself. Your uncle shot himself this very morning. I was told at two this afternoon. Half the town must know it by now. They say there are three hundred and fifty

thousand roubles, government money, missing; some say five hundred thousand. And I was under the impression that he would leave you a fortune! He's whistled it all away. A most depraved old gentleman, really! Well, ta, ta!—bonne chance! Surely you intend to be off there, don't you? Ha, ha! You've retired from the army in good time, I see! Plain clothes! Well done, sly rogue! Nonsense! I see—you knew it all before—I dare say you knew all about it yesterday—“

Although the impudence of this attack, this public proclamation of intimacy, as it were, was doubtless premeditated, and had its special object, yet Evgenie Pavlovitch at first seemed to intend to make no show of observing either his tormentor or her words. But Nastasia's communication struck him with the force of a thunderclap. On hearing of his uncle's death he suddenly grew as white as a sheet, and turned towards his informant.

At this moment, Lizabetha Prokofievna rose swiftly from her seat, beckoned her companions, and left the place almost at a run.

Only the prince stopped behind for a moment, as though in indecision; and Evgenie Pavlovitch lingered too, for he had not collected his scattered wits. But the Epanchins had not had time to get more than twenty paces away when a scandalous episode occurred. The young officer, Evgenie Pavlovitch's friend who had been conversing with Aglaya, said aloud in a great state of indignation:

“She ought to be whipped—that's the only way to deal with creatures like that—she ought to be whipped!”

This gentleman was a confidant of Evgenie's, and had doubtless heard of the carriage episode.

Nastasia turned to him. Her eyes flashed; she rushed up to a young man standing near, whom she did not know in the least, but who happened to have in his hand a thin cane. Seizing this from him, she brought it with all her force across the face of her insulter.

All this occurred, of course, in one instant of time.

The young officer, forgetting himself, sprang towards her. Nastasia's followers were not by her at the moment (the elderly gentleman having disappeared altogether, and the younger man simply standing aside and roaring with laughter).

In another moment, of course, the police would have been on the spot, and it would have gone hard with Nastasia Philipovna had not unexpected aid appeared.

Muishkin, who was but a couple of steps away, had time to spring forward and seize the officer's arms from behind.

The officer, tearing himself from the prince's grasp, pushed him so violently backwards that he staggered a few steps and then subsided into a chair.

But there were other defenders for Nastasia on the spot by this time. The gentleman known as the “boxer” now confronted the enraged officer.

“Keller is my name, sir; ex-lieutenant,” he said, very loud. “If you will accept me as champion of the fair sex, I am at your disposal. English boxing has no secrets from me. I sympathize with you for the insult you have received, but I can't permit you to raise

your hand against a woman in public. If you prefer to meet me—as would be more fitting to your rank—in some other manner, of course you understand me, captain.”

But the young officer had recovered himself, and was no longer listening. At this moment Rogojin appeared, elbowing through the crowd; he took Nastasia’s hand, drew it through his arm, and quickly led her away. He appeared to be terribly excited; he was trembling all over, and was as pale as a corpse. As he carried Nastasia off, he turned and grinned horribly in the officer’s face, and with low malice observed:

“Tfu! look what the fellow got! Look at the blood on his cheek! Ha, ha!”

Recollecting himself, however, and seeing at a glance the sort of people he had to deal with, the officer turned his back on both his opponents, and courteously, but concealing his face with his handkerchief, approached the prince, who was now rising from the chair into which he had fallen.

“Prince Muishkin, I believe? The gentleman to whom I had the honour of being introduced?”

“She is mad, insane—I assure you, she is mad,” replied the prince in trembling tones, holding out both his hands mechanically towards the officer.

“I cannot boast of any such knowledge, of course, but I wished to know your name.”

He bowed and retired without waiting for an answer.

Five seconds after the disappearance of the last actor in this scene, the police arrived. The whole episode had not lasted more than a couple of minutes. Some of the spectators had risen from their places, and departed altogether; some merely exchanged their seats for others a little further off; some were delighted with the occurrence, and talked and laughed over it for a long time.

In a word, the incident closed as such incidents do, and the band began to play again. The prince walked away after the Epanchin party. Had he thought of looking round to the left after he had been pushed so unceremoniously into the chair, he would have observed Aglaya standing some twenty yards away. She had stayed to watch the scandalous scene in spite of her mother’s and sisters’ anxious cries to her to come away.

Prince S. ran up to her and persuaded her, at last, to come home with them.

Lizabetha Prokofievna saw that she returned in such a state of agitation that it was doubtful whether she had even heard their calls. But only a couple of minutes later, when they had reached the park, Aglaya suddenly remarked, in her usual calm, indifferent voice:

“I wanted to see how the farce would end.”

III.

THE occurrence at the Vauxhall had filled both mother and daughters with something like horror. In their excitement Lizabetha Prokofievna and the girls were nearly running all the way home.

In her opinion there was so much disclosed and laid bare by the episode, that, in spite of the chaotic condition of her mind, she was able to feel more or less decided on certain points which, up to now, had been in a cloudy condition.

However, one and all of the party realized that something important had happened, and that, perhaps fortunately enough, something which had hitherto been enveloped in the obscurity of guess-work had now begun to come forth a little from the mists. In spite of Prince S.'s assurances and explanations, Evgenie Pavlovitch's real character and position were at last coming to light. He was publicly convicted of intimacy with "that creature." So thought Lizabetha Prokofievna and her two elder daughters.

But the real upshot of the business was that the number of riddles to be solved was augmented. The two girls, though rather irritated at their mother's exaggerated alarm and haste to depart from the scene, had been unwilling to worry her at first with questions.

Besides, they could not help thinking that their sister Aglaya probably knew more about the whole matter than both they and their mother put together.

Prince S. looked as black as night, and was silent and moody. Mrs. Epanchin did not say a word to him all the way home, and he did not seem to observe the fact. Adelaida tried to pump him a little by asking, "who was the uncle they were talking about, and what was it that had happened in Petersburg?" But he had merely muttered something disconnected about "making inquiries," and that "of course it was all nonsense." "Oh, of course," replied Adelaida, and asked no more questions. Aglaya, too, was very quiet; and the only remark she made on the way home was that they were "walking much too fast to be pleasant."

Once she turned and observed the prince hurrying after them. Noticing his anxiety to catch them up, she smiled ironically, and then looked back no more. At length, just as they neared the house, General Epanchin came out and met them; he had only just arrived from town.

His first word was to inquire after Evgenie Pavlovitch. But Lizabetha stalked past him, and neither looked at him nor answered his question.

He immediately judged from the faces of his daughters and Prince S. that there was a thunderstorm brewing, and he himself already bore evidences of unusual perturbation of mind.

He immediately button-holed Prince S., and standing at the front door, engaged in a whispered conversation with him. By the troubled aspect of both of them, when they entered the house, and approached Mrs. Epanchin, it was evident that they had been discussing very disturbing news.

Little by little the family gathered together upstairs in Lizabetha Prokofievna's apartments, and Prince Muishkin found himself alone on the verandah when he arrived. He settled himself in a corner and sat waiting, though he knew not what he expected. It never struck him that he had better go away, with all this disturbance in the house. He seemed to have forgotten all the world, and to be ready to sit on where he was for

years on end. From upstairs he caught sounds of excited conversation every now and then.

He could not say how long he sat there. It grew late and became quite dark.

Suddenly Aglaya entered the verandah. She seemed to be quite calm, though a little pale.

Observing the prince, whom she evidently did not expect to see there, alone in the corner, she smiled, and approached him:

“What are you doing there?” she asked.

The prince muttered something, blushed, and jumped up; but Aglaya immediately sat down beside him; so he reseated himself.

She looked suddenly, but attentively into his face, then at the window, as though thinking of something else, and then again at him.

“Perhaps she wants to laugh at me,” thought the prince, “but no; for if she did she certainly would do so.”

“Would you like some tea? I’ll order some,” she said, after a minute or two of silence.

“N-no thanks, I don’t know—”

“Don’t know! How can you not know? By-the-by, look here—if someone were to challenge you to a duel, what should you do? I wished to ask you this—some time ago—”

“Why? Nobody would ever challenge me to a duel!”

“But if they were to, would you be dreadfully frightened?”

“I dare say I should be—much alarmed!”

“Seriously? Then are you a coward?”

“N-no!—I don’t think so. A coward is a man who is afraid and runs away; the man who is frightened but does not run away, is not quite a coward,” said the prince with a smile, after a moment’s thought.

“And you wouldn’t run away?”

“No—I don’t think I should run away,” replied the prince, laughing outright at last at Aglaya’s questions.

“Though I am a woman, I should certainly not run away for anything,” said Aglaya, in a slightly pained voice. “However, I see you are laughing at me and twisting your face up as usual in order to make yourself look more interesting. Now tell me, they generally shoot at twenty paces, don’t they? At ten, sometimes? I suppose if at ten they must be either wounded or killed, mustn’t they?”

“I don’t think they often kill each other at duels.”

“They killed Pushkin that way.”

“That may have been an accident.”

“Not a bit of it; it was a duel to the death, and he was killed.”

“The bullet struck so low down that probably his antagonist would never have aimed at that part of him—people never do; he would have aimed at his chest or head; so that probably the bullet hit him accidentally. I have been told this by competent authorities.”

“Well, a soldier once told me that they were always ordered to aim at the middle of the body. So you see they don’t aim at the chest or head; they aim lower on purpose. I asked some officer about this afterwards, and he said it was perfectly true.”

“That is probably when they fire from a long distance.”

“Can you shoot at all?”

“No, I have never shot in my life.”

“Can’t you even load a pistol?”

“No! That is, I understand how it’s done, of course, but I have never done it.”

“Then, you don’t know how, for it is a matter that needs practice. Now listen and learn; in the first place buy good powder, not damp (they say it mustn’t be at all damp, but very dry), some fine kind it is—you must ask for PISTOL powder, not the stuff they load cannons with. They say one makes the bullets oneself, somehow or other. Have you got a pistol?”

“No—and I don’t want one,” said the prince, laughing.

“Oh, what NONSENSE! You must buy one. French or English are the best, they say. Then take a little powder, about a thimbleful, or perhaps two, and pour it into the barrel. Better put plenty. Then push in a bit of felt (it MUST be felt, for some reason or other); you can easily get a bit off some old mattress, or off a door; it’s used to keep the cold out. Well, when you have pushed the felt down, put the bullet in; do you hear now? The bullet last and the powder first, not the other way, or the pistol won’t shoot. What are you laughing at? I wish you to buy a pistol and practise every day, and you must learn to hit a mark for CERTAIN; will you?”

The prince only laughed. Aglaya stamped her foot with annoyance.

Her serious air, however, during this conversation had surprised him considerably. He had a feeling that he ought to be asking her something, that there was something he wanted to find out far more important than how to load a pistol; but his thoughts had all scattered, and he was only aware that she was sitting by, him, and talking to him, and that he was looking at her; as to what she happened to be saying to him, that did not matter in the least.

The general now appeared on the verandah, coming from upstairs. He was on his way out, with an expression of determination on his face, and of preoccupation and worry also.

“Ah! Lef Nicolaievitch, it’s you, is it? Where are you off to now?” he asked, oblivious of the fact that the prince had not showed the least sign of moving. “Come along with me; I want to say a word or two to you.”

“Au revoir, then!” said Aglaya, holding out her hand to the prince.

It was quite dark now, and Muishkin could not see her face clearly, but a minute or two later, when he and the general had left the villa, he suddenly flushed up, and squeezed his right hand tightly.

It appeared that he and the general were going in the same direction. In spite of the lateness of the hour, the general was hurrying away to talk to someone upon some

important subject. Meanwhile he talked incessantly but disconnectedly to the prince, and continually brought in the name of Lizabetha Prokofievna.

If the prince had been in a condition to pay more attention to what the general was saying, he would have discovered that the latter was desirous of drawing some information out of him, or indeed of asking him some question outright; but that he could not make up his mind to come to the point.

Muishkin was so absent, that from the very first he could not attend to a word the other was saying; and when the general suddenly stopped before him with some excited question, he was obliged to confess, ignominiously, that he did not know in the least what he had been talking about.

The general shrugged his shoulders.

“How strange everyone, yourself included, has become of late,” said he. “I was telling you that I cannot in the least understand Lizabetha Prokofievna’s ideas and agitations. She is in hysterics up there, and moans and says that we have been ‘shamed and disgraced.’ How? Why? When? By whom? I confess that I am very much to blame myself; I do not conceal the fact; but the conduct, the outrageous behaviour of this woman, must really be kept within limits, by the police if necessary, and I am just on my way now to talk the question over and make some arrangements. It can all be managed quietly and gently, even kindly, and without the slightest fuss or scandal. I foresee that the future is pregnant with events, and that there is much that needs explanation. There is intrigue in the wind; but if on one side nothing is known, on the other side nothing will be explained. If I have heard nothing about it, nor have YOU, nor HE, nor SHE— who HAS heard about it, I should like to know? How CAN all this be explained except by the fact that half of it is mirage or moonshine, or some hallucination of that sort?”

“SHE is insane,” muttered the prince, suddenly recollecting all that had passed, with a spasm of pain at his heart.

“I too had that idea, and I slept in peace. But now I see that their opinion is more correct. I do not believe in the theory of madness! The woman has no common sense; but she is not only not insane, she is artful to a degree. Her outburst of this evening about Evgenie’s uncle proves that conclusively. It was VILLAINOUS, simply jesuitical, and it was all for some special purpose.”

“What about Evgenie’s uncle?”

“My goodness, Lef Nicolaievitch, why, you can’t have heard a single word I said! Look at me, I’m still trembling all over with the dreadful shock! It is that that kept me in town so late. Evgenie Pavlovitch’s uncle—”

Well?” cried the prince.

“Shot himself this morning, at seven o’clock. A respected, eminent old man of seventy; and exactly point for point as she described it; a sum of money, a considerable sum of government money, missing!”

“Why, how could she—”

“What, know of it? Ha, ha, ha! Why, there was a whole crowd round her the moment she appeared on the scenes here. You know what sort of people surround her nowadays, and solicit the honour of her ‘acquaintance.’ Of course she might easily have heard the news from someone coming from town. All Petersburg, if not all Pavlofsk, knows it by now. Look at the slyness of her observation about Evgenie’s uniform! I mean, her remark that he had retired just in time! There’s a venomous hint for you, if you like! No, no! there’s no insanity there! Of course I refuse to believe that Evgenie Pavlovitch could have known beforehand of the catastrophe; that is, that at such and such a day at seven o’clock, and all that; but he might well have had a presentiment of the truth. And I—all of us—Prince S. and everybody, believed that he was to inherit a large fortune from this uncle. It’s dreadful, horrible! Mind, I don’t suspect Evgenie of anything, be quite clear on that point; but the thing is a little suspicious, nevertheless. Prince S. can’t get over it. Altogether it is a very extraordinary combination of circumstances.”

“What suspicion attaches to Evgenie Pavlovitch?”

“Oh, none at all! He has behaved very well indeed. I didn’t mean to drop any sort of hint. His own fortune is intact, I believe. Lizabetha Prokofievna, of course, refuses to listen to anything. That’s the worst of it all, these family catastrophes or quarrels, or whatever you like to call them. You know, prince, you are a friend of the family, so I don’t mind telling you; it now appears that Evgenie Pavlovitch proposed to Aglaya a month ago, and was refused.”

“Impossible!” cried the prince.

“Why? Do you know anything about it? Look here,” continued the general, more agitated than ever, and trembling with excitement, “maybe I have been letting the cat out of the bag too freely with you, if so, it is because you are—that sort of man, you know! Perhaps you have some special information?”

“I know nothing about Evgenie Pavlovitch!” said the prince.

“Nor do I! They always try to bury me underground when there’s anything going on; they don’t seem to reflect that it is unpleasant to a man to be treated so! I won’t stand it! We have just had a terrible scene!—mind, I speak to you as I would to my own son! Aglaya laughs at her mother. Her sisters guessed about Evgenie having proposed and been rejected, and told Lizabetha.

“I tell you, my dear fellow, Aglaya is such an extraordinary, such a self-willed, fantastical little creature, you wouldn’t believe it! Every high quality, every brilliant trait of heart and mind, are to be found in her, and, with it all, so much caprice and mockery, such wild fancies—indeed, a little devil! She has just been laughing at her mother to her very face, and at her sisters, and at Prince S., and everybody—and of course she always laughs at me! You know I love the child—I love her even when she laughs at me, and I believe the wild little creature has a special fondness for me for that very reason. She is fonder of me than any of the others. I dare swear she has had a good laugh at YOU before now! You were having a quiet talk just now, I observed, after all the thunder and lightning upstairs. She was sitting with you just as though there had been no row at all.”

The prince blushed painfully in the darkness, and closed his right hand tightly, but he said nothing.

“My dear good Prince Lef Nicolaievitch,” began the general again, suddenly, “both I and Lizabetha Prokofievna—(who has begun to respect you once more, and me through you, goodness knows why!)— we both love you very sincerely, and esteem you, in spite of any appearances to the contrary. But you’ll admit what a riddle it must have been for us when that calm, cold, little spitfire, Aglaya—(for she stood up to her mother and answered her questions with inexpressible contempt, and mine still more so, because, like a fool, I thought it my duty to assert myself as head of the family)—when Aglaya stood up of a sudden and informed us that ‘that madwoman’ (strangely enough, she used exactly the same expression as you did) ‘has taken it into her head to marry me to Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, and therefore is doing her best to choke Evgenie Pavlovitch off, and rid the house of him.’ That’s what she said. She would not give the slightest explanation; she burst out laughing, banged the door, and went away. We all stood there with our mouths open. Well, I was told afterwards of your little passage with Aglaya this afternoon, and-and—dear prince—you are a good, sensible fellow, don’t be angry if I speak out—she is laughing at you, my boy! She is enjoying herself like a child, at your expense, and therefore, since she is a child, don’t be angry with her, and don’t think anything of it. I assure you, she is simply making a fool of you, just as she does with one and all of us out of pure lack of something better to do. Well—good-bye! You know our feelings, don’t you—our sincere feelings for yourself? They are unalterable, you know, dear boy, under all circumstances, but—Well, here we part; I must go down to the right. Rarely have I sat so uncomfortably in my saddle, as they say, as I now sit. And people talk of the charms of a country holiday!”

Left to himself at the cross-roads, the prince glanced around him, quickly crossed the road towards the lighted window of a neighbouring house, and unfolded a tiny scrap of paper which he had held clasped in his right hand during the whole of his conversation with the general.

He read the note in the uncertain rays that fell from the window. It was as follows:

“Tomorrow morning, I shall be at the green bench in the park at seven, and shall wait there for you. I have made up my mind to speak to you about a most important matter which closely concerns yourself.

“P.S.—I trust that you will not show this note to anyone. Though I am ashamed of giving you such instructions, I feel that I must do so, considering what you are. I therefore write the words, and blush for your simple character.

“P.P.S.—It is the same green bench that I showed you before. There! aren’t you ashamed of yourself? I felt that it was necessary to repeat even that information.”

The note was written and folded anyhow, evidently in a great hurry, and probably just before Aglaya had come down to the verandah.

In inexpressible agitation, amounting almost to fear, the prince slipped quickly away from the window, away from the light, like a frightened thief, but as he did so

he collided violently with some gentleman who seemed to spring from the earth at his feet.

“I was watching for you, prince,” said the individual.

“Is that you, Keller?” said the prince, in surprise.

“Yes, I’ve been looking for you. I waited for you at the Epanchins’ house, but of course I could not come in. I dogged you from behind as you walked along with the general. Well, prince, here is Keller, absolutely at your service—command him!—ready to sacrifice himself—even to die in case of need.”

“But-why?”

“Oh, why?—Of course you’ll be challenged! That was young Lieutenant Moloftsoff. I know him, or rather of him; he won’t pass an insult. He will take no notice of Rogojin and myself, and, therefore, you are the only one left to account for. You’ll have to pay the piper, prince. He has been asking about you, and undoubtedly his friend will call on you tomorrow—perhaps he is at your house already. If you would do me the honour to have me for a second, prince, I should be happy. That’s why I have been looking for you now.”

“Duel! You’ve come to talk about a duel, too!” The prince burst out laughing, to the great astonishment of Keller. He laughed unrestrainedly, and Keller, who had been on pins and needles, and in a fever of excitement to offer himself as “second,” was very near being offended.

“You caught him by the arms, you know, prince. No man of proper pride can stand that sort of treatment in public.”

“Yes, and he gave me a fearful dig in the chest,” cried the prince, still laughing. “What are we to fight about? I shall beg his pardon, that’s all. But if we must fight—we’ll fight! Let him have a shot at me, by all means; I should rather like it. Ha, ha, ha! I know how to load a pistol now; do you know how to load a pistol, Keller? First, you have to buy the powder, you know; it mustn’t be wet, and it mustn’t be that coarse stuff that they load cannons with—it must be pistol powder. Then you pour the powder in, and get hold of a bit of felt from some door, and then shove the bullet in. But don’t shove the bullet in before the powder, because the thing wouldn’t go off—do you hear, Keller, the thing wouldn’t go off! Ha, ha, ha! Isn’t that a grand reason, Keller, my friend, eh? Do you know, my dear fellow, I really must kiss you, and embrace you, this very moment. Ha, ha! How was it you so suddenly popped up in front of me as you did? Come to my house as soon as you can, and we’ll have some champagne. We’ll all get drunk! Do you know I have a dozen of champagne in Lebedeff’s cellar? Lebedeff sold them to me the day after I arrived. I took the lot. We’ll invite everybody! Are you going to do any sleeping tonight?”

“As much as usual, prince—why?”

“Pleasant dreams then—ha, ha!”

The prince crossed the road, and disappeared into the park, leaving the astonished Keller in a state of ludicrous wonder. He had never before seen the prince in such a strange condition of mind, and could not have imagined the possibility of it.

“Fever, probably,” he said to himself, “for the man is all nerves, and this business has been a little too much for him. He is not AFRAID, that’s clear; that sort never funks! H’m! champagne! That was an interesting item of news, at all events!— Twelve bottles! Dear me, that’s a very respectable little stock indeed! I bet anything Lebedeff lent somebody money on deposit of this dozen of champagne. Hum! he’s a nice fellow, is this prince! I like this sort of man. Well, I needn’t be wasting time here, and if it’s a case of champagne, why—there’s no time like the present!”

That the prince was almost in a fever was no more than the truth. He wandered about the park for a long while, and at last came to himself in a lonely avenue. He was vaguely conscious that he had already paced this particular walk—from that large, dark tree to the bench at the other end—about a hundred yards altogether—at least thirty times backwards and forwards.

As to recollecting what he had been thinking of all that time, he could not. He caught himself, however, indulging in one thought which made him roar with laughter, though there was nothing really to laugh at in it; but he felt that he must laugh, and go on laughing.

It struck him that the idea of the duel might not have occurred to Keller alone, but that his lesson in the art of pistol-loading might have been not altogether accidental! “Pooh! nonsense!” he said to himself, struck by another thought, of a sudden. “Why, she was immensely surprised to find me there on the verandah, and laughed and talked about TEA! And yet she had this little note in her hand, therefore she must have known that I was sitting there. So why was she surprised? Ha, ha, ha!”

He pulled the note out and kissed it; then paused and reflected. “How strange it all is! how strange!” he muttered, melancholy enough now. In moments of great joy, he invariably felt a sensation of melancholy come over him—he could not tell why.

He looked intently around him, and wondered why he had come here; he was very tired, so he approached the bench and sat down on it. Around him was profound silence; the music in the Vauxhall was over. The park seemed quite empty, though it was not, in reality, later than half-past eleven. It was a quiet, warm, clear night—a real Petersburg night of early June; but in the dense avenue, where he was sitting, it was almost pitch dark.

If anyone had come up at this moment and told him that he was in love, passionately in love, he would have rejected the idea with astonishment, and, perhaps, with irritation. And if anyone had added that Aglaya’s note was a love-letter, and that it contained an appointment to a lover’s rendezvous, he would have blushed with shame for the speaker, and, probably, have challenged him to a duel.

All this would have been perfectly sincere on his part. He had never for a moment entertained the idea of the possibility of this girl loving him, or even of such a thing as himself falling in love with her. The possibility of being loved himself, “a man like me,” as he put it, he ranked among ridiculous suppositions. It appeared to him that it was simply a joke on Aglaya’s part, if there really were anything in it at all; but that seemed to him quite natural. His preoccupation was caused by something different.

As to the few words which the general had let slip about Aglaya laughing at everybody, and at himself most of all—he entirely believed them. He did not feel the slightest sensation of offence; on the contrary, he was quite certain that it was as it should be.

His whole thoughts were now as to next morning early; he would see her; he would sit by her on that little green bench, and listen to how pistols were loaded, and look at her. He wanted nothing more.

The question as to what she might have to say of special interest to himself occurred to him once or twice. He did not doubt, for a moment, that she really had some such subject of conversation in store, but so very little interested in the matter was he that it did not strike him to wonder what it could be. The crunch of gravel on the path suddenly caused him to raise his head.

A man, whose face it was difficult to see in the gloom, approached the bench, and sat down beside him. The prince peered into his face, and recognized the livid features of Rogojin.

“I knew you’d be wandering about somewhere here. I didn’t have to look for you very long,” muttered the latter between his teeth.

It was the first time they had met since the encounter on the staircase at the hotel.

Painfully surprised as he was at this sudden apparition of Rogojin, the prince, for some little while, was unable to collect his thoughts. Rogojin, evidently, saw and understood the impression he had made; and though he seemed more or less confused at first, yet he began talking with what looked like assumed ease and freedom. However, the prince soon changed his mind on this score, and thought that there was not only no affectation of indifference, but that Rogojin was not even particularly agitated. If there were a little apparent awkwardness, it was only in his words and gestures. The man could not change his heart.

“How did you—find me here?” asked the prince for the sake of saying something.

“Keller told me (I found him at your place) that you were in the park. ‘Of course he is!’ I thought.”

“Why so?” asked the prince uneasily.

Rogojin smiled, but did not explain.

“I received your letter, Lef Nicolaievitch—what’s the good of all that?—It’s no use, you know. I’ve come to you from HER,—she bade me tell you that she must see you, she has something to say to you. She told me to find you today.”

“I’ll come tomorrow. Now I’m going home—are you coming to my house?”

“Why should I? I’ve given you the message.—Goodbye!”

“Won’t you come?” asked the prince in a gentle voice.

“What an extraordinary man you are! I wonder at you!” Rogojin laughed sarcastically.

“Why do you hate me so?” asked the prince, sadly. “You know yourself that all you suspected is quite unfounded. I felt you were still angry with me, though. Do you know why? Because you tried to kill me—that’s why you can’t shake off your wrath

against me. I tell you that I only remember the Parfen Rogojin with whom I exchanged crosses, and vowed brotherhood. I wrote you this in yesterday's letter, in order that you might forget all that madness on your part, and that you might not feel called to talk about it when we met. Why do you avoid me? Why do you hold your hand back from me? I tell you again, I consider all that has passed a delirium, an insane dream. I can understand all you did, and all you felt that day, as if it were myself. What you were then imagining was not the case, and could never be the case. Why, then, should there be anger between us?"

"You don't know what anger is!" laughed Rogojin, in reply to the prince's heated words.

He had moved a pace or two away, and was hiding his hands behind him.

"No, it is impossible for me to come to your house again," he added slowly.

"Why? Do you hate me so much as all that?"

"I don't love you, Lef Nicolaievitch, and, therefore, what would be the use of my coming to see you? You are just like a child—you want a plaything, and it must be taken out and given you—and then you don't know how to work it. You are simply repeating all you said in your letter, and what's the use? Of course I believe every word you say, and I know perfectly well that you neither did or ever can deceive me in any way, and yet, I don't love you. You write that you've forgotten everything, and only remember your brother Parfen, with whom you exchanged crosses, and that you don't remember anything about the Rogojin who aimed a knife at your throat. What do you know about my feelings, eh?" (Rogojin laughed disagreeably.) "Here you are holding out your brotherly forgiveness to me for a thing that I have perhaps never repented of in the slightest degree. I did not think of it again all that evening; all my thoughts were centred on something else—"

"Not think of it again? Of course you didn't!" cried the prince. "And I dare swear that you came straight away down here to Pavlofsk to listen to the music and dog her about in the crowd, and stare at her, just as you did today. There's nothing surprising in that! If you hadn't been in that condition of mind that you could think of nothing but one subject, you would, probably, never have raised your knife against me. I had a presentiment of what you would do, that day, ever since I saw you first in the morning. Do you know yourself what you looked like? I knew you would try to murder me even at the very moment when we exchanged crosses. What did you take me to your mother for? Did you think to stay your hand by doing so? Perhaps you did not put your thoughts into words, but you and I were thinking the same thing, or feeling the same thing looming over us, at the same moment. What should you think of me now if you had not raised your knife to me—the knife which God averted from my throat? I would have been guilty of suspecting you all the same—and you would have intended the murder all the same; therefore we should have been mutually guilty in any case. Come, don't frown; you needn't laugh at me, either. You say you haven't 'repented.' Repented! You probably couldn't, if you were to try; you dislike me too much for that. Why, if I were an angel of light, and as innocent before you as a babe, you would

still loathe me if you believed that SHE loved me, instead of loving yourself. That's jealousy—that is the real jealousy.

"But do you know what I have been thinking out during this last week, Parfen? I'll tell you. What if she loves you now better than anyone? And what if she torments you BECAUSE she loves you, and in proportion to her love for you, so she torments you the more? She won't tell you this, of course; you must have eyes to see. Why do you suppose she consents to marry you? She must have a reason, and that reason she will tell you some day. Some women desire the kind of love you give her, and she is probably one of these. Your love and your wild nature impress her. Do you know that a woman is capable of driving a man crazy almost, with her cruelties and mockeries, and feels not one single pang of regret, because she looks at him and says to herself, 'There! I'll torment this man nearly into his grave, and then, oh! how I'll compensate him for it all with my love!'"

Rogojin listened to the end, and then burst out laughing:

"Why, prince, I declare you must have had a taste of this sort of thing yourself—haven't you? I have heard tell of something of the kind, you know; is it true?"

"What? What can you have heard?" said the prince, stammering.

Rogojin continued to laugh loudly. He had listened to the prince's speech with curiosity and some satisfaction. The speaker's impulsive warmth had surprised and even comforted him.

"Why, I've not only heard of it; I see it for myself," he said. "When have you ever spoken like that before? It wasn't like yourself, prince. Why, if I hadn't heard this report about you, I should never have come all this way into the park—at midnight, too!"

"I don't understand you in the least, Parfen."

"Oh, SHE told me all about it long ago, and tonight I saw for myself. I saw you at the music, you know, and whom you were sitting with. She swore to me yesterday, and again today, that you are madly in love with Aglaya Ivanovna. But that's all the same to me, prince, and it's not my affair at all; for if you have ceased to love HER, SHE has not ceased to love YOU. You know, of course, that she wants to marry you to that girl? She's sworn to it! Ha, ha! She says to me, 'Until then I won't marry you. When they go to church, we'll go too—and not before.' What on earth does she mean by it? I don't know, and I never did. Either she loves you without limits or—yet, if she loves you, why does she wish to marry you to another girl? She says, 'I want to see him happy,' which is to say—she loves you."

"I wrote, and I say to you once more, that she is not in her right mind," said the prince, who had listened with anguish to what Rogojin said.

"Goodness knows—you may be wrong there! At all events, she named the day this evening, as we left the gardens. 'In three weeks,' says she, 'and perhaps sooner, we shall be married.' She swore to it, took off her cross and kissed it. So it all depends upon you now, prince, You see! Ha, ha!"

“That’s all madness. What you say about me, Parfen, never can and never will be. Tomorrow, I shall come and see you—”

“How can she be mad,” Rogojin interrupted, “when she is sane enough for other people and only mad for you? How can she write letters to HER, if she’s mad? If she were insane they would observe it in her letters.”

“What letters?” said the prince, alarmed.

“She writes to HER—and the girl reads the letters. Haven’t you heard?—You are sure to hear; she’s sure to show you the letters herself.”

“I won’t believe this!” cried the prince.

“Why, prince, you’ve only gone a few steps along this road, I perceive. You are evidently a mere beginner. Wait a bit! Before long, you’ll have your own detectives, you’ll watch day and night, and you’ll know every little thing that goes on there—that is, if—”

“Drop that subject, Rogojin, and never mention it again. And listen: as I have sat here, and talked, and listened, it has suddenly struck me that tomorrow is my birthday. It must be about twelve o’clock, now; come home with me—do, and we’ll see the day in! We’ll have some wine, and you shall wish me—I don’t know what—but you, especially you, must wish me a good wish, and I shall wish you full happiness in return. Otherwise, hand me my cross back again. You didn’t return it to me next day. Haven’t you got it on now?”

“Yes, I have,” said Rogojin.

“Come along, then. I don’t wish to meet my new year without you— my new life, I should say, for a new life is beginning for me. Did you know, Parfen, that a new life had begun for me?”

“I see for myself that it is so—and I shall tell HER. But you are not quite yourself, Lef Nicolaievitch.”

IV.

THE prince observed with great surprise, as he approached his villa, accompanied by Rogojin, that a large number of people were assembled on his verandah, which was brilliantly lighted up. The company seemed merry and were noisily laughing and talking—even quarrelling, to judge from the sounds. At all events they were clearly enjoying themselves, and the prince observed further on closer investigation—that all had been drinking champagne. To judge from the lively condition of some of the party, it was to be supposed that a considerable quantity of champagne had been consumed already.

All the guests were known to the prince; but the curious part of the matter was that they had all arrived on the same evening, as though with one accord, although he had only himself recollected the fact that it was his birthday a few moments since.

“You must have told somebody you were going to trot out the champagne, and that’s why they are all come!” muttered Rogojin, as the two entered the verandah. “We know all about that! You’ve only to whistle and they come up in shoals!” he continued, almost angrily. He was doubtless thinking of his own late experiences with his boon companions.

All surrounded the prince with exclamations of welcome, and, on hearing that it was his birthday, with cries of congratulation and delight; many of them were very noisy.

The presence of certain of those in the room surprised the prince vastly, but the guest whose advent filled him with the greatest wonder—almost amounting to alarm—was Evgenie Pavlovitch. The prince could not believe his eyes when he beheld the latter, and could not help thinking that something was wrong.

Lebedeff ran up promptly to explain the arrival of all these gentlemen. He was himself somewhat intoxicated, but the prince gathered from his long-winded periods that the party had assembled quite naturally, and accidentally.

First of all Hippolyte had arrived, early in the evening, and feeling decidedly better, had determined to await the prince on the verandah. There Lebedeff had joined him, and his household had followed—that is, his daughters and General Ivolgin. Burdovsky had brought Hippolyte, and stayed on with him. Gania and Ptitsin had dropped in accidentally later on; then came Keller, and he and Colia insisted on having champagne. Evgenie Pavlovitch had only dropped in half an hour or so ago. Lebedeff had served the champagne readily.

“My own though, prince, my own, mind,” he said, “and there’ll be some supper later on; my daughter is getting it ready now. Come and sit down, prince, we are all waiting for you, we want you with us. Fancy what we have been discussing! You know the question, ‘to be or not to be,’—out of Hamlet! A contemporary theme! Quite up-to-date! Mr. Hippolyte has been eloquent to a degree. He won’t go to bed, but he has only drunk a little champagne, and that can’t do him any harm. Come along, prince, and settle the question. Everyone is waiting for you, sighing for the light of your luminous intelligence...”

The prince noticed the sweet, welcoming look on Vera Lebedeff’s face, as she made her way towards him through the crowd. He held out his hand to her. She took it, blushing with delight, and wished him “a happy life from that day forward.” Then she ran off to the kitchen, where her presence was necessary to help in the preparations for supper. Before the prince’s arrival she had spent some time on the terrace, listening eagerly to the conversation, though the visitors, mostly under the influence of wine, were discussing abstract subjects far beyond her comprehension. In the next room her younger sister lay on a wooden chest, sound asleep, with her mouth wide open; but the boy, Lebedeff’s son, had taken up his position close beside Colia and Hippolyte, his face lit up with interest in the conversation of his father and the rest, to which he would willingly have listened for ten hours at a stretch.

"I have waited for you on purpose, and am very glad to see you arrive so happy," said Hippolyte, when the prince came forward to press his hand, immediately after greeting Vera.

"And how do you know that I am 'so happy'?"

"I can see it by your face! Say 'how do you do' to the others, and come and sit down here, quick—I've been waiting for you!" he added, accentuating the fact that he had waited. On the prince's asking, "Will it not be injurious to you to sit out so late?" he replied that he could not believe that he had thought himself dying three days or so ago, for he never had felt better than this evening.

Burdovsky next jumped up and explained that he had come in by accident, having escorted Hippolyte from town. He murmured that he was glad he had "written nonsense" in his letter, and then pressed the prince's hand warmly and sat down again.

The prince approached Evgenie Pavlovitch last of all. The latter immediately took his arm.

"I have a couple of words to say to you," he began, "and those on a very important matter; let's go aside for a minute or two."

"Just a couple of words!" whispered another voice in the prince's other ear, and another hand took his other arm. Muishkin turned, and to his great surprise observed a red, flushed face and a droll-looking figure which he recognized at once as that of Ferdishenko. Goodness knows where he had turned up from!

"Do you remember Ferdishenko?" he asked.

"Where have you dropped from?" cried the prince.

"He is sorry for his sins now, prince," cried Keller. "He did not want to let you know he was here; he was hidden over there in the corner,—but he repents now, he feels his guilt."

"Why, what has he done?"

"I met him outside and brought him in—he's a gentleman who doesn't often allow his friends to see him, of late—but he's sorry now."

"Delighted, I'm sure!—I'll come back directly, gentlemen,—sit down there with the others, please,—excuse me one moment," said the host, getting away with difficulty in order to follow Evgenie.

"You are very gay here," began the latter, "and I have had quite a pleasant half-hour while I waited for you. Now then, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, this is what's the matter. I've arranged it all with Moloftsoff, and have just come in to relieve your mind on that score. You need be under no apprehensions. He was very sensible, as he should be, of course, for I think he was entirely to blame himself."

"What Moloftsoff?"

"The young fellow whose arms you held, don't you know? He was so wild with you that he was going to send a friend to you tomorrow morning."

"What nonsense!"

"Of course it is nonsense, and in nonsense it would have ended, doubtless; but you know these fellows, they—"

“Excuse me, but I think you must have something else that you wished to speak about, Evgenie Pavlovitch?”

“Of course, I have!” said the other, laughing. “You see, my dear fellow, tomorrow, very early in the morning, I must be off to town about this unfortunate business (my uncle, you know!). Just imagine, my dear sir, it is all true—word for word—and, of course, everybody knew it excepting myself. All this has been such a blow to me that I have not managed to call in at the Epanchins’. Tomorrow I shall not see them either, because I shall be in town. I may not be here for three days or more; in a word, my affairs are a little out of gear. But though my town business is, of course, most pressing, still I determined not to go away until I had seen you, and had a clear understanding with you upon certain points; and that without loss of time. I will wait now, if you will allow me, until the company departs; I may just as well, for I have nowhere else to go to, and I shall certainly not do any sleeping tonight; I’m far too excited. And finally, I must confess that, though I know it is bad form to pursue a man in this way, I have come to beg your friendship, my dear prince. You are an unusual sort of a person; you don’t lie at every step, as some men do; in fact, you don’t lie at all, and there is a matter in which I need a true and sincere friend, for I really may claim to be among the number of bona fide unfortunates just now.”

He laughed again.

“But the trouble is,” said the prince, after a slight pause for reflection, “that goodness only knows when this party will break up. Hadn’t we better stroll into the park? I’ll excuse myself, there’s no danger of their going away.”

“No, no! I have my reasons for wishing them not to suspect us of being engaged in any specially important conversation. There are gentry present who are a little too much interested in us. You are not aware of that perhaps, prince? It will be a great deal better if they see that we are friendly just in an ordinary way. They’ll all go in a couple of hours, and then I’ll ask you to give me twenty minutes—half an hour at most.”

“By all means! I assure you I am delighted—you need not have entered into all these explanations. As for your remarks about friendship with me—thanks, very much indeed. You must excuse my being a little absent this evening. Do you know, I cannot somehow be attentive to anything just now?”

“I see, I see,” said Evgenie, smiling gently. His mirth seemed very near the surface this evening.

“What do you see?” said the prince, startled.

“I don’t want you to suspect that I have simply come here to deceive you and pump information out of you!” said Evgenie, still smiling, and without making any direct reply to the question.

“Oh, but I haven’t the slightest doubt that you did come to pump me,” said the prince, laughing himself, at last; “and I dare say you are quite prepared to deceive me too, so far as that goes. But what of that? I’m not afraid of you; besides, you’ll hardly believe it, I feel as though I really didn’t care a scrap one way or the other, just now!—And-and-and as you are a capital fellow, I am convinced of that, I dare say

we really shall end by being good friends. I like you very much Evgenie Pavlovitch; I consider you a very good fellow indeed.”

“Well, in any case, you are a most delightful man to have to deal with, be the business what it may,” concluded Evgenie. “Come along now, I’ll drink a glass to your health. I’m charmed to have entered into alliance with you. By-the-by,” he added suddenly, has this young Hippolyte come down to stay with you

“Yes.”

“He’s not going to die at once, I should think, is he?”

“Why?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’ve been half an hour here with him, and he—”

Hippolyte had been waiting for the prince all this time, and had never ceased looking at him and Evgenie Pavlovitch as they conversed in the corner. He became much excited when they approached the table once more. He was disturbed in his mind, it seemed; perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead; in his gleaming eyes it was easy to read impatience and agitation; his gaze wandered from face to face of those present, and from object to object in the room, apparently without aim. He had taken a part, and an animated one, in the noisy conversation of the company; but his animation was clearly the outcome of fever. His talk was almost incoherent; he would break off in the middle of a sentence which he had begun with great interest, and forget what he had been saying. The prince discovered to his dismay that Hippolyte had been allowed to drink two large glasses of champagne; the one now standing by him being the third. All this he found out afterwards; at the moment he did not notice anything, very particularly.

“Do you know I am specially glad that today is your birthday!” cried Hippolyte.

“Why?”

“You’ll soon see. D’you know I had a feeling that there would be a lot of people here tonight? It’s not the first time that my presentiments have been fulfilled. I wish I had known it was your birthday, I’d have brought you a present—perhaps I have got a present for you! Who knows? Ha, ha! How long is it now before daylight?”

“Not a couple of hours,” said Ptitsin, looking at his watch. What’s the good of daylight now? One can read all night in the open air without it,” said someone.

“The good of it! Well, I want just to see a ray of the sun,” said Hippolyte. Can one drink to the sun’s health, do you think, prince?”

“Oh, I dare say one can; but you had better be calm and lie down, Hippolyte—that’s much more important.

“You are always preaching about resting; you are a regular nurse to me, prince. As soon as the sun begins to ‘resound’ in the sky —what poet said that? ‘The sun resounded in the sky.’ It is beautiful, though there’s no sense in it!—then we will go to bed. Lebedeff, tell me, is the sun the source of life? What does the source, or ‘spring,’ of life really mean in the Apocalypse? You have heard of the ‘Star that is called Wormwood,’ prince?”

“I have heard that Lebedeff explains it as the railroads that cover Europe like a net.”

Everybody laughed, and Lebedeff got up abruptly.

“No! Allow me, that is not what we are discussing!” he cried, waving his hand to impose silence. “Allow me! With these gentlemen ... all these gentlemen,” he added, suddenly addressing the prince, “on certain points ... that is ...” He thumped the table repeatedly, and the laughter increased. Lebedeff was in his usual evening condition, and had just ended a long and scientific argument, which had left him excited and irritable. On such occasions he was apt to evince a supreme contempt for his opponents.

“It is not right! Half an hour ago, prince, it was agreed among us that no one should interrupt, no one should laugh, that each person was to express his thoughts freely; and then at the end, when everyone had spoken, objections might be made, even by the atheists. We chose the general as president. Now without some such rule and order, anyone might be shouted down, even in the loftiest and most profound thought... .”

“Go on! Go on! Nobody is going to interrupt you!” cried several voices.

“Speak, but keep to the point!”

“What is this ‘star’?” asked another.

I have no idea,” replied General Ivolgin, who presided with much gravity.

“I love these arguments, prince,” said Keller, also more than half intoxicated, moving restlessly in his chair. “Scientific and political.” Then, turning suddenly towards Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was seated near him: “Do you know, I simply adore reading the accounts of the debates in the English parliament. Not that the discussions themselves interest me; I am not a politician, you know; but it delights me to see how they address each other ‘the noble lord who agrees with me,’ ‘my honourable opponent who astonished Europe with his proposal,’ ‘the noble viscount sitting opposite’—all these expressions, all this parliamentarism of a free people, has an enormous attraction for me. It fascinates me, prince. I have always been an artist in the depths of my soul, I assure you, Evgenie Pavlovitch.”

“Do you mean to say,” cried Gania, from the other corner, “do you mean to say that railways are accursed inventions, that they are a source of ruin to humanity, a poison poured upon the earth to corrupt the springs of life?”

Gavrila Ardalionovitch was in high spirits that evening, and it seemed to the prince that his gaiety was mingled with triumph. Of course he was only joking with Lebedeff, meaning to egg him on, but he grew excited himself at the same time.

“Not the railways, oh dear, no!” replied Lebedeff, with a mixture of violent anger and extreme enjoyment. “Considered alone, the railways will not pollute the springs of life, but as a whole they are accursed. The whole tendency of our latest centuries, in its scientific and materialistic aspect, is most probably accursed.”

“Is it certainly accursed? ... or do you only mean it might be? That is an important point,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“It is accursed, certainly accursed!” replied the clerk, vehemently.

“Don’t go so fast, Lebedeff; you are much milder in the morning,” said Ptitsin, smiling.

“But, on the other hand, more frank in the evening! In the evening sincere and frank,” repeated Lebedeff, earnestly. “More candid, more exact, more honest, more honourable, and ... although I may show you my weak side, I challenge you all; you atheists, for instance! How are you going to save the world? How find a straight road of progress, you men of science, of industry, of cooperation, of trades unions, and all the rest? How are you going to save it, I say? By what? By credit? What is credit? To what will credit lead you?”

“You are too inquisitive,” remarked Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“Well, anyone who does not interest himself in questions such as this is, in my opinion, a mere fashionable dummy.”

“But it will lead at least to solidarity, and balance of interests,” said Ptitsin.

“You will reach that with nothing to help you but credit? Without recourse to any moral principle, having for your foundation only individual selfishness, and the satisfaction of material desires? Universal peace, and the happiness of mankind as a whole, being the result! Is it really so that I may understand you, sir?”

“But the universal necessity of living, of drinking, of eating— in short, the whole scientific conviction that this necessity can only be satisfied by universal co-operation and the solidarity of interests—is, it seems to me, a strong enough idea to serve as a basis, so to speak, and a ‘spring of life,’ for humanity in future centuries,” said Gavrila Ardalionovitch, now thoroughly roused.

“The necessity of eating and drinking, that is to say, solely the instinct of self-preservation...”

“Is not that enough? The instinct of self-preservation is the normal law of humanity...”

“Who told you that?” broke in Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“It is a law, doubtless, but a law neither more nor less normal than that of destruction, even self-destruction. Is it possible that the whole normal law of humanity is contained in this sentiment of self-preservation?”

“Ah!” cried Hippolyte, turning towards Evgenie Pavlovitch, and looking at him with a queer sort of curiosity.

Then seeing that Radomski was laughing, he began to laugh himself, nudged Colia, who was sitting beside him, with his elbow, and again asked what time it was. He even pulled Colia’s silver watch out of his hand, and looked at it eagerly. Then, as if he had forgotten everything, he stretched himself out on the sofa, put his hands behind his head, and looked up at the sky. After a minute or two he got up and came back to the table to listen to Lebedeff’s outpourings, as the latter passionately commentated on Evgenie Pavlovitch’s paradox.

“That is an artful and traitorous idea. A smart notion,” vociferated the clerk, “thrown out as an apple of discord. But it is just. You are a scoffer, a man of the world, a cavalry officer, and, though not without brains, you do not realize how profound is

your thought, nor how true. Yes, the laws of self-preservation and of self-destruction are equally powerful in this world. The devil will hold his empire over humanity until a limit of time which is still unknown. You laugh? You do not believe in the devil? Scepticism as to the devil is a French idea, and it is also a frivolous idea. Do you know who the devil is? Do you know his name? Although you don't know his name you make a mockery of his form, following the example of Voltaire. You sneer at his hoofs, at his tail, at his horns—all of them the produce of your imagination! In reality the devil is a great and terrible spirit, with neither hoofs, nor tail, nor horns; it is you who have endowed him with these attributes! But ... he is not the question just now!"

"How do you know he is not the question now?" cried Hippolyte, laughing hysterically.

"Another excellent idea, and worth considering!" replied Lebedeff. "But, again, that is not the question. The question at this moment is whether we have not weakened 'the springs of life' by the extension ..."

"Of railways?" put in Colia eagerly.

"Not railways, properly speaking, presumptuous youth, but the general tendency of which railways may be considered as the outward expression and symbol. We hurry and push and hustle, for the good of humanity! 'The world is becoming too noisy, too commercial!' groans some solitary thinker. 'Undoubtedly it is, but the noise of waggons bearing bread to starving humanity is of more value than tranquillity of soul,' replies another triumphantly, and passes on with an air of pride. As for me, I don't believe in these waggons bringing bread to humanity. For, founded on no moral principle, these may well, even in the act of carrying bread to humanity, coldly exclude a considerable portion of humanity from enjoying it; that has been seen more than once.

"What, these waggons may coldly exclude?" repeated someone.

"That has been seen already," continued Lebedeff, not deigning to notice the interruption. "Malthus was a friend of humanity, but, with ill-founded moral principles, the friend of humanity is the devourer of humanity, without mentioning his pride; for, touch the vanity of one of these numberless philanthropists, and to avenge his self-esteem, he will be ready at once to set fire to the whole globe; and to tell the truth, we are all more or less like that. I, perhaps, might be the first to set a light to the fuel, and then run away. But, again, I must repeat, that is not the question."

"What is it then, for goodness' sake?"

"He is boring us!"

"The question is connected with the following anecdote of past times; for I am obliged to relate a story. In our times, and in our country, which I hope you love as much as I do, for as far as I am concerned, I am ready to shed the last drop of my blood...

"Go on! Go on!"

"In our dear country, as indeed in the whole of Europe, a famine visits humanity about four times a century, as far as I can remember; once in every twenty-five years. I

won't swear to this being the exact figure, but anyhow they have become comparatively rare."

"Comparatively to what?"

"To the twelfth century, and those immediately preceding and following it. We are told by historians that widespread famines occurred in those days every two or three years, and such was the condition of things that men actually had recourse to cannibalism, in secret, of course. One of these cannibals, who had reached a good age, declared of his own free will that during the course of his long and miserable life he had personally killed and eaten, in the most profound secrecy, sixty monks, not to mention several children; the number of the latter he thought was about six, an insignificant total when compared with the enormous mass of ecclesiastics consumed by him. As to adults, laymen that is to say, he had never touched them."

The president joined in the general outcry.

"That's impossible!" said he in an aggrieved tone. "I am often discussing subjects of this nature with him, gentlemen, but for the most part he talks nonsense enough to make one deaf: this story has no pretence of being true."

"General, remember the siege of Kars! And you, gentlemen, I assure you my anecdote is the naked truth. I may remark that reality, although it is governed by invariable law, has at times a resemblance to falsehood. In fact, the truer a thing is the less true it sounds."

"But could anyone possibly eat sixty monks?" objected the scoffing listeners.

"It is quite clear that he did not eat them all at once, but in a space of fifteen or twenty years: from that point of view the thing is comprehensible and natural..."

"Natural?"

"And natural," repeated Lebedeff with pedantic obstinacy. "Besides, a Catholic monk is by nature excessively curious; it would be quite easy therefore to entice him into a wood, or some secret place, on false pretences, and there to deal with him as said. But I do not dispute in the least that the number of persons consumed appears to denote a spice of greediness."

"It is perhaps true, gentlemen," said the prince, quietly. He had been listening in silence up to that moment without taking part in the conversation, but laughing heartily with the others from time to time. Evidently he was delighted to see that everybody was amused, that everybody was talking at once, and even that everybody was drinking. It seemed as if he were not intending to speak at all, when suddenly he intervened in such a serious voice that everyone looked at him with interest.

"It is true that there were frequent famines at that time, gentlemen. I have often heard of them, though I do not know much history. But it seems to me that it must have been so. When I was in Switzerland I used to look with astonishment at the many ruins of feudal castles perched on the top of steep and rocky heights, half a mile at least above sea-level, so that to reach them one had to climb many miles of stony tracks. A castle, as you know, is, a kind of mountain of stones—a dreadful, almost an impossible, labour! Doubtless the builders were all poor men, vassals, and had to pay heavy taxes,

and to keep up the priesthood. How, then, could they provide for themselves, and when had they time to plough and sow their fields? The greater number must, literally, have died of starvation. I have sometimes asked myself how it was that these communities were not utterly swept off the face of the earth, and how they could possibly survive. Lebedeff is not mistaken, in my opinion, when he says that there were cannibals in those days, perhaps in considerable numbers; but I do not understand why he should have dragged in the monks, nor what he means by that."

"It is undoubtedly because, in the twelfth century, monks were the only people one could eat; they were the fat, among many lean," said Gavril Ardalionovitch.

"A brilliant idea, and most true!" cried Lebedeff, "for he never even touched the laity. Sixty monks, and not a single layman! It is a terrible idea, but it is historic, it is statistic; it is indeed one of those facts which enables an intelligent historian to reconstruct the physiognomy of a special epoch, for it brings out this further point with mathematical accuracy, that the clergy were in those days sixty times richer and more flourishing than the rest of humanity. and perhaps sixty times fatter also..."

"You are exaggerating, you are exaggerating, Lebedeff!" cried his hearers, amid laughter.

"I admit that it is an historic thought, but what is your conclusion?" asked the prince.

He spoke so seriously in addressing Lebedeff, that his tone contrasted quite comically with that of the others. They were very nearly laughing at him, too, but he did not notice it.

"Don't you see he is a lunatic, prince?" whispered Evgenie Pavlovitch in his ear. "Someone told me just now that he is a bit touched on the subject of lawyers, that he has a mania for making speeches and intends to pass the examinations. I am expecting a splendid burlesque now."

"My conclusion is vast," replied Lebedeff, in a voice like thunder. "Let us examine first the psychological and legal position of the criminal. We see that in spite of the difficulty of finding other food, the accused, or, as we may say, my client, has often during his peculiar life exhibited signs of repentance, and of wishing to give up this clerical diet. Incontrovertible facts prove this assertion. He has eaten five or six children, a relatively insignificant number, no doubt, but remarkable enough from another point of view. It is manifest that, pricked by remorse—for my client is religious, in his way, and has a conscience, as I shall prove later—and desiring to extenuate his sin as far as possible, he has tried six times at least to substitute lay nourishment for clerical. That this was merely an experiment we can hardly doubt: for if it had been only a question of gastronomic variety, six would have been too few; why only six? Why not thirty? But if we regard it as an experiment, inspired by the fear of committing new sacrilege, then this number six becomes intelligible. Six attempts to calm his remorse, and the pricking of his conscience, would amply suffice, for these attempts could scarcely have been happy ones. In my humble opinion, a child is too small; I should say, not sufficient; which would result in four or five times more lay children than monks being required

in a given time. The sin, lessened on the one hand, would therefore be increased on the other, in quantity, not in quality. Please understand, gentlemen, that in reasoning thus, I am taking the point of view which might have been taken by a criminal of the middle ages. As for myself, a man of the late nineteenth century, I, of course, should reason differently; I say so plainly, and therefore you need not jeer at me nor mock me, gentlemen. As for you, general, it is still more unbecoming on your part. In the second place, and giving my own personal opinion, a child's flesh is not a satisfying diet; it is too insipid, too sweet; and the criminal, in making these experiments, could have satisfied neither his conscience nor his appetite. I am about to conclude, gentlemen; and my conclusion contains a reply to one of the most important questions of that day and of our own! This criminal ended at last by denouncing himself to the clergy, and giving himself up to justice. We cannot but ask, remembering the penal system of that day, and the tortures that awaited him—the wheel, the stake, the fire!—we cannot but ask, I repeat, what induced him to accuse himself of this crime? Why did he not simply stop short at the number sixty, and keep his secret until his last breath? Why could he not simply leave the monks alone, and go into the desert to repent? Or why not become a monk himself? That is where the puzzle comes in! There must have been something stronger than the stake or the fire, or even than the habits of twenty years! There must have been an idea more powerful than all the calamities and sorrows of this world, famine or torture, leprosy or plague—an idea which entered into the heart, directed and enlarged the springs of life, and made even that hell supportable to humanity! Show me a force, a power like that, in this our century of vices and railways! I might say, perhaps, in our century of steamboats and railways, but I repeat in our century of vices and railways, because I am drunk but truthful! Show me a single idea which unites men nowadays with half the strength that it had in those centuries, and dare to maintain that the 'springs of life' have not been polluted and weakened beneath this 'star,' beneath this network in which men are entangled! Don't talk to me about your prosperity, your riches, the rarity of famine, the rapidity of the means of transport! There is more of riches, but less of force. The idea uniting heart and soul to heart and soul exists no more. All is loose, soft, limp—we are all of us limp.... Enough, gentlemen! I have done. That is not the question. No, the question is now, excellency, I believe, to sit down to the banquet you are about to provide for us!"

Lebedeff had roused great indignation in some of his auditors (it should be remarked that the bottles were constantly uncorked during his speech); but this unexpected conclusion calmed even the most turbulent spirits. "That's how a clever barrister makes a good point!" said he, when speaking of his peroration later on. The visitors began to laugh and chatter once again; the committee left their seats, and stretched their legs on the terrace. Keller alone was still disgusted with Lebedeff and his speech; he turned from one to another, saying in a loud voice:

“He attacks education, he boasts of the fanaticism of the twelfth century, he makes absurd grimaces, and added to that he is by no means the innocent he makes himself out to be. How did he get the money to buy this house, allow me to ask?”

In another corner was the general, holding forth to a group of hearers, among them Ptitsin, whom he had buttonholed. “I have known,” said he, “a real interpreter of the Apocalypse, the late Gregory Semeonovitch Burmistroff, and he—he pierced the heart like a fiery flash! He began by putting on his spectacles, then he opened a large black book; his white beard, and his two medals on his breast, recalling acts of charity, all added to his impressiveness. He began in a stern voice, and before him generals, hard men of the world, bowed down, and ladies fell to the ground fainting. But this one here—he ends by announcing a banquet! That is not the real thing!”

Ptitsin listened and smiled, then turned as if to get his hat; but if he had intended to leave, he changed his mind. Before the others had risen from the table, Gania had suddenly left off drinking, and pushed away his glass, a dark shadow seemed to come over his face. When they all rose, he went and sat down by Rogojin. It might have been believed that quite friendly relations existed between them. Rogojin, who had also seemed on the point of going away now sat motionless, his head bent, seeming to have forgotten his intention. He had drunk no wine, and appeared absorbed in reflection. From time to time he raised his eyes, and examined everyone present; one might have imagined that he was expecting something very important to himself, and that he had decided to wait for it. The prince had taken two or three glasses of champagne, and seemed cheerful. As he rose he noticed Evgenie Pavlovitch, and, remembering the appointment he had made with him, smiled pleasantly. Evgenie Pavlovitch made a sign with his head towards Hippolyte, whom he was attentively watching. The invalid was fast asleep, stretched out on the sofa.

“Tell me, prince, why on earth did this boy intrude himself upon you?” he asked, with such annoyance and irritation in his voice that the prince was quite surprised. “I wouldn’t mind laying odds that he is up to some mischief.”

“I have observed,” said the prince, “that he seems to be an object of very singular interest to you, Evgenie Pavlovitch. Why is it?”

“You may add that I have surely enough to think of, on my own account, without him; and therefore it is all the more surprising that I cannot tear my eyes and thoughts away from his detestable physiognomy.”

“Oh, come! He has a handsome face.”

“Why, look at him—look at him now!”

The prince glanced again at Evgenie Pavlovitch with considerable surprise.

V.

HIPPOLYTE, who had fallen asleep during Lebedeff’s discourse, now suddenly woke up, just as though someone had jogged him in the side. He shuddered, raised himself

on his arm, gazed around, and grew very pale. A look almost of terror crossed his face as he recollected.

“What! are they all off? Is it all over? Is the sun up?” He trembled, and caught at the prince’s hand. “What time is it? Tell me, quick, for goodness’ sake! How long have I slept?” he added, almost in despair, just as though he had overslept something upon which his whole fate depended.

“You have slept seven or perhaps eight minutes,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Hippolyte gazed eagerly at the latter, and mused for a few moments.

“Oh, is that all?” he said at last. “Then I—”

He drew a long, deep breath of relief, as it seemed. He realized that all was not over as yet, that the sun had not risen, and that the guests had merely gone to supper. He smiled, and two hectic spots appeared on his cheeks.

“So you counted the minutes while I slept, did you, Evgenie Pavlovitch?” he said, ironically. “You have not taken your eyes off me all the evening—I have noticed that much, you see! Ah, Rogojin! I’ve just been dreaming about him, prince,” he added, frowning. “Yes, by the by,” starting up, “where’s the orator? Where’s Lebedeff? Has he finished? What did he talk about? Is it true, prince, that you once declared that ‘beauty would save the world’? Great Heaven! The prince says that beauty saves the world! And I declare that he only has such playful ideas because he’s in love! Gentlemen, the prince is in love. I guessed it the moment he came in. Don’t blush, prince; you make me sorry for you. What beauty saves the world? Colia told me that you are a zealous Christian; is it so? Colia says you call yourself a Christian.”

The prince regarded him attentively, but said nothing.

“You don’t answer me; perhaps you think I am very fond of you?” added Hippolyte, as though the words had been drawn from him.

“No, I don’t think that. I know you don’t love me.”

“What, after yesterday? Wasn’t I honest with you?”

“I knew yesterday that you didn’t love me.”

“Why so? why so? Because I envy you, eh? You always think that, I know. But do you know why I am saying all this? Look here! I must have some more champagne—pour me out some, Keller, will you?”

“No, you’re not to drink any more, Hippolyte. I won’t let you.” The prince moved the glass away.

“Well perhaps you’re right,” said Hippolyte, musing. They might say—yet, devil take them! what does it matter?—prince, what can it matter what people will say of us THEN, eh? I believe I’m half asleep. I’ve had such a dreadful dream—I’ve only just remembered it. Prince, I don’t wish you such dreams as that, though sure enough, perhaps, I DON’T love you. Why wish a man evil, though you do not love him, eh? Give me your hand—let me press it sincerely. There—you’ve given me your hand—you must feel that I DO press it sincerely, don’t you? I don’t think I shall drink any more. What time is it? Never mind, I know the time. The time has come, at all events. What! they are laying supper over there, are they? Then this table is free? Capital,

gentlemen! I—hem! these gentlemen are not listening. Prince, I will just read over an article I have here. Supper is more interesting, of course, but—”

Here Hippolyte suddenly, and most unexpectedly, pulled out of his breast-pocket a large sealed paper. This imposing-looking document he placed upon the table before him.

The effect of this sudden action upon the company was instantaneous. Evgenie Pavlovitch almost bounded off his chair in excitement. Rogojin drew nearer to the table with a look on his face as if he knew what was coming. Gania came nearer too; so did Lebedeff and the others—the paper seemed to be an object of great interest to the company in general.

“What have you got there?” asked the prince, with some anxiety.

“At the first glimpse of the rising sun, prince, I will go to bed. I told you I would, word of honour! You shall see!” cried Hippolyte. “You think I’m not capable of opening this packet, do you?” He glared defiantly round at the audience in general.

The prince observed that he was trembling all over.

“None of us ever thought such a thing!” Muishkin replied for all. “Why should you suppose it of us? And what are you going to read, Hippolyte? What is it?”

“Yes, what is it?” asked others. The packet sealed with red wax seemed to attract everyone, as though it were a magnet.

“I wrote this yesterday, myself, just after I saw you, prince, and told you I would come down here. I wrote all day and all night, and finished it this morning early. Afterwards I had a dream.”

“Hadn’t we better hear it tomorrow?” asked the prince timidly.

“Tomorrow ‘there will be no more time!’” laughed Hippolyte, hysterically. “You needn’t be afraid; I shall get through the whole thing in forty minutes, at most an hour! Look how interested everybody is! Everybody has drawn near. Look! look at them all staring at my sealed packet! If I hadn’t sealed it up it wouldn’t have been half so effective! Ha, ha! that’s mystery, that is! Now then, gentlemen, shall I break the seal or not? Say the word; it’s a mystery, I tell you—a secret! Prince, you know who said there would be ‘no more time’? It was the great and powerful angel in the Apocalypse.”

“Better not read it now,” said the prince, putting his hand on the packet.

“No, don’t read it!” cried Evgenie suddenly. He appeared so strangely disturbed that many of those present could not help wondering.

“Reading? None of your reading now!” said somebody; “it’s supper-time.” “What sort of an article is it? For a paper? Probably it’s very dull,” said another. But the prince’s timid gesture had impressed even Hippolyte.

“Then I’m not to read it?” he whispered, nervously. “Am I not to read it?” he repeated, gazing around at each face in turn. “What are you afraid of, prince?” he turned and asked the latter suddenly.

“What should I be afraid of?”

"Has anyone a coin about them? Give me a twenty-copeck piece, somebody!" And Hippolyte leapt from his chair.

"Here you are," said Lebedeff, handing him one; he thought the boy had gone mad.

"Vera Lukianovna," said Hippolyte, "toss it, will you? Heads, I read, tails, I don't."

Vera Lebedeff tossed the coin into the air and let it fall on the table.

It was "heads."

"Then I read it," said Hippolyte, in the tone of one bowing to the fiat of destiny. He could not have grown paler if a verdict of death had suddenly been presented to him.

"But after all, what is it? Is it possible that I should have just risked my fate by tossing up?" he went on, shuddering; and looked round him again. His eyes had a curious expression of sincerity. "That is an astonishing psychological fact," he cried, suddenly addressing the prince, in a tone of the most intense surprise. "It is ... it is something quite inconceivable, prince," he repeated with growing animation, like a man regaining consciousness. "Take note of it, prince, remember it; you collect, I am told, facts concerning capital punishment... They told me so. Ha, ha! My God, how absurd!" He sat down on the sofa, put his elbows on the table, and laid his head on his hands. "It is shameful—though what does it matter to me if it is shameful?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! I am about to break the seal," he continued, with determination. "I—I—of course I don't insist upon anyone listening if they do not wish to."

With trembling fingers he broke the seal and drew out several sheets of paper, smoothed them out before him, and began sorting them.

"What on earth does all this mean? What's he going to read?" muttered several voices. Others said nothing; but one and all sat down and watched with curiosity. They began to think something strange might really be about to happen. Vera stood and trembled behind her father's chair, almost in tears with fright; Colia was nearly as much alarmed as she was. Lebedeff jumped up and put a couple of candles nearer to Hippolyte, so that he might see better.

"Gentlemen, this—you'll soon see what this is," began Hippolyte, and suddenly commenced his reading.

"It's headed, 'A Necessary Explanation,' with the motto, 'Apres moi le deluge!' Oh, deuce take it all! Surely I can never have seriously written such a silly motto as that? Look here, gentlemen, I beg to give notice that all this is very likely terrible nonsense. It is only a few ideas of mine. If you think that there is anything mysterious coming—or in a word—"

"Better read on without any more beating about the bush," said Gania.

"Affectation!" remarked someone else.

"Too much talk," said Rogojin, breaking the silence for the first time.

Hippolyte glanced at him suddenly, and when their eye met Rogojin showed his teeth in a disagreeable smile, and said the following strange words: "That's not the way to settle this business, my friend; that's not the way at all."

Of course nobody knew what Rogojin meant by this; but his words made a deep impression upon all. Everyone seemed to see in a flash the same idea.

As for Hippolyte, their effect upon him was astounding. He trembled so that the prince was obliged to support him, and would certainly have cried out, but that his voice seemed to have entirely left him for the moment. For a minute or two he could not speak at all, but panted and stared at Rogojin. At last he managed to ejaculate:

“Then it was YOU who came—YOU—YOU?”

“Came where? What do you mean?” asked Rogojin, amazed. But Hippolyte, panting and choking with excitement, interrupted him violently.

“YOU came to me last week, in the night, at two o’clock, the day I was with you in the morning! Confess it was you!”

“Last week? In the night? Have you gone cracked, my good friend?”

Hippolyte paused and considered a moment. Then a smile of cunning—almost triumph—crossed his lips.

“It was you,” he murmured, almost in a whisper, but with absolute conviction. “Yes, it was you who came to my room and sat silently on a chair at my window for a whole hour—more! It was between one and two at night; you rose and went out at about three. It was you, you! Why you should have frightened me so, why you should have wished to torment me like that, I cannot tell—but you it was.”

There was absolute hatred in his eyes as he said this, but his look of fear and his trembling had not left him.

“You shall hear all this directly, gentlemen. I-I—listen!”

He seized his paper in a desperate hurry; he fidgeted with it, and tried to sort it, but for a long while his trembling hands could not collect the sheets together. “He’s either mad or delirious,” murmured Rogojin. At last he began.

For the first five minutes the reader’s voice continued to tremble, and he read disconnectedly and unevenly; but gradually his voice strengthened. Occasionally a violent fit of coughing stopped him, but his animation grew with the progress of the reading—as did also the disagreeable impression which it made upon his audience,—until it reached the highest pitch of excitement.

Here is the article.

MY NECESSARY EXPLANATION.

“Apres moi le deluge.

“Yesterday morning the prince came to see me. Among other things he asked me to come down to his villa. I knew he would come and persuade me to this step, and that he would adduce the argument that it would be easier for me to die’ among people and green trees,—as he expressed it. But today he did not say ‘die,’ he said ‘live.’ It is pretty much the same to me, in my position, which he says. When I asked him why he made such a point of his ‘green trees,’ he told me, to my astonishment, that he had heard that last time I was in Pavlofsk I had said that I had come ‘to have a last look at the trees.’

“When I observed that it was all the same whether one died among trees or in front of a blank brick wall, as here, and that it was not worth making any fuss over a fortnight, he agreed at once. But he insisted that the good air at Pavlofsk and the greenness

would certainly cause a physical change for the better, and that my excitement, and my DREAMS, would be perhaps relieved. I remarked to him, with a smile, that he spoke like a materialist, and he answered that he had always been one. As he never tells a lie, there must be something in his words. His smile is a pleasant one. I have had a good look at him. I don't know whether I like him or not; and I have no time to waste over the question. The hatred which I felt for him for five months has become considerably modified, I may say, during the last month. Who knows, perhaps I am going to Pavlofsk on purpose to see him! But why do I leave my chamber? Those who are sentenced to death should not leave their cells. If I had not formed a final resolve, but had decided to wait until the last minute, I should not leave my room, or accept his invitation to come and die at Pavlofsk. I must be quick and finish this explanation before tomorrow. I shall have no time to read it over and correct it, for I must read it tomorrow to the prince and two or three witnesses whom I shall probably find there.

“As it will be absolutely true, without a touch of falsehood, I am curious to see what impression it will make upon me myself at the moment when I read it out. This is my ‘last and solemn’—but why need I call it that? There is no question about the truth of it, for it is not worthwhile lying for a fortnight; a fortnight of life is not itself worth having, which is a proof that I write nothing here but pure truth.

(“N.B.—Let me remember to consider; am I mad at this moment, or not? or rather at these moments? I have been told that consumptives sometimes do go out of their minds for a while in the last stages of the malady. I can prove this tomorrow when I read it out, by the impression it makes upon the audience. I must settle this question once and for all, otherwise I can't go on with anything.)

“I believe I have just written dreadful nonsense; but there's no time for correcting, as I said before. Besides that, I have made myself a promise not to alter a single word of what I write in this paper, even though I find that I am contradicting myself every five lines. I wish to verify the working of the natural logic of my ideas tomorrow during the reading—whether I am capable of detecting logical errors, and whether all that I have meditated over during the last six months be true, or nothing but delirium.

“If two months since I had been called upon to leave my room and the view of Meyer's wall opposite, I verily believe I should have been sorry. But now I have no such feeling, and yet I am leaving this room and Meyer's brick wall FOR EVER. So that my conclusion, that it is not worth while indulging in grief, or any other emotion, for a fortnight, has proved stronger than my very nature, and has taken over the direction of my feelings. But is it so? Is it the case that my nature is conquered entirely? If I were to be put on the rack now, I should certainly cry out. I should not say that it is not worth while to yell and feel pain because I have but a fortnight to live.

“But is it true that I have but a fortnight of life left to me? I know I told some of my friends that Doctor B. had informed me that this was the case; but I now confess that I lied; B. has not even seen me. However, a week ago, I called in a medical student, Kislrodoff, who is a Nationalist, an Atheist, and a Nihilist, by conviction, and that is why I had him. I needed a man who would tell me the bare truth without any humbug

or ceremony—and so he did—indeed, almost with pleasure (which I thought was going a little too far).

“Well, he plumped out that I had about a month left me; it might be a little more, he said, under favourable circumstances, but it might also be considerably less. According to his opinion I might die quite suddenly—tomorrow, for instance—there had been such cases. Only a day or two since a young lady at Colomna who suffered from consumption, and was about on a par with myself in the march of the disease, was going out to market to buy provisions, when she suddenly felt faint, lay down on the sofa, gasped once, and died.

“Kislorodoff told me all this with a sort of exaggerated devil-may-care negligence, and as though he did me great honour by talking to me so, because it showed that he considered me the same sort of exalted Nihilistic being as himself, to whom death was a matter of no consequence whatever, either way.

“At all events, the fact remained—a month of life and no more! That he is right in his estimation I am absolutely persuaded.

“It puzzles me much to think how on earth the prince guessed yesterday that I have had bad dreams. He said to me, ‘Your excitement and dreams will find relief at Pavlofsk.’ Why did he say ‘dreams’? Either he is a doctor, or else he is a man of exceptional intelligence and wonderful powers of observation. (But that he is an ‘idiot,’ at bottom there can be no doubt whatever.) It so happened that just before he arrived I had a delightful little dream; one of a kind that I have hundreds of just now. I had fallen asleep about an hour before he came in, and dreamed that I was in some room, not my own. It was a large room, well furnished, with a cupboard, chest of drawers, sofa, and my bed, a fine wide bed covered with a silken counterpane. But I observed in the room a dreadful-looking creature, a sort of monster. It was a little like a scorpion, but was not a scorpion, but far more horrible, and especially so, because there are no creatures anything like it in nature, and because it had appeared to me for a purpose, and bore some mysterious signification. I looked at the beast well; it was brown in colour and had a shell; it was a crawling kind of reptile, about eight inches long, and narrowed down from the head, which was about a couple of fingers in width, to the end of the tail, which came to a fine point. Out of its trunk, about a couple of inches below its head, came two legs at an angle of forty-five degrees, each about three inches long, so that the beast looked like a trident from above. It had eight hard needle-like whiskers coming out from different parts of its body; it went along like a snake, bending its body about in spite of the shell it wore, and its motion was very quick and very horrible to look at. I was dreadfully afraid it would sting me; somebody had told me, I thought, that it was venomous; but what tormented me most of all was the wondering and wondering as to who had sent it into my room, and what was the mystery which I felt it contained.

“It hid itself under the cupboard and under the chest of drawers, and crawled into the corners. I sat on a chair and kept my legs tucked under me. Then the beast crawled quietly across the room and disappeared somewhere near my chair. I looked about for

it in terror, but I still hoped that as my feet were safely tucked away it would not be able to touch me.

“Suddenly I heard behind me, and about on a level with my head, a sort of rattling sound. I turned sharp round and saw that the brute had crawled up the wall as high as the level of my face, and that its horrible tail, which was moving incredibly fast from side to side, was actually touching my hair! I jumped up—and it disappeared. I did not dare lie down on my bed for fear it should creep under my pillow. My mother came into the room, and some friends of hers. They began to hunt for the reptile and were more composed than I was; they did not seem to be afraid of it. But they did not understand as I did.

“Suddenly the monster reappeared; it crawled slowly across the room and made for the door, as though with some fixed intention, and with a slow movement that was more horrible than ever.

“Then my mother opened the door and called my dog, Norma. Norma was a great Newfoundland, and died five years ago.

“She sprang forward and stood still in front of the reptile as if she had been turned to stone. The beast stopped too, but its tail and claws still moved about. I believe animals are incapable of feeling supernatural fright—if I have been rightly informed,—but at this moment there appeared to me to be something more than ordinary about Norma’s terror, as though it must be supernatural; and as though she felt, just as I did myself, that this reptile was connected with some mysterious secret, some fatal omen.

“Norma backed slowly and carefully away from the brute, which followed her, creeping deliberately after her as though it intended to make a sudden dart and sting her.

“In spite of Norma’s terror she looked furious, though she trembled in all her limbs. At length she slowly bared her terrible teeth, opened her great red jaws, hesitated—took courage, and seized the beast in her mouth. It seemed to try to dart out of her jaws twice, but Norma caught at it and half swallowed it as it was escaping. The shell cracked in her teeth; and the tail and legs stuck out of her mouth and shook about in a horrible manner. Suddenly Norma gave a piteous whine; the reptile had bitten her tongue. She opened her mouth wide with the pain, and I saw the beast lying across her tongue, and out of its body, which was almost bitten in two, came a hideous white-looking substance, oozing out into Norma’s mouth; it was of the consistency of a crushed black-beetle. just then I awoke and the prince entered the room.”

“Gentlemen!” said Hippolyte, breaking off here, “I have not done yet, but it seems to me that I have written down a great deal here that is unnecessary,—this dream—”

“You have indeed!” said Gania.

“There is too much about myself, I know, but—” As Hippolyte said this his face wore a tired, pained look, and he wiped the sweat off his brow.

“Yes,” said Lebedeff, “you certainly think a great deal too much about yourself.”

“Well—gentlemen—I do not force anyone to listen! If any of you are unwilling to sit it out, please go away, by all means!”

“He turns people out of a house that isn’t his own,” muttered Rogojin.

“Suppose we all go away?” said Ferdishenko suddenly.

Hippolyte clutched his manuscript, and gazing at the last speaker with glittering eyes, said: “You don’t like me at all!” A few laughed at this, but not all.

“Hippolyte,” said the prince, “give me the papers, and go to bed like a sensible fellow. We’ll have a good talk tomorrow, but you really mustn’t go on with this reading; it is not good for you!”

“How can I? How can I?” cried Hippolyte, looking at him in amazement. “Gentlemen! I was a fool! I won’t break off again. Listen, everyone who wants to!”

He gulped down some water out of a glass standing near, bent over the table, in order to hide his face from the audience, and recommenced.

“The idea that it is not worth while living for a few weeks took possession of me a month ago, when I was told that I had four weeks to live, but only partially so at that time. The idea quite overmastered me three days since, that evening at Pavlofsk. The first time that I felt really impressed with this thought was on the terrace at the prince’s, at the very moment when I had taken it into my head to make a last trial of life. I wanted to see people and trees (I believe I said so myself), I got excited, I maintained Burdovsky’s rights, ‘my neighbour!’—I dreamt that one and all would open their arms, and embrace me, that there would be an indescribable exchange of forgiveness between us all! In a word, I behaved like a fool, and then, at that very same instant, I felt my ‘last conviction.’ I ask myself now how I could have waited six months for that conviction! I knew that I had a disease that spares no one, and I really had no illusions; but the more I realized my condition, the more I clung to life; I wanted to live at any price. I confess I might well have resented that blind, deaf fate, which, with no apparent reason, seemed to have decided to crush me like a fly; but why did I not stop at resentment? Why did I begin to live, knowing that it was not worthwhile to begin? Why did I attempt to do what I knew to be an impossibility? And yet I could not even read a book to the end; I had given up reading. What is the good of reading, what is the good of learning anything, for just six months? That thought has made me throw aside a book more than once.

“Yes, that wall of Meyer’s could tell a tale if it liked. There was no spot on its dirty surface that I did not know by heart. Accursed wall! and yet it is dearer to me than all the Pavlofsk trees!—That is—it WOULD be dearer if it were not all the same to me, now!

“I remember now with what hungry interest I began to watch the lives of other people—interest that I had never felt before! I used to wait for Colia’s arrival impatiently, for I was so ill myself, then, that I could not leave the house. I so threw myself into every little detail of news, and took so much interest in every report and rumour, that I believe I became a regular gossip! I could not understand, among other things, how all these people—with so much life in and before them—do not become RICH—and I don’t understand it now. I remember being told of a poor wretch I once knew, who had died of hunger. I was almost beside myself with rage! I believe if I could have resuscitated him I would have done so for the sole purpose of murdering him!

“Occasionally I was so much better that I could go out; but the streets used to put me in such a rage that I would lock myself up for days rather than go out, even if I were well enough to do so! I could not bear to see all those preoccupied, anxious-looking creatures continuously surging along the streets past me! Why are they always anxious? What is the meaning of their eternal care and worry? It is their wickedness, their perpetual detestable malice—that’s what it is—they are all full of malice, malice!

“Whose fault is it that they are all miserable, that they don’t know how to live, though they have fifty or sixty years of life before them? Why did that fool allow himself to die of hunger with sixty years of un-lived life before him?

“And everyone of them shows his rags, his toil-worn hands, and yells in his wrath: ‘Here are we, working like cattle all our lives, and always as hungry as dogs, and there are others who do not work, and are fat and rich!’ The eternal refrain! And side by side with them trots along some wretched fellow who has known better days, doing light porter’s work from morn to night for a living, always blubbering and saying that ‘his wife died because he had no money to buy medicine with,’ and his children dying of cold and hunger, and his eldest daughter gone to the bad, and so on. Oh! I have no pity and no patience for these fools of people. Why can’t they be Rothschilds? Whose fault is it that a man has not got millions of money like Rothschild? If he has life, all this must be in his power! Whose fault is it that he does not know how to live his life?

“Oh! it’s all the same to me now—NOW! But at that time I would soak my pillow at night with tears of mortification, and tear at my blanket in my rage and fury. Oh, how I longed at that time to be turned out—ME, eighteen years old, poor, half-clothed, turned out into the street, quite alone, without lodging, without work, without a crust of bread, without relations, without a single acquaintance, in some large town—hungry, beaten (if you like), but in good health—and THEN I would show them—

“What would I show them?

“Oh, don’t think that I have no sense of my own humiliation! I have suffered already in reading so far. Which of you all does not think me a fool at this moment—a young fool who knows nothing of life—forgetting that to live as I have lived these last six months is to live longer than grey-haired old men. Well, let them laugh, and say it is all nonsense, if they please. They may say it is all fairy-tales, if they like; and I have spent whole nights telling myself fairy-tales. I remember them all. But how can I tell fairy-tales now? The time for them is over. They amused me when I found that there was not even time for me to learn the Greek grammar, as I wanted to do. ‘I shall die before I get to the syntax,’ I thought at the first page—and threw the book under the table. It is there still, for I forbade anyone to pick it up.

“If this ‘Explanation’ gets into anybody’s hands, and they have patience to read it through, they may consider me a madman, or a schoolboy, or, more likely, a man condemned to die, who thought it only natural to conclude that all men, excepting himself, esteem life far too lightly, live it far too carelessly and lazily, and are, therefore, one and all, unworthy of it. Well, I affirm that my reader is wrong again, for my convictions have nothing to do with my sentence of death. Ask them, ask any one of

them, or all of them, what they mean by happiness! Oh, you may be perfectly sure that if Columbus was happy, it was not after he had discovered America, but when he was discovering it! You may be quite sure that he reached the culminating point of his happiness three days before he saw the New World with his actual eyes, when his mutinous sailors wanted to tack about, and return to Europe! What did the New World matter after all? Columbus had hardly seen it when he died, and in reality he was entirely ignorant of what he had discovered. The important thing is life—life and nothing else! What is any ‘discovery’ whatever compared with the incessant, eternal discovery of life?

“But what is the use of talking? I’m afraid all this is so commonplace that my confession will be taken for a schoolboy exercise—the work of some ambitious lad writing in the hope of his work ‘seeing the light’; or perhaps my readers will say that ‘I had perhaps something to say, but did not know how to express it.’

“Let me add to this that in every idea emanating from genius, or even in every serious human idea—born in the human brain—there always remains something—some sediment—which cannot be expressed to others, though one wrote volumes and lectured upon it for five-and-thirty years. There is always a something, a remnant, which will never come out from your brain, but will remain there with you, and you alone, for ever and ever, and you will die, perhaps, without having imparted what may be the very essence of your idea to a single living soul.

“So that if I cannot now impart all that has tormented me for the last six months, at all events you will understand that, having reached my ‘last convictions,’ I must have paid a very dear price for them. That is what I wished, for reasons of my own, to make a point of in this my ‘Explanation.’

“But let me resume.

VI.

“I WILL not deceive you. ‘Reality’ got me so entrapped in its meshes now and again during the past six months, that I forgot my ‘sentence’ (or perhaps I did not wish to think of it), and actually busied myself with affairs.

“A word as to my circumstances. When, eight months since, I became very ill, I threw up all my old connections and dropped all my old companions. As I was always a gloomy, morose sort of individual, my friends easily forgot me; of course, they would have forgotten me all the same, without that excuse. My position at home was solitary enough. Five months ago I separated myself entirely from the family, and no one dared enter my room except at stated times, to clean and tidy it, and so on, and to bring me my meals. My mother dared not disobey me; she kept the children quiet, for my sake, and beat them if they dared to make any noise and disturb me. I so often complained of them that I should think they must be very fond, indeed, of me by this time. I think I must have tormented ‘my faithful Colia’ (as I called him) a good deal too. He

tormented me of late; I could see that he always bore my tempers as though he had determined to 'spare the poor invalid.' This annoyed me, naturally. He seemed to have taken it into his head to imitate the prince in Christian meekness! Surikoff, who lived above us, annoyed me, too. He was so miserably poor, and I used to prove to him that he had no one to blame but himself for his poverty. I used to be so angry that I think I frightened him eventually, for he stopped coming to see me. He was a most meek and humble fellow, was Surikoff. (N.B.— They say that meekness is a great power. I must ask the prince about this, for the expression is his.) But I remember one day in March, when I went up to his lodgings to see whether it was true that one of his children had been starved and frozen to death, I began to hold forth to him about his poverty being his own fault, and, in the course of my remarks, I accidentally smiled at the corpse of his child. Well, the poor wretch's lips began to tremble, and he caught me by the shoulder, and pushed me to the door. 'Go out,' he said, in a whisper. I went out, of course, and I declare I LIKED it. I liked it at the very moment when I was turned out. But his words filled me with a strange sort of feeling of disdainful pity for him whenever I thought of them—a feeling which I did not in the least desire to entertain. At the very moment of the insult (for I admit that I did insult him, though I did not mean to), this man could not lose his temper. His lips had trembled, but I swear it was not with rage. He had taken me by the arm, and said, 'Go out,' without the least anger. There was dignity, a great deal of dignity, about him, and it was so inconsistent with the look of him that, I assure you, it was quite comical. But there was no anger. Perhaps he merely began to despise me at that moment.

"Since that time he has always taken off his hat to me on the stairs, whenever I met him, which is a thing he never did before; but he always gets away from me as quickly as he can, as though he felt confused. If he did despise me, he despised me 'meekly,' after his own fashion.

"I dare say he only took his hat off out of fear, as it were, to the son of his creditor; for he always owed my mother money. I thought of having an explanation with him, but I knew that if I did, he would begin to apologize in a minute or two, so I decided to let him alone.

"Just about that time, that is, the middle of March, I suddenly felt very much better; this continued for a couple of weeks. I used to go out at dusk. I like the dusk, especially in March, when the night frost begins to harden the day's puddles, and the gas is burning.

"Well, one night in the Shestilavochnaya, a man passed me with a paper parcel under his arm. I did not take stock of him very carefully, but he seemed to be dressed in some shabby summer dust-coat, much too light for the season. When he was opposite the lamp-post, some ten yards away, I observed something fall out of his pocket. I hurried forward to pick it up, just in time, for an old wretch in a long kaftan rushed up too. He did not dispute the matter, but glanced at what was in my hand and disappeared.

"It was a large old-fashioned pocket-book, stuffed full; but I guessed, at a glance, that it had anything in the world inside it, except money.

“The owner was now some forty yards ahead of me, and was very soon lost in the crowd. I ran after him, and began calling out; but as I knew nothing to say excepting ‘hey!’ he did not turn round. Suddenly he turned into the gate of a house to the left; and when I darted in after him, the gateway was so dark that I could see nothing whatever. It was one of those large houses built in small tenements, of which there must have been at least a hundred.

“When I entered the yard I thought I saw a man going along on the far side of it; but it was so dark I could not make out his figure.

“I crossed to that corner and found a dirty dark staircase. I heard a man mounting up above me, some way higher than I was, and thinking I should catch him before his door would be opened to him, I rushed after him. I heard a door open and shut on the fifth storey, as I panted along; the stairs were narrow, and the steps innumerable, but at last I reached the door I thought the right one. Some moments passed before I found the bell and got it to ring.

“An old peasant woman opened the door; she was busy lighting the ‘samovar’ in a tiny kitchen. She listened silently to my questions, did not understand a word, of course, and opened another door leading into a little bit of a room, low and scarcely furnished at all, but with a large, wide bed in it, hung with curtains. On this bed lay one Terentich, as the woman called him, drunk, it appeared to me. On the table was an end of candle in an iron candlestick, and a half-bottle of vodka, nearly finished. Terentich muttered something to me, and signed towards the next room. The old woman had disappeared, so there was nothing for me to do but to open the door indicated. I did so, and entered the next room.

“This was still smaller than the other, so cramped that I could scarcely turn round; a narrow single bed at one side took up nearly all the room. Besides the bed there were only three common chairs, and a wretched old kitchen-table standing before a small sofa. One could hardly squeeze through between the table and the bed.

“On the table, as in the other room, burned a tallow candle-end in an iron candlestick; and on the bed there whined a baby of scarcely three weeks old. A pale-looking woman was dressing the child, probably the mother; she looked as though she had not as yet got over the trouble of childbirth, she seemed so weak and was so carelessly dressed. Another child, a little girl of about three years old, lay on the sofa, covered over with what looked like a man’s old dress-coat.

“At the table stood a man in his shirt sleeves; he had thrown off his coat; it lay upon the bed; and he was unfolding a blue paper parcel in which were a couple of pounds of bread, and some little sausages.

“On the table along with these things were a few old bits of black bread, and some tea in a pot. From under the bed there protruded an open portmanteau full of bundles of rags. In a word, the confusion and untidiness of the room were indescribable.

“It appeared to me, at the first glance, that both the man and the woman were respectable people, but brought to that pitch of poverty where untidiness seems to get the better of every effort to cope with it, till at last they take a sort of bitter

satisfaction in it. When I entered the room, the man, who had entered but a moment before me, and was still unpacking his parcels, was saying something to his wife in an excited manner. The news was apparently bad, as usual, for the woman began whimpering. The man's face seemed to me to be refined and even pleasant. He was dark-complexioned, and about twenty-eight years of age; he wore black whiskers, and his lip and chin were shaved. He looked morose, but with a sort of pride of expression. A curious scene followed.

"There are people who find satisfaction in their own touchy feelings, especially when they have just taken the deepest offence; at such moments they feel that they would rather be offended than not. These easily-ignited natures, if they are wise, are always full of remorse afterwards, when they reflect that they have been ten times as angry as they need have been.

"The gentleman before me gazed at me for some seconds in amazement, and his wife in terror; as though there was something alarmingly extraordinary in the fact that anyone could come to see them. But suddenly he fell upon me almost with fury; I had had no time to mutter more than a couple of words; but he had doubtless observed that I was decently dressed and, therefore, took deep offence because I had dared enter his den so unceremoniously, and spy out the squalor and untidiness of it.

"Of course he was delighted to get hold of someone upon whom to vent his rage against things in general.

"For a moment I thought he would assault me; he grew so pale that he looked like a woman about to have hysterics; his wife was dreadfully alarmed.

"How dare you come in so? Be off!" he shouted, trembling all over with rage and scarcely able to articulate the words. Suddenly, however, he observed his pocketbook in my hand.

"I think you dropped this," I remarked, as quietly and drily as I could. (I thought it best to treat him so.) For some while he stood before me in downright terror, and seemed unable to understand. He then suddenly grabbed at his side-pocket, opened his mouth in alarm, and beat his forehead with his hand.

"My God!" he cried, "where did you find it? How?" I explained in as few words as I could, and as drily as possible, how I had seen it and picked it up; how I had run after him, and called out to him, and how I had followed him upstairs and groped my way to his door.

"Gracious Heaven!" he cried, "all our papers are in it! My dear sir, you little know what you have done for us. I should have been lost—lost!"

"I had taken hold of the door-handle meanwhile, intending to leave the room without reply; but I was panting with my run upstairs, and my exhaustion came to a climax in a violent fit of coughing, so bad that I could hardly stand.

"I saw how the man dashed about the room to find me an empty chair, how he kicked the rags off a chair which was covered up by them, brought it to me, and helped me to sit down; but my cough went on for another three minutes or so. When I came to

myself he was sitting by me on another chair, which he had also cleared of the rubbish by throwing it all over the floor, and was watching me intently.

“‘I’m afraid you are ill?’ he remarked, in the tone which doctors use when they address a patient. ‘I am myself a medical man’ (he did not say ‘doctor’), with which words he waved his hands towards the room and its contents as though in protest at his present condition. ‘I see that you—’

“‘I’m in consumption,’ I said laconically, rising from my seat.

He jumped up, too.

“‘Perhaps you are exaggerating—if you were to take proper measures perhaps—’”

“He was terribly confused and did not seem able to collect his scattered senses; the pocket-book was still in his left hand.

“‘Oh, don’t mind me,’ I said. ‘Dr. B— saw me last week’ (I lugged him in again), ‘and my hash is quite settled; pardon me—’ I took hold of the door-handle again. I was on the point of opening the door and leaving my grateful but confused medical friend to himself and his shame, when my damnable cough got hold of me again.

“My doctor insisted on my sitting down again to get my breath. He now said something to his wife who, without leaving her place, addressed a few words of gratitude and courtesy to me. She seemed very shy over it, and her sickly face flushed up with confusion. I remained, but with the air of a man who knows he is intruding and is anxious to get away. The doctor’s remorse at last seemed to need a vent, I could see.

“‘If I—’ he began, breaking off abruptly every other moment, and starting another sentence. ‘I-I am so very grateful to you, and I am so much to blame in your eyes, I feel sure, I—you see—’ (he pointed to the room again) ‘at this moment I am in such a position-’

“‘Oh!’ I said, ‘there’s nothing to see; it’s quite a clear case— you’ve lost your post and have come up to make explanations and get another, if you can!’

“‘How do you know that?’ he asked in amazement.

“‘Oh, it was evident at the first glance,’ I said ironically, but not intentionally so. ‘There are lots of people who come up from the provinces full of hope, and run about town, and have to live as best they can.’

“He began to talk at once excitedly and with trembling lips; he began complaining and telling me his story. He interested me, I confess; I sat there nearly an hour. His story was a very ordinary one. He had been a provincial doctor; he had a civil appointment, and had no sooner taken it up than intrigues began. Even his wife was dragged into these. He was proud, and flew into a passion; there was a change of local government which acted in favour of his opponents; his position was undermined, complaints were made against him; he lost his post and came up to Petersburg with his last remaining money, in order to appeal to higher authorities. Of course nobody would listen to him for a long time; he would come and tell his story one day and be refused promptly; another day he would be fed on false promises; again he would be treated harshly; then he would be told to sign some documents; then he would sign the paper and hand it in, and they would refuse to receive it, and tell him to file a formal petition. In a word

he had been driven about from office to office for five months and had spent every farthing he had; his wife's last rags had just been pawned; and meanwhile a child had been born to them and—and today I have a final refusal to my petition, and I have hardly a crumb of bread left—I have nothing left; my wife has had a baby lately—and I-I—'

"He sprang up from his chair and turned away. His wife was crying in the corner; the child had begun to moan again. I pulled out my note-book and began writing in it. When I had finished and rose from my chair he was standing before me with an expression of alarmed curiosity.

"'I have jotted down your name,' I told him, 'and all the rest of it—the place you served at, the district, the date, and all. I have a friend, Bachmatoff, whose uncle is a councillor of state and has to do with these matters, one Peter Matveyevitch Bachmatoff.'

"'Peter Matveyevitch Bachmatoff!' he cried, trembling all over with excitement. 'Why, nearly everything depends on that very man!'

"It is very curious, this story of the medical man, and my visit, and the happy termination to which I contributed by accident! Everything fitted in, as in a novel. I told the poor people not to put much hope in me, because I was but a poor schoolboy myself— (I am not really, but I humiliated myself as much as possible in order to make them less hopeful)—but that I would go at once to the Vassili Ostroff and see my friend; and that as I knew for certain that his uncle adored him, and was absolutely devoted to him as the last hope and branch of the family, perhaps the old man might do something to oblige his nephew.

"'If only they would allow me to explain all to his excellency! If I could but be permitted to tell my tale to him!'" he cried, trembling with feverish agitation, and his eyes flashing with excitement. I repeated once more that I could not hold out much hope—that it would probably end in smoke, and if I did not turn up next morning they must make up their minds that there was no more to be done in the matter.

"They showed me out with bows and every kind of respect; they seemed quite beside themselves. I shall never forget the expression of their faces!

"I took a droshky and drove over to the Vassili Ostroff at once. For some years I had been at enmity with this young Bachmatoff, at school. We considered him an aristocrat; at all events I called him one. He used to dress smartly, and always drove to school in a private trap. He was a good companion, and was always merry and jolly, sometimes even witty, though he was not very intellectual, in spite of the fact that he was always top of the class; I myself was never top in anything! All his companions were very fond of him, excepting myself. He had several times during those years come up to me and tried to make friends; but I had always turned sulkily away and refused to have anything to do with him. I had not seen him for a whole year now; he was at the university. When, at nine o'clock, or so, this evening, I arrived and was shown up to him with great ceremony, he first received me with astonishment, and not too affably, but he soon cheered up, and suddenly gazed intently at me and burst out laughing.

“‘Why, what on earth can have possessed you to come and see ME, Terentieff?’ he cried, with his usual pleasant, sometimes audacious, but never offensive familiarity, which I liked in reality, but for which I also detested him. ‘Why what’s the matter?’ he cried in alarm. ‘Are you ill?’

“That confounded cough of mine had come on again; I fell into a chair, and with difficulty recovered my breath. ‘It’s all right, it’s only consumption’ I said. ‘I have come to you with a petition!’

“He sat down in amazement, and I lost no time in telling him the medical man’s history; and explained that he, with the influence which he possessed over his uncle, might do some good to the poor fellow.

“‘I’ll do it—I’ll do it, of course!’ he said. ‘I shall attack my uncle about it tomorrow morning, and I’m very glad you told me the story. But how was it that you thought of coming to me about it, Terentieff?’

“‘So much depends upon your uncle,’ I said. ‘And besides we have always been enemies, Bachmatoff; and as you are a generous sort of fellow, I thought you would not refuse my request because I was your enemy!’ I added with irony.

“‘Like Napoleon going to England, eh?’ cried he, laughing. ‘I’ll do it though—of course, and at once, if I can!’ he added, seeing that I rose seriously from my chair at this point.

“And sure enough the matter ended as satisfactorily as possible. A month or so later my medical friend was appointed to another post. He got his travelling expenses paid, and something to help him to start life with once more. I think Bachmatoff must have persuaded the doctor to accept a loan from himself. I saw Bachmatoff two or three times, about this period, the third time being when he gave a farewell dinner to the doctor and his wife before their departure, a champagne dinner.

“Bachmatoff saw me home after the dinner and we crossed the Nicolai bridge. We were both a little drunk. He told me of his joy, the joyful feeling of having done a good action; he said that it was all thanks to myself that he could feel this satisfaction; and held forth about the foolishness of the theory that individual charity is useless

“I, too, was burning to have my say!

“‘In Moscow,’ I said, ‘there was an old state counsellor, a civil general, who, all his life, had been in the habit of visiting the prisons and speaking to criminals. Every party of convicts on its way to Siberia knew beforehand that on the Vorobeef Hills the “old general” would pay them a visit. He did all he undertook seriously and devotedly. He would walk down the rows of the unfortunate prisoners, stop before each individual and ask after his needs—he never sermonized them; he spoke kindly to them—he gave them money; he brought them all sorts of necessaries for the journey, and gave them devotional books, choosing those who could read, under the firm conviction that they would read to those who could not, as they went along.

“‘He scarcely ever talked about the particular crimes of any of them, but listened if any volunteered information on that point. All the convicts were equal for him, and he made no distinction. He spoke to all as to brothers, and every one of them looked

upon him as a father. When he observed among the exiles some poor woman with a child, he would always come forward and fondle the little one, and make it laugh. He continued these acts of mercy up to his very death; and by that time all the criminals, all over Russia and Siberia, knew him!

“A man I knew who had been to Siberia and returned, told me that he himself had been a witness of how the very most hardened criminals remembered the old general, though, in point of fact, he could never, of course, have distributed more than a few pence to each member of a party. Their recollection of him was not sentimental or particularly devoted. Some wretch, for instance, who had been a murderer—cutting the throat of a dozen fellow-creatures, for instance; or stabbing six little children for his own amusement (there have been such men!)—would perhaps, without rhyme or reason, suddenly give a sigh and say, “I wonder whether that old general is alive still!” Although perhaps he had not thought of mentioning him for a dozen years before! How can one say what seed of good may have been dropped into his soul, never to die?”

“I continued in that strain for a long while, pointing out to Bachmatoff how impossible it is to follow up the effects of any isolated good deed one may do, in all its influences and subtle workings upon the heart and after-actions of others.

“And to think that you are to be cut off from life!” remarked Bachmatoff, in a tone of reproach, as though he would like to find someone to pitch into on my account.

“We were leaning over the balustrade of the bridge, looking into the Neva at this moment.

“Do you know what has suddenly come into my head?” said I, suddenly—leaning further and further over the rail.

“Surely not to throw yourself into the river?” cried Bachmatoff in alarm. Perhaps he read my thought in my face.

“No, not yet. At present nothing but the following consideration. You see I have some two or three months left me to live—perhaps four; well, supposing that when I have but a month or two more, I take a fancy for some “good deed” that needs both trouble and time, like this business of our doctor friend, for instance: why, I shall have to give up the idea of it and take to something else—some LITTLE good deed, MORE WITHIN MY MEANS, eh? Isn’t that an amusing idea!”

“Poor Bachmatoff was much impressed—painfully so. He took me all the way home; not attempting to console me, but behaving with the greatest delicacy. On taking leave he pressed my hand warmly and asked permission to come and see me. I replied that if he came to me as a ‘comforter,’ so to speak (for he would be in that capacity whether he spoke to me in a soothing manner or only kept silence, as I pointed out to him), he would but remind me each time of my approaching death! He shrugged his shoulders, but quite agreed with me; and we parted better friends than I had expected.

“But that evening and that night were sown the first seeds of my ‘last conviction.’ I seized greedily on my new idea; I thirstily drank in all its different aspects (I did not sleep a wink that night!), and the deeper I went into it the more my being seemed to

merge itself in it, and the more alarmed I became. A dreadful terror came over me at last, and did not leave me all next day.

“Sometimes, thinking over this, I became quite numb with the terror of it; and I might well have deduced from this fact, that my ‘last conviction’ was eating into my being too fast and too seriously, and would undoubtedly come to its climax before long. And for the climax I needed greater determination than I yet possessed.

“However, within three weeks my determination was taken, owing to a very strange circumstance.

“Here on my paper, I make a note of all the figures and dates that come into my explanation. Of course, it is all the same to me, but just now—and perhaps only at this moment—I desire that all those who are to judge of my action should see clearly out of how logical a sequence of deductions has at length proceeded my ‘last conviction.’

“I have said above that the determination needed by me for the accomplishment of my final resolve, came to hand not through any sequence of causes, but thanks to a certain strange circumstance which had perhaps no connection whatever with the matter at issue. Ten days ago Rogojin called upon me about certain business of his own with which I have nothing to do at present. I had never seen Rogojin before, but had often heard about him.

“I gave him all the information he needed, and he very soon took his departure; so that, since he only came for the purpose of gaining the information, the matter might have been expected to end there.

“But he interested me too much, and all that day I was under the influence of strange thoughts connected with him, and I determined to return his visit the next day.

“Rogojin was evidently by no means pleased to see me, and hinted, delicately, that he saw no reason why our acquaintance should continue. For all that, however, I spent a very interesting hour, and so, I dare say, did he. There was so great a contrast between us that I am sure we must both have felt it; anyhow, I felt it acutely. Here was I, with my days numbered, and he, a man in the full vigour of life, living in the present, without the slightest thought for ‘final convictions,’ or numbers, or days, or, in fact, for anything but that which—which—well, which he was mad about, if he will excuse me the expression—as a feeble author who cannot express his ideas properly.

“In spite of his lack of amiability, I could not help seeing, in Rogojin a man of intellect and sense; and although, perhaps, there was little in the outside world which was of interest to him, still he was clearly a man with eyes to see.

“I hinted nothing to him about my ‘final conviction,’ but it appeared to me that he had guessed it from my words. He remained silent—he is a terribly silent man. I remarked to him, as I rose to depart, that, in spite of the contrast and the wide differences between us two, *les extremités se touchent* (‘extremes meet,’ as I explained to him in Russian); so that maybe he was not so far from my final conviction as appeared.

“His only reply to this was a sour grimace. He rose and looked for my cap, and placed it in my hand, and led me out of the house—that dreadful gloomy house of

his—to all appearances, of course, as though I were leaving of my own accord, and he were simply seeing me to the door out of politeness. His house impressed me much; it is like a burial-ground, he seems to like it, which is, however, quite natural. Such a full life as he leads is so overflowing with absorbing interests that he has little need of assistance from his surroundings.

“The visit to Rogojin exhausted me terribly. Besides, I had felt ill since the morning; and by evening I was so weak that I took to my bed, and was in high fever at intervals, and even delirious. Colia sat with me until eleven o’clock.

“Yet I remember all he talked about, and every word we said, though whenever my eyes closed for a moment I could picture nothing but the image of Surikoff just in the act of finding a million roubles. He could not make up his mind what to do with the money, and tore his hair over it. He trembled with fear that somebody would rob him, and at last he decided to bury it in the ground. I persuaded him that, instead of putting it all away uselessly underground, he had better melt it down and make a golden coffin out of it for his starved child, and then dig up the little one and put her into the golden coffin. Surikoff accepted this suggestion, I thought, with tears of gratitude, and immediately commenced to carry out my design.

“I thought I spat on the ground and left him in disgust. Colia told me, when I quite recovered my senses, that I had not been asleep for a moment, but that I had spoken to him about Surikoff the whole while.

“At moments I was in a state of dreadful weakness and misery, so that Colia was greatly disturbed when he left me.

“When I arose to lock the door after him, I suddenly called to mind a picture I had noticed at Rogojin’s in one of his gloomiest rooms, over the door. He had pointed it out to me himself as we walked past it, and I believe I must have stood a good five minutes in front of it. There was nothing artistic about it, but the picture made me feel strangely uncomfortable. It represented Christ just taken down from the cross. It seems to me that painters as a rule represent the Saviour, both on the cross and taken down from it, with great beauty still upon His face. This marvellous beauty they strive to preserve even in His moments of deepest agony and passion. But there was no such beauty in Rogojin’s picture. This was the presentment of a poor mangled body which had evidently suffered unbearable anguish even before its crucifixion, full of wounds and bruises, marks of the violence of soldiers and people, and of the bitterness of the moment when He had fallen with the cross—all this combined with the anguish of the actual crucifixion.

“The face was depicted as though still suffering; as though the body, only just dead, was still almost quivering with agony. The picture was one of pure nature, for the face was not beautified by the artist, but was left as it would naturally be, whosoever the sufferer, after such anguish.

“I know that the earliest Christian faith taught that the Saviour suffered actually and not figuratively, and that nature was allowed her own way even while His body was on the cross.

“It is strange to look on this dreadful picture of the mangled corpse of the Saviour, and to put this question to oneself: ‘Supposing that the disciples, the future apostles, the women who had followed Him and stood by the cross, all of whom believed in and worshipped Him—supposing that they saw this tortured body, this face so mangled and bleeding and bruised (and they MUST have so seen it)—how could they have gazed upon the dreadful sight and yet have believed that He would rise again?’

“The thought steps in, whether one likes it or no, that death is so terrible and so powerful, that even He who conquered it in His miracles during life was unable to triumph over it at the last. He who called to Lazarus, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ and the dead man lived—He was now Himself a prey to nature and death. Nature appears to one, looking at this picture, as some huge, implacable, dumb monster; or still better—a stranger simile—some enormous mechanical engine of modern days which has seized and crushed and swallowed up a great and invaluable Being, a Being worth nature and all her laws, worth the whole earth, which was perhaps created merely for the sake of the advent of that Being.

“This blind, dumb, implacable, eternal, unreasoning force is well shown in the picture, and the absolute subordination of all men and things to it is so well expressed that the idea unconsciously arises in the mind of anyone who looks at it. All those faithful people who were gazing at the cross and its mutilated occupant must have suffered agony of mind that evening; for they must have felt that all their hopes and almost all their faith had been shattered at a blow. They must have separated in terror and dread that night, though each perhaps carried away with him one great thought which was never eradicated from his mind for ever afterwards. If this great Teacher of theirs could have seen Himself after the Crucifixion, how could He have consented to mount the Cross and to die as He did? This thought also comes into the mind of the man who gazes at this picture. I thought of all this by snatches probably between my attacks of delirium—for an hour and a half or so before Colia’s departure.

“Can there be an appearance of that which has no form? And yet it seemed to me, at certain moments, that I beheld in some strange and impossible form, that dark, dumb, irresistibly powerful, eternal force.

“I thought someone led me by the hand and showed me, by the light of a candle, a huge, loathsome insect, which he assured me was that very force, that very almighty, dumb, irresistible Power, and laughed at the indignation with which I received this information. In my room they always light the little lamp before my icon for the night; it gives a feeble flicker of light, but it is strong enough to see by dimly, and if you sit just under it you can even read by it. I think it was about twelve or a little past that night. I had not slept a wink, and was lying with my eyes wide open, when suddenly the door opened, and in came Rogojin.

“He entered, and shut the door behind him. Then he silently gazed at me and went quickly to the corner of the room where the lamp was burning and sat down underneath it.

“I was much surprised, and looked at him expectantly.

“Rogojin only leaned his elbow on the table and silently stared at me. So passed two or three minutes, and I recollect that his silence hurt and offended me very much. Why did he not speak?

“That his arrival at this time of night struck me as more or less strange may possibly be the case; but I remember I was by no means amazed at it. On the contrary, though I had not actually told him my thought in the morning, yet I know he understood it; and this thought was of such a character that it would not be anything very remarkable, if one were to come for further talk about it at any hour of night, however late.

“I thought he must have come for this purpose.

“In the morning we had parted not the best of friends; I remember he looked at me with disagreeable sarcasm once or twice; and this same look I observed in his eyes now—which was the cause of the annoyance I felt.

“I did not for a moment suspect that I was delirious and that this Rogojin was but the result of fever and excitement. I had not the slightest idea of such a theory at first.

“Meanwhile he continued to sit and stare jeeringly at me.

“I angrily turned round in bed and made up my mind that I would not say a word unless he did; so I rested silently on my pillow determined to remain dumb, if it were to last till morning. I felt resolved that he should speak first. Probably twenty minutes or so passed in this way. Suddenly the idea struck me—what if this is an apparition and not Rogojin himself?

“Neither during my illness nor at any previous time had I ever seen an apparition;—but I had always thought, both when I was a little boy, and even now, that if I were to see one I should die on the spot—though I don’t believe in ghosts. And yet NOW, when the idea struck me that this was a ghost and not Rogojin at all, I was not in the least alarmed. Nay—the thought actually irritated me. Strangely enough, the decision of the question as to whether this were a ghost or Rogojin did not, for some reason or other, interest me nearly so much as it ought to have done;—I think I began to muse about something altogether different. For instance, I began to wonder why Rogojin, who had been in dressing—gown and slippers when I saw him at home, had now put on a dress-coat and white waistcoat and tie? I also thought to myself, I remember—‘if this is a ghost, and I am not afraid of it, why don’t I approach it and verify my suspicions? Perhaps I am afraid—’ And no sooner did this last idea enter my head than an icy blast blew over me; I felt a chill down my backbone and my knees shook.

“At this very moment, as though divining my thoughts, Rogojin raised his head from his arm and began to part his lips as though he were going to laugh—but he continued to stare at me as persistently as before.

“I felt so furious with him at this moment that I longed to rush at him; but as I had sworn that he should speak first, I continued to lie still—and the more willingly, as I was still by no means satisfied as to whether it really was Rogojin or not.

“I cannot remember how long this lasted; I cannot recollect, either, whether consciousness forsook me at intervals, or not. But at last Rogojin rose, staring at me as

intently as ever, but not smiling any longer,—and walking very softly, almost on tip-toes, to the door, he opened it, went out, and shut it behind him.

“I did not rise from my bed, and I don’t know how long I lay with my eyes open, thinking. I don’t know what I thought about, nor how I fell asleep or became insensible; but I awoke next morning after nine o’clock when they knocked at my door. My general orders are that if I don’t open the door and call, by nine o’clock, Matreona is to come and bring my tea. When I now opened the door to her, the thought suddenly struck me—how could he have come in, since the door was locked? I made inquiries and found that Rogojin himself could not possibly have come in, because all our doors were locked for the night.

“Well, this strange circumstance—which I have described with so much detail—was the ultimate cause which led me to taking my final determination. So that no logic, or logical deductions, had anything to do with my resolve;—it was simply a matter of disgust.

“It was impossible for me to go on living when life was full of such detestable, strange, tormenting forms. This ghost had humiliated me;—nor could I bear to be subordinate to that dark, horrible force which was embodied in the form of the loathsome insect. It was only towards evening, when I had quite made up my mind on this point, that I began to feel easier.

VII.

“I HAD a small pocket pistol. I had procured it while still a boy, at that droll age when the stories of duels and highwaymen begin to delight one, and when one imagines oneself nobly standing fire at some future day, in a duel.

“There were a couple of old bullets in the bag which contained the pistol, and powder enough in an old flask for two or three charges.

“The pistol was a wretched thing, very crooked and wouldn’t carry farther than fifteen paces at the most. However, it would send your skull flying well enough if you pressed the muzzle of it against your temple.

“I determined to die at Pavlofsk at sunrise, in the park—so as to make no commotion in the house.

“This ‘explanation’ will make the matter clear enough to the police. Students of psychology, and anyone else who likes, may make what they please of it. I should not like this paper, however, to be made public. I request the prince to keep a copy himself, and to give a copy to Aglaya Ivanovna Epanchin. This is my last will and testament. As for my skeleton, I bequeath it to the Medical Academy for the benefit of science.

“I recognize no jurisdiction over myself, and I know that I am now beyond the power of laws and judges.

“A little while ago a very amusing idea struck me. What if I were now to commit some terrible crime—murder ten fellow-creatures, for instance, or anything else that is

thought most shocking and dreadful in this world—what a dilemma my judges would be in, with a criminal who only has a fortnight to live in any case, now that the rack and other forms of torture are abolished! Why, I should die comfortably in their own hospital—in a warm, clean room, with an attentive doctor—probably much more comfortably than I should at home.

“I don’t understand why people in my position do not oftener indulge in such ideas—if only for a joke! Perhaps they do! Who knows! There are plenty of merry souls among us!

“But though I do not recognize any jurisdiction over myself, still I know that I shall be judged, when I am nothing but a voiceless lump of clay; therefore I do not wish to go before I have left a word of reply—the reply of a free man—not one forced to justify himself—oh no! I have no need to ask forgiveness of anyone. I wish to say a word merely because I happen to desire it of my own free will.

“Here, in the first place, comes a strange thought!

“Who, in the name of what Law, would think of disputing my full personal right over the fortnight of life left to me? What jurisdiction can be brought to bear upon the case? Who would wish me, not only to be sentenced, but to endure the sentence to the end? Surely there exists no man who would wish such a thing—why should anyone desire it? For the sake of morality? Well, I can understand that if I were to make an attempt upon my own life while in the enjoyment of full health and vigour—my life which might have been ‘useful,’ etc., etc.—morality might reproach me, according to the old routine, for disposing of my life without permission—or whatever its tenet may be. But now, NOW, when my sentence is out and my days numbered! How can morality have need of my last breaths, and why should I die listening to the consolations offered by the prince, who, without doubt, would not omit to demonstrate that death is actually a benefactor to me? (Christians like him always end up with that—it is their pet theory.) And what do they want with their ridiculous ‘Pavlofsk trees’? To sweeten my last hours? Cannot they understand that the more I forget myself, the more I let myself become attached to these last illusions of life and love, by means of which they try to hide from me Meyer’s wall, and all that is so plainly written on it—the more unhappy they make me? What is the use of all your nature to me—all your parks and trees, your sunsets and sunrises, your blue skies and your self-satisfied faces—when all this wealth of beauty and happiness begins with the fact that it accounts me—only me—one too many! What is the good of all this beauty and glory to me, when every second, every moment, I cannot but be aware that this little fly which buzzes around my head in the sun’s rays—even this little fly is a sharer and participator in all the glory of the universe, and knows its place and is happy in it;—while I—only I, am an outcast, and have been blind to the fact hitherto, thanks to my simplicity! Oh! I know well how the prince and others would like me, instead of indulging in all these wicked words of my own, to sing, to the glory and triumph of morality, that well-known verse of Gilbert’s:

“O, puissent voir longtemps votre beaute sacree Tant d’amis, sourds a mes adieux! Qu’ils meurent pleins de jours, que leur mort soit pleuree, Qu’un ami leur ferme les yeux!”

“But believe me, believe me, my simple-hearted friends, that in this highly moral verse, in this academical blessing to the world in general in the French language, is hidden the intensest gall and bitterness; but so well concealed is the venom, that I dare say the poet actually persuaded himself that his words were full of the tears of pardon and peace, instead of the bitterness of disappointment and malice, and so died in the delusion.

“Do you know there is a limit of ignominy, beyond which man’s consciousness of shame cannot go, and after which begins satisfaction in shame? Well, of course humility is a great force in that sense, I admit that—though not in the sense in which religion accounts humility to be strength!

“Religion!—I admit eternal life—and perhaps I always did admit it.

“Admitted that consciousness is called into existence by the will of a Higher Power; admitted that this consciousness looks out upon the world and says ‘I am;’ and admitted that the Higher Power wills that the consciousness so called into existence, be suddenly extinguished (for so—for some unexplained reason—it is and must be)—still there comes the eternal question—why must I be humble through all this? Is it not enough that I am devoured, without my being expected to bless the power that devours me? Surely—surely I need not suppose that Somebody—there—will be offended because I do not wish to live out the fortnight allowed me? I don’t believe it.

“It is much simpler, and far more likely, to believe that my death is needed—the death of an insignificant atom—in order to fulfil the general harmony of the universe—in order to make even some plus or minus in the sum of existence. Just as every day the death of numbers of beings is necessary because without their annihilation the rest cannot live on—(although we must admit that the idea is not a particularly grand one in itself!)

“However—admit the fact! Admit that without such perpetual devouring of one another the world cannot continue to exist, or could never have been organized—I am ever ready to confess that I cannot understand why this is so—but I’ll tell you what I DO know, for certain. If I have once been given to understand and realize that I AM—what does it matter to me that the world is organized on a system full of errors and that otherwise it cannot be organized at all? Who will or can judge me after this? Say what you like—the thing is impossible and unjust!

“And meanwhile I have never been able, in spite of my great desire to do so, to persuade myself that there is no future existence, and no Providence.

“The fact of the matter is that all this DOES exist, but that we know absolutely nothing about the future life and its laws!

“But it is so difficult, and even impossible to understand, that surely I am not to be blamed because I could not fathom the incomprehensible?”

“Of course I know they say that one must be obedient, and of course, too, the prince is one of those who say so: that one must be obedient without questions, out of pure goodness of heart, and that for my worthy conduct in this matter I shall meet with reward in another world. We degrade God when we attribute our own ideas to Him, out of annoyance that we cannot fathom His ways.

“Again, I repeat, I cannot be blamed because I am unable to understand that which it is not given to mankind to fathom. Why am I to be judged because I could not comprehend the Will and Laws of Providence? No, we had better drop religion.

“And enough of this. By the time I have got so far in the reading of my document the sun will be up and the huge force of his rays will be acting upon the living world. So be it. I shall die gazing straight at the great Fountain of life and power; I do not want this life!

“If I had had the power to prevent my own birth I should certainly never have consented to accept existence under such ridiculous conditions. However, I have the power to end my existence, although I do but give back days that are already numbered. It is an insignificant gift, and my revolt is equally insignificant.

“Final explanation: I die, not in the least because I am unable to support these next three weeks. Oh no, I should find strength enough, and if I wished it I could obtain consolation from the thought of the injury that is done me. But I am not a French poet, and I do not desire such consolation. And finally, nature has so limited my capacity for work or activity of any kind, in allotting me but three weeks of time, that suicide is about the only thing left that I can begin and end in the time of my own free will.

“Perhaps then I am anxious to take advantage of my last chance of doing something for myself. A protest is sometimes no small thing.”

The explanation was finished; Hippolyte paused at last.

There is, in extreme cases, a final stage of cynical candour when a nervous man, excited, and beside himself with emotion, will be afraid of nothing and ready for any sort of scandal, nay, glad of it. The extraordinary, almost unnatural, tension of the nerves which upheld Hippolyte up to this point, had now arrived at this final stage. This poor feeble boy of eighteen—exhausted by disease—looked for all the world as weak and frail as a leaflet torn from its parent tree and trembling in the breeze; but no sooner had his eye swept over his audience, for the first time during the whole of the last hour, than the most contemptuous, the most haughty expression of repugnance lighted up his face. He defied them all, as it were. But his hearers were indignant, too; they rose to their feet with annoyance. Fatigue, the wine consumed, the strain of listening so long, all added to the disagreeable impression which the reading had made upon them.

Suddenly Hippolyte jumped up as though he had been shot.

“The sun is rising,” he cried, seeing the gilded tops of the trees, and pointing to them as to a miracle. “See, it is rising now!”

“Well, what then? Did you suppose it wasn’t going to rise?” asked Ferdishenko.

"It's going to be atrociously hot again all day," said Gania, with an air of annoyance, taking his hat. "A month of this... Are you coming home, Ptitsin?" Hippolyte listened to this in amazement, almost amounting to stupefaction. Suddenly he became deadly pale and shuddered.

"You manage your composure too awkwardly. I see you wish to insult me," he cried to Gania. "You—you are a cur!" He looked at Gania with an expression of malice.

"What on earth is the matter with the boy? What phenomenal feeble-mindedness!" exclaimed Ferdishenko.

"Oh, he's simply a fool," said Gania.

Hippolyte braced himself up a little.

"I understand, gentlemen," he began, trembling as before, and stumbling over every word, "that I have deserved your resentment, and—and am sorry that I should have troubled you with this raving nonsense" (pointing to his article), "or rather, I am sorry that I have not troubled you enough." He smiled feebly. "Have I troubled you, Evgenie Pavlovitch?" He suddenly turned on Evgenie with this question. "Tell me now, have I troubled you or not?"

"Well, it was a little drawn out, perhaps; but—"

"Come, speak out! Don't lie, for once in your life—speak out!" continued Hippolyte, quivering with agitation.

"Oh, my good sir, I assure you it's entirely the same to me. Please leave me in peace," said Evgenie, angrily, turning his back on him.

"Good-night, prince," said Ptitsin, approaching his host.

"What are you thinking of? Don't go, he'll blow his brains out in a minute!" cried Vera Lebedeff, rushing up to Hippolyte and catching hold of his hands in a torment of alarm. "What are you thinking of? He said he would blow his brains out at sunrise."

"Oh, he won't shoot himself!" cried several voices, sarcastically.

"Gentlemen, you'd better look out," cried Colia, also seizing Hippolyte by the hand. "Just look at him! Prince, what are you thinking of?" Vera and Colia, and Keller, and Burdovsky were all crowding round Hippolyte now and holding him down.

"He has the right—the right—" murmured Burdovsky. "Excuse me, prince, but what are your arrangements?" asked Lebedeff, tipsy and exasperated, going up to Muishkin.

"What do you mean by 'arrangements'?"

"No, no, excuse me! I'm master of this house, though I do not wish to lack respect towards you. You are master of the house too, in a way; but I can't allow this sort of thing—"

"He won't shoot himself; the boy is only playing the fool," said General Ivolgin, suddenly and unexpectedly, with indignation.

"I know he won't, I know he won't, general; but I—I'm master here!"

"Listen, Mr. Terentieff," said Ptitsin, who had bidden the prince good-night, and was now holding out his hand to Hippolyte; "I think you remark in that manuscript of yours, that you bequeath your skeleton to the Academy. Are you referring to your own skeleton—I mean, your very bones?"

“Yes, my bones, I—”

“Quite so, I see; because, you know, little mistakes have occurred now and then. There was a case—”

Why do you tease him?” cried the prince, suddenly.

“You’ve moved him to tears,” added Ferdishenko. But Hippolyte was by no means weeping. He was about to move from his place, when his four guards rushed at him and seized him once more. There was a laugh at this.

“He led up to this on purpose. He took the trouble of writing all that so that people should come and grab him by the arm,” observed Rogojin. “Good-night, prince. What a time we’ve sat here, my very bones ache!”

“If you really intended to shoot yourself, Terentieff,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing, “if I were you, after all these compliments, I should just not shoot myself in order to vex them all.”

“They are very anxious to see me blow my brains out,” said Hippolyte, bitterly.

“Yes, they’ll be awfully annoyed if they don’t see it.”

“Then you think they won’t see it?”

“I am not trying to egg you on. On the contrary, I think it very likely that you may shoot yourself; but the principal thing is to keep cool,” said Evgenie with a drawl, and with great condescension.

“I only now perceive what a terrible mistake I made in reading this article to them,” said Hippolyte, suddenly, addressing Evgenie, and looking at him with an expression of trust and confidence, as though he were applying to a friend for counsel.

“Yes, it’s a droll situation; I really don’t know what advice to give you,” replied Evgenie, laughing. Hippolyte gazed steadfastly at him, but said nothing. To look at him one might have supposed that he was unconscious at intervals.

“Excuse me,” said Lebedeff, “but did you observe the young gentleman’s style? ‘I’ll go and blow my brains out in the park,’ says he, so as not to disturb anyone.’ He thinks he won’t disturb anybody if he goes three yards away, into the park, and blows his brains out there.”

“Gentlemen—” began the prince.

“No, no, excuse me, most revered prince,” Lebedeff interrupted, excitedly. “Since you must have observed yourself that this is no joke, and since at least half your guests must also have concluded that after all that has been said this youth MUST blow his brains out for honour’s sake—I—as master of this house, and before these witnesses, now call upon you to take steps.”

“Yes, but what am I to do, Lebedeff? What steps am I to take? I am ready.”

“I’ll tell you. In the first place he must immediately deliver up the pistol which he boasted of, with all its appurtenances. If he does this I shall consent to his being allowed to spend the night in this house—considering his feeble state of health, and of course conditionally upon his being under proper supervision. But tomorrow he must go elsewhere. Excuse me, prince! Should he refuse to deliver up his weapon, then I shall instantly seize one of his arms and General Ivolgin the other, and we shall hold

him until the police arrive and take the matter into their own hands. Mr. Ferdishenko will kindly fetch them.”

At this there was a dreadful noise; Lebedeff danced about in his excitement; Ferdishenko prepared to go for the police; Gania frantically insisted that it was all nonsense, “for nobody was going to shoot themselves.” Evgenie Pavlovitch said nothing.

“Prince,” whispered Hippolyte, suddenly, his eyes all ablaze, “you don’t suppose that I did not foresee all this hatred?” He looked at the prince as though he expected him to reply, for a moment. “Enough!” he added at length, and addressing the whole company, he cried: “It’s all my fault, gentlemen! Lebedeff, here’s the key,” (he took out a small bunch of keys); “this one, the last but one—Colia will show you—Colia, where’s Colia?” he cried, looking straight at Colia and not seeing him. “Yes, he’ll show you; he packed the bag with me this morning. Take him up, Colia; my bag is upstairs in the prince’s study, under the table. Here’s the key, and in the little case you’ll find my pistol and the powder, and all. Colia packed it himself, Mr. Lebedeff; he’ll show you; but it’s on condition that tomorrow morning, when I leave for Petersburg, you will give me back my pistol, do you hear? I do this for the prince’s sake, not yours.”

“Capital, that’s much better!” cried Lebedeff, and seizing the key he made off in haste.

Colia stopped a moment as though he wished to say something; but Lebedeff dragged him away.

Hippolyte looked around at the laughing guests. The prince observed that his teeth were chattering as though in a violent attack of ague.

“What brutes they all are!” he whispered to the prince. Whenever he addressed him he lowered his voice.

“Let them alone, you’re too weak now—”

Yes, directly; I’ll go away directly. I’ll—”

Suddenly he embraced Muishkin.

“Perhaps you think I am mad, eh?” he asked him, laughing very strangely.

“No, but you—”

“Directly, directly! Stand still a moment, I wish to look in your eyes; don’t speak—stand so—let me look at you! I am bidding farewell to mankind.”

He stood so for ten seconds, gazing at the prince, motionless, deadly pale, his temples wet with perspiration; he held the prince’s hand in a strange grip, as though afraid to let him go.

“Hippolyte, Hippolyte, what is the matter with you?” cried Muishkin.

“Directly! There, that’s enough. I’ll lie down directly. I must drink to the sun’s health. I wish to—I insist upon it! Let go!”

He seized a glass from the table, broke away from the prince, and in a moment had reached the terrace steps.

The prince made after him, but it so happened that at this moment Evgenie Pavlovitch stretched out his hand to say good-night. The next instant there was a general outcry, and then followed a few moments of indescribable excitement.

Reaching the steps, Hippolyte had paused, holding the glass in his left hand while he put his right hand into his coat pocket.

Keller insisted afterwards that he had held his right hand in his pocket all the while, when he was speaking to the prince, and that he had held the latter's shoulder with his left hand only. This circumstance, Keller affirmed, had led him to feel some suspicion from the first. However this may be, Keller ran after Hippolyte, but he was too late.

He caught sight of something flashing in Hippolyte's right hand, and saw that it was a pistol. He rushed at him, but at that very instant Hippolyte raised the pistol to his temple and pulled the trigger. There followed a sharp metallic click, but no report.

When Keller seized the would-be suicide, the latter fell forward into his arms, probably actually believing that he was shot. Keller had hold of the pistol now. Hippolyte was immediately placed in a chair, while the whole company thronged around excitedly, talking and asking each other questions. Every one of them had heard the snap of the trigger, and yet they saw a live and apparently unharmed man before them.

Hippolyte himself sat quite unconscious of what was going on, and gazed around with a senseless expression.

Lebedeff and Colia came rushing up at this moment.

"What is it?" someone asked, breathlessly—"A misfire?"

"Perhaps it wasn't loaded," said several voices.

"It's loaded all right," said Keller, examining the pistol, "but—"

"What! did it miss fire?"

"There was no cap in it," Keller announced.

It would be difficult to describe the pitiable scene that now followed. The first sensation of alarm soon gave place to amusement; some burst out laughing loud and heartily, and seemed to find a malicious satisfaction in the joke. Poor Hippolyte sobbed hysterically; he wrung his hands; he approached everyone in turn—even Ferdishenko—and took them by both hands, and swore solemnly that he had forgotten—absolutely forgotten—"accidentally, and not on purpose,"—to put a cap in—that he "had ten of them, at least, in his pocket." He pulled them out and showed them to everyone; he protested that he had not liked to put one in beforehand for fear of an accidental explosion in his pocket. That he had thought he would have lots of time to put it in afterwards—when required—and, that, in the heat of the moment, he had forgotten all about it. He threw himself upon the prince, then on Evgenie Pavlovitch. He entreated Keller to give him back the pistol, and he'd soon show them all that "his honour—his honour,"—but he was "dishonoured, now, for ever!"

He fell senseless at last—and was carried into the prince's study.

Lebedeff, now quite sobered down, sent for a doctor; and he and his daughter, with Burdovsky and General Ivolgin, remained by the sick man's couch.

When he was carried away unconscious, Keller stood in the middle of the room, and made the following declaration to the company in general, in a loud tone of voice, with emphasis upon each word.

“Gentlemen, if any one of you casts any doubt again, before me, upon Hippolyte’s good faith, or hints that the cap was forgotten intentionally, or suggests that this unhappy boy was acting a part before us, I beg to announce that the person so speaking shall account to me for his words.”

No one replied.

The company departed very quickly, in a mass. Ptitsin, Gania, and Rogojin went away together.

The prince was much astonished that Evgenie Pavlovitch changed his mind, and took his departure without the conversation he had requested.

“Why, you wished to have a talk with me when the others left?” he said.

“Quite so,” said Evgenie, sitting down suddenly beside him, “but I have changed my mind for the time being. I confess, I am too disturbed, and so, I think, are you; and the matter as to which I wished to consult you is too serious to tackle with one’s mind even a little disturbed; too serious both for myself and for you. You see, prince, for once in my life I wish to perform an absolutely honest action, that is, an action with no ulterior motive; and I think I am hardly in a condition to talk of it just at this moment, and—and—well, we’ll discuss it another time. Perhaps the matter may gain in clearness if we wait for two or three days—just the two or three days which I must spend in Petersburg.”

Here he rose again from his chair, so that it seemed strange that he should have thought it worth while to sit down at all.

The prince thought, too, that he looked vexed and annoyed, and not nearly so friendly towards himself as he had been earlier in the night.

“I suppose you will go to the sufferer’s bedside now?” he added.

“Yes, I am afraid...” began the prince.

“Oh, you needn’t fear! He’ll live another six weeks all right. Very likely he will recover altogether; but I strongly advise you to pack him off tomorrow.”

“I think I may have offended him by saying nothing just now. I am afraid he may suspect that I doubted his good faith,—about shooting himself, you know. What do you think, Evgenie Pavlovitch?”

“Not a bit of it! You are much too good to him; you shouldn’t care a hang about what he thinks. I have heard of such things before, but never came across, till tonight, a man who would actually shoot himself in order to gain a vulgar notoriety, or blow out his brains for spite, if he finds that people don’t care to pat him on the back for his sanguinary intentions. But what astonishes me more than anything is the fellow’s candid confession of weakness. You’d better get rid of him tomorrow, in any case.

“Do you think he will make another attempt?”

“Oh no, not he, not now! But you have to be very careful with this sort of gentleman. Crime is too often the last resource of these petty nonentities. This young fellow is quite capable of cutting the throats of ten people, simply for a lark, as he told us in his ‘explanation.’ I assure you those confounded words of his will not let me sleep.”

“I think you disturb yourself too much.”

“What an extraordinary person you are, prince! Do you mean to say that you doubt the fact that he is capable of murdering ten men?”

“I daren’t say, one way or the other; all this is very strange— but—”

“Well, as you like, just as you like,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, irritably. “Only you are such a plucky fellow, take care you don’t get included among the ten victims!”

“Oh, he is much more likely not to kill anyone at all,” said the prince, gazing thoughtfully at Evgenie. The latter laughed disagreeably.

“Well, au revoir! Did you observe that he ‘willed’ a copy of his confession to Aglaya Ivanovna?”

“Yes, I did; I am thinking of it.”

“In connection with ‘the ten,’ eh?” laughed Evgenie, as he left the room.

An hour later, towards four o’clock, the prince went into the park. He had endeavoured to fall asleep, but could not, owing to the painful beating of his heart.

He had left things quiet and peaceful; the invalid was fast asleep, and the doctor, who had been called in, had stated that there was no special danger. Lebedeff, Colia, and Burdovsky were lying down in the sick-room, ready to take it in turns to watch. There was nothing to fear, therefore, at home.

But the prince’s mental perturbation increased every moment. He wandered about the park, looking absently around him, and paused in astonishment when he suddenly found himself in the empty space with the rows of chairs round it, near the Vauxhall. The look of the place struck him as dreadful now: so he turned round and went by the path which he had followed with the Epanchins on the way to the band, until he reached the green bench which Aglaya had pointed out for their rendezvous. He sat down on it and suddenly burst into a loud fit of laughter, immediately followed by a feeling of irritation. His disturbance of mind continued; he felt that he must go away somewhere, anywhere.

Above his head some little bird sang out, of a sudden; he began to peer about for it among the leaves. Suddenly the bird darted out of the tree and away, and instantly he thought of the “fly buzzing about in the sun’s rays” that Hippolyte had talked of; how that it knew its place and was a participator in the universal life, while he alone was an “outcast.” This picture had impressed him at the time, and he meditated upon it now. An old, forgotten memory awoke in his brain, and suddenly burst into clearness and light. It was a recollection of Switzerland, during the first year of his cure, the very first months. At that time he had been pretty nearly an idiot still; he could not speak properly, and had difficulty in understanding when others spoke to him. He climbed the mountain-side, one sunny morning, and wandered long and aimlessly with a certain thought in his brain, which would not become clear. Above him was the blazing sky, below, the lake; all around was the horizon, clear and infinite. He looked out upon this, long and anxiously. He remembered how he had stretched out his arms towards the beautiful, boundless blue of the horizon, and wept, and wept. What had so tormented him was the idea that he was a stranger to all this, that he was outside this glorious festival.

What was this universe? What was this grand, eternal pageant to which he had yearned from his childhood up, and in which he could never take part? Every morning the same magnificent sun; every morning the same rainbow in the waterfall; every evening the same glow on the snow-mountains.

Every little fly that buzzed in the sun's rays was a singer in the universal chorus, "knew its place, and was happy in it. "Every blade of grass grew and was happy. Everything knew its path and loved it, went forth with a song and returned with a song; only he knew nothing, understood nothing, neither men nor words, nor any of nature's voices; he was a stranger and an outcast.

Oh, he could not then speak these words, or express all he felt! He had been tormented dumbly; but now it appeared to him that he must have said these very words—even then—and that Hippolyte must have taken his picture of the little fly from his tears and words of that time.

He was sure of it, and his heart beat excitedly at the thought, he knew not why.

He fell asleep on the bench; but his mental disquiet continued through his slumbers.

Just before he dozed off, the idea of Hippolyte murdering ten men flitted through his brain, and he smiled at the absurdity of such a thought.

Around him all was quiet; only the flutter and whisper of the leaves broke the silence, but broke it only to cause it to appear yet more deep and still.

He dreamed many dreams as he sat there, and all were full of disquiet, so that he shuddered every moment.

At length a woman seemed to approach him. He knew her, oh! he knew her only too well. He could always name her and recognize her anywhere; but, strange, she seemed to have quite a different face from hers, as he had known it, and he felt a tormenting desire to be able to say she was not the same woman. In the face before him there was such dreadful remorse and horror that he thought she must be a criminal, that she must have just committed some awful crime.

Tears were trembling on her white cheek. She beckoned him, but placed her finger on her lip as though to warn him that he must follow her very quietly. His heart froze within him. He wouldn't, he COULDN'T confess her to be a criminal, and yet he felt that something dreadful would happen the next moment, something which would blast his whole life.

She seemed to wish to show him something, not far off, in the park.

He rose from his seat in order to follow her, when a bright, clear peal of laughter rang out by his side. He felt somebody's hand suddenly in his own, seized it, pressed it hard, and awoke. Before him stood Aglaya, laughing aloud.

VIII.

SHE laughed, but she was rather angry too.

"He's asleep! You were asleep," she said, with contemptuous surprise.

"Is it really you?" muttered the prince, not quite himself as yet, and recognizing her with a start of amazement. "Oh yes, of course," he added, "this is our rendezvous. I fell asleep here."

"So I saw."

"Did no one awake me besides yourself? Was there no one else here? I thought there was another woman."

"There was another woman here?"

At last he was wide awake.

"It was a dream, of course," he said, musingly. "Strange that I should have a dream like that at such a moment. Sit down—"

He took her hand and seated her on the bench; then sat down beside her and reflected.

Aglaya did not begin the conversation, but contented herself with watching her companion intently.

He looked back at her, but at times it was clear that he did not see her and was not thinking of her.

Aglaya began to flush up.

"Oh yes!" cried the prince, starting. "Hippolyte's suicide—"

"What? At your house?" she asked, but without much surprise. "He was alive yesterday evening, wasn't he? How could you sleep here after that?" she cried, growing suddenly animated.

"Oh, but he didn't kill himself; the pistol didn't go off." Aglaya insisted on hearing the whole story. She hurried the prince along, but interrupted him with all sorts of questions, nearly all of which were irrelevant. Among other things, she seemed greatly interested in every word that Evgenie Pavlovitch had said, and made the prince repeat that part of the story over and over again.

"Well, that'll do; we must be quick," she concluded, after hearing all. "We have only an hour here, till eight; I must be home by then without fail, so that they may not find out that I came and sat here with you; but I've come on business. I have a great deal to say to you. But you have bowled me over considerably with your news. As to Hippolyte, I think his pistol was bound not to go off; it was more consistent with the whole affair. Are you sure he really wished to blow his brains out, and that there was no humbug about the matter?"

"No humbug at all."

"Very likely. So he wrote that you were to bring me a copy of his confession, did he? Why didn't you bring it?"

"Why, he didn't die! I'll ask him for it, if you like."

"Bring it by all means; you needn't ask him. He will be delighted, you may be sure; for, in all probability, he shot at himself simply in order that I might read his confession. Don't laugh at what I say, please, Lef Nicolaievitch, because it may very well be the case."

"I'm not laughing. I am convinced, myself, that that may have been partly the reason.

"You are convinced? You don't really mean to say you think that honestly?" asked Aglaya, extremely surprised.

She put her questions very quickly and talked fast, every now and then forgetting what she had begun to say, and not finishing her sentence. She seemed to be impatient to warn the prince about something or other. She was in a state of unusual excitement, and though she put on a brave and even defiant air, she seemed to be rather alarmed. She was dressed very simply, but this suited her well. She continually trembled and blushed, and she sat on the very edge of the seat.

The fact that the prince confirmed her idea, about Hippolyte shooting himself that she might read his confession, surprised her greatly.

"Of course," added the prince, "he wished us all to applaud his conduct—besides yourself."

"How do you mean—applaud?"

"Well—how am I to explain? He was very anxious that we should all come around him, and say we were so sorry for him, and that we loved him very much, and all that; and that we hoped he wouldn't kill himself, but remain alive. Very likely he thought more of you than the rest of us, because he mentioned you at such a moment, though perhaps he did not know himself that he had you in his mind's eye."

"I don't understand you. How could he have me in view, and not be aware of it himself? And yet, I don't know—perhaps I do. Do you know I have intended to poison myself at least thirty times—ever since I was thirteen or so—and to write to my parents before I did it? I used to think how nice it would be to lie in my coffin, and have them all weeping over me and saying it was all their fault for being so cruel, and all that—what are you smiling at?" she added, knitting her brow. "What do YOU think of when you go mooning about alone? I suppose you imagine yourself a field-marshal, and think you have conquered Napoleon?"

"Well, I really have thought something of the sort now and then, especially when just dozing off," laughed the prince. "Only it is the Austrians whom I conquer—not Napoleon."

"I don't wish to joke with you, Lef Nicolaievitch. I shall see Hippolyte myself. Tell him so. As for you, I think you are behaving very badly, because it is not right to judge a man's soul as you are judging Hippolyte's. You have no gentleness, but only justice—so you are unjust."

The prince reflected.

"I think you are unfair towards me," he said. "There is nothing wrong in the thoughts I ascribe to Hippolyte; they are only natural. But of course I don't know for certain what he thought. Perhaps he thought nothing, but simply longed to see human faces once more, and to hear human praise and feel human affection. Who knows? Only it all came out wrong, somehow. Some people have luck, and everything comes out right with them; others have none, and never a thing turns out fortunately."

"I suppose you have felt that in your own case," said Aglaya.

"Yes, I have," replied the prince, quite unsuspecting of any irony in the remark.

"H'm—well, at all events, I shouldn't have fallen asleep here, in your place. It wasn't nice of you, that. I suppose you fall asleep wherever you sit down?"

"But I didn't sleep a wink all night. I walked and walked about, and went to where the music was—"

"What music?"

"Where they played last night. Then I found this bench and sat down, and thought and thought—and at last I fell fast asleep."

"Oh, is that it? That makes a difference, perhaps. What did you go to the bandstand for?"

"I don't know; I—"

"Very well—afterwards. You are always interrupting me. What woman was it you were dreaming about?"

"It was—about—you saw her—"

"Quite so; I understand. I understand quite well. You are very— Well, how did she appear to you? What did she look like? No, I don't want to know anything about her," said Aglaya, angrily; "don't interrupt me—"

She paused a moment as though getting breath, or trying to master her feeling of annoyance.

"Look here; this is what I called you here for. I wish to make you a—to ask you to be my friend. What do you stare at me like that for?" she added, almost angrily.

The prince certainly had darted a rather piercing look at her, and now observed that she had begun to blush violently. At such moments, the more Aglaya blushed, the angrier she grew with herself; and this was clearly expressed in her eyes, which flashed like fire. As a rule, she vented her wrath on her unfortunate companion, be it who it might. She was very conscious of her own shyness, and was not nearly so talkative as her sisters for this reason—in fact, at times she was much too quiet. When, therefore, she was bound to talk, especially at such delicate moments as this, she invariably did so with an air of haughty defiance. She always knew beforehand when she was going to blush, long before the blush came.

"Perhaps you do not wish to accept my proposition?" she asked, gazing haughtily at the prince.

"Oh yes, I do; but it is so unnecessary. I mean, I did not think you need make such a proposition," said the prince, looking confused.

"What did you suppose, then? Why did you think I invited you out here? I suppose you think me a 'little fool,' as they all call me at home?"

"I didn't know they called you a fool. I certainly don't think you one."

"You don't think me one! Oh, dear me!—that's very clever of you; you put it so neatly, too."

"In my opinion, you are far from a fool sometimes—in fact, you are very intelligent. You said a very clever thing just now about my being unjust because I had ONLY justice. I shall remember that, and think about it."

Aglaya blushed with pleasure. All these changes in her expression came about so naturally and so rapidly—they delighted the prince; he watched her, and laughed.

"Listen," she began again; "I have long waited to tell you all this, ever since the time when you sent me that letter—even before that. Half of what I have to say you heard yesterday. I consider you the most honest and upright of men—more honest and upright than any other man; and if anybody says that your mind is—is sometimes affected, you know—it is unfair. I always say so and uphold it, because even if your surface mind be a little affected (of course you will not feel angry with me for talking so—I am speaking from a higher point of view) yet your real mind is far better than all theirs put together. Such a mind as they have never even DREAMED of; because really, there are TWO minds—the kind that matters, and the kind that doesn't matter. Isn't it so?"

"May be! may be so!" said the prince, faintly; his heart was beating painfully.

"I knew you would not misunderstand me," she said, triumphantly. "Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch and Alexandra don't understand anything about these two kinds of mind, but, just fancy, mamma does!"

"You are very like Lizabetha Prokofievna."

"What! surely not?" said Aglaya.

"Yes, you are, indeed."

"Thank you; I am glad to be like mamma," she said, thoughtfully. "You respect her very much, don't you?" she added, quite unconscious of the naiveness of the question.

"VERY much; and I am so glad that you have realized the fact."

"I am very glad, too, because she is often laughed at by people. But listen to the chief point. I have long thought over the matter, and at last I have chosen you. I don't wish people to laugh at me; I don't wish people to think me a 'little fool.' I don't want to be chaffed. I felt all this of a sudden, and I refused Evgenie Pavlovitch flatly, because I am not going to be forever thrown at people's heads to be married. I want—I want—well, I'll tell you, I wish to run away from home, and I have chosen you to help me."

"Run away from home?" cried the prince.

"Yes—yes—yes! Run away from home!" she repeated, in a transport of rage. "I won't, I won't be made to blush every minute by them all! I don't want to blush before Prince S. or Evgenie Pavlovitch, or anyone, and therefore I have chosen you. I shall tell you everything, EVERYTHING, even the most important things of all, whenever I like, and you are to hide nothing from me on your side. I want to speak to at least one person, as I would to myself. They have suddenly begun to say that I am waiting for you, and in love with you. They began this before you arrived here, and so I didn't show them the letter, and now they all say it, every one of them. I want to be brave, and be afraid of nobody. I don't want to go to their balls and things—I want to do good. I have long desired to run away, for I have been kept shut up for twenty years,

and they are always trying to marry me off. I wanted to run away when I was fourteen years old—I was a little fool then, I know—but now I have worked it all out, and I have waited for you to tell me about foreign countries. I have never seen a single Gothic cathedral. I must go to Rome; I must see all the museums; I must study in Paris. All this last year I have been preparing and reading forbidden books. Alexandra and Adelaida are allowed to read anything they like, but I mayn't. I don't want to quarrel with my sisters, but I told my parents long ago that I wish to change my social position. I have decided to take up teaching, and I count on you because you said you loved children. Can we go in for education together—if not at once, then afterwards? We could do good together. I won't be a general's daughter any more! Tell me, are you a very learned man?"

"Oh no; not at all."

"Oh-h-h! I'm sorry for that. I thought you were. I wonder why I always thought so—but at all events you'll help me, won't you? Because I've chosen you, you know."

"Aglaya Ivanovna, it's absurd."

"But I will, I WILL run away!" she cried—and her eyes flashed again with anger—"and if you don't agree I shall go and marry Gavrila Ardalionovitch! I won't be considered a horrible girl, and accused of goodness knows what."

"Are you out of your mind?" cried the prince, almost starting from his seat. "What do they accuse you of? Who accuses you?"

"At home, everybody, mother, my sisters, Prince S., even that detestable Colia! If they don't say it, they think it. I told them all so to their faces. I told mother and father and everybody. Mamma was ill all the day after it, and next day father and Alexandra told me that I didn't understand what nonsense I was talking. I informed them that they little knew me—I was not a small child—I understood every word in the language—that I had read a couple of Paul de Kok's novels two years since on purpose, so as to know all about everything. No sooner did mamma hear me say this than she nearly fainted!"

A strange thought passed through the prince's brain; he gazed intently at Aglaya and smiled.

He could not believe that this was the same haughty young girl who had once so proudly shown him Gania's letter. He could not understand how that proud and austere beauty could show herself to be such an utter child—a child who probably did not even now understand some words.

"Have you always lived at home, Aglaya Ivanovna?" he asked. "I mean, have you never been to school, or college, or anything?"

"No—never—nowhere! I've been at home all my life, corked up in a bottle; and they expect me to be married straight out of it. What are you laughing at again? I observe that you, too, have taken to laughing at me, and range yourself on their side against me," she added, frowning angrily. "Don't irritate me—I'm bad enough without that—I don't know what I am doing sometimes. I am persuaded that you came here today in

the full belief that I am in love with you, and that I arranged this meeting because of that," she cried, with annoyance.

"I admit I was afraid that that was the case, yesterday," blundered the prince (he was rather confused), "but today I am quite convinced that "

"How?" cried Aglaya—and her lower lip trembled violently. "You were AFRAID that I—you dared to think that I—good gracious! you suspected, perhaps, that I sent for you to come here in order to catch you in a trap, so that they should find us here together, and make you marry me—"

"Aglaya Ivanovna, aren't you ashamed of saying such a thing? How could such a horrible idea enter your sweet, innocent heart? I am certain you don't believe a word of what you say, and probably you don't even know what you are talking about."

Aglaya sat with her eyes on the ground; she seemed to have alarmed even herself by what she had said.

"No, I'm not; I'm not a bit ashamed!" she murmured. "And how do you know my heart is innocent? And how dared you send me a love— letter that time?"

"LOVE-LETTER? My letter a love-letter? That letter was the most respectful of letters; it went straight from my heart, at what was perhaps the most painful moment of my life! I thought of you at the time as a kind of light. I—"

"Well, very well, very well!" she said, but quite in a different tone. She was remorseful now, and bent forward to touch his shoulder, though still trying not to look him in the face, as if the more persuasively to beg him not to be angry with her. "Very well," she continued, looking thoroughly ashamed of herself, "I feel that I said a very foolish thing. I only did it just to try you. Take it as unsaid, and if I offended you, forgive me. Don't look straight at me like that, please; turn your head away. You called it a 'horrible idea'; I only said it to shock you. Very often I am myself afraid of saying what I intend to say, and out it comes all the same. You have just told me that you wrote that letter at the most painful moment of your life. I know what moment that was!" she added softly, looking at the ground again.

"Oh, if you could know all!"

"I DO know all!" she cried, with another burst of indignation. "You were living in the same house as that horrible woman with whom you ran away." She did not blush as she said this; on the contrary, she grew pale, and started from her seat, apparently oblivious of what she did, and immediately sat down again. Her lip continued to tremble for a long time.

There was silence for a moment. The prince was taken aback by the suddenness of this last reply, and did not know to what he should attribute it.

"I don't love you a bit!" she said suddenly, just as though the words had exploded from her mouth.

The prince did not answer, and there was silence again. "I love Gavrila Ardalionovitch," she said, quickly; but hardly audibly, and with her head bent lower than ever.

"That is NOT true," said the prince, in an equally low voice.

“What! I tell stories, do I? It is true! I gave him my promise a couple of days ago on this very seat.”

The prince was startled, and reflected for a moment.

“It is not true,” he repeated, decidedly; “you have just invented it!”

“You are wonderfully polite. You know he is greatly improved. He loves me better than his life. He let his hand burn before my very eyes in order to prove to me that he loved me better than his life!”

“He burned his hand!”

“Yes, believe it or not! It’s all the same to me!”

The prince sat silent once more. Aglaya did not seem to be joking; she was too angry for that.

“What! he brought a candle with him to this place? That is, if the episode happened here; otherwise I can’t “

“Yes, a candle! What’s there improbable about that?”

“A whole one, and in a candlestick?”

“Yes—no—half a candle—an end, you know—no, it was a whole candle; it’s all the same. Be quiet, can’t you! He brought a box of matches too, if you like, and then lighted the candle and held his finger in it for half an hour and more!—There! Can’t that be?”

“I saw him yesterday, and his fingers were all right!”

Aglaya suddenly burst out laughing, as simply as a child.

“Do you know why I have just told you these lies?” She appealed to the prince, of a sudden, with the most childlike candour, and with the laugh still trembling on her lips. “Because when one tells a lie, if one insists on something unusual and eccentric—something too ‘out of the way’ for anything, you know—the more impossible the thing is, the more plausible does the lie sound. I’ve noticed this. But I managed it badly; I didn’t know how to work it.” She suddenly frowned again at this point as though at some sudden unpleasant recollection.

“If”—she began, looking seriously and even sadly at him— “if when I read you all that about the ‘poor knight,’ I wished to—to praise you for one thing—I also wished to show you that I knew all—and did not approve of your conduct.”

“You are very unfair to me, and to that unfortunate woman of whom you spoke just now in such dreadful terms, Aglaya.”

“Because I know all, all—and that is why I speak so. I know very well how you—half a year since—offered her your hand before everybody. Don’t interrupt me. You see, I am merely stating facts without any comment upon them. After that she ran away with Rogojin. Then you lived with her at some village or town, and she ran away from you.” (Aglaya blushed dreadfully.) “Then she returned to Rogojin again, who loves her like a madman. Then you—like a wise man as you are—came back here after her as soon as ever you heard that she had returned to Petersburg. Yesterday evening you sprang forward to protect her, and just now you dreamed about her. You see, I know all. You did come back here for her, for her—now didn’t you?”

“Yes—for her!” said the prince softly and sadly, and bending his head down, quite unconscious of the fact that Aglaya was gazing at him with eyes which burned like live coals. “I came to find out something—I don’t believe in her future happiness as Rogojin’s wife, although—in a word, I did not know how to help her or what to do for her—but I came, on the chance.”

He glanced at Aglaya, who was listening with a look of hatred on her face.

“If you came without knowing why, I suppose you love her very much indeed!” she said at last.

“No,” said the prince, “no, I do not love her. Oh! if you only knew with what horror I recall the time I spent with her!”

A shudder seemed to sweep over his whole body at the recollection.

“Tell me about it,” said Aglaya.

“There is nothing which you might not hear. Why I should wish to tell you, and only you, this experience of mine, I really cannot say; perhaps it really is because I love you very much. This unhappy woman is persuaded that she is the most hopeless, fallen creature in the world. Oh, do not condemn her! Do not cast stones at her! She has suffered too much already in the consciousness of her own undeserved shame.

“And she is not guilty—oh God!—Every moment she bemoans and bewails herself, and cries out that she does not admit any guilt, that she is the victim of circumstances—the victim of a wicked libertine.

“But whatever she may say, remember that she does not believe it herself,—remember that she will believe nothing but that she is a guilty creature.

“When I tried to rid her soul of this gloomy fallacy, she suffered so terribly that my heart will never be quite at peace so long as I can remember that dreadful time!—Do you know why she left me? Simply to prove to me what is not true—that she is base. But the worst of it is, she did not realize herself that that was all she wanted to prove by her departure! She went away in response to some inner prompting to do something disgraceful, in order that she might say to herself—‘There—you’ve done a new act of shame—you degraded creature!’

“Oh, Aglaya—perhaps you cannot understand all this. Try to realize that in the perpetual admission of guilt she probably finds some dreadful unnatural satisfaction—as though she were revenging herself upon someone.

“Now and then I was able to persuade her almost to see light around her again; but she would soon fall, once more, into her old tormenting delusions, and would go so far as to reproach me for placing myself on a pedestal above her (I never had an idea of such a thing!), and informed me, in reply to my proposal of marriage, that she ‘did not want condescending sympathy or help from anybody.’ You saw her last night. You don’t suppose she can be happy among such people as those—you cannot suppose that such society is fit for her? You have no idea how well-educated she is, and what an intellect she has! She astonished me sometimes.”

“And you preached her sermons there, did you?”

“Oh no,” continued the prince thoughtfully, not noticing Aglaya’s mocking tone, “I was almost always silent there. I often wished to speak, but I really did not know what to say. In some cases it is best to say nothing, I think. I loved her, yes, I loved her very much indeed; but afterwards—afterwards she guessed all.”

“What did she guess?”

“That I only PITIED her—and—and loved her no longer!”

“How do you know that? How do you know that she is not really in love with that—that rich cad—the man she eloped with?”

“Oh no! I know she only laughs at him; she has made a fool of him all along.”

“Has she never laughed at you?”

“No—in anger, perhaps. Oh yes! she reproached me dreadfully in anger; and suffered herself, too! But afterwards—oh! don’t remind me—don’t remind me of that!”

He hid his face in his hands.

“Are you aware that she writes to me almost every day?”

“So that is true, is it?” cried the prince, greatly agitated. “I had heard a report of it, but would not believe it.”

“Whom did you hear it from?” asked Aglaya, alarmed. “Rogojin said something about it yesterday, but nothing definite.”

“Yesterday! Morning or evening? Before the music or after?”

“After—it was about twelve o’clock.”

“Ah! Well, if it was Rogojin—but do you know what she writes to me about?”

“I should not be surprised by anything. She is mad!”

“There are the letters.” (Aglaya took three letters out of her pocket and threw them down before the prince.) “For a whole week she has been entreating and worrying and persuading me to marry you. She—well, she is clever, though she may be mad—much cleverer than I am, as you say. Well, she writes that she is in love with me herself, and tries to see me every day, if only from a distance. She writes that you love me, and that she has long known it and seen it, and that you and she talked about me—there. She wishes to see you happy, and she says that she is certain only I can ensure you the happiness you deserve. She writes such strange, wild letters—I haven’t shown them to anyone. Now, do you know what all this means? Can you guess anything?”

“It is madness—it is merely another proof of her insanity!” said the prince, and his lips trembled.

“You are crying, aren’t you?”

“No, Aglaya. No, I’m not crying.” The prince looked at her.

“Well, what am I to do? What do you advise me? I cannot go on receiving these letters, you know.”

“Oh, let her alone, I entreat you!” cried the prince. What can you do in this dark, gloomy mystery? Let her alone, and I’ll use all my power to prevent her writing you any more letters.”

“If so, you are a heartless man!” cried Aglaya. As if you can’t see that it is not myself she loves, but you, you, and only you! Surely you have not remarked everything

else in her, and only not THIS? Do you know what these letters mean? They mean jealousy, sir—nothing but pure jealousy! She—do you think she will ever really marry this Rogojin, as she says here she will? She would take her own life the day after you and I were married.”

The prince shuddered; his heart seemed to freeze within him. He gazed at Aglaya in wonderment; it was difficult for him to realize that this child was also a woman.

“God knows, Aglaya, that to restore her peace of mind and make her happy I would willingly give up my life. But I cannot love her, and she knows that.”

“Oh, make a sacrifice of yourself! That sort of thing becomes you well, you know. Why not do it? And don’t call me ‘Aglaya’; you have done it several times lately. You are bound, it is your DUTY to ‘raise’ her; you must go off somewhere again to soothe and pacify her. Why, you love her, you know!”

“I cannot sacrifice myself so, though I admit I did wish to do so once. Who knows, perhaps I still wish to! But I know for CERTAIN, that if she married me it would be her ruin; I know this and therefore I leave her alone. I ought to go to see her today; now I shall probably not go. She is proud, she would never forgive me the nature of the love I bear her, and we should both be ruined. This may be unnatural, I don’t know; but everything seems unnatural. You say she loves me, as if this were LOVE! As if she could love ME, after what I have been through! No, no, it is not love.”

“How pale you have grown!” cried Aglaya in alarm.

Oh, it’s nothing. I haven’t slept, that’s all, and I’m rather tired. I—we certainly did talk about you, Aglaya.”

“Oh, indeed, it is true then! YOU COULD ACTUALLY TALK ABOUT ME WITH HER; and—and how could you have been fond of me when you had only seen me once?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps it was that I seemed to come upon light in the midst of my gloom. I told you the truth when I said I did not know why I thought of you before all others. Of course it was all a sort of dream, a dream amidst the horrors of reality. Afterwards I began to work. I did not intend to come back here for two or three years—”

“Then you came for her sake?” Aglaya’s voice trembled.

“Yes, I came for her sake.”

There was a moment or two of gloomy silence. Aglaya rose from her seat.

“If you say,” she began in shaky tones, “if you say that this woman of yours is mad—at all events I have nothing to do with her insane fancies. Kindly take these three letters, Lef Nicolaievitch, and throw them back to her, from me. And if she dares,” cried Aglaya suddenly, much louder than before, “if she dares so much as write me one word again, tell her I shall tell my father, and that she shall be taken to a lunatic asylum.”

The prince jumped up in alarm at Aglaya’s sudden wrath, and a mist seemed to come before his eyes.

“You cannot really feel like that! You don’t mean what you say. It is not true,” he murmured.

“It IS true, it IS true,” cried Aglaya, almost beside herself with rage.

“What’s true? What’s all this? What’s true?” said an alarmed voice just beside them.

Before them stood Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“Why, it’s true that I am going to marry Gavril Ardalionovitch, that I love him and intend to elope with him tomorrow,” cried Aglaya, turning upon her mother. “Do you hear? Is your curiosity satisfied? Are you pleased with what you have heard?”

Aglaya rushed away homewards with these words.

“H’m! well, YOU are not going away just yet, my friend, at all events,” said Lizabetha, stopping the prince. “Kindly step home with me, and let me have a little explanation of the mystery. Nice goings on, these! I haven’t slept a wink all night as it is.”

The prince followed her.

IX.

ARRIVED at her house, Lizabetha Prokofievna paused in the first room. She could go no farther, and subsided on to a couch quite exhausted; too feeble to remember so much as to ask the prince to take a seat. This was a large reception-room, full of flowers, and with a glass door leading into the garden.

Alexandra and Adelaida came in almost immediately, and looked inquiringly at the prince and their mother.

The girls generally rose at about nine in the morning in the country; Aglaya, of late, had been in the habit of getting up rather earlier and having a walk in the garden, but not at seven o’clock; about eight or a little later was her usual time.

Lizabetha Prokofievna, who really had not slept all night, rose at about eight on purpose to meet Aglaya in the garden and walk with her; but she could not find her either in the garden or in her own room.

This agitated the old lady considerably; and she awoke her other daughters. Next, she learned from the maid that Aglaya had gone into the park before seven o’clock. The sisters made a joke of Aglaya’s last freak, and told their mother that if she went into the park to look for her, Aglaya would probably be very angry with her, and that she was pretty sure to be sitting reading on the green bench that she had talked of two or three days since, and about which she had nearly quarrelled with Prince S., who did not see anything particularly lovely in it.

Arrived at the rendezvous of the prince and her daughter, and hearing the strange words of the latter, Lizabetha Prokofievna had been dreadfully alarmed, for many reasons. However, now that she had dragged the prince home with her, she began to feel a little frightened at what she had undertaken. Why should not Aglaya meet the prince in the park and have a talk with him, even if such a meeting should be by appointment?

“Don’t suppose, prince,” she began, bracing herself up for the effort, “don’t suppose that I have brought you here to ask questions. After last night, I assure you, I am not so exceedingly anxious to see you at all; I could have postponed the pleasure for a long while.” She paused.

“But at the same time you would be very glad to know how I happened to meet Aglaya Ivanovna this morning?” The prince finished her speech for her with the utmost composure.

“Well, what then? Supposing I should like to know?” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, blushing. “I’m sure I am not afraid of plain speaking. I’m not offending anyone, and I never wish to, and—”

“Pardon me, it is no offence to wish to know this; you are her mother. We met at the green bench this morning, punctually at seven o’clock,—according to an agreement made by Aglaya Ivanovna with myself yesterday. She said that she wished to see me and speak to me about something important. We met and conversed for an hour about matters concerning Aglaya Ivanovna herself, and that’s all.”

“Of course it is all, my friend. I don’t doubt you for a moment,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna with dignity.

“Well done, prince, capital!” cried Aglaya, who entered the room at this moment. “Thank you for assuming that I would not demean myself with lies. Come, is that enough, mamma, or do you intend to put any more questions?”

“You know I have never needed to blush before you, up to this day, though perhaps you would have been glad enough to make me,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna,—with majesty. “Good-bye, prince; forgive me for bothering you. I trust you will rest assured of my unalterable esteem for you.”

The prince made his bows and retired at once. Alexandra and Adelaida smiled and whispered to each other, while Lizabetha Prokofievna glared severely at them. “We are only laughing at the prince’s beautiful bows, mamma,” said Adelaida. “Sometimes he bows just like a meal-sack, but to-day he was like—like Evgenie Pavlovitch!”

“It is the HEART which is the best teacher of refinement and dignity, not the dancing-master,” said her mother, sententiously, and departed upstairs to her own room, not so much as glancing at Aglaya.

When the prince reached home, about nine o’clock, he found Vera Lebedeff and the maid on the verandah. They were both busy trying to tidy up the place after last night’s disorderly party.

“Thank goodness, we’ve just managed to finish it before you came in!” said Vera, joyfully.

“Good-morning! My head whirls so; I didn’t sleep all night. I should like to have a nap now.”

“Here, on the verandah? Very well, I’ll tell them all not to come and wake you. Papa has gone out somewhere.”

The servant left the room. Vera was about to follow her, but returned and approached the prince with a preoccupied air.

“Prince!” she said, “have pity on that poor boy; don’t turn him out today.”

“Not for the world; he shall do just as he likes.”

“He won’t do any harm now; and—and don’t be too severe with him,”

“Oh dear no! Why—”

“And—and you won’t LAUGH at him? That’s the chief thing.”

“Oh no! Never.”

“How foolish I am to speak of such things to a man like you,” said Vera, blushing. “Though you DO look tired,” she added, half turning away, “your eyes are so splendid at this moment—so full of happiness.”

“Really?” asked the prince, gleefully, and he laughed in delight.

But Vera, simple-minded little girl that she was (just like a boy, in fact), here became dreadfully confused, of a sudden, and ran hastily out of the room, laughing and blushing.

“What a dear little thing she is,” thought the prince, and immediately forgot all about her.

He walked to the far end of the verandah, where the sofa stood, with a table in front of it. Here he sat down and covered his face with his hands, and so remained for ten minutes. Suddenly he put his hand in his coat-pocket and hurriedly produced three letters.

But the door opened again, and out came Colia.

The prince actually felt glad that he had been interrupted,—and might return the letters to his pocket. He was glad of the respite.

“Well,” said Colia, plunging in medias res, as he always did, “here’s a go! What do you think of Hippolyte now? Don’t respect him any longer, eh?”

“Why not? But look here, Colia, I’m tired; besides, the subject is too melancholy to begin upon again. How is he, though?”

“Asleep—he’ll sleep for a couple of hours yet. I quite understand—you haven’t slept—you walked about the park, I know. Agitation—excitement—all that sort of thing—quite natural, too!”

“How do you know I walked in the park and didn’t sleep at home?”

“Vera just told me. She tried to persuade me not to come, but I couldn’t help myself, just for one minute. I have been having my turn at the bedside for the last two hours; Kostia Lebedeff is there now. Burdovsky has gone. Now, lie down, prince, make yourself comfortable, and sleep well! I’m awfully impressed, you know.”

“Naturally, all this—”

“No, no, I mean with the ‘explanation,’ especially that part of it where he talks about Providence and a future life. There is a gigantic thought there.”

The prince gazed affectionately at Colia, who, of course, had come in solely for the purpose of talking about this “gigantic thought.”

“But it is not any one particular thought, only; it is the general circumstances of the case. If Voltaire had written this now, or Rousseau, I should have just read it and thought it remarkable, but should not have been so IMPRESSED by it. But a man

who knows for certain that he has but ten minutes to live and can talk like that—why—it’s—it’s PRIDE, that is! It is really a most extraordinary, exalted assertion of personal dignity, it’s—it’s DEFIANT! What a GIGANTIC strength of will, eh? And to accuse a fellow like that of not putting in the cap on purpose; it’s base and mean! You know he deceived us last night, the cunning rascal. I never packed his bag for him, and I never saw his pistol. He packed it himself. But he put me off my guard like that, you see. Vera says you are going to let him stay on; I swear there’s no danger, especially as we are always with him.”

“Who was by him at night?”

“I, and Burdovsky, and Kostia Lebedeff. Keller stayed a little while, and then went over to Lebedeff’s to sleep. Ferdishenko slept at Lebedeff’s, too; but he went away at seven o’clock. My father is always at Lebedeff’s; but he has gone out just now. I dare say Lebedeff will be coming in here directly; he has been looking for you; I don’t know what he wants. Shall we let him in or not, if you are asleep? I’m going to have a nap, too. By-the- by, such a curious thing happened. Burdovsky woke me at seven, and I met my father just outside the room, so drunk, he didn’t even know me. He stood before me like a log, and when he recovered himself, asked hurriedly how Hippolyte was. ‘Yes,’ he said, when I told him, ‘that’s all very well, but I REALLY came to warn you that you must be very careful what you say before Ferdishenko.’ Do you follow me, prince?”

“Yes. Is it really so? However, it’s all the same to us, of course.”

“Of course it is; we are not a secret society; and that being the case, it is all the more curious that the general should have been on his way to wake me up in order to tell me this.”

“Ferdishenko has gone, you say?”

“Yes, he went at seven o’clock. He came into the room on his way out; I was watching just then. He said he was going to spend ‘the rest of the night’ at Wilkin’s; there’s a tipsy fellow, a friend of his, of that name. Well, I’m off. Oh, here’s Lebedeff himself! The prince wants to go to sleep, Lukian Timofeyovitch, so you may just go away again.”

“One moment, my dear prince, just one. I must absolutely speak to you about something which is most grave,” said Lebedeff, mysteriously and solemnly, entering the room with a bow and looking extremely important. He had but just returned, and carried his hat in his hand. He looked preoccupied and most unusually dignified.

The prince begged him to take a chair.

“I hear you have called twice; I suppose you are still worried about yesterday’s affair.”

“What, about that boy, you mean? Oh dear no, yesterday my ideas were a little—well—mixed. Today, I assure you, I shall not oppose in the slightest degree any suggestions it may please you to make.”

“What’s up with you this morning, Lebedeff? You look so important and dignified, and you choose your words so carefully,” said the prince, smiling.

“Nicolai Ardalionovitch!” said Lebedeff, in a most amiable tone of voice, addressing the boy. “As I have a communication to make to the prince which concerns only myself—”

“Of course, of course, not my affair. All right,” said Colia, and away he went.

“I love that boy for his perception,” said Lebedeff, looking after him. “My dear prince,” he continued, “I have had a terrible misfortune, either last night or early this morning. I cannot tell the exact time.”

“What is it?”

“I have lost four hundred roubles out of my side pocket! They’re gone!” said Lebedeff, with a sour smile.

“You’ve lost four hundred roubles? Oh! I’m sorry for that.”

“Yes, it is serious for a poor man who lives by his toil.”

“Of course, of course! How was it?”

“Oh, the wine is to blame, of course. I confess to you, prince, as I would to Providence itself. Yesterday I received four hundred roubles from a debtor at about five in the afternoon, and came down here by train. I had my purse in my pocket. When I changed, I put the money into the pocket of my plain clothes, intending to keep it by me, as I expected to have an applicant for it in the evening.”

“It’s true then, Lebedeff, that you advertise to lend money on gold or silver articles?”

“Yes, through an agent. My own name doesn’t appear. I have a large family, you see, and at a small percentage—”

“Quite so, quite so. I only asked for information—excuse the question. Go on.”

“Well, meanwhile that sick boy was brought here, and those guests came in, and we had tea, and—well, we made merry—to my ruin! Hearing of your birthday afterwards, and excited with the circumstances of the evening, I ran upstairs and changed my plain clothes once more for my uniform [Civil Service clerks in Russia wear uniform.]—you must have noticed I had my uniform on all the evening? Well, I forgot the money in the pocket of my old coat—you know when God will ruin a man he first of all bereaves him of his senses—and it was only this morning at half-past seven that I woke up and grabbed at my coat pocket, first thing. The pocket was empty—the purse gone, and not a trace to be found!”

“Dear me! This is very unpleasant!”

“Unpleasant! Indeed it is. You have found a very appropriate expression,” said Lebedeff, politely, but with sarcasm.

“But what’s to be done? It’s a serious matter,” said the prince, thoughtfully. “Don’t you think you may have dropped it out of your pocket whilst intoxicated?”

“Certainly. Anything is possible when one is intoxicated, as you neatly express it, prince. But consider—if I, intoxicated or not, dropped an object out of my pocket on to the ground, that object ought to remain on the ground. Where is the object, then?”

“Didn’t you put it away in some drawer, perhaps?”

“I’ve looked everywhere, and turned out everything.”

“I confess this disturbs me a good deal. Someone must have picked it up, then.”

“Or taken it out of my pocket—two alternatives.”

“It is very distressing, because WHO—? That’s the question!”

“Most undoubtedly, excellent prince, you have hit it—that is the very question. How wonderfully you express the exact situation in a few words!”

“Come, come, Lebedeff, no sarcasm! It’s a serious—”

“Sarcasm!” cried Lebedeff, wringing his hands. “All right, all right, I’m not angry. I’m only put out about this. Whom do you suspect?”

“That is a very difficult and complicated question. I cannot suspect the servant, for she was in the kitchen the whole evening, nor do I suspect any of my children.”

“I should think not. Go on.”

“Then it must be one of the guests.”

“Is such a thing possible?”

“Absolutely and utterly impossible—and yet, so it must be. But one thing I am sure of, if it be a theft, it was committed, not in the evening when we were all together, but either at night or early in the morning; therefore, by one of those who slept here. Burdovsky and Colia I except, of course. They did not even come into my room.”

“Yes, or even if they had! But who did sleep with you?” “Four of us, including myself, in two rooms. The general, myself, Keller, and Ferdishenko. One of us four it must have been. I don’t suspect myself, though such cases have been known.”

“Oh! DO go on, Lebedeff! Don’t drag it out so.”

“Well, there are three left, then—Keller firstly. He is a drunkard to begin with, and a liberal (in the sense of other people’s pockets), otherwise with more of the ancient knight about him than of the modern liberal. He was with the sick man at first, but came over afterwards because there was no place to lie down in the room and the floor was so hard.”

“You suspect him?”

“I DID suspect him. When I woke up at half-past seven and tore my hair in despair for my loss and carelessness, I awoke the general, who was sleeping the sleep of innocence near me. Taking into consideration the sudden disappearance of Ferdishenko, which was suspicious in itself, we decided to search Keller, who was lying there sleeping like a top. Well, we searched his clothes thoroughly, and not a farthing did we find; in fact, his pockets all had holes in them. We found a dirty handkerchief, and a love-letter from some scullery-maid. The general decided that he was innocent. We awoke him for further inquiries, and had the greatest difficulty in making him understand what was up. He opened his mouth and stared—he looked so stupid and so absurdly innocent. It wasn’t Keller.”

“Oh, I’m so glad!” said the prince, joyfully. “I was so afraid.”

“Afraid! Then you had some grounds for supposing he might be the culprit?” said Lebedeff, frowning.

“Oh no—not a bit! It was foolish of me to say I was afraid! Don’t repeat it please, Lebedeff, don’t tell anyone I said that!”

“My dear prince! your words lie in the lowest depth of my heart—it is their tomb!” said Lebedeff, solemnly, pressing his hat to the region of his heart.

“Thanks; very well. Then I suppose it’s Ferdishenko; that is, I mean, you suspect Ferdishenko?”

“Whom else?” said Lebedeff, softly, gazing intently into the prince’s face.

“Of course—quite so, whom else? But what are the proofs?”

“We have evidence. In the first place, his mysterious disappearance at seven o’clock, or even earlier.”

“I know, Colia told me that he had said he was off to—I forget the name, some friend of his, to finish the night.”

“H’m! then Colia has spoken to you already?”

“Not about the theft.”

“He does not know of it; I have kept it a secret. Very well, Ferdishenko went off to Wilkin’s. That is not so curious in itself, but here the evidence opens out further. He left his address, you see, when he went. Now prince, consider, why did he leave his address? Why do you suppose he went out of his way to tell Colia that he had gone to Wilkin’s? Who cared to know that he was going to Wilkin’s? No, no! prince, this is finesse, thieves’ finesse! This is as good as saying, ‘There, how can I be a thief when I leave my address? I’m not concealing my movements as a thief would.’ Do you understand, prince?”

“Oh yes, but that is not enough.”

“Second proof. The scent turns out to be false, and the address given is a sham. An hour after—that is at about eight, I went to Wilkin’s myself, and there was no trace of Ferdishenko. The maid did tell me, certainly, that an hour or so since someone had been hammering at the door, and had smashed the bell; she said she would not open the door because she didn’t want to wake her master; probably she was too lazy to get up herself. Such phenomena are met with occasionally!”

“But is that all your evidence? It is not enough!”

“Well, prince, whom are we to suspect, then? Consider!” said Lebedeff with almost servile amiability, smiling at the prince. There was a look of cunning in his eyes, however.

“You should search your room and all the cupboards again,” said the prince, after a moment or two of silent reflection.

“But I have done so, my dear prince!” said Lebedeff, more sweetly than ever.

“H’m! why must you needs go up and change your coat like that?” asked the prince, banging the table with his fist, in annoyance.

“Oh, don’t be so worried on my account, prince! I assure you I am not worth it! At least, not I alone. But I see you are suffering on behalf of the criminal too, for wretched Ferdishenko, in fact!”

“Of course you have given me a disagreeable enough thing to think about,” said the prince, irritably, “but what are you going to do, since you are so sure it was Ferdishenko?”

“But who else COULD it be, my very dear prince?” repeated Lebedeff, as sweet as sugar again. “If you don’t wish me to suspect Mr. Burdovsky?”

“Of course not.”

“Nor the general? Ha, ha, ha!”

“Nonsense!” said the prince, angrily, turning round upon him.

“Quite so, nonsense! Ha, ha, ha! dear me! He did amuse me, did the general! We went off on the hot scent to Wilkin’s together, you know; but I must first observe that the general was even more thunderstruck than I myself this morning, when I awoke him after discovering the theft; so much so that his very face changed—he grew red and then pale, and at length flew into a paroxysm of such noble wrath that I assure you I was quite surprised! He is a most generous-hearted man! He tells lies by the thousands, I know, but it is merely a weakness; he is a man of the highest feelings; a simple-minded man too, and a man who carries the conviction of innocence in his very appearance. I love that man, sir; I may have told you so before; it is a weakness of mine. Well—he suddenly stopped in the middle of the road, opened out his coat and bared his breast. “Search me,” he says, “you searched Keller; why don’t you search me too? It is only fair!” says he. And all the while his legs and hands were trembling with anger, and he as white as a sheet all over! So I said to him, “Nonsense, general; if anybody but yourself had said that to me, I’d have taken my head, my own head, and put it on a large dish and carried it round to anyone who suspected you; and I should have said: ‘There, you see that head? It’s my head, and I’ll go bail with that head for him! Yes, and walk through the fire for him, too. There,’ says I, ‘that’s how I’d answer for you, general!’ Then he embraced me, in the middle of the street, and hugged me so tight (crying over me all the while) that I coughed fit to choke! ‘You are the one friend left to me amid all my misfortunes,’ says he. Oh, he’s a man of sentiment, that! He went on to tell me a story of how he had been accused, or suspected, of stealing five hundred thousand roubles once, as a young man; and how, the very next day, he had rushed into a burning, blazing house and saved the very count who suspected him, and Nina Alexandrovna (who was then a young girl), from a fiery death. The count embraced him, and that was how he came to marry Nina Alexandrovna, he said. As for the money, it was found among the ruins next day in an English iron box with a secret lock; it had got under the floor somehow, and if it had not been for the fire it would never have been found! The whole thing is, of course, an absolute fabrication, though when he spoke of Nina Alexandrovna he wept! She’s a grand woman, is Nina Alexandrovna, though she is very angry with me!”

“Are you acquainted with her?”

“Well, hardly at all. I wish I were, if only for the sake of justifying myself in her eyes. Nina Alexandrovna has a grudge against me for, as she thinks, encouraging her husband in drinking; whereas in reality I not only do not encourage him, but I actually keep him out of harm’s way, and out of bad company. Besides, he’s my friend, prince, so that I shall not lose sight of him, again. Where he goes, I go. He’s quite given up visiting the captain’s widow, though sometimes he thinks sadly of her, especially in

the morning, when he's putting on his boots. I don't know why it's at that time. But he has no money, and it's no use his going to see her without. Has he borrowed any money from you, prince?"

"No, he has not."

"Ah, he's ashamed to! He MEANT to ask you, I know, for he said so. I suppose he thinks that as you gave him some once (you remember), you would probably refuse if he asked you again."

"Do you ever give him money?"

"Prince! Money! Why I would give that man not only my money, but my very life, if he wanted it. Well, perhaps that's exaggeration; not life, we'll say, but some illness, a boil or a bad cough, or anything of that sort, I would stand with pleasure, for his sake; for I consider him a great man fallen—money, indeed!"

"H'm, then you DO give him money?"

"N-no, I have never given him money, and he knows well that I will never give him any; because I am anxious to keep him out of intemperate ways. He is going to town with me now; for you must know I am off to Petersburg after Ferdishenko, while the scent is hot; I'm certain he is there. I shall let the general go one way, while I go the other; we have so arranged matters in order to pop out upon Ferdishenko, you see, from different sides. But I am going to follow that naughty old general and catch him, I know where, at a certain widow's house; for I think it will be a good lesson, to put him to shame by catching him with the widow."

"Oh, Lebedeff, don't, don't make any scandal about it!" said the prince, much agitated, and speaking in a low voice.

"Not for the world, not for the world! I merely wish to make him ashamed of himself. Oh, prince, great though this misfortune be to myself, I cannot help thinking of his morals! I have a great favour to ask of you, esteemed prince; I confess that it is the chief object of my visit. You know the Ivolgins, you have even lived in their house; so if you would lend me your help, honoured prince, in the general's own interest and for his good."

Lebedeff clasped his hands in supplication.

"What help do you want from me? You may be certain that I am most anxious to understand you, Lebedeff."

"I felt sure of that, or I should not have come to you. We might manage it with the help of Nina Alexandrovna, so that he might be closely watched in his own house. Unfortunately I am not on terms ... otherwise ... but Nicolai Ardalionovitch, who adores you with all his youthful soul, might help, too."

"No, no! Heaven forbid that we should bring Nina Alexandrovna into this business! Or Colia, either. But perhaps I have not yet quite understood you, Lebedeff?"

Lebedeff made an impatient movement.

"But there is nothing to understand! Sympathy and tenderness, that is all—that is all our poor invalid requires! You will permit me to consider him an invalid?"

"Yes, it shows delicacy and intelligence on your part."

"I will explain my idea by a practical example, to make it clearer. You know the sort of man he is. At present his only failing is that he is crazy about that captain's widow, and he cannot go to her without money, and I mean to catch him at her house today—for his own good; but supposing it was not only the widow, but that he had committed a real crime, or at least some very dishonourable action (of which he is, of course, incapable), I repeat that even in that case, if he were treated with what I may call generous tenderness, one could get at the whole truth, for he is very soft-hearted! Believe me, he would betray himself before five days were out; he would burst into tears, and make a clean breast of the matter; especially if managed with tact, and if you and his family watched his every step, so to speak. Oh, my dear prince," Lebedeff added most emphatically, "I do not positively assert that he has ... I am ready, as the saying is, to shed my last drop of blood for him this instant; but you will admit that debauchery, drunkenness, and the captain's widow, all these together may lead him very far."

"I am, of course, quite ready to add my efforts to yours in such a case," said the prince, rising; "but I confess, Lebedeff, that I am terribly perplexed. Tell me, do you still think ... plainly, you say yourself that you suspect Mr. Ferdishenko?"

Lebedeff clasped his hands once more.

"Why, who else could I possibly suspect? Who else, most outspoken prince?" he replied, with an unctuous smile.

Muishkin frowned, and rose from his seat.

"You see, Lebedeff, a mistake here would be a dreadful thing. This Ferdishenko, I would not say a word against him, of course; but, who knows? Perhaps it really was he? I mean he really does seem to be a more likely man than... than any other."

Lebedeff strained his eyes and ears to take in what the prince was saying. The latter was frowning more and more, and walking excitedly up and down, trying not to look at Lebedeff.

"You see," he said, "I was given to understand that Ferdishenko was that sort of man,—that one can't say everything before him. One has to take care not to say too much, you understand? I say this to prove that he really is, so to speak, more likely to have done this than anyone else, eh? You understand? The important thing is, not to make a mistake."

"And who told you this about Ferdishenko?"

"Oh, I was told. Of course I don't altogether believe it. I am very sorry that I should have had to say this, because I assure you I don't believe it myself; it is all nonsense, of course. It was stupid of me to say anything about it."

"You see, it is very important, it is most important to know where you got this report from," said Lebedeff, excitedly. He had risen from his seat, and was trying to keep step with the prince, running after him, up and down. "Because look here, prince, I don't mind telling you now that as we were going along to Wilkin's this morning, after telling me what you know about the fire, and saving the count and all that, the general was pleased to drop certain hints to the same effect about Ferdishenko, but so

vaguely and clumsily that I thought better to put a few questions to him on the matter, with the result that I found the whole thing was an invention of his excellency's own mind. Of course, he only lies with the best intentions; still, he lies. But, such being the case, where could you have heard the same report? It was the inspiration of the moment with him, you understand, so who could have told YOU? It is an important question, you see!"

"It was Colia told me, and his father told HIM at about six this morning. They met at the threshold, when Colia was leaving the room for something or other." The prince told Lebedeff all that Colia had made known to himself, in detail.

"There now, that's what we may call SCENT!" said Lebedeff, rubbing his hands and laughing silently. "I thought it must be so, you see. The general interrupted his innocent slumbers, at six o'clock, in order to go and wake his beloved son, and warn him of the dreadful danger of companionship with Ferdishenko. Dear me! what a dreadfully dangerous man Ferdishenko must be, and what touching paternal solicitude, on the part of his excellency, ha! ha! ha!"

"Listen, Lebedeff," began the prince, quite overwhelmed; "DO act quietly—don't make a scandal, Lebedeff, I ask you—I entreat you! No one must know—NO ONE, mind! In that case only, I will help you."

"Be assured, most honourable, most worthy of princes—be assured that the whole matter shall be buried within my heart!" cried Lebedeff, in a paroxysm of exaltation. "I'd give every drop of my blood... Illustrious prince, I am a poor wretch in soul and spirit, but ask the veriest scoundrel whether he would prefer to deal with one like himself, or with a noble-hearted man like you, and there is no doubt as to his choice! He'll answer that he prefers the noble-hearted man—and there you have the triumph of virtue! Au revoir, honoured prince! You and I together—softly! softly!"

X.

THE prince understood at last why he shivered with dread every time he thought of the three letters in his pocket, and why he had put off reading them until the evening.

When he fell into a heavy sleep on the sofa on the verandah, without having had the courage to open a single one of the three envelopes, he again dreamed a painful dream, and once more that poor, "sinful" woman appeared to him. Again she gazed at him with tears sparkling on her long lashes, and beckoned him after her; and again he awoke, as before, with the picture of her face haunting him.

He longed to get up and go to her at once—but he COULD NOT. At length, almost in despair, he unfolded the letters, and began to read them.

These letters, too, were like a dream. We sometimes have strange, impossible dreams, contrary to all the laws of nature. When we awake we remember them and wonder at their strangeness. You remember, perhaps, that you were in full possession of your reason during this succession of fantastic images; even that you acted with extraordi-

nary logic and cunning while surrounded by murderers who hid their intentions and made great demonstrations of friendship, while waiting for an opportunity to cut your throat. You remember how you escaped them by some ingenious stratagem; then you doubted if they were really deceived, or whether they were only pretending not to know your hiding-place; then you thought of another plan and hoodwinked them once again. You remember all this quite clearly, but how is it that your reason calmly accepted all the manifest absurdities and impossibilities that crowded into your dream? One of the murderers suddenly changed into a woman before your very eyes; then the woman was transformed into a hideous, cunning little dwarf; and you believed it, and accepted it all almost as a matter of course—while at the same time your intelligence seemed unusually keen, and accomplished miracles of cunning, sagacity, and logic! Why is it that when you awake to the world of realities you nearly always feel, sometimes very vividly, that the vanished dream has carried with it some enigma which you have failed to solve? You smile at the extravagance of your dream, and yet you feel that this tissue of absurdity contained some real idea, something that belongs to your true life,—something that exists, and has always existed, in your heart. You search your dream for some prophecy that you were expecting. It has left a deep impression upon you, joyful or cruel, but what it means, or what has been predicted to you in it, you can neither understand nor remember.

The reading of these letters produced some such effect upon the prince. He felt, before he even opened the envelopes, that the very fact of their existence was like a nightmare. How could she ever have made up her mind to write to her? he asked himself. How could she write about that at all? And how could such a wild idea have entered her head? And yet, the strangest part of the matter was, that while he read the letters, he himself almost believed in the possibility, and even in the justification, of the idea he had thought so wild. Of course it was a mad dream, a nightmare, and yet there was something cruelly real about it. For hours he was haunted by what he had read. Several passages returned again and again to his mind, and as he brooded over them, he felt inclined to say to himself that he had foreseen and known all that was written here; it even seemed to him that he had read the whole of this some time or other, long, long ago; and all that had tormented and grieved him up to now was to be found in these old, long since read, letters.

“When you open this letter” (so the first began), “look first at the signature. The signature will tell you all, so that I need explain nothing, nor attempt to justify myself. Were I in any way on a footing with you, you might be offended at my audacity; but who am I, and who are you? We are at such extremes, and I am so far removed from you, that I could not offend you if I wished to do so.”

Farther on, in another place, she wrote: “Do not consider my words as the sickly ecstasies of a diseased mind, but you are, in my opinion—perfection! I have seen you—I see you every day. I do not judge you; I have not weighed you in the scales of Reason and found you Perfection—it is simply an article of faith. But I must confess one sin against you—I love you. One should not love perfection. One should only look on it as

perfection—yet I am in love with you. Though love equalizes, do not fear. I have not lowered you to my level, even in my most secret thoughts. I have written ‘Do not fear,’ as if you could fear. I would kiss your footprints if I could; but, oh! I am not putting myself on a level with you!—Look at the signature—quick, look at the signature!”

“However, observe” (she wrote in another of the letters), “that although I couple you with him, yet I have not once asked you whether you love him. He fell in love with you, though he saw you but once. He spoke of you as of ‘the light.’ These are his own words—I heard him use them. But I understood without his saying it that you were all that light is to him. I lived near him for a whole month, and I understood then that you, too, must love him. I think of you and him as one.”

“What was the matter yesterday?” (she wrote on another sheet). “I passed by you, and you seemed to me to BLUSH. Perhaps it was only my fancy. If I were to bring you to the most loathsome den, and show you the revelation of undisguised vice—you should not blush. You can never feel the sense of personal affront. You may hate all who are mean, or base, or unworthy—but not for yourself—only for those whom they wrong. No one can wrong YOU. Do you know, I think you ought to love me—for you are the same in my eyes as in his—you are as light. An angel cannot hate, perhaps cannot love, either. I often ask myself—is it possible to love everybody? Indeed it is not; it is not in nature. Abstract love of humanity is nearly always love of self. But you are different. You cannot help loving all, since you can compare with none, and are above all personal offence or anger. Oh! how bitter it would be to me to know that you felt anger or shame on my account, for that would be your fall—you would become comparable at once with such as me.

“Yesterday, after seeing you, I went home and thought out a picture.

“Artists always draw the Saviour as an actor in one of the Gospel stories. I should do differently. I should represent Christ alone—the disciples did leave Him alone occasionally. I should paint one little child left with Him. This child has been playing about near Him, and had probably just been telling the Saviour something in its pretty baby prattle. Christ had listened to it, but was now musing—one hand reposing on the child’s bright head. His eyes have a far-away expression. Thought, great as the Universe, is in them—His face is sad. The little one leans its elbow upon Christ’s knee, and with its cheek resting on its hand, gazes up at Him, pondering as children sometimes do ponder. The sun is setting. There you have my picture.

“You are innocent—and in your innocence lies all your perfection—oh, remember that! What is my passion to you?—you are mine now; I shall be near you all my life—I shall not live long!”

At length, in the last letter of all, he found:

“For Heaven’s sake, don’t misunderstand me! Do not think that I humiliate myself by writing thus to you, or that I belong to that class of people who take a satisfaction in humiliating themselves—from pride. I have my consolation, though it would be difficult to explain it—but I do not humiliate myself.

“Why do I wish to unite you two? For your sakes or my own? For my own sake, naturally. All the problems of my life would thus be solved; I have thought so for a long time. I know that once when your sister Adelaida saw my portrait she said that such beauty could overthrow the world. But I have renounced the world. You think it strange that I should say so, for you saw me decked with lace and diamonds, in the company of drunkards and wastrels. Take no notice of that; I know that I have almost ceased to exist. God knows what it is dwelling within me now—it is not myself. I can see it every day in two dreadful eyes which are always looking at me, even when not present. These eyes are silent now, they say nothing; but I know their secret. His house is gloomy, and there is a secret in it. I am convinced that in some box he has a razor hidden, tied round with silk, just like the one that Moscow murderer had. This man also lived with his mother, and had a razor hidden away, tied round with white silk, and with this razor he intended to cut a throat.

“All the while I was in their house I felt sure that somewhere beneath the floor there was hidden away some dreadful corpse, wrapped in oil-cloth, perhaps buried there by his father, who knows? Just as in the Moscow case. I could have shown you the very spot!

“He is always silent, but I know well that he loves me so much that he must hate me. My wedding and yours are to be on the same day; so I have arranged with him. I have no secrets from him. I would kill him from very fright, but he will kill me first. He has just burst out laughing, and says that I am raving. He knows I am writing to you.”

There was much more of this delirious wandering in the letters— one of them was very long.

At last the prince came out of the dark, gloomy park, in which he had wandered about for hours just as yesterday. The bright night seemed to him to be lighter than ever. “It must be quite early,” he thought. (He had forgotten his watch.) There was a sound of distant music somewhere. “Ah,” he thought, “the Vauxhall! They won’t be there today, of course!” At this moment he noticed that he was close to their house; he had felt that he must gravitate to this spot eventually, and, with a beating heart, he mounted the verandah steps.

No one met him; the verandah was empty, and nearly pitch dark. He opened the door into the room, but it, too, was dark and empty. He stood in the middle of the room in perplexity. Suddenly the door opened, and in came Alexandra, candle in hand. Seeing the prince she stopped before him in surprise, looking at him questioningly.

It was clear that she had been merely passing through the room from door to door, and had not had the remotest notion that she would meet anyone.

“How did you come here?” she asked, at last.

“I—I—came in—”

“Mamma is not very well, nor is Aglaya. Adelaida has gone to bed, and I am just going. We were alone the whole evening. Father and Prince S. have gone to town.”

“I have come to you—now—to—”

“Do you know what time it is?”

“N—no!”

“Half-past twelve. We are always in bed by one.”

“I-I thought it was half-past nine!”

“Never mind!” she laughed, “but why didn’t you come earlier? Perhaps you were expected!”

“I thought” he stammered, making for the door.

“Au revoir! I shall amuse them all with this story tomorrow!”

He walked along the road towards his own house. His heart was beating, his thoughts were confused, everything around seemed to be part of a dream.

And suddenly, just as twice already he had awaked from sleep with the same vision, that very apparition now seemed to rise up before him. The woman appeared to step out from the park, and stand in the path in front of him, as though she had been waiting for him there.

He shuddered and stopped; she seized his hand and pressed it frenziedly.

No, this was no apparition!

There she stood at last, face to face with him, for the first time since their parting.

She said something, but he looked silently back at her. His heart ached with anguish. Oh! never would he banish the recollection of this meeting with her, and he never remembered it but with the same pain and agony of mind.

She went on her knees before him—there in the open road—like a madwoman. He retreated a step, but she caught his hand and kissed it, and, just as in his dream, the tears were sparkling on her long, beautiful lashes.

“Get up!” he said, in a frightened whisper, raising her. “Get up at once!”

“Are you happy—are you happy?” she asked. “Say this one word. Are you happy now? Today, this moment? Have you just been with her? What did she say?”

She did not rise from her knees; she would not listen to him; she put her questions hurriedly, as though she were pursued.

“I am going away tomorrow, as you bade me—I won’t write—so that this is the last time I shall see you, the last time! This is really the LAST TIME!”

“Oh, be calm—be calm! Get up!” he entreated, in despair.

She gazed thirstily at him and clutched his hands.

“Good-bye!” she said at last, and rose and left him, very quickly.

The prince noticed that Rogojin had suddenly appeared at her side, and had taken her arm and was leading her away.

“Wait a minute, prince,” shouted the latter, as he went. “I shall be back in five minutes.”

He reappeared in five minutes as he had said. The prince was waiting for him.

“I’ve put her in the carriage,” he said; “it has been waiting round the corner there since ten o’clock. She expected that you would be with THEM all the evening. I told her exactly what you wrote me. She won’t write to the girl any more, she promises; and tomorrow she will be off, as you wish. She desired to see you for the last time,

although you refused, so we've been sitting and waiting on that bench till you should pass on your way home."

"Did she bring you with her of her own accord?"

"Of course she did!" said Rogojin, showing his teeth; "and I saw for myself what I knew before. You've read her letters, I suppose?"

"Did you read them?" asked the prince, struck by the thought.

"Of course—she showed them to me herself. You are thinking of the razor, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, she is mad!" cried the prince, wringing his hands. "Who knows? Perhaps she is not so mad after all," said Rogojin, softly, as though thinking aloud.

The prince made no reply.

"Well, good-bye," said Rogojin. "I'm off tomorrow too, you know. Remember me kindly! By-the-by," he added, turning round sharply again, "did you answer her question just now? Are you happy, or not?"

"No, no, no!" cried the prince, with unspeakable sadness.

"Ha, ha! I never supposed you would say 'yes,'" cried Rogojin, laughing sardonically. And he disappeared, without looking round again.

Part 4

I.

A WEEK had elapsed since the rendezvous of our two friends on the green bench in the park, when, one fine morning at about half-past ten o'clock, Varvara Ardalionovna, otherwise Mrs. Ptitsin, who had been out to visit a friend, returned home in a state of considerable mental depression.

There are certain people of whom it is difficult to say anything which will at once throw them into relief—in other words, describe them graphically in their typical characteristics. These are they who are generally known as “commonplace people,” and this class comprises, of course, the immense majority of mankind. Authors, as a rule, attempt to select and portray types rarely met with in their entirety, but these types are nevertheless more real than real life itself.

“Podkoleosin” [A character in Gogol’s comedy, *The Wedding*.] was perhaps an exaggeration, but he was by no means a non-existent character; on the contrary, how many intelligent people, after hearing of this Podkoleosin from Gogol, immediately began to find that scores of their friends were exactly like him! They knew, perhaps, before Gogol told them, that their friends were like Podkoleosin, but they did not know what name to give them. In real life, young fellows seldom jump out of the window just before their weddings, because such a feat, not to speak of its other aspects, must be a decidedly unpleasant mode of escape; and yet there are plenty of bridegrooms, intelligent fellows too, who would be ready to confess themselves Podkoleosins in the depths of their consciousness, just before marriage. Nor does every husband feel bound to repeat at every step, “*Tu l’as voulu, Georges Dandin!*” like another typical personage; and yet how many millions and billions of Georges Dandins there are in real life who feel inclined to utter this soul-drawn cry after their honeymoon, if not the day after the wedding! Therefore, without entering into any more serious examination of the question, I will content myself with remarking that in real life typical characters are “watered down,” so to speak; and all these Dandins and Podkoleosins actually exist among us every day, but in a diluted form. I will just add, however, that Georges Dandin might have existed exactly as Moliere presented him, and probably does exist now and then, though rarely; and so I will end this scientific examination, which is beginning to look like a newspaper criticism. But for all this, the question remains,—what are the novelists to do with commonplace people, and how are they to be presented to the reader in such a form as to be in the least degree interesting? They cannot

be left out altogether, for commonplace people meet one at every turn of life, and to leave them out would be to destroy the whole reality and probability of the story. To fill a novel with typical characters only, or with merely strange and uncommon people, would render the book unreal and improbable, and would very likely destroy the interest. In my opinion, the duty of the novelist is to seek out points of interest and instruction even in the characters of commonplace people.

For instance, when the whole essence of an ordinary person's nature lies in his perpetual and unchangeable commonplaceness; and when in spite of all his endeavours to do something out of the common, this person ends, eventually, by remaining in his unbroken line of routine—. I think such an individual really does become a type of his own—a type of commonplaceness which will not for the world, if it can help it, be contented, but strains and yearns to be something original and independent, without the slightest possibility of being so. To this class of commonplace people belong several characters in this novel;— characters which—I admit—I have not drawn very vividly up to now for my reader's benefit.

Such were, for instance, Varvara Ardalionovna Ptitsin, her husband, and her brother, Gania.

There is nothing so annoying as to be fairly rich, of a fairly good family, pleasing presence, average education, to be “not stupid,” kind-hearted, and yet to have no talent at all, no originality, not a single idea of one's own—to be, in fact, “just like everyone else.”

Of such people there are countless numbers in this world—far more even than appear. They can be divided into two classes as all men can—that is, those of limited intellect, and those who are much cleverer. The former of these classes is the happier.

To a commonplace man of limited intellect, for instance, nothing is simpler than to imagine himself an original character, and to revel in that belief without the slightest misgiving.

Many of our young women have thought fit to cut their hair short, put on blue spectacles, and call themselves Nihilists. By doing this they have been able to persuade themselves, without further trouble, that they have acquired new convictions of their own. Some men have but felt some little qualm of kindness towards their fellow-men, and the fact has been quite enough to persuade them that they stand alone in the van of enlightenment and that no one has such humanitarian feelings as they. Others have but to read an idea of somebody else's, and they can immediately assimilate it and believe that it was a child of their own brain. The “impudence of ignorance,” if I may use the expression, is developed to a wonderful extent in such cases;—unlikely as it appears, it is met with at every turn.

This confidence of a stupid man in his own talents has been wonderfully depicted by Gogol in the amazing character of Pirogoff. Pirogoff has not the slightest doubt of his own genius,—nay, of his SUPERIORITY of genius,—so certain is he of it that he never questions it. How many Pirogoffs have there not been among our writers—

scholars—propagandists? I say “have been,” but indeed there are plenty of them at this very day.

Our friend, Gania, belonged to the other class—to the “much cleverer” persons, though he was from head to foot permeated and saturated with the longing to be original. This class, as I have said above, is far less happy. For the “clever commonplace” person, though he may possibly imagine himself a man of genius and originality, none the less has within his heart the deathless worm of suspicion and doubt; and this doubt sometimes brings a clever man to despair. (As a rule, however, nothing tragic happens;—his liver becomes a little damaged in the course of time, nothing more serious. Such men do not give up their aspirations after originality without a severe struggle,—and there have been men who, though good fellows in themselves, and even benefactors to humanity, have sunk to the level of base criminals for the sake of originality.

Gania was a beginner, as it were, upon this road. A deep and unchangeable consciousness of his own lack of talent, combined with a vast longing to be able to persuade himself that he was original, had rankled in his heart, even from childhood.

He seemed to have been born with overwrought nerves, and in his passionate desire to excel, he was often led to the brink of some rash step; and yet, having resolved upon such a step, when the moment arrived, he invariably proved too sensible to take it. He was ready, in the same way, to do a base action in order to obtain his wished-for object; and yet, when the moment came to do it, he found that he was too honest for any great baseness. (Not that he objected to acts of petty meanness—he was always ready for THEM.) He looked with hate and loathing on the poverty and downfall of his family, and treated his mother with haughty contempt, although he knew that his whole future depended on her character and reputation.

Aglaya had simply frightened him; yet he did not give up all thoughts of her—though he never seriously hoped that she would condescend to him. At the time of his “adventure” with Nastasia Philipovna he had come to the conclusion that money was his only hope—money should do all for him.

At the moment when he lost Aglaya, and after the scene with Nastasia, he had felt so low in his own eyes that he actually brought the money back to the prince. Of this returning of the money given to him by a madwoman who had received it from a madman, he had often repented since—though he never ceased to be proud of his action. During the short time that Muishkin remained in Petersburg Gania had had time to come to hate him for his sympathy, though the prince told him that it was “not everyone who would have acted so nobly” as to return the money. He had long pondered, too, over his relations with Aglaya, and had persuaded himself that with such a strange, childish, innocent character as hers, things might have ended very differently. Remorse then seized him; he threw up his post, and buried himself in self-torment and reproach.

He lived at Ptitsin’s, and openly showed contempt for the latter, though he always listened to his advice, and was sensible enough to ask for it when he wanted it. Gavrila

Ardalionovitch was angry with Ptitsin because the latter did not care to become a Rothschild. "If you are to be a Jew," he said, "do it properly—squeeze people right and left, show some character; be the King of the Jews while you are about it."

Ptitsin was quiet and not easily offended—he only laughed. But on one occasion he explained seriously to Gania that he was no Jew, that he did nothing dishonest, that he could not help the market price of money, that, thanks to his accurate habits, he had already a good footing and was respected, and that his business was flourishing.

"I shan't ever be a Rothschild, and there is no reason why I should," he added, smiling; "but I shall have a house in the Liteynaya, perhaps two, and that will be enough for me." "Who knows but what I may have three!" he concluded to himself; but this dream, cherished inwardly, he never confided to a soul.

Nature loves and favours such people. Ptitsin will certainly have his reward, not three houses, but four, precisely because from childhood up he had realized that he would never be a Rothschild. That will be the limit of Ptitsin's fortune, and, come what may, he will never have more than four houses.

Varvara Ardalionovna was not like her brother. She too, had passionate desires, but they were persistent rather than impetuous. Her plans were as wise as her methods of carrying them out. No doubt she also belonged to the category of ordinary people who dream of being original, but she soon discovered that she had not a grain of true originality, and she did not let it trouble her too much. Perhaps a certain kind of pride came to her help. She made her first concession to the demands of practical life with great resolution when she consented to marry Ptitsin. However, when she married she did not say to herself, "Never mind a mean action if it leads to the end in view," as her brother would certainly have said in such a case; it is quite probable that he may have said it when he expressed his elder-brotherly satisfaction at her decision. Far from this; Varvara Ardalionovna did not marry until she felt convinced that her future husband was unassuming, agreeable, almost cultured, and that nothing on earth would tempt him to a really dishonourable deed. As to small meannesses, such trifles did not trouble her. Indeed, who is free from them? It is absurd to expect the ideal! Besides, she knew that her marriage would provide a refuge for all her family. Seeing Gania unhappy, she was anxious to help him, in spite of their former disputes and misunderstandings. Ptitsin, in a friendly way, would press his brother-in-law to enter the army. "You know," he said sometimes, jokingly, "you despise generals and generaldom, but you will see that 'they' will all end by being generals in their turn. You will see it if you live long enough!"

"But why should they suppose that I despise generals?" Gania thought sarcastically to himself.

To serve her brother's interests, Varvara Ardalionovna was constantly at the Epanchins' house, helped by the fact that in childhood she and Gania had played with General Ivan Fedorovitch's daughters. It would have been inconsistent with her character if in these visits she had been pursuing a chimera; her project was not chimerical at all; she was building on a firm basis—on her knowledge of the character of the Ep-

anchin family, especially Aglaya, whom she studied closely. All Varvara's efforts were directed towards bringing Aglaya and Gania together. Perhaps she achieved some result; perhaps, also, she made the mistake of depending too much upon her brother, and expecting more from him than he would ever be capable of giving. However this may be, her manoeuvres were skilful enough. For weeks at a time she would never mention Gania. Her attitude was modest but dignified, and she was always extremely truthful and sincere. Examining the depths of her conscience, she found nothing to reproach herself with, and this still further strengthened her in her designs. But Varvara Ardalionovna sometimes remarked that she felt spiteful; that there was a good deal of vanity in her, perhaps even of wounded vanity. She noticed this at certain times more than at others, and especially after her visits to the Epanchins.

Today, as I have said, she returned from their house with a heavy feeling of dejection. There was a sensation of bitterness, a sort of mocking contempt, mingled with it.

Arrived at her own house, Varia heard a considerable commotion going on in the upper storey, and distinguished the voices of her father and brother. On entering the salon she found Gania pacing up and down at frantic speed, pale with rage and almost tearing his hair. She frowned, and subsided on to the sofa with a tired air, and without taking the trouble to remove her hat. She very well knew that if she kept quiet and asked her brother nothing about his reason for tearing up and down the room, his wrath would fall upon her head. So she hastened to put the question:

"The old story, eh?"

"Old story? No! Heaven knows what's up now—I don't! Father has simply gone mad; mother's in floods of tears. Upon my word, Varia, I must kick him out of the house; or else go myself," he added, probably remembering that he could not well turn people out of a house which was not his own.

"You must make allowances," murmured Varia.

"Make allowances? For whom? Him—the old blackguard? No, no, Varia—that won't do! It won't do, I tell you! And look at the swagger of the man! He's all to blame himself, and yet he puts on so much 'side' that you'd think—my word!—'It's too much trouble to go through the gate, you must break the fence for me!' That's the sort of air he puts on; but what's the matter with you, Varia? What a curious expression you have!"

"I'm all right," said Varia, in a tone that sounded as though she were all wrong.

Gania looked more intently at her.

"You've been THERE?" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes."

"Did you find out anything?"

"Nothing unexpected. I discovered that it's all true. My husband was wiser than either of us. Just as he suspected from the beginning, so it has fallen out. Where is he?"

"Out. Well—what has happened?—go on."

"The prince is formally engaged to her—that's settled. The elder sisters told me about it. Aglaya has agreed. They don't attempt to conceal it any longer; you know

how mysterious and secret they have all been up to now. Adelaida's wedding is put off again, so that both can be married on one day. Isn't that delightfully romantic? Somebody ought to write a poem on it. Sit down and write an ode instead of tearing up and down like that. This evening Princess Bielokonski is to arrive; she comes just in time—they have a party tonight. He is to be presented to old Bielokonski, though I believe he knows her already; probably the engagement will be openly announced. They are only afraid that he may knock something down, or trip over something when he comes into the room. It would be just like him."

Gania listened attentively, but to his sister's astonishment he was by no means so impressed by this news (which should, she thought, have been so important to him) as she had expected.

"Well, it was clear enough all along," he said, after a moment's reflection. "So that's the end," he added, with a disagreeable smile, continuing to walk up and down the room, but much slower than before, and glancing slyly into his sister's face.

"It's a good thing that you take it philosophically, at all events," said Varia. "I'm really very glad of it."

"Yes, it's off our hands—off YOURS, I should say."

"I think I have served you faithfully. I never even asked you what happiness you expected to find with Aglaya."

"Did I ever expect to find happiness with Aglaya?"

"Come, come, don't overdo your philosophy. Of course you did. Now it's all over, and a good thing, too; pair of fools that we have been! I confess I have never been able to look at it seriously. I busied myself in it for your sake, thinking that there was no knowing what might happen with a funny girl like that to deal with. There were ninety to one chances against it. To this moment I can't make out why you wished for it."

"H'm! now, I suppose, you and your husband will never weary of egging me on to work again. You'll begin your lectures about perseverance and strength of will, and all that. I know it all by heart," said Gania, laughing.

"He's got some new idea in his head," thought Varia. "Are they pleased over there—the parents?" asked Gania, suddenly.

"N—no, I don't think they are. You can judge for yourself. I think the general is pleased enough; her mother is a little uneasy. She always loathed the idea of the prince as a HUSBAND; everybody knows that."

"Of course, naturally. The bridegroom is an impossible and ridiculous one. I mean, has SHE given her formal consent?"

"She has not said 'no,' up to now, and that's all. It was sure to be so with her. You know what she is like. You know how absurdly shy she is. You remember how she used to hide in a cupboard as a child, so as to avoid seeing visitors, for hours at a time. She is just the same now; but, do you know, I think there is something serious in the matter, even from her side; I feel it, somehow. She laughs at the prince, they say, from morn to night in order to hide her real feelings; but you may be sure she finds occasion

to say something or other to him on the sly, for he himself is in a state of radiant happiness. He walks in the clouds; they say he is extremely funny just now; I heard it from themselves. They seemed to be laughing at me in their sleeves— those elder girls—I don't know why."

Gania had begun to frown, and probably Varia added this last sentence in order to probe his thought. However, at this moment, the noise began again upstairs.

"I'll turn him out!" shouted Gania, glad of the opportunity of venting his vexation. "I shall just turn him out—we can't have this."

"Yes, and then he'll go about the place and disgrace us as he did yesterday."

"How 'as he did yesterday'? What do you mean? What did he do yesterday?" asked Gania, in alarm.

"Why, goodness me, don't you know?" Varia stopped short.

"What? You don't mean to say that he went there yesterday!" cried Gania, flushing red with shame and anger. "Good heavens, Varia! Speak! You have just been there. WAS he there or not, QUICK?" And Gania rushed for the door. Varia followed and caught him by both hands.

"What are you doing? Where are you going to? You can't let him go now; if you do he'll go and do something worse."

"What did he do there? What did he say?" "They couldn't tell me themselves; they couldn't make head or tail of it; but he frightened them all. He came to see the general, who was not at home; so he asked for Lizabetha Prokofievna. First of all, he begged her for some place, or situation, for work of some kind, and then he began to complain about US, about me and my husband, and you, especially YOU; he said a lot of things."

"Oh! couldn't you find out?" muttered Gania, trembling hysterically.

"No—nothing more than that. Why, they couldn't understand him themselves; and very likely didn't tell me all."

Gania seized his head with both hands and tottered to the window; Varia sat down at the other window.

"Funny girl, Aglaya," she observed, after a pause. "When she left me she said, 'Give my special and personal respects to your parents; I shall certainly find an opportunity to see your father one day,' and so serious over it. She's a strange creature."

"Wasn't she joking? She was speaking sarcastically!" "Not a bit of it; that's just the strange part of it."

"Does she know about father, do you think—or not?"

"That they do NOT know about it in the house is quite certain, the rest of them, I mean; but you have given me an idea. Aglaya perhaps knows. She alone, though, if anyone; for the sisters were as astonished as I was to hear her speak so seriously. If she knows, the prince must have told her."

"Oh! it's not a great matter to guess who told her. A thief! A thief in our family, and the head of the family, too!"

"Oh! nonsense!" cried Varia, angrily. "That was nothing but a drunkard's tale. Nonsense! Why, who invented the whole thing— Lebedeff and the prince—a pretty pair! Both were probably drunk."

"Father is a drunkard and a thief; I am a beggar, and the husband of my sister is a usurer," continued Gania, bitterly. "There was a pretty list of advantages with which to enchant the heart of Aglaya."

"That same husband of your sister, the usurer—"

"Feeds me? Go on. Don't stand on ceremony, pray."

"Don't lose your temper. You are just like a schoolboy. You think that all this sort of thing would harm you in Aglaya's eyes, do you? You little know her character. She is capable of refusing the most brilliant party, and running away and starving in a garret with some wretched student; that's the sort of girl she is. You never could or did understand how interesting you would have seen in her eyes if you had come firmly and proudly through our misfortunes. The prince has simply caught her with hook and line; firstly, because he never thought of fishing for her, and secondly, because he is an idiot in the eyes of most people. It's quite enough for her that by accepting him she puts her family out and annoys them all round—that's what she likes. You don't understand these things."

"We shall see whether I understand or no!" said Gania, enigmatically. "But I shouldn't like her to know all about father, all the same. I thought the prince would manage to hold his tongue about this, at least. He prevented Lebedeff spreading the news—he wouldn't even tell me all when I asked him—"

"Then you must see that he is not responsible. What does it matter to you now, in any case? What are you hoping for still? If you HAVE a hope left, it is that your suffering air may soften her heart towards you."

"Oh, she would funk a scandal like anyone else. You are all tarred with one brush!"

"What! AGLAYA would have funked? You are a chicken-hearted fellow, Gania!" said Varia, looking at her brother with contempt. "Not one of us is worth much. Aglaya may be a wild sort of a girl, but she is far nobler than any of us, a thousand times nobler!"

"Well—come! there's nothing to get cross about," said Gania.

"All I'm afraid of is—mother. I'm afraid this scandal about father may come to her ears; perhaps it has already. I am dreadfully afraid."

"It undoubtedly has already!" observed Gania.

Varia had risen from her place and had started to go upstairs to her mother; but at this observation of Gania's she turned and gazed at him attentively.

"Who could have told her?"

"Hippolyte, probably. He would think it the most delightful amusement in the world to tell her of it the instant he moved over here; I haven't a doubt of it."

"But how could he know anything of it? Tell me that. Lebedeff and the prince determined to tell no one—even Colia knows nothing."

“What, Hippolyte? He found it out himself, of course. Why, you have no idea what a cunning little animal he is; dirty little gossip! He has the most extraordinary nose for smelling out other people’s secrets, or anything approaching to scandal. Believe it or not, but I’m pretty sure he has got round Aglaya. If he hasn’t, he soon will. Rogojin is intimate with him, too. How the prince doesn’t notice it, I can’t understand. The little wretch considers me his enemy now and does his best to catch me tripping. What on earth does it matter to him, when he’s dying? However, you’ll see; I shall catch HIM tripping yet, and not he me.”

“Why did you get him over here, if you hate him so? And is it really worth your while to try to score off him?”

“Why, it was yourself who advised me to bring him over!”

“I thought he might be useful. You know he is in love with Aglaya himself, now, and has written to her; he has even written to Lizabetha Prokofievna!”

“Oh! he’s not dangerous there!” cried Gania, laughing angrily. “However, I believe there is something of that sort in the air; he is very likely to be in love, for he is a mere boy. But he won’t write anonymous letters to the old lady; that would be too audacious a thing for him to attempt; but I dare swear the very first thing he did was to show me up to Aglaya as a base deceiver and intriguer. I confess I was fool enough to attempt something through him at first. I thought he would throw himself into my service out of revengeful feelings towards the prince, the sly little beast! But I know him better now. As for the theft, he may have heard of it from the widow in Petersburg, for if the old man committed himself to such an act, he can have done it for no other object but to give the money to her. Hippolyte said to me, without any prelude, that the general had promised the widow four hundred roubles. Of course I understood, and the little wretch looked at me with a nasty sort of satisfaction. I know him; you may depend upon it he went and told mother too, for the pleasure of wounding her. And why doesn’t he die, I should like to know? He undertook to die within three weeks, and here he is getting fatter. His cough is better, too. It was only yesterday that he said that was the second day he hadn’t coughed blood.”

“Well, turn him out!”

“I don’t HATE, I despise him,” said Gania, grandly. “Well, I do hate him, if you like!” he added, with a sudden access of rage, “and I’ll tell him so to his face, even when he’s dying! If you had but read his confession—good Lord! what refinement of impudence! Oh, but I’d have liked to whip him then and there, like a schoolboy, just to see how surprised he would have been! Now he hates everybody because he—Oh, I say, what on earth are they doing there! Listen to that noise! I really can’t stand this any longer. Ptitsin!” he cried, as the latter entered the room, “what in the name of goodness are we coming to? Listen to that—”

But the noise came rapidly nearer, the door burst open, and old General Ivolgin, raging, furious, purple-faced, and trembling with anger, rushed in. He was followed by Nina Alexandrovna, Colia, and behind the rest, Hippolyte.

II.

HIPPOLYTE had now been five days at the Ptitsins'. His flitting from the prince's to these new quarters had been brought about quite naturally and without many words. He did not quarrel with the prince—in fact, they seemed to part as friends. Gania, who had been hostile enough on that eventful evening, had himself come to see him a couple of days later, probably in obedience to some sudden impulse. For some reason or other, Rogojin too had begun to visit the sick boy. The prince thought it might be better for him to move away from his (the prince's) house. Hippolyte informed him, as he took his leave, that Ptitsin "had been kind enough to offer him a corner," and did not say a word about Gania, though Gania had procured his invitation, and himself came to fetch him away. Gania noticed this at the time, and put it to Hippolyte's debit on account.

Gania was right when he told his sister that Hippolyte was getting better; that he was better was clear at the first glance. He entered the room now last of all, deliberately, and with a disagreeable smile on his lips.

Nina Alexandrovna came in, looking frightened. She had changed much since we last saw her, half a year ago, and had grown thin and pale. Colia looked worried and perplexed. He could not understand the vagaries of the general, and knew nothing of the last achievement of that worthy, which had caused so much commotion in the house. But he could see that his father had of late changed very much, and that he had begun to behave in so extraordinary a fashion both at home and abroad that he was not like the same man. What perplexed and disturbed him as much as anything was that his father had entirely given up drinking during the last few days. Colia knew that he had quarrelled with both Lebedeff and the prince, and had just bought a small bottle of vodka and brought it home for his father.

"Really, mother," he had assured Nina Alexandrovna upstairs, "really you had better let him drink. He has not had a drop for three days; he must be suffering agonies—The general now entered the room, threw the door wide open, and stood on the threshold trembling with indignation.

"Look here, my dear sir," he began, addressing Ptitsin in a very loud tone of voice; "if you have really made up your mind to sacrifice an old man—your father too or at all events father of your wife—an old man who has served his emperor—to a wretched little atheist like this, all I can say is, sir, my foot shall cease to tread your floors. Make your choice, sir; make your choice quickly, if you please! Me or this—screw! Yes, screw, sir; I said it accidentally, but let the word stand—this screw, for he screws and drills himself into my soul—"

"Hadn't you better say corkscrew?" said Hippolyte.

"No, sir, NOT corkscrew. I am a general, not a bottle, sir. Make your choice, sir—me or him."

Here Colia handed him a chair, and he subsided into it, breathless with rage.

"Hadn't you better—better—take a nap?" murmured the stupefied Ptitsin.

“A nap?” shrieked the general. “I am not drunk, sir; you insult me! I see,” he continued, rising, “I see that all are against me here. Enough—I go; but know, sirs—know that—”

He was not allowed to finish his sentence. Somebody pushed him back into his chair, and begged him to be calm. Nina Alexandrovna trembled, and cried quietly. Gania retired to the window in disgust.

“But what have I done? What is his grievance?” asked Hippolyte, grinning.

“What have you done, indeed?” put in Nina Alexandrovna. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself, teasing an old man like that— and in your position, too.”

“And pray what IS my position, madame? I have the greatest respect for you, personally; but—”

“He’s a little screw,” cried the general; “he drills holes my heart and soul. He wishes me to be a pervert to atheism. Know, you young greenhorn, that I was covered with honours before ever you were born; and you are nothing better than a wretched little worm, torn in two with coughing, and dying slowly of your own malice and unbelief. What did Gavrila bring you over here for? They’re all against me, even to my own son—all against me.”

“Oh, come—nonsense!” cried Gania; “if you did not go shaming us all over the town, things might be better for all parties.”

“What—shame you? I?—what do you mean, you young calf? I shame you? I can only do you honour, sir; I cannot shame you.”

He jumped up from his chair in a fit of uncontrollable rage. Gania was very angry too.

“Honour, indeed!” said the latter, with contempt.

“What do you say, sir?” growled the general, taking a step towards him.

“I say that I have but to open my mouth, and you—”

Gania began, but did not finish. The two—father and son—stood before one another, both unspeakably agitated, especially Gania.

“Gania, Gania, reflect!” cried his mother, hurriedly.

“It’s all nonsense on both sides,” snapped out Varia. “Let them alone, mother.”

“It’s only for mother’s sake that I spare him,” said Gania, tragically.

“Speak!” said the general, beside himself with rage and excitement; “speak—under the penalty of a father’s curse

“Oh, father’s curse be hanged—you don’t frighten me that way!” said Gania. “Whose fault is it that you have been as mad as a March hare all this week? It is just a week—you see, I count the days. Take care now; don’t provoke me too much, or I’ll tell all. Why did you go to the Epanchins’ yesterday—tell me that? And you call yourself an old man, too, with grey hair, and father of a family! H’m—nice sort of a father.”

“Be quiet, Gania,” cried Colia. “Shut up, you fool!”

“Yes, but how have I offended him?” repeated Hippolyte, still in the same jeering voice. “Why does he call me a screw? You all heard it. He came to me himself and began telling me about some Captain Eropegoff. I don’t wish for your company, general.

I always avoided you—you know that. What have I to do with Captain Eropegoff? All I did was to express my opinion that probably Captain Eropegoff never existed at all!”

“Of course he never existed!” Gania interrupted.

But the general only stood stupefied and gazed around in a dazed way. Gania’s speech had impressed him, with its terrible candour. For the first moment or two he could find no words to answer him, and it was only when Hippolyte burst out laughing, and said:

“There, you see! Even your own son supports my statement that there never was such a person as Captain Eropegoff!” that the old fellow muttered confusedly:

“Kapiton Eropegoff—not Captain Eropegoff!—Kapiton—major retired—Eropegoff—Kapiton.”

“Kapiton didn’t exist either!” persisted Gania, maliciously.

“What? Didn’t exist?” cried the poor general, and a deep blush suffused his face.

“That’ll do, Gania!” cried Varia and Ptitsin.

“Shut up, Gania!” said Colia.

But this intercession seemed to rekindle the general.

“What did you mean, sir, that he didn’t exist? Explain yourself,” he repeated, angrily.

“Because he DIDN’T exist—never could and never did—there! You’d better drop the subject, I warn you!”

“And this is my son—my own son—whom I—oh, gracious Heaven! Eropegoff—Eroshka Eropegoff didn’t exist!”

“Ha, ha! it’s Eroshka now,” laughed Hippolyte.

“No, sir, Kapitoshka—not Eroshka. I mean, Kapiton Alexeyevitch—retired major—married Maria Petrovna Lu—Lu—he was my friend and companion—Lutugoff—from our earliest beginnings. I closed his eyes for him—he was killed. Kapiton Eropegoff never existed! tfu!”

The general shouted in his fury; but it was to be concluded that his wrath was not kindled by the expressed doubt as to Kapiton’s existence. This was his scapegoat; but his excitement was caused by something quite different. As a rule he would have merely shouted down the doubt as to Kapiton, told a long yarn about his friend, and eventually retired upstairs to his room. But today, in the strange uncertainty of human nature, it seemed to require but so small an offence as this to make his cup to overflow. The old man grew purple in the face, he raised his hands. “Enough of this!” he yelled. “My curse—away, out of the house I go! Colia, bring my bag away!” He left the room hastily and in a paroxysm of rage.

His wife, Colia, and Ptitsin ran out after him.

“What have you done now?” said Varia to Gania. “He’ll probably be making off THERE again! What a disgrace it all is!”

“Well, he shouldn’t steal,” cried Gania, panting with fury. And just at this moment his eye met Hippolyte’s.

“As for you, sir,” he cried, “you should at least remember that you are in a strange house and—receiving hospitality; you should not take the opportunity of tormenting an old man, sir, who is too evidently out of his mind.”

Hippolyte looked furious, but he restrained himself.

“I don’t quite agree with you that your father is out of his mind,” he observed, quietly. “On the contrary, I cannot help thinking he has been less demented of late. Don’t you think so? He has grown so cunning and careful, and weighs his words so deliberately; he spoke to me about that Kapiton fellow with an object, you know! Just fancy—he wanted me to—”

“Oh, devil take what he wanted you to do! Don’t try to be too cunning with me, young man!” shouted Gania. “If you are aware of the real reason for my father’s present condition (and you have kept such an excellent spying watch during these last few days that you are sure to be aware of it)—you had no right whatever to torment the—unfortunate man, and to worry my mother by your exaggerations of the affair; because the whole business is nonsense—simply a drunken freak, and nothing more, quite unproved by any evidence, and I don’t believe that much of it!” (he snapped his fingers). “But you must needs spy and watch over us all, because you are a-a—”

“Screw!” laughed Hippolyte.

“Because you are a humbug, sir; and thought fit to worry people for half an hour, and tried to frighten them into believing that you would shoot yourself with your little empty pistol, pirouetting about and playing at suicide! I gave you hospitality, you have fattened on it, your cough has left you, and you repay all this—”

“Excuse me—two words! I am Varvara Ardalionovna’s guest, not yours; YOU have extended no hospitality to me. On the contrary, if I am not mistaken, I believe you are yourself indebted to Mr. Ptitsin’s hospitality. Four days ago I begged my mother to come down here and find lodgings, because I certainly do feel better here, though I am not fat, nor have I ceased to cough. I am today informed that my room is ready for me; therefore, having thanked your sister and mother for their kindness to me, I intend to leave the house this evening. I beg your pardon—I interrupted you—I think you were about to add something?”

“Oh—if that is the state of affairs—” began Gania.

“Excuse me—I will take a seat,” interrupted Hippolyte once more, sitting down deliberately; “for I am not strong yet. Now then, I am ready to hear you. Especially as this is the last chance we shall have of a talk, and very likely the last meeting we shall ever have at all.”

Gania felt a little guilty.

“I assure you I did not mean to reckon up debits and credits,” he began, “and if you—”

“I don’t understand your condescension,” said Hippolyte. “As for me, I promised myself, on the first day of my arrival in this house, that I would have the satisfaction of settling accounts with you in a very thorough manner before I said good-bye to you. I intend to perform this operation now, if you like; after you, though, of course.”

“May I ask you to be so good as to leave this room?”

“You’d better speak out. You’ll be sorry afterwards if you don’t.”

“Hippolyte, stop, please! It’s so dreadfully undignified,” said Varia.

“Well, only for the sake of a lady,” said Hippolyte, laughing. “I am ready to put off the reckoning, but only put it off, Varvara Ardalionovna, because an explanation between your brother and myself has become an absolute necessity, and I could not think of leaving the house without clearing up all misunderstandings first.”

“In a word, you are a wretched little scandal-monger,” cried Gania, “and you cannot go away without a scandal!”

“You see,” said Hippolyte, coolly, “you can’t restrain yourself. You’ll be dreadfully sorry afterwards if you don’t speak out now. Come, you shall have the first say. I’ll wait.”

Gania was silent and merely looked contemptuously at him.

“You won’t? Very well. I shall be as short as possible, for my part. Two or three times to-day I have had the word ‘hospitality’ pushed down my throat; this is not fair. In inviting me here you yourself entrapped me for your own use; you thought I wished to revenge myself upon the prince. You heard that Aglaya Ivanovna had been kind to me and read my confession. Making sure that I should give myself up to your interests, you hoped that you might get some assistance out of me. I will not go into details. I don’t ask either admission or confirmation of this from yourself; I am quite content to leave you to your conscience, and to feel that we understand one another capitally.”

“What a history you are weaving out of the most ordinary circumstances!” cried Varia.

“I told you the fellow was nothing but a scandalmonger,” said Gania.

“Excuse me, Varia Ardalionovna, I will proceed. I can, of course, neither love nor respect the prince, though he is a good-hearted fellow, if a little queer. But there is no need whatever for me to hate him. I quite understood your brother when he first offered me aid against the prince, though I did not show it; I knew well that your brother was making a ridiculous mistake in me. I am ready to spare him, however, even now; but solely out of respect for yourself, Varvara Ardalionovna.

“Having now shown you that I am not quite such a fool as I look, and that I have to be fished for with a rod and line for a good long while before I am caught, I will proceed to explain why I specially wished to make your brother look a fool. That my motive power is hate, I do not attempt to conceal. I have felt that before dying (and I am dying, however much fatter I may appear to you), I must absolutely make a fool of, at least, one of that class of men which has dogged me all my life, which I hate so cordially, and which is so prominently represented by your much esteemed brother. I should not enjoy paradise nearly so much without having done this first. I hate you, Gavril Ardalionovitch, solely (this may seem curious to you, but I repeat)—solely because you are the type, and incarnation, and head, and crown of the most impudent, the most self-satisfied, the most vulgar and detestable form of commonplaceness. You are ordinary of the ordinary; you have no chance of ever fathering the pettiest idea

of your own. And yet you are as jealous and conceited as you can possibly be; you consider yourself a great genius; of this you are persuaded, although there are dark moments of doubt and rage, when even this fact seems uncertain. There are spots of darkness on your horizon, though they will disappear when you become completely stupid. But a long and chequered path lies before you, and of this I am glad. In the first place you will never gain a certain person."

"Come, come! This is intolerable! You had better stop, you little mischief-making wretch!" cried Varia. Gania had grown very pale; he trembled, but said nothing.

Hippolyte paused, and looked at him intently and with great gratification. He then turned his gaze upon Varia, bowed, and went out, without adding another word.

Gania might justly complain of the hardness with which fate treated him. Varia dared not speak to him for a long while, as he strode past her, backwards and forwards. At last he went and stood at the window, looking out, with his back turned towards her. There was a fearful row going on upstairs again.

"Are you off?" said Gania, suddenly, remarking that she had risen and was about to leave the room. "Wait a moment—look at this."

He approached the table and laid a small sheet of paper before her. It looked like a little note.

"Good heavens!" cried Varia, raising her hands.

This was the note:

"GAVRILA ARDOLIONOVITCH,—persuaded of your kindness of heart, I have determined to ask your advice on a matter of great importance to myself. I should like to meet you tomorrow morning at seven o'clock by the green bench in the park. It is not far from our house. Varvara Ardalionovna, who must accompany you, knows the place well.

"A. E."

"What on earth is one to make of a girl like that?" said Varia.

Gania, little as he felt inclined for swagger at this moment, could not avoid showing his triumph, especially just after such humiliating remarks as those of Hippolyte. A smile of self-satisfaction beamed on his face, and Varia too was brimming over with delight.

"And this is the very day that they were to announce the engagement! What will she do next?"

"What do you suppose she wants to talk about tomorrow?" asked Gania.

"Oh, THAT'S all the same! The chief thing is that she wants to see you after six months' absence. Look here, Gania, this is a SERIOUS business. Don't swagger again and lose the game—play carefully, but don't funk, do you understand? As if she could possibly avoid seeing what I have been working for all this last six months! And just imagine, I was there this morning and not a word of this! I was there, you know, on the sly. The old lady did not know, or she would have kicked me out. I ran some risk for you, you see. I did so want to find out, at all hazards."

Here there was a frantic noise upstairs once more; several people seemed to be rushing downstairs at once.

“Now, Gania,” cried Varia, frightened, “we can’t let him go out! We can’t afford to have a breath of scandal about the town at this moment. Run after him and beg his pardon—quick.”

But the father of the family was out in the road already. Colia was carrying his bag for him; Nina Alexandrovna stood and cried on the doorstep; she wanted to run after the general, but Ptitsin kept her back.

“You will only excite him more,” he said. “He has nowhere else to go to—he’ll be back here in half an hour. I’ve talked it all over with Colia; let him play the fool a bit, it will do him good.”

“What are you up to? Where are you off to? You’ve nowhere to go to, you know,” cried Gania, out of the window.

“Come back, father; the neighbours will hear!” cried Varia.

The general stopped, turned round, raised his hands and remarked: “My curse be upon this house!”

“Which observation should always be made in as theatrical a tone as possible,” muttered Gania, shutting the window with a bang.

The neighbours undoubtedly did hear. Varia rushed out of the room.

No sooner had his sister left him alone, than Gania took the note out of his pocket, kissed it, and pirouetted around.

III.

As a general rule, old General Ivolgin’s paroxysms ended in smoke. He had before this experienced fits of sudden fury, but not very often, because he was really a man of peaceful and kindly disposition. He had tried hundreds of times to overcome the dissolute habits which he had contracted of late years. He would suddenly remember that he was “a father,” would be reconciled with his wife, and shed genuine tears. His feeling for Nina Alexandrovna amounted almost to adoration; she had pardoned so much in silence, and loved him still in spite of the state of degradation into which he had fallen. But the general’s struggles with his own weakness never lasted very long. He was, in his way, an impetuous man, and a quiet life of repentance in the bosom of his family soon became insupportable to him. In the end he rebelled, and flew into rages which he regretted, perhaps, even as he gave way to them, but which were beyond his control. He picked quarrels with everyone, began to hold forth eloquently, exacted unlimited respect, and at last disappeared from the house, and sometimes did not return for a long time. He had given up interfering in the affairs of his family for two years now, and knew nothing about them but what he gathered from hearsay.

But on this occasion there was something more serious than usual. Everyone seemed to know something, but to be afraid to talk about it.

The general had turned up in the bosom of his family two or three days before, but not, as usual, with the olive branch of peace in his hand, not in the garb of penitence—in which he was usually clad on such occasions—but, on the contrary, in an uncommonly bad temper. He had arrived in a quarrelsome mood, pitching into everyone he came across, and talking about all sorts and kinds of subjects in the most unexpected manner, so that it was impossible to discover what it was that was really putting him out. At moments he would be apparently quite bright and happy; but as a rule he would sit moody and thoughtful. He would abruptly commence to hold forth about the Epanchins, about Lebedeff, or the prince, and equally abruptly would stop short and refuse to speak another word, answering all further questions with a stupid smile, unconscious that he was smiling, or that he had been asked a question. The whole of the previous night he had spent tossing about and groaning, and poor Nina Alexandrovna had been busy making cold compresses and warm fomentations and so on, without being very clear how to apply them. He had fallen asleep after a while, but not for long, and had awaked in a state of violent hypochondria which had ended in his quarrel with Hippolyte, and the solemn cursing of Ptitsin's establishment generally. It was also observed during those two or three days that he was in a state of morbid self-esteem, and was specially touchy on all points of honour. Colia insisted, in discussing the matter with his mother, that all this was but the outcome of abstinence from drink, or perhaps of pining after Lebedeff, with whom up to this time the general had been upon terms of the greatest friendship; but with whom, for some reason or other, he had quarrelled a few days since, parting from him in great wrath. There had also been a scene with the prince. Colia had asked an explanation of the latter, but had been forced to conclude that he was not told the whole truth.

If Hippolyte and Nina Alexandrovna had, as Gania suspected, had some special conversation about the general's actions, it was strange that the malicious youth, whom Gania had called a scandal-monger to his face, had not allowed himself a similar satisfaction with Colia.

The fact is that probably Hippolyte was not quite so black as Gania painted him; and it was hardly likely that he had informed Nina Alexandrovna of certain events, of which we know, for the mere pleasure of giving her pain. We must never forget that human motives are generally far more complicated than we are apt to suppose, and that we can very rarely accurately describe the motives of another. It is much better for the writer, as a rule, to content himself with the bare statement of events; and we shall take this line with regard to the catastrophe recorded above, and shall state the remaining events connected with the general's trouble shortly, because we feel that we have already given to this secondary character in our story more attention than we originally intended.

The course of events had marched in the following order. When Lebedeff returned, in company with the general, after their expedition to town a few days since, for the purpose of investigation, he brought the prince no information whatever. If the latter had not himself been occupied with other thoughts and impressions at the time,

he must have observed that Lebedeff not only was very uncommunicative, but even appeared anxious to avoid him.

When the prince did give the matter a little attention, he recalled the fact that during these days he had always found Lebedeff to be in radiantly good spirits, when they happened to meet; and further, that the general and Lebedeff were always together. The two friends did not seem ever to be parted for a moment.

Occasionally the prince heard loud talking and laughing upstairs, and once he detected the sound of a jolly soldier's song going on above, and recognized the unmistakable bass of the general's voice. But the sudden outbreak of song did not last; and for an hour afterwards the animated sound of apparently drunken conversation continued to be heard from above. At length there was the clearest evidence of a grand mutual embracing, and someone burst into tears. Shortly after this, however, there was a violent but short-lived quarrel, with loud talking on both sides.

All these days Colia had been in a state of great mental preoccupation. Muishkin was usually out all day, and only came home late at night. On his return he was invariably informed that Colia had been looking for him. However, when they did meet, Colia never had anything particular to tell him, excepting that he was highly dissatisfied with the general and his present condition of mind and behaviour.

"They drag each other about the place," he said, and get drunk together at the pub close by here, and quarrel in the street on the way home, and embrace one another after it, and don't seem to part for a moment."

When the prince pointed out that there was nothing new about that, for that they had always behaved in this manner together, Colia did not know what to say; in fact he could not explain what it was that specially worried him, just now, about his father.

On the morning following the bacchanalian songs and quarrels recorded above, as the prince stepped out of the house at about eleven o'clock, the general suddenly appeared before him, much agitated.

"I have long sought the honour and opportunity of meeting you— much-esteemed Lef Nicolaievitch," he murmured, pressing the prince's hand very hard, almost painfully so; "long—very long."

The prince begged him to step in and sit down.

"No—I will not sit down,—I am keeping you, I see,—another time!—I think I may be permitted to congratulate you upon the realization of your heart's best wishes, is it not so?"

"What best wishes?"

The prince blushed. He thought, as so many in his position do, that nobody had seen, heard, noticed, or understood anything.

"Oh—be easy, sir, be easy! I shall not wound your tenderest feelings. I've been through it all myself, and I know well how unpleasant it is when an outsider sticks his nose in where he is not wanted. I experience this every morning. I came to speak to you about another matter, though, an important matter. A very important matter, prince."

The latter requested him to take a seat once more, and sat down himself.

“Well—just for one second, then. The fact is, I came for advice. Of course I live now without any very practical objects in life; but, being full of self-respect, in which quality the ordinary Russian is so deficient as a rule, and of activity, I am desirous, in a word, prince, of placing myself and my wife and children in a position of—in fact, I want advice.”

The prince commended his aspirations with warmth.

“Quite so—quite so! But this is all mere nonsense. I came here to speak of something quite different, something very important, prince. And I have determined to come to you as to a man in whose sincerity and nobility of feeling I can trust like—like—are you surprised at my words, prince?”

The prince was watching his guest, if not with much surprise, at all events with great attention and curiosity.

The old man was very pale; every now and then his lips trembled, and his hands seemed unable to rest quietly, but continually moved from place to place. He had twice already jumped up from his chair and sat down again without being in the least aware of it. He would take up a book from the table and open it—talking all the while,—look at the heading of a chapter, shut it and put it back again, seizing another immediately, but holding it unopened in his hand, and waving it in the air as he spoke.

“But enough!” he cried, suddenly. “I see I have been boring you with my—”

“Not in the least—not in the least, I assure you. On the contrary, I am listening most attentively, and am anxious to guess—”

“Prince, I wish to place myself in a respectable position—I wish to esteem myself—and to—”

“My dear sir, a man of such noble aspirations is worthy of all esteem by virtue of those aspirations alone.”

The prince brought out his “copy-book sentence” in the firm belief that it would produce a good effect. He felt instinctively that some such well-sounding humbug, brought out at the proper moment, would soothe the old man’s feelings, and would be specially acceptable to such a man in such a position. At all hazards, his guest must be despatched with heart relieved and spirit comforted; that was the problem before the prince at this moment.

The phrase flattered the general, touched him, and pleased him mightily. He immediately changed his tone, and started off on a long and solemn explanation. But listen as he would, the prince could make neither head nor tail of it.

The general spoke hotly and quickly for ten minutes; he spoke as though his words could not keep pace with his crowding thoughts. Tears stood in his eyes, and yet his speech was nothing but a collection of disconnected sentences, without beginning and without end—a string of unexpected words and unexpected sentiments—colliding with one another, and jumping over one another, as they burst from his lips.

“Enough!” he concluded at last, “you understand me, and that is the great thing. A heart like yours cannot help understanding the sufferings of another. Prince, you are

the ideal of generosity; what are other men beside yourself? But you are young—accept my blessing! My principal object is to beg you to fix an hour for a most important conversation—that is my great hope, prince. My heart needs but a little friendship and sympathy, and yet I cannot always find means to satisfy it.”

“But why not now? I am ready to listen, and—”

“No, no—prince, not now! Now is a dream! And it is too, too important! It is to be the hour of Fate to me—MY OWN hour. Our interview is not to be broken in upon by every chance comer, every impertinent guest—and there are plenty of such stupid, impertinent fellows”—(he bent over and whispered mysteriously, with a funny, frightened look on his face)—“who are unworthy to tie your shoe, prince. I don’t say MINE, mind—you will understand me, prince. Only YOU understand me, prince—no one else. HE doesn’t understand me, he is absolutely—ABSOLUTELY unable to sympathize. The first qualification for understanding another is Heart.”

The prince was rather alarmed at all this, and was obliged to end by appointing the same hour of the following day for the interview desired. The general left him much comforted and far less agitated than when he had arrived.

At seven in the evening, the prince sent to request Lebedeff to pay him a visit. Lebedeff came at once, and “esteemed it an honour,” as he observed, the instant he entered the room. He acted as though there had never been the slightest suspicion of the fact that he had systematically avoided the prince for the last three days.

He sat down on the edge of his chair, smiling and making faces, and rubbing his hands, and looking as though he were in delighted expectation of hearing some important communication, which had been long guessed by all.

The prince was instantly covered with confusion; for it appeared to be plain that everyone expected something of him—that everyone looked at him as though anxious to congratulate him, and greeted him with hints, and smiles, and knowing looks.

Keller, for instance, had run into the house three times of late, “just for a moment,” and each time with the air of desiring to offer his congratulations. Colia, too, in spite of his melancholy, had once or twice begun sentences in much the same strain of suggestion or insinuation.

The prince, however, immediately began, with some show of annoyance, to question Lebedeff categorically, as to the general’s present condition, and his opinion thereon. He described the morning’s interview in a few words.

“Everyone has his worries, prince, especially in these strange and troublous times of ours,” Lebedeff replied, drily, and with the air of a man disappointed of his reasonable expectations.

“Dear me, what a philosopher you are!” laughed the prince.

Philosophy is necessary, sir—very necessary—in our day. It is too much neglected. As for me, much esteemed prince, I am sensible of having experienced the honour of your confidence in a certain matter up to a certain point, but never beyond that point. I do not for a moment complain—”

“Lebedeff, you seem to be angry for some reason!” said the prince.

“Not the least bit in the world, esteemed and revered prince! Not the least bit in the world!” cried Lebedeff, solemnly, with his hand upon his heart. “On the contrary, I am too painfully aware that neither by my position in the world, nor by my gifts of intellect and heart, nor by my riches, nor by any former conduct of mine, have I in any way deserved your confidence, which is far above my highest aspirations and hopes. Oh no, prince; I may serve you, but only as your humble slave! I am not angry, oh no! Not angry; pained perhaps, but nothing more.

“My dear Lebedeff, I—”

“Oh, nothing more, nothing more! I was saying to myself but now... ‘I am quite unworthy of friendly relations with him,’ say I; ‘but perhaps as landlord of this house I may, at some future date, in his good time, receive information as to certain imminent and much to be desired changes—’”

So saying Lebedeff fixed the prince with his sharp little eyes, still in hope that he would get his curiosity satisfied.

The prince looked back at him in amazement.

“I don’t understand what you are driving at!” he cried, almost angrily, “and, and—what an intriguer you are, Lebedeff!” he added, bursting into a fit of genuine laughter.

Lebedeff followed suit at once, and it was clear from his radiant face that he considered his prospects of satisfaction immensely improved.

“And do you know,” the prince continued, “I am amazed at your naive ways, Lebedeff! Don’t be angry with me—not only yours, everybody else’s also! You are waiting to hear something from me at this very moment with such simplicity that I declare I feel quite ashamed of myself for having nothing whatever to tell you. I swear to you solemnly, that there is nothing to tell. There! Can you take that in?” The prince laughed again.

Lebedeff assumed an air of dignity. It was true enough that he was sometimes naive to a degree in his curiosity; but he was also an excessively cunning gentleman, and the prince was almost converting him into an enemy by his repeated rebuffs. The prince did not snub Lebedeff’s curiosity, however, because he felt any contempt for him; but simply because the subject was too delicate to talk about. Only a few days before he had looked upon his own dreams almost as crimes. But Lebedeff considered the refusal as caused by personal dislike to himself, and was hurt accordingly. Indeed, there was at this moment a piece of news, most interesting to the prince, which Lebedeff knew and even had wished to tell him, but which he now kept obstinately to himself.

“And what can I do for you, esteemed prince? Since I am told you sent for me just now,” he said, after a few moments’ silence.

“Oh, it was about the general,” began the prince, waking abruptly from the fit of musing which he too had indulged in “and-and about the theft you told me of.”

“That is—er—about—what theft?”

“Oh come! just as if you didn’t understand, Lukian Timofeyovitch! What are you up to? I can’t make you out! The money, the money, sir! The four hundred roubles

that you lost that day. You came and told me about it one morning, and then went off to Petersburg. There, NOW do you understand?"

"Oh—h—h! You mean the four hundred roubles!" said Lebedeff, dragging the words out, just as though it had only just dawned upon him what the prince was talking about. "Thanks very much, prince, for your kind interest—you do me too much honour. I found the money, long ago!"

"You found it? Thank God for that!"

"Your exclamation proves the generous sympathy of your nature, prince; for four hundred roubles—to a struggling family man like myself—is no small matter!"

"I didn't mean that; at least, of course, I'm glad for your sake, too," added the prince, correcting himself, "but—how did you find it?"

"Very simply indeed! I found it under the chair upon which my coat had hung; so that it is clear the purse simply fell out of the pocket and on to the floor!"

"Under the chair? Impossible! Why, you told me yourself that you had searched every corner of the room? How could you not have looked in the most likely place of all?"

"Of course I looked there,—of course I did! Very much so! I looked and scrambled about, and felt for it, and wouldn't believe it was not there, and looked again and again. It is always so in such cases. One longs and expects to find a lost article; one sees it is not there, and the place is as hare as one's palm; and yet one returns and looks again and again, fifteen or twenty times, likely enough!"

"Oh, quite so, of course. But how was it in your case?—I don't quite understand," said the bewildered prince. "You say it wasn't there at first, and that you searched the place thoroughly, and yet it turned up on that very spot!"

"Yes, sir—on that very spot." The prince gazed strangely at Lebedeff. "And the general?" he asked, abruptly.

"The—the general? How do you mean, the general?" said Lebedeff, dubiously, as though he had not taken in the drift of the prince's remark.

"Oh, good heavens! I mean, what did the general say when the purse turned up under the chair? You and he had searched for it together there, hadn't you?"

"Quite so—together! But the second time I thought better to say nothing about finding it. I found it alone."

"But—why in the world—and the money? Was it all there?"

"I opened the purse and counted it myself; right to a single rouble."

"I think you might have come and told me," said the prince, thoughtfully.

"Oh—I didn't like to disturb you, prince, in the midst of your private and doubtless most interesting personal reflections. Besides, I wanted to appear, myself, to have found nothing. I took the purse, and opened it, and counted the money, and shut it and put it down again under the chair."

"What in the world for?"

"Oh, just out of curiosity," said Lebedeff, rubbing his hands and sniggering.

"What, it's still there then, is it? Ever since the day before yesterday?"

“Oh no! You see, I was half in hopes the general might find it. Because if I found it, why should not he too observe an object lying before his very eyes? I moved the chair several times so as to expose the purse to view, but the general never saw it. He is very absent just now, evidently. He talks and laughs and tells stories, and suddenly flies into a rage with me, goodness knows why.”

“Well, but—have you taken the purse away now?”

“No, it disappeared from under the chair in the night.”

“Where is it now, then?”

“Here,” laughed Lebedeff, at last, rising to his full height and looking pleasantly at the prince, “here, in the lining of my coat. Look, you can feel it for yourself, if you like!”

Sure enough there was something sticking out of the front of the coat—something large. It certainly felt as though it might well be the purse fallen through a hole in the pocket into the lining.

“I took it out and had a look at it; it’s all right. I’ve let it slip back into the lining now, as you see, and so I have been walking about ever since yesterday morning; it knocks against my legs when I walk along.”

“H’m! and you take no notice of it?”

“Quite so, I take no notice of it. Ha, ha! and think of this, prince, my pockets are always strong and whole, and yet, here in one night, is a huge hole. I know the phenomenon is unworthy of your notice; but such is the case. I examined the hole, and I declare it actually looks as though it had been made with a pen-knife, a most improbable contingency.”

“And—and—the general?”

“Ah, very angry all day, sir; all yesterday and all today. He shows decided bacchanalian predilections at one time, and at another is tearful and sensitive, but at any moment he is liable to paroxysms of such rage that I assure you, prince, I am quite alarmed. I am not a military man, you know. Yesterday we were sitting together in the tavern, and the lining of my coat was—quite accidentally, of course—sticking out right in front. The general squinted at it, and flew into a rage. He never looks me quite in the face now, unless he is very drunk or maudlin; but yesterday he looked at me in such a way that a shiver went all down my back. I intend to find the purse tomorrow; but till then I am going to have another night of it with him.”

“What’s the good of tormenting him like this?” cried the prince.

“I don’t torment him, prince, I don’t indeed!” cried Lebedeff, hotly. “I love him, my dear sir, I esteem him; and believe it or not, I love him all the better for this business, yes—and value him more.”

Lebedeff said this so seriously that the prince quite lost his temper with him.

“Nonsense! love him and torment him so! Why, by the very fact that he put the purse prominently before you, first under the chair and then in your lining, he shows that he does not wish to deceive you, but is anxious to beg your forgiveness in this artless way. Do you hear? He is asking your pardon. He confides in the delicacy of your

feelings, and in your friendship for him. And you can allow yourself to humiliate so thoroughly honest a man!"

"Thoroughly honest, quite so, prince, thoroughly honest!" said Lebedeff, with flashing eyes. "And only you, prince, could have found so very appropriate an expression. I honour you for it, prince. Very well, that's settled; I shall find the purse now and not tomorrow. Here, I find it and take it out before your eyes! And the money is all right. Take it, prince, and keep it till tomorrow, will you? Tomorrow or next day I'll take it back again. I think, prince, that the night after its disappearance it was buried under a bush in the garden. So I believe—what do you think of that?"

"Well, take care you don't tell him to his face that you have found the purse. Simply let him see that it is no longer in the lining of your coat, and form his own conclusions."

"Do you think so? Had I not just better tell him I have found it, and pretend I never guessed where it was?"

"No, I don't think so," said the prince, thoughtfully; "it's too late for that—that would be dangerous now. No, no! Better say nothing about it. Be nice with him, you know, but don't show him —oh, YOU know well enough—"

"I know, prince, of course I know, but I'm afraid I shall not carry it out; for to do so one needs a heart like your own. He is so very irritable just now, and so proud. At one moment he will embrace me, and the next he flies out at me and sneers at me, and then I stick the lining forward on purpose. Well, au revoir, prince, I see I am keeping you, and boring you, too, interfering with your most interesting private reflections."

"Now, do be careful! Secrecy, as before!"

"Oh, silence isn't the word! Softly, softly!"

But in spite of this conclusion to the episode, the prince remained as puzzled as ever, if not more so. He awaited next morning's interview with the general most impatiently.

IV.

THE time appointed was twelve o'clock, and the prince, returning home unexpectedly late, found the general waiting for him. At the first glance, he saw that the latter was displeased, perhaps because he had been kept waiting. The prince apologized, and quickly took a seat. He seemed strangely timid before the general this morning, for some reason, and felt as though his visitor were some piece of china which he was afraid of breaking.

On scrutinizing him, the prince soon saw that the general was quite a different man from what he had been the day before; he looked like one who had come to some momentous resolve. His calmness, however, was more apparent than real. He was courteous, but there was a suggestion of injured innocence in his manner.

"I've brought your book back," he began, indicating a book lying on the table. "Much obliged to you for lending it to me."

“Ah, yes. Well, did you read it, general? It’s curious, isn’t it?” said the prince, delighted to be able to open up conversation upon an outside subject.

“Curious enough, yes, but crude, and of course dreadful nonsense; probably the man lies in every other sentence.”

The general spoke with considerable confidence, and dragged his words out with a conceited drawl.

“Oh, but it’s only the simple tale of an old soldier who saw the French enter Moscow. Some of his remarks were wonderfully interesting. Remarks of an eye-witness are always valuable, whoever he be, don’t you think so

“Had I been the publisher I should not have printed it. As to the evidence of eye-witnesses, in these days people prefer impudent lies to the stories of men of worth and long service. I know of some notes of the year 1812, which—I have determined, prince, to leave this house, Mr. Lebedeff’s house.”

The general looked significantly at his host.

“Of course you have your own lodging at Pavlofsk at—at your daughter’s house,” began the prince, quite at a loss what to say. He suddenly recollected that the general had come for advice on a most important matter, affecting his destiny.

“At my wife’s; in other words, at my own place, my daughter’s house.”

“I beg your pardon, I—”

“I leave Lebedeff’s house, my dear prince, because I have quarrelled with this person. I broke with him last night, and am very sorry that I did not do so before. I expect respect, prince, even from those to whom I give my heart, so to speak. Prince, I have often given away my heart, and am nearly always deceived. This person was quite unworthy of the gift.”

“There is much that might be improved in him,” said the prince, moderately, “but he has some qualities which—though amid them one cannot but discern a cunning nature—reveal what is often a diverting intellect.”

The prince’s tone was so natural and respectful that the general could not possibly suspect him of any insincerity.

“Oh, that he possesses good traits, I was the first to show, when I very nearly made him a present of my friendship. I am not dependent upon his hospitality, and upon his house; I have my own family. I do not attempt to justify my own weakness. I have drunk with this man, and perhaps I deplore the fact now, but I did not take him up for the sake of drink alone (excuse the crudeness of the expression, prince); I did not make friends with him for that alone. I was attracted by his good qualities; but when the fellow declares that he was a child in 1812, and had his left leg cut off, and buried in the Vagarkoff cemetery, in Moscow, such a cock-and-bull story amounts to disrespect, my dear sir, to—to impudent exaggeration.”

“Oh, he was very likely joking; he said it for fun.”

“I quite understand you. You mean that an innocent lie for the sake of a good joke is harmless, and does not offend the human heart. Some people lie, if you like to put it so, out of pure friendship, in order to amuse their fellows; but when a man makes use

of extravagance in order to show his disrespect and to make clear how the intimacy bores him, it is time for a man of honour to break off the said intimacy., and to teach the offender his place.”

The general flushed with indignation as he spoke.

“Oh, but Lebedeff cannot have been in Moscow in 1812. He is much too young; it is all nonsense.”

“Very well, but even if we admit that he was alive in 1812, can one believe that a French chasseur pointed a cannon at him for a lark, and shot his left leg off? He says he picked his own leg up and took it away and buried it in the cemetery. He swore he had a stone put up over it with the inscription: ‘Here lies the leg of Collegiate Secretary Lebedeff,’ and on the other side, ‘Rest, beloved ashes, till the morn of joy,’ and that he has a service read over it every year (which is simply sacrilege), and goes to Moscow once a year on purpose. He invites me to Moscow in order to prove his assertion, and show me his leg’s tomb, and the very cannon that shot him; he says it’s the eleventh from the gate of the Kremlin, an old-fashioned falconet taken from the French afterwards.”

“And, meanwhile both his legs are still on his body,” said the prince, laughing. “I assure you, it is only an innocent joke, and you need not be angry about it.”

“Excuse me—wait a minute—he says that the leg we see is a wooden one, made by Tchernosvitoff.”

“They do say one can dance with those!”

“Quite so, quite so; and he swears that his wife never found out that one of his legs was wooden all the while they were married. When I showed him the ridiculousness of all this, he said, ‘Well, if you were one of Napoleon’s pages in 1812, you might let me bury my leg in the Moscow cemetery.’

“Why, did you say—” began the prince, and paused in confusion.

The general gazed at his host disdainfully.

“Oh, go on,” he said, “finish your sentence, by all means. Say how odd it appears to you that a man fallen to such a depth of humiliation as I, can ever have been the actual eye-witness of great events. Go on, I don’t mind! Has he found time to tell you scandal about me?”

“No, I’ve heard nothing of this from Lebedeff, if you mean Lebedeff.”

“H’m; I thought differently. You see, we were talking over this period of history. I was criticizing a current report of something which then happened, and having been myself an eye-witness of the occurrence—you are smiling, prince—you are looking at my face as if—”

“Oh no! not at all—I—”

“I am rather young-looking, I know; but I am actually older than I appear to be. I was ten or eleven in the year 1812. I don’t know my age exactly, but it has always been a weakness of mine to make it out less than it really is.

"I assure you, general, I do not in the least doubt your statement. One of our living autobiographers states that when he was a small baby in Moscow in 1812 the French soldiers fed him with bread."

"Well, there you see!" said the general, condescendingly. "There is nothing whatever unusual about my tale. Truth very often appears to be impossible. I was a page—it sounds strange, I dare say. Had I been fifteen years old I should probably have been terribly frightened when the French arrived, as my mother was (who had been too slow about clearing out of Moscow); but as I was only just ten I was not in the least alarmed, and rushed through the crowd to the very door of the palace when Napoleon alighted from his horse."

"Undoubtedly, at ten years old you would not have felt the sense of fear, as you say," blurted out the prince, horribly uncomfortable in the sensation that he was just about to blush.

"Of course; and it all happened so easily and naturally. And yet, were a novelist to describe the episode, he would put in all kinds of impossible and incredible details."

"Oh," cried the prince, "I have often thought that! Why, I know of a murder, for the sake of a watch. It's in all the papers now. But if some writer had invented it, all the critics would have jumped down his throat and said the thing was too improbable for anything. And yet you read it in the paper, and you can't help thinking that out of these strange disclosures is to be gained the full knowledge of Russian life and character. You said that well, general; it is so true," concluded the prince, warmly, delighted to have found a refuge from the fiery blushes which had covered his face.

"Yes, it's quite true, isn't it?" cried the general, his eyes sparkling with gratification. "A small boy, a child, would naturally realize no danger; he would shove his way through the crowds to see the shine and glitter of the uniforms, and especially the great man of whom everyone was speaking, for at that time all the world had been talking of no one but this man for some years past. The world was full of his name; I—so to speak—drew it in with my mother's milk. Napoleon, passing a couple of paces from me, caught sight of me accidentally. I was very well dressed, and being all alone, in that crowd, as you will easily imagine..."

"Oh, of course! Naturally the sight impressed him, and proved to him that not ALL the aristocracy had left Moscow; that at least some nobles and their children had remained behind."

Just so just so! He wanted to win over the aristocracy! When his eagle eye fell on me, mine probably flashed back in response. 'Voila un garcon bien eveille! Qui est ton pere?' I immediately replied, almost panting with excitement, 'A general, who died on the battle-fields of his country! "Le fils d'un boyard et d'un brave, pardessus le marche. J'aime les boyards. M'aimes-tu, petit?' To this keen question I replied as keenly, 'The Russian heart can recognize a great man even in the bitter enemy of his country.' At least, I don't remember the exact words, you know, but the idea was as I say. Napoleon was struck; he thought a minute and then said to his suite: 'I like that boy's pride; if all Russians think like this child', then he didn't finish, hut went on and entered the

palace. I instantly mixed with his suite, and followed him. I was already in high favour. I remember when he came into the first hall, the emperor stopped before a portrait of the Empress Katherine, and after a thoughtful glance remarked, 'That was a great woman,' and passed on.

"Well, in a couple of days I was known all over the palace and the Kremlin as 'le petit boyard.' I only went home to sleep. They were nearly out of their minds about me at home. A couple of days after this, Napoleon's page, De Bazancour, died; he had not been able to stand the trials of the campaign. Napoleon remembered me; I was taken away without explanation; the dead page's uniform was tried on me, and when I was taken before the emperor, dressed in it, he nodded his head to me, and I was told that I was appointed to the vacant post of page.

"Well, I was glad enough, for I had long felt the greatest sympathy for this man; and then the pretty uniform and all that—only a child, you know—and so on. It was a dark green dress coat with gold buttons—red facings, white trousers, and a white silk waistcoat—silk stockings, shoes with buckles, and top-boots if I were riding out with his majesty or with the suite.

"Though the position of all of us at that time was not particularly brilliant, and the poverty was dreadful all round, yet the etiquette at court was strictly preserved, and the more strictly in proportion to the growth of the forebodings of disaster."

"Quite so, quite so, of course!" murmured the poor prince, who didn't know where to look. "Your memoirs would be most interesting."

The general was, of course, repeating what he had told Lebedeff the night before, and thus brought it out glibly enough, but here he looked suspiciously at the prince out of the corners of his eyes.

"My memoirs!" he began, with redoubled pride and dignity. "Write my memoirs? The idea has not tempted me. And yet, if you please, my memoirs have long been written, but they shall not see the light until dust returns to dust. Then, I doubt not, they will be translated into all languages, not of course on account of their actual literary merit, but because of the great events of which I was the actual witness, though but a child at the time. As a child, I was able to penetrate into the secrecy of the great man's private room. At nights I have heard the groans and wailings of this 'giant in distress.' He could feel no shame in weeping before such a mere child as I was, though I understood even then that the reason for his suffering was the silence of the Emperor Alexander."

"Yes, of course; he had written letters to the latter with proposals of peace, had he not?" put in the prince.

"We did not know the details of his proposals, but he wrote letter after letter, all day and every day. He was dreadfully agitated. Sometimes at night I would throw myself upon his breast with tears (Oh, how I loved that man!). 'Ask forgiveness, Oh, ask forgiveness of the Emperor Alexander!' I would cry. I should have said, of course, 'Make peace with Alexander,' but as a child I expressed my idea in the naive way recorded. 'Oh, my child,' he would say (he loved to talk to me and seemed to forget

my tender years), ‘Oh, my child, I am ready to kiss Alexander’s feet, but I hate and abominate the King of Prussia and the Austrian Emperor, and—and—but you know nothing of politics, my child.’ He would pull up, remembering whom he was speaking to, but his eyes would sparkle for a long while after this. Well now, if I were to describe all this, and I have seen greater events than these, all these critical gentlemen of the press and political parties—Oh, no thanks! I’m their very humble servant, but no thanks!”

“Quite so—parties—you are very right,” said the prince. “I was reading a book about Napoleon and the Waterloo campaign only the other day, by Charasse, in which the author does not attempt to conceal his joy at Napoleon’s discomfiture at every page. Well now, I don’t like that; it smells of ‘party,’ you know. You are quite right. And were you much occupied with your service under Napoleon?”

The general was in ecstasies, for the prince’s remarks, made, as they evidently were, in all seriousness and simplicity, quite dissipated the last relics of his suspicion.

“I know Charasse’s book! Oh! I was so angry with his work! I wrote to him and said—I forget what, at this moment. You ask whether I was very busy under the Emperor? Oh no! I was called ‘page,’ but hardly took my duty seriously. Besides, Napoleon very soon lost hope of conciliating the Russians, and he would have forgotten all about me had he not loved me—for personal reasons—I don’t mind saying so now. My heart was greatly drawn to him, too. My duties were light. I merely had to be at the palace occasionally to escort the Emperor out riding, and that was about all. I rode very fairly well. He used to have a ride before dinner, and his suite on those occasions were generally Davoust, myself, and Roustan.”

“Constant?” said the prince, suddenly, and quite involuntarily.

“No; Constant was away then, taking a letter to the Empress Josephine. Instead of him there were always a couple of orderlies—and that was all, excepting, of course, the generals and marshals whom Napoleon always took with him for the inspection of various localities, and for the sake of consultation generally. I remember there was one—Davoust—nearly always with him—a big man with spectacles. They used to argue and quarrel sometimes. Once they were in the Emperor’s study together—just those two and myself—I was unobserved—and they argued, and the Emperor seemed to be agreeing to something under protest. Suddenly his eye fell on me and an idea seemed to flash across him.

“‘Child,’ he said, abruptly. ‘If I were to recognize the Russian orthodox religion and emancipate the serfs, do you think Russia would come over to me?’”

“‘Never!’ I cried, indignantly.”

“The Emperor was much struck.”

“‘In the flashing eyes of this patriotic child I read and accept the fiat of the Russian people. Enough, Davoust, it is mere phantasy on our part. Come, let’s hear your other project.’”

“‘Yes, but that was a great idea,’ said the prince, clearly interested. “You ascribe it to Davoust, do you?”

“Well, at all events, they were consulting together at the time. Of course it was the idea of an eagle, and must have originated with Napoleon; but the other project was good too—it was the ‘Conseil du lion!’ as Napoleon called it. This project consisted in a proposal to occupy the Kremlin with the whole army; to arm and fortify it scientifically, to kill as many horses as could be got, and salt their flesh, and spend the winter there; and in spring to fight their way out. Napoleon liked the idea—it attracted him. We rode round the Kremlin walls every day, and Napoleon used to give orders where they were to be patched, where built up, where pulled down and so on. All was decided at last. They were alone together—those two and myself.

“Napoleon was walking up and down with folded arms. I could not take my eyes off his face—my heart beat loudly and painfully.

“‘I’m off,’ said Davoust. ‘Where to?’ asked Napoleon.

“‘To salt horse-flesh,’ said Davoust. Napoleon shuddered—his fate was being decided.

“‘Child,’ he addressed me suddenly, ‘what do you think of our plan?’ Of course he only applied to me as a sort of toss-up, you know. I turned to Davoust and addressed my reply to him. I said, as though inspired:

“‘Escape, general! Go home!—’

“The project was abandoned; Davoust shrugged his shoulders and went out, whispering to himself—‘Bah, il devient superstitieux!’ Next morning the order to retreat was given.”

“All this is most interesting,” said the prince, very softly, “if it really was so—that is, I mean—” he hastened to correct himself.

“Oh, my dear prince,” cried the general, who was now so intoxicated with his own narrative that he probably could not have pulled up at the most patent indiscretion.

“You say, if it really was so!’ There was more—much more, I assure you! These are merely a few little political acts. I tell you I was the eye-witness of the nightly sorrow and groanings of the great man, and of that no one can speak but myself. Towards the end he wept no more, though he continued to emit an occasional groan; but his face grew more overcast day by day, as though Eternity were wrapping its gloomy mantle about him. Occasionally we passed whole hours of silence together at night, Roustan snoring in the next room—that fellow slept like a pig. ‘But he’s loyal to me and my dynasty,’ said Napoleon of him.

“Sometimes it was very painful to me, and once he caught me with tears in my eyes. He looked at me kindly. ‘You are sorry for me,’ he said, ‘you, my child, and perhaps one other child—my son, the King of Rome—may grieve for me. All the rest hate me; and my brothers are the first to betray me in misfortune.’ I sobbed and threw myself into his arms. He could not resist me—he burst into tears, and our tears mingled as we folded each other in a close embrace.

“‘Write, oh, write a letter to the Empress Josephine!’ I cried, sobbing. Napoleon started, reflected, and said, ‘You remind me of a third heart which loves me. Thank

you, my friend;’ and then and there he sat down and wrote that letter to Josephine, with which Constant was sent off next day.”

“You did a good action,” said the prince, “for in the midst of his angry feelings you insinuated a kind thought into his heart.”

“Just so, prince, just so. How well you bring out that fact! Because your own heart is good!” cried the ecstatic old gentleman, and, strangely enough, real tears glistened in his eyes.” Yes, prince, it was a wonderful spectacle. And, do you know, I all but went off to Paris, and should assuredly have shared his solitary exile with him; but, alas, our destinies were otherwise ordered! We parted, he to his island, where I am sure he thought of the weeping child who had embraced him so affectionately at parting in Moscow; and I was sent off to the cadet corps, where I found nothing but roughness and harsh discipline. Alas, my happy days were done!

“‘I do not wish to deprive your mother of you, and, therefore, I will not ask you to go with me,’ he said, the morning of his departure, ‘but I should like to do something for you.’ He was mounting his horse as he spoke. ‘Write something in my sister’s album for me,’ I said rather timidly, for he was in a state of great dejection at the moment. He turned, called for a pen, took the album. ‘How old is your sister?’ he asked, holding the pen in his hand. ‘Three years old,’ I said. ‘Ah, petite fille alors!’ and he wrote in the album:

‘Ne mentes jamais! NAPOLEON (votre ami sincere).’

“Such advice, and at such a moment, you must allow, prince, was—”

“Yes, quite so; very remarkable.”

“This page of the album, framed in gold, hung on the wall of my sister’s drawing-room all her life, in the most conspicuous place, till the day of her death; where it is now, I really don’t know. Heavens! it’s two o’clock! HOW I have kept you, prince! It is really most unpardonable of me.

The general rose.

“Oh, not in the least,” said the prince. ” On the contrary, I have been so much interested, I’m really very much obliged to you.”

“Prince,” said the general, pressing his hand, and looking at him with flashing eyes, and an expression as though he were under the influence of a sudden thought which had come upon him with stunning force. “Prince, you are so kind, so simple-minded, that sometimes I really feel sorry for you! I gaze at you with a feeling of real affection. Oh, Heaven bless you! May your life blossom and fructify in love. Mine is over. Forgive me, forgive me!”

He left the room quickly, covering his face with his hands.

The prince could not doubt the sincerity of his agitation. He understood, too, that the old man had left the room intoxicated with his own success. The general belonged to that class of liars, who, in spite of their transports of lying, invariably suspect that they are not believed. On this occasion, when he recovered from his exaltation, he would probably suspect Muishkin of pitying him, and feel insulted.

“Have I been acting rightly in allowing him to develop such vast resources of imagination?” the prince asked himself. But his answer was a fit of violent laughter which lasted ten whole minutes. He tried to reproach himself for the laughing fit, but eventually concluded that he needn’t do so, since in spite of it he was truly sorry for the old man. The same evening he received a strange letter, short but decided. The general informed him that they must part for ever; that he was grateful, but that even from him he could not accept “signs of sympathy which were humiliating to the dignity of a man already miserable enough.”

When the prince heard that the old man had gone to Nina Alexandrovna, though, he felt almost easy on his account.

We have seen, however, that the general paid a visit to Lizabetha Prokofievna and caused trouble there, the final upshot being that he frightened Mrs. Epanchin, and angered her by bitter hints as to his son Gania.

He had been turned out in disgrace, eventually, and this was the cause of his bad night and quarrelsome day, which ended in his sudden departure into the street in a condition approaching insanity, as recorded before.

Colia did not understand the position. He tried severity with his father, as they stood in the street after the latter had cursed the household, hoping to bring him round that way.

“Well, where are we to go to now, father?” he asked. “You don’t want to go to the prince’s; you have quarrelled with Lebedeff; you have no money; I never have any; and here we are in the middle of the road, in a nice sort of mess.”

“Better to be of a mess than in a mess! I remember making a joke something like that at the mess in eighteen hundred and forty—forty—I forget. ‘Where is my youth, where is my golden youth?’ Who was it said that, Colia?”

“It was Gogol, in *Dead Souls*, father,” cried Colia, glancing at him in some alarm.

“‘*Dead Souls*,’ yes, of course, dead. When I die, Colia, you must engrave on my tomb:

“‘Here lies a Dead Soul, Shame pursues me.’

“Who said that, Colia?”

“I don’t know, father.”

“There was no Eropegoff? Eroshka Eropegoff?” he cried, suddenly, stopping in the road in a frenzy. “No Eropegoff! And my own son to say it! Eropegoff was in the place of a brother to me for eleven months. I fought a duel for him. He was married afterwards, and then killed on the field of battle. The bullet struck the cross on my breast and glanced off straight into his temple. ‘I’ll never forget you,’ he cried, and expired. I served my country well and honestly, Colia, but shame, shame has pursued me! You and Nina will come to my grave, Colia; poor Nina, I always used to call her Nina in the old days, and how she loved.... Nina, Nina, oh, Nina. What have I ever done to deserve your forgiveness and long-suffering? Oh, Colia, your mother has an angelic spirit, an angelic spirit, Colia!”

"I know that, father. Look here, dear old father, come back home! Let's go back to mother. Look, she ran after us when we came out. What have you stopped her for, just as though you didn't take in what I said? Why are you crying, father?"

Poor Colia cried himself, and kissed the old man's hands

"You kiss my hands, MINE?"

"Yes, yes, yours, yours! What is there to surprise anyone in that? Come, come, you mustn't go on like this, crying in the middle of the road; and you a general too, a military man! Come, let's go back."

"God bless you, dear boy, for being respectful to a disgraced man. Yes, to a poor disgraced old fellow, your father. You shall have such a son yourself; le roi de Rome. Oh, curses on this house!"

"Come, come, what does all this mean?" cried Colia beside himself at last. "What is it? What has happened to you? Why don't you wish to come back home? Why have you gone out of your mind, like this?"

"I'll explain it, I'll explain all to you. Don't shout! You shall hear. Le roi de Rome. Oh, I am sad, I am melancholy!

"Nurse, where is your tomb?"

"Who said that, Colia?"

"I don't know, I don't know who said it. Come home at once; come on! I'll punch Gania's head myself, if you like—only come. Oh, where are you off to again?" The general was dragging him away towards the door a house near. He sat down on the step, still holding Colia by the hand.

"Bend down—bend down your ear. I'll tell you all—disgrace—bend down, I'll tell you in your ear."

"What are you dreaming of?" said poor, frightened Colia, stooping down towards the old man, all the same.

"Le roi de Rome," whispered the general, trembling all over.

"What? What DO you mean? What roi de Rome?"

"I-I," the general continued to whisper, clinging more and more tightly to the boy's shoulder. "I—wish—to tell you—all—Maria- -Maria Petrovna—Su—Su—Su....."

Colia broke loose, seized his father by the shoulders, and stared into his eyes with frenzied gaze. The old man had grown livid— his lips were shaking, convulsions were passing over his features. Suddenly he leant over and began to sink slowly into Colia's arms.

"He's got a stroke!" cried Colia, loudly, realizing what was the matter at last.

V.

IN point of fact, Varia had rather exaggerated the certainty of her news as to the prince's betrothal to Aglaya. Very likely, with the perspicacity of her sex, she gave out as an accomplished fact what she felt was pretty sure to become a fact in a few days.

Perhaps she could not resist the satisfaction of pouring one last drop of bitterness into her brother Gania's cup, in spite of her love for him. At all events, she had been unable to obtain any definite news from the Epanchin girls—the most she could get out of them being hints and surmises, and so on. Perhaps Aglaya's sisters had merely been pumping Varia for news while pretending to impart information; or perhaps, again, they had been unable to resist the feminine gratification of teasing a friend—for, after all this time, they could scarcely have helped divining the aim of her frequent visits.

On the other hand, the prince, although he had told Lebedeff,—as we know, that nothing had happened, and that he had nothing to impart,—the prince may have been in error. Something strange seemed to have happened, without anything definite having actually happened. Varia had guessed that with her true feminine instinct.

How or why it came about that everyone at the Epanchins' became imbued with one conviction—that something very important had happened to Aglaya, and that her fate was in process of settlement—it would be very difficult to explain. But no sooner had this idea taken root, than all at once declared that they had seen and observed it long ago; that they had remarked it at the time of the “poor knight” joke, and even before, though they had been unwilling to believe in such nonsense.

So said the sisters. Of course, Lizabetha Prokofievna had foreseen it long before the rest; her “heart had been sore” for a long while, she declared, and it was now so sore that she appeared to be quite overwhelmed, and the very thought of the prince became distasteful to her.

There was a question to be decided—most important, but most difficult; so much so, that Mrs. Epanchin did not even see how to put it into words. Would the prince do or not? Was all this good or bad? If good (which might be the case, of course), WHY good? If bad (which was hardly doubtful), WHEREIN, especially, bad? Even the general, the paterfamilias, though astonished at first, suddenly declared that, “upon his honour, he really believed he had fancied something of the kind, after all. At first, it seemed a new idea, and then, somehow, it looked as familiar as possible.” His wife frowned him down there. This was in the morning; but in the evening, alone with his wife, he had given tongue again.

“Well, really, you know”—(silence)—“of course, you know all this is very strange, if true, which I cannot deny; but”—(silence).—” But, on the other hand, if one looks things in the face, you know—upon my honour, the prince is a rare good fellow—and—and—and—well, his name, you know—your family name—all this looks well, and perpetuates the name and title and all that—which at this moment is not standing so high as it might—from one point of view—don't you know? The world, the world is the world, of course—and people will talk—and—and—the prince has property, you know—if it is not very large—and then he—he—” (Continued silence, and collapse of the general.)

Hearing these words from her husband, Lizabetha Prokofievna was driven beside herself.

According to her opinion, the whole thing had been one huge, fantastical, absurd, unpardonable mistake. "First of all, this prince is an idiot, and, secondly, he is a fool—knows nothing of the world, and has no place in it. Whom can he be shown to? Where can you take him to? What will old Bielokonski say? We never thought of such a husband as THAT for our Aglaya!"

Of course, the last argument was the chief one. The maternal heart trembled with indignation to think of such an absurdity, although in that heart there rose another voice, which said: "And WHY is not the prince such a husband as you would have desired for Aglaya?" It was this voice which annoyed Lizabetha Prokofievna more than anything else.

For some reason or other, the sisters liked the idea of the prince. They did not even consider it very strange; in a word, they might be expected at any moment to range themselves strongly on his side. But both of them decided to say nothing either way. It had always been noticed in the family that the stronger Mrs. Epanchin's opposition was to any project, the nearer she was, in reality, to giving in.

Alexandra, however, found it difficult to keep absolute silence on the subject. Long since holding, as she did, the post of "confidential adviser to mamma," she was now perpetually called in council, and asked her opinion, and especially her assistance, in order to recollect "how on earth all this happened?" Why did no one see it? Why did no one say anything about it? What did all that wretched "poor knight" joke mean? Why was she, Lizabetha Prokofievna, driven to think, and foresee, and worry for everybody, while they all sucked their thumbs, and counted the crows in the garden, and did nothing? At first, Alexandra had been very careful, and had merely replied that perhaps her father's remark was not so far out: that, in the eyes of the world, probably the choice of the prince as a husband for one of the Epanchin girls would be considered a very wise one. Warming up, however, she added that the prince was by no means a fool, and never had been; and that as to "place in the world," no one knew what the position of a respectable person in Russia would imply in a few years—whether it would depend on successes in the government service, on the old system, or what.

To all this her mother replied that Alexandra was a freethinker, and that all this was due to that "cursed woman's rights question."

Half an hour after this conversation, she went off to town, and thence to the Kamenny Ostrof, ["Stone Island," a suburb and park of St. Petersburg] to see Princess Bielokonski, who had just arrived from Moscow on a short visit. The princess was Aglaya's godmother.

"Old Bielokonski" listened to all the fevered and despairing lamentations of Lizabetha Prokofievna without the least emotion; the tears of this sorrowful mother did not evoke answering sighs—in fact, she laughed at her. She was a dreadful old despot, this princess; she could not allow equality in anything, not even in friendship of the oldest standing, and she insisted on treating Mrs. Epanchin as her protegee, as she had been thirty-five years ago. She could never put up with the independence and energy of

Lizabetha's character. She observed that, as usual, the whole family had gone much too far ahead, and had converted a fly into an elephant; that, so far as she had heard their story, she was persuaded that nothing of any seriousness had occurred; that it would surely be better to wait until something DID happen; that the prince, in her opinion, was a very decent young fellow, though perhaps a little eccentric, through illness, and not quite as weighty in the world as one could wish. The worst feature was, she said, Nastasia Philipovna.

Lizabetha Prokofievna well understood that the old lady was angry at the failure of Evgenie Pavlovitch—her own recommendation. She returned home to Pavlofsk in a worse humour than when she left, and of course everybody in the house suffered. She pitched into everyone, because, she declared, they had 'gone mad.' Why were things always mismanaged in her house? Why had everybody been in such a frantic hurry in this matter? So far as she could see, nothing whatever had happened. Surely they had better wait and see what was to happen, instead of making mountains out of molehills.

And so the conclusion of the matter was that it would be far better to take it quietly, and wait coolly to see what would turn up. But, alas! peace did not reign for more than ten minutes. The first blow dealt to its power was in certain news communicated to Lizabetha Prokofievna as to events which had happened during her trip to see the princess. (This trip had taken place the day after that on which the prince had turned up at the Epanchins at nearly one o'clock at night, thinking it was nine.)

The sisters replied candidly and fully enough to their mother's impatient questions on her return. They said, in the first place, that nothing particular had happened since her departure; that the prince had been, and that Aglaya had kept him waiting a long while before she appeared—half an hour, at least; that she had then come in, and immediately asked the prince to have a game of chess; that the prince did not know the game, and Aglaya had beaten him easily; that she had been in a wonderfully merry mood, and had laughed at the prince, and chaffed him so unmercifully that one was quite sorry to see his wretched expression.

She had then asked him to play cards—the game called "little fools." At this game the tables were turned completely, for the prince had shown himself a master at it. Aglaya had cheated and changed cards, and stolen others, in the most bare-faced way, but, in spite of everything the prince had beaten her hopelessly five times running, and she had been left "little fool" each time.

Aglaya then lost her temper, and began to say such awful things to the prince that he laughed no more, but grew dreadfully pale, especially when she said that she should not remain in the house with him, and that he ought to be ashamed of coming to their house at all, especially at night, "AFTER ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED."

So saying, she had left the room, banging the door after her, and the prince went off, looking as though he were on his way to a funeral, in spite of all their attempts at consolation.

Suddenly, a quarter of an hour after the prince's departure, Aglaya had rushed out of her room in such a hurry that she had not even wiped her eyes, which were full of

tears. She came back because Colia had brought a hedgehog. Everybody came in to see the hedgehog. In answer to their questions Colia explained that the hedgehog was not his, and that he had left another boy, Kostia Lebedeff, waiting for him outside. Kostia was too shy to come in, because he was carrying a hatchet; they had bought the hedgehog and the hatchet from a peasant whom they had met on the road. He had offered to sell them the hedgehog, and they had paid fifty copecks for it; and the hatchet had so taken their fancy that they had made up their minds to buy it of their own accord. On hearing this, Aglaya urged Colia to sell her the hedgehog; she even called him "dear Colia," in trying to coax him. He refused for a long time, but at last he could hold out no more, and went to fetch Kostia Lebedeff. The latter appeared, carrying his hatchet, and covered with confusion. Then it came out that the hedgehog was not theirs, but the property of a schoolmate, one Petroff, who had given them some money to buy Schiosser's History for him, from another schoolfellow who at that moment was driven to raising money by the sale of his books. Colia and Kostia were about to make this purchase for their friend when chance brought the hedgehog to their notice, and they had succumbed to the temptation of buying it. They were now taking Petroff the hedgehog and hatchet which they had bought with his money, instead of Schiosser's History. But Aglaya so entreated them that at last they consented to sell her the hedgehog. As soon as she had got possession of it, she put it in a wicker basket with Colia's help, and covered it with a napkin. Then she said to Colia: "Go and take this hedgehog to the prince from me, and ask him to accept it as a token of my profound respect." Colia joyfully promised to do the errand, but he demanded explanations. "What does the hedgehog mean? What is the meaning of such a present?" Aglaya replied that it was none of his business. "I am sure that there is some allegory about it," Colia persisted. Aglaya grew angry, and called him "a silly boy." "If I did not respect all women in your person," replied Colia, "and if my own principles would permit it, I would soon prove to you, that I know how to answer such an insult!" But, in the end, Colia went off with the hedgehog in great delight, followed by Kostia Lebedeff. Aglaya's annoyance was soon over, and seeing that Colia was swinging the hedgehog's basket violently to and fro, she called out to him from the verandah, as if they had never quarrelled: "Colia, dear, please take care not to drop him!" Colia appeared to have no grudge against her, either, for he stopped, and answered most cordially: "No, I will not drop him! Don't be afraid, Aglaya Ivanovna!" After which he went on his way. Aglaya burst out laughing and ran up to her room, highly delighted. Her good spirits lasted the whole day.

All this filled poor Lizabetha's mind with chaotic confusion. What on earth did it all mean? The most disturbing feature was the hedgehog. What was the symbolic signification of a hedgehog? What did they understand by it? What underlay it? Was it a cryptic message?

Poor General Epanchin "put his foot in it" by answering the above questions in his own way. He said there was no cryptic message at all. As for the hedgehog, it was just a hedgehog, which meant nothing—unless, indeed, it was a pledge of friendship,—the

sign of forgetting of offences and so on. At all events, it was a joke, and, of course, a most pardonable and innocent one.

We may as well remark that the general had guessed perfectly accurately.

The prince, returning home from the interview with Aglaya, had sat gloomy and depressed for half an hour. He was almost in despair when Colia arrived with the hedgehog.

Then the sky cleared in a moment. The prince seemed to arise from the dead; he asked Colia all about it, made him repeat the story over and over again, and laughed and shook hands with the boys in his delight.

It seemed clear to the prince that Aglaya forgave him, and that he might go there again this very evening; and in his eyes that was not only the main thing, but everything in the world.

“What children we are still, Colia!” he cried at last, enthusiastically,—“and how delightful it is that we can be children still!”

“Simply—my dear prince,—simply she is in love with you,—that’s the whole of the secret!” replied Colia, with authority.

The prince blushed, but this time he said nothing. Colia burst out laughing and clapped his hands. A minute later the prince laughed too, and from this moment until the evening he looked at his watch every other minute to see how much time he had to wait before evening came.

But the situation was becoming rapidly critical.

Mrs. Epanchin could bear her suspense no longer, and in spite of the opposition of husband and daughters, she sent for Aglaya, determined to get a straightforward answer out of her, once for all.

“Otherwise,” she observed hysterically, “I shall die before evening.”

It was only now that everyone realized to what a ridiculous dead-lock the whole matter had been brought. Excepting feigned surprise, indignation, laughter, and jeering—both at the prince and at everyone who asked her questions,—nothing could be got out of Aglaya.

Lizabetha Prokofievna went to bed and only rose again in time for tea, when the prince might be expected.

She awaited him in trembling agitation; and when he at last arrived she nearly went off into hysterics.

Muishkin himself came in very timidly. He seemed to feel his way, and looked in each person’s eyes in a questioning way,—for Aglaya was absent, which fact alarmed him at once.

This evening there were no strangers present—no one but the immediate members of the family. Prince S. was still in town, occupied with the affairs of Evgenie Pavlovitch’s uncle.

“I wish at least HE would come and say something!” complained poor Lizabetha Prokofievna.

The general sat still with a most preoccupied air. The sisters were looking very serious and did not speak a word, and Lizabetha Prokofievna did not know how to commence the conversation.

At length she plunged into an energetic and hostile criticism of railways, and glared at the prince defiantly.

Alas Aglaya still did not come—and the prince was quite lost. He had the greatest difficulty in expressing his opinion that railways were most useful institutions,—and in the middle of his speech Adelaida laughed, which threw him into a still worse state of confusion.

At this moment in marched Aglaya, as calm and collected as could be. She gave the prince a ceremonious bow and solemnly took up a prominent position near the big round table. She looked at the prince questioningly.

All present realized that the moment for the settlement of perplexities had arrived.

“Did you get my hedgehog?” she inquired, firmly and almost angrily.

Yes, I got it,” said the prince, blushing.

“Tell us now, at once, what you made of the present? I must have you answer this question for mother’s sake; she needs pacifying, and so do all the rest of the family!”

“Look here, Aglaya—” began the general.

“This—this is going beyond all limits!” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, suddenly alarmed.

“It is not in the least beyond all limits, mamma!” said her daughter, firmly. “I sent the prince a hedgehog this morning, and I wish to hear his opinion of it. Go on, prince.”

“What—what sort of opinion, Aglaya Ivanovna?”

“About the hedgehog.”

“That is—I suppose you wish to know how I received the hedgehog, Aglaya Ivanovna,—or, I should say, how I regarded your sending him to me? In that case, I may tell you—in a word—that I—in fact—”

He paused, breathless.

“Come—you haven’t told us much!” said Aglaya, after waiting some five seconds. “Very well, I am ready to drop the hedgehog, if you like; but I am anxious to be able to clear up this accumulation of misunderstandings. Allow me to ask you, prince,—I wish to hear from you, personally—are you making me an offer, or not?”

“Gracious heavens!” exclaimed Lizabetha Prokofievna. The prince started. The general stiffened in his chair; the sisters frowned.

“Don’t deceive me now, prince—tell the truth. All these people persecute me with astounding questions—about you. Is there any ground for all these questions, or not? Come!”

“I have not asked you to marry me yet, Aglaya Ivanovna,” said the prince, becoming suddenly animated; “but you know yourself how much I love you and trust you.”

“No—I asked you this—answer this! Do you intend to ask for my band, or not?”

“Yes—I do ask for it!” said the prince, more dead than alive now.

There was a general stir in the room.

"No—no—my dear girl," began the general. "You cannot proceed like this, Aglaya, if that's how the matter stands. It's impossible. Prince, forgive it, my dear fellow, but—Lizabeta Prokofievna!"—he appealed to his spouse for help—"you must really—"

"Not I—not I! I retire from all responsibility," said Lizabeta Prokofievna, with a wave of the hand.

"Allow me to speak, please, mamma," said Aglaya. "I think I ought to have something to say in the matter. An important moment of my destiny is about to be decided"—(this is how Aglaya expressed herself)—"and I wish to find out how the matter stands, for my own sake, though I am glad you are all here. Allow me to ask you, prince, since you cherish those intentions, how you consider that you will provide for my happiness?"

"I—I don't quite know how to answer your question, Aglaya Ivanovna. What is there to say to such a question? And—and must I answer?"

"I think you are rather overwhelmed and out of breath. Have a little rest, and try to recover yourself. Take a glass of water, or—but they'll give you some tea directly."

"I love you, Aglaya Ivanovna,—I love you very much. I love only you—and—please don't jest about it, for I do love you very much."

"Well, this matter is important. We are not children—we must look into it thoroughly. Now then, kindly tell me—what does your fortune consist of?"

"No—Aglaya—come, enough of this, you mustn't behave like this," said her father, in dismay.

"It's disgraceful," said Lizabeta Prokofievna in a loud whisper.

"She's mad—quite!" said Alexandra.

"Fortune—money—do you mean?" asked the prince in some surprise.

"Just so."

"I have now—let's see—I have a hundred and thirty-five thousand roubles," said the prince, blushing violently.

"Is that all, really?" said Aglaya, candidly, without the slightest show of confusion. "However, it's not so bad, especially if managed with economy. Do you intend to serve?"

"I—I intended to try for a certificate as private tutor."

"Very good. That would increase our income nicely. Have you any intention of being a Kammer-junker?"

"A Kammer-junker? I had not thought of it, but—"

But here the two sisters could restrain themselves no longer, and both of them burst into irrepressible laughter.

Adelaida had long since detected in Aglaya's features the gathering signs of an approaching storm of laughter, which she restrained with amazing self-control.

Aglaya looked menacingly at her laughing sisters, but could not contain herself any longer, and the next minute she too had burst into an irrepressible, and almost hysterical, fit of mirth. At length she jumped up, and ran out of the room.

"I knew it was all a joke!" cried Adelaida. "I felt it ever since—since the hedgehog."

"No, no! I cannot allow this,—this is a little too much," cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, exploding with rage, and she rose from her seat and followed Aglaya out of the room as quickly as she could.

The two sisters hurriedly went after her.

The prince and the general were the only two persons left in the room.

"It's—it's really—now could you have imagined anything like it, Lef Nicolaievitch?" cried the general. He was evidently so much agitated that he hardly knew what he wished to say. "Seriously now, seriously I mean—"

"I only see that Aglaya Ivanovna is laughing at me," said the poor prince, sadly.

"Wait a bit, my boy, I'll just go—you stay here, you know. But do just explain, if you can, Lef Nicolaievitch, how in the world has all this come about? And what does it all mean? You must understand, my dear fellow; I am a father, you see, and I ought to be allowed to understand the matter—do explain, I beg you!"

"I love Aglaya Ivanovna—she knows it,—and I think she must have long known it." The general shrugged his shoulders.

"Strange—it's strange," he said, "and you love her very much?"

"Yes, very much."

"Well—it's all most strange to me. That is—my dear fellow, it is such a surprise—such a blow—that... You see, it is not your financial position (though I should not object if you were a bit richer)—I am thinking of my daughter's happiness, of course, and the thing is—are you able to give her the happiness she deserves? And then—is all this a joke on her part, or is she in earnest? I don't mean on your side, but on hers."

At this moment Alexandra's voice was heard outside the door, calling out "Papa!"

"Wait for me here, my boy—will you? Just wait and think it all over, and I'll come back directly," he said hurriedly, and made off with what looked like the rapidity of alarm in response to Alexandra's call.

He found the mother and daughter locked in one another's arms, mingling their tears.

These were the tears of joy and peace and reconciliation. Aglaya was kissing her mother's lips and cheeks and hands; they were hugging each other in the most ardent way.

"There, look at her now—Ivan Fedorovitch! Here she is—all of her! This is our REAL Aglaya at last!" said Lizabetha Prokofievna.

Aglaya raised her happy, tearful face from her mother's breast, glanced at her father, and burst out laughing. She sprang at him and hugged him too, and kissed him over and over again. She then rushed back to her mother and hid her face in the maternal bosom, and there indulged in more tears. Her mother covered her with a corner of her shawl.

"Oh, you cruel little girl! How will you treat us all next, I wonder?" she said, but she spoke with a ring of joy in her voice, and as though she breathed at last without the oppression which she had felt so long.

“Cruel?” sobbed Aglaya. “Yes, I AM cruel, and worthless, and spoiled—tell father so,—oh, here he is—I forgot Father, listen!” She laughed through her tears.

“My darling, my little idol,” cried the general, kissing and fondling her hands (Aglaya did not draw them away); “so you love this young man, do you?”

“No, no, no, can’t BEAR him, I can’t BEAR your young man!” cried Aglaya, raising her head. “And if you dare say that ONCE more, papa—I’m serious, you know, I’m,—do you hear me—I’m serious!”

She certainly did seem to be serious enough. She had flushed up all over and her eyes were blazing.

The general felt troubled and remained silent, while Lizabetha Prokofievna telegraphed to him from behind Aglaya to ask no questions.

“If that’s the case, darling—then, of course, you shall do exactly as you like. He is waiting alone downstairs. Hadn’t I better hint to him gently that he can go?” The general telegraphed to Lizabetha Prokofievna in his turn.

“No, no, you needn’t do anything of the sort; you mustn’t hint gently at all. I’ll go down myself directly. I wish to apologize to this young man, because I hurt his feelings.”

“Yes, SERIOUSLY,” said the general, gravely.

“Well, you’d better stay here, all of you, for a little, and I’ll go down to him alone to begin with. I’ll just go in and then you can follow me almost at once. That’s the best way.”

She had almost reached the door when she turned round again.

“I shall laugh—I know I shall; I shall die of laughing,” she said, lugubriously.

However, she turned and ran down to the prince as fast as her feet could carry her.

“Well, what does it all mean? What do you make of it?” asked the general of his spouse, hurriedly.

“I hardly dare say,” said Lizabetha, as hurriedly, “but I think it’s as plain as anything can be.”

“I think so too, as clear as day; she loves him.”

“Loves him? She is head over ears in love, that’s what she is,” put in Alexandra.

“Well, God bless her, God bless her, if such is her destiny,” said Lizabetha, crossing herself devoutly.

“H’m destiny it is,” said the general, “and there’s no getting out of destiny.”

With these words they all moved off towards the drawing-room, where another surprise awaited them. Aglaya had not only not laughed, as she had feared, but had gone to the prince rather timidly, and said to him:

“Forgive a silly, horrid, spoilt girl!”—(she took his hand here)—“and be quite assured that we all of us esteem you beyond all words. And if I dared to turn your beautiful, admirable simplicity to ridicule, forgive me as you would a little child its mischief. Forgive me all my absurdity of just now, which, of course, meant nothing, and could not have the slightest consequence.” She spoke these words with great emphasis.

Her father, mother, and sisters came into the room and were much struck with the last words, which they just caught as they entered—"absurdity which of course meant nothing"—and still more so with the emphasis with which Aglaya had spoken.

They exchanged glances questioningly, but the prince did not seem to have understood the meaning of Aglaya's words; he was in the highest heaven of delight.

"Why do you speak so?" he murmured. "Why do you ask my forgiveness?"

He wished to add that he was unworthy of being asked for forgiveness by her, but paused. Perhaps he did understand Aglaya's sentence about "absurdity which meant nothing," and like the strange fellow that he was, rejoiced in the words.

Undoubtedly the fact that he might now come and see Aglaya as much as he pleased again was quite enough to make him perfectly happy; that he might come and speak to her, and see her, and sit by her, and walk with her—who knows, but that all this was quite enough to satisfy him for the whole of his life, and that he would desire no more to the end of time?

(Lizabetha Prokofievna felt that this might be the case, and she didn't like it; though very probably she could not have put the idea into words.)

It would be difficult to describe the animation and high spirits which distinguished the prince for the rest of the evening.

He was so happy that "it made one feel happy to look at him," as Aglaya's sisters expressed it afterwards. He talked, and told stories just as he had done once before, and never since, namely on the very first morning of his acquaintance with the Epanchins, six months ago. Since his return to Petersburg from Moscow, he had been remarkably silent, and had told Prince S. on one occasion, before everyone, that he did not think himself justified in degrading any thought by his unworthy words.

But this evening he did nearly all the talking himself, and told stories by the dozen, while he answered all questions put to him clearly, gladly, and with any amount of detail.

There was nothing, however, of love-making in his talk. His ideas were all of the most serious kind; some were even mystical and profound.

He aired his own views on various matters, some of his most private opinions and observations, many of which would have seemed rather funny, so his hearers agreed afterwards, had they not been so well expressed.

The general liked serious subjects of conversation; but both he and Lizabetha Prokofievna felt that they were having a little too much of a good thing tonight, and as the evening advanced, they both grew more or less melancholy; but towards night, the prince fell to telling funny stories, and was always the first to burst out laughing himself, which he invariably did so joyously and simply that the rest laughed just as much at him as at his stories.

As for Aglaya, she hardly said a word all the evening; but she listened with all her ears to Lef Nicolaievitch's talk, and scarcely took her eyes off him.

“She looked at him, and stared and stared, and hung on every word he said,” said Lizabetha afterwards, to her husband, “and yet, tell her that she loves him, and she is furious!”

“What’s to be done? It’s fate,” said the general, shrugging his shoulders, and, for a long while after, he continued to repeat: “It’s fate, it’s fate!”

We may add that to a business man like General Epanchin the present position of affairs was most unsatisfactory. He hated the uncertainty in which they had been, perforce, left. However, he decided to say no more about it, and merely to look on, and take his time and tune from Lizabetha Prokofievna.

The happy state in which the family had spent the evening, as just recorded, was not of very long duration. Next day Aglaya quarrelled with the prince again, and so she continued to behave for the next few days. For whole hours at a time she ridiculed and chaffed the wretched man, and made him almost a laughing-stock.

It is true that they used to sit in the little summer-house together for an hour or two at a time, very often, but it was observed that on these occasions the prince would read the paper, or some book, aloud to Aglaya.

“Do you know,” Aglaya said to him once, interrupting the reading, “I’ve remarked that you are dreadfully badly educated. You never know anything thoroughly, if one asks you; neither anyone’s name, nor dates, nor about treaties and so on. It’s a great pity, you know!”

“I told you I had not had much of an education,” replied the prince.

“How am I to respect you, if that’s the case? Read on now. No— don’t! Stop reading!”

And once more, that same evening, Aglaya mystified them all. Prince S. had returned, and Aglaya was particularly amiable to him, and asked a great deal after Evgenie Pavlovitch. (Muishkin had not come in as yet.)

Suddenly Prince S. hinted something about “a new and approaching change in the family.” He was led to this remark by a communication inadvertently made to him by Lizabetha Prokofievna, that Adelaida’s marriage must be postponed a little longer, in order that the two weddings might come off together.

It is impossible to describe Aglaya’s irritation. She flared up, and said some indignant words about “all these silly insinuations.” She added that “she had no intentions as yet of replacing anybody’s mistress.”

These words painfully impressed the whole party; but especially her parents. Lizabetha Prokofievna summoned a secret council of two, and insisted upon the general’s demanding from the prince a full explanation of his relations with Nastasia Philipovna. The general argued that it was only a whim of Aglaya’s; and that, had not Prince S. unfortunately made that remark, which had confused the child and made her blush, she never would have said what she did; and that he was sure Aglaya knew well that anything she might have heard of the prince and Nastasia Philipovna was merely the fabrication of malicious tongues, and that the woman was going to marry Rogojin. He insisted that the prince had nothing whatever to do with Nastasia Philipovna, so far as

any liaison was concerned; and, if the truth were to be told about it, he added, never had had.

Meanwhile nothing put the prince out, and he continued to be in the seventh heaven of bliss. Of course he could not fail to observe some impatience and ill-temper in Aglaya now and then; but he believed in something else, and nothing could now shake his conviction. Besides, Aglaya's frowns never lasted long; they disappeared of themselves.

Perhaps he was too easy in his mind. So thought Hippolyte, at all events, who met him in the park one day.

"Didn't I tell you the truth now, when I said you were in love?" he said, coming up to Muishkin of his own accord, and stopping him.

The prince gave him his hand and congratulated him upon "looking so well."

Hippolyte himself seemed to be hopeful about his state of health, as is often the case with consumptives.

He had approached the prince with the intention of talking sarcastically about his happy expression of face, but very soon forgot his intention and began to talk about himself. He began complaining about everything, disconnectedly and endlessly, as was his wont.

"You wouldn't believe," he concluded, "how irritating they all are there. They are such wretchedly small, vain, egotistical, COMMONPLACE people! Would you believe it, they invited me there under the express condition that I should die quickly, and they are all as wild as possible with me for not having died yet, and for being, on the contrary, a good deal better! Isn't it a comedy? I don't mind betting that you don't believe me!"

The prince said nothing.

"I sometimes think of coming over to you again," said Hippolyte, carelessly. "So you DON'T think them capable of inviting a man on the condition that he is to look sharp and die?"

"I certainly thought they invited you with quite other views."

"Ho, ho! you are not nearly so simple as they try to make you out! This is not the time for it, or I would tell you a thing or two about that beauty, Gania, and his hopes. You are being undermined, pitilessly undermined, and—and it is really melancholy to see you so calm about it. But alas! it's your nature—you can't help it!"

"My word! what a thing to be melancholy about! Why, do you think I should be any happier if I were to feel disturbed about the excavations you tell me of?"

"It is better to be unhappy and know the worst, than to be happy in a fool's paradise! I suppose you don't believe that you have a rival in that quarter?"

"Your insinuations as to rivalry are rather cynical, Hippolyte. I'm sorry to say I have no right to answer you! As for Gania, I put it to you, CAN any man have a happy mind after passing through what he has had to suffer? I think that is the best way to look at it. He will change yet, he has lots of time before him, and life is rich; besides—besides..." the prince hesitated. "As to being undermined, I don't know what in the world you are driving at, Hippolyte. I think we had better drop the subject!"

“Very well, we’ll drop it for a while. You can’t look at anything but in your exalted, generous way. You must put out your finger and touch a thing before you’ll believe it, eh? Ha! ha! ha! I suppose you despise me dreadfully, prince, eh? What do you think?”

“Why? Because you have suffered more than we have?”

“No; because I am unworthy of my sufferings, if you like!”

“Whoever CAN suffer is worthy to suffer, I should think. Aglaya Ivanovna wished to see you, after she had read your confession, but—”

“She postponed the pleasure—I see—I quite understand!” said Hippolyte, hurriedly, as though he wished to banish the subject. “I hear—they tell me—that you read her all that nonsense aloud? Stupid @ bosh it was—written in delirium. And I can’t understand how anyone can be so I won’t say CRUEL, because the word would be humiliating to myself, but we’ll say childishly vain and revengeful, as to REPROACH me with this confession, and use it as a weapon against me. Don’t be afraid, I’m not referring to yourself.”

“Oh, but I’m sorry you repudiate the confession, Hippolyte—it is sincere; and, do you know, even the absurd parts of it—and these are many” (here Hippolyte frowned savagely) “are, as it were, redeemed by suffering—for it must have cost you something to admit what you there say—great torture, perhaps, for all I know. Your motive must have been a very noble one all through. Whatever may have appeared to the contrary, I give you my word, I see this more plainly every day. I do not judge you; I merely say this to have it off my mind, and I am only sorry that I did not say it all THEN—”

Hippolyte flushed hotly. He had thought at first that the prince was “humberging” him; but on looking at his face he saw that he was absolutely serious, and had no thought of any deception. Hippolyte beamed with gratification.

“And yet I must die,” he said, and almost added: “a man like me @

“And imagine how that Gania annoys me! He has developed the idea—or pretends to believe—that in all probability three or four others who heard my confession will die before I do. There’s an idea for you—and all this by way of CONSOLING me! Ha! ha! ha! In the first place they haven’t died yet; and in the second, if they DID die—all of them—what would be the satisfaction to me in that? He judges me by himself. But he goes further, he actually pitches into me because, as he declares, ‘any decent fellow’ would die quietly, and that ‘all this’ is mere egotism on my part. He doesn’t see what refinement of egotism it is on his own part—and at the same time, what ox-like coarseness! Have you ever read of the death of one Stepan Gleboff, in the eighteenth century? I read of it yesterday by chance.”

“Who was he?”

He was impaled on a stake in the time of Peter.”

“I know, I know! He lay there fifteen hours in the hard frost, and died with the most extraordinary fortitude—I know—what of him?”

“Only that God gives that sort of dying to some, and not to others. Perhaps you think, though, that I could not die like Gleboff?”

“Not at all!” said the prince, blushing. “I was only going to say that you—not that you could not be like Gleboff—but that you would have been more like @

“I guess what you mean—I should be an Osterman, not a Gleboff— eh? Is that what you meant?”

“What Osterman?” asked the prince in some surprise.

“Why, Osterman—the diplomatist. Peter’s Osterman,” muttered Hippolyte, confused. There was a moment’s pause of mutual confusion.

Oh, no, no!” said the prince at last, “that was not what I was going to say—oh no! I don’t think you would ever have been like Osterman.”

Hippolyte frowned gloomily.

“I’ll tell you why I draw the conclusion,” explained the prince, evidently desirous of clearing up the matter a little. “Because, though I often think over the men of those times, I cannot for the life of me imagine them to be like ourselves. It really appears to me that they were of another race altogether than ourselves of today. At that time people seemed to stick so to one idea; now, they are more nervous, more sensitive, more enlightened—people of two or three ideas at once—as it were. The man of today is a broader man, so to speak—and I declare I believe that is what prevents him from being so self-contained and independent a being as his brother of those earlier days. Of course my remark was only made under this impression, and not in the least @

“I quite understand. You are trying to comfort me for the naiveness with which you disagreed with me—eh? Ha! ha! ha! You are a regular child, prince! However, I cannot help seeing that you always treat me like—like a fragile china cup. Never mind, never mind, I’m not a bit angry! At all events we have had a very funny talk. Do you know, all things considered, I should like to be something better than Osterman! I wouldn’t take the trouble to rise from the dead to be an Osterman. However, I see I must make arrangements to die soon, or I myself—. Well—leave me now! Au revoir. Look here—before you go, just give me your opinion: how do you think I ought to die, now? I mean—the best, the most virtuous way? Tell me!”

“You should pass us by and forgive us our happiness,” said the prince in a low voice.

“Ha! ha! ha! I thought so. I thought I should hear something like that. Well, you are—you really are—oh dear me! Eloquence, eloquence! Good-bye!”

VI.

As to the evening party at the Epanchins’ at which Princess Bielokonski was to be present, Varia had reported with accuracy; though she had perhaps expressed herself too strongly.

The thing was decided in a hurry and with a certain amount of quite unnecessary excitement, doubtless because “nothing could be done in this house like anywhere else.”

The impatience of Lizabetha Prokofievna “to get things settled” explained a good deal, as well as the anxiety of both parents for the happiness of their beloved daughter.

Besides, Princess Bielokonski was going away soon, and they hoped that she would take an interest in the prince. They were anxious that he should enter society under the auspices of this lady, whose patronage was the best of recommendations for any young man.

Even if there seems something strange about the match, the general and his wife said to each other, the “world” will accept Aglaya’s fiance without any question if he is under the patronage of the princess. In any case, the prince would have to be “shown” sooner or later; that is, introduced into society, of which he had, so far, not the least idea. Moreover, it was only a question of a small gathering of a few intimate friends. Besides Princess Bielokonski, only one other lady was expected, the wife of a high dignitary. Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was to escort the princess, was the only young man.

Muishkin was told of the princess’s visit three days beforehand, but nothing was said to him about the party until the night before it was to take place.

He could not help observing the excited and agitated condition of all members of the family, and from certain hints dropped in conversation he gathered that they were all anxious as to the impression he should make upon the princess. But the Epanchins, one and all, believed that Muishkin, in his simplicity of mind, was quite incapable of realizing that they could be feeling any anxiety on his account, and for this reason they all looked at him with dread and uneasiness.

In point of fact, he did attach marvellously little importance to the approaching event. He was occupied with altogether different thoughts. Aglaya was growing hourly more capricious and gloomy, and this distressed him. When they told him that Evgenie Pavlovitch was expected, he evinced great delight, and said that he had long wished to see him—and somehow these words did not please anyone.

Aglaya left the room in a fit of irritation, and it was not until late in the evening, past eleven, when the prince was taking his departure, that she said a word or two to him, privately, as she accompanied him as far as the front door.

“I should like you,” she said, “not to come here tomorrow until evening, when the guests are all assembled. You know there are to be guests, don’t you?”

She spoke impatiently and with severity; this was the first allusion she had made to the party of tomorrow.

She hated the idea of it, everyone saw that; and she would probably have liked to quarrel about it with her parents, but pride and modesty prevented her from broaching the subject.

The prince jumped to the conclusion that Aglaya, too, was nervous about him, and the impression he would make, and that she did not like to admit her anxiety; and this thought alarmed him.

“Yes, I am invited,” he replied.

She was evidently in difficulties as to how best to go on. “May I speak of something serious to you, for once in my life?” she asked, angrily. She was irritated at she knew not what, and could not restrain her wrath.

“Of course you may; I am very glad to listen,” replied Muishkin.

Aglaya was silent a moment and then began again with evident dislike of her subject:

“I do not wish to quarrel with them about this; in some things they won’t be reasonable. I always did feel a loathing for the laws which seem to guide mamma’s conduct at times. I don’t speak of father, for he cannot be expected to be anything but what he is. Mother is a noble-minded woman, I know; you try to suggest anything mean to her, and you’ll see! But she is such a slave to these miserable creatures! I don’t mean old Bielokonski alone. She is a contemptible old thing, but she is able to twist people round her little finger, and I admire that in her, at all events! How mean it all is, and how foolish! We were always middle-class, thoroughly middle-class, people. Why should we attempt to climb into the giddy heights of the fashionable world? My sisters are all for it. It’s Prince S. they have to thank for poisoning their minds. Why are you so glad that Evgenie Pavlovitch is coming?”

“Listen to me, Aglaya,” said the prince, “I do believe you are nervous lest I shall make a fool of myself tomorrow at your party?”

“Nervous about you?” Aglaya blushed. “Why should I be nervous about you? What would it matter to me if you were to make ever such a fool of yourself? How can you say such a thing? What do you mean by ‘making a fool of yourself’? What a vulgar expression! I suppose you intend to talk in that sort of way tomorrow evening? Look up a few more such expressions in your dictionary; do, you’ll make a grand effect! I’m sorry that you seem to be able to come into a room as gracefully as you do; where did you learn the art? Do you think you can drink a cup of tea decently, when you know everybody is looking at you, on purpose to see how you do it?”

“Yes, I think I can.”

“Can you? I’m sorry for it then, for I should have had a good laugh at you otherwise. Do break SOMETHING at least, in the drawing-room! Upset the Chinese vase, won’t you? It’s a valuable one; DO break it. Mamma values it, and she’ll go out of her mind—it was a present. She’ll cry before everyone, you’ll see! Wave your hand about, you know, as you always do, and just smash it. Sit down near it on purpose.”

“On the contrary, I shall sit as far from it as I can. Thanks for the hint.”

“Ha, ha! Then you are afraid you WILL wave your arms about! I wouldn’t mind betting that you’ll talk about some lofty subject, something serious and learned. How delightful, how tactful that will be!”

“I should think it would be very foolish indeed, unless it happened to come in appropriately.”

“Look here, once for all,” cried Aglaya, boiling over, “if I hear you talking about capital punishment, or the economical condition of Russia, or about Beauty redeeming the world, or anything of that sort, I’ll—well, of course I shall laugh and seem very pleased, but I warn you beforehand, don’t look me in the face again! I’m serious now, mind, this time I AM REALLY serious.” She certainly did say this very seriously, so much so, that she looked quite different from what she usually was, and the prince could not help noticing the fact. She did not seem to be joking in the slightest degree.

“Well, you’ve put me into such a fright that I shall certainly make a fool of myself, and very likely break something too. I wasn’t a bit alarmed before, but now I’m as nervous as can be.”

“Then don’t speak at all. Sit still and don’t talk.”

“Oh, I can’t do that, you know! I shall say something foolish out of pure ‘funk,’ and break something for the same excellent reason; I know I shall. Perhaps I shall slip and fall on the slippery floor; I’ve done that before now, you know. I shall dream of it all night now. Why did you say anything about it?”

Aglaya looked blackly at him.

“Do you know what, I had better not come at all tomorrow! I’ll plead sick-list and stay away,” said the prince, with decision.

Aglaya stamped her foot, and grew quite pale with anger.

Oh, my goodness! Just listen to that! ‘Better not come,’ when the party is on purpose for him! Good Lord! What a delightful thing it is to have to do with such a—such a stupid as you are!”

“Well, I’ll come, I’ll come,” interrupted the prince, hastily, “and I’ll give you my word of honour that I will sit the whole evening and not say a word.”

“I believe that’s the best thing you can do. You said you’d ‘plead sick-list’ just now; where in the world do you get hold of such expressions? Why do you talk to me like this? Are you trying to irritate me, or what?”

“Forgive me, it’s a schoolboy expression. I won’t do it again. I know quite well, I see it, that you are anxious on my account (now, don’t be angry), and it makes me very happy to see it. You wouldn’t believe how frightened I am of misbehaving somehow, and how glad I am of your instructions. But all this panic is simply nonsense, you know, Aglaya! I give you my word it is; I am so pleased that you are such a child, such a dear good child. How CHARMING you can be if you like, Aglaya.”

Aglaya wanted to be angry, of course, but suddenly some quite unexpected feeling seized upon her heart, all in a moment.

“And you won’t reproach me for all these rude words of mine—some day—afterwards?” she asked, of a sudden.

“What an idea! Of course not. And what are you blushing for again? And there comes that frown once more! You’ve taken to looking too gloomy sometimes, Aglaya, much more than you used to. I know why it is.”

“Be quiet, do be quiet!”

“No, no, I had much better speak out. I have long wished to say it, and HAVE said it, but that’s not enough, for you didn’t believe me. Between us two there stands a being who—”

“Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet!” Aglaya struck in, suddenly, seizing his hand in hers, and gazing at him almost in terror.

At this moment she was called by someone. She broke loose from him with an air of relief and ran away.

The prince was in a fever all night. It was strange, but he had suffered from fever for several nights in succession. On this particular night, while in semi-delirium, he had an idea: what if on the morrow he were to have a fit before everybody? The thought seemed to freeze his blood within him. All night he fancied himself in some extraordinary society of strange persons. The worst of it was that he was talking nonsense; he knew that he ought not to speak at all, and yet he talked the whole time; he seemed to be trying to persuade them all to something. Evgenie and Hippolyte were among the guests, and appeared to be great friends.

He awoke towards nine o'clock with a headache, full of confused ideas and strange impressions. For some reason or other he felt most anxious to see Rogojin, to see and talk to him, but what he wished to say he could not tell. Next, he determined to go and see Hippolyte. His mind was in a confused state, so much so that the incidents of the morning seemed to be imperfectly realized, though acutely felt.

One of these incidents was a visit from Lebedeff. Lebedeff came rather early—before ten—but he was tipsy already. Though the prince was not in an observant condition, yet he could not avoid seeing that for at least three days—ever since General Ivolgin had left the house Lebedeff had been behaving very badly. He looked untidy and dirty at all times of the day, and it was said that he had begun to rage about in his own house, and that his temper was very bad. As soon as he arrived this morning, he began to hold forth, beating his breast and apparently blaming himself for something.

“I’ve—I’ve had a reward for my meanness—I’ve had a slap in the face,” he concluded, tragically.

“A slap in the face? From whom? And so early in the morning?”

“Early?” said Lebedeff, sarcastically. “Time counts for nothing, even in physical chastisement; but my slap in the face was not physical, it was moral.”

He suddenly took a seat, very unceremoniously, and began his story. It was very disconnected; the prince frowned, and wished he could get away; but suddenly a few words struck him. He sat stiff with wonder—Lebedeff said some extraordinary things.

In the first place he began about some letter; the name of Aglaya Ivanovna came in. Then suddenly he broke off and began to accuse the prince of something; he was apparently offended with him. At first he declared that the prince had trusted him with his confidences as to “a certain person” (Nastasia Philipovna), but that of late his friendship had been thrust back into his bosom, and his innocent question as to “approaching family changes” had been curtly put aside, which Lebedeff declared, with tipsy tears, he could not bear; especially as he knew so much already both from Rogojin and Nastasia Philipovna and her friend, and from Varvara Ardalionovna, and even from Aglaya Ivanovna, through his daughter Vera. “And who told Lizabetha Prokofievna something in secret, by letter? Who told her all about the movements of a certain person called Nastasia Philipovna? Who was the anonymous person, eh? Tell me!”

“Surely not you?” cried the prince.

“Just so,” said Lebedeff, with dignity; “and only this very morning I have sent up a letter to the noble lady, stating that I have a matter of great importance to communicate. She received the letter; I know she got it; and she received ME, too.”

“Have you just seen Lizabetha Prokofievna?” asked the prince, scarcely believing his ears.

“Yes, I saw her, and got the said slap in the face as mentioned. She chucked the letter back to me unopened, and kicked me out of the house, morally, not physically, although not far off it.”

“What letter do you mean she returned unopened?”

“What! didn’t I tell you? Ha, ha, ha! I thought I had. Why, I received a letter, you know, to be handed over—“From whom? To whom?”

But it was difficult, if not impossible, to extract anything from Lebedeff. All the prince could gather was, that the letter had been received very early, and had a request written on the outside that it might be sent on to the address given.

“Just as before, sir, just as before! To a certain person, and from a certain hand. The individual’s name who wrote the letter is to be represented by the letter A.—”

“What? Impossible! To Nastasia Philipovna? Nonsense!” cried the prince.

“It was, I assure you, and if not to her then to Rogojin, which is the same thing. Mr. Hippolyte has had letters, too, and all from the individual whose name begins with an A.,” smirked Lebedeff, with a hideous grin.

As he kept jumping from subject to subject, and forgetting what he had begun to talk about, the prince said nothing, but waited, to give him time.

It was all very vague. Who had taken the letters, if letters there were? Probably Vera—and how could Lebedeff have got them? In all probability, he had managed to steal the present letter from Vera, and had himself gone over to Lizabetha Prokofievna with some idea in his head. So the prince concluded at last.

“You are mad!” he cried, indignantly.

“Not quite, esteemed prince,” replied Lebedeff, with some acerbity. “I confess I thought of doing you the service of handing the letter over to yourself, but I decided that it would pay me better to deliver it up to the noble lady aforesaid, as I had informed her of everything hitherto by anonymous letters; so when I sent her up a note from myself, with the letter, you know, in order to fix a meeting for eight o’clock this morning, I signed it ‘your secret correspondent.’ They let me in at once— very quickly—by the back door, and the noble lady received me.”

“Well? Go on.”

“Oh, well, when I saw her she almost punched my head, as I say; in fact so nearly that one might almost say she did punch my head. She threw the letter in my face; she seemed to reflect first, as if she would have liked to keep it, but thought better of it and threw it in my face instead. ‘If anybody can have been such a fool as to trust a man like you to deliver the letter,’ says she, ‘take it and deliver it! ‘Hey! she was grandly indignant. A fierce, fiery lady that, sir!’”

“Where’s the letter now?”

“Oh, I’ve still got it, here!”

And he handed the prince the very letter from Aglaya to Gania, which the latter showed with so much triumph to his Sister at a later hour.

“This letter cannot be allowed to remain in your hands.”

“It’s for you—for you! I’ve brought it you on purpose!” cried Lebedeff, excitedly. “Why, I’m yours again now, heart and hand, your slave; there was but a momentary pause in the flow of my love and esteem for you. *Mea culpa, mea culpa!* as the Pope of Rome says.

“This letter should be sent on at once,” said the prince, disturbed. “I’ll hand it over myself.”

“Wouldn’t it be better, esteemed prince, wouldn’t it be better— to—don’t you know—”

Lebedeff made a strange and very expressive grimace; he twisted about in his chair, and did something, apparently symbolical, with his hands.

“What do you mean?” said the prince.

“Why, open it, for the time being, don’t you know?” he said, most confidentially and mysteriously.

The prince jumped up so furiously that Lebedeff ran towards the door; having gained which strategic position, however, he stopped and looked back to see if he might hope for pardon.

“Oh, Lebedeff, Lebedeff! Can a man really sink to such depths of meanness?” said the prince, sadly.

Lebedeff’s face brightened.

“Oh, I’m a mean wretch—a mean wretch!” he said, approaching the prince once more, and beating his breast, with tears in his eyes.

“It’s abominable dishonesty, you know!”

“Dishonesty—it is, it is! That’s the very word!”

“What in the world induces you to act so? You are nothing but a spy. Why did you write anonymously to worry so noble and generous a lady? Why should not Aglaya Ivanovna write a note to whomever she pleases? What did you mean to complain of today? What did you expect to get by it? What made you go at all?”

“Pure amiable curiosity,—I assure you—desire to do a service. That’s all. Now I’m entirely yours again, your slave; hang me if you like!”

“Did you go before Lizabetha Prokofievna in your present condition?” inquired the prince.

“No—oh no, fresher—more the correct card. I only became this like after the humiliation I suffered there,

“Well—that’ll do; now leave me.”

This injunction had to be repeated several times before the man could be persuaded to move. Even then he turned back at the door, came as far as the middle of the room, and there went through his mysterious motions designed to convey the suggestion that the prince should open the letter. He did not dare put his suggestion into words again.

After this performance, he smiled sweetly and left the room on tiptoe.

All this had been very painful to listen to. One fact stood out certain and clear, and that was that poor Aglaya must be in a state of great distress and indecision and mental torment (“from jealousy,” the prince whispered to himself). Undoubtedly in this inexperienced, but hot and proud little head, there were all sorts of plans forming, wild and impossible plans, maybe; and the idea of this so frightened the prince that he could not make up his mind what to do. Something must be done, that was clear.

He looked at the address on the letter once more. Oh, he was not in the least degree alarmed about Aglaya writing such a letter; he could trust her. What he did not like about it was that he could not trust Gania.

However, he made up his mind that he would himself take the note and deliver it. Indeed, he went so far as to leave the house and walk up the road, but changed his mind when he had nearly reached Ptitsin’s door. However, he there luckily met Colia, and commissioned him to deliver the letter to his brother as if direct from Aglaya. Colia asked no questions but simply delivered it, and Gania consequently had no suspicion that it had passed through so many hands.

Arrived home again, the prince sent for Vera Lebedeff and told her as much as was necessary, in order to relieve her mind, for she had been in a dreadful state of anxiety since she had missed the letter. She heard with horror that her father had taken it. Muishkin learned from her that she had on several occasions performed secret missions both for Aglaya and for Rogojin, without, however, having had the slightest idea that in so doing she might injure the prince in any way.

The latter, with one thing and another, was now so disturbed and confused, that when, a couple of hours or so later, a message came from Colia that the general was ill, he could hardly take the news in.

However, when he did master the fact, it acted upon him as a tonic by completely distracting his attention. He went at once to Nina Alexandrovna’s, whither the general had been carried, and stayed there until the evening. He could do no good, but there are people whom to have near one is a blessing at such times. Colia was in an almost hysterical state; he cried continuously, but was running about all day, all the same; fetching doctors, of whom he collected three; going to the chemist’s, and so on.

The general was brought round to some extent, but the doctors declared that he could not be said to be out of danger. Varia and Nina Alexandrovna never left the sick man’s bedside; Gania was excited and distressed, but would not go upstairs, and seemed afraid to look at the patient. He wrung his hands when the prince spoke to him, and said that “such a misfortune at such a moment” was terrible.

The prince thought he knew what Gania meant by “such a moment.”

Hippolyte was not in the house. Lebedeff turned up late in the afternoon; he had been asleep ever since his interview with the prince in the morning. He was quite sober now, and cried with real sincerity over the sick general—mourning for him as though he were his own brother. He blamed himself aloud, but did not explain why. He repeated over and over again to Nina Alexandrovna that he alone was to blame—no one else—

but that he had acted out of “pure amiable curiosity,” and that “the deceased,” as he insisted upon calling the still living general, had been the greatest of geniuses.

He laid much stress on the genius of the sufferer, as if this idea must be one of immense solace in the present crisis.

Nina Alexandrovna—seeing his sincerity of feeling—said at last, and without the faintest suspicion of reproach in her voice: “Come, come—don’t cry! God will forgive you!”

Lebedeff was so impressed by these words, and the tone in which they were spoken, that he could not leave Nina Alexandrovna all the evening—in fact, for several days. Till the general’s death, indeed, he spent almost all his time at his side.

Twice during the day a messenger came to Nina Alexandrovna from the Epanchins to inquire after the invalid.

When—late in the evening—the prince made his appearance in Lizabetha Prokofievna’s drawing-room, he found it full of guests. Mrs. Epanchin questioned him very fully about the general as soon as he appeared; and when old Princess Bielokonski wished to know “who this general was, and who was Nina Alexandrovna,” she proceeded to explain in a manner which pleased the prince very much.

He himself, when relating the circumstances of the general’s illness to Lizabetha Prokofievna, “spoke beautifully,” as Aglaya’s sisters declared afterwards—“modestly, quietly, without gestures or too many words, and with great dignity.” He had entered the room with propriety and grace, and he was perfectly dressed; he not only did not “fall down on the slippery floor,” as he had expressed it, but evidently made a very favourable impression upon the assembled guests.

As for his own impression on entering the room and taking his seat, he instantly remarked that the company was not in the least such as Aglaya’s words had led him to fear, and as he had dreamed of—in nightmare form—all night.

This was the first time in his life that he had seen a little corner of what was generally known by the terrible name of “society.” He had long thirsted, for reasons of his own, to penetrate the mysteries of the magic circle, and, therefore, this assemblage was of the greatest possible interest to him.

His first impression was one of fascination. Somehow or other he felt that all these people must have been born on purpose to be together! It seemed to him that the Epanchins were not having a party at all; that these people must have been here always, and that he himself was one of them—returned among them after a long absence, but one of them, naturally and indisputably.

It never struck him that all this refined simplicity and nobility and wit and personal dignity might possibly be no more than an exquisite artistic polish. The majority of the guests—who were somewhat empty-headed, after all, in spite of their aristocratic bearing—never guessed, in their self-satisfied composure, that much of their superiority was mere veneer, which indeed they had adopted unconsciously and by inheritance.

The prince would never so much as suspect such a thing in the delight of his first impression.

He saw, for instance, that one important dignitary, old enough to be his grandfather, broke off his own conversation in order to listen to HIM—a young and inexperienced man; and not only listened, but seemed to attach value to his opinion, and was kind and amiable, and yet they were strangers and had never seen each other before. Perhaps what most appealed to the prince's impressionability was the refinement of the old man's courtesy towards him. Perhaps the soil of his susceptible nature was really predisposed to receive a pleasant impression.

Meanwhile all these people—though friends of the family and of each other to a certain extent—were very far from being such intimate friends of the family and of each other as the prince concluded. There were some present who never would think of considering the Epanchins their equals. There were even some who hated one another cordially. For instance, old Princess Bielokonski had all her life despised the wife of the “dignitary,” while the latter was very far from loving Lizabetha Prokofievna. The dignitary himself had been General Epanchin's protector from his youth up; and the general considered him so majestic a personage that he would have felt a hearty contempt for himself if he had even for one moment allowed himself to pose as the great man's equal, or to think of him—in his fear and reverence—as anything less than an Olympic God! There were others present who had not met for years, and who had no feeling whatever for each other, unless it were dislike; and yet they met tonight as though they had seen each other but yesterday in some friendly and intimate assembly of kindred spirits.

It was not a large party, however. Besides Princess Bielokonski and the old dignitary (who was really a great man) and his wife, there was an old military general—a count or baron with a German name, a man reputed to possess great knowledge and administrative ability. He was one of those Olympian administrators who know everything except Russia, pronounce a word of extraordinary wisdom, admired by all, about once in five years, and, after being an eternity in the service, generally die full of honour and riches, though they have never done anything great, and have even been hostile to all greatness. This general was Ivan Fedorovitch's immediate superior in the service; and it pleased the latter to look upon him also as a patron. On the other hand, the great man did not at all consider himself Epanchin's patron. He was always very cool to him, while taking advantage of his ready services, and would instantly have put another in his place if there had been the slightest reason for the change.

Another guest was an elderly, important-looking gentleman, a distant relative of Lizabetha Prokofievna's. This gentleman was rich, held a good position, was a great talker, and had the reputation of being “one of the dissatisfied,” though not belonging to the dangerous sections of that class. He had the manners, to some extent, of the English aristocracy, and some of their tastes (especially in the matter of under-done roast beef, harness, men-servants, etc.). He was a great friend of the dignitary's, and Lizabetha Prokofievna, for some reason or other, had got hold of the idea that this worthy intended at no distant date to offer the advantages of his hand and heart to Alexandra.

Besides the elevated and more solid individuals enumerated, there were present a few younger though not less elegant guests. Besides Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch, we must name the eminent and fascinating Prince N.—once the vanquisher of female hearts all over Europe. This gentleman was no longer in the first bloom of youth—he was forty-five, but still very handsome. He was well off, and lived, as a rule, abroad, and was noted as a good teller of stories. Then came a few guests belonging to a lower stratum of society—people who, like the Epanchins themselves, moved only occasionally in this exalted sphere. The Epanchins liked to draft among their more elevated guests a few picked representatives of this lower stratum, and Lizabetha Prokofievna received much praise for this practice, which proved, her friends said, that she was a woman of tact. The Epanchins prided themselves upon the good opinion people held of them.

One of the representatives of the middle-class present today was a colonel of engineers, a very serious man and a great friend of Prince S., who had introduced him to the Epanchins. He was extremely silent in society, and displayed on the forefinger of his right hand a large ring, probably bestowed upon him for services of some sort. There was also a poet, German by name, but a Russian poet; very presentable, and even handsome—the sort of man one could bring into society with impunity. This gentleman belonged to a German family of decidedly bourgeois origin, but he had a knack of acquiring the patronage of “big-wigs,” and of retaining their favour. He had translated some great German poem into Russian verse, and claimed to have been a friend of a famous Russian poet, since dead. (It is strange how great a multitude of literary people there are who have had the advantages of friendship with some great man of their own profession who is, unfortunately, dead.) The dignitary’s wife had introduced this worthy to the Epanchins. This lady posed as the patroness of literary people, and she certainly had succeeded in obtaining pensions for a few of them, thanks to her influence with those in authority on such matters. She was a lady of weight in her own way. Her age was about forty-five, so that she was a very young wife for such an elderly husband as the dignitary. She had been a beauty in her day and still loved, as many ladies of forty-five do love, to dress a little too smartly. Her intellect was nothing to boast of, and her literary knowledge very doubtful. Literary patronage was, however, with her as much a mania as was the love of gorgeous clothes. Many books and translations were dedicated to her by her proteges, and a few of these talented individuals had published some of their own letters to her, upon very weighty subjects.

This, then, was the society that the prince accepted at once as true coin, as pure gold without alloy.

It so happened, however, that on this particular evening all these good people were in excellent humour and highly pleased with themselves. Every one of them felt that they were doing the Epanchins the greatest possible honour by their presence. But alas! the prince never suspected any such subtleties! For instance, he had no suspicion of the fact that the Epanchins, having in their mind so important a step as the marriage of their daughter, would never think of presuming to take it without having previously

“shown off” the proposed husband to the dignitary—the recognized patron of the family. The latter, too, though he would probably have received news of a great disaster to the Epanchin family with perfect composure, would nevertheless have considered it a personal offence if they had dared to marry their daughter without his advice, or we might almost say, his leave.

The amiable and undoubtedly witty Prince N. could not but feel that he was as a sun, risen for one night only to shine upon the Epanchin drawing-room. He accounted them immeasurably his inferiors, and it was this feeling which caused his special amiability and delightful ease and grace towards them. He knew very well that he must tell some story this evening for the edification of the company, and led up to it with the inspiration of anticipatory triumph.

The prince, when he heard the story afterwards, felt that he had never yet come across so wonderful a humorist, or such remarkable brilliancy as was shown by this man; and yet if he had only known it, this story was the oldest, stalest, and most worn-out yarn, and every drawing-room in town was sick to death of it. It was only in the innocent Epanchin household that it passed for a new and brilliant tale—as a sudden and striking reminiscence of a splendid and talented man.

Even the German poet, though as amiable as possible, felt that he was doing the house the greatest of honours by his presence in it.

But the prince only looked at the bright side; he did not turn the coat and see the shabby lining.

Aglaya had not foreseen that particular calamity. She herself looked wonderfully beautiful this evening. All three sisters were dressed very tastefully, and their hair was done with special care.

Aglaya sat next to Evgenie Pavlovitch, and laughed and talked to him with an unusual display of friendliness. Evgenie himself behaved rather more sedately than usual, probably out of respect to the dignitary. Evgenie had been known in society for a long while. He had appeared at the Epanchins' today with crape on his hat, and Princess Bielokonski had commended this action on his part. Not every society man would have worn crape for “such an uncle.” Lizabetha Prokofievna had liked it also, but was too preoccupied to take much notice. The prince remarked that Aglaya looked attentively at him two or three times, and seemed to be satisfied with his behaviour.

Little by little he became very happy indeed. All his late anxieties and apprehensions (after his conversation with Lebedeff) now appeared like so many bad dreams—impossible, and even laughable.

He did not speak much, only answering such questions as were put to him, and gradually settled down into unbroken silence, listening to what went on, and steeped in perfect satisfaction and contentment.

Little by little a sort of inspiration, however, began to stir within him, ready to spring into life at the right moment. When he did begin to speak, it was accidentally, in response to a question, and apparently without any special object.

VII.

WHILE he feasted his eyes upon Aglaya, as she talked merrily with Evgenie and Prince N., suddenly the old anglo-maniac, who was talking to the dignitary in another corner of the room, apparently telling him a story about something or other—suddenly this gentleman pronounced the name of “Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlicheff” aloud. The prince quickly turned towards him, and listened.

The conversation had been on the subject of land, and the present disorders, and there must have been something amusing said, for the old man had begun to laugh at his companion’s heated expressions.

The latter was describing in eloquent words how, in consequence of recent legislation, he was obliged to sell a beautiful estate in the N. province, not because he wanted ready money—in fact, he was obliged to sell it at half its value. “To avoid another lawsuit about the Pavlicheff estate, I ran away,” he said. “With a few more inheritances of that kind I should soon be ruined!”

At this point General Epanchin, noticing how interested Muishkin had become in the conversation, said to him, in a low tone:

“That gentleman—Ivan Petrovitch—is a relation of your late friend, Mr. Pavlicheff. You wanted to find some of his relations, did you not?”

The general, who had been talking to his chief up to this moment, had observed the prince’s solitude and silence, and was anxious to draw him into the conversation, and so introduce him again to the notice of some of the important personages.

“Lef Nicolaievitch was a ward of Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlicheff, after the death of his own parents,” he remarked, meeting Ivan Petrovitch’s eye.

“Very happy to meet him, I’m sure,” remarked the latter. “I remember Lef Nicolaievitch well. When General Epanchin introduced us just now, I recognized you at once, prince. You are very little changed, though I saw you last as a child of some ten or eleven years old. There was something in your features, I suppose, that—”

“You saw me as a child!” exclaimed the prince, with surprise.

“Oh! yes, long ago,” continued Ivan Petrovitch, “while you were living with my cousin at Zlatoverhoff. You don’t remember me? No, I dare say you don’t; you had some malady at the time, I remember. It was so serious that I was surprised—”

“No; I remember nothing!” said the prince. A few more words of explanation followed, words which were spoken without the smallest excitement by his companion, but which evoked the greatest agitation in the prince; and it was discovered that two old ladies to whose care the prince had been left by Pavlicheff, and who lived at Zlatoverhoff, were also relations of Ivan Petrovitch.

The latter had no idea and could give no information as to why Pavlicheff had taken so great an interest in the little prince, his ward.

“In point of fact I don’t think I thought much about it,” said the old fellow. He seemed to have a wonderfully good memory, however, for he told the prince all about the two old ladies, Pavlicheff’s cousins, who had taken care of him, and whom, he

declared, he had taken to task for being too severe with the prince as a small sickly boy—the elder sister, at least; the younger had been kind, he recollected. They both now lived in another province, on a small estate left to them by Pavlicheff. The prince listened to all this with eyes sparkling with emotion and delight.

He declared with unusual warmth that he would never forgive himself for having travelled about in the central provinces during these last six months without having hunted up his two old friends.

He declared, further, that he had intended to go every day, but had always been prevented by circumstances; but that now he would promise himself the pleasure—however far it was, he would find them out. And so Ivan Petrovitch REALLY knew Natalia Nikitishna!—what a saintly nature was hers!—and Martha Nikitishna! Ivan Petrovitch must excuse him, but really he was not quite fair on dear old Martha. She was severe, perhaps; but then what else could she be with such a little idiot as he was then? (Ha, ha.) He really was an idiot then, Ivan Petrovitch must know, though he might not believe it. (Ha, ha.) So he had really seen him there! Good heavens! And was he really and truly and actually a cousin of Pavlicheff's?

“I assure you of it,” laughed Ivan Petrovitch, gazing amusedly at the prince.

“Oh! I didn't say it because I DOUBT the fact, you know. (Ha, ha.) How could I doubt such a thing? (Ha, ha, ha.) I made the remark because—because Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlicheff was such a splendid man, don't you see! Such a high-souled man, he really was, I assure you.”

The prince did not exactly pant for breath, but he “seemed almost to CHOKE out of pure simplicity and goodness of heart,” as Adelaida expressed it, on talking the party over with her fiance, the Prince S., next morning.

“But, my goodness me,” laughed Ivan Petrovitch, “why can't I be cousin to even a splendid man?”

“Oh, dear!” cried the prince, confused, trying to hurry his words out, and growing more and more eager every moment: “I've gone and said another stupid thing. I don't know what to say. I—I didn't mean that, you know—I—I—he really was such a splendid man, wasn't he?”

The prince trembled all over. Why was he so agitated? Why had he flown into such transports of delight without any apparent reason? He had far outshot the measure of joy and emotion consistent with the occasion. Why this was it would be difficult to say.

He seemed to feel warmly and deeply grateful to someone for something or other—perhaps to Ivan Petrovitch; but likely enough to all the guests, individually, and collectively. He was much too happy.

Ivan Petrovitch began to stare at him with some surprise; the dignitary, too, looked at him with considerable attention; Princess Bielokonski glared at him angrily, and compressed her lips. Prince N., Evgenie, Prince S., and the girls, all broke off their own conversations and listened. Aglaya seemed a little startled; as for Lizabetha Prokofievna, her heart sank within her.

This was odd of Lizabetha Prokofievna and her daughters. They had themselves decided that it would be better if the prince did not talk all the evening. Yet seeing him sitting silent and alone, but perfectly happy, they had been on the point of exerting themselves to draw him into one of the groups of talkers around the room. Now that he was in the midst of a talk they became more than ever anxious and perturbed.

“That he was a splendid man is perfectly true; you are quite right,” repeated Ivan Petrovitch, but seriously this time. “He was a fine and a worthy fellow—worthy, one may say, of the highest respect,” he added, more and more seriously at each pause; ” and it is agreeable to see, on your part, such—”

“Wasn’t it this same Pavlicheff about whom there was a strange story in connection with some abbot? I don’t remember who the abbot was, but I remember at one time everybody was talking about it,” remarked the old dignitary.

“Yes—Abbot Gurot, a Jesuit,” said Ivan Petrovitch. “Yes, that’s the sort of thing our best men are apt to do. A man of rank, too, and rich—a man who, if he had continued to serve, might have done anything; and then to throw up the service and everything else in order to go over to Roman Catholicism and turn Jesuit— openly, too—almost triumphantly. By Jove! it was positively a mercy that he died when he did—it was indeed—everyone said so at the time.”

The prince was beside himself.

“Pavlicheff?—Pavlicheff turned Roman Catholic? Impossible!” he cried, in horror.

“H’m! impossible is rather a strong word,” said Ivan Petrovitch. “You must allow, my dear prince... However, of course you value the memory of the deceased so very highly; and he certainly was the kindest of men; to which fact, by the way, I ascribe, more than to anything else, the success of the abbot in influencing his religious convictions. But you may ask me, if you please, how much trouble and worry I, personally, had over that business, and especially with this same Gurot! Would you believe it,” he continued, addressing the dignitary, “they actually tried to put in a claim under the deceased’s will, and I had to resort to the very strongest measures in order to bring them to their senses? I assure you they knew their cue, did these gentlemen— wonderful! Thank goodness all this was in Moscow, and I got the Court, you know, to help me, and we soon brought them to their senses.

“You wouldn’t believe how you have pained and astonished me,” cried the prince.

“Very sorry; but in point of fact, you know, it was all nonsense and would have ended in smoke, as usual—I’m sure of that. Last year,”—he turned to the old man again,— “Countess K. joined some Roman Convent abroad. Our people never seem to be able to offer any resistance so soon as they get into the hands of these— intriguers—especially abroad.”

“That is all thanks to our lassitude, I think,” replied the old man, with authority. “And then their way of preaching; they have a skilful manner of doing it! And they know how to startle one, too. I got quite a fright myself in ‘32, in Vienna, I assure you; but I didn’t cave in to them, I ran away instead, ha, ha!”

“Come, come, I’ve always heard that you ran away with the beautiful Countess Levitsky that time—throwing up everything in order to do it—and not from the Jesuits at all,” said Princess Bielokonski, suddenly.

“Well, yes—but we call it from the Jesuits, you know; it comes to the same thing,” laughed the old fellow, delighted with the pleasant recollection.

“You seem to be very religious,” he continued, kindly, addressing the prince,” which is a thing one meets so seldom nowadays among young people.”

The prince was listening open-mouthed, and still in a condition of excited agitation. The old man was evidently interested in him, and anxious to study him more closely.

“Pavlicheff was a man of bright intellect and a good Christian, a sincere Christian,” said the prince, suddenly. “How could he possibly embrace a faith which is unchristian? Roman Catholicism is, so to speak, simply the same thing as unchristianity,” he added with flashing eyes, which seemed to take in everybody in the room.

“Come, that’s a little TOO strong, isn’t it?” murmured the old man, glancing at General Epanchin in surprise.

“How do you make out that the Roman Catholic religion is UNCHRISTIAN? What is it, then?” asked Ivan Petrovitch, turning to the prince.

“It is not a Christian religion, in the first place,” said the latter, in extreme agitation, quite out of proportion to the necessity of the moment. “And in the second place, Roman Catholicism is, in my opinion, worse than Atheism itself. Yes— that is my opinion. Atheism only preaches a negation, but Romanism goes further; it preaches a disfigured, distorted Christ—it preaches Anti-Christ—I assure you, I swear it! This is my own personal conviction, and it has long distressed me. The Roman Catholic believes that the Church on earth cannot stand without universal temporal Power. He cries ‘non possumus!’ In my opinion the Roman Catholic religion is not a faith at all, but simply a continuation of the Roman Empire, and everything is subordinated to this idea—beginning with faith. The Pope has seized territories and an earthly throne, and has held them with the sword. And so the thing has gone on, only that to the sword they have added lying, intrigue, deceit, fanaticism, superstition, swindling;—they have played fast and loose with the most sacred and sincere feelings of men;—they have exchanged everything—everything for money, for base earthly POWER! And is this not the teaching of Anti-Christ? How could the upshot of all this be other than Atheism? Atheism is the child of Roman Catholicism—it proceeded from these Romans themselves, though perhaps they would not believe it. It grew and fattened on hatred of its parents; it is the progeny of their lies and spiritual feebleness. Atheism! In our country it is only among the upper classes that you find unbelievers; men who have lost the root or spirit of their faith; but abroad whole masses of the people are beginning to profess unbelief—at first because of the darkness and lies by which they were surrounded; but now out of fanaticism, out of loathing for the Church and Christianity!”

The prince paused to get breath. He had spoken with extraordinary rapidity, and was very pale.

All present interchanged glances, but at last the old dignitary burst out laughing frankly. Prince N. took out his eye-glass to have a good look at the speaker. The German poet came out of his corner and crept nearer to the table, with a spiteful smile.

“You exaggerate the matter very much,” said Ivan Petrovitch, with rather a bored air. “There are, in the foreign Churches, many representatives of their faith who are worthy of respect and esteem.”

“Oh, but I did not speak of individual representatives. I was merely talking about Roman Catholicism, and its essence—of Rome itself. A Church can never entirely disappear; I never hinted at that!”

“Agreed that all this may be true; but we need not discuss a subject which belongs to the domain of theology.”

“Oh, no; oh, no! Not to theology alone, I assure you! Why, Socialism is the progeny of Romanism and of the Romanistic spirit. It and its brother Atheism proceed from Despair in opposition to Catholicism. It seeks to replace in itself the moral power of religion, in order to appease the spiritual thirst of parched humanity and save it; not by Christ, but by force. ‘Don’t dare to believe in God, don’t dare to possess any individuality, any property! Fraternite ou la Mort; two million heads. ‘By their works ye shall know them’—we are told. And we must not suppose that all this is harmless and without danger to ourselves. Oh, no; we must resist, and quickly, quickly! We must let out Christ shine forth upon the Western nations, our Christ whom we have preserved intact, and whom they have never known. Not as slaves, allowing ourselves to be caught by the hooks of the Jesuits, but carrying our Russian civilization to THEM, we must stand before them, not letting it be said among us that their preaching is ‘skilful,’ as someone expressed it just now.”

“But excuse me, excuse me;” cried Ivan Petrovitch considerably disturbed, and looking around uneasily. “Your ideas are, of course, most praiseworthy, and in the highest degree patriotic; but you exaggerate the matter terribly. It would be better if we dropped the subject.”

“No, sir, I do not exaggerate, I understate the matter, if anything, undoubtedly understate it; simply because I cannot express myself as I should like, but—”

“Allow me!”

The prince was silent. He sat straight up in his chair and gazed fervently at Ivan Petrovitch.

“It seems to me that you have been too painfully impressed by the news of what happened to your good benefactor,” said the old dignitary, kindly, and with the utmost calmness of demeanour. “You are excitable, perhaps as the result of your solitary life. If you would make up your mind to live more among your fellows in society, I trust, I am sure, that the world would be glad to welcome you, as a remarkable young man; and you would soon find yourself able to look at things more calmly. You would see that all these things are much simpler than you think; and, besides, these rare cases come about, in my opinion, from ennui and from satiety.”

“Exactly, exactly! That is a true thought!” cried the prince. “From ennui, from our ennui but not from satiety! Oh, no, you are wrong there! Say from THIRST if you like; the thirst of fever! And please do not suppose that this is so small a matter that we may have a laugh at it and dismiss it; we must be able to foresee our disasters and arm against them. We Russians no sooner arrive at the brink of the water, and realize that we are really at the brink, than we are so delighted with the outlook that in we plunge and swim to the farthest point we can see. Why is this? You say you are surprised at Pavlicheff’s action; you ascribe it to madness, to kindness of heart, and what not, but it is not so.

“Our Russian intensity not only astonishes ourselves; all Europe wonders at our conduct in such cases! For, if one of us goes over to Roman Catholicism, he is sure to become a Jesuit at once, and a rabid one into the bargain. If one of us becomes an Atheist, he must needs begin to insist on the prohibition of faith in God by force, that is, by the sword. Why is this? Why does he then exceed all bounds at once? Because he has found land at last, the fatherland that he sought in vain before; and, because his soul is rejoiced to find it, he throws himself upon it and kisses it! Oh, it is not from vanity alone, it is not from feelings of vanity that Russians become Atheists and Jesuits! But from spiritual thirst, from anguish of longing for higher things, for dry firm land, for foothold on a fatherland which they never believed in because they never knew it. It is easier for a Russian to become an Atheist, than for any other nationality in the world. And not only does a Russian ‘become an Atheist,’ but he actually BELIEVES IN Atheism, just as though he had found a new faith, not perceiving that he has pinned his faith to a negation. Such is our anguish of thirst! ‘Whoso has no country has no God.’ That is not my own expression; it is the expression of a merchant, one of the Old Believers, whom I once met while travelling. He did not say exactly these words. I think his expression was:

“‘Whoso forsakes his country forsakes his God.’

“But let these thirsty Russian souls find, like Columbus’ discoverers, a new world; let them find the Russian world, let them search and discover all the gold and treasure that lies hid in the bosom of their own land! Show them the restitution of lost humanity, in the future, by Russian thought alone, and by means of the God and of the Christ of our Russian faith, and you will see how mighty and just and wise and good a giant will rise up before the eyes of the astonished and frightened world; astonished because they expect nothing but the sword from us, because they think they will get nothing out of us but barbarism. This has been the case up to now, and the longer matters go on as they are now proceeding, the more clear will be the truth of what I say; and I—”

But at this moment something happened which put a most unexpected end to the orator’s speech. All this heated tirade, this outflow of passionate words and ecstatic ideas which seemed to hustle and tumble over each other as they fell from his lips, bore evidence of some unusually disturbed mental condition in the young fellow who had “boiled over” in such a remarkable manner, without any apparent reason.

Of those who were present, such as knew the prince listened to his outburst in a state of alarm, some with a feeling of mortification. It was so unlike his usual timid self-constraint; so inconsistent with his usual taste and tact, and with his instinctive feeling for the higher proprieties. They could not understand the origin of the outburst; it could not be simply the news of Pavlicheff's perversion. By the ladies the prince was regarded as little better than a lunatic, and Princess Bielokonski admitted afterwards that "in another minute she would have bolted."

The two old gentlemen looked quite alarmed. The old general (Epanchin's chief) sat and glared at the prince in severe displeasure. The colonel sat immovable. Even the German poet grew a little pale, though he wore his usual artificial smile as he looked around to see what the others would do.

In point of fact it is quite possible that the matter would have ended in a very commonplace and natural way in a few minutes. The undoubtedly astonished, but now more collected, General Epanchin had several times endeavoured to interrupt the prince, and not having succeeded he was now preparing to take firmer and more vigorous measures to attain his end. In another minute or two he would probably have made up his mind to lead the prince quietly out of the room, on the plea of his being ill (and it was more than likely that the general was right in his belief that the prince WAS actually ill), but it so happened that destiny had something different in store.

At the beginning of the evening, when the prince first came into the room, he had sat down as far as possible from the Chinese vase which Aglaya had spoken of the day before.

Will it be believed that, after Aglaya's alarming words, an ineradicable conviction had taken possession of his mind that, however he might try to avoid this vase next day, he must certainly break it? But so it was.

During the evening other impressions began to awaken in his mind, as we have seen, and he forgot his presentiment. But when Pavlicheff was mentioned and the general introduced him to Ivan Petrovitch, he had changed his place, and went over nearer to the table; when, it so happened, he took the chair nearest to the beautiful vase, which stood on a pedestal behind him, just about on a level with his elbow.

As he spoke his last words he had risen suddenly from his seat with a wave of his arm, and there was a general cry of horror.

The huge vase swayed backwards and forwards; it seemed to be uncertain whether or no to topple over on to the head of one of the old men, but eventually determined to go the other way, and came crashing over towards the German poet, who darted out of the way in terror.

The crash, the cry, the sight of the fragments of valuable china covering the carpet, the alarm of the company—what all this meant to the poor prince it would be difficult to convey to the mind of the reader, or for him to imagine.

But one very curious fact was that all the shame and vexation and mortification which he felt over the accident were less powerful than the deep impression of the almost supernatural truth of his premonition. He stood still in alarm—in almost superstitious

alarm, for a moment; then all mists seemed to clear away from his eyes; he was conscious of nothing but light and joy and ecstasy; his breath came and went; but the moment passed. Thank God it was not that! He drew a long breath and looked around.

For some minutes he did not seem to comprehend the excitement around him; that is, he comprehended it and saw everything, but he stood aside, as it were, like someone invisible in a fairy tale, as though he had nothing to do with what was going on, though it pleased him to take an interest in it.

He saw them gather up the broken bits of china; he heard the loud talking of the guests and observed how pale Aglaya looked, and how very strangely she was gazing at him. There was no hatred in her expression, and no anger whatever. It was full of alarm for him, and sympathy and affection, while she looked around at the others with flashing, angry eyes. His heart filled with a sweet pain as he gazed at her.

At length he observed, to his amazement, that all had taken their seats again, and were laughing and talking as though nothing had happened. Another minute and the laughter grew louder—they were laughing at him, at his dumb stupor—laughing kindly and merrily. Several of them spoke to him, and spoke so kindly and cordially, especially Lizabetha Prokofievna—she was saying the kindest possible things to him.

Suddenly he became aware that General Epanchin was tapping him on the shoulder; Ivan Petrovitch was laughing too, but still more kind and sympathizing was the old dignitary. He took the prince by the hand and pressed it warmly; then he patted it, and quietly urged him to recollect himself—speaking to him exactly as he would have spoken to a little frightened child, which pleased the prince wonderfully; and next seated him beside himself.

The prince gazed into his face with pleasure, but still seemed to have no power to speak. His breath failed him. The old man's face pleased him greatly.

"Do you really forgive me?" he said at last. "And—and Lizabetha Prokofievna too?" The laugh increased, tears came into the prince's eyes, he could not believe in all this kindness—he was enchanted.

"The vase certainly was a very beautiful one. I remember it here for fifteen years—yes, quite that!" remarked Ivan Petrovitch.

"Oh, what a dreadful calamity! A wretched vase smashed, and a man half dead with remorse about it," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, loudly. "What made you so dreadfully startled, Lef Nicolaievitch?" she added, a little timidly. "Come, my dear boy! cheer up. You really alarm me, taking the accident so to heart."

"Do you forgive me all—ALL, besides the vase, I mean?" said the prince, rising from his seat once more, but the old gentleman caught his hand and drew him down again—he seemed unwilling to let him go.

"C'est tres-curieux et c'est tres-serieux," he whispered across the table to Ivan Petrovitch, rather loudly. Probably the prince heard him.

"So that I have not offended any of you? You will not believe how happy I am to be able to think so. It is as it should be. As if I COULD offend anyone here! I should offend you again by even suggesting such a thing."

“Calm yourself, my dear fellow. You are exaggerating again; you really have no occasion to be so grateful to us. It is a feeling which does you great credit, but an exaggeration, for all that.”

“I am not exactly thanking you, I am only feeling a growing admiration for you—it makes me happy to look at you. I dare say I am speaking very foolishly, but I must speak—I must explain, if it be out of nothing better than self-respect.”

All he said and did was abrupt, confused, feverish—very likely the words he spoke, as often as not, were not those he wished to say. He seemed to inquire whether he MIGHT speak. His eyes lighted on Princess Bielokonski.

“All right, my friend, talk away, talk away!” she remarked. “Only don’t lose your breath; you were in such a hurry when you began, and look what you’ve come to now! Don’t be afraid of speaking— all these ladies and gentlemen have seen far stranger people than yourself; you don’t astonish THEM. You are nothing out-of-the-way remarkable, you know. You’ve done nothing but break a vase, and give us all a fright.”

The prince listened, smiling.

“Wasn’t it you,” he said, suddenly turning to the old gentleman, “who saved the student Porkunoff and a clerk called Shoabrin from being sent to Siberia, two or three months since?”

The old dignitary blushed a little, and murmured that the prince had better not excite himself further.

“And I have heard of YOU,” continued the prince, addressing Ivan Petrovitch, “that when some of your villagers were burned out you gave them wood to build up their houses again, though they were no longer your serfs and had behaved badly towards you.”

“Oh, come, come! You are exaggerating,” said Ivan Petrovitch, beaming with satisfaction, all the same. He was right, however, in this instance, for the report had reached the prince’s ears in an incorrect form.

“And you, princess,” he went on, addressing Princess Bielokonski, “was it not you who received me in Moscow, six months since, as kindly as though I had been your own son, in response to a letter from Lizabetha Prokofievna; and gave me one piece of advice, again as to your own son, which I shall never forget? Do you remember?”

“What are you making such a fuss about?” said the old lady, with annoyance. “You are a good fellow, but very silly. One gives you a halfpenny, and you are as grateful as though one had saved your life. You think this is praiseworthy on your part, but it is not—it is not, indeed.”

She seemed to be very angry, but suddenly burst out laughing, quite good-humouredly.

Lizabetha Prokofievna’s face brightened up, too; so did that of General Epanchin.

“I told you Lef Nicolaievitch was a man—a man—if only he would not be in such a hurry, as the princess remarked,” said the latter, with delight.

Aglaya alone seemed sad and depressed; her face was flushed, perhaps with indignation.

"He really is very charming," whispered the old dignitary to Ivan Petrovitch.

"I came into this room with anguish in my heart," continued the prince, with ever-growing agitation, speaking quicker and quicker, and with increasing strangeness. "I—I was afraid of you all, and afraid of myself. I was most afraid of myself. When I returned to Petersburg, I promised myself to make a point of seeing our greatest men, and members of our oldest families—the old families like my own. I am now among princes like myself, am I not? I wished to know you, and it was necessary, very, very necessary. I had always heard so much that was evil said of you all—more evil than good; as to how small and petty were your interests, how absurd your habits, how shallow your education, and so on. There is so much written and said about you! I came here today with anxious curiosity; I wished to see for myself and form my own convictions as to whether it were true that the whole of this upper stratum of Russian society is WORTHLESS, has outlived its time, has existed too long, and is only fit to die—and yet is dying with petty, spiteful warring against that which is destined to supersede it and take its place—hindering the Coming Men, and knowing not that itself is in a dying condition. I did not fully believe in this view even before, for there never was such a class among us—excepting perhaps at court, by accident—or by uniform; but now there is not even that, is there? It has vanished, has it not?"

"No, not a bit of it," said Ivan Petrovitch, with a sarcastic laugh.

"Good Lord, he's off again!" said Princess Bielokonski, impatiently.

"Laissez-le dire! He is trembling all over," said the old man, in a warning whisper.

The prince certainly was beside himself.

"Well? What have I seen?" he continued. "I have seen men of graceful simplicity of intellect; I have seen an old man who is not above speaking kindly and even LISTENING to a boy like myself; I see before me persons who can understand, who can forgive—kind, good Russian hearts—hearts almost as kind and cordial as I met abroad. Imagine how delighted I must have been, and how surprised! Oh, let me express this feeling! I have so often heard, and I have even believed, that in society there was nothing but empty forms, and that reality had vanished; but I now see for myself that this can never be the case HERE, among us—it may be the order elsewhere, but not in Russia. Surely you are not all Jesuits and deceivers! I heard Prince N.'s story just now. Was it not simple-minded, spontaneous humour? Could such words come from the lips of a man who is dead?—a man whose heart and talents are dried up? Could dead men and women have treated me so kindly as you have all been treating me to-day? Is there not material for the future in all this—for hope? Can such people fail to UNDERSTAND? Can such men fall away from reality?"

"Once more let us beg you to be calm, my dear boy. We'll talk of all this another time—I shall do so with the greatest pleasure, for one," said the old dignitary, with a smile.

Ivan Petrovitch grunted and twisted round in his chair. General Epanchin moved nervously. The latter's chief had started a conversation with the wife of the dignitary,

and took no notice whatever of the prince, but the old lady very often glanced at him, and listened to what he was saying.

“No, I had better speak,” continued the prince, with a new outburst of feverish emotion, and turning towards the old man with an air of confidential trustfulness.” Yesterday, Aglaya Ivanovna forbade me to talk, and even specified the particular subjects I must not touch upon—she knows well enough that I am odd when I get upon these matters. I am nearly twenty-seven years old, and yet I know I am little better than a child. I have no right to express my ideas, and said so long ago. Only in Moscow, with Rogojin, did I ever speak absolutely freely! He and I read Pushkin together—all his works. Rogojin knew nothing of Pushkin, had not even heard his name. I am always afraid of spoiling a great Thought or Idea by my absurd manner. I have no eloquence, I know. I always make the wrong gestures— inappropriate gestures—and therefore I degrade the Thought, and raise a laugh instead of doing my subject justice. I have no sense of proportion either, and that is the chief thing. I know it would be much better if I were always to sit still and say nothing. When I do so, I appear to be quite a sensible sort of a person, and what’s more, I think about things. But now I must speak; it is better that I should. I began to speak because you looked so kindly at me; you have such a beautiful face. I promised Aglaya Ivanovna yesterday that I would not speak all the evening.”

“Really?” said the old man, smiling.

“But, at times, I can’t help thinking that I am. wrong in feeling so about it, you know. Sincerity is more important than elocution, isn’t it?”

“Sometimes.”

“I want to explain all to you—everything—everything! I know you think me Utopian, don’t you—an idealist? Oh, no! I’m not, indeed—my ideas are all so simple. You don’t believe me? You are smiling. Do you know, I am sometimes very wicked—for I lose my faith? This evening as I came here, I thought to myself, ‘What shall I talk about? How am I to begin, so that they may be able to understand partially, at all events?’ How afraid I was— dreadfully afraid! And yet, how COULD I be afraid—was it not shameful of me? Was I afraid of finding a bottomless abyss of empty selfishness? Ah! that’s why I am so happy at this moment, because I find there is no bottomless abyss at all—but good, healthy material, full of life.

“It is not such a very dreadful circumstance that we are odd people, is it? For we really are odd, you know—careless, reckless, easily wearied of anything. We don’t look thoroughly into matters—don’t care to understand things. We are all like this—you and I, and all of them! Why, here are you, now—you are not a bit angry with me for calling you odd,’ are you? And, if so, surely there is good material in you? Do you know, I sometimes think it is a good thing to be odd. We can forgive one another more easily, and be more humble. No one can begin by being perfect—there is much one cannot understand in life at first. In order to attain to perfection, one must begin by failing to understand much. And if we take in knowledge too quickly, we very likely are not taking it in at all. I say all this to you—you who by this time understand

so much—and doubtless have failed to understand so much, also. I am not afraid of you any longer. You are not angry that a mere boy should say such words to you, are you? Of course not! You know how to forget and to forgive. You are laughing, Ivan Petrovitch? You think I am a champion of other classes of people—that I am THEIR advocate, a democrat, and an orator of Equality?” The prince laughed hysterically; he had several times burst into these little, short nervous laughs. “Oh, no—it is for you, for myself, and for all of us together, that I am alarmed. I am a prince of an old family myself, and I am sitting among my peers; and I am talking like this in the hope of saving us all; in the hope that our class will not disappear altogether—into the darkness—unguessing its danger—blaming everything around it, and losing ground every day. Why should we disappear and give place to others, when we may still, if we choose, remain in the front rank and lead the battle? Let us be servants, that we may become lords in due season!”

He tried to get upon his feet again, but the old man still restrained him, gazing at him with increasing perturbation as he went on.

“Listen—I know it is best not to speak! It is best simply to give a good example—simply to begin the work. I have done this—I have begun, and—and—oh! CAN anyone be unhappy, really? Oh! what does grief matter—what does misfortune matter, if one knows how to be happy? Do you know, I cannot understand how anyone can pass by a green tree, and not feel happy only to look at it! How anyone can talk to a man and not feel happy in loving him! Oh, it is my own fault that I cannot express myself well enough! But there are lovely things at every step I take—things which even the most miserable man must recognize as beautiful. Look at a little child—look at God’s day-dawn—look at the grass growing—look at the eyes that love you, as they gaze back into your eyes!”

He had risen, and was speaking standing up. The old gentleman was looking at him now in unconcealed alarm. Lizabetha Prokofievna wrung her hands. “Oh, my God!” she cried. She had guessed the state of the case before anyone else.

Aglaya rushed quickly up to him, and was just in time to receive him in her arms, and to hear with dread and horror that awful, wild cry as he fell writhing to the ground.

There he lay on the carpet, and someone quickly placed a cushion under his head. No one had expected this.

In a quarter of an hour or so Prince N. and Evgenie Pavlovitch and the old dignitary were hard at work endeavouring to restore the harmony of the evening, but it was of no avail, and very soon after the guests separated and went their ways.

A great deal of sympathy was expressed; a considerable amount of advice was volunteered; Ivan Petrovitch expressed his opinion that the young man was “a Slavophile, or something of that sort”; but that it was not a dangerous development. The old dignitary said nothing.

True enough, most of the guests, next day and the day after, were not in very good humour. Ivan Petrovitch was a little offended, but not seriously so. General Epanchin’s

chief was rather cool towards him for some while after the occurrence. The old dignitary, as patron of the family, took the opportunity of murmuring some kind of admonition to the general, and added, in flattering terms, that he was most interested in Aglaya's future. He was a man who really did possess a kind heart, although his interest in the prince, in the earlier part of the evening, was due, among other reasons, to the latter's connection with Nastasia Philipovna, according to popular report. He had heard a good deal of this story here and there, and was greatly interested in it, so much so that he longed to ask further questions about it.

Princess Bielokonski, as she drove away on this eventful evening, took occasion to say to Lizabetha Prokofievna:

"Well—he's a good match—and a bad one; and if you want my opinion, more bad than good. You can see for yourself the man is an invalid."

Lizabetha therefore decided that the prince was impossible as a husband for Aglaya; and during the ensuing night she made a vow that never while she lived should he marry Aglaya. With this resolve firmly impressed upon her mind, she awoke next day; but during the morning, after her early lunch, she fell into a condition of remarkable inconsistency.

In reply to a very guarded question of her sisters', Aglaya had answered coldly, but exceedingly haughtily:

"I have never given him my word at all, nor have I ever counted him as my future husband—never in my life. He is just as little to me as all the rest."

Lizabetha Prokofievna suddenly flared up.

"I did not expect that of you, Aglaya," she said. "He is an impossible husband for you,—I know it; and thank God that we agree upon that point; but I did not expect to hear such words from you. I thought I should hear a very different tone from you. I would have turned out everyone who was in the room last night and kept him,—that's the sort of man he is, in my opinion!"

Here she suddenly paused, afraid of what she had just said. But she little knew how unfair she was to her daughter at that moment. It was all settled in Aglaya's mind. She was only waiting for the hour that would bring the matter to a final climax; and every hint, every careless probing of her wound, did but further lacerate her heart.

VIII.

THIS same morning dawned for the prince pregnant with no less painful presentiments,—which fact his physical state was, of course, quite enough to account for; but he was so indefinitely melancholy,—his sadness could not attach itself to anything in particular, and this tormented him more than anything else. Of course certain facts stood before him, clear and painful, but his sadness went beyond all that he could remember or imagine; he realized that he was powerless to console himself

unaided. Little by little he began to develop the expectation that this day something important, something decisive, was to happen to him.

His attack of yesterday had been a slight one. Excepting some little heaviness in the head and pain in the limbs, he did not feel any particular effects. His brain worked all right, though his soul was heavy within him.

He rose late, and immediately upon waking remembered all about the previous evening; he also remembered, though not quite so clearly, how, half an hour after his fit, he had been carried home.

He soon heard that a messenger from the Epanchins' had already been to inquire after him. At half-past eleven another arrived; and this pleased him.

Vera Lebedeff was one of the first to come to see him and offer her services. No sooner did she catch sight of him than she burst into tears; but when he tried to soothe her she began to laugh. He was quite struck by the girl's deep sympathy for him; he seized her hand and kissed it. Vera flushed crimson.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she exclaimed in alarm, snatching her hand away. She went hastily out of the room in a state of strange confusion.

Lebedeff also came to see the prince, in a great hurry to get away to the "deceased," as he called General Ivolgin, who was alive still, but very ill. Colia also turned up, and begged the prince for pity's sake to tell him all he knew about his father which had been concealed from him till now. He said he had found out nearly everything since yesterday; the poor boy was in a state of deep affliction. With all the sympathy which he could bring into play, the prince told Colia the whole story without reserve, detailing the facts as clearly as he could. The tale struck Colia like a thunderbolt. He could not speak. He listened silently, and cried softly to himself the while. The prince perceived that this was an impression which would last for the whole of the boy's life. He made haste to explain his view of the matter, and pointed out that the old man's approaching death was probably brought on by horror at the thought of his action; and that it was not everyone who was capable of such a feeling.

Colia's eyes flashed as he listened.

"Gania and Varia and Ptitsin are a worthless lot! I shall not quarrel with them; but from this moment our feet shall not travel the same road. Oh, prince, I have felt much that is quite new to me since yesterday! It is a lesson for me. I shall now consider my mother as entirely my responsibility; though she may be safe enough with Varia. Still, meat and drink is not everything."

He jumped up and hurried off, remembering suddenly that he was wanted at his father's bedside; but before he went out of the room he inquired hastily after the prince's health, and receiving the latter's reply, added:

"Isn't there something else, prince? I heard yesterday, but I have no right to talk about this... If you ever want a true friend and servant—neither you nor I are so very happy, are we? —come to me. I won't ask you questions, though."

He ran off and left the prince more dejected than ever.

Everyone seemed to be speaking prophetically, hinting at some misfortune or sorrow to come; they had all looked at him as though they knew something which he did not know. Lebedeff had asked questions, Colia had hinted, and Vera had shed tears. What was it?

At last, with a sigh of annoyance, he said to himself that it was nothing but his own cursed sickly suspicion. His face lighted up with joy when, at about two o'clock, he espied the Epanchins coming along to pay him a short visit, "just for a minute." They really had only come for a minute.

Lizabetha Prokofievna had announced, directly after lunch, that they would all take a walk together. The information was given in the form of a command, without explanation, drily and abruptly. All had issued forth in obedience to the mandate; that is, the girls, mamma, and Prince S. Lizabetha Prokofievna went off in a direction exactly contrary to the usual one, and all understood very well what she was driving at, but held their peace, fearing to irritate the good lady. She, as though anxious to avoid any conversation, walked ahead, silent and alone. At last Adelaida remarked that it was no use racing along at such a pace, and that she could not keep up with her mother.

"Look here," said Lizabetha Prokofievna, turning round suddenly; "we are passing his house. Whatever Aglaya may think, and in spite of anything that may happen, he is not a stranger to us; besides which, he is ill and in misfortune. I, for one, shall call in and see him. Let anyone follow me who cares to."

Of course every one of them followed her.

The prince hastened to apologize, very properly, for yesterday's mishap with the vase, and for the scene generally.

"Oh, that's nothing," replied Lizabetha; "I'm not sorry for the vase, I'm sorry for you. H'm! so you can see that there was a 'scene,' can you? Well, it doesn't matter much, for everyone must realize now that it is impossible to be hard on you. Well, au revoir. I advise you to have a walk, and then go to sleep again if you can. Come in as usual, if you feel inclined; and be assured, once for all, whatever happens, and whatever may have happened, you shall always remain the friend of the family—mine, at all events. I can answer for myself."

In response to this challenge all the others chimed in and re-echoed mamma's sentiments.

And so they took their departure; but in this hasty and kindly designed visit there was hidden a fund of cruelty which Lizabetha Prokofievna never dreamed of. In the words "as usual," and again in her added, "mine, at all events," there seemed an ominous knell of some evil to come.

The prince began to think of Aglaya. She had certainly given him a wonderful smile, both at coming and again at leave-taking, but had not said a word, not even when the others all professed their friendship for him. She had looked very intently at him, but that was all. Her face had been paler than usual; she looked as though she had slept badly.

The prince made up his mind that he would make a point of going there “as usual,” tonight, and looked feverishly at his watch.

Vera came in three minutes after the Epanchins had left. “Lef Nicolaievitch,” she said, “Aglaya Ivanovna has just given me a message for you.”

The prince trembled.

“Is it a note?”

“No, a verbal message; she had hardly time even for that. She begs you earnestly not to go out of the house for a single moment all to-day, until seven o’clock in the evening. It may have been nine; I didn’t quite hear.”

“But—but, why is this? What does it mean?”

“I don’t know at all; but she said I was to tell you particularly.”

“Did she say that?”

“Not those very words. She only just had time to whisper as she went by; but by the way she looked at me I knew it was important. She looked at me in a way that made my heart stop beating.”

The prince asked a few more questions, and though he learned nothing else, he became more and more agitated.

Left alone, he lay down on the sofa, and began to think.

“Perhaps,” he thought, “someone is to be with them until nine tonight and she is afraid that I may come and make a fool of myself again, in public.” So he spent his time longing for the evening and looking at his watch. But the clearing-up of the mystery came long before the evening, and came in the form of a new and agonizing riddle.

Half an hour after the Epanchins had gone, Hippolyte arrived, so tired that, almost unconscious, he sank into a chair, and broke into such a fit of coughing that he could not stop. He coughed till the blood came. His eyes glittered, and two red spots on his cheeks grew brighter and brighter. The prince murmured something to him, but Hippolyte only signed that he must be left alone for a while, and sat silent. At last he came to himself.

“I am off,” he said, hoarsely, and with difficulty.

“Shall I see you home?” asked the prince, rising from his seat, but suddenly stopping short as he remembered Aglaya’s prohibition against leaving the house. Hippolyte laughed.

“I don’t mean that I am going to leave your house,” he continued, still gasping and coughing. “On the contrary, I thought it absolutely necessary to come and see you; otherwise I should not have troubled you. I am off there, you know, and this time I believe, seriously, that I am off! It’s all over. I did not come here for sympathy, believe me. I lay down this morning at ten o’clock with the intention of not rising again before that time; but I thought it over and rose just once more in order to come here; from which you may deduce that I had some reason for wishing to come.”

“It grieves me to see you so, Hippolyte. Why didn’t you send me a message? I would have come up and saved you this trouble.”

“Well, well! Enough! You’ve pitied me, and that’s all that good manners exact. I forgot, how are you?”

“I’m all right; yesterday I was a little—”

“I know, I heard; the china vase caught it! I’m sorry I wasn’t there. I’ve come about something important. In the first place I had, the pleasure of seeing Gavril Ardalionovitch and Aglaya Ivanovna enjoying a rendezvous on the green bench in the park. I was astonished to see what a fool a man can look. I remarked upon the fact to Aglaya Ivanovna when he had gone. I don’t think anything ever surprises you, prince!” added Hippolyte, gazing incredulously at the prince’s calm demeanour. “To be astonished by nothing is a sign, they say, of a great intellect. In my opinion it would serve equally well as a sign of great foolishness. I am not hinting about you; pardon me! I am very unfortunate today in my expressions.

“I knew yesterday that Gavril Ardalionovitch—” began the prince, and paused in evident confusion, though Hippolyte had shown annoyance at his betraying no surprise.

“You knew it? Come, that’s news! But no—perhaps better not tell me. And were you a witness of the meeting?”

“If you were there yourself you must have known that I was NOT there!”

“Oh! but you may have been sitting behind the bushes somewhere. However, I am very glad, on your account, of course. I was beginning to be afraid that Mr. Gania—might have the preference!”

“May I ask you, Hippolyte, not to talk of this subject? And not to use such expressions?”

“Especially as you know all, eh?”

“You are wrong. I know scarcely anything, and Aglaya Ivanovna is aware that I know nothing. I knew nothing whatever about this meeting. You say there was a meeting. Very well; let’s leave it so—”

“Why, what do you mean? You said you knew, and now suddenly you know nothing! You say ‘very well; let’s leave it so.’ But I say, don’t be so confiding, especially as you know nothing. You are confiding simply BECAUSE you know nothing. But do you know what these good people have in their minds’ eye—Gania and his sister? Perhaps you are suspicious? Well, well, I’ll drop the subject!” he added, hastily, observing the prince’s impatient gesture. “But I’ve come to you on my own business; I wish to make you a clear explanation. What a nuisance it is that one cannot die without explanations! I have made such a quantity of them already. Do you wish to hear what I have to say?”

“Speak away, I am listening.”

“Very well, but I’ll change my mind, and begin about Gania. Just fancy to begin with, if you can, that I, too, was given an appointment at the green bench today! However, I won’t deceive you; I asked for the appointment. I said I had a secret to disclose. I don’t know whether I came there too early, I think I must have; but scarcely had I sat down beside Aglaya Ivanovna than I saw Gavril Ardalionovitch and his sister Varia coming along, arm in arm, just as though they were enjoying a morning walk together. Both of them seemed very much astonished, not to say disturbed, at

seeing me; they evidently had not expected the pleasure. Aglaya Ivanovna blushed up, and was actually a little confused. I don't know whether it was merely because I was there, or whether Gania's beauty was too much for her! But anyway, she turned crimson, and then finished up the business in a very funny manner. She jumped up from her seat, bowed back to Gania, smiled to Varia, and suddenly observed: 'I only came here to express my gratitude for all your kind wishes on my behalf, and to say that if I find I need your services, believe me—' Here she bowed them away, as it were, and they both marched off again, looking very foolish. Gania evidently could not make head nor tail of the matter, and turned as red as a lobster; but Varia understood at once that they must get away as quickly as they could, so she dragged Gania away; she is a great deal cleverer than he is. As for myself, I went there to arrange a meeting to be held between Aglaya Ivanovna and Nastasia Philipovna."

"Nastasia Philipovna!" cried the prince.

"Aha! I think you are growing less cool, my friend, and are beginning to be a trifle surprised, aren't you? I'm glad that you are not above ordinary human feelings, for once. I'll console you a little now, after your consternation. See what I get for serving a young and high-souled maiden! This morning I received a slap in the face from the lady!"

"A—a moral one?" asked the prince, involuntarily.

"Yes—not a physical one! I don't suppose anyone—even a woman— would raise a hand against me now. Even Gania would hesitate! I did think at one time yesterday, that he would fly at me, though. I bet anything that I know what you are thinking of now! You are thinking: 'Of course one can't strike the little wretch, but one could suffocate him with a pillow, or a wet towel, when he is asleep! One OUGHT to get rid of him somehow.' I can see in your face that you are thinking that at this very second."

"I never thought of such a thing for a moment," said the prince, with disgust.

"I don't know—I dreamed last night that I was being suffocated with a wet cloth by—somebody. I'll tell you who it was—Rogojin! What do you think, can a man be suffocated with a wet cloth?"

"I don't know."

"I've heard so. Well, we'll leave that question just now. Why am I a scandal-monger? Why did she call me a scandal-monger? And mind, AFTER she had heard every word I had to tell her, and had asked all sorts of questions besides—but such is the way of women. For HER sake I entered into relations with Rogojin—an interesting man! At HER request I arranged a personal interview between herself and Nastasia Philipovna. Could she have been angry because I hinted that she was enjoying Nastasia Philipovna's 'leavings'? Why, I have been impressing it upon her all this while for her own good. Two letters have I written her in that strain, and I began straight off today about its being humiliating for her. Besides, the word 'leavings' is not my invention. At all events, they all used it at Gania's, and she used it herself. So why am I a scandal-monger? I see—I see you are tremendously amused, at this moment! Probably you are laughing at me and fitting those silly lines to my case—

“‘Maybe sad Love upon his setting smiles, And with vain hopes his farewell hour beguiles.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Hippolyte suddenly burst into a fit of hysterical laughter, which turned into a choking cough.

“Observe,” he gasped, through his coughing, “what a fellow Gania is! He talks about Nastasia’s ‘leavings,’ but what does he want to take himself?”

The prince sat silent for a long while. His mind was filled with dread and horror.

“You spoke of a meeting with Nastasia Philipovna,” he said at last, in a low voice.

“Oh—come! Surely you must know that there is to be a meeting today between Nastasia and Aglaya Ivanovna, and that Nastasia has been sent for on purpose, through Rogojin, from St. Petersburg? It has been brought about by invitation of Aglaya Ivanovna and my own efforts, and Nastasia is at this moment with Rogojin, not far from here—at Dana Alexeyevna’s—that curious friend of hers; and to this questionable house Aglaya Ivanovna is to proceed for a friendly chat with Nastasia Philipovna, and for the settlement of several problems. They are going to play at arithmetic—didn’t you know about it? Word of honour?”

“It’s a most improbable story.”

“Oh, very well! if it’s improbable—it is—that’s all! And yet—where should you have heard it? Though I must say, if a fly crosses the room it’s known all over the place here. However, I’ve warned you, and you may be grateful to me. Well—au revoir—probably in the next world! One more thing—don’t think that I am telling you all this for your sake. Oh, dear, no! Do you know that I dedicated my confession to Aglaya Ivanovna? I did though, and how she took it, ha, ha! Oh, no! I am not acting from any high, exalted motives. But though I may have behaved like a cad to you, I have not done HER any harm. I don’t apologize for my words about ‘leavings’ and all that. I am atoning for that, you see, by telling you the place and time of the meeting. Goodbye! You had better take your measures, if you are worthy the name of a man! The meeting is fixed for this evening—that’s certain.”

Hippolyte walked towards the door, but the prince called him back and he stopped.

“Then you think Aglaya Ivanovna herself intends to go to Nastasia Philipovna’s tonight?” he asked, and bright hectic spots came out on his cheeks and forehead.

“I don’t know absolutely for certain; but in all probability it is so,” replied Hippolyte, looking round. “Nastasia would hardly go to her; and they can’t meet at Gania’s, with a man nearly dead in the house.”

“It’s impossible, for that very reason,” said the prince. “How would she get out if she wished to? You don’t know the habits of that house—she COULD not get away alone to Nastasia Philipovna’s! It’s all nonsense!”

“Look here, my dear prince, no one jumps out of the window if they can help it; but when there’s a fire, the dandiest gentleman or the finest lady in the world will skip out! When the moment comes, and there’s nothing else to be done—our young

lady will go to Nastasia Philipovna's! Don't they let the young ladies out of the house alone, then?"

"I didn't mean that exactly."

"If you didn't mean that, then she has only to go down the steps and walk off, and she need never come back unless she chooses: Ships are burned behind one sometimes, and one doesn't care to return whence one came. Life need not consist only of lunches, and dinners, and Prince S's. It strikes me you take Aglaya Ivanovna for some conventional boarding-school girl. I said so to her, and she quite agreed with me. Wait till seven or eight o'clock. In your place I would send someone there to keep watch, so as to seize the exact moment when she steps out of the house. Send Colia. He'll play the spy with pleasure—for you at least. Ha, ha, ha!"

Hippolyte went out.

There was no reason for the prince to set anyone to watch, even if he had been capable of such a thing. Aglaya's command that he should stay at home all day seemed almost explained now. Perhaps she meant to call for him, herself, or it might be, of course, that she was anxious to make sure of his not coming there, and therefore bade him remain at home. His head whirled; the whole room seemed to be turning round. He lay down on the sofa, and closed his eyes.

One way or the other the question was to be decided at last— finally.

Oh, no, he did not think of Aglaya as a boarding-school miss, or a young lady of the conventional type! He had long since feared that she might take some such step as this. But why did she wish to see Nastasia?

He shivered all over as he lay; he was in high fever again.

No! he did not account her a child. Certain of her looks, certain of her words, of late, had filled him with apprehension. At times it had struck him that she was putting too great a restraint upon herself, and he remembered that he had been alarmed to observe this. He had tried, all these days, to drive away the heavy thoughts that oppressed him; but what was the hidden mystery of that soul? The question had long tormented him, although he implicitly trusted that soul. And now it was all to be cleared up. It was a dreadful thought. And "that woman" again! Why did he always feel as though "that woman" were fated to appear at each critical moment of his life, and tear the thread of his destiny like a bit of rotten string? That he always HAD felt this he was ready to swear, although he was half delirious at the moment. If he had tried to forget her, all this time, it was simply because he was afraid of her. Did he love the woman or hate her? This question he did not once ask himself today; his heart was quite pure. He knew whom he loved. He was not so much afraid of this meeting, nor of its strangeness, nor of any reasons there might be for it, unknown to himself; he was afraid of the woman herself, Nastasia Philipovna. He remembered, some days afterwards, how during all those fevered hours he had seen but HER eyes, HER look, had heard HER voice, strange words of hers; he remembered that this was so, although he could not recollect the details of his thoughts.

He could remember that Vera brought him some dinner, and that he took it; but whether he slept after dinner, or no, he could not recollect.

He only knew that he began to distinguish things clearly from the moment when Aglaya suddenly appeared, and he jumped up from the sofa and went to meet her. It was just a quarter past seven then.

Aglaya was quite alone, and dressed, apparently hastily, in a light mantle. Her face was pale, as it had been in the morning, and her eyes were ablaze with bright but subdued fire. He had never seen that expression in her eyes before.

She gazed attentively at him.

“You are quite ready, I observe,” she said, with absolute composure, “dressed, and your hat in your hand. I see somebody has thought fit to warn you, and I know who. Hippolyte?”

“Yes, he told me,” said the prince, feeling only half alive.

“Come then. You know, I suppose, that you must escort me there? You are well enough to go out, aren’t you?”

“I am well enough; but is it really possible?—”

He broke off abruptly, and could not add another word. This was his one attempt to stop the mad child, and, after he had made it, he followed her as though he had no will of his own. Confused as his thoughts were, he was, nevertheless, capable of realizing the fact that if he did not go with her, she would go alone, and so he must go with her at all hazards. He guessed the strength of her determination; it was beyond him to check it.

They walked silently, and said scarcely a word all the way. He only noticed that she seemed to know the road very well; and once, when he thought it better to go by a certain lane, and remarked to her that it would be quieter and less public, she only said, “it’s all the same,” and went on.

When they were almost arrived at Daria Alexeyevna’s house (it was a large wooden structure of ancient date), a gorgeously-dressed lady and a young girl came out of it. Both these ladies took their seats in a carriage, which was waiting at the door, talking and laughing loudly the while, and drove away without appearing to notice the approaching couple.

No sooner had the carriage driven off than the door opened once more; and Rogojin, who had apparently been awaiting them, let them in and closed it after them.

“There is not another soul in the house now excepting our four selves,” he said aloud, looking at the prince in a strange way.

Nastasia Philipovna was waiting for them in the first room they went into. She was dressed very simply, in black.

She rose at their entrance, but did not smile or give her hand, even to the prince. Her anxious eyes were fixed upon Aglaya. Both sat down, at a little distance from one another—Aglaya on the sofa, in the corner of the room, Nastasia by the window. The prince and Rogojin remained standing, and were not invited to sit.

Muishkin glanced at Rogojin in perplexity, but the latter only smiled disagreeably, and said nothing. The silence continued for some few moments.

An ominous expression passed over Nastasia Philipovna's face, of a sudden. It became obstinate-looking, hard, and full of hatred; but she did not take her eyes off her visitors for a moment.

Aglaya was clearly confused, but not frightened. On entering she had merely glanced momentarily at her rival, and then had sat still, with her eyes on the ground, apparently in thought. Once or twice she glanced casually round the room. A shade of disgust was visible in her expression; she looked as though she were afraid of contamination in this place.

She mechanically arranged her dress, and fidgeted uncomfortably, eventually changing her seat to the other end of the sofa. Probably she was unconscious of her own movements; but this very unconsciousness added to the offensiveness of their suggested meaning.

At length she looked straight into Nastasia's eyes, and instantly read all there was to read in her rival's expression. Woman understood woman! Aglaya shuddered.

"You know of course why I requested this meeting?" she said at last, quietly, and pausing twice in the delivery of this very short sentence.

"No—I know nothing about it," said Nastasia, drily and abruptly.

Aglaya blushed. Perhaps it struck her as very strange and impossible that she should really be sitting here and waiting for "that woman's" reply to her question.

At the first sound of Nastasia's voice a shudder ran through her frame. Of course "that woman" observed and took in all this.

"You know quite well, but you are pretending to be ignorant," said Aglaya, very low, with her eyes on the ground.

"Why should I?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, smiling slightly.

"You want to take advantage of my position, now that I am in your house," continued Aglaya, awkwardly.

"For that position YOU are to blame and not I," said Nastasia, flaring up suddenly. "I did not invite YOU, but you me; and to this moment I am quite ignorant as to why I am thus honoured."

Aglaya raised her head haughtily.

"Restrain your tongue!" she said. "I did not come here to fight you with your own weapons.

"Oh! then you did come 'to fight,' I may conclude? Dear me!—and I thought you were cleverer—"

They looked at one another with undisguised malice. One of these women had written to the other, so lately, such letters as we have seen; and it all was dispersed at their first meeting. Yet it appeared that not one of the four persons in the room considered this in any degree strange.

The prince who, up to yesterday, would not have believed that he could even dream of such an impossible scene as this, stood and listened and looked on, and felt as

though he had long foreseen it all. The most fantastic dream seemed suddenly to have been metamorphosed into the most vivid reality.

One of these women so despised the other, and so longed to express her contempt for her (perhaps she had only come for that very purpose, as Rogojin said next day), that howsoever fantastical was the other woman, howsoever afflicted her spirit and disturbed her understanding, no preconceived idea of hers could possibly stand up against that deadly feminine contempt of her rival. The prince felt sure that Nastasia would say nothing about the letters herself; but he could judge by her flashing eyes and the expression of her face what the thought of those letters must be costing her at this moment. He would have given half his life to prevent Aglaya from speaking of them. But Aglaya suddenly braced herself up, and seemed to master herself fully, all in an instant.

“You have not quite understood,” she said. “I did not come to quarrel with you, though I do not like you. I came to speak to you as... as one human being to another. I came with my mind made up as to what I had to say to you, and I shall not change my intention, although you may misunderstand me. So much the worse for you, not for myself! I wished to reply to all you have written to me and to reply personally, because I think that is the more convenient way. Listen to my reply to all your letters. I began to be sorry for Prince Lef Nicolaievitch on the very day I made his acquaintance, and when I heard—afterwards—of all that took place at your house in the evening, I was sorry for him because he was such a simple-minded man, and because he, in the simplicity of his soul, believed that he could be happy with a woman of your character. What I feared actually took place; you could not love him, you tortured him, and threw him over. You could not love him because you are too proud—no, not proud, that is an error; because you are too vain—no, not quite that either; too self-loving; you are self-loving to madness. Your letters to me are a proof of it. You could not love so simple a soul as his, and perhaps in your heart you despised him and laughed at him. All you could love was your shame and the perpetual thought that you were disgraced and insulted. If you were less shameful, or had no cause at all for shame, you would be still more unhappy than you are now.

Aglaya brought out these thronging words with great satisfaction. They came from her lips hurriedly and impetuously, and had been prepared and thought out long ago, even before she had ever dreamed of the present meeting. She watched with eagerness the effect of her speech as shown in Nastasia’s face, which was distorted with agitation.

“You remember,” she continued, “he wrote me a letter at that time; he says you know all about that letter and that you even read it. I understand all by means of this letter, and understand it correctly. He has since confirmed it all to me—what I now say to you, word for word. After receiving his letter I waited; I guessed that you would soon come back here, because you could never do without Petersburg; you are still too young and lovely for the provinces. However, this is not my own idea,” she added, blushing dreadfully; and from this moment the colour never left her cheeks to the end of her speech. When I next saw the prince I began to feel terribly pained and

hurt on his account. Do not laugh; if you laugh you are unworthy of understanding what I say.”

“Surely you see that I am not laughing,” said Nastasia, sadly and sternly.

“However, it’s all the same to me; laugh or not, just as you please. When I asked him about you, he told me that he had long since ceased to love you, that the very recollection of you was a torture to him, but that he was sorry for you; and that when he thought of you his heart was pierced. I ought to tell you that I never in my life met a man anything like him for noble simplicity of mind and for boundless trustfulness. I guessed that anyone who liked could deceive him, and that he would immediately forgive anyone who did deceive him; and it was for this that I grew to love him—”

Aglaya paused for a moment, as though suddenly brought up in astonishment that she could have said these words, but at the same time a great pride shone in her eyes, like a defiant assertion that it would not matter to her if “this woman” laughed in her face for the admission just made.

“I have told you all now, and of course you understand what I wish of you.”

“Perhaps I do; but tell me yourself,” said Nastasia Philipovna, quietly.

Aglaya flushed up angrily.

“I wished to find out from you,” she said, firmly, “by what right you dare to meddle with his feelings for me? By what right you dared send me those letters? By what right do you continually remind both me and him that you love him, after you yourself threw him over and ran away from him in so insulting and shameful a way?”

“I never told either him or you that I loved him!” replied Nastasia Philipovna, with an effort. “And—and I did run away from him—you are right there,” she added, scarcely audibly.

“Never told either him or me?” cried Aglaya. “How about your letters? Who asked you to try to persuade me to marry him? Was not that a declaration from you? Why do you force yourself upon us in this way? I confess I thought at first that you were anxious to arouse an aversion for him in my heart by your meddling, in order that I might give him up; and it was only afterwards that I guessed the truth. You imagined that you were doing an heroic action! How could you spare any love for him, when you love your own vanity to such an extent? Why could you not simply go away from here, instead of writing me those absurd letters? Why do you not NOW marry that generous man who loves you, and has done you the honour of offering you his hand? It is plain enough why; if you marry Rogojin you lose your grievance; you will have nothing more to complain of. You will be receiving too much honour. Evgenie Pavlovitch was saying the other day that you had read too many poems and are too well educated for—your position; and that you live in idleness. Add to this your vanity, and, there you have reason enough—”

“And do you not live in idleness?”

Things had come to this unexpected point too quickly. Unexpected because Nastasia Philipovna, on her way to Pavlofsk, had thought and considered a good deal, and had expected something different, though perhaps not altogether good, from this interview;

but Aglaya had been carried away by her own outburst, just as a rolling stone gathers impetus as it careers downhill, and could not restrain herself in the satisfaction of revenge.

It was strange, Nastasia Philipovna felt, to see Aglaya like this. She gazed at her, and could hardly believe her eyes and ears for a moment or two.

Whether she were a woman who had read too many poems, as Evgenie Pavlovitch supposed, or whether she were mad, as the prince had assured Aglaya, at all events, this was a woman who, in spite of her occasionally cynical and audacious manner, was far more refined and trustful and sensitive than appeared. There was a certain amount of romantic dreaminess and caprice in her, but with the fantastic was mingled much that was strong and deep.

The prince realized this, and great suffering expressed itself in his face.

Aglaya observed it, and trembled with anger.

“How dare you speak so to me?” she said, with a haughtiness which was quite indescribable, replying to Nastasia’s last remark.

“You must have misunderstood what I said,” said Nastasia, in some surprise.

“If you wished to preserve your good name, why did you not give up your—your ‘guardian,’ Totski, without all that theatrical posturing?” said Aglaya, suddenly a propos of nothing.

“What do you know of my position, that you dare to judge me?” cried Nastasia, quivering with rage, and growing terribly white.

“I know this much, that you did not go out to honest work, but went away with a rich man, Rogojin, in order to pose as a fallen angel. I don’t wonder that Totski was nearly driven to suicide by such a fallen angel.”

“Silence!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. “You are about as fit to understand me as the housemaid here, who bore witness against her lover in court the other day. She would understand me better than you do.”

“Probably an honest girl living by her own toil. Why do you speak of a housemaid so contemptuously?”

“I do not despise toil; I despise you when you speak of toil.”

“If you had cared to be an honest woman, you would have gone out as a laundress.”

Both had risen, and were gazing at one another with pallid faces.

“Aglaya, don’t! This is unfair,” cried the prince, deeply distressed.

Rogojin was not smiling now; he sat and listened with folded arms, and lips tight compressed.

“There, look at her,” cried Nastasia, trembling with passion. “Look at this young lady! And I imagined her an angel! Did you come to me without your governess, Aglaya Ivanovna? Oh, fie, now shall I just tell you why you came here today? Shall I tell you without any embellishments? You came because you were afraid of me!”

“Afraid of YOU?” asked Aglaya, beside herself with naive amazement that the other should dare talk to her like this.

“Yes, me, of course! Of course you were afraid of me, or you would not have decided to come. You cannot despise one you fear. And to think that I have actually esteemed you up to this very moment! Do you know why you are afraid of me, and what is your object now? You wished to satisfy yourself with your own eyes as to which he loves best, myself or you, because you are fearfully jealous.”

“He has told me already that he hates you,” murmured Aglaya, scarcely audibly.

“Perhaps, perhaps! I am not worthy of him, I know. But I think you are lying, all the same. He cannot hate me, and he cannot have said so. I am ready to forgive you, in consideration of your position; but I confess I thought better of you. I thought you were wiser, and more beautiful, too; I did, indeed! Well, take your treasure! See, he is gazing at you, he can’t recollect himself. Take him, but on one condition; go away at once, this instant!”

She fell back into a chair, and burst into tears. But suddenly some new expression blazed in her eyes. She stared fixedly at Aglaya, and rose from her seat.

“Or would you like me to bid him, **BID HIM**, do you hear, **COMMAND HIM**, now, at once, to throw you up, and remain mine for ever? Shall I? He will stay, and he will marry me too, and you shall trot home all alone. Shall I?—shall I say the word?” she screamed like a madwoman, scarcely believing herself that she could really pronounce such wild words.

Aglaya had made for the door in terror, but she stopped at the threshold, and listened. “Shall I turn Rogojin off? Ha! ha! you thought I would marry him for your benefit, did you? Why, I’ll call out **NOW**, if you like, in your presence, ‘Rogojin, get out!’ and say to the prince, ‘Do you remember what you promised me?’ Heavens! what a fool I have been to humiliate myself before them! Why, prince, you yourself gave me your word that you would marry me whatever happened, and would never abandon me. You said you loved me and would forgive me all, and—and resp—yes, you even said that! I only ran away from you in order to set you free, and now I don’t care to let you go again. Why does she treat me so— so shamefully? I am not a loose woman—ask Rogojin there! He’ll tell you. Will you go again now that she has insulted me, before your eyes, too; turn away from me and lead her away, arm-in-arm? May you be accursed too, for you were the only one I trusted among them all! Go away, Rogojin, I don’t want you,” she continued, blind with fury, and forcing the words out with dry lips and distorted features, evidently not believing a single word of her own tirade, but, at the same time, doing her utmost to prolong the moment of self-deception.

The outburst was so terribly violent that the prince thought it would have killed her.

“There he is!” she shrieked again, pointing to the prince and addressing Aglaya. “There he is! and if he does not approach me at once and take **ME** and throw you over, then have him for your own—I give him up to you! I don’t want him!”

Both she and Aglaya stood and waited as though in expectation, and both looked at the prince like madwomen.

But he, perhaps, did not understand the full force of this challenge; in fact, it is certain he did not. All he could see was the poor despairing face which, as he had said to Aglaya, "had pierced his heart for ever."

He could bear it no longer, and with a look of entreaty, mingled with reproach, he addressed Aglaya, pointing to Nastasia the while:

"How can you?" he murmured; "she is so unhappy."

But he had no time to say another word before. Aglaya's terrible look bereft him of speech. In that look was embodied so dreadful a suffering and so deadly a hatred, that he gave a cry and flew to her; but it was too late.

She could not hold out long enough even to witness his movement in her direction. She had hidden her face in her hands, cried once "Oh, my God!" and rushed out of the room. Rogojin followed her to undo the bolts of the door and let her out into the street.

The prince made a rush after her, but he, was caught and held back. The distorted, livid face of Nastasia gazed at him reproachfully, and her blue lips whispered:

"What? Would you go to her—to her?"

She fell senseless into his arms.

He raised her, carried her into the room, placed her in an arm-chair, and stood over her, stupefied. On the table stood a tumbler of water. Rogojin, who now returned, took this and sprinkled a little in her face. She opened her eyes, but for a moment she understood nothing.

Suddenly she looked around, shuddered, gave a loud cry, and threw herself in the prince's arms.

"Mine, mine!" she cried. "Has the proud young lady gone? Ha, ha, ha!" she laughed hysterically. "And I had given him up to her! Why—why did I? Mad—mad! Get away, Rogojin! Ha, ha, ha!"

Rogojin stared intently at them; then he took his hat, and without a word, left the room.

A few moments later, the prince was seated by Nastasia on the sofa, gazing into her eyes and stroking her face and hair, as he would a little child's. He laughed when she laughed, and was ready to cry when she cried. He did not speak, but listened to her excited, disconnected chatter, hardly understanding a word of it the while. No sooner did he detect the slightest appearance of complaining, or weeping, or reproaching, than he would smile at her kindly, and begin stroking her hair and her cheeks, soothing and consoling her once more, as if she were a child.

IX.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and the position of the actors in our story had become so changed that it is almost impossible for us to continue the tale without some few explanations. Yet we feel that we ought

to limit ourselves to the simple record of facts, without much attempt at explanation, for a very patent reason: because we ourselves have the greatest possible difficulty in accounting for the facts to be recorded. Such a statement on our part may appear strange to the reader. How is anyone to tell a story which he cannot understand himself? In order to keep clear of a false position, we had perhaps better give an example of what we mean; and probably the intelligent reader will soon understand the difficulty. More especially are we inclined to take this course since the example will constitute a distinct march forward of our story, and will not hinder the progress of the events remaining to be recorded.

During the next fortnight—that is, through the early part of July—the history of our hero was circulated in the form of strange, diverting, most unlikely-sounding stories, which passed from mouth to mouth, through the streets and villas adjoining those inhabited by Lebedeff, Ptitsin, Nastasia Philipovna and the Epanchins; in fact, pretty well through the whole town and its environs. All society—both the inhabitants of the place and those who came down of an evening for the music—had got hold of one and the same story, in a thousand varieties of detail—as to how a certain young prince had raised a terrible scandal in a most respectable household, had thrown over a daughter of the family, to whom he was engaged, and had been captured by a woman of shady reputation whom he was determined to marry at once—breaking off all old ties for the satisfaction of his insane idea; and, in spite of the public indignation roused by his action, the marriage was to take place in Pavlofsk openly and publicly, and the prince had announced his intention of going through with it with head erect and looking the whole world in the face. The story was so artfully adorned with scandalous details, and persons of so great eminence and importance were apparently mixed up in it, while, at the same time, the evidence was so circumstantial, that it was no wonder the matter gave food for plenty of curiosity and gossip.

According to the reports of the most talented gossip-mongers—those who, in every class of society, are always in haste to explain every event to their neighbours—the young gentleman concerned was of good family—a prince—fairly rich—weak of intellect, but a democrat and a dabbler in the Nihilism of the period, as exposed by Mr. Turgenieff. He could hardly talk Russian, but had fallen in love with one of the Miss Epanchins, and his suit met with so much encouragement that he had been received in the house as the recognized bridegroom-to-be of the young lady. But like the Frenchman of whom the story is told that he studied for holy orders, took all the oaths, was ordained priest, and next morning wrote to his bishop informing him that, as he did not believe in God and considered it wrong to deceive the people and live upon their pockets, he begged to surrender the orders conferred upon him the day before, and to inform his lordship that he was sending this letter to the public press,—like this Frenchman, the prince played a false game. It was rumoured that he had purposely waited for the solemn occasion of a large evening party at the house of his future bride, at which he was introduced to several eminent persons, in order publicly to make known his ideas and opinions, and thereby insult the “big-wigs,” and to throw over his

bride as offensively as possible; and that, resisting the servants who were told off to turn him out of the house, he had seized and thrown down a magnificent china vase. As a characteristic addition to the above, it was currently reported that the young prince really loved the lady to whom he was engaged, and had thrown her over out of purely Nihilistic motives, with the intention of giving himself the satisfaction of marrying a fallen woman in the face of all the world, thereby publishing his opinion that there is no distinction between virtuous and disreputable women, but that all women are alike, free; and a “fallen” woman, indeed, somewhat superior to a virtuous one.

It was declared that he believed in no classes or anything else, excepting “the woman question.”

All this looked likely enough, and was accepted as fact by most of the inhabitants of the place, especially as it was borne out, more or less, by daily occurrences.

Of course much was said that could not be determined absolutely. For instance, it was reported that the poor girl had so loved her future husband that she had followed him to the house of the other woman, the day after she had been thrown over; others said that he had insisted on her coming, himself, in order to shame and insult her by his taunts and Nihilistic confessions when she reached the house. However all these things might be, the public interest in the matter grew daily, especially as it became clear that the scandalous wedding was undoubtedly to take place.

So that if our readers were to ask an explanation, not of the wild reports about the prince’s Nihilistic opinions, but simply as to how such a marriage could possibly satisfy his real aspirations, or as to the spiritual condition of our hero at this time, we confess that we should have great difficulty in giving the required information.

All we know is, that the marriage really was arranged, and that the prince had commissioned Lebedeff and Keller to look after all the necessary business connected with it; that he had requested them to spare no expense; that Nastasia herself was hurrying on the wedding; that Keller was to be the prince’s best man, at his own earnest request; and that Burdovsky was to give Nastasia away, to his great delight. The wedding was to take place before the middle of July.

But, besides the above, we are cognizant of certain other undoubted facts, which puzzle us a good deal because they seem flatly to contradict the foregoing.

We suspect, for instance, that having commissioned Lebedeff and the others, as above, the prince immediately forgot all about masters of ceremonies and even the ceremony itself; and we feel quite certain that in making these arrangements he did so in order that he might absolutely escape all thought of the wedding, and even forget its approach if he could, by detailing all business concerning it to others.

What did he think of all this time, then? What did he wish for? There is no doubt that he was a perfectly free agent all through, and that as far as Nastasia was concerned, there was no force of any kind brought to bear on him. Nastasia wished for a speedy marriage, true!—but the prince agreed at once to her proposals; he agreed, in fact, so casually that anyone might suppose he was but acceding to the most simple and ordinary suggestion.

There are many strange circumstances such as this before us; but in our opinion they do but deepen the mystery, and do not in the smallest degree help us to understand the case.

However, let us take one more example. Thus, we know for a fact that during the whole of this fortnight the prince spent all his days and evenings with Nastasia; he walked with her, drove with her; he began to be restless whenever he passed an hour without seeing her—in fact, to all appearances, he sincerely loved her. He would listen to her for hours at a time with a quiet smile on his face, scarcely saying a word himself. And yet we know, equally certainly, that during this period he several times set off, suddenly, to the Epanchins', not concealing the fact from Nastasia Philipovna, and driving the latter to absolute despair. We know also that he was not received at the Epanchins' so long as they remained at Pavlofsk, and that he was not allowed an interview with Aglaya;—but next day he would set off once more on the same errand, apparently quite oblivious of the fact of yesterday's visit having been a failure,—and, of course, meeting with another refusal. We know, too, that exactly an hour after Aglaya had fled from Nastasia Philipovna's house on that fateful evening, the prince was at the Epanchins',—and that his appearance there had been the cause of the greatest consternation and dismay; for Aglaya had not been home, and the family only discovered then, for the first time, that the two of them had been to Nastasia's house together.

It was said that Elizabetha Prokofievna and her daughters had there and then denounced the prince in the strongest terms, and had refused any further acquaintance and friendship with him; their rage and denunciations being redoubled when Varia Ardalionovna suddenly arrived and stated that Aglaya had been at her house in a terrible state of mind for the last hour, and that she refused to come home.

This last item of news, which disturbed Elizabetha Prokofievna more than anything else, was perfectly true. On leaving Nastasia's, Aglaya had felt that she would rather die than face her people, and had therefore gone straight to Nina Alexandrovna's. On receiving the news, Elizabetha and her daughters and the general all rushed off to Aglaya, followed by Prince Lef Nicolaievitch—undeterred by his recent dismissal; but through Varia he was refused a sight of Aglaya here also. The end of the episode was that when Aglaya saw her mother and sisters crying over her and not uttering a word of reproach, she had flung herself into their arms and gone straight home with them.

It was said that Gania managed to make a fool of himself even on this occasion; for, finding himself alone with Aglaya for a minute or two when Varia had gone to the Epanchins', he had thought it a fitting opportunity to make a declaration of his love, and on hearing this Aglaya, in spite of her state of mind at the time, had suddenly burst out laughing, and had put a strange question to him. She asked him whether he would consent to hold his finger to a lighted candle in proof of his devotion! Gania—it was said—looked so comically bewildered that Aglaya had almost laughed herself into hysterics, and had rushed out of the room and upstairs,—where her parents had found her.

Hippolyte told the prince this last story, sending for him on purpose. When Muishkin heard about the candle and Gania's finger he had laughed so that he had quite astonished Hippolyte,—and then shuddered and burst into tears. The prince's condition during those days was strange and perturbed. Hippolyte plainly declared that he thought he was out of his mind;—this, however, was hardly to be relied upon.

Offering all these facts to our readers and refusing to explain them, we do not for a moment desire to justify our hero's conduct. On the contrary, we are quite prepared to feel our share of the indignation which his behaviour aroused in the hearts of his friends. Even Vera Lebedeff was angry with him for a while; so was Colia; so was Keller, until he was selected for best man; so was Lebedeff himself,—who began to intrigue against him out of pure irritation;—but of this anon. In fact we are in full accord with certain forcible words spoken to the prince by Evgenie Pavlovitch, quite unceremoniously, during the course of a friendly conversation, six or seven days after the events at Nastasia Philipovna's house.

We may remark here that not only the Epanchins themselves, but all who had anything to do with them, thought it right to break with the prince in consequence of his conduct. Prince S. even went so far as to turn away and cut him dead in the street. But Evgenie Pavlovitch was not afraid to compromise himself by paying the prince a visit, and did so, in spite of the fact that he had recommenced to visit at the Epanchins', where he was received with redoubled hospitality and kindness after the temporary estrangement.

Evgenie called upon the prince the day after that on which the Epanchins left Pavlofsk. He knew of all the current rumours,—in fact, he had probably contributed to them himself. The prince was delighted to see him, and immediately began to speak of the Epanchins;—which simple and straightforward opening quite took Evgenie's fancy, so that he melted at once, and plunged in medias res without ceremony.

The prince did not know, up to this, that the Epanchins had left the place. He grew very pale on hearing the news; but a moment later he nodded his head, and said thoughtfully:

“I knew it was bound to be so.” Then he added quickly:

“Where have they gone to?”

Evgenie meanwhile observed him attentively, and the rapidity of the questions, their simplicity, the prince's candour, and at the same time, his evident perplexity and mental agitation, surprised him considerably. However, he told Muishkin all he could, kindly and in detail. The prince hardly knew anything, for this was the first informant from the household whom he had met since the estrangement.

Evgenie reported that Aglaya had been really ill, and that for two nights she had not slept at all, owing to high fever; that now she was better and out of serious danger, but still in a nervous, hysterical state.

“It's a good thing that there is peace in the house, at all events,” he continued. “They never utter a hint about the past, not only in Aglaya's presence, but even among

themselves. The old people are talking of a trip abroad in the autumn, immediately after Adelaida's wedding; Aglaya received the news in silence."

Evgenie himself was very likely going abroad also; so were Prince S. and his wife, if affairs allowed of it; the general was to stay at home. They were all at their estate of Colmina now, about twenty miles or so from St. Petersburg. Princess Bielokonski had not returned to Moscow yet, and was apparently staying on for reasons of her own. Lizabetha Prokofievna had insisted that it was quite impossible to remain in Pavlofsk after what had happened. Evgenie had told her of all the rumours current in town about the affair; so that there could be no talk of their going to their house on the Yelagin as yet.

"And in point of fact, prince," added Evgenie Pavlovitch, "you must allow that they could hardly have stayed here, considering that they knew of all that went on at your place, and in the face of your daily visits to their house, visits which you insisted upon making in spite of their refusal to see you."

"Yes—yes, quite so; you are quite right. I wished to see Aglaya Ivanovna, you know!" said the prince, nodding his head.

"Oh, my dear fellow," cried Evgenie, warmly, with real sorrow in his voice, "how could you permit all that to come about as it has? Of course, of course, I know it was all so unexpected. I admit that you, only naturally, lost your head, and—and could not stop the foolish girl; that was not in your power. I quite see so much; but you really should have understood how seriously she cared for you. She could not bear to share you with another; and you could bring yourself to throw away and shatter such a treasure! Oh, prince, prince!"

"Yes, yes, you are quite right again," said the poor prince, in anguish of mind. "I was wrong, I know. But it was only Aglaya who looked on Nastasia Philipovna so; no one else did, you know."

"But that's just the worst of it all, don't you see, that there was absolutely nothing serious about the matter in reality!" cried Evgenie, beside himself: "Excuse me, prince, but I have thought over all this; I have thought a great deal over it; I know all that had happened before; I know all that took place six months since; and I know there was NOTHING serious about the matter, it was but fancy, smoke, fantasy, distorted by agitation, and only the alarmed jealousy of an absolutely inexperienced girl could possibly have mistaken it for serious reality."

Here Evgenie Pavlovitch quite let himself go, and gave the reins to his indignation.

Clearly and reasonably, and with great psychological insight, he drew a picture of the prince's past relations with Nastasia Philipovna. Evgenie Pavlovitch always had a ready tongue, but on this occasion his eloquence, surprised himself. "From the very beginning," he said, "you began with a lie; what began with a lie was bound to end with a lie; such is the law of nature. I do not agree, in fact I am angry, when I hear you called an idiot; you are far too intelligent to deserve such an epithet; but you are so far STRANGE as to be unlike others; that you must allow, yourself. Now, I have come to the conclusion that the basis of all that has happened, has been first of all your innate

inexperience (remark the expression 'innate,' prince). Then follows your unheard-of simplicity of heart; then comes your absolute want of sense of proportion (to this want you have several times confessed); and lastly, a mass, an accumulation, of intellectual convictions which you, in your unexampled honesty of soul, accept unquestionably as also innate and natural and true. Admit, prince, that in your relations with Nastasia Philipovna there has existed, from the very first, something democratic, and the fascination, so to speak, of the 'woman question'? I know all about that scandalous scene at Nastasia Philipovna's house when Rogojin brought the money, six months ago. I'll show you yourself as in a looking-glass, if you like. I know exactly all that went on, in every detail, and why things have turned out as they have. You thirsted, while in Switzerland, for your home-country, for Russia; you read, doubtless, many books about Russia, excellent books, I dare say, but hurtful to YOU; and you arrived here; as it were, on fire with the longing to be of service. Then, on the very day of your arrival, they tell you a sad story of an ill-used woman; they tell YOU, a knight, pure and without reproach, this tale of a poor woman! The same day you actually SEE her; you are attracted by her beauty, her fantastic, almost demoniacal, beauty—(I admit her beauty, of course).

"Add to all this your nervous nature, your epilepsy, and your sudden arrival in a strange town—the day of meetings and of exciting scenes, the day of unexpected acquaintanceships, the day of sudden actions, the day of meeting with the three lovely Epanchin girls, and among them Aglaya—add your fatigue, your excitement; add Nastasia's evening party, and the tone of that party, and—what were you to expect of yourself at such a moment as that?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" said the prince, once more, nodding his head, and blushing slightly. "Yes, it was so, or nearly so—I know it. And besides, you see, I had not slept the night before, in the train, or the night before that, either, and I was very tired."

"Of course, of course, quite so; that's what I am driving at!" continued Evgenie, excitedly. "It is as clear as possible, and most comprehensible, that you, in your enthusiasm, should plunge headlong into the first chance that came of publicly airing your great idea that you, a prince, and a pure-living man, did not consider a woman disgraced if the sin were not her own, but that of a disgusting social libertine! Oh, heavens! it's comprehensible enough, my dear prince, but that is not the question, unfortunately! The question is, was there any reality and truth in your feelings? Was it nature, or nothing but intellectual enthusiasm? What do you think yourself? We are told, of course, that a far worse woman was FORGIVEN, but we don't find that she was told that she had done well, or that she was worthy of honour and respect! Did not your common-sense show you what was the real state of the case, a few months later? The question is now, not whether she is an innocent woman (I do not insist one way or the other—I do not wish to); but can her whole career justify such intolerable pride, such insolent, rapacious egotism as she has shown? Forgive me, I am too violent, perhaps, but—"

“Yes—I dare say it is all as you say; I dare say you are quite right,” muttered the prince once more. “She is very sensitive and easily put out, of course; but still, she...”

“She is worthy of sympathy? Is that what you wished to say, my good fellow? But then, for the mere sake of vindicating her worthiness of sympathy, you should not have insulted and offended a noble and generous girl in her presence! This is a terrible exaggeration of sympathy! How can you love a girl, and yet so humiliate her as to throw her over for the sake of another woman, before the very eyes of that other woman, when you have already made her a formal proposal of marriage? And you DID propose to her, you know; you did so before her parents and sisters. Can you be an honest man, prince, if you act so? I ask you! And did you not deceive that beautiful girl when you assured her of your love?”

“Yes, you are quite right. Oh! I feel that I am very guilty!” said Muishkin, in deepest distress.

“But as if that is enough!” cried Evgenie, indignantly. “As if it is enough simply to say: ‘I know I am very guilty!’ You are to blame, and yet you persevere in evil-doing. Where was your heart, I should like to know, your CHRISTIAN HEART, all that time? Did she look as though she were suffering less, at that moment? You saw her face—was she suffering less than the other woman? How could you see her suffering and allow it to continue? How could you?”

“But I did not allow it,” murmured the wretched prince.

“How—what do you mean you didn’t allow?”

“Upon my word, I didn’t! To this moment I don’t know how it all happened. I—I ran after Aglaya Ivanovna, but Nastasia Philipovna fell down in a faint; and since that day they won’t let me see Aglaya—that’s all I know.”

“It’s all the same; you ought to have run after Aglaya though the other was fainting.”

“Yes, yes, I ought—but I couldn’t! She would have died—she would have killed herself. You don’t know her; and I should have told Aglaya everything afterwards—but I see, Evgenie Pavlovitch, you don’t know all. Tell me now, why am I not allowed to see Aglaya? I should have cleared it all up, you know. Neither of them kept to the real point, you see. I could never explain what I mean to you, but I think I could to Aglaya. Oh! my God, my God! You spoke just now of Aglaya’s face at the moment when she ran away. Oh, my God! I remember it! Come along, come along—quick!” He pulled at Evgenie’s coat-sleeve nervously and excitedly, and rose from his chair.

“Where to?”

“Come to Aglaya—quick, quick!”

“But I told you she is not at Pavlofsk. And what would be the use if she were?”

“Oh, she’ll understand, she’ll understand!” cried the prince, clasping his hands. “She would understand that all this is not the point—not a bit the real point—it is quite foreign to the real question.”

“How can it be foreign? You ARE going to be married, are you not? Very well, then you are persisting in your course. ARE you going to marry her or not?”

“Yes, I shall marry her—yes.”

"Then why is it 'not the point'?"

"Oh, no, it is not the point, not a bit. It makes no difference, my marrying her—it means nothing."

"How 'means nothing'? You are talking nonsense, my friend. You are marrying the woman you love in order to secure her happiness, and Aglaya sees and knows it. How can you say that it's 'not the point'?"

"Her happiness? Oh, no! I am only marrying her—well, because she wished it. It means nothing—it's all the same. She would certainly have died. I see now that that marriage with Rogojin was an insane idea. I understand all now that I did not understand before; and, do you know, when those two stood opposite to one another, I could not bear Nastasia Philipovna's face! You must know, Evgenie Pavlovitch, I have never told anyone before—not even Aglaya—that I cannot bear Nastasia Philipovna's face." (He lowered his voice mysteriously as he said this.) You described that evening at Nastasia Philipovna's (six months since) very accurately just now; but there is one thing which you did not mention, and of which you took no account, because you do not know. I mean her FACE—I looked at her face, you see. Even in the morning when I saw her portrait, I felt that I could not BEAR to look at it. Now, there's Vera Lebedeff, for instance, her eyes are quite different, you know. I'm AFRAID of her face!" he added, with real alarm.

"You are AFRAID of it?"

"Yes—she's mad!" he whispered, growing pale.

"Do you know this for certain?" asked Evgenie, with the greatest curiosity.

"Yes, for certain—quite for certain, now! I have discovered it ABSOLUTELY for certain, these last few days."

"What are you doing, then?" cried Evgenie, in horror. "You must be marrying her solely out of FEAR, then! I can't make head or tail of it, prince. Perhaps you don't even love her?"

"Oh, no; I love her with all my soul. Why, she is a child! She's a child now—a real child. Oh! you know nothing about it at all, I see."

"And are you assured, at the same time, that you love Aglaya too?"

"Yes—yes—oh; yes!"

"How so? Do you want to make out that you love them BOTH?"

"Yes—yes—both! I do!"

"Excuse me, prince, but think what you are saying! Recollect yourself!"

"Without Aglaya—I—I MUST see Aglaya!—I shall die in my sleep very soon—I thought I was dying in my sleep last night. Oh! if Aglaya only knew all—I mean really, REALLY all! Because she must know ALL—that's the first condition towards understanding. Why cannot we ever know all about another, especially when that other has been guilty? But I don't know what I'm talking about—I'm so confused. You pained me so dreadfully. Surely—surely Aglaya has not the same expression now as she had at the moment when she ran away? Oh, yes! I am guilty and I know it—I know it! Probably I am in fault all round—I don't quite know how—but I am

in fault, no doubt. There is something else, but I cannot explain it to you, Evgenie Pavlovitch. I have no words; but Aglaya will understand. I have always believed Aglaya will understand—I am assured she will.”

“No, prince, she will not. Aglaya loved like a woman, like a human being, not like an abstract spirit. Do you know what, my poor prince? The most probable explanation of the matter is that you never loved either the one or the other in reality.”

“I don’t know—perhaps you are right in much that you have said, Evgenie Pavlovitch. You are very wise, Evgenie Pavlovitch—oh! how my head is beginning to ache again! Come to her, quick—for God’s sake, come!”

“But I tell you she is not in Pavlofsk! She’s in Colmina.”

“Oh, come to Colmina, then! Come—let us go at once!”

“No—no, impossible!” said Evgenie, rising.

“Look here—I’ll write a letter—take a letter for me!”

“No—no, prince; you must forgive me, but I can’t undertake any such commissions! I really can’t.”

And so they parted.

Evgenie Pavlovitch left the house with strange convictions. He, too, felt that the prince must be out of his mind.

“And what did he mean by that FACE—a face which he so fears, and yet so loves? And meanwhile he really may die, as he says, without seeing Aglaya, and she will never know how devotedly he loves her! Ha, ha, ha! How does the fellow manage to love two of them? Two different kinds of love, I suppose! This is very interesting—poor idiot! What on earth will become of him now?”

X.

THE prince did not die before his wedding—either by day or night, as he had foretold that he might. Very probably he passed disturbed nights, and was afflicted with bad dreams; but, during the daytime, among his fellow-men, he seemed as kind as ever, and even contented; only a little thoughtful when alone.

The wedding was hurried on. The day was fixed for exactly a week after Evgenie’s visit to the prince. In the face of such haste as this, even the prince’s best friends (if he had had any) would have felt the hopelessness of any attempt to save” the poor madman.” Rumour said that in the visit of Evgenie Pavlovitch was to be discerned the influence of Lizabetha Prokofievna and her husband... But if those good souls, in the boundless kindness of their hearts, were desirous of saving the eccentric young fellow from ruin, they were unable to take any stronger measures to attain that end. Neither their position, nor their private inclination, perhaps (and only naturally), would allow them to use any more pronounced means.

We have observed before that even some of the prince’s nearest neighbours had begun to oppose him. Vera Lebedeff’s passive disagreement was limited to the shedding

of a few solitary tears; to more frequent sitting alone at home, and to a diminished frequency in her visits to the prince's apartments.

Colia was occupied with his father at this time. The old man died during a second stroke, which took place just eight days after the first. The prince showed great sympathy in the grief of the family, and during the first days of their mourning he was at the house a great deal with Nina Alexandrovna. He went to the funeral, and it was observable that the public assembled in church greeted his arrival and departure with whisperings, and watched him closely.

The same thing happened in the park and in the street, wherever he went. He was pointed out when he drove by, and he often overheard the name of Nastasia Philipovna coupled with his own as he passed. People looked out for her at the funeral, too, but she was not there; and another conspicuous absentee was the captain's widow, whom Lebedeff had prevented from coming.

The funeral service produced a great effect on the prince. He whispered to Lebedeff that this was the first time he had ever heard a Russian funeral service since he was a little boy. Observing that he was looking about him uneasily, Lebedeff asked him whom he was seeking.

"Nothing. I only thought I—"

"Is it Rogojin?"

"Why—is he here?"

"Yes, he's in church."

"I thought I caught sight of his eyes!" muttered the prince, in confusion. "But what of it!—Why is he here? Was he asked?"

"Oh, dear, no! Why, they don't even know him! Anyone can come in, you know. Why do you look so amazed? I often meet him; I've seen him at least four times, here at Pavlofsk, within the last week."

"I haven't seen him once—since that day!" the prince murmured.

As Nastasia Philipovna had not said a word about having met Rogojin since "that day," the prince concluded that the latter had his own reasons for wishing to keep out of sight. All the day of the funeral our hero, was in a deeply thoughtful state, while Nastasia Philipovna was particularly merry, both in the daytime and in the evening.

Colia had made it up with the prince before his father's death, and it was he who urged him to make use of Keller and Burdovsky, promising to answer himself for the former's behaviour. Nina Alexandrovna and Lebedeff tried to persuade him to have the wedding in St. Petersburg, instead of in the public fashion contemplated, down here at Pavlofsk in the height of the season. But the prince only said that Nastasia Philipovna desired to have it so, though he saw well enough what prompted their arguments.

The next day Keller came to visit the prince. He was in a high state of delight with the post of honour assigned to him at the wedding.

Before entering he stopped on the threshold, raised his hand as if making a solemn vow, and cried:

"I won't drink!"

Then he went up to the prince, seized both his hands, shook them warmly, and declared that he had at first felt hostile towards the project of this marriage, and had openly said so in the billiard-rooms, but that the reason simply was that, with the impatience of a friend, he had hoped to see the prince marry at least a Princess de Rohan or de Chabot; but that now he saw that the prince's way of thinking was ten times more noble than that of "all the rest put together." For he desired neither pomp nor wealth nor honour, but only the truth! The sympathies of exalted personages were well known, and the prince was too highly placed by his education, and so on, not to be in some sense an exalted personage!

"But all the common herd judge 'differently; in the town, at the meetings, in the villas, at the band, in the inns and the billiard-rooms, the coming event has only to be mentioned and there are shouts and cries from everybody. I have even heard talk of getting up a 'charivari' under the windows on the wedding-night. So if 'you have need of the pistol' of an honest man, prince, I am ready to fire half a dozen shots even before you rise from your nuptial couch!"

Keller also advised, in anticipation of the crowd making a rush after the ceremony, that a fire-hose should be placed at the entrance to the house; but Lebedeff was opposed to this measure, which he said might result in the place being pulled down.

"I assure you, prince, that Lebedeff is intriguing against you. He wants to put you under control. Imagine that! To take 'from you the use of your free-will and your money—that' is to say, the two things that distinguish us from the animals! I have heard it said positively. It is the sober truth."

The prince recollected that somebody had told him something of the kind before, and he had, of course, scoffed at it. He only laughed now, and forgot the hint at once.

Lebedeff really had been busy for some little while; but, as usual, his plans had become too complex to succeed, through sheer excess of ardour. When he came to the prince—the very day before the wedding—to confess (for he always confessed to the persons against whom he intrigued, especially when the plan failed), he informed our hero that he himself was a born Talleyrand, but for some unknown reason had become simple Lebedeff. He then proceeded to explain his whole game to the prince, interesting the latter exceedingly.

According to Lebedeff's account, he had first tried what he could do with General Epanchin. The latter informed him that he wished well to the unfortunate young man, and would gladly do what he could to "save him," but that he did not think it would be seemly for him to interfere in this matter. Lizabetha Prokofievna would neither hear nor see him. Prince S. and Evgenie Pavlovitch only shrugged their shoulders, and implied that it was no business of theirs. However, Lebedeff had not lost heart, and went off to a clever lawyer,—a worthy and respectable man, whom he knew well. This old gentleman informed him that the thing was perfectly feasible if he could get hold of competent witnesses as to Muishkin's mental incapacity. Then, with the assistance of a few influential persons, he would soon see the matter arranged.

Lebedeff immediately procured the services of an old doctor, and carried the latter away to Pavlofsk to see the prince, by way of viewing the ground, as it were, and to give him (Lebedeff) counsel as to whether the thing was to be done or not. The visit was not to be official, but merely friendly.

Muishkin remembered the doctor's visit quite well. He remembered that Lebedeff had said that he looked ill, and had better see a doctor; and although the prince scouted the idea, Lebedeff had turned up almost immediately with his old friend, explaining that they had just met at the bedside of Hippolyte, who was very ill, and that the doctor had something to tell the prince about the sick man.

The prince had, of course, at once received him, and had plunged into a conversation about Hippolyte. He had given the doctor an account of Hippolyte's attempted suicide; and had proceeded thereafter to talk of his own malady,—of Switzerland, of Schneider, and so on; and so deeply was the old man interested by the prince's conversation and his description of Schneider's system, that he sat on for two hours.

Muishkin gave him excellent cigars to smoke, and Lebedeff, for his part, regaled him with liqueurs, brought in by Vera, to whom the doctor—a married man and the father of a family—addressed such compliments that she was filled with indignation. They parted friends, and, after leaving the prince, the doctor said to Lebedeff: "If all such people were put under restraint, there would be no one left for keepers." Lebedeff then, in tragic tones, told of the approaching marriage, whereupon the other nodded his head and replied that, after all, marriages like that were not so rare; that he had heard that the lady was very fascinating and of extraordinary beauty, which was enough to explain the infatuation of a wealthy man; that, further, thanks to the liberality of Totski and of Rogojin, she possessed—so he had heard—not only money, but pearls, diamonds, shawls, and furniture, and consequently she could not be considered a bad match. In brief, it seemed to the doctor that the prince's choice, far from being a sign of foolishness, denoted, on the contrary, a shrewd, calculating, and practical mind. Lebedeff had been much struck by this point of view, and he terminated his confession by assuring the prince that he was ready, if need be, to shed his very life's blood for him.

Hippolyte, too, was a source of some distraction to the prince at this time; he would send for him at any and every hour of the day. They lived,—Hippolyte and his mother and the children,—in a small house not far off, and the little ones were happy, if only because they were able to escape from the invalid into the garden. The prince had enough to do in keeping the peace between the irritable Hippolyte and his mother, and eventually the former became so malicious and sarcastic on the subject of the approaching wedding, that Muishkin took offence at last, and refused to continue his visits.

A couple of days later, however, Hippolyte's mother came with tears in her eyes, and begged the prince to come back, "or HE would eat her up bodily." She added that Hippolyte had a great secret to disclose. Of course the prince went. There was no secret,

however, unless we reckon certain pantings and agitated glances around (probably all put on) as the invalid begged his visitor to “beware of Rogojin.”

“He is the sort of man,” he continued, “who won’t give up his object, you know; he is not like you and me, prince—he belongs to quite a different order of beings. If he sets his heart on a thing he won’t be afraid of anything—” and so on.

Hippolyte was very ill, and looked as though he could not long survive. He was tearful at first, but grew more and more sarcastic and malicious as the interview proceeded.

The prince questioned him in detail as to his hints about Rogojin. He was anxious to seize upon some facts which might confirm Hippolyte’s vague warnings; but there were none; only Hippolyte’s own private impressions and feelings.

However, the invalid—to his immense satisfaction—ended by seriously alarming the prince.

At first Muishkin had not cared to make any reply to his sundry questions, and only smiled in response to Hippolyte’s advice to “run for his life—abroad, if necessary. There are Russian priests everywhere, and one can get married all over the world.”

But it was Hippolyte’s last idea which upset him.

“What I am really alarmed about, though,” he said, “is Aglaya Ivanovna. Rogojin knows how you love her. Love for love. You took Nastasia Philipovna from him. He will murder Aglaya Ivanovna; for though she is not yours, of course, now, still such an act would pain you,—wouldn’t it?”

He had attained his end. The prince left the house beside himself with terror.

These warnings about Rogojin were expressed on the day before the wedding. That evening the prince saw Nastasia Philipovna for the last time before they were to meet at the altar; but Nastasia was not in a position to give him any comfort or consolation. On the contrary, she only added to his mental perturbation as the evening went on. Up to this time she had invariably done her best to cheer him—she was afraid of his looking melancholy; she would try singing to him, and telling him every sort of funny story or reminiscence that she could recall. The prince nearly always pretended to be amused, whether he were so actually or no; but often enough he laughed sincerely, delighted by the brilliancy of her wit when she was carried away by her narrative, as she very often was. Nastasia would be wild with joy to see the impression she had made, and to hear his laugh of real amusement; and she would remain the whole evening in a state of pride and happiness. But this evening her melancholy and thoughtfulness grew with every hour.

The prince had told Evgenie Pavlovitch with perfect sincerity that he loved Nastasia Philipovna with all his soul. In his love for her there was the sort of tenderness one feels for a sick, unhappy child which cannot be left alone. He never spoke of his feelings for Nastasia to anyone, not even to herself. When they were together they never discussed their “feelings,” and there was nothing in their cheerful, animated conversation which an outsider could not have heard. Daria Alexeyevna, with whom Nastasia was staying,

told afterwards how she had been filled with joy and delight only to look at them, all this time.

Thanks to the manner in which he regarded Nastasia's mental and moral condition, the prince was to some extent freed from other perplexities. She was now quite different from the woman he had known three months before. He was not astonished, for instance, to see her now so impatient to marry him—she who formerly had wept with rage and hurled curses and reproaches at him if he mentioned marriage! "It shows that she no longer fears, as she did then, that she would make me unhappy by marrying me," he thought. And he felt sure that so sudden a change could not be a natural one. This rapid growth of self-confidence could not be due only to her hatred for Aglaya. To suppose that would be to suspect the depth of her feelings. Nor could it arise from dread of the fate that awaited her if she married Rogojin. These causes, indeed, as well as others, might have played a part in it, but the true reason, Muishkin decided, was the one he had long suspected—that the poor sick soul had come to the end of its forces. Yet this was an explanation that did not procure him any peace of mind. At times he seemed to be making violent efforts to think of nothing, and one would have said that he looked on his marriage as an unimportant formality, and on his future happiness as a thing not worth considering. As to conversations such as the one held with Evgenie Pavlovitch, he avoided them as far as possible, feeling that there were certain objections to which he could make no answer.

The prince had observed that Nastasia knew well enough what Aglaya was to him. He never spoke of it, but he had seen her face when she had caught him starting off for the Epanchins' house on several occasions. When the Epanchins left Pavlofsk, she had beamed with radiance and happiness. Unsuspicious and unobservant as he was, he had feared at that time that Nastasia might have some scheme in her mind for a scene or scandal which would drive Aglaya out of Pavlofsk. She had encouraged the rumours and excitement among the inhabitants of the place as to her marriage with the prince, in order to annoy her rival; and, finding it difficult to meet the Epanchins anywhere, she had, on one occasion, taken him for a drive past their house. He did not observe what was happening until they were almost passing the windows, when it was too late to do anything. He said nothing, but for two days afterwards he was ill.

Nastasia did not try that particular experiment again. A few days before that fixed for the wedding, she grew grave and thoughtful. She always ended by getting the better of her melancholy, and becoming merry and cheerful again, but not quite so unaffectedly happy as she had been some days earlier.

The prince redoubled his attentive study of her symptoms. It was a most curious circumstance, in his opinion, that she never spoke of Rogojin. But once, about five days before the wedding, when the prince was at home, a messenger arrived begging him to come at once, as Nastasia Philipovna was very ill.

He had found her in a condition approaching to absolute madness. She screamed, and trembled, and cried out that Rogojin was hiding out there in the garden—that she had seen him herself—and that he would murder her in the night—that he would cut

her throat. She was terribly agitated all day. But it so happened that the prince called at Hippolyte's house later on, and heard from his mother that she had been in town all day, and had there received a visit from Rogojin, who had made inquiries about Pavlofsk. On inquiry, it turned out that Rogojin visited the old lady in town at almost the same moment when Nastasia declared that she had seen him in the garden; so that the whole thing turned out to be an illusion on her part. Nastasia immediately went across to Hippolyte's to inquire more accurately, and returned immensely relieved and comforted.

On the day before the wedding, the prince left Nastasia in a state of great animation. Her wedding-dress and all sorts of finery had just arrived from town. Muishkin had not imagined that she would be so excited over it, but he praised everything, and his praise rendered her doubly happy.

But Nastasia could not hide the cause of her intense interest in her wedding splendour. She had heard of the indignation in the town, and knew that some of the populace was getting up a sort of charivari with music, that verses had been composed for the occasion, and that the rest of Pavlofsk society more or less encouraged these preparations. So, since attempts were being made to humiliate her, she wanted to hold her head even higher than usual, and to overwhelm them all with the beauty and taste of her toilette. "Let them shout and whistle, if they dare!" Her eyes flashed at the thought. But, underneath this, she had another motive, of which she did not speak. She thought that possibly Aglaya, or at any rate someone sent by her, would be present incognito at the ceremony, or in the crowd, and she wished to be prepared for this eventuality.

The prince left her at eleven, full of these thoughts, and went home. But it was not twelve o'clock when a messenger came to say that Nastasia was very bad, and he must come at once.

On hurrying back he found his bride locked up in her own room and could hear her hysterical cries and sobs. It was some time before she could be made to hear that the prince had come, and then she opened the door only just sufficiently to let him in, and immediately locked it behind him. She then fell on her knees at his feet. (So at least Dana Alexeyevna reported.)

"What am I doing? What am I doing to you?" she sobbed convulsively, embracing his knees.

The prince was a whole hour soothing and comforting her, and left her, at length, pacified and composed. He sent another messenger during the night to inquire after her, and two more next morning. The last brought back a message that Nastasia was surrounded by a whole army of dressmakers and maids, and was as happy and as busy as such a beauty should be on her wedding morning, and that there was not a vestige of yesterday's agitation remaining. The message concluded with the news that at the moment of the bearer's departure there was a great confabulation in progress as to which diamonds were to be worn, and how.

This message entirely calmed the prince's mind.

The following report of the proceedings on the wedding day may be depended upon, as coming from eye-witnesses.

The wedding was fixed for eight o'clock in the evening. Nastasia Philipovna was ready at seven. From six o'clock groups of people began to gather at Nastasia's house, at the prince's, and at the church door, but more especially at the former place. The church began to fill at seven.

Colia and Vera Lebedeff were very anxious on the prince's account, but they were so busy over the arrangements for receiving the guests after the wedding, that they had not much time for the indulgence of personal feelings.

There were to be very few guests besides the best men and so on; only Dana Alexeyevna, the Ptitsins, Gania, and the doctor. When the prince asked Lebedeff why he had invited the doctor, who was almost a stranger, Lebedeff replied:

"Why, he wears an 'order,' and it looks so well!"

This idea amused the prince.

Keller and Burdovsky looked wonderfully correct in their dress-coats and white kid gloves, although Keller caused the bridegroom some alarm by his undisguisedly hostile glances at the gathering crowd of sight-seers outside.

At about half-past seven the prince started for the church in his carriage.

We may remark here that he seemed anxious not to omit a single one of the recognized customs and traditions observed at weddings. He wished all to be done as openly as possible, and "in due order."

Arrived at the church, Muishkin, under Keller's guidance, passed through the crowd of spectators, amid continuous whispering and excited exclamations. The prince stayed near the altar, while Keller made off once more to fetch the bride.

On reaching the gate of Daria Alexeyevna's house, Keller found a far denser crowd than he had encountered at the prince's. The remarks and exclamations of the spectators here were of so irritating a nature that Keller was very near making them a speech on the impropriety of their conduct, but was luckily caught by Burdovsky, in the act of turning to address them, and hurried indoors.

Nastasia Philipovna was ready. She rose from her seat, looked into the glass and remarked, as Keller told the tale afterwards, that she was "as pale as a corpse." She then bent her head reverently, before the ikon in the corner, and left the room.

A torrent of voices greeted her appearance at the front door. The crowd whistled, clapped its hands, and laughed and shouted; but in a moment or two isolated voices were distinguishable.

"What a beauty!" cried one.

"Well, she isn't the first in the world, nor the last," said another.

"Marriage covers everything," observed a third.

"I defy you to find another beauty like that," said a fourth.

"She's a real princess! I'd sell my soul for such a princess as that!"

Nastasia came out of the house looking as white as any handkerchief; but her large dark eyes shone upon the vulgar crowd like blazing coals. The spectators' cries were

redoubled, and became more exultant and triumphant every moment. The door of the carriage was open, and Keller had given his hand to the bride to help her in, when suddenly with a loud cry she rushed from him, straight into the surging crowd. Her friends about her were stupefied with amazement; the crowd parted as she rushed through it, and suddenly, at a distance of five or six yards from the carriage, appeared Rogojin. It was his look that had caught her eyes.

Nastasia rushed to him like a madwoman, and seized both his hands.

“Save me!” she cried. “Take me away, anywhere you like, quick!”

Rogojin seized her in his arms and almost carried her to the carriage. Then, in a flash, he tore a hundred-rouble note out of his pocket and held it to the coachman.

“To the station, quick! If you catch the train you shall have another. Quick!”

He leaped into the carriage after Nastasia and banged the door. The coachman did not hesitate a moment; he whipped up the horses, and they were off.

“One more second and I should have stopped him,” said Keller, afterwards. In fact, he and Burdovsky jumped into another carriage and set off in pursuit; but it struck them as they drove along that it was not much use trying to bring Nastasia back by force.

“Besides,” said Burdovsky, “the prince would not like it, would he?” So they gave up the pursuit.

Rogojin and Nastasia Philipovna reached the station just in time for the train. As he jumped out of the carriage and was almost on the point of entering the train, Rogojin accosted a young girl standing on the platform and wearing an old-fashioned, but respectable-looking, black cloak and a silk handkerchief over her head.

“Take fifty roubles for your cloak?” he shouted, holding the money out to the girl. Before the astonished young woman could collect her scattered senses, he pushed the money into her hand, seized the mantle, and threw it and the handkerchief over Nastasia’s head and shoulders. The latter’s wedding-array would have attracted too much attention, and it was not until some time later that the girl understood why her old cloak and kerchief had been bought at such a price.

The news of what had happened reached the church with extraordinary rapidity. When Keller arrived, a host of people whom he did not know thronged around to ask him questions. There was much excited talking, and shaking of heads, even some laughter; but no one left the church, all being anxious to observe how the now celebrated bridegroom would take the news. He grew very pale upon hearing it, but took it quite quietly.

“I was afraid,” he muttered, scarcely audibly, “but I hardly thought it would come to this.” Then after a short silence, he added: “However, in her state, it is quite consistent with the natural order of things.”

Even Keller admitted afterwards that this was “extraordinarily philosophical” on the prince’s part. He left the church quite calm, to all appearances, as many witnesses were found to declare afterwards. He seemed anxious to reach home and be left alone as quickly as possible; but this was not to be. He was accompanied by nearly all the

invited guests, and besides this, the house was almost besieged by excited bands of people, who insisted upon being allowed to enter the verandah. The prince heard Keller and Lebedeff remonstrating and quarrelling with these unknown individuals, and soon went out himself. He approached the disturbers of his peace, requested courteously to be told what was desired; then politely putting Lebedeff and Keller aside, he addressed an old gentleman who was standing on the verandah steps at the head of the band of would-be guests, and courteously requested him to honour him with a visit. The old fellow was quite taken aback by this, but entered, followed by a few more, who tried to appear at their ease. The rest remained outside, and presently the whole crowd was censuring those who had accepted the invitation. The prince offered seats to his strange visitors, tea was served, and a general conversation sprang up. Everything was done most decorously, to the considerable surprise of the intruders. A few tentative attempts were made to turn the conversation to the events of the day, and a few indiscreet questions were asked; but Muishkin replied to everybody with such simplicity and good-humour, and at the same time with so much dignity, and showed such confidence in the good breeding of his guests, that the indiscreet talkers were quickly silenced. By degrees the conversation became almost serious. One gentleman suddenly exclaimed, with great vehemence: "Whatever happens, I shall not sell my property; I shall wait. Enterprise is better than money, and there, sir, you have my whole system of economy, if you wish!" He addressed the prince, who warmly commended his sentiments, though Lebedeff whispered in his ear that this gentleman, who talked so much of his "property," had never had either house or home.

Nearly an hour passed thus, and when tea was over the visitors seemed to think that it was time to go. As they went out, the doctor and the old gentleman bade Muishkin a warm farewell, and all the rest took their leave with hearty protestations of goodwill, dropping remarks to the effect that "it was no use worrying," and that "perhaps all would turn out for the best," and so on. Some of the younger intruders would have asked for champagne, but they were checked by the older ones. When all had departed, Keller leaned over to Lebedeff, and said:

"With you and me there would have been a scene. We should have shouted and fought, and called in the police. But he has simply made some new friends—and such friends, too! I know them!"

Lebedeff, who was slightly intoxicated, answered with a sigh:

"Things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. I have applied those words to him before, but now I add that God has preserved the babe himself from the abyss, He and all His saints."

At last, about half-past ten, the prince was left alone. His head ached. Colia was the last to go, after having helped him to change his wedding clothes. They parted on affectionate terms, and, without speaking of what had happened, Colia promised to come very early the next day. He said later that the prince had given no hint of his intentions when they said good-bye, but had hidden them even from him. Soon there

was hardly anyone left in the house. Burdovsky had gone to see Hippolyte; Keller and Lebedeff had wandered off together somewhere.

Only Vera Lebedeff remained hurriedly rearranging the furniture in the rooms. As she left the verandah, she glanced at the prince. He was seated at the table, with both elbows upon it, and his head resting on his hands. She approached him, and touched his shoulder gently. The prince started and looked at her in perplexity; he seemed to be collecting his senses for a minute or so, before he could remember where he was. As recollection dawned upon him, he became violently agitated. All he did, however, was to ask Vera very earnestly to knock at his door and awake him in time for the first train to Petersburg next morning. Vera promised, and the prince entreated her not to tell anyone of his intention. She promised this, too; and at last, when she had half-closed the door, he called her back a third time, took her hands in his, kissed them, then kissed her forehead, and in a rather peculiar manner said to her, "Until tomorrow!"

Such was Vera's story afterwards.

She went away in great anxiety about him, but when she saw him in the morning, he seemed to be quite himself again, greeted her with a smile, and told her that he would very likely be back by the evening. It appears that he did not consider it necessary to inform anyone excepting Vera of his departure for town.

XI.

AN hour later he was in St. Petersburg, and by ten o'clock he had rung the bell at Rogojin's.

He had gone to the front door, and was kept waiting a long while before anyone came. At last the door of old Mrs. Rogojin's flat was opened, and an aged servant appeared.

"Parfen Semionovitch is not at home," she announced from the doorway. "Whom do you want?"

"Parfen Semionovitch."

"He is not in."

The old woman examined the prince from head to foot with great curiosity.

"At all events tell me whether he slept at home last night, and whether he came alone?"

The old woman continued to stare at him, but said nothing.

"Was not Nastasia Philipovna here with him, yesterday evening?"

"And, pray, who are you yourself?"

"Prince Lef Nicolaievitch Muishkin; he knows me well."

"He is not at home."

The woman lowered her eyes.

"And Nastasia Philipovna?"

"I know nothing about it."

"Stop a minute! When will he come back?"

"I don't know that either."

The door was shut with these words, and the old woman disappeared. The prince decided to come back within an hour. Passing out of the house, he met the porter.

"Is Parfen Semionovitch at home?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Why did they tell me he was not at home, then?" "Where did they tell you so,—at his door?" "No, at his mother's flat; I rang at Parfen Semionovitch's door and nobody came."

"Well, he may have gone out. I can't tell. Sometimes he takes the keys with him, and leaves the rooms empty for two or three days."

"Do you know for certain that he was at home last night?"

"Yes, he was."

"Was Nastasia Philipovna with him?"

"I don't know; she doesn't come often. I think I should have known if she had come."

The prince went out deep in thought, and walked up and down the pavement for some time. The windows of all the rooms occupied by Rogojin were closed, those of his mother's apartments were open. It was a hot, bright day. The prince crossed the road in order to have a good look at the windows again; not only were Rogojin's closed, but the white blinds were all down as well.

He stood there for a minute and then, suddenly and strangely enough, it seemed to him that a little corner of one of the blinds was lifted, and Rogojin's face appeared for an instant and then vanished. He waited another minute, and decided to go and ring the bell once more; however, he thought better of it again and put it off for an hour.

The chief object in his mind at this moment was to get as quickly as he could to Nastasia Philipovna's lodging. He remembered that, not long since, when she had left Pavlofsk at his request, he had begged her to put up in town at the house of a respectable widow, who had well-furnished rooms to let, near the Ismailofsky barracks. Probably Nastasia had kept the rooms when she came down to Pavlofsk this last time; and most likely she would have spent the night in them, Rogojin having taken her straight there from the station.

The prince took a droshky. It struck him as he drove on that he ought to have begun by coming here, since it was most improbable that Rogojin should have taken Nastasia to his own house last night. He remembered that the porter said she very rarely came at all, so that it was still less likely that she would have gone there so late at night.

Vainly trying to comfort himself with these reflections, the prince reached the Ismailofsky barracks more dead than alive.

To his consternation the good people at the lodgings had not only heard nothing of Nastasia, but all came out to look at him as if he were a marvel of some sort. The whole family, of all ages, surrounded him, and he was begged to enter. He guessed at once that they knew perfectly well who he was, and that yesterday ought to have

been his wedding-day; and further that they were dying to ask about the wedding, and especially about why he should be here now, inquiring for the woman who in all reasonable human probability might have been expected to be with him in Pavlofsk.

He satisfied their curiosity, in as few words as possible, with regard to the wedding, but their exclamations and sighs were so numerous and sincere that he was obliged to tell the whole story— in a short form, of course. The advice of all these agitated ladies was that the prince should go at once and knock at Rogojin's until he was let in: and when let in insist upon a substantial explanation of everything. If Rogojin was really not at home, the prince was advised to go to a certain house, the address of which was given, where lived a German lady, a friend of Nastasia Philipovna's. It was possible that she might have spent the night there in her anxiety to conceal herself.

The prince rose from his seat in a condition of mental collapse. The good ladies reported afterwards that "his pallor was terrible to see, and his legs seemed to give way underneath him." With difficulty he was made to understand that his new friends would be glad of his address, in order to act with him if possible. After a moment's thought he gave the address of the small hotel, on the stairs of which he had had a fit some five weeks since. He then set off once more for Rogojin's.

This time they neither opened the door at Rogojin's flat nor at the one opposite. The prince found the porter with difficulty, but when found, the man would hardly look at him or answer his questions, pretending to be busy. Eventually, however, he was persuaded to reply so far as to state that Rogojin had left the house early in the morning and gone to Pavlofsk, and that he would not return today at all.

"I shall wait; he may come back this evening."

"He may not be home for a week."

"Then, at all events, he DID sleep here, did he?"

"Well—he did sleep here, yes."

All this was suspicious and unsatisfactory. Very likely the porter had received new instructions during the interval of the prince's absence; his manner was so different now. He had been obliging—now he was as obstinate and silent as a mule. However, the prince decided to call again in a couple of hours, and after that to watch the house, in case of need. His hope was that he might yet find Nastasia at the address which he had just received. To that address he now set off at full speed.

But alas! at the German lady's house they did not even appear to understand what he wanted. After a while, by means of certain hints, he was able to gather that Nastasia must have had a quarrel with her friend two or three weeks ago, since which date the latter had neither heard nor seen anything of her. He was given to understand that the subject of Nastasia's present whereabouts was not of the slightest interest to her; and that Nastasia might marry all the princes in the world for all she cared! So Muishkin took his leave hurriedly. It struck him now that she might have gone away to Moscow just as she had done the last time, and that Rogojin had perhaps gone after her, or even WITH her. If only he could find some trace!

However, he must take his room at the hotel; and he started off in that direction. Having engaged his room, he was asked by the waiter whether he would take dinner; replying mechanically in the affirmative, he sat down and waited; but it was not long before it struck him that dining would delay him. Enraged at this idea, he started up, crossed the dark passage (which filled him with horrible impressions and gloomy forebodings), and set out once more for Rogojin's. Rogojin had not returned, and no one came to the door. He rang at the old lady's door opposite, and was informed that Parfen Semionovitch would not return for three days. The curiosity with which the old servant stared at him again impressed the prince disagreeably. He could not find the porter this time at all.

As before, he crossed the street and watched the windows from the other side, walking up and down in anguish of soul for half an hour or so in the stifling heat. Nothing stirred; the blinds were motionless; indeed, the prince began to think that the apparition of Rogojin's face could have been nothing but fancy. Soothed by this thought, he drove off once more to his friends at the Ismailofsky barracks. He was expected there. The mother had already been to three or four places to look for Nastasia, but had not found a trace of any kind.

The prince said nothing, but entered the room, sat down silently, and stared at them, one after the other, with the air of a man who cannot understand what is being said to him. It was strange— one moment he seemed to be so observant, the next so absent; his behaviour struck all the family as most remarkable. At length he rose from his seat, and begged to be shown Nastasia's rooms. The ladies reported afterwards how he had examined everything in the apartments. He observed an open book on the table, *Madam Bovary*, and requested the leave of the lady of the house to take it with him. He had turned down the leaf at the open page, and pocketed it before they could explain that it was a library book. He had then seated himself by the open window, and seeing a card-table, he asked who played cards.

He was informed that Nastasia used to play with Rogojin every evening, either at "preference" or "little fool," or "whist"; that this had been their practice since her last return from Pavlofsk; that she had taken to this amusement because she did not like to see Rogojin sitting silent and dull for whole evenings at a time; that the day after Nastasia had made a remark to this effect, Rogojin had whipped a pack of cards out of his pocket. Nastasia had laughed, but soon they began playing. The prince asked where were the cards, but was told that Rogojin used to bring a new pack every day, and always carried it away in his pocket.

The good ladies recommended the prince to try knocking at Rogojin's once more—not at once, but in the evening. Meanwhile, the mother would go to Pavlofsk to inquire at Dana Alexeyevna's whether anything had been heard of Nastasia there. The prince was to come back at ten o'clock and meet her, to hear her news and arrange plans for the morrow.

In spite of the kindly-meant consolations of his new friends, the prince walked to his hotel in inexpressible anguish of spirit, through the hot, dusty streets, aimlessly

staring at the faces of those who passed him. Arrived at his destination, he determined to rest awhile in his room before he started for Rogojin's once more. He sat down, rested his elbows on the table and his head on his hands, and fell to thinking.

Heaven knows how long and upon what subjects he thought. He thought of many things—of Vera Lebedeff, and of her father; of Hippolyte; of Rogojin himself, first at the funeral, then as he had met him in the park, then, suddenly, as they had met in this very passage, outside, when Rogojin had watched in the darkness and awaited him with uplifted knife. The prince remembered his enemy's eyes as they had glared at him in the darkness. He shuddered, as a sudden idea struck him.

This idea was, that if Rogojin were in Petersburg, though he might hide for a time, yet he was quite sure to come to him—the prince—before long, with either good or evil intentions, but probably with the same intention as on that other occasion. At all events, if Rogojin were to come at all he would be sure to seek the prince here—he had no other town address—perhaps in this same corridor; he might well seek him here if he needed him. And perhaps he did need him. This idea seemed quite natural to the prince, though he could not have explained why he should so suddenly have become necessary to Rogojin. Rogojin would not come if all were well with him, that was part of the thought; he would come if all were not well; and certainly, undoubtedly, all would not be well with him. The prince could not bear this new idea; he took his hat and rushed out towards the street. It was almost dark in the passage.

“What if he were to come out of that corner as I go by and—and stop me?” thought the prince, as he approached the familiar spot. But no one came out.

He passed under the gateway and into the street. The crowds of people walking about—as is always the case at sunset in Petersburg, during the summer—surprised him, but he walked on in the direction of Rogojin's house.

About fifty yards from the hotel, at the first cross-road, as he passed through the crowd of foot-passengers sauntering along, someone touched his shoulder, and said in a whisper into his ear:

“Lef Nicolaievitch, my friend, come along with me.” It was Rogojin.

The prince immediately began to tell him, eagerly and joyfully, how he had but the moment before expected to see him in the dark passage of the hotel.

“I was there,” said Rogojin, unexpectedly. “Come along.” The prince was surprised at this answer; but his astonishment increased a couple of minutes afterwards, when he began to consider it. Having thought it over, he glanced at Rogojin in alarm. The latter was striding along a yard or so ahead, looking straight in front of him, and mechanically making way for anyone he met.

“Why did you not ask for me at my room if you were in the hotel?” asked the prince, suddenly.

Rogojin stopped and looked at him; then reflected, and replied as though he had not heard the question:

“Look here, Lef Nicolaievitch, you go straight on to the house; I shall walk on the other side. See that we keep together.”

So saying, Rogojin crossed the road.

Arrived on the opposite pavement, he looked back to see whether the prince were moving, waved his hand in the direction of the Gorohovaya, and strode on, looking across every moment to see whether Muishkin understood his instructions. The prince supposed that Rogojin desired to look out for someone whom he was afraid to miss; but if so, why had he not told HIM whom to look out for? So the two proceeded for half a mile or so. Suddenly the prince began to tremble from some unknown cause. He could not bear it, and signalled to Rogojin across the road.

The latter came at once.

“Is Nastasia Philipovna at your house?”

“Yes.”

“And was it you looked out of the window under the blind this morning?”

“Yes.”

“Then why did—”

But the prince could not finish his question; he did not know what to say. Besides this, his heart was beating so that he found it difficult to speak at all. Rogojin was silent also and looked at him as before, with an expression of deep thoughtfulness.

“Well, I’m going,” he said, at last, preparing to recross the road. “You go along here as before; we will keep to different sides of the road; it’s better so, you’ll see.”

When they reached the Gorohovaya, and came near the house, the prince’s legs were trembling so that he could hardly walk. It was about ten o’clock. The old lady’s windows were open, as before; Rogojin’s were all shut, and in the darkness the white blinds showed whiter than ever. Rogojin and the prince each approached the house on his respective side of the road; Rogojin, who was on the near side, beckoned the prince across. He went over to the doorway.

“Even the porter does not know that I have come home now. I told him, and told them at my mother’s too, that I was off to Pavlofsk,” said Rogojin, with a cunning and almost satisfied smile. “We’ll go in quietly and nobody will hear us.”

He had the key in his hand. Mounting the staircase he turned and signalled to the prince to go more softly; he opened the door very quietly, let the prince in, followed him, locked the door behind him, and put the key in his pocket.

“Come along,” he whispered.

He had spoken in a whisper all the way. In spite of his apparent outward composure, he was evidently in a state of great mental agitation. Arrived in a large salon, next to the study, he went to the window and cautiously beckoned the prince up to him.

“When you rang the bell this morning I thought it must be you. I went to the door on tip-toe and heard you talking to the servant opposite. I had told her before that if anyone came and rang— especially you, and I gave her your name—she was not to tell about me. Then I thought, what if he goes and stands opposite and looks up, or waits about to watch the house? So I came to this very window, looked out, and there you were staring straight at me. That’s how it came about.”

“Where is Nastasia Philipovna?” asked the prince, breathlessly.

"She's here," replied Rogojin, slowly, after a slight pause.

"Where?"

Rogojin raised his eyes and gazed intently at the prince.

"Come," he said.

He continued to speak in a whisper, very deliberately as before, and looked strangely thoughtful and dreamy. Even while he told the story of how he had peeped through the blind, he gave the impression of wishing to say something else. They entered the study. In this room some changes had taken place since the prince last saw it. It was now divided into two equal parts by a heavy green silk curtain stretched across it, separating the alcove beyond, where stood Rogojin's bed, from the rest of the room.

The heavy curtain was drawn now, and it was very dark. The bright Petersburg summer nights were already beginning to close in, and but for the full moon, it would have been difficult to distinguish anything in Rogojin's dismal room, with the drawn blinds. They could just see one another's faces, however, though not in detail. Rogojin's face was white, as usual. His glittering eyes watched the prince with an intent stare.

"Had you not better light a candle?" said Muishkin.

"No, I needn't," replied Rogojin, and taking the other by the hand he drew him down to a chair. He himself took a chair opposite and drew it up so close that he almost pressed against the prince's knees. At their side was a little round table.

Sit down," said Rogojin; "let's rest a bit." There was silence for a moment.

"I knew you would be at that hotel," he continued, just as men sometimes commence a serious conversation by discussing any outside subject before leading up to the main point. "As I entered the passage it struck me that perhaps you were sitting and waiting for me, just as I was waiting for you. Have you been to the old lady at Ismailofsky barracks?"

"Yes," said the prince, squeezing the word out with difficulty owing to the dreadful beating of his heart.

"I thought you would. 'They'll talk about it,' I thought; so I determined to go and fetch you to spend the night here—'We will be together,' I thought, 'for this one night—'"

"Rogojin, WHERE is Nastasia Philipovna?" said the prince, suddenly rising from his seat. He was quaking in all his limbs, and his words came in a scarcely audible whisper. Rogojin rose also.

"There," he whispered, nodding his head towards the curtain.

"Asleep?" whispered the prince.

Rogojin looked intently at him again, as before.

"Let's go in—but you mustn't—well—let's go in."

He lifted the curtain, paused—and turned to the prince. "Go in," he said, motioning him to pass behind the curtain. Muishkin went in.

It's so dark," he said.

"You can see quite enough," muttered Rogojin.

"I can just see there's a bed—"

“Go nearer,” suggested Rogojin, softly.

The prince took a step forward—then another—and paused. He stood and stared for a minute or two.

Neither of the men spoke a word while at the bedside. The prince’s heart beat so loud that its knocking seemed to be distinctly audible in the deathly silence.

But now his eyes had become so far accustomed to the darkness that he could distinguish the whole of the bed. Someone was asleep upon it—in an absolutely motionless sleep. Not the slightest movement was perceptible, not the faintest breathing could be heard. The sleeper was covered with a white sheet; the outline of the limbs was hardly distinguishable. He could only just make out that a human being lay outstretched there.

All around, on the bed, on a chair beside it, on the floor, were scattered the different portions of a magnificent white silk dress, bits of lace, ribbons and flowers. On a small table at the bedside glittered a mass of diamonds, torn off and thrown down anyhow. From under a heap of lace at the end of the bed peeped a small white foot, which looked as though it had been chiselled out of marble; it was terribly still.

The prince gazed and gazed, and felt that the more he gazed the more death-like became the silence. Suddenly a fly awoke somewhere, buzzed across the room, and settled on the pillow. The prince shuddered.

“Let’s go,” said Rogojin, touching his shoulder. They left the alcove and sat down in the two chairs they had occupied before, opposite to one another. The prince trembled more and more violently, and never took his questioning eyes off Rogojin’s face.

“I see you are shuddering, Lef Nicolaievitch,” said the latter, at length, “almost as you did once in Moscow, before your fit; don’t you remember? I don’t know what I shall do with you—”

The prince bent forward to listen, putting all the strain he could muster upon his understanding in order to take in what Rogojin said, and continuing to gaze at the latter’s face.

“Was it you?” he muttered, at last, motioning with his head towards the curtain.

“Yes, it was I,” whispered Rogojin, looking down.

Neither spoke for five minutes.

“Because, you know,” Rogojin recommenced, as though continuing a former sentence, “if you were ill now, or had a fit, or screamed, or anything, they might hear it in the yard, or even in the street, and guess that someone was passing the night in the house. They would all come and knock and want to come in, because they know I am not at home. I didn’t light a candle for the same reason. When I am not here—for two or three days at a time, now and then—no one comes in to tidy the house or anything; those are my orders. So that I want them to not know we are spending the night here—”

“Wait,” interrupted the prince. “I asked both the porter and the woman whether Nastasia Philipovna had spent last night in the house; so they knew—”

“I know you asked. I told them that she had called in for ten minutes, and then gone straight back to Pavlofsk. No one knows she slept here. Last night we came in just as

carefully as you and I did today. I thought as I came along with her that she would not like to creep in so secretly, but I was quite wrong. She whispered, and walked on tip-toe; she carried her skirt over her arm, so that it shouldn't rustle, and she held up her finger at me on the stairs, so that I shouldn't make a noise—it was you she was afraid of. She was mad with terror in the train, and she begged me to bring her to this house. I thought of taking her to her rooms at the Ismailofsky barracks first; but she wouldn't hear of it. She said, 'No—not there; he'll find me out at once there. Take me to your own house, where you can hide me, and tomorrow we'll set off for Moscow.' Thence she would go to Orel, she said. When she went to bed, she was still talking about going to Orel."

"Wait! What do you intend to do now, Parfen?"

"Well, I'm afraid of you. You shudder and tremble so. We'll pass the night here together. There are no other beds besides that one; but I've thought how we'll manage. I'll take the cushions off all the sofas, and lay them down on the floor, up against the curtain here—for you and me—so that we shall be together. For if they come in and look about now, you know, they'll find her, and carry her away, and they'll be asking me questions, and I shall say I did it, and then they'll take me away, too, don't you see? So let her lie close to us—close to you and me.

"Yes, yes," agreed the prince, warmly.

"So we will not say anything about it, or let them take her away?"

"Not for anything!" cried the other; "no, no, no!"

"So I had decided, my friend; not to give her up to anyone," continued Rogojin. "We'll be very quiet. I have only been out of the house one hour all day, all the rest of the time I have been with her. I dare say the air is very bad here. It is so hot. Do you find it bad?"

"I don't know—perhaps—by morning it will be."

"I've covered her with oil-cloth—best American oilcloth, and put the sheet over that, and four jars of disinfectant, on account of the smell—as they did at Moscow—you remember? And she's lying so still; you shall see, in the morning, when it's light. What! can't you get up?" asked Rogojin, seeing the other was trembling so that he could not rise from his seat.

"My legs won't move," said the prince; "it's fear, I know. When my fear is over, I'll get up—"

"Wait a bit—I'll make the bed, and you can lie down. I'll lie down, too, and we'll listen and watch, for I don't know yet what I shall do... I tell you beforehand, so that you may be ready in case I—"

Muttering these disconnected words, Rogojin began to make up the beds. It was clear that he had devised these beds long before; last night he slept on the sofa. But there was no room for two on the sofa, and he seemed anxious that he and the prince should be close to one another; therefore, he now dragged cushions of all sizes and shapes from the sofas, and made a sort of bed of them close by the curtain. He then approached the prince, and gently helped him to rise, and led him towards the bed.

But the prince could now walk by himself, so that his fear must have passed; for all that, however, he continued to shudder.

"It's hot weather, you see," continued Rogojin, as he lay down on the cushions beside Muishkin, "and, naturally, there will be a smell. I daren't open the window. My mother has some beautiful flowers in pots; they have a delicious scent; I thought of fetching them in, but that old servant will find out, she's very inquisitive.

"Yes, she is inquisitive," assented the prince.

"I thought of buying flowers, and putting them all round her; but I was afraid it would make us sad to see her with flowers round her."

"Look here," said the prince; he was bewildered, and his brain wandered. He seemed to be continually groping for the questions he wished to ask, and then losing them. "Listen—tell me—how did you—with a knife?—That same one?"

"Yes, that same one."

"Wait a minute, I want to ask you something else, Parfen; all sorts of things; but tell me first, did you intend to kill her before my wedding, at the church door, with your knife?"

"I don't know whether I did or not," said Rogojin, drily, seeming to be a little astonished at the question, and not quite taking it in.

"Did you never take your knife to Pavlofsk with you?" "No. As to the knife," he added, "this is all I can tell you about it." He was silent for a moment, and then said, "I took it out of the locked drawer this morning about three, for it was in the early morning all this—happened. It has been inside the book ever since—and—and—this is what is such a marvel to me, the knife only went in a couple of inches at most, just under her left breast, and there wasn't more than half a tablespoonful of blood altogether, not more."

"Yes—yes—yes—" The prince jumped up in extraordinary agitation. "I know, I know, I've read of that sort of thing—it's internal haemorrhage, you know. Sometimes there isn't a drop—if the blow goes straight to the heart—"

"Wait—listen!" cried Rogojin, suddenly, starting up. "Somebody's walking about, do you hear? In the hall." Both sat up to listen.

"I hear," said the prince in a whisper, his eyes fixed on Rogojin.

"Footsteps?"

"Yes."

"Shall we shut the door, and lock it, or not?"

"Yes, lock it."

They locked the door, and both lay down again. There was a long silence.

"Yes, by-the-by," whispered the prince, hurriedly and excitedly as before, as though he had just seized hold of an idea and was afraid of losing it again. "I—I wanted those cards! They say you played cards with her?"

"Yes, I played with her," said Rogojin, after a short silence.

"Where are the cards?"

"Here they are," said Rogojin, after a still longer pause.

He pulled out a pack of cards, wrapped in a bit of paper, from his pocket, and handed them to the prince. The latter took them, with a sort of perplexity. A new, sad, helpless feeling weighed on his heart; he had suddenly realized that not only at this moment, but for a long while, he had not been saying what he wanted to say, had not been acting as he wanted to act; and that these cards which he held in his hand, and which he had been so delighted to have at first, were now of no use—no use... He rose, and wrung his hands. Rogojin lay motionless, and seemed neither to hear nor see his movements; but his eyes blazed in the darkness, and were fixed in a wild stare.

The prince sat down on a chair, and watched him in alarm. Half an hour went by.

Suddenly Rogojin burst into a loud abrupt laugh, as though he had quite forgotten that they must speak in whispers.

“That officer, eh!—that young officer—don’t you remember that fellow at the band? Eh? Ha, ha, ha! Didn’t she whip him smartly, eh?”

The prince jumped up from his seat in renewed terror. When Rogojin quieted down (which he did at once) the prince bent over him, sat down beside him, and with painfully beating heart and still more painful breath, watched his face intently. Rogojin never turned his head, and seemed to have forgotten all about him. The prince watched and waited. Time went on—it began to grow light.

Rogojin began to wander—muttering disconnectedly; then he took to shouting and laughing. The prince stretched out a trembling hand and gently stroked his hair and his cheeks—he could do nothing more. His legs trembled again and he seemed to have lost the use of them. A new sensation came over him, filling his heart and soul with infinite anguish.

Meanwhile the daylight grew full and strong; and at last the prince lay down, as though overcome by despair, and laid his face against the white, motionless face of Rogojin. His tears flowed on to Rogojin’s cheek, though he was perhaps not aware of them himself.

At all events when, after many hours, the door was opened and people thronged in, they found the murderer unconscious and in a raging fever. The prince was sitting by him, motionless, and each time that the sick man gave a laugh, or a shout, he hastened to pass his own trembling hand over his companion’s hair and cheeks, as though trying to soothe and quiet him. But alas I he understood nothing of what was said to him, and recognized none of those who surrounded him.

If Schneider himself had arrived then and seen his former pupil and patient, remembering the prince’s condition during the first year in Switzerland, he would have flung up his hands, despairingly, and cried, as he did then:

“An idiot!”

XII.

WHEN the widow hurried away to Pavlofsk, she went straight to Daria Alexeyevna's house, and telling all she knew, threw her into a state of great alarm. Both ladies decided to communicate at once with Lebedeff, who, as the friend and landlord of the prince, was also much agitated. Vera Lebedeff told all she knew, and by Lebedeff's advice it was decided that all three should go to Petersburg as quickly as possible, in order to avert "what might so easily happen."

This is how it came about that at eleven o'clock next morning Rogojin's flat was opened by the police in the presence of Lebedeff, the two ladies, and Rogojin's own brother, who lived in the wing.

The evidence of the porter went further than anything else towards the success of Lebedeff in gaining the assistance of the police. He declared that he had seen Rogojin return to the house last night, accompanied by a friend, and that both had gone upstairs very secretly and cautiously. After this there was no hesitation about breaking open the door, since it could not be got open in any other way.

Rogojin suffered from brain fever for two months. When he recovered from the attack he was at once brought up on trial for murder.

He gave full, satisfactory, and direct evidence on every point; and the prince's name was, thanks to this, not brought into the proceedings. Rogojin was very quiet during the progress of the trial. He did not contradict his clever and eloquent counsel, who argued that the brain fever, or inflammation of the brain, was the cause of the crime; clearly proving that this malady had existed long before the murder was perpetrated, and had been brought on by the sufferings of the accused.

But Rogojin added no words of his own in confirmation of this view, and as before, he recounted with marvellous exactness the details of his crime. He was convicted, but with extenuating circumstances, and condemned to hard labour in Siberia for fifteen years. He heard his sentence grimly, silently, and thoughtfully. His colossal fortune, with the exception of the comparatively small portion wasted in the first wanton period of his inheritance, went to his brother, to the great satisfaction of the latter.

The old lady, Rogojin's mother, is still alive, and remembers her favourite son Parfen sometimes, but not clearly. God spared her the knowledge of this dreadful calamity which had overtaken her house.

Lebedeff, Keller, Gania, Ptitsin, and many other friends of ours continue to live as before. There is scarcely any change in them, so that there is no need to tell of their subsequent doings.

Hippolyte died in great agitation, and rather sooner than he expected, about a fortnight after Nastasia Phiipovna's death. Colia was much affected by these events, and drew nearer to his mother in heart and sympathy. Nina Alexandrovna is anxious, because he is "thoughtful beyond his years," but he will, we think, make a useful and active man.

The prince's further fate was more or less decided by Colia, who selected, out of all the persons he had met during the last six or seven months, Evgenie Pavlovitch, as friend and confidant. To him he made over all that he knew as to the events above recorded, and as to the present condition of the prince. He was not far wrong in his choice. Evgenie Pavlovitch took the deepest interest in the fate of the unfortunate "idiot," and, thanks to his influence, the prince found himself once more with Dr. Schneider, in Switzerland.

Evgenie Pavlovitch, who went abroad at this time, intending to live a long while on the continent, being, as he often said, quite superfluous in Russia, visits his sick friend at Schneider's every few months.

But Dr. Schneider frowns ever more and more and shakes his head; he hints that the brain is fatally injured; he does not as yet declare that his patient is incurable, but he allows himself to express the gravest fears.

Evgenie takes this much to heart, and he has a heart, as is proved by the fact that he receives and even answers letters from Colia. But besides this, another trait in his character has become apparent, and as it is a good trait we will make haste to reveal it. After each visit to Schneider's establishment, Evgenie Pavlovitch writes another letter, besides that to Colia, giving the most minute particulars concerning the invalid's condition. In these letters is to be detected, and in each one more than the last, a growing feeling of friendship and sympathy.

The individual who corresponds thus with Evgenie Pavlovitch, and who engages so much of his attention and respect, is Vera Lebedeff. We have never been able to discover clearly how such relations sprang up. Of course the root of them was in the events which we have already recorded, and which so filled Vera with grief on the prince's account that she fell seriously ill. But exactly how the acquaintance and friendship came about, we cannot say.

We have spoken of these letters chiefly because in them is often to be found some news of the Epanchin family, and of Aglaya in particular. Evgenie Pavlovitch wrote of her from Paris, that after a short and sudden attachment to a certain Polish count, an exile, she had suddenly married him, quite against the wishes of her parents, though they had eventually given their consent through fear of a terrible scandal. Then, after a six months' silence, Evgenie Pavlovitch informed his correspondent, in a long letter, full of detail, that while paying his last visit to Dr. Schneider's establishment, he had there come across the whole Epanchin family (excepting the general, who had remained in St. Petersburg) and Prince S. The meeting was a strange one. They all received Evgenie Pavlovitch with effusive delight; Adelaida and Alexandra were deeply grateful to him for his "angelic kindness to the unhappy prince."

Lizabetha Prokofievna, when she saw poor Muishkin, in his enfeebled and humiliated condition, had wept bitterly. Apparently all was forgiven him.

Prince S. had made a few just and sensible remarks. It seemed to Evgenie Pavlovitch that there was not yet perfect harmony between Adelaida and her fiance, but he thought that in time the impulsive young girl would let herself be guided by his reason

and experience. Besides, the recent events that had befallen her family had given Adelaida much to think about, especially the sad experiences of her younger sister. Within six months, everything that the family had dreaded from the marriage with the Polish count had come to pass. He turned out to be neither count nor exile—at least, in the political sense of the word—but had had to leave his native land owing to some rather dubious affair of the past. It was his noble patriotism, of which he made a great display, that had rendered him so interesting in Aglaya's eyes. She was so fascinated that, even before marrying him, she joined a committee that had been organized abroad to work for the restoration of Poland; and further, she visited the confessional of a celebrated Jesuit priest, who made an absolute fanatic of her. The supposed fortune of the count had dwindled to a mere nothing, although he had given almost irrefutable evidence of its existence to Lizabetha Prokofievna and Prince S.

Besides this, before they had been married half a year, the count and his friend the priest managed to bring about a quarrel between Aglaya and her family, so that it was now several months since they had seen her. In a word, there was a great deal to say; but Mrs. Epanchin, and her daughters, and even Prince S., were still so much distressed by Aglaya's latest infatuations and adventures, that they did not care to talk of them, though they must have known that Evgenie knew much of the story already.

Poor Lizabetha Prokofievna was most anxious to get home, and, according to Evgenie's account, she criticized everything foreign with much hostility.

"They can't bake bread anywhere, decently; and they all freeze in their houses, during winter, like a lot of mice in a cellar. At all events, I've had a good Russian cry over this poor fellow," she added, pointing to the prince, who had not recognized her in the slightest degree. "So enough of this nonsense; it's time we faced the truth. All this continental life, all this Europe of yours, and all the trash about 'going abroad' is simply foolery, and it is mere foolery on our part to come. Remember what I say, my friend; you'll live to agree with me yourself."

So spoke the good lady, almost angrily, as she took leave of Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Notes from the Underground

Translated By Constance Garnett

Part 1

Underground* *The author of the diary and the diary itself are, of course, imaginary. Nevertheless it is clear that such persons as the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society, when we consider the circumstances in the midst of which our society is formed. I have tried to expose to the view of the public more distinctly than is commonly done, one of the characters of the recent past. He is one of the representatives of a generation still living. In this fragment, entitled “Underground,” this person introduces himself and his views, and, as it were, tries to explain the causes owing to which he has made his appearance and was bound to make his appearance in our midst. In the second fragment there are added the actual notes of this person concerning certain events in his life. —AUTHOR’S NOTE.

I

I am a sick man. ... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, I know nothing at all about my disease, and do not know for certain what ails me. I don’t consult a doctor for it, and never have, though I have a respect for medicine and doctors. Besides, I am extremely superstitious, sufficiently so to respect medicine, anyway (I am well-educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am superstitious). No, I refuse to consult a doctor from spite. That you probably will not understand. Well, I understand it, though. Of course, I can’t explain who it is precisely that I am mortifying in this case by my spite: I am perfectly well aware that I cannot “pay out” the doctors by not consulting them; I know better than anyone that by all this I am only injuring myself and no one else. But still, if I don’t consult a doctor it is from spite. My liver is bad, well—let it get worse!

I have been going on like that for a long time—twenty years. Now I am forty. I used to be in the government service, but am no longer. I was a spiteful official. I was rude and took pleasure in being so. I did not take bribes, you see, so I was bound to find a recompense in that, at least. (A poor jest, but I will not scratch it out. I wrote it thinking it would sound very witty; but now that I have seen myself that I only wanted to show off in a despicable way, I will not scratch it out on purpose!)

When petitioners used to come for information to the table at which I sat, I used to grind my teeth at them, and felt intense enjoyment when I succeeded in making anybody unhappy. I almost did succeed. For the most part they were all timid people—of course, they were petitioners. But of the uppish ones there was one officer in particular

I could not endure. He simply would not be humble, and clanked his sword in a disgusting way. I carried on a feud with him for eighteen months over that sword. At last I got the better of him. He left off clanking it. That happened in my youth, though. But do you know, gentlemen, what was the chief point about my spite? Why, the whole point, the real sting of it lay in the fact that continually, even in the moment of the acutest spleen, I was inwardly conscious with shame that I was not only not a spiteful but not even an embittered man, that I was simply scaring sparrows at random and amusing myself by it. I might foam at the mouth, but bring me a doll to play with, give me a cup of tea with sugar in it, and maybe I should be appeased. I might even be genuinely touched, though probably I should grind my teeth at myself afterwards and lie awake at night with shame for months after. That was my way.

I was lying when I said just now that I was a spiteful official. I was lying from spite. I was simply amusing myself with the petitioners and with the officer, and in reality I never could become spiteful. I was conscious every moment in myself of many, very many elements absolutely opposite to that. I felt them positively swarming in me, these opposite elements. I knew that they had been swarming in me all my life and craving some outlet from me, but I would not let them, would not let them, purposely would not let them come out. They tormented me till I was ashamed: they drove me to convulsions and—sickened me, at last, how they sickened me! Now, are not you fancying, gentlemen, that I am expressing remorse for something now, that I am asking your forgiveness for something? I am sure you are fancying that ... However, I assure you I do not care if you are. ...

It was not only that I could not become spiteful, I did not know how to become anything; neither spiteful nor kind, neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect. Now, I am living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously, and it is only the fool who becomes anything. Yes, a man in the nineteenth century must and morally ought to be pre-eminently a characterless creature; a man of character, an active man is pre-eminently a limited creature. That is my conviction of forty years. I am forty years old now, and you know forty years is a whole lifetime; you know it is extreme old age. To live longer than forty years is bad manners, is vulgar, immoral. Who does live beyond forty? Answer that, sincerely and honestly I will tell you who do: fools and worthless fellows. I tell all old men that to their face, all these venerable old men, all these silver-haired and reverend seniors! I tell the whole world that to its face! I have a right to say so, for I shall go on living to sixty myself. To seventy! To eighty! ... Stay, let me take breath ...

You imagine no doubt, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. You are mistaken in that, too. I am by no means such a mirthful person as you imagine, or as you may imagine; however, irritated by all this babble (and I feel that you are irritated) you think fit to ask me who I am—then my answer is, I am a collegiate assessor. I was in the service that I might have something to eat (and solely for that reason), and when last year a distant relation left me six thousand roubles in his will I immediately

retired from the service and settled down in my corner. I used to live in this corner before, but now I have settled down in it. My room is a wretched, horrid one in the outskirts of the town. My servant is an old country- woman, ill-natured from stupidity, and, moreover, there is always a nasty smell about her. I am told that the Petersburg climate is bad for me, and that with my small means it is very expensive to live in Petersburg. I know all that better than all these sage and experienced counsellors and monitors. ... But I am remaining in Petersburg; I am not going away from Petersburg! I am not going away because ... ech! Why, it is absolutely no matter whether I am going away or not going away.

But what can a decent man speak of with most pleasure?

Answer: Of himself.

Well, so I will talk about myself.

II

I want now to tell you, gentlemen, whether you care to hear it or not, why I could not even become an insect. I tell you solemnly, that I have many times tried to become an insect. But I was not equal even to that. I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness—a real thorough-going illness. For man's everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe. (There are intentional and unintentional towns.) It would have been quite enough, for instance, to have the consciousness by which all so-called direct persons and men of action live. I bet you think I am writing all this from affectation, to be witty at the expense of men of action; and what is more, that from ill-bred affectation, I am clanking a sword like my officer. But, gentlemen, whoever can pride himself on his diseases and even swagger over them?

Though, after all, everyone does do that; people do pride themselves on their diseases, and I do, may be, more than anyone. We will not dispute it; my contention was absurd. But yet I am firmly persuaded that a great deal of consciousness, every sort of consciousness, in fact, is a disease. I stick to that. Let us leave that, too, for a minute. Tell me this: why does it happen that at the very, yes, at the very moments when I am most capable of feeling every refinement of all that is "sublime and beautiful," as they used to say at one time, it would, as though of design, happen to me not only to feel but to do such ugly things, such that ... Well, in short, actions that all, perhaps, commit; but which, as though purposely, occurred to me at the very time when I was most conscious that they ought not to be committed. The more conscious I was of goodness and of all that was "sublime and beautiful," the more deeply I sank into my mire and the more ready I was to sink in it altogether. But the chief point was that all this was, as it were, not accidental in me, but as though it were bound to be so.

It was as though it were my most normal condition, and not in the least disease or depravity, so that at last all desire in me to struggle against this depravity passed. It ended by my almost believing (perhaps actually believing) that this was perhaps my normal condition. But at first, in the beginning, what agonies I endured in that struggle! I did not believe it was the same with other people, and all my life I hid this fact about myself as a secret. I was ashamed (even now, perhaps, I am ashamed): I got to the point of feeling a sort of secret abnormal, despicable enjoyment in returning home to my corner on some disgusting Petersburg night, acutely conscious that that day I had committed a loathsome action again, that what was done could never be undone, and secretly, inwardly gnawing, gnawing at myself for it, tearing and consuming myself till at last the bitterness turned into a sort of shameful accursed sweetness, and at last—into positive real enjoyment! Yes, into enjoyment, into enjoyment! I insist upon that. I have spoken of this because I keep wanting to know for a fact whether other people feel such enjoyment? I will explain; the enjoyment was just from the too intense consciousness of one's own degradation; it was from feeling oneself that one had reached the last barrier, that it was horrible, but that it could not be otherwise; that there was no escape for you; that you never could become a different man; that even if time and faith were still left you to change into something different you would most likely not wish to change; or if you did wish to, even then you would do nothing; because perhaps in reality there was nothing for you to change into.

And the worst of it was, and the root of it all, that it was all in accord with the normal fundamental laws of over-acute consciousness, and with the inertia that was the direct result of those laws, and that consequently one was not only unable to change but could do absolutely nothing. Thus it would follow, as the result of acute consciousness, that one is not to blame in being a scoundrel; as though that were any consolation to the scoundrel once he has come to realise that he actually is a scoundrel. But enough. ... Ech, I have talked a lot of nonsense, but what have I explained? How is enjoyment in this to be explained? But I will explain it. I will get to the bottom of it! That is why I have taken up my pen. ...

I, for instance, have a great deal of AMOUR PROPRE. I am as suspicious and prone to take offence as a humpback or a dwarf. But upon my word I sometimes have had moments when if I had happened to be slapped in the face I should, perhaps, have been positively glad of it. I say, in earnest, that I should probably have been able to discover even in that a peculiar sort of enjoyment—the enjoyment, of course, of despair; but in despair there are the most intense enjoyments, especially when one is very acutely conscious of the hopelessness of one's position. And when one is slapped in the face—why then the consciousness of being rubbed into a pulp would positively overwhelm one. The worst of it is, look at it which way one will, it still turns out that I was always the most to blame in everything. And what is most humiliating of all, to blame for no fault of my own but, so to say, through the laws of nature. In the first place, to blame because I am cleverer than any of the people surrounding me. (I have always considered myself cleverer than any of the people surrounding me, and

sometimes, would you believe it, have been positively ashamed of it. At any rate, I have all my life, as it were, turned my eyes away and never could look people straight in the face.) To blame, finally, because even if I had had magnanimity, I should only have had more suffering from the sense of its uselessness. I should certainly have never been able to do anything from being magnanimous—neither to forgive, for my assailant would perhaps have slapped me from the laws of nature, and one cannot forgive the laws of nature; nor to forget, for even if it were owing to the laws of nature, it is insulting all the same. Finally, even if I had wanted to be anything but magnanimous, had desired on the contrary to revenge myself on my assailant, I could not have revenged myself on any one for anything because I should certainly never have made up my mind to do anything, even if I had been able to. Why should I not have made up my mind? About that in particular I want to say a few words.

III

With people who know how to revenge themselves and to stand up for themselves in general, how is it done? Why, when they are possessed, let us suppose, by the feeling of revenge, then for the time there is nothing else but that feeling left in their whole being. Such a gentleman simply dashes straight for his object like an infuriated bull with its horns down, and nothing but a wall will stop him. (By the way: facing the wall, such gentlemen—that is, the “direct” persons and men of action—are genuinely nonplussed. For them a wall is not an evasion, as for us people who think and consequently do nothing; it is not an excuse for turning aside, an excuse for which we are always very glad, though we scarcely believe in it ourselves, as a rule. No, they are nonplussed in all sincerity. The wall has for them something tranquillising, morally soothing, final—maybe even something mysterious ... but of the wall later.)

Well, such a direct person I regard as the real normal man, as his tender mother nature wished to see him when she graciously brought him into being on the earth. I envy such a man till I am green in the face. He is stupid. I am not disputing that, but perhaps the normal man should be stupid, how do you know? Perhaps it is very beautiful, in fact. And I am the more persuaded of that suspicion, if one can call it so, by the fact that if you take, for instance, the antithesis of the normal man, that is, the man of acute consciousness, who has come, of course, not out of the lap of nature but out of a retort (this is almost mysticism, gentlemen, but I suspect this, too), this retort-made man is sometimes so nonplussed in the presence of his antithesis that with all his exaggerated consciousness he genuinely thinks of himself as a mouse and not a man. It may be an acutely conscious mouse, yet it is a mouse, while the other is a man, and therefore, *et caetera, et caetera*. And the worst of it is, he himself, his very own self, looks on himself as a mouse; no one asks him to do so; and that is an important point. Now let us look at this mouse in action. Let us suppose, for instance, that it feels insulted, too (and it almost always does feel insulted), and wants to revenge itself,

too. There may even be a greater accumulation of spite in it than in L'HOMME DE LA NATURE ET DE LA VERITE. The base and nasty desire to vent that spite on its assailant rankles perhaps even more nastily in it than in L'HOMME DE LA NATURE ET DE LA VERITE. For through his innate stupidity the latter looks upon his revenge as justice pure and simple; while in consequence of his acute consciousness the mouse does not believe in the justice of it. To come at last to the deed itself, to the very act of revenge. Apart from the one fundamental nastiness the luckless mouse succeeds in creating around it so many other nastinesses in the form of doubts and questions, adds to the one question so many unsettled questions that there inevitably works up around it a sort of fatal brew, a stinking mess, made up of its doubts, emotions, and of the contempt spat upon it by the direct men of action who stand solemnly about it as judges and arbitrators, laughing at it till their healthy sides ache. Of course the only thing left for it is to dismiss all that with a wave of its paw, and, with a smile of assumed contempt in which it does not even itself believe, creep ignominiously into its mouse-hole. There in its nasty, stinking, underground home our insulted, crushed and ridiculed mouse promptly becomes absorbed in cold, malignant and, above all, everlasting spite. For forty years together it will remember its injury down to the smallest, most ignominious details, and every time will add, of itself, details still more ignominious, spitefully teasing and tormenting itself with its own imagination. It will itself be ashamed of its imaginings, but yet it will recall it all, it will go over and over every detail, it will invent unheard of things against itself, pretending that those things might happen, and will forgive nothing. Maybe it will begin to revenge itself, too, but, as it were, piecemeal, in trivial ways, from behind the stove, incognito, without believing either in its own right to vengeance, or in the success of its revenge, knowing that from all its efforts at revenge it will suffer a hundred times more than he on whom it revenges itself, while he, I daresay, will not even scratch himself. On its deathbed it will recall it all over again, with interest accumulated over all the years and ...

But it is just in that cold, abominable half despair, half belief, in that conscious burying oneself alive for grief in the underworld for forty years, in that acutely recognised and yet partly doubtful hopelessness of one's position, in that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, in that fever of oscillations, of resolutions determined for ever and repented of again a minute later—that the savour of that strange enjoyment of which I have spoken lies. It is so subtle, so difficult of analysis, that persons who are a little limited, or even simply persons of strong nerves, will not understand a single atom of it. "Possibly," you will add on your own account with a grin, "people will not understand it either who have never received a slap in the face," and in that way you will politely hint to me that I, too, perhaps, have had the experience of a slap in the face in my life, and so I speak as one who knows. I bet that you are thinking that. But set your minds at rest, gentlemen, I have not received a slap in the face, though it is absolutely a matter of indifference to me what you may think about it. Possibly, I even regret, myself, that I have given so few slaps in the face during my life. But enough ... not another word on that subject of such extreme interest to you.

I will continue calmly concerning persons with strong nerves who do not understand a certain refinement of enjoyment. Though in certain circumstances these gentlemen bellow their loudest like bulls, though this, let us suppose, does them the greatest credit, yet, as I have said already, confronted with the impossible they subside at once. The impossible means the stone wall! What stone wall? Why, of course, the laws of nature, the deductions of natural science, mathematics. As soon as they prove to you, for instance, that you are descended from a monkey, then it is no use scowling, accept it for a fact. When they prove to you that in reality one drop of your own fat must be dearer to you than a hundred thousand of your fellow-creatures, and that this conclusion is the final solution of all so-called virtues and duties and all such prejudices and fancies, then you have just to accept it, there is no help for it, for twice two is a law of mathematics. Just try refuting it.

“Upon my word, they will shout at you, it is no use protesting: it is a case of twice two makes four! Nature does not ask your permission, she has nothing to do with your wishes, and whether you like her laws or dislike them, you are bound to accept her as she is, and consequently all her conclusions. A wall, you see, is a wall ... and so on, and so on.”

Merciful Heavens! but what do I care for the laws of nature and arithmetic, when, for some reason I dislike those laws and the fact that twice two makes four? Of course I cannot break through the wall by battering my head against it if I really have not the strength to knock it down, but I am not going to be reconciled to it simply because it is a stone wall and I have not the strength.

As though such a stone wall really were a consolation, and really did contain some word of conciliation, simply because it is as true as twice two makes four. Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand it all, to recognise it all, all the impossibilities and the stone wall; not to be reconciled to one of those impossibilities and stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it; by the way of the most inevitable, logical combinations to reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme, that even for the stone wall you are yourself somehow to blame, though again it is as clear as day you are not to blame in the least, and therefore grinding your teeth in silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one even for you to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, that it is a sleight of hand, a bit of juggling, a card-sharper's trick, that it is simply a mess, no knowing what and no knowing who, but in spite of all these uncertainties and jugglings, still there is an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.

IV

“Ha, ha, ha! You will be finding enjoyment in toothache next,” you cry, with a laugh.

“Well, even in toothache there is enjoyment,” I answer. I had toothache for a whole month and I know there is. In that case, of course, people are not spiteful in silence, but moan; but they are not candid moans, they are malignant moans, and the malignancy is the whole point. The enjoyment of the sufferer finds expression in those moans; if he did not feel enjoyment in them he would not moan. It is a good example, gentlemen, and I will develop it. Those moans express in the first place all the aimlessness of your pain, which is so humiliating to your consciousness; the whole legal system of nature on which you spit disdainfully, of course, but from which you suffer all the same while she does not. They express the consciousness that you have no enemy to punish, but that you have pain; the consciousness that in spite of all possible Wagenheims you are in complete slavery to your teeth; that if someone wishes it, your teeth will leave off aching, and if he does not, they will go on aching another three months; and that finally if you are still contumacious and still protest, all that is left you for your own gratification is to thrash yourself or beat your wall with your fist as hard as you can, and absolutely nothing more. Well, these mortal insults, these jeers on the part of someone unknown, end at last in an enjoyment which sometimes reaches the highest degree of voluptuousness. I ask you, gentlemen, listen sometimes to the moans of an educated man of the nineteenth century suffering from toothache, on the second or third day of the attack, when he is beginning to moan, not as he moaned on the first day, that is, not simply because he has toothache, not just as any coarse peasant, but as a man affected by progress and European civilisation, a man who is “divorced from the soil and the national elements,” as they express it now-a-days. His moans become nasty, disgustingly malignant, and go on for whole days and nights. And of course he knows himself that he is doing himself no sort of good with his moans; he knows better than anyone that he is only lacerating and harassing himself and others for nothing; he knows that even the audience before whom he is making his efforts, and his whole family, listen to him with loathing, do not put a ha’porth of faith in him, and inwardly understand that he might moan differently, more simply, without trills and flourishes, and that he is only amusing himself like that from ill-humour, from malignancy. Well, in all these recognitions and disgraces it is that there lies a voluptuous pleasure. As though he would say: “I am worrying you, I am lacerating your hearts, I am keeping everyone in the house awake. Well, stay awake then, you, too, feel every minute that I have toothache. I am not a hero to you now, as I tried to seem before, but simply a nasty person, an impostor. Well, so be it, then! I am very glad that you see through me. It is nasty for you to hear my despicable moans: well, let it be nasty; here I will let you have a nastier flourish in a minute. ...” You do not understand even now, gentlemen? No, it seems our development and our consciousness must go further to understand all the intricacies of this pleasure. You laugh? Delighted. My jests, gentlemen, are of course in bad taste, jerky, involved, lacking self-confidence. But of course that is because I do not respect myself. Can a man of perception respect himself at all?

V

Come, can a man who attempts to find enjoyment in the very feeling of his own degradation possibly have a spark of respect for himself? I am not saying this now from any mawkish kind of remorse. And, indeed, I could never endure saying, "Forgive me, Papa, I won't do it again," not because I am incapable of saying that—on the contrary, perhaps just because I have been too capable of it, and in what a way, too. As though of design I used to get into trouble in cases when I was not to blame in any way. That was the nastiest part of it. At the same time I was genuinely touched and penitent, I used to shed tears and, of course, deceived myself, though I was not acting in the least and there was a sick feeling in my heart at the time. ... For that one could not blame even the laws of nature, though the laws of nature have continually all my life offended me more than anything. It is loathsome to remember it all, but it was loathsome even then. Of course, a minute or so later I would realise wrathfully that it was all a lie, a revolting lie, an affected lie, that is, all this penitence, this emotion, these vows of reform. You will ask why did I worry myself with such antics: answer, because it was very dull to sit with one's hands folded, and so one began cutting capers. That is really it. Observe yourselves more carefully, gentlemen, then you will understand that it is so. I invented adventures for myself and made up a life, so as at least to live in some way. How many times it has happened to me—well, for instance, to take offence simply on purpose, for nothing; and one knows oneself, of course, that one is offended at nothing; that one is putting it on, but yet one brings oneself at last to the point of being really offended. All my life I have had an impulse to play such pranks, so that in the end I could not control it in myself. Another time, twice, in fact, I tried hard to be in love. I suffered, too, gentlemen, I assure you. In the depth of my heart there was no faith in my suffering, only a faint stir of mockery, but yet I did suffer, and in the real, orthodox way; I was jealous, beside myself ... and it was all from ENNUI, gentlemen, all from ENNUI; inertia overcame me. You know the direct, legitimate fruit of consciousness is inertia, that is, conscious sitting-with-the-hands-folded. I have referred to this already. I repeat, I repeat with emphasis: all "direct" persons and men of action are active just because they are stupid and limited. How explain that? I will tell you: in consequence of their limitation they take immediate and secondary causes for primary ones, and in that way persuade themselves more quickly and easily than other people do that they have found an infallible foundation for their activity, and their minds are at ease and you know that is the chief thing. To begin to act, you know, you must first have your mind completely at ease and no trace of doubt left in it. Why, how am I, for example, to set my mind at rest? Where are the primary causes on which I am to build? Where are my foundations? Where am I to get them from? I exercise myself in reflection, and consequently with me every primary cause at once draws after itself another still more primary, and so on to infinity. That is just the essence of every sort of consciousness and reflection. It must be a case of the laws of nature again. What is the result of it in the end? Why, just the same. Remember I spoke just now of vengeance. (I am sure

you did not take it in.) I said that a man revenges himself because he sees justice in it. Therefore he has found a primary cause, that is, justice. And so he is at rest on all sides, and consequently he carries out his revenge calmly and successfully, being persuaded that he is doing a just and honest thing. But I see no justice in it, I find no sort of virtue in it either, and consequently if I attempt to revenge myself, it is only out of spite. Spite, of course, might overcome everything, all my doubts, and so might serve quite successfully in place of a primary cause, precisely because it is not a cause. But what is to be done if I have not even spite (I began with that just now, you know). In consequence again of those accursed laws of consciousness, anger in me is subject to chemical disintegration. You look into it, the object flies off into air, your reasons evaporate, the criminal is not to be found, the wrong becomes not a wrong but a phantom, something like the toothache, for which no one is to blame, and consequently there is only the same outlet left again—that is, to beat the wall as hard as you can. So you give it up with a wave of the hand because you have not found a fundamental cause. And try letting yourself be carried away by your feelings, blindly, without reflection, without a primary cause, repelling consciousness at least for a time; hate or love, if only not to sit with your hands folded. The day after tomorrow, at the latest, you will begin despising yourself for having knowingly deceived yourself. Result: a soap-bubble and inertia. Oh, gentlemen, do you know, perhaps I consider myself an intelligent man, only because all my life I have been able neither to begin nor to finish anything. Granted I am a babbler, a harmless vexatious babbler, like all of us. But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a sieve?

VI

Oh, if I had done nothing simply from laziness! Heavens, how I should have respected myself, then. I should have respected myself because I should at least have been capable of being lazy; there would at least have been one quality, as it were, positive in me, in which I could have believed myself. Question: What is he? Answer: A sluggard; how very pleasant it would have been to hear that of oneself! It would mean that I was positively defined, it would mean that there was something to say about me. “Sluggard”—why, it is a calling and vocation, it is a career. Do not jest, it is so. I should then be a member of the best club by right, and should find my occupation in continually respecting myself. I knew a gentleman who prided himself all his life on being a connoisseur of Lafitte. He considered this as his positive virtue, and never doubted himself. He died, not simply with a tranquil, but with a triumphant conscience, and he was quite right, too. Then I should have chosen a career for myself, I should have been a sluggard and a glutton, not a simple one, but, for instance, one with sympathies for everything sublime and beautiful. How do you like that? I have long had visions of it. That “sublime and beautiful” weighs heavily on my mind at forty

But that is at forty; then—oh, then it would have been different! I should have found for myself a form of activity in keeping with it, to be precise, drinking to the health of everything “sublime and beautiful.” I should have snatched at every opportunity to drop a tear into my glass and then to drain it to all that is “sublime and beautiful.” I should then have turned everything into the sublime and the beautiful; in the nastiest, unquestionable trash, I should have sought out the sublime and the beautiful. I should have exuded tears like a wet sponge. An artist, for instance, paints a picture worthy of Gay. At once I drink to the health of the artist who painted the picture worthy of Gay, because I love all that is “sublime and beautiful.” An author has written AS YOU WILL: at once I drink to the health of “anyone you will” because I love all that is “sublime and beautiful.”

I should claim respect for doing so. I should persecute anyone who would not show me respect. I should live at ease, I should die with dignity, why, it is charming, perfectly charming! And what a good round belly I should have grown, what a treble chin I should have established, what a ruby nose I should have coloured for myself, so that everyone would have said, looking at me: “Here is an asset! Here is something real and solid!” And, say what you like, it is very agreeable to hear such remarks about oneself in this negative age.

VII

But these are all golden dreams. Oh, tell me, who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else, and we all know that not one man can, consciously, act against his own interests, consequently, so to say, through necessity, he would begin doing good? Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child! Why, in the first place, when in all these thousands of years has there been a time when man has acted only from his own interest? What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, CONSCIOUSLY, that is fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and have rushed headlong on another path, to meet peril and danger, compelled to this course by nobody and by nothing, but, as it were, simply disliking the beaten track, and have obstinately, wilfully, struck out another difficult, absurd way, seeking it almost in the darkness. So, I suppose, this obstinacy and perversity were pleasanter to them than any advantage. ... Advantage! What is advantage? And will you take it upon yourself to define with perfect accuracy in what the advantage of man consists? And what if it so happens that a man’s advantage, SOMETIMES, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous. And if so, if there can

be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you think—are there such cases? You laugh; laugh away, gentlemen, but only answer me: have man's advantages been reckoned up with perfect certainty? Are there not some which not only have not been included but cannot possibly be included under any classification? You see, you gentlemen have, to the best of my knowledge, taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economical formulas. Your advantages are prosperity, wealth, freedom, peace—and so on, and so on. So that the man who should, for instance, go openly and knowingly in opposition to all that list would to your thinking, and indeed mine, too, of course, be an obscurantist or an absolute madman: would not he? But, you know, this is what is surprising: why does it so happen that all these statisticians, sages and lovers of humanity, when they reckon up human advantages invariably leave out one? They don't even take it into their reckoning in the form in which it should be taken, and the whole reckoning depends upon that. It would be no greater matter, they would simply have to take it, this advantage, and add it to the list. But the trouble is, that this strange advantage does not fall under any classification and is not in place in any list. I have a friend for instance ... Ech! gentlemen, but of course he is your friend, too; and indeed there is no one, no one to whom he is not a friend! When he prepares for any undertaking this gentleman immediately explains to you, elegantly and clearly, exactly how he must act in accordance with the laws of reason and truth. What is more, he will talk to you with excitement and passion of the true normal interests of man; with irony he will upbraid the short-sighted fools who do not understand their own interests, nor the true significance of virtue; and, within a quarter of an hour, without any sudden outside provocation, but simply through something inside him which is stronger than all his interests, he will go off on quite a different tack—that is, act in direct opposition to what he has just been saying about himself, in opposition to the laws of reason, in opposition to his own advantage, in fact in opposition to everything ... I warn you that my friend is a compound personality and therefore it is difficult to blame him as an individual. The fact is, gentlemen, it seems there must really exist something that is dearer to almost every man than his greatest advantages, or (not to be illogical) there is a most advantageous advantage (the very one omitted of which we spoke just now) which is more important and more advantageous than all other advantages, for the sake of which a man if necessary is ready to act in opposition to all laws; that is, in opposition to reason, honour, peace, prosperity—in fact, in opposition to all those excellent and useful things if only he can attain that fundamental, most advantageous advantage which is dearer to him than all. “Yes, but it's advantage all the same,” you will retort. But excuse me, I'll make the point clear, and it is not a case of playing upon words. What matters is, that this advantage is remarkable from the very fact that it breaks down all our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind. In fact, it upsets everything. But before I mention this advantage to you, I want to compromise myself personally, and therefore I boldly declare that all these fine systems, all these

theories for explaining to mankind their real normal interests, in order that inevitably striving to pursue these interests they may at once become good and noble—are, in my opinion, so far, mere logical exercises! Yes, logical exercises. Why, to maintain this theory of the regeneration of mankind by means of the pursuit of his own advantage is to my mind almost the same thing ... as to affirm, for instance, following Buckle, that through civilisation mankind becomes softer, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less fitted for warfare. Logically it does seem to follow from his arguments. But man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic. I take this example because it is the most glaring instance of it. Only look about you: blood is being spilt in streams, and in the merriest way, as though it were champagne. Take the whole of the nineteenth century in which Buckle lived. Take Napoleon—the Great and also the present one. Take North America—the eternal union. Take the farce of Schleswig-Holstein And what is it that civilisation softens in us? The only gain of civilisation for mankind is the greater capacity for variety of sensations—and absolutely nothing more. And through the development of this many-sidedness man may come to finding enjoyment in bloodshed. In fact, this has already happened to him. Have you noticed that it is the most civilised gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is simply because they are so often met with, are so ordinary and have become so familiar to us. In any case civilisation has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty, at least more vilely, more loathsomely bloodthirsty. In old days he saw justice in bloodshed and with his conscience at peace exterminated those he thought proper. Now we do think bloodshed abominable and yet we engage in this abomination, and with more energy than ever. Which is worse? Decide that for yourselves. They say that Cleopatra (excuse an instance from Roman history) was fond of sticking gold pins into her slave-girls' breasts and derived gratification from their screams and writhings. You will say that that was in the comparatively barbarous times; that these are barbarous times too, because also, comparatively speaking, pins are stuck in even now; that though man has now learned to see more clearly than in barbarous ages, he is still far from having learnt to act as reason and science would dictate. But yet you are fully convinced that he will be sure to learn when he gets rid of certain old bad habits, and when common sense and science have completely re-educated human nature and turned it in a normal direction. You are confident that then man will cease from INTENTIONAL error and will, so to say, be compelled not to want to set his will against his normal interests. That is not all; then, you say, science itself will teach man (though to my mind it's a superfluous luxury) that he never has really had any caprice or will of his own, and that he himself is something of the nature of a piano-key or the stop of an organ, and that there are, besides, things called the laws of nature; so that everything he does is not done by his willing it, but is done of itself, by the laws of nature. Consequently we have only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer have to answer for his

actions and life will become exceedingly easy for him. All human actions will then, of course, be tabulated according to these laws, mathematically, like tables of logarithms up to 108,000, and entered in an index; or, better still, there would be published certain edifying works of the nature of encyclopaedic lexicons, in which everything will be so clearly calculated and explained that there will be no more incidents or adventures in the world.

Then—this is all what you say—new economic relations will be established, all ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude, so that every possible question will vanish in the twinkling of an eye, simply because every possible answer to it will be provided. Then the “Palace of Crystal” will be built. Then ... In fact, those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated), but on the other hand everything will be extraordinarily rational. Of course boredom may lead you to anything. It is boredom sets one sticking golden pins into people, but all that would not matter. What is bad (this is my comment again) is that I dare say people will be thankful for the gold pins then. Man is stupid, you know, phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not at all stupid, but he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation. I, for instance, would not be in the least surprised if all of a sudden, A PROPOS of nothing, in the midst of general prosperity a gentleman with an ignoble, or rather with a reactionary and ironical, countenance were to arise and, putting his arms akimbo, say to us all: “I say, gentleman, hadn’t we better kick over the whole show and scatter rationalism to the winds, simply to send these logarithms to the devil, and to enable us to live once more at our own sweet foolish will!” That again would not matter, but what is annoying is that he would be sure to find followers—such is the nature of man. And all that for the most foolish reason, which, one would think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one’s own interests, and sometimes one POSITIVELY OUGHT (that is my idea). One’s own free unfettered choice, one’s own caprice, however wild it may be, one’s own fancy worked up at times to frenzy—is that very “most advantageous advantage” which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply INDEPENDENT choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice.

VIII

“Ha! ha! ha! But you know there is no such thing as choice in reality, say what you like,” you will interpose with a chuckle. “Science has succeeded in so far analysing man that we know already that choice and what is called freedom of will is nothing else than—”

Stay, gentlemen, I meant to begin with that myself I confess, I was rather frightened. I was just going to say that the devil only knows what choice depends on, and that perhaps that was a very good thing, but I remembered the teaching of science ... and pulled myself up. And here you have begun upon it. Indeed, if there really is some day discovered a formula for all our desires and caprices—that is, an explanation of what they depend upon, by what laws they arise, how they develop, what they are aiming at in one case and in another and so on, that is a real mathematical formula—then, most likely, man will at once cease to feel desire, indeed, he will be certain to. For who would want to choose by rule? Besides, he will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort; for what is a man without desires, without free will and without choice, if not a stop in an organ? What do you think? Let us reckon the chances—can such a thing happen or not?

“H’m!” you decide. “Our choice is usually mistaken from a false view of our advantage. We sometimes choose absolute nonsense because in our foolishness we see in that nonsense the easiest means for attaining a supposed advantage. But when all that is explained and worked out on paper (which is perfectly possible, for it is contemptible and senseless to suppose that some laws of nature man will never understand), then certainly so-called desires will no longer exist. For if a desire should come into conflict with reason we shall then reason and not desire, because it will be impossible retaining our reason to be SENSELESS in our desires, and in that way knowingly act against reason and desire to injure ourselves. And as all choice and reasoning can be really calculated—because there will some day be discovered the laws of our so-called free will—so, joking apart, there may one day be something like a table constructed of them, so that we really shall choose in accordance with it. If, for instance, some day they calculate and prove to me that I made a long nose at someone because I could not help making a long nose at him and that I had to do it in that particular way, what FREEDOM is left me, especially if I am a learned man and have taken my degree somewhere? Then I should be able to calculate my whole life for thirty years beforehand. In short, if this could be arranged there would be nothing left for us to do; anyway, we should have to understand that. And, in fact, we ought unwearingly to repeat to ourselves that at such and such a time and in such and such circumstances nature does not ask our leave; that we have got to take her as she is and not fashion her to suit our fancy, and if we really aspire to formulas and tables of rules, and well, even ... to the chemical retort, there’s no help for it, we must accept the retort too, or else it will be accepted without our consent ...”

Yes, but here I come to a stop! Gentlemen, you must excuse me for being over-philosophical; it's the result of forty years underground! Allow me to indulge my fancy. You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives. I suspect, gentlemen, that you are looking at me with compassion; you tell me again that an enlightened and developed man, such, in short, as the future man will be, cannot consciously desire anything disadvantageous to himself, that that can be proved mathematically. I thoroughly agree, it can—by mathematics. But I repeat for the hundredth time, there is one case, one only, when man may consciously, purposely, desire what is injurious to himself, what is stupid, very stupid—simply in order to have the right to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible. Of course, this very stupid thing, this caprice of ours, may be in reality, gentlemen, more advantageous for us than anything else on earth, especially in certain cases. And in particular it may be more advantageous than any advantage even when it does us obvious harm, and contradicts the soundest conclusions of our reason concerning our advantage—for in any circumstances it preserves for us what is most precious and most important—that is, our personality, our individuality. Some, you see, maintain that this really is the most precious thing for mankind; choice can, of course, if it chooses, be in agreement with reason; and especially if this be not abused but kept within bounds. It is profitable and sometimes even praiseworthy. But very often, and even most often, choice is utterly and stubbornly opposed to reason ... and ... and ... do you know that that, too, is profitable, sometimes even praiseworthy? Gentlemen, let us suppose that man is not stupid. (Indeed one cannot refuse to suppose that, if only from the one consideration, that, if man is stupid, then who is wise?) But if he is not stupid, he is monstrously ungrateful! Phenomenally ungrateful. In fact, I believe that the best definition of man is the ungrateful biped. But that is not all, that is not his worst defect; his worst defect is his perpetual moral obliquity, perpetual—from the days of the Flood to the Schleswig-Holstein period. Moral obliquity and consequently lack of good sense; for it has long been accepted that lack of good sense is due to no other cause than moral obliquity. Put it to the test and cast your eyes upon the history of mankind. What will you see? Is it a grand spectacle? Grand, if you like. Take the Colossus of Rhodes, for instance, that's worth something. With good reason Mr. Anaeusky testifies of it that some say that it is the work of man's hands, while others maintain that it has

been created by nature herself. Is it many-coloured? May be it is many-coloured, too: if one takes the dress uniforms, military and civilian, of all peoples in all ages—that alone is worth something, and if you take the undress uniforms you will never get to the end of it; no historian would be equal to the job. Is it monotonous? May be it's monotonous too: it's fighting and fighting; they are fighting now, they fought first and they fought last—you will admit, that it is almost too monotonous. In short, one may say anything about the history of the world—anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat. And, indeed, this is the odd thing that is continually happening: there are continually turning up in life moral and rational persons, sages and lovers of humanity who make it their object to live all their lives as morally and rationally as possible, to be, so to speak, a light to their neighbours simply in order to show them that it is possible to live morally and rationally in this world. And yet we all know that those very people sooner or later have been false to themselves, playing some queer trick, often a most unseemly one. Now I ask you: what can be expected of man since he is a being endowed with strange qualities? Shower upon him every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would deliberately desire the most fatal rubbish, the most uneconomical absurdity, simply to introduce into all this positive good sense his fatal fantastic element. It is just his fantastic dreams, his vulgar folly that he will desire to retain, simply in order to prove to himself—as though that were so necessary—that men still are men and not the keys of a piano, which the laws of nature threaten to control so completely that soon one will be able to desire nothing but by the calendar. And that is not all: even if man really were nothing but a piano-key, even if this were proved to him by natural science and mathematics, even then he would not become reasonable, but would purposely do something perverse out of simple ingratitude, simply to gain his point. And if he does not find means he will contrive destruction and chaos, will contrive sufferings of all sorts, only to gain his point! He will launch a curse upon the world, and as only man can curse (it is his privilege, the primary distinction between him and other animals), may be by his curse alone he will attain his object—that is, convince himself that he is a man and not a piano-key! If you say that all this, too, can be calculated and tabulated—chaos and darkness and curses, so that the mere possibility of calculating it all beforehand would stop it all, and reason would reassert itself, then man would purposely go mad in order to be rid of reason and gain his point! I believe in it, I answer for it, for the whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not a piano-key! It may be at the cost of his skin, it may be by cannibalism! And this being so, can one help being tempted to rejoice that it has not yet come off, and that desire still depends on something we don't know?

You will scream at me (that is, if you condescend to do so) that no one is touching my free will, that all they are concerned with is that my will should of itself, of its own free will, coincide with my own normal interests, with the laws of nature and arithmetic.

Good heavens, gentlemen, what sort of free will is left when we come to tabulation and arithmetic, when it will all be a case of twice two make four? Twice two makes four without my will. As if free will meant that!

IX

Gentlemen, I am joking, and I know myself that my jokes are not brilliant, but you know one can take everything as a joke. I am, perhaps, jesting against the grain. Gentlemen, I am tormented by questions; answer them for me. You, for instance, want to cure men of their old habits and reform their will in accordance with science and good sense. But how do you know, not only that it is possible, but also that it is DESIRABLE to reform man in that way? And what leads you to the conclusion that man's inclinations NEED reforming? In short, how do you know that such a reformation will be a benefit to man? And to go to the root of the matter, why are you so positively convinced that not to act against his real normal interests guaranteed by the conclusions of reason and arithmetic is certainly always advantageous for man and must always be a law for mankind? So far, you know, this is only your supposition. It may be the law of logic, but not the law of humanity. You think, gentlemen, perhaps that I am mad? Allow me to defend myself. I agree that man is pre-eminently a creative animal, predestined to strive consciously for an object and to engage in engineering—that is, incessantly and eternally to make new roads, WHEREVER THEY MAY LEAD. But the reason why he wants sometimes to go off at a tangent may just be that he is PREDESTINED to make the road, and perhaps, too, that however stupid the “direct” practical man may be, the thought sometimes will occur to him that the road almost always does lead SOMEWHERE, and that the destination it leads to is less important than the process of making it, and that the chief thing is to save the well-conducted child from despising engineering, and so giving way to the fatal idleness, which, as we all know, is the mother of all the vices. Man likes to make roads and to create, that is a fact beyond dispute. But why has he such a passionate love for destruction and chaos also? Tell me that! But on that point I want to say a couple of words myself. May it not be that he loves chaos and destruction (there can be no disputing that he does sometimes love it) because he is instinctively afraid of attaining his object and completing the edifice he is constructing? Who knows, perhaps he only loves that edifice from a distance, and is by no means in love with it at close quarters; perhaps he only loves building it and does not want to live in it, but will leave it, when completed, for the use of LES ANIMAUX DOMESTIQUES—such as the ants, the sheep, and so

on. Now the ants have quite a different taste. They have a marvellous edifice of that pattern which endures for ever—the ant-heap.

With the ant-heap the respectable race of ants began and with the ant-heap they will probably end, which does the greatest credit to their perseverance and good sense. But man is a frivolous and incongruous creature, and perhaps, like a chess player, loves the process of the game, not the end of it. And who knows (there is no saying with certainty), perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in this incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself, and not in the thing to be attained, which must always be expressed as a formula, as positive as twice two makes four, and such positiveness is not life, gentlemen, but is the beginning of death. Anyway, man has always been afraid of this mathematical certainty, and I am afraid of it now. Granted that man does nothing but seek that mathematical certainty, he traverses oceans, sacrifices his life in the quest, but to succeed, really to find it, dreads, I assure you. He feels that when he has found it there will be nothing for him to look for. When workmen have finished their work they do at least receive their pay, they go to the tavern, then they are taken to the police-station—and there is occupation for a week. But where can man go? Anyway, one can observe a certain awkwardness about him when he has attained such objects. He loves the process of attaining, but does not quite like to have attained, and that, of course, is very absurd. In fact, man is a comical creature; there seems to be a kind of jest in it all. But yet mathematical certainty is after all, something insufferable. Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too.

And why are you so firmly, so triumphantly, convinced that only the normal and the positive—in other words, only what is conducive to welfare—is for the advantage of man? Is not reason in error as regards advantage? Does not man, perhaps, love something besides well-being? Perhaps he is just as fond of suffering? Perhaps suffering is just as great a benefit to him as well-being? Man is sometimes extraordinarily, passionately, in love with suffering, and that is a fact. There is no need to appeal to universal history to prove that; only ask yourself, if you are a man and have lived at all. As far as my personal opinion is concerned, to care only for well-being seems to me positively ill-bred. Whether it's good or bad, it is sometimes very pleasant, too, to smash things. I hold no brief for suffering nor for well-being either. I am standing for ... my caprice, and for its being guaranteed to me when necessary. Suffering would be out of place in vaudevilles, for instance; I know that. In the "Palace of Crystal" it is unthinkable; suffering means doubt, negation, and what would be the good of a "palace of crystal" if there could be any doubt about it? And yet I think man will never renounce real suffering, that is, destruction and chaos. Why, suffering is the sole origin of consciousness. Though I did lay it down at the beginning that consciousness is the greatest misfortune for man, yet I know man prizes it and would not give it

up for any satisfaction. Consciousness, for instance, is infinitely superior to twice two makes four. Once you have mathematical certainty there is nothing left to do or to understand. There will be nothing left but to bottle up your five senses and plunge into contemplation. While if you stick to consciousness, even though the same result is attained, you can at least flog yourself at times, and that will, at any rate, liven you up. Reactionary as it is, corporal punishment is better than nothing.

X

You believe in a palace of crystal that can never be destroyed—a palace at which one will not be able to put out one's tongue or make a long nose on the sly. And perhaps that is just why I am afraid of this edifice, that it is of crystal and can never be destroyed and that one cannot put one's tongue out at it even on the sly.

You see, if it were not a palace, but a hen-house, I might creep into it to avoid getting wet, and yet I would not call the hen-house a palace out of gratitude to it for keeping me dry. You laugh and say that in such circumstances a hen-house is as good as a mansion. Yes, I answer, if one had to live simply to keep out of the rain.

But what is to be done if I have taken it into my head that that is not the only object in life, and that if one must live one had better live in a mansion? That is my choice, my desire. You will only eradicate it when you have changed my preference. Well, do change it, allure me with something else, give me another ideal. But meanwhile I will not take a hen-house for a mansion. The palace of crystal may be an idle dream, it may be that it is inconsistent with the laws of nature and that I have invented it only through my own stupidity, through the old-fashioned irrational habits of my generation. But what does it matter to me that it is inconsistent? That makes no difference since it exists in my desires, or rather exists as long as my desires exist. Perhaps you are laughing again? Laugh away; I will put up with any mockery rather than pretend that I am satisfied when I am hungry. I know, anyway, that I will not be put off with a compromise, with a recurring zero, simply because it is consistent with the laws of nature and actually exists. I will not accept as the crown of my desires a block of buildings with tenements for the poor on a lease of a thousand years, and perhaps with a sign-board of a dentist hanging out. Destroy my desires, eradicate my ideals, show me something better, and I will follow you. You will say, perhaps, that it is not worth your trouble; but in that case I can give you the same answer. We are discussing things seriously; but if you won't deign to give me your attention, I will drop your acquaintance. I can retreat into my underground hole.

But while I am alive and have desires I would rather my hand were withered off than bring one brick to such a building! Don't remind me that I have just rejected the palace of crystal for the sole reason that one cannot put out one's tongue at it. I did not say because I am so fond of putting my tongue out. Perhaps the thing I resented was, that of all your edifices there has not been one at which one could not put out

one's tongue. On the contrary, I would let my tongue be cut off out of gratitude if things could be so arranged that I should lose all desire to put it out. It is not my fault that things cannot be so arranged, and that one must be satisfied with model flats. Then why am I made with such desires? Can I have been constructed simply in order to come to the conclusion that all my construction is a cheat? Can this be my whole purpose? I do not believe it.

But do you know what: I am convinced that we underground folk ought to be kept on a curb. Though we may sit forty years underground without speaking, when we do come out into the light of day and break out we talk and talk and talk

XI

The long and the short of it is, gentlemen, that it is better to do nothing! Better conscious inertia! And so hurrah for underground! Though I have said that I envy the normal man to the last drop of my bile, yet I should not care to be in his place such as he is now (though I shall not cease envying him). No, no; anyway the underground life is more advantageous. There, at any rate, one can ... Oh, but even now I am lying! I am lying because I know myself that it is not underground that is better, but something different, quite different, for which I am thirsting, but which I cannot find! Damn underground!

I will tell you another thing that would be better, and that is, if I myself believed in anything of what I have just written. I swear to you, gentlemen, there is not one thing, not one word of what I have written that I really believe. That is, I believe it, perhaps, but at the same time I feel and suspect that I am lying like a cobbler.

"Then why have you written all this?" you will say to me. "I ought to put you underground for forty years without anything to do and then come to you in your cellar, to find out what stage you have reached! How can a man be left with nothing to do for forty years?"

"Isn't that shameful, isn't that humiliating?" you will say, perhaps, wagging your heads contemptuously. "You thirst for life and try to settle the problems of life by a logical tangle. And how persistent, how insolent are your sallies, and at the same time what a scare you are in! You talk nonsense and are pleased with it; you say impudent things and are in continual alarm and apologising for them. You declare that you are afraid of nothing and at the same time try to ingratiate yourself in our good opinion. You declare that you are gnashing your teeth and at the same time you try to be witty so as to amuse us. You know that your witticisms are not witty, but you are evidently well satisfied with their literary value. You may, perhaps, have really suffered, but you have no respect for your own suffering. You may have sincerity, but you have no modesty; out of the pettiest vanity you expose your sincerity to publicity and ignominy. You doubtlessly mean to say something, but hide your last word through fear, because you have not the resolution to utter it, and only have a cowardly impudence. You boast

of consciousness, but you are not sure of your ground, for though your mind works, yet your heart is darkened and corrupt, and you cannot have a full, genuine consciousness without a pure heart. And how intrusive you are, how you insist and grimace! Lies, lies, lies!"

Of course I have myself made up all the things you say. That, too, is from underground. I have been for forty years listening to you through a crack under the floor. I have invented them myself, there was nothing else I could invent. It is no wonder that I have learned it by heart and it has taken a literary form

But can you really be so credulous as to think that I will print all this and give it to you to read too? And another problem: why do I call you "gentlemen," why do I address you as though you really were my readers? Such confessions as I intend to make are never printed nor given to other people to read. Anyway, I am not strong-minded enough for that, and I don't see why I should be. But you see a fancy has occurred to me and I want to realise it at all costs. Let me explain.

Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone, but only to his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind. The more decent he is, the greater the number of such things in his mind. Anyway, I have only lately determined to remember some of my early adventures. Till now I have always avoided them, even with a certain uneasiness. Now, when I am not only recalling them, but have actually decided to write an account of them, I want to try the experiment whether one can, even with oneself, be perfectly open and not take fright at the whole truth. I will observe, in parenthesis, that Heine says that a true autobiography is almost an impossibility, and that man is bound to lie about himself. He considers that Rousseau certainly told lies about himself in his confessions, and even intentionally lied, out of vanity. I am convinced that Heine is right; I quite understand how sometimes one may, out of sheer vanity, attribute regular crimes to oneself, and indeed I can very well conceive that kind of vanity. But Heine judged of people who made their confessions to the public. I write only for myself, and I wish to declare once and for all that if I write as though I were addressing readers, that is simply because it is easier for me to write in that form. It is a form, an empty form—I shall never have readers. I have made this plain already ...

I don't wish to be hampered by any restrictions in the compilation of my notes. I shall not attempt any system or method. I will jot things down as I remember them.

But here, perhaps, someone will catch at the word and ask me: if you really don't reckon on readers, why do you make such compacts with yourself—and on paper too—that is, that you won't attempt any system or method, that you jot things down as you remember them, and so on, and so on? Why are you explaining? Why do you apologise?

Well, there it is, I answer.

There is a whole psychology in all this, though. Perhaps it is simply that I am a coward. And perhaps that I purposely imagine an audience before me in order that I may be more dignified while I write. There are perhaps thousands of reasons. Again, what is my object precisely in writing? If it is not for the benefit of the public why should I not simply recall these incidents in my own mind without putting them on paper?

Quite so; but yet it is more imposing on paper. There is something more impressive in it; I shall be better able to criticise myself and improve my style. Besides, I shall perhaps obtain actual relief from writing. Today, for instance, I am particularly oppressed by one memory of a distant past. It came back vividly to my mind a few days ago, and has remained haunting me like an annoying tune that one cannot get rid of. And yet I must get rid of it somehow. I have hundreds of such reminiscences; but at times some one stands out from the hundred and oppresses me. For some reason I believe that if I write it down I should get rid of it. Why not try?

Besides, I am bored, and I never have anything to do. Writing will be a sort of work. They say work makes man kind-hearted and honest. Well, here is a chance for me, anyway.

Snow is falling today, yellow and dingy. It fell yesterday, too, and a few days ago. I fancy it is the wet snow that has reminded me of that incident which I cannot shake off now. And so let it be a story A PROPOS of the falling snow.

Part 2

A Propos of the Wet Snow

When from dark error's subjugation My words of passionate exhortation Had wrenched thy fainting spirit free; And writhing prone in thine affliction Thou didst recall with malediction The vice that had encompassed thee: And when thy slumbering conscience, fretting By recollection's torturing flame, Thou didst reveal the hideous setting Of thy life's current ere I came: When suddenly I saw thee sicken, And weeping, hide thine anguished face, Revolted, maddened, horror-stricken, At memories of foul disgrace. NEKRASSOV (translated by Juliet Soskice).

I

AT THAT TIME I was only twenty-four. My life was even then gloomy, ill-regulated, and as solitary as that of a savage. I made friends with no one and positively avoided talking, and buried myself more and more in my hole. At work in the office I never looked at anyone, and was perfectly well aware that my companions looked upon me, not only as a queer fellow, but even looked upon me—I always fancied this—with a sort of loathing. I sometimes wondered why it was that nobody except me fancied that he was looked upon with aversion? One of the clerks had a most repulsive, pock-marked face, which looked positively villainous. I believe I should not have dared to look at anyone with such an unsightly countenance. Another had such a very dirty old uniform that there was an unpleasant odour in his proximity. Yet not one of these gentlemen showed the slightest self-consciousness—either about their clothes or their countenance or their character in any way. Neither of them ever imagined that they were looked at with repulsion; if they had imagined it they would not have minded—so long as their superiors did not look at them in that way. It is clear to me now that, owing to my unbounded vanity and to the high standard I set for myself, I often looked at myself with furious discontent, which verged on loathing, and so I inwardly attributed the same feeling to everyone. I hated my face, for instance: I thought it disgusting, and even suspected that there was something base in my expression, and so every day when I turned up at the office I tried to behave as independently as possible, and to assume a lofty expression, so that I might not be suspected of being abject. “My face may be ugly,” I thought, “but let it be lofty, expressive, and, above all, EXTREMELY intelligent.” But I was positively and painfully certain that it was impossible for my countenance ever to express those qualities. And what was worst of all, I thought it

actually stupid looking, and I would have been quite satisfied if I could have looked intelligent. In fact, I would even have put up with looking base if, at the same time, my face could have been thought strikingly intelligent.

Of course, I hated my fellow clerks one and all, and I despised them all, yet at the same time I was, as it were, afraid of them. In fact, it happened at times that I thought more highly of them than of myself. It somehow happened quite suddenly that I alternated between despising them and thinking them superior to myself. A cultivated and decent man cannot be vain without setting a fearfully high standard for himself, and without despising and almost hating himself at certain moments. But whether I despised them or thought them superior I dropped my eyes almost every time I met anyone. I even made experiments whether I could face so and so's looking at me, and I was always the first to drop my eyes. This worried me to distraction. I had a sickly dread, too, of being ridiculous, and so had a slavish passion for the conventional in everything external. I loved to fall into the common rut, and had a whole-hearted terror of any kind of eccentricity in myself. But how could I live up to it? I was morbidly sensitive as a man of our age should be. They were all stupid, and as like one another as so many sheep. Perhaps I was the only one in the office who fancied that I was a coward and a slave, and I fancied it just because I was more highly developed. But it was not only that I fancied it, it really was so. I was a coward and a slave. I say this without the slightest embarrassment. Every decent man of our age must be a coward and a slave. That is his normal condition. Of that I am firmly persuaded. He is made and constructed to that very end. And not only at the present time owing to some casual circumstances, but always, at all times, a decent man is bound to be a coward and a slave. It is the law of nature for all decent people all over the earth. If anyone of them happens to be valiant about something, he need not be comforted nor carried away by that; he would show the white feather just the same before something else. That is how it invariably and inevitably ends. Only donkeys and mules are valiant, and they only till they are pushed up to the wall. It is not worth while to pay attention to them for they really are of no consequence.

Another circumstance, too, worried me in those days: that there was no one like me and I was unlike anyone else. "I am alone and they are EVERYONE," I thought—and pondered.

From that it is evident that I was still a youngster.

The very opposite sometimes happened. It was loathsome sometimes to go to the office; things reached such a point that I often came home ill. But all at once, A PRO-POS of nothing, there would come a phase of scepticism and indifference (everything happened in phases to me), and I would laugh myself at my intolerance and fastidiousness, I would reproach myself with being ROMANTIC. At one time I was unwilling to speak to anyone, while at other times I would not only talk, but go to the length of contemplating making friends with them. All my fastidiousness would suddenly, for no rhyme or reason, vanish. Who knows, perhaps I never had really had it, and it had simply been affected, and got out of books. I have not decided that question even now.

Once I quite made friends with them, visited their homes, played preference, drank vodka, talked of promotions But here let me make a digression.

We Russians, speaking generally, have never had those foolish transcendental “romantics”—German, and still more French—on whom nothing produces any effect; if there were an earthquake, if all France perished at the barricades, they would still be the same, they would not even have the decency to affect a change, but would still go on singing their transcendental songs to the hour of their death, because they are fools. We, in Russia, have no fools; that is well known. That is what distinguishes us from foreign lands. Consequently these transcendental natures are not found amongst us in their pure form. The idea that they are is due to our “realistic” journalists and critics of that day, always on the look out for Kostanzhoglos and Uncle Pyotr Ivanitchs and foolishly accepting them as our ideal; they have slandered our romantics, taking them for the same transcendental sort as in Germany or France. On the contrary, the characteristics of our “romantics” are absolutely and directly opposed to the transcendental European type, and no European standard can be applied to them. (Allow me to make use of this word “romantic”—an old-fashioned and much respected word which has done good service and is familiar to all.) The characteristics of our romantic are to understand everything, TO SEE EVERYTHING AND TO SEE IT OFTEN INCOMPARABLY MORE CLEARLY THAN OUR MOST REALISTIC MINDS SEE IT; to refuse to accept anyone or anything, but at the same time not to despise anything; to give way, to yield, from policy; never to lose sight of a useful practical object (such as rent-free quarters at the government expense, pensions, decorations), to keep their eye on that object through all the enthusiasms and volumes of lyrical poems, and at the same time to preserve “the sublime and the beautiful” inviolate within them to the hour of their death, and to preserve themselves also, incidentally, like some precious jewel wrapped in cotton wool if only for the benefit of “the sublime and the beautiful.” Our “romantic” is a man of great breadth and the greatest rogue of all our rogues, I assure you I can assure you from experience, indeed. Of course, that is, if he is intelligent. But what am I saying! The romantic is always intelligent, and I only meant to observe that although we have had foolish romantics they don’t count, and they were only so because in the flower of their youth they degenerated into Germans, and to preserve their precious jewel more comfortably, settled somewhere out there—by preference in Weimar or the Black Forest.

I, for instance, genuinely despised my official work and did not openly abuse it simply because I was in it myself and got a salary for it. Anyway, take note, I did not openly abuse it. Our romantic would rather go out of his mind—a thing, however, which very rarely happens—than take to open abuse, unless he had some other career in view; and he is never kicked out. At most, they would take him to the lunatic asylum as “the King of Spain” if he should go very mad. But it is only the thin, fair people who go out of their minds in Russia. Innumerable “romantics” attain later in life to considerable rank in the service. Their many-sidedness is remarkable! And what a faculty they have for the most contradictory sensations! I was comforted by this thought even in those

days, and I am of the same opinion now. That is why there are so many “broad natures” among us who never lose their ideal even in the depths of degradation; and though they never stir a finger for their ideal, though they are arrant thieves and knaves, yet they tearfully cherish their first ideal and are extraordinarily honest at heart. Yes, it is only among us that the most incorrigible rogue can be absolutely and loftily honest at heart without in the least ceasing to be a rogue. I repeat, our romantics, frequently, become such accomplished rascals (I use the term “rascals” affectionately), suddenly display such a sense of reality and practical knowledge that their bewildered superiors and the public generally can only ejaculate in amazement.

Their many-sidedness is really amazing, and goodness knows what it may develop into later on, and what the future has in store for us. It is not a poor material! I do not say this from any foolish or boastful patriotism. But I feel sure that you are again imagining that I am joking. Or perhaps it’s just the contrary and you are convinced that I really think so. Anyway, gentlemen, I shall welcome both views as an honour and a special favour. And do forgive my digression.

I did not, of course, maintain friendly relations with my comrades and soon was at loggerheads with them, and in my youth and inexperience I even gave up bowing to them, as though I had cut off all relations. That, however, only happened to me once. As a rule, I was always alone.

In the first place I spent most of my time at home, reading. I tried to stifle all that was continually seething within me by means of external impressions. And the only external means I had was reading. Reading, of course, was a great help—exciting me, giving me pleasure and pain. But at times it bored me fearfully. One longed for movement in spite of everything, and I plunged all at once into dark, underground, loathsome vice of the pettiest kind. My wretched passions were acute, smarting, from my continual, sickly irritability I had hysterical impulses, with tears and convulsions. I had no resource except reading, that is, there was nothing in my surroundings which I could respect and which attracted me. I was overwhelmed with depression, too; I had an hysterical craving for incongruity and for contrast, and so I took to vice. I have not said all this to justify myself ... But, no! I am lying. I did want to justify myself. I make that little observation for my own benefit, gentlemen. I don’t want to lie. I vowed to myself I would not.

And so, furtively, timidly, in solitude, at night, I indulged in filthy vice, with a feeling of shame which never deserted me, even at the most loathsome moments, and which at such moments nearly made me curse. Already even then I had my underground world in my soul. I was fearfully afraid of being seen, of being met, of being recognised. I visited various obscure haunts.

One night as I was passing a tavern I saw through a lighted window some gentlemen fighting with billiard cues, and saw one of them thrown out of the window. At other times I should have felt very much disgusted, but I was in such a mood at the time, that I actually envied the gentleman thrown out of the window—and I envied him so

much that I even went into the tavern and into the billiard-room. "Perhaps," I thought, "I'll have a fight, too, and they'll throw me out of the window."

I was not drunk—but what is one to do—depression will drive a man to such a pitch of hysteria? But nothing happened. It seemed that I was not even equal to being thrown out of the window and I went away without having my fight.

An officer put me in my place from the first moment.

I was standing by the billiard-table and in my ignorance blocking up the way, and he wanted to pass; he took me by the shoulders and without a word—without a warning or explanation—moved me from where I was standing to another spot and passed by as though he had not noticed me. I could have forgiven blows, but I could not forgive his having moved me without noticing me.

Devil knows what I would have given for a real regular quarrel—a more decent, a more LITERARY one, so to speak. I had been treated like a fly. This officer was over six foot, while I was a spindly little fellow. But the quarrel was in my hands. I had only to protest and I certainly would have been thrown out of the window. But I changed my mind and preferred to beat a resentful retreat.

I went out of the tavern straight home, confused and troubled, and the next night I went out again with the same lewd intentions, still more furtively, abjectly and miserably than before, as it were, with tears in my eyes—but still I did go out again. Don't imagine, though, it was coward-ice made me slink away from the officer; I never have been a coward at heart, though I have always been a coward in action. Don't be in a hurry to laugh—I assure you I can explain it all.

Oh, if only that officer had been one of the sort who would consent to fight a duel! But no, he was one of those gentlemen (alas, long extinct!) who preferred fighting with cues or, like Gogol's Lieutenant Pirogov, appealing to the police. They did not fight duels and would have thought a duel with a civilian like me an utterly unseemly procedure in any case—and they looked upon the duel altogether as something impossible, something free-thinking and French. But they were quite ready to bully, especially when they were over six foot.

I did not slink away through cowardice, but through an unbounded vanity. I was afraid not of his six foot, not of getting a sound thrashing and being thrown out of the window; I should have had physical courage enough, I assure you; but I had not the moral courage. What I was afraid of was that everyone present, from the insolent marker down to the lowest little stinking, pimply clerk in a greasy collar, would jeer at me and fail to understand when I began to protest and to address them in literary language. For of the point of honour—not of honour, but of the point of honour (POINT D'HONNEUR)—one cannot speak among us except in literary language. You can't allude to the "point of honour" in ordinary language. I was fully convinced (the sense of reality, in spite of all my romanticism!) that they would all simply split their sides with laughter, and that the officer would not simply beat me, that is, without insulting me, but would certainly prod me in the back with his knee, kick me round the billiard-table, and only then perhaps have pity and drop me out of the window.

Of course, this trivial incident could not with me end in that. I often met that officer afterwards in the street and noticed him very carefully. I am not quite sure whether he recognised me, I imagine not; I judge from certain signs. But I—I stared at him with spite and hatred and so it went on ... for several years! My resentment grew even deeper with years. At first I began making stealthy inquiries about this officer. It was difficult for me to do so, for I knew no one. But one day I heard someone shout his surname in the street as I was following him at a distance, as though I were tied to him—and so I learnt his surname. Another time I followed him to his flat, and for ten kopecks learned from the porter where he lived, on which storey, whether he lived alone or with others, and so on—in fact, everything one could learn from a porter. One morning, though I had never tried my hand with the pen, it suddenly occurred to me to write a satire on this officer in the form of a novel which would unmask his villainy. I wrote the novel with relish. I did unmask his villainy, I even exaggerated it; at first I so altered his surname that it could easily be recognised, but on second thoughts I changed it, and sent the story to the OTETCHESTVENNIYA ZAPISKI. But at that time such attacks were not the fashion and my story was not printed. That was a great vexation to me.

Sometimes I was positively choked with resentment. At last I determined to challenge my enemy to a duel. I composed a splendid, charming letter to him, imploring him to apologise to me, and hinting rather plainly at a duel in case of refusal. The letter was so composed that if the officer had had the least understanding of the sublime and the beautiful he would certainly have flung himself on my neck and have offered me his friendship. And how fine that would have been! How we should have got on together! “He could have shielded me with his higher rank, while I could have improved his mind with my culture, and, well ... my ideas, and all sorts of things might have happened.” Only fancy, this was two years after his insult to me, and my challenge would have been a ridiculous anachronism, in spite of all the ingenuity of my letter in disguising and explaining away the anachronism. But, thank God (to this day I thank the Almighty with tears in my eyes) I did not send the letter to him. Cold shivers run down my back when I think of what might have happened if I had sent it.

And all at once I revenged myself in the simplest way, by a stroke of genius! A brilliant thought suddenly dawned upon me. Sometimes on holidays I used to stroll along the sunny side of the Nevsky about four o’clock in the afternoon. Though it was hardly a stroll so much as a series of innumerable miseries, humiliations and resentments; but no doubt that was just what I wanted. I used to wriggle along in a most unseemly fashion, like an eel, continually moving aside to make way for generals, for officers of the guards and the hussars, or for ladies. At such minutes there used to be a convulsive twinge at my heart, and I used to feel hot all down my back at the mere thought of the wretchedness of my attire, of the wretchedness and abjectness of my little scurrying figure. This was a regular martyrdom, a continual, intolerable humiliation at the thought, which passed into an incessant and direct sensation, that I was a mere fly in the eyes of all this world, a nasty, disgusting fly—more intelligent,

more highly developed, more refined in feeling than any of them, of course—but a fly that was continually making way for everyone, insulted and injured by everyone. Why I inflicted this torture upon myself, why I went to the Nevsky, I don't know. I felt simply drawn there at every possible opportunity.

Already then I began to experience a rush of the enjoyment of which I spoke in the first chapter. After my affair with the officer I felt even more drawn there than before: it was on the Nevsky that I met him most frequently, there I could admire him. He, too, went there chiefly on holidays, He, too, turned out of his path for generals and persons of high rank, and he too, wriggled between them like an eel; but people, like me, or even better dressed than me, he simply walked over; he made straight for them as though there was nothing but empty space before him, and never, under any circumstances, turned aside. I gloated over my resentment watching him and ... always resentfully made way for him. It exasperated me that even in the street I could not be on an even footing with him.

“Why must you invariably be the first to move aside?” I kept asking myself in hysterical rage, waking up sometimes at three o'clock in the morning. “Why is it you and not he? There's no regulation about it; there's no written law. Let the making way be equal as it usually is when refined people meet; he moves half-way and you move half-way; you pass with mutual respect.”

But that never happened, and I always moved aside, while he did not even notice my making way for him. And lo and behold a bright idea dawned upon me! “What,” I thought, “if I meet him and don't move on one side? What if I don't move aside on purpose, even if I knock up against him? How would that be?” This audacious idea took such a hold on me that it gave me no peace. I was dreaming of it continually, horribly, and I purposely went more frequently to the Nevsky in order to picture more vividly how I should do it when I did do it. I was delighted. This intention seemed to me more and more practical and possible.

“Of course I shall not really push him,” I thought, already more good-natured in my joy. “I will simply not turn aside, will run up against him, not very violently, but just shouldering each other—just as much as decency permits. I will push against him just as much as he pushes against me.” At last I made up my mind completely. But my preparations took a great deal of time. To begin with, when I carried out my plan I should need to be looking rather more decent, and so I had to think of my get-up. “In case of emergency, if, for instance, there were any sort of public scandal (and the public there is of the most RECHERCHE: the Countess walks there; Prince D. walks there; all the literary world is there), I must be well dressed; that inspires respect and of itself puts us on an equal footing in the eyes of the society.”

With this object I asked for some of my salary in advance, and bought at Tchurkin's a pair of black gloves and a decent hat. Black gloves seemed to me both more dignified and BON TON than the lemon-coloured ones which I had contemplated at first. “The colour is too gaudy, it looks as though one were trying to be conspicuous,” and I did not take the lemon-coloured ones. I had got ready long beforehand a good shirt,

with white bone studs; my overcoat was the only thing that held me back. The coat in itself was a very good one, it kept me warm; but it was wadded and it had a raccoon collar which was the height of vulgarity. I had to change the collar at any sacrifice, and to have a beaver one like an officer's. For this purpose I began visiting the Gostiny Dvor and after several attempts I pitched upon a piece of cheap German beaver. Though these German beavers soon grow shabby and look wretched, yet at first they look exceedingly well, and I only needed it for the occasion. I asked the price; even so, it was too expensive. After thinking it over thoroughly I decided to sell my raccoon collar. The rest of the money—a considerable sum for me, I decided to borrow from Anton Antonitch Syetotchkin, my immediate superior, an unassuming person, though grave and judicious. He never lent money to anyone, but I had, on entering the service, been specially recommended to him by an important personage who had got me my berth. I was horribly worried. To borrow from Anton Antonitch seemed to me monstrous and shameful. I did not sleep for two or three nights. Indeed, I did not sleep well at that time, I was in a fever; I had a vague sinking at my heart or else a sudden throbbing, throbbing, throbbing! Anton Antonitch was surprised at first, then he frowned, then he reflected, and did after all lend me the money, receiving from me a written authorisation to take from my salary a fortnight later the sum that he had lent me.

In this way everything was at last ready. The handsome beaver replaced the mean-looking raccoon, and I began by degrees to get to work. It would never have done to act offhand, at random; the plan had to be carried out skilfully, by degrees. But I must confess that after many efforts I began to despair: we simply could not run into each other. I made every preparation, I was quite determined—it seemed as though we should run into one another directly—and before I knew what I was doing I had stepped aside for him again and he had passed without noticing me. I even prayed as I approached him that God would grant me determination. One time I had made up my mind thoroughly, but it ended in my stumbling and falling at his feet because at the very last instant when I was six inches from him my courage failed me. He very calmly stepped over me, while I flew on one side like a ball. That night I was ill again, feverish and delirious.

And suddenly it ended most happily. The night before I had made up my mind not to carry out my fatal plan and to abandon it all, and with that object I went to the Nevsky for the last time, just to see how I would abandon it all. Suddenly, three paces from my enemy, I unexpectedly made up my mind—I closed my eyes, and we ran full tilt, shoulder to shoulder, against one another! I did not budge an inch and passed him on a perfectly equal footing! He did not even look round and pretended not to notice it; but he was only pretending, I am convinced of that. I am convinced of that to this day! Of course, I got the worst of it—he was stronger, but that was not the point. The point was that I had attained my object, I had kept up my dignity, I had not yielded a step, and had put myself publicly on an equal social footing with him. I returned home feeling that I was fully avenged for everything. I was delighted. I was triumphant and

sang Italian arias. Of course, I will not describe to you what happened to me three days later; if you have read my first chapter you can guess for yourself. The officer was afterwards transferred; I have not seen him now for fourteen years. What is the dear fellow doing now? Whom is he walking over?

II

But the period of my dissipation would end and I always felt very sick afterwards. It was followed by remorse—I tried to drive it away; I felt too sick. By degrees, however, I grew used to that too. I grew used to everything, or rather I voluntarily resigned myself to enduring it. But I had a means of escape that reconciled everything—that was to find refuge in “the sublime and the beautiful,” in dreams, of course. I was a terrible dreamer, I would dream for three months on end, tucked away in my corner, and you may believe me that at those moments I had no resemblance to the gentleman who, in the perturbation of his chicken heart, put a collar of German beaver on his great-coat. I suddenly became a hero. I would not have admitted my six-foot lieutenant even if he had called on me. I could not even picture him before me then. What were my dreams and how I could satisfy myself with them—it is hard to say now, but at the time I was satisfied with them. Though, indeed, even now, I am to some extent satisfied with them. Dreams were particularly sweet and vivid after a spell of dissipation; they came with remorse and with tears, with curses and transports. There were moments of such positive intoxication, of such happiness, that there was not the faintest trace of irony within me, on my honour. I had faith, hope, love. I believed blindly at such times that by some miracle, by some external circumstance, all this would suddenly open out, expand; that suddenly a vista of suitable activity—beneficent, good, and, above all, READY MADE (what sort of activity I had no idea, but the great thing was that it should be all ready for me)—would rise up before me—and I should come out into the light of day, almost riding a white horse and crowned with laurel. Anything but the foremost place I could not conceive for myself, and for that very reason I quite contentedly occupied the lowest in reality. Either to be a hero or to grovel in the mud—there was nothing between. That was my ruin, for when I was in the mud I comforted myself with the thought that at other times I was a hero, and the hero was a cloak for the mud: for an ordinary man it was shameful to defile himself, but a hero was too lofty to be utterly defiled, and so he might defile himself. It is worth noting that these attacks of the “sublime and the beautiful” visited me even during the period of dissipation and just at the times when I was touching the bottom. They came in separate spurts, as though reminding me of themselves, but did not banish the dissipation by their appearance. On the contrary, they seemed to add a zest to it by contrast, and were only sufficiently present to serve as an appetising sauce. That sauce was made up of contradictions and sufferings, of agonising inward analysis, and all these pangs and pin-pricks gave a certain piquancy, even a significance to my dissipation—

in fact, completely answered the purpose of an appetising sauce. There was a certain depth of meaning in it. And I could hardly have resigned myself to the simple, vulgar, direct debauchery of a clerk and have endured all the filthiness of it. What could have allured me about it then and have drawn me at night into the street? No, I had a lofty way of getting out of it all.

And what loving-kindness, oh Lord, what loving-kindness I felt at times in those dreams of mine! in those “flights into the sublime and the beautiful”; though it was fantastic love, though it was never applied to anything human in reality, yet there was so much of this love that one did not feel afterwards even the impulse to apply it in reality; that would have been superfluous. Everything, however, passed satisfactorily by a lazy and fascinating transition into the sphere of art, that is, into the beautiful forms of life, lying ready, largely stolen from the poets and novelists and adapted to all sorts of needs and uses. I, for instance, was triumphant over everyone; everyone, of course, was in dust and ashes, and was forced spontaneously to recognise my superiority, and I forgave them all. I was a poet and a grand gentleman, I fell in love; I came in for countless millions and immediately devoted them to humanity, and at the same time I confessed before all the people my shameful deeds, which, of course, were not merely shameful, but had in them much that was “sublime and beautiful” something in the Manfred style. Everyone would kiss me and weep (what idiots they would be if they did not), while I should go barefoot and hungry preaching new ideas and fighting a victorious Austerlitz against the obscurantists. Then the band would play a march, an amnesty would be declared, the Pope would agree to retire from Rome to Brazil; then there would be a ball for the whole of Italy at the Villa Borghese on the shores of Lake Como, Lake Como being for that purpose transferred to the neighbourhood of Rome; then would come a scene in the bushes, and so on, and so on—as though you did not know all about it? You will say that it is vulgar and contemptible to drag all this into public after all the tears and transports which I have myself confessed. But why is it contemptible? Can you imagine that I am ashamed of it all, and that it was stupider than anything in your life, gentlemen? And I can assure you that some of these fancies were by no means badly composed It did not all happen on the shores of Lake Como. And yet you are right—it really is vulgar and contemptible. And most contemptible of all it is that now I am attempting to justify myself to you. And even more contemptible than that is my making this remark now. But that’s enough, or there will be no end to it; each step will be more contemptible than the last

I could never stand more than three months of dreaming at a time without feeling an irresistible desire to plunge into society. To plunge into society meant to visit my superior at the office, Anton Antonitch Syetotchkin. He was the only permanent acquaintance I have had in my life, and I wonder at the fact myself now. But I only went to see him when that phase came over me, and when my dreams had reached such a point of bliss that it became essential at once to embrace my fellows and all mankind; and for that purpose I needed, at least, one human being, actually existing. I had to

call on Anton Antonitch, however, on Tuesday—his at-home day; so I had always to time my passionate desire to embrace humanity so that it might fall on a Tuesday.

This Anton Antonitch lived on the fourth storey in a house in Five Corners, in four low-pitched rooms, one smaller than the other, of a particularly frugal and sallow appearance. He had two daughters and their aunt, who used to pour out the tea. Of the daughters one was thirteen and another fourteen, they both had snub noses, and I was awfully shy of them because they were always whispering and giggling together. The master of the house usually sat in his study on a leather couch in front of the table with some grey-headed gentleman, usually a colleague from our office or some other department. I never saw more than two or three visitors there, always the same. They talked about the excise duty; about business in the senate, about salaries, about promotions, about His Excellency, and the best means of pleasing him, and so on. I had the patience to sit like a fool beside these people for four hours at a stretch, listening to them without knowing what to say to them or venturing to say a word. I became stupefied, several times I felt myself perspiring, I was overcome by a sort of paralysis; but this was pleasant and good for me. On returning home I deferred for a time my desire to embrace all mankind.

I had however one other acquaintance of a sort, Simonov, who was an old schoolfellow. I had a number of schoolfellows, indeed, in Petersburg, but I did not associate with them and had even given up nodding to them in the street. I believe I had transferred into the department I was in simply to avoid their company and to cut off all connection with my hateful childhood. Curses on that school and all those terrible years of penal servitude! In short, I parted from my schoolfellows as soon as I got out into the world. There were two or three left to whom I nodded in the street. One of them was Simonov, who had in no way been distinguished at school, was of a quiet and equable disposition; but I discovered in him a certain independence of character and even honesty I don't even suppose that he was particularly stupid. I had at one time spent some rather soulful moments with him, but these had not lasted long and had somehow been suddenly clouded over. He was evidently uncomfortable at these reminiscences, and was, I fancy, always afraid that I might take up the same tone again. I suspected that he had an aversion for me, but still I went on going to see him, not being quite certain of it.

And so on one occasion, unable to endure my solitude and knowing that as it was Thursday Anton Antonitch's door would be closed, I thought of Simonov. Climbing up to his fourth storey I was thinking that the man disliked me and that it was a mistake to go and see him. But as it always happened that such reflections impelled me, as though purposely, to put myself into a false position, I went in. It was almost a year since I had last seen Simonov.

III

I found two of my old schoolfellows with him. They seemed to be discussing an important matter. All of them took scarcely any notice of my entrance, which was strange, for I had not met them for years. Evidently they looked upon me as something on the level of a common fly. I had not been treated like that even at school, though they all hated me. I knew, of course, that they must despise me now for my lack of success in the service, and for my having let myself sink so low, going about badly dressed and so on—which seemed to them a sign of my incapacity and insignificance. But I had not expected such contempt. Simonov was positively surprised at my turning up. Even in old days he had always seemed surprised at my coming. All this disconcerted me: I sat down, feeling rather miserable, and began listening to what they were saying.

They were engaged in warm and earnest conversation about a farewell dinner which they wanted to arrange for the next day to a comrade of theirs called Zverkov, an officer in the army, who was going away to a distant province. This Zverkov had been all the time at school with me too. I had begun to hate him particularly in the upper forms. In the lower forms he had simply been a pretty, playful boy whom everybody liked. I had hated him, however, even in the lower forms, just because he was a pretty and playful boy. He was always bad at his lessons and got worse and worse as he went on; however, he left with a good certificate, as he had powerful interests. During his last year at school he came in for an estate of two hundred serfs, and as almost all of us were poor he took up a swaggering tone among us. He was vulgar in the extreme, but at the same time he was a good-natured fellow, even in his swaggering. In spite of superficial, fantastic and sham notions of honour and dignity, all but very few of us positively grovelled before Zverkov, and the more so the more he swaggered. And it was not from any interested motive that they grovelled, but simply because he had been favoured by the gifts of nature. Moreover, it was, as it were, an accepted idea among us that Zverkov was a specialist in regard to tact and the social graces. This last fact particularly infuriated me. I hated the abrupt self-confident tone of his voice, his admiration of his own witticisms, which were often frightfully stupid, though he was bold in his language; I hated his handsome, but stupid face (for which I would, however, have gladly exchanged my intelligent one), and the free-and-easy military manners in fashion in the “forties.” I hated the way in which he used to talk of his future conquests of women (he did not venture to begin his attack upon women until he had the epaulettes of an officer, and was looking forward to them with impatience), and boasted of the duels he would constantly be fighting. I remember how I, invariably so taciturn, suddenly fastened upon Zverkov, when one day talking at a leisure moment with his schoolfellows of his future relations with the fair sex, and growing as sportive as a puppy in the sun, he all at once declared that he would not leave a single village girl on his estate unnoticed, that that was his DROIT DE SEIGNEUR, and that if the peasants dared to protest he would have them all flogged and double the tax on them, the bearded rascals. Our servile rabble applauded, but I attacked him, not from

compassion for the girls and their fathers, but simply because they were applauding such an insect. I got the better of him on that occasion, but though Zverkov was stupid he was lively and impudent, and so laughed it off, and in such a way that my victory was not really complete; the laugh was on his side. He got the better of me on several occasions afterwards, but without malice, jestingly, casually. I remained angrily and contemptuously silent and would not answer him. When we left school he made advances to me; I did not rebuff them, for I was flattered, but we soon parted and quite naturally. Afterwards I heard of his barrack-room success as a lieutenant, and of the fast life he was leading. Then there came other rumours—of his successes in the service. By then he had taken to cutting me in the street, and I suspected that he was afraid of compromising himself by greeting a personage as insignificant as me. I saw him once in the theatre, in the third tier of boxes. By then he was wearing shoulder-straps. He was twisting and twirling about, ingratiating himself with the daughters of an ancient General. In three years he had gone off considerably, though he was still rather handsome and adroit. One could see that by the time he was thirty he would be corpulent. So it was to this Zverkov that my schoolfellows were going to give a dinner on his departure. They had kept up with him for those three years, though privately they did not consider themselves on an equal footing with him, I am convinced of that.

Of Simonov's two visitors, one was Ferfitchkin, a Russianised German—a little fellow with the face of a monkey, a blockhead who was always deriding everyone, a very bitter enemy of mine from our days in the lower forms—a vulgar, impudent, swaggering fellow, who affected a most sensitive feeling of personal honour, though, of course, he was a wretched little coward at heart. He was one of those worshippers of Zverkov who made up to the latter from interested motives, and often borrowed money from him. Simonov's other visitor, Trudolyubov, was a person in no way remarkable—a tall young fellow, in the army, with a cold face, fairly honest, though he worshipped success of every sort, and was only capable of thinking of promotion. He was some sort of distant relation of Zverkov's, and this, foolish as it seems, gave him a certain importance among us. He always thought me of no consequence whatever; his behaviour to me, though not quite courteous, was tolerable.

"Well, with seven roubles each," said Trudolyubov, "twenty-one roubles between the three of us, we ought to be able to get a good dinner. Zverkov, of course, won't pay."

"Of course not, since we are inviting him," Simonov decided.

"Can you imagine," Ferfitchkin interrupted hotly and conceitedly, like some insolent funkey boasting of his master the General's decorations, "can you imagine that Zverkov will let us pay alone? He will accept from delicacy, but he will order half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"Do we want half a dozen for the four of us?" observed Trudolyubov, taking notice only of the half dozen.

"So the three of us, with Zverkov for the fourth, twenty-one roubles, at the Hotel de Paris at five o'clock tomorrow," Simonov, who had been asked to make the arrangements, concluded finally.

“How twenty-one roubles?” I asked in some agitation, with a show of being offended; “if you count me it will not be twenty-one, but twenty-eight roubles.”

It seemed to me that to invite myself so suddenly and unexpectedly would be positively graceful, and that they would all be conquered at once and would look at me with respect.

“Do you want to join, too?” Simonov observed, with no appearance of pleasure, seeming to avoid looking at me. He knew me through and through.

It infuriated me that he knew me so thoroughly.

“Why not? I am an old schoolfellow of his, too, I believe, and I must own I feel hurt that you have left me out,” I said, boiling over again.

“And where were we to find you?” Ferfitchkin put in roughly.

“You never were on good terms with Zverkov,” Trudolyubov added, frowning.

But I had already clutched at the idea and would not give it up.

“It seems to me that no one has a right to form an opinion upon that,” I retorted in a shaking voice, as though something tremendous had happened. “Perhaps that is just my reason for wishing it now, that I have not always been on good terms with him.”

“Oh, there’s no making you out ... with these refinements,” Trudolyubov jeered.

“We’ll put your name down,” Simonov decided, addressing me. “Tomorrow at five-o’clock at the Hotel de Paris.”

“What about the money?” Ferfitchkin began in an undertone, indicating me to Simonov, but he broke off, for even Simonov was embarrassed.

“That will do,” said Trudolyubov, getting up. “If he wants to come so much, let him.”

“But it’s a private thing, between us friends,” Ferfitchkin said crossly, as he, too, picked up his hat. “It’s not an official gathering.”

“We do not want at all, perhaps ...”

They went away. Ferfitchkin did not greet me in any way as he went out, Trudolyubov barely nodded. Simonov, with whom I was left TETE-A-TETE, was in a state of vexation and perplexity, and looked at me queerly. He did not sit down and did not ask me to.

“H’m ... yes ... tomorrow, then. Will you pay your subscription now? I just ask so as to know,” he muttered in embarrassment.

I flushed crimson, as I did so I remembered that I had owed Simonov fifteen roubles for ages—which I had, indeed, never forgotten, though I had not paid it.

“You will understand, Simonov, that I could have no idea when I came here I am very much vexed that I have forgotten”

“All right, all right, that doesn’t matter. You can pay tomorrow after the dinner. I simply wanted to know Please don’t ...”

He broke off and began pacing the room still more vexed. As he walked he began to stamp with his heels.

“Am I keeping you?” I asked, after two minutes of silence.

“Oh!” he said, starting, “that is—to be truthful—yes. I have to go and see someone ... not far from here,” he added in an apologetic voice, somewhat abashed.

“My goodness, why didn’t you say so?” I cried, seizing my cap, with an astonishingly free-and-easy air, which was the last thing I should have expected of myself.

“It’s close by ... not two paces away,” Simonov repeated, accompanying me to the front door with a fussy air which did not suit him at all. “So five o’clock, punctually, tomorrow,” he called down the stairs after me. He was very glad to get rid of me. I was in a fury.

“What possessed me, what possessed me to force myself upon them?” I wondered, grinding my teeth as I strode along the street, “for a scoundrel, a pig like that Zverkov! Of course I had better not go; of course, I must just snap my fingers at them. I am not bound in any way. I’ll send Simonov a note by tomorrow’s post ...”

But what made me furious was that I knew for certain that I should go, that I should make a point of going; and the more tactless, the more unseemly my going would be, the more certainly I would go.

And there was a positive obstacle to my going: I had no money. All I had was nine roubles, I had to give seven of that to my servant, Apollon, for his monthly wages. That was all I paid him—he had to keep himself.

Not to pay him was impossible, considering his character. But I will talk about that fellow, about that plague of mine, another time.

However, I knew I should go and should not pay him his wages.

That night I had the most hideous dreams. No wonder; all the evening I had been oppressed by memories of my miserable days at school, and I could not shake them off. I was sent to the school by distant relations, upon whom I was dependent and of whom I have heard nothing since— they sent me there a forlorn, silent boy, already crushed by their reproaches, already troubled by doubt, and looking with savage distrust at everyone. My schoolfellows met me with spiteful and merciless jibes because I was not like any of them. But I could not endure their taunts; I could not give in to them with the ignoble readiness with which they gave in to one another. I hated them from the first, and shut myself away from everyone in timid, wounded and disproportionate pride. Their coarseness revolted me. They laughed cynically at my face, at my clumsy figure; and yet what stupid faces they had themselves. In our school the boys’ faces seemed in a special way to degenerate and grow stupider. How many fine-looking boys came to us! In a few years they became repulsive. Even at sixteen I wondered at them morosely; even then I was struck by the pettiness of their thoughts, the stupidity of their pursuits, their games, their conversations. They had no understanding of such essential things, they took no interest in such striking, impressive subjects, that I could not help considering them inferior to myself. It was not wounded vanity that drove me to it, and for God’s sake do not thrust upon me your hackneyed remarks, repeated to nausea, that “I was only a dreamer,” while they even then had an understanding of life. They understood nothing, they had no idea of real life, and I swear that that was what made me most indignant with them. On the contrary, the most obvious, striking

reality they accepted with fantastic stupidity and even at that time were accustomed to respect success. Everything that was just, but oppressed and looked down upon, they laughed at heartlessly and shamefully. They took rank for intelligence; even at sixteen they were already talking about a snug berth. Of course, a great deal of it was due to their stupidity, to the bad examples with which they had always been surrounded in their childhood and boyhood. They were monstrously depraved. Of course a great deal of that, too, was superficial and an assumption of cynicism; of course there were glimpses of youth and freshness even in their depravity; but even that freshness was not attractive, and showed itself in a certain rakishness. I hated them horribly, though perhaps I was worse than any of them. They repaid me in the same way, and did not conceal their aversion for me. But by then I did not desire their affection: on the contrary, I continually longed for their humiliation. To escape from their derision I purposely began to make all the progress I could with my studies and forced my way to the very top. This impressed them. Moreover, they all began by degrees to grasp that I had already read books none of them could read, and understood things (not forming part of our school curriculum) of which they had not even heard. They took a savage and sarcastic view of it, but were morally impressed, especially as the teachers began to notice me on those grounds. The mockery ceased, but the hostility remained, and cold and strained relations became permanent between us. In the end I could not put up with it: with years a craving for society, for friends, developed in me. I attempted to get on friendly terms with some of my schoolfellows; but somehow or other my intimacy with them was always strained and soon ended of itself. Once, indeed, I did have a friend. But I was already a tyrant at heart; I wanted to exercise unbounded sway over him; I tried to instil into him a contempt for his surroundings; I required of him a disdainful and complete break with those surroundings. I frightened him with my passionate affection; I reduced him to tears, to hysterics. He was a simple and devoted soul; but when he devoted himself to me entirely I began to hate him immediately and repulsed him—as though all I needed him for was to win a victory over him, to subjugate him and nothing else. But I could not subjugate all of them; my friend was not at all like them either, he was, in fact, a rare exception. The first thing I did on leaving school was to give up the special job for which I had been destined so as to break all ties, to curse my past and shake the dust from off my feet And goodness knows why, after all that, I should go trudging off to Simonov's!

Early next morning I roused myself and jumped out of bed with excitement, as though it were all about to happen at once. But I believed that some radical change in my life was coming, and would inevitably come that day. Owing to its rarity, perhaps, any external event, however trivial, always made me feel as though some radical change in my life were at hand. I went to the office, however, as usual, but sneaked away home two hours earlier to get ready. The great thing, I thought, is not to be the first to arrive, or they will think I am overjoyed at coming. But there were thousands of such great points to consider, and they all agitated and overwhelmed me. I polished my boots a second time with my own hands; nothing in the world would have induced Apollon to

clean them twice a day, as he considered that it was more than his duties required of him. I stole the brushes to clean them from the passage, being careful he should not detect it, for fear of his contempt. Then I minutely examined my clothes and thought that everything looked old, worn and threadbare. I had let myself get too slovenly. My uniform, perhaps, was tidy, but I could not go out to dinner in my uniform. The worst of it was that on the knee of my trousers was a big yellow stain. I had a foreboding that that stain would deprive me of nine-tenths of my personal dignity. I knew, too, that it was very poor to think so. "But this is no time for thinking: now I am in for the real thing," I thought, and my heart sank. I knew, too, perfectly well even then, that I was monstrously exaggerating the facts. But how could I help it? I could not control myself and was already shaking with fever. With despair I pictured to myself how coldly and disdainfully that "scoundrel" Zverkoy would meet me; with what dull-witted, invincible contempt the blockhead Trudolyubov would look at me; with what impudent rudeness the insect Ferfitchkin would snigger at me in order to curry favour with Zverkoy; how completely Simonov would take it all in, and how he would despise me for the abjectness of my vanity and lack of spirit—and, worst of all, how paltry, UNLITERARY, commonplace it would all be. Of course, the best thing would be not to go at all. But that was most impossible of all: if I feel impelled to do anything, I seem to be pitchforked into it. I should have jeered at myself ever afterwards: "So you funked it, you funked it, you funked the REAL THING!" On the contrary, I passionately longed to show all that "rabble" that I was by no means such a spiritless creature as I seemed to myself. What is more, even in the acutest paroxysm of this cowardly fever, I dreamed of getting the upper hand, of dominating them, carrying them away, making them like me—if only for my "elevation of thought and unmistakable wit." They would abandon Zverkoy, he would sit on one side, silent and ashamed, while I should crush him. Then, perhaps, we would be reconciled and drink to our everlasting friendship; but what was most bitter and humiliating for me was that I knew even then, knew fully and for certain, that I needed nothing of all this really, that I did not really want to crush, to subdue, to attract them, and that I did not care a straw really for the result, even if I did achieve it. Oh, how I prayed for the day to pass quickly! In unutterable anguish I went to the window, opened the movable pane and looked out into the troubled darkness of the thickly falling wet snow. At last my wretched little clock hissed out five. I seized my hat and, trying not to look at Apollon, who had been all day expecting his month's wages, but in his foolishness was unwilling to be the first to speak about it, I slipped between him and the door and, jumping into a high-class sledge, on which I spent my last half rouble, I drove up in grand style to the Hotel de Paris.

IV

I had been certain the day before that I should be the first to arrive. But it was not a question of being the first to arrive. Not only were they not there, but I had difficulty in finding our room. The table was not laid even. What did it mean? After a good many questions I elicited from the waiters that the dinner had been ordered not for five, but for six o'clock. This was confirmed at the buffet too. I felt really ashamed to go on questioning them. It was only twenty-five minutes past five. If they changed the dinner hour they ought at least to have let me know—that is what the post is for, and not to have put me in an absurd position in my own eyes and ... and even before the waiters. I sat down; the servant began laying the table; I felt even more humiliated when he was present. Towards six o'clock they brought in candles, though there were lamps burning in the room. It had not occurred to the waiter, however, to bring them in at once when I arrived. In the next room two gloomy, angry-looking persons were eating their dinners in silence at two different tables. There was a great deal of noise, even shouting, in a room further away; one could hear the laughter of a crowd of people, and nasty little shrieks in French: there were ladies at the dinner. It was sickening, in fact. I rarely passed more unpleasant moments, so much so that when they did arrive all together punctually at six I was overjoyed to see them, as though they were my deliverers, and even forgot that it was incumbent upon me to show resentment.

Zverkov walked in at the head of them; evidently he was the leading spirit. He and all of them were laughing; but, seeing me, Zverkov drew himself up a little, walked up to me deliberately with a slight, rather jaunty bend from the waist. He shook hands with me in a friendly, but not over-friendly, fashion, with a sort of circumspect courtesy like that of a General, as though in giving me his hand he were warding off something. I had imagined, on the contrary, that on coming in he would at once break into his habitual thin, shrill laugh and fall to making his insipid jokes and witticisms. I had been preparing for them ever since the previous day, but I had not expected such condescension, such high-official courtesy. So, then, he felt himself ineffably superior to me in every respect! If he only meant to insult me by that high-official tone, it would not matter, I thought—I could pay him back for it one way or another. But what if, in reality, without the least desire to be offensive, that sheephead had a notion in earnest that he was superior to me and could only look at me in a patronising way? The very supposition made me gasp.

"I was surprised to hear of your desire to join us," he began, lisping and drawling, which was something new. "You and I seem to have seen nothing of one another. You fight shy of us. You shouldn't. We are not such terrible people as you think. Well, anyway, I am glad to renew our acquaintance."

And he turned carelessly to put down his hat on the window.

"Have you been waiting long?" Trudolyubov inquired.

"I arrived at five o'clock as you told me yesterday," I answered aloud, with an irritability that threatened an explosion.

"Didn't you let him know that we had changed the hour?" said Trudolyubov to Simonov.

"No, I didn't. I forgot," the latter replied, with no sign of regret, and without even apologising to me he went off to order the HORS D'OEUVRE.

"So you've been here a whole hour? Oh, poor fellow!" Zverkov cried ironically, for to his notions this was bound to be extremely funny. That rascal Ferfitchkin followed with his nasty little snigger like a puppy yapping. My position struck him, too, as exquisitely ludicrous and embarrassing.

"It isn't funny at all!" I cried to Ferfitchkin, more and more irritated. "It wasn't my fault, but other people's. They neglected to let me know. It was ... it was ... it was simply absurd."

"It's not only absurd, but something else as well," muttered Trudolyubov, naively taking my part. "You are not hard enough upon it. It was simply rudeness—unintentional, of course. And how could Simonov ... h'm!"

"If a trick like that had been played on me," observed Ferfitchkin, "I should ..."

"But you should have ordered something for yourself," Zverkov interrupted, "or simply asked for dinner without waiting for us."

"You will allow that I might have done that without your permission," I rapped out. "If I waited, it was ..."

"Let us sit down, gentlemen," cried Simonov, coming in. "Everything is ready; I can answer for the champagne; it is capitally frozen You see, I did not know your address, where was I to look for you?" he suddenly turned to me, but again he seemed to avoid looking at me. Evidently he had something against me. It must have been what happened yesterday.

All sat down; I did the same. It was a round table. Trudolyubov was on my left, Simonov on my right, Zverkov was sitting opposite, Ferfitchkin next to him, between him and Trudolyubov.

"Tell me, are you ... in a government office?" Zverkov went on attending to me. Seeing that I was embarrassed he seriously thought that he ought to be friendly to me, and, so to speak, cheer me up.

"Does he want me to throw a bottle at his head?" I thought, in a fury. In my novel surroundings I was unnaturally ready to be irritated.

"In the N- office," I answered jerkily, with my eyes on my plate.

"And ha-ave you a go-od berth? I say, what ma-a-de you leave your original job?"

"What ma-a-de me was that I wanted to leave my original job," I drawled more than he, hardly able to control myself. Ferfitchkin went off into a guffaw. Simonov looked at me ironically. Trudolyubov left off eating and began looking at me with curiosity.

Zverkov winced, but he tried not to notice it.

"And the remuneration?"

"What remuneration?"

“I mean, your sa-a-lary?”

“Why are you cross-examining me?” However, I told him at once what my salary was. I turned horribly red.

“It is not very handsome,” Zverkov observed majestically.

“Yes, you can’t afford to dine at cafes on that,” Ferfitchkin added insolently.

“To my thinking it’s very poor,” Trudolyubov observed gravely.

“And how thin you have grown! How you have changed!” added Zverkov, with a shade of venom in his voice, scanning me and my attire with a sort of insolent compassion.

“Oh, spare his blushes,” cried Ferfitchkin, sniggering.

“My dear sir, allow me to tell you I am not blushing,” I broke out at last; “do you hear? I am dining here, at this cafe, at my own expense, not at other people’s—note that, Mr. Ferfitchkin.”

“Wha-at? Isn’t every one here dining at his own expense? You would seem to be ...” Ferfitchkin flew out at me, turning as red as a lobster, and looking me in the face with fury. “Tha-at,” I answered, feeling I had gone too far, “and I imagine it would be better to talk of something more intelligent.”

“You intend to show off your intelligence, I suppose?”

“Don’t disturb yourself, that would be quite out of place here.”

“Why are you clacking away like that, my good sir, eh? Have you gone out of your wits in your office?”

“Enough, gentlemen, enough!” Zverkov cried, authoritatively.

“How stupid it is!” muttered Simonov.

“It really is stupid. We have met here, a company of friends, for a farewell dinner to a comrade and you carry on an altercation,” said Trudolyubov, rudely addressing himself to me alone. “You invited yourself to join us, so don’t disturb the general harmony.”

“Enough, enough!” cried Zverkov. “Give over, gentlemen, it’s out of place. Better let me tell you how I nearly got married the day before yesterday ...”

And then followed a burlesque narrative of how this gentleman had almost been married two days before. There was not a word about the marriage, however, but the story was adorned with generals, colonels and kammer-junkers, while Zverkov almost took the lead among them. It was greeted with approving laughter; Ferfitchkin positively squealed.

No one paid any attention to me, and I sat crushed and humiliated.

“Good Heavens, these are not the people for me!” I thought. “And what a fool I have made of myself before them! I let Ferfitchkin go too far, though. The brutes imagine they are doing me an honour in letting me sit down with them. They don’t understand that it’s an honour to them and not to me! I’ve grown thinner! My clothes! Oh, damn my trousers! Zverkov noticed the yellow stain on the knee as soon as he came in ... But what’s the use! I must get up at once, this very minute, take my hat and simply go without a word ... with contempt! And tomorrow I can send a challenge. The scoundrels! As though I cared about the seven roubles. They may think Damn it! I don’t care about the seven roubles. I’ll go this minute!”

Of course I remained. I drank sherry and Lafitte by the glassful in my discomfiture. Being unaccustomed to it, I was quickly affected. My annoyance increased as the wine went to my head. I longed all at once to insult them all in a most flagrant manner and then go away. To seize the moment and show what I could do, so that they would say, "He's clever, though he is absurd," and ... and ... in fact, damn them all!

I scanned them all insolently with my drowsy eyes. But they seemed to have forgotten me altogether. They were noisy, vociferous, cheerful. Zverkov was talking all the time. I began listening. Zverkov was talking of some exuberant lady whom he had at last led on to declaring her love (of course, he was lying like a horse), and how he had been helped in this affair by an intimate friend of his, a Prince Kolya, an officer in the hussars, who had three thousand serfs.

"And yet this Kolya, who has three thousand serfs, has not put in an appearance here tonight to see you off," I cut in suddenly.

For one minute every one was silent. "You are drunk already." Trudolyubov deigned to notice me at last, glancing contemptuously in my direction. Zverkov, without a word, examined me as though I were an insect. I dropped my eyes. Simonov made haste to fill up the glasses with champagne.

Trudolyubov raised his glass, as did everyone else but me.

"Your health and good luck on the journey!" he cried to Zverkov. "To old times, to our future, hurrah!"

They all tossed off their glasses, and crowded round Zverkov to kiss him. I did not move; my full glass stood untouched before me.

"Why, aren't you going to drink it?" roared Trudolyubov, losing patience and turning menacingly to me.

"I want to make a speech separately, on my own account ... and then I'll drink it, Mr. Trudolyubov."

"Spiteful brute!" muttered Simonov. I drew myself up in my chair and feverishly seized my glass, prepared for something extraordinary, though I did not know myself precisely what I was going to say.

"SILENCE!" cried Ferfitchkin. "Now for a display of wit!"

Zverkov waited very gravely, knowing what was coming.

"Mr. Lieutenant Zverkov," I began, "let me tell you that I hate phrases, phrasemongers and men in corsets ... that's the first point, and there is a second one to follow it."

There was a general stir.

"The second point is: I hate ribaldry and ribald talkers. Especially ribald talkers! The third point: I love justice, truth and honesty." I went on almost mechanically, for I was beginning to shiver with horror myself and had no idea how I came to be talking like this. "I love thought, Monsieur Zverkov; I love true comradeship, on an equal footing and not ... H'm ... I love ... But, however, why not? I will drink your health, too, Mr. Zverkov. Seduce the Circassian girls, shoot the enemies of the fatherland and ... and ... to your health, Monsieur Zverkov!"

Zverkov got up from his seat, bowed to me and said:

"I am very much obliged to you." He was frightfully offended and turned pale.

"Damn the fellow!" roared Trudolyubov, bringing his fist down on the table.

"Well, he wants a punch in the face for that," squealed Ferfitchkin.

"We ought to turn him out," muttered Simonov.

"Not a word, gentlemen, not a movement!" cried Zverkov solemnly, checking the general indignation. "I thank you all, but I can show him for myself how much value I attach to his words."

"Mr. Ferfitchkin, you will give me satisfaction tomorrow for your words just now!" I said aloud, turning with dignity to Ferfitchkin.

"A duel, you mean? Certainly," he answered. But probably I was so ridiculous as I challenged him and it was so out of keeping with my appearance that everyone including Ferfitchkin was prostrate with laughter.

"Yes, let him alone, of course! He is quite drunk," Trudolyubov said with disgust.

"I shall never forgive myself for letting him join us," Simonov muttered again.

"Now is the time to throw a bottle at their heads," I thought to myself. I picked up the bottle ... and filled my glass ... "No, I'd better sit on to the end," I went on thinking; "you would be pleased, my friends, if I went away. Nothing will induce me to go. I'll go on sitting here and drinking to the end, on purpose, as a sign that I don't think you of the slightest consequence. I will go on sitting and drinking, because this is a public-house and I paid my entrance money. I'll sit here and drink, for I look upon you as so many pawns, as inanimate pawns. I'll sit here and drink ... and sing if I want to, yes, sing, for I have the right to ... to sing ... H'm!"

But I did not sing. I simply tried not to look at any of them. I assumed most unconcerned attitudes and waited with impatience for them to speak FIRST. But alas, they did not address me! And oh, how I wished, how I wished at that moment to be reconciled to them! It struck eight, at last nine. They moved from the table to the sofa. Zverkov stretched himself on a lounge and put one foot on a round table. Wine was brought there. He did, as a fact, order three bottles on his own account. I, of course, was not invited to join them. They all sat round him on the sofa. They listened to him, almost with reverence. It was evident that they were fond of him. "What for? What for?" I wondered. From time to time they were moved to drunken enthusiasm and kissed each other. They talked of the Caucasus, of the nature of true passion, of snug berths in the service, of the income of an hussar called Podharzhevsky, whom none of them knew personally, and rejoiced in the largeness of it, of the extraordinary grace and beauty of a Princess D., whom none of them had ever seen; then it came to Shakespeare's being immortal.

I smiled contemptuously and walked up and down the other side of the room, opposite the sofa, from the table to the stove and back again. I tried my very utmost to show them that I could do without them, and yet I purposely made a noise with my boots, thumping with my heels. But it was all in vain. They paid no attention. I had the patience to walk up and down in front of them from eight o'clock till eleven, in the

same place, from the table to the stove and back again. "I walk up and down to please myself and no one can prevent me." The waiter who came into the room stopped, from time to time, to look at me. I was somewhat giddy from turning round so often; at moments it seemed to me that I was in delirium. During those three hours I was three times soaked with sweat and dry again. At times, with an intense, acute pang I was stabbed to the heart by the thought that ten years, twenty years, forty years would pass, and that even in forty years I would remember with loathing and humiliation those filthiest, most ludicrous, and most awful moments of my life. No one could have gone out of his way to degrade himself more shamelessly, and I fully realised it, fully, and yet I went on pacing up and down from the table to the stove. "Oh, if you only knew what thoughts and feelings I am capable of, how cultured I am!" I thought at moments, mentally addressing the sofa on which my enemies were sitting. But my enemies behaved as though I were not in the room. Once—only once—they turned towards me, just when Zverkov was talking about Shakespeare, and I suddenly gave a contemptuous laugh. I laughed in such an affected and disgusting way that they all at once broke off their conversation, and silently and gravely for two minutes watched me walking up and down from the table to the stove, TAKING NO NOTICE OF THEM. But nothing came of it: they said nothing, and two minutes later they ceased to notice me again. It struck eleven.

"Friends," cried Zverkov getting up from the sofa, "let us all be off now, THERE!"

"Of course, of course," the others assented. I turned sharply to Zverkov. I was so harassed, so exhausted, that I would have cut my throat to put an end to it. I was in a fever; my hair, soaked with perspiration, stuck to my forehead and temples.

"Zverkov, I beg your pardon," I said abruptly and resolutely. "Ferfitchkin, yours too, and everyone's, everyone's: I have insulted you all!"

"Aha! A duel is not in your line, old man," Ferfitchkin hissed venomously.

It sent a sharp pang to my heart.

"No, it's not the duel I am afraid of, Ferfitchkin! I am ready to fight you tomorrow, after we are reconciled. I insist upon it, in fact, and you cannot refuse. I want to show you that I am not afraid of a duel. You shall fire first and I shall fire into the air."

"He is comforting himself," said Simonov.

"He's simply raving," said Trudolyubov.

"But let us pass. Why are you barring our way? What do you want?" Zverkov answered disdainfully. They were all flushed, their eyes were bright: they had been drinking heavily.

"I ask for your friendship, Zverkov; I insulted you, but ..."

"Insulted? YOU insulted ME? Understand, sir, that you never, under any circumstances, could possibly insult ME."

"And that's enough for you. Out of the way!" concluded Trudolyubov.

"Olympia is mine, friends, that's agreed!" cried Zverkov.

"We won't dispute your right, we won't dispute your right," the others answered, laughing.

I stood as though spat upon. The party went noisily out of the room. Trudolyubov struck up some stupid song. Simonov remained behind for a moment to tip the waiters. I suddenly went up to him.

“Simonov! give me six roubles!” I said, with desperate resolution.

He looked at me in extreme amazement, with vacant eyes. He, too, was drunk.

“You don’t mean you are coming with us?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve no money,” he snapped out, and with a scornful laugh he went out of the room.

I clutched at his overcoat. It was a nightmare.

“Simonov, I saw you had money. Why do you refuse me? Am I a scoundrel? Beware of refusing me: if you knew, if you knew why I am asking! My whole future, my whole plans depend upon it!”

Simonov pulled out the money and almost flung it at me.

“Take it, if you have no sense of shame!” he pronounced pitilessly, and ran to overtake them.

I was left for a moment alone. Disorder, the remains of dinner, a broken wine-glass on the floor, spilt wine, cigarette ends, fumes of drink and delirium in my brain, an agonising misery in my heart and finally the waiter, who had seen and heard all and was looking inquisitively into my face.

“I am going there!” I cried. “Either they shall all go down on their knees to beg for my friendship, or I will give Zverkov a slap in the face!”

V

“So this is it, this is it at last—contact with real life,” I muttered as I ran headlong downstairs. “This is very different from the Pope’s leaving Rome and going to Brazil, very different from the ball on Lake Como!”

“You are a scoundrel,” a thought flashed through my mind, “if you laugh at this now.”

“No matter!” I cried, answering myself. “Now everything is lost!”

There was no trace to be seen of them, but that made no difference—I knew where they had gone.

At the steps was standing a solitary night sledge-driver in a rough peasant coat, powdered over with the still falling, wet, and as it were warm, snow. It was hot and steamy. The little shaggy piebald horse was also covered with snow and coughing, I remember that very well. I made a rush for the roughly made sledge; but as soon as I raised my foot to get into it, the recollection of how Simonov had just given me six roubles seemed to double me up and I tumbled into the sledge like a sack.

“No, I must do a great deal to make up for all that,” I cried. “But I will make up for it or perish on the spot this very night. Start!”

We set off. There was a perfect whirl in my head.

“They won’t go down on their knees to beg for my friendship. That is a mirage, cheap mirage, revolting, romantic and fantastical—that’s another ball on Lake Como. And so I am bound to slap Zverkov’s face! It is my duty to. And so it is settled; I am flying to give him a slap in the face. Hurry up!”

The driver tugged at the reins.

“As soon as I go in I’ll give it him. Ought I before giving him the slap to say a few words by way of preface? No. I’ll simply go in and give it him. They will all be sitting in the drawing-room, and he with Olympia on the sofa. That damned Olympia! She laughed at my looks on one occasion and refused me. I’ll pull Olympia’s hair, pull Zverkov’s ears! No, better one ear, and pull him by it round the room. Maybe they will all begin beating me and will kick me out. That’s most likely, indeed. No matter! Anyway, I shall first slap him; the initiative will be mine; and by the laws of honour that is everything: he will be branded and cannot wipe off the slap by any blows, by nothing but a duel. He will be forced to fight. And let them beat me now. Let them, the ungrateful wretches! Trudolyubov will beat me hardest, he is so strong; Ferfitchkin will be sure to catch hold sideways and tug at my hair. But no matter, no matter! That’s what I am going for. The blockheads will be forced at last to see the tragedy of it all! When they drag me to the door I shall call out to them that in reality they are not worth my little finger. Get on, driver, get on!” I cried to the driver. He started and flicked his whip, I shouted so savagely.

“We shall fight at daybreak, that’s a settled thing. I’ve done with the office. Ferfitchkin made a joke about it just now. But where can I get pistols? Nonsense! I’ll get my salary in advance and buy them. And powder, and bullets? That’s the second’s business. And how can it all be done by daybreak? and where am I to get a second? I have no friends. Nonsense!” I cried, lashing myself up more and more. “It’s of no consequence! The first person I meet in the street is bound to be my second, just as he would be bound to pull a drowning man out of water. The most eccentric things may happen. Even if I were to ask the director himself to be my second tomorrow, he would be bound to consent, if only from a feeling of chivalry, and to keep the secret! Anton Antonitch”

The fact is, that at that very minute the disgusting absurdity of my plan and the other side of the question was clearer and more vivid to my imagination than it could be to anyone on earth. But

“Get on, driver, get on, you rascal, get on!”

“Ugh, sir!” said the son of toil.

Cold shivers suddenly ran down me. Wouldn’t it be better ... to go straight home? My God, my God! Why did I invite myself to this dinner yesterday? But no, it’s impossible. And my walking up and down for three hours from the table to the stove? No, they, they and no one else must pay for my walking up and down! They must wipe out this dishonour! Drive on!

And what if they give me into custody? They won’t dare! They’ll be afraid of the scandal. And what if Zverkov is so contemptuous that he refuses to fight a duel? He is

sure to; but in that case I'll show them ... I will turn up at the posting station when he's setting off tomorrow, I'll catch him by the leg, I'll pull off his coat when he gets into the carriage. I'll get my teeth into his hand, I'll bite him. "See what lengths you can drive a desperate man to!" He may hit me on the head and they may belabour me from behind. I will shout to the assembled multitude: "Look at this young puppy who is driving off to captivate the Circassian girls after letting me spit in his face!"

Of course, after that everything will be over! The office will have vanished off the face of the earth. I shall be arrested, I shall be tried, I shall be dismissed from the service, thrown in prison, sent to Siberia. Never mind! In fifteen years when they let me out of prison I will trudge off to him, a beggar, in rags. I shall find him in some provincial town. He will be married and happy. He will have a grown-up daughter ... I shall say to him: "Look, monster, at my hollow cheeks and my rags! I've lost everything—my career, my happiness, art, science, THE WOMAN I LOVED, and all through you. Here are pistols. I have come to discharge my pistol and ... and I ... forgive you. Then I shall fire into the air and he will hear nothing more of me ..."

I was actually on the point of tears, though I knew perfectly well at that moment that all this was out of Pushkin's SILVIO and Lermontov's MASQUERADE. And all at once I felt horribly ashamed, so ashamed that I stopped the horse, got out of the sledge, and stood still in the snow in the middle of the street. The driver gazed at me, sighing and astonished.

What was I to do? I could not go on there—it was evidently stupid, and I could not leave things as they were, because that would seem as though ... Heavens, how could I leave things! And after such insults! "No!" I cried, throwing myself into the sledge again. "It is ordained! It is fate! Drive on, drive on!"

And in my impatience I punched the sledge-driver on the back of the neck.

"What are you up to? What are you hitting me for?" the peasant shouted, but he whipped up his nag so that it began kicking.

The wet snow was falling in big flakes; I unbuttoned myself, regardless of it. I forgot everything else, for I had finally decided on the slap, and felt with horror that it was going to happen NOW, AT ONCE, and that NO FORCE COULD STOP IT. The deserted street lamps gleamed sullenly in the snowy darkness like torches at a funeral. The snow drifted under my great-coat, under my coat, under my cravat, and melted there. I did not wrap myself up—all was lost, anyway.

At last we arrived. I jumped out, almost unconscious, ran up the steps and began knocking and kicking at the door. I felt fearfully weak, particularly in my legs and knees. The door was opened quickly as though they knew I was coming. As a fact, Simonov had warned them that perhaps another gentleman would arrive, and this was a place in which one had to give notice and to observe certain precautions. It was one of those "millinery establishments" which were abolished by the police a good time ago. By day it really was a shop; but at night, if one had an introduction, one might visit it for other purposes.

I walked rapidly through the dark shop into the familiar drawing-room, where there was only one candle burning, and stood still in amazement: there was no one there. "Where are they?" I asked somebody. But by now, of course, they had separated. Before me was standing a person with a stupid smile, the "madam" herself, who had seen me before. A minute later a door opened and another person came in.

Taking no notice of anything I strode about the room, and, I believe, I talked to myself. I felt as though I had been saved from death and was conscious of this, joyfully, all over: I should have given that slap, I should certainly, certainly have given it! But now they were not here and ... everything had vanished and changed! I looked round. I could not realise my condition yet. I looked mechanically at the girl who had come in: and had a glimpse of a fresh, young, rather pale face, with straight, dark eyebrows, and with grave, as it were wondering, eyes that attracted me at once; I should have hated her if she had been smiling. I began looking at her more intently and, as it were, with effort. I had not fully collected my thoughts. There was something simple and good-natured in her face, but something strangely grave. I am sure that this stood in her way here, and no one of those fools had noticed her. She could not, however, have been called a beauty, though she was tall, strong-looking, and well built. She was very simply dressed. Something loathsome stirred within me. I went straight up to her.

I chanced to look into the glass. My harassed face struck me as revolting in the extreme, pale, angry, abject, with dishevelled hair. "No matter, I am glad of it," I thought; "I am glad that I shall seem repulsive to her; I like that."

VI

... Somewhere behind a screen a clock began wheezing, as though oppressed by something, as though someone were strangling it. After an unnaturally prolonged wheezing there followed a shrill, nasty, and as it were unexpectedly rapid, chime—as though someone were suddenly jumping forward. It struck two. I woke up, though I had indeed not been asleep but lying half-conscious.

It was almost completely dark in the narrow, cramped, low-pitched room, cumbered up with an enormous wardrobe and piles of cardboard boxes and all sorts of frippery and litter. The candle end that had been burning on the table was going out and gave a faint flicker from time to time. In a few minutes there would be complete darkness.

I was not long in coming to myself; everything came back to my mind at once, without an effort, as though it had been in ambush to pounce upon me again. And, indeed, even while I was unconscious a point seemed continually to remain in my memory unforgotten, and round it my dreams moved drearily. But strange to say, everything that had happened to me in that day seemed to me now, on waking, to be in the far, far away past, as though I had long, long ago lived all that down.

My head was full of fumes. Something seemed to be hovering over me, rousing me, exciting me, and making me restless. Misery and spite seemed surging up in me again

and seeking an outlet. Suddenly I saw beside me two wide open eyes scrutinising me curiously and persistently. The look in those eyes was coldly detached, sullen, as it were utterly remote; it weighed upon me.

A grim idea came into my brain and passed all over my body, as a horrible sensation, such as one feels when one goes into a damp and mouldy cellar. There was something unnatural in those two eyes, beginning to look at me only now. I recalled, too, that during those two hours I had not said a single word to this creature, and had, in fact, considered it utterly superfluous; in fact, the silence had for some reason gratified me. Now I suddenly realised vividly the hideous idea— revolting as a spider—of vice, which, without love, grossly and shamelessly begins with that in which true love finds its consummation. For a long time we gazed at each other like that, but she did not drop her eyes before mine and her expression did not change, so that at last I felt uncomfortable.

“What is your name?” I asked abruptly, to put an end to it.

“Liza,” she answered almost in a whisper, but somehow far from graciously, and she turned her eyes away.

I was silent.

“What weather! The snow ... it’s disgusting!” I said, almost to myself, putting my arm under my head despondently, and gazing at the ceiling.

She made no answer. This was horrible.

“Have you always lived in Petersburg?” I asked a minute later, almost angrily, turning my head slightly towards her.

“No.”

“Where do you come from?”

“From Riga,” she answered reluctantly.

“Are you a German?”

“No, Russian.”

“Have you been here long?”

“Where?”

“In this house?”

“A fortnight.”

She spoke more and more jerkily. The candle went out; I could no longer distinguish her face.

“Have you a father and mother?”

“Yes ... no ... I have.”

“Where are they?”

“There ... in Riga.”

“What are they?”

“Oh, nothing.”

“Nothing? Why, what class are they?”

“Tradespeople.”

“Have you always lived with them?”

“Yes.”

“How old are you?”

“Twenty.” “Why did you leave them?”

“Oh, for no reason.”

That answer meant “Let me alone; I feel sick, sad.”

We were silent.

God knows why I did not go away. I felt myself more and more sick and dreary. The images of the previous day began of themselves, apart from my will, flitting through my memory in confusion. I suddenly recalled something I had seen that morning when, full of anxious thoughts, I was hurrying to the office.

“I saw them carrying a coffin out yesterday and they nearly dropped it,” I suddenly said aloud, not that I desired to open the conversation, but as it were by accident.

“A coffin?”

“Yes, in the Haymarket; they were bringing it up out of a cellar.”

“From a cellar?”

“Not from a cellar, but a basement. Oh, you know ... down below ... from a house of ill-fame. It was filthy all round ... Egg-shells, litter ... a stench. It was loathsome.”

Silence.

“A nasty day to be buried,” I began, simply to avoid being silent.

“Nasty, in what way?”

“The snow, the wet.” (I yawned.)

“It makes no difference,” she said suddenly, after a brief silence.

“No, it’s horrid.” (I yawned again). “The gravediggers must have sworn at getting drenched by the snow. And there must have been water in the grave.”

“Why water in the grave?” she asked, with a sort of curiosity, but speaking even more harshly and abruptly than before.

I suddenly began to feel provoked.

“Why, there must have been water at the bottom a foot deep. You can’t dig a dry grave in Volkovo Cemetery.”

“Why?”

“Why? Why, the place is waterlogged. It’s a regular marsh. So they bury them in water. I’ve seen it myself ... many times.”

(I had never seen it once, indeed I had never been in Volkovo, and had only heard stories of it.)

“Do you mean to say, you don’t mind how you die?”

“But why should I die?” she answered, as though defending herself.

“Why, some day you will die, and you will die just the same as that dead woman. She was ... a girl like you. She died of consumption.”

“A wench would have died in hospital ...” (She knows all about it already: she said “wench,” not “girl.”)

“She was in debt to her madam,” I retorted, more and more provoked by the discussion; “and went on earning money for her up to the end, though she was in consumption.”

Some sledge-drivers standing by were talking about her to some soldiers and telling them so. No doubt they knew her. They were laughing. They were going to meet in a pot-house to drink to her memory.”

A great deal of this was my invention. Silence followed, profound silence. She did not stir.

“And is it better to die in a hospital?”

“Isn’t it just the same? Besides, why should I die?” she added irritably.

“If not now, a little later.”

“Why a little later?”

“Why, indeed? Now you are young, pretty, fresh, you fetch a high price. But after another year of this life you will be very different—you will go off.”

“In a year?”

“Anyway, in a year you will be worth less,” I continued malignantly. “You will go from here to something lower, another house; a year later— to a third, lower and lower, and in seven years you will come to a basement in the Haymarket. That will be if you were lucky. But it would be much worse if you got some disease, consumption, say ... and caught a chill, or something or other. It’s not easy to get over an illness in your way of life. If you catch anything you may not get rid of it. And so you would die.”

“Oh, well, then I shall die,” she answered, quite vindictively, and she made a quick movement.

“But one is sorry.”

“Sorry for whom?”

“Sorry for life.” Silence.

“Have you been engaged to be married? Eh?”

“What’s that to you?”

“Oh, I am not cross-examining you. It’s nothing to me. Why are you so cross? Of course you may have had your own troubles. What is it to me? It’s simply that I felt sorry.”

“Sorry for whom?”

“Sorry for you.”

“No need,” she whispered hardly audibly, and again made a faint movement.

That incensed me at once. What! I was so gentle with her, and she ...

“Why, do you think that you are on the right path?”

“I don’t think anything.”

“That’s what’s wrong, that you don’t think. Realise it while there is still time. There still is time. You are still young, good-looking; you might love, be married, be happy ...”

“Not all married women are happy,” she snapped out in the rude abrupt tone she had used at first.

“Not all, of course, but anyway it is much better than the life here. Infinitely better. Besides, with love one can live even without happiness. Even in sorrow life is sweet; life is sweet, however one lives. But here what is there but ... foulness? Phew!”

I turned away with disgust; I was no longer reasoning coldly. I began to feel myself what I was saying and warmed to the subject. I was already longing to expound the cherished ideas I had brooded over in my corner. Something suddenly flared up in me. An object had appeared before me.

“Never mind my being here, I am not an example for you. I am, perhaps, worse than you are. I was drunk when I came here, though,” I hastened, however, to say in self-defence. “Besides, a man is no example for a woman. It’s a different thing. I may degrade and defile myself, but I am not anyone’s slave. I come and go, and that’s an end of it. I shake it off, and I am a different man. But you are a slave from the start. Yes, a slave! You give up everything, your whole freedom. If you want to break your chains afterwards, you won’t be able to; you will be more and more fast in the snares. It is an accursed bondage. I know it. I won’t speak of anything else, maybe you won’t understand, but tell me: no doubt you are in debt to your madam? There, you see,” I added, though she made no answer, but only listened in silence, entirely absorbed, “that’s a bondage for you! You will never buy your freedom. They will see to that. It’s like selling your soul to the devil And besides ... perhaps, I too, am just as unlucky—how do you know—and wallow in the mud on purpose, out of misery? You know, men take to drink from grief; well, maybe I am here from grief. Come, tell me, what is there good here? Here you and I ... came together ... just now and did not say one word to one another all the time, and it was only afterwards you began staring at me like a wild creature, and I at you. Is that loving? Is that how one human being should meet another? It’s hideous, that’s what it is!”

“Yes!” she assented sharply and hurriedly.

I was positively astounded by the promptitude of this “Yes.” So the same thought may have been straying through her mind when she was staring at me just before. So she, too, was capable of certain thoughts? “Damn it all, this was interesting, this was a point of likeness!” I thought, almost rubbing my hands. And indeed it’s easy to turn a young soul like that!

It was the exercise of my power that attracted me most.

She turned her head nearer to me, and it seemed to me in the darkness that she propped herself on her arm. Perhaps she was scrutinising me. How I regretted that I could not see her eyes. I heard her deep breathing.

“Why have you come here?” I asked her, with a note of authority already in my voice.

“Oh, I don’t know.”

“But how nice it would be to be living in your father’s house! It’s warm and free; you have a home of your own.”

“But what if it’s worse than this?”

“I must take the right tone,” flashed through my mind. “I may not get far with sentimentality.” But it was only a momentary thought. I swear she really did interest me. Besides, I was exhausted and moody. And cunning so easily goes hand-in-hand with feeling.

“Who denies it!” I hastened to answer. “Anything may happen. I am convinced that someone has wronged you, and that you are more sinned against than sinning. Of course, I know nothing of your story, but it’s not likely a girl like you has come here of her own inclination”

“A girl like me?” she whispered, hardly audibly; but I heard it.

Damn it all, I was flattering her. That was horrid. But perhaps it was a good thing She was silent.

“See, Liza, I will tell you about myself. If I had had a home from childhood, I shouldn’t be what I am now. I often think that. However bad it may be at home, anyway they are your father and mother, and not enemies, strangers. Once a year at least, they’ll show their love of you. Anyway, you know you are at home. I grew up without a home; and perhaps that’s why I’ve turned so ... unfeeling.”

I waited again. “Perhaps she doesn’t understand,” I thought, “and, indeed, it is absurd—it’s moralising.”

“If I were a father and had a daughter, I believe I should love my daughter more than my sons, really,” I began indirectly, as though talking of something else, to distract her attention. I must confess I blushed.

“Why so?” she asked.

Ah! so she was listening!

“I don’t know, Liza. I knew a father who was a stern, austere man, but used to go down on his knees to his daughter, used to kiss her hands, her feet, he couldn’t make enough of her, really. When she danced at parties he used to stand for five hours at a stretch, gazing at her. He was mad over her: I understand that! She would fall asleep tired at night, and he would wake to kiss her in her sleep and make the sign of the cross over her. He would go about in a dirty old coat, he was stingy to everyone else, but would spend his last penny for her, giving her expensive presents, and it was his greatest delight when she was pleased with what he gave her. Fathers always love their daughters more than the mothers do. Some girls live happily at home! And I believe I should never let my daughters marry.”

“What next?” she said, with a faint smile.

“I should be jealous, I really should. To think that she should kiss anyone else! That she should love a stranger more than her father! It’s painful to imagine it. Of course, that’s all nonsense, of course every father would be reasonable at last. But I believe before I should let her marry, I should worry myself to death; I should find fault with all her suitors. But I should end by letting her marry whom she herself loved. The one whom the daughter loves always seems the worst to the father, you know. That is always so. So many family troubles come from that.”

“Some are glad to sell their daughters, rather than marrying them honourably.”

Ah, so that was it!

“Such a thing, Liza, happens in those accursed families in which there is neither love nor God,” I retorted warmly, “and where there is no love, there is no sense either. There are such families, it’s true, but I am not speaking of them. You must have seen

wickedness in your own family, if you talk like that. Truly, you must have been unlucky. H'm! ... that sort of thing mostly comes about through poverty."

"And is it any better with the gentry? Even among the poor, honest people who live happily?"

"H'm ... yes. Perhaps. Another thing, Liza, man is fond of reckoning up his troubles, but does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it. And what if all goes well with the family, if the blessing of God is upon it, if the husband is a good one, loves you, cherishes you, never leaves you! There is happiness in such a family! Even sometimes there is happiness in the midst of sorrow; and indeed sorrow is everywhere. If you marry **YOU WILL FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF**. But think of the first years of married life with one you love: what happiness, what happiness there sometimes is in it! And indeed it's the ordinary thing. In those early days even quarrels with one's husband end happily. Some women get up quarrels with their husbands just because they love them. Indeed, I knew a woman like that: she seemed to say that because she loved him, she would torment him and make him feel it. You know that you may torment a man on purpose through love. Women are particularly given to that, thinking to themselves 'I will love him so, I will make so much of him afterwards, that it's no sin to torment him a little now.' And all in the house rejoice in the sight of you, and you are happy and gay and peaceful and honourable Then there are some women who are jealous. If he went off anywhere—I knew one such woman, she couldn't restrain herself, but would jump up at night and run off on the sly to find out where he was, whether he was with some other woman. That's a pity. And the woman knows herself it's wrong, and her heart fails her and she suffers, but she loves—it's all through love. And how sweet it is to make up after quarrels, to own herself in the wrong or to forgive him! And they both are so happy all at once—as though they had met anew, been married over again; as though their love had begun afresh. And no one, no one should know what passes between husband and wife if they love one another. And whatever quarrels there may be between them they ought not to call in their own mother to judge between them and tell tales of one another. They are their own judges. Love is a holy mystery and ought to be hidden from all other eyes, whatever happens. That makes it holier and better. They respect one another more, and much is built on respect. And if once there has been love, if they have been married for love, why should love pass away? Surely one can keep it! It is rare that one cannot keep it. And if the husband is kind and straightforward, why should not love last? The first phase of married love will pass, it is true, but then there will come a love that is better still. Then there will be the union of souls, they will have everything in common, there will be no secrets between them. And once they have children, the most difficult times will seem to them happy, so long as there is love and courage. Even toil will be a joy, you may deny yourself bread for your children and even that will be a joy, They will love you for it afterwards; so you are laying by for your future. As the children grow up you feel that you are an example, a support for them; that even after you die your children will always keep

your thoughts and feelings, because they have received them from you, they will take on your semblance and likeness. So you see this is a great duty. How can it fail to draw the father and mother nearer? People say it's a trial to have children. Who says that? It is heavenly happiness! Are you fond of little children, Liza? I am awfully fond of them. You know—a little rosy baby boy at your bosom, and what husband's heart is not touched, seeing his wife nursing his child! A plump little rosy baby, sprawling and snuggling, chubby little hands and feet, clean tiny little nails, so tiny that it makes one laugh to look at them; eyes that look as if they understand everything. And while it sucks it clutches at your bosom with its little hand, plays. When its father comes up, the child tears itself away from the bosom, flings itself back, looks at its father, laughs, as though it were fearfully funny, and falls to sucking again. Or it will bite its mother's breast when its little teeth are coming, while it looks sideways at her with its little eyes as though to say, 'Look, I am biting!' Is not all that happiness when they are the three together, husband, wife and child? One can forgive a great deal for the sake of such moments. Yes, Liza, one must first learn to live oneself before one blames others!"

"It's by pictures, pictures like that one must get at you," I thought to myself, though I did speak with real feeling, and all at once I flushed crimson. "What if she were suddenly to burst out laughing, what should I do then?" That idea drove me to fury. Towards the end of my speech I really was excited, and now my vanity was somehow wounded. The silence continued. I almost nudged her.

"Why are you—" she began and stopped. But I understood: there was a quiver of something different in her voice, not abrupt, harsh and unyielding as before, but something soft and shamefaced, so shamefaced that I suddenly felt ashamed and guilty.

"What?" I asked, with tender curiosity.

"Why, you ..."

"What?"

"Why, you ... speak somehow like a book," she said, and again there was a note of irony in her voice.

That remark sent a pang to my heart. It was not what I was expecting.

I did not understand that she was hiding her feelings under irony, that this is usually the last refuge of modest and chaste-souled people when the privacy of their soul is coarsely and intrusively invaded, and that their pride makes them refuse to surrender till the last moment and shrink from giving expression to their feelings before you. I ought to have guessed the truth from the timidity with which she had repeatedly approached her sarcasm, only bringing herself to utter it at last with an effort. But I did not guess, and an evil feeling took possession of me.

"Wait a bit!" I thought.

VII

“Oh, hush, Liza! How can you talk about being like a book, when it makes even me, an outsider, feel sick? Though I don’t look at it as an outsider, for, indeed, it touches me to the heart Is it possible, is it possible that you do not feel sick at being here yourself? Evidently habit does wonders! God knows what habit can do with anyone. Can you seriously think that you will never grow old, that you will always be good-looking, and that they will keep you here for ever and ever? I say nothing of the loathsomeness of the life here Though let me tell you this about it—about your present life, I mean; here though you are young now, attractive, nice, with soul and feeling, yet you know as soon as I came to myself just now I felt at once sick at being here with you! One can only come here when one is drunk. But if you were anywhere else, living as good people live, I should perhaps be more than attracted by you, should fall in love with you, should be glad of a look from you, let alone a word; I should hang about your door, should go down on my knees to you, should look upon you as my betrothed and think it an honour to be allowed to. I should not dare to have an impure thought about you. But here, you see, I know that I have only to whistle and you have to come with me whether you like it or not. I don’t consult your wishes, but you mine. The lowest labourer hires himself as a workman, but he doesn’t make a slave of himself altogether; besides, he knows that he will be free again presently. But when are you free? Only think what you are giving up here? What is it you are making a slave of? It is your soul, together with your body; you are selling your soul which you have no right to dispose of! You give your love to be outraged by every drunkard! Love! But that’s everything, you know, it’s a priceless diamond, it’s a maiden’s treasure, love—why, a man would be ready to give his soul, to face death to gain that love. But how much is your love worth now? You are sold, all of you, body and soul, and there is no need to strive for love when you can have everything without love. And you know there is no greater insult to a girl than that, do you understand? To be sure, I have heard that they comfort you, poor fools, they let you have lovers of your own here. But you know that’s simply a farce, that’s simply a sham, it’s just laughing at you, and you are taken in by it! Why, do you suppose he really loves you, that lover of yours? I don’t believe it. How can he love you when he knows you may be called away from him any minute? He would be a low fellow if he did! Will he have a grain of respect for you? What have you in common with him? He laughs at you and robs you—that is all his love amounts to! You are lucky if he does not beat you. Very likely he does beat you, too. Ask him, if you have got one, whether he will marry you. He will laugh in your face, if he doesn’t spit in it or give you a blow—though maybe he is not worth a bad halfpenny himself. And for what have you ruined your life, if you come to think of it? For the coffee they give you to drink and the plentiful meals? But with what object are they feeding you up? An honest girl couldn’t swallow the food, for she would know what she was being fed for. You are in debt here, and, of course, you will always be in debt, and you will go on in debt to the end, till the visitors here

begin to scorn you. And that will soon happen, don't rely upon your youth—all that flies by express train here, you know. You will be kicked out. And not simply kicked out; long before that she'll begin nagging at you, scolding you, abusing you, as though you had not sacrificed your health for her, had not thrown away your youth and your soul for her benefit, but as though you had ruined her, beggared her, robbed her. And don't expect anyone to take your part: the others, your companions, will attack you, too, win her favour, for all are in slavery here, and have lost all conscience and pity here long ago. They have become utterly vile, and nothing on earth is viler, more loathsome, and more insulting than their abuse. And you are laying down everything here, unconditionally, youth and health and beauty and hope, and at twenty-two you will look like a woman of five-and-thirty, and you will be lucky if you are not diseased, pray to God for that! No doubt you are thinking now that you have a gay time and no work to do! Yet there is no work harder or more dreadful in the world or ever has been. One would think that the heart alone would be worn out with tears. And you won't dare to say a word, not half a word when they drive you away from here; you will go away as though you were to blame. You will change to another house, then to a third, then somewhere else, till you come down at last to the Haymarket. There you will be beaten at every turn; that is good manners there, the visitors don't know how to be friendly without beating you. You don't believe that it is so hateful there? Go and look for yourself some time, you can see with your own eyes. Once, one New Year's Day, I saw a woman at a door. They had turned her out as a joke, to give her a taste of the frost because she had been crying so much, and they shut the door behind her. At nine o'clock in the morning she was already quite drunk, dishevelled, half-naked, covered with bruises, her face was powdered, but she had a black-eye, blood was trickling from her nose and her teeth; some cabman had just given her a drubbing. She was sitting on the stone steps, a salt fish of some sort was in her hand; she was crying, wailing something about her luck and beating with the fish on the steps, and cabmen and drunken soldiers were crowding in the doorway taunting her. You don't believe that you will ever be like that? I should be sorry to believe it, too, but how do you know; maybe ten years, eight years ago that very woman with the salt fish came here fresh as a cherub, innocent, pure, knowing no evil, blushing at every word. Perhaps she was like you, proud, ready to take offence, not like the others; perhaps she looked like a queen, and knew what happiness was in store for the man who should love her and whom she should love. Do you see how it ended? And what if at that very minute when she was beating on the filthy steps with that fish, drunken and dishevelled—what if at that very minute she recalled the pure early days in her father's house, when she used to go to school and the neighbour's son watched for her on the way, declaring that he would love her as long as he lived, that he would devote his life to her, and when they vowed to love one another for ever and be married as soon as they were grown up! No, Liza, it would be happy for you if you were to die soon of consumption in some corner, in some cellar like that woman just now. In the hospital, do you say? You will be lucky if they take you, but what if you are still of use to the madam here? Consumption

is a queer disease, it is not like fever. The patient goes on hoping till the last minute and says he is all right. He deludes himself And that just suits your madam. Don't doubt it, that's how it is; you have sold your soul, and what is more you owe money, so you daren't say a word. But when you are dying, all will abandon you, all will turn away from you, for then there will be nothing to get from you. What's more, they will reproach you for cumbering the place, for being so long over dying. However you beg you won't get a drink of water without abuse: 'Whenever are you going off, you nasty hussy, you won't let us sleep with your moaning, you make the gentlemen sick.' That's true, I have heard such things said myself. They will thrust you dying into the filthiest corner in the cellar—in the damp and darkness; what will your thoughts be, lying there alone? When you die, strange hands will lay you out, with grumbling and impatience; no one will bless you, no one will sigh for you, they only want to get rid of you as soon as may be; they will buy a coffin, take you to the grave as they did that poor woman today, and celebrate your memory at the tavern. In the grave, sleet, filth, wet snow—no need to put themselves out for you—'Let her down, Vanuha; it's just like her luck—even here, she is head-foremost, the hussy. Shorten the cord, you rascal.' 'It's all right as it is.' 'All right, is it? Why, she's on her side! She was a fellow-creature, after all! But, never mind, throw the earth on her.' And they won't care to waste much time quarrelling over you. They will scatter the wet blue clay as quick as they can and go off to the tavern ... and there your memory on earth will end; other women have children to go to their graves, fathers, husbands. While for you neither tear, nor sigh, nor remembrance; no one in the whole world will ever come to you, your name will vanish from the face of the earth—as though you had never existed, never been born at all! Nothing but filth and mud, however you knock at your coffin lid at night, when the dead arise, however you cry: 'Let me out, kind people, to live in the light of day! My life was no life at all; my life has been thrown away like a dish- clout; it was drunk away in the tavern at the Haymarket; let me out, kind people, to live in the world again.'"

And I worked myself up to such a pitch that I began to have a lump in my throat myself, and ... and all at once I stopped, sat up in dismay and, bending over apprehensively, began to listen with a beating heart. I had reason to be troubled.

I had felt for some time that I was turning her soul upside down and rending her heart, and—and the more I was convinced of it, the more eagerly I desired to gain my object as quickly and as effectually as possible. It was the exercise of my skill that carried me away; yet it was not merely sport

I knew I was speaking stiffly, artificially, even bookishly, in fact, I could not speak except "like a book." But that did not trouble me: I knew, I felt that I should be understood and that this very bookishness might be an assistance. But now, having attained my effect, I was suddenly panic-stricken. Never before had I witnessed such despair! She was lying on her face, thrusting her face into the pillow and clutching it in both hands. Her heart was being torn. Her youthful body was shuddering all over as though in convulsions. Suppressed sobs rent her bosom and suddenly burst out in

weeping and wailing, then she pressed closer into the pillow: she did not want anyone here, not a living soul, to know of her anguish and her tears. She bit the pillow, bit her hand till it bled (I saw that afterwards), or, thrusting her fingers into her dishevelled hair, seemed rigid with the effort of restraint, holding her breath and clenching her teeth. I began saying something, begging her to calm herself, but felt that I did not dare; and all at once, in a sort of cold shiver, almost in terror, began fumbling in the dark, trying hurriedly to get dressed to go. It was dark; though I tried my best I could not finish dressing quickly. Suddenly I felt a box of matches and a candlestick with a whole candle in it. As soon as the room was lighted up, Liza sprang up, sat up in bed, and with a contorted face, with a half insane smile, looked at me almost senselessly. I sat down beside her and took her hands; she came to herself, made an impulsive movement towards me, would have caught hold of me, but did not dare, and slowly bowed her head before me.

“Liza, my dear, I was wrong ... forgive me, my dear,” I began, but she squeezed my hand in her fingers so tightly that I felt I was saying the wrong thing and stopped.

“This is my address, Liza, come to me.”

“I will come,” she answered resolutely, her head still bowed.

“But now I am going, good-bye ... till we meet again.”

I got up; she, too, stood up and suddenly flushed all over, gave a shudder, snatched up a shawl that was lying on a chair and muffled herself in it to her chin. As she did this she gave another sickly smile, blushed and looked at me strangely. I felt wretched; I was in haste to get away—to disappear.

“Wait a minute,” she said suddenly, in the passage just at the doorway, stopping me with her hand on my overcoat. She put down the candle in hot haste and ran off; evidently she had thought of something or wanted to show me something. As she ran away she flushed, her eyes shone, and there was a smile on her lips—what was the meaning of it? Against my will I waited: she came back a minute later with an expression that seemed to ask forgiveness for something. In fact, it was not the same face, not the same look as the evening before: sullen, mistrustful and obstinate. Her eyes now were imploring, soft, and at the same time trustful, caressing, timid. The expression with which children look at people they are very fond of, of whom they are asking a favour. Her eyes were a light hazel, they were lovely eyes, full of life, and capable of expressing love as well as sullen hatred.

Making no explanation, as though I, as a sort of higher being, must understand everything without explanations, she held out a piece of paper to me. Her whole face was positively beaming at that instant with naive, almost childish, triumph. I unfolded it. It was a letter to her from a medical student or someone of that sort—a very high-flown and flowery, but extremely respectful, love-letter. I don’t recall the words now, but I remember well that through the high-flown phrases there was apparent a genuine feeling, which cannot be feigned. When I had finished reading it I met her glowing, questioning, and childishly impatient eyes fixed upon me. She fastened her eyes upon my face and waited impatiently for what I should say. In a few words,

hurriedly, but with a sort of joy and pride, she explained to me that she had been to a dance somewhere in a private house, a family of “very nice people, WHO KNEW NOTHING, absolutely nothing, for she had only come here so lately and it had all happened ... and she hadn’t made up her mind to stay and was certainly going away as soon as she had paid her debt...” and at that party there had been the student who had danced with her all the evening. He had talked to her, and it turned out that he had known her in old days at Riga when he was a child, they had played together, but a very long time ago—and he knew her parents, but ABOUT THIS he knew nothing, nothing whatever, and had no suspicion! And the day after the dance (three days ago) he had sent her that letter through the friend with whom she had gone to the party ... and ... well, that was all.”

She dropped her shining eyes with a sort of bashfulness as she finished.

The poor girl was keeping that student’s letter as a precious treasure, and had run to fetch it, her only treasure, because she did not want me to go away without knowing that she, too, was honestly and genuinely loved; that she, too, was addressed respectfully. No doubt that letter was destined to lie in her box and lead to nothing. But none the less, I am certain that she would keep it all her life as a precious treasure, as her pride and justification, and now at such a minute she had thought of that letter and brought it with naive pride to raise herself in my eyes that I might see, that I, too, might think well of her. I said nothing, pressed her hand and went out. I so longed to get away ... I walked all the way home, in spite of the fact that the melting snow was still falling in heavy flakes. I was exhausted, shattered, in bewilderment. But behind the bewilderment the truth was already gleaming. The loathsome truth.

VIII

It was some time, however, before I consented to recognise that truth. Waking up in the morning after some hours of heavy, leaden sleep, and immediately realising all that had happened on the previous day, I was positively amazed at my last night’s SENTIMENTALITY with Liza, at all those “outcries of horror and pity.” “To think of having such an attack of womanish hysteria, pah!” I concluded. And what did I thrust my address upon her for? What if she comes? Let her come, though; it doesn’t matter But OBVIOUSLY, that was not now the chief and the most important matter: I had to make haste and at all costs save my reputation in the eyes of Zverkov and Simonov as quickly as possible; that was the chief business. And I was so taken up that morning that I actually forgot all about Liza.

First of all I had at once to repay what I had borrowed the day before from Simonov. I resolved on a desperate measure: to borrow fifteen roubles straight off from Anton Antonitch. As luck would have it he was in the best of humours that morning, and gave it to me at once, on the first asking. I was so delighted at this that, as I signed the IOU with a swaggering air, I told him casually that the night before “I had been

keeping it up with some friends at the Hotel de Paris; we were giving a farewell party to a comrade, in fact, I might say a friend of my childhood, and you know—a desperate rake, fearfully spoilt—of course, he belongs to a good family, and has considerable means, a brilliant career; he is witty, charming, a regular Lovelace, you understand; we drank an extra ‘half-dozen’ and ...”

And it went off all right; all this was uttered very easily, unconstrainedly and complacently.

On reaching home I promptly wrote to Simonov.

To this hour I am lost in admiration when I recall the truly gentlemanly, good-humoured, candid tone of my letter. With tact and good-breeding, and, above all, entirely without superfluous words, I blamed myself for all that had happened. I defended myself, “if I really may be allowed to defend myself,” by alleging that being utterly unaccustomed to wine, I had been intoxicated with the first glass, which I said, I had drunk before they arrived, while I was waiting for them at the Hotel de Paris between five and six o’clock. I begged Simonov’s pardon especially; I asked him to convey my explanations to all the others, especially to Zverkov, whom “I seemed to remember as though in a dream” I had insulted. I added that I would have called upon all of them myself, but my head ached, and besides I had not the face to. I was particularly pleased with a certain lightness, almost carelessness (strictly within the bounds of politeness, however), which was apparent in my style, and better than any possible arguments, gave them at once to understand that I took rather an independent view of “all that unpleasantness last night”; that I was by no means so utterly crushed as you, my friends, probably imagine; but on the contrary, looked upon it as a gentleman serenely respecting himself should look upon it. “On a young hero’s past no censure is cast!”

“There is actually an aristocratic playfulness about it!” I thought admiringly, as I read over the letter. “And it’s all because I am an intellectual and cultivated man! Another man in my place would not have known how to extricate himself, but here I have got out of it and am as jolly as ever again, and all because I am ‘a cultivated and educated man of our day.’ And, indeed, perhaps, everything was due to the wine yesterday. H’m!” ... No, it was not the wine. I did not drink anything at all between five and six when I was waiting for them. I had lied to Simonov; I had lied shamelessly; and indeed I wasn’t ashamed now Hang it all though, the great thing was that I was rid of it.

I put six roubles in the letter, sealed it up, and asked Apollon to take it to Simonov. When he learned that there was money in the letter, Apollon became more respectful and agreed to take it. Towards evening I went out for a walk. My head was still aching and giddy after yesterday. But as evening came on and the twilight grew denser, my impressions and, following them, my thoughts, grew more and more different and confused. Something was not dead within me, in the depths of my heart and conscience it would not die, and it showed itself in acute depression. For the most part I jostled my way through the most crowded business streets, along Myeshtchansky Street, along

Sadovy Street and in Yusupov Garden. I always liked particularly sauntering along these streets in the dusk, just when there were crowds of working people of all sorts going home from their daily work, with faces looking cross with anxiety. What I liked was just that cheap bustle, that bare prose. On this occasion the jostling of the streets irritated me more than ever, I could not make out what was wrong with me, I could not find the clue, something seemed rising up continually in my soul, painfully, and refusing to be appeased. I returned home completely upset, it was just as though some crime were lying on my conscience.

The thought that Liza was coming worried me continually. It seemed queer to me that of all my recollections of yesterday this tormented me, as it were, especially, as it were, quite separately. Everything else I had quite succeeded in forgetting by the evening; I dismissed it all and was still perfectly satisfied with my letter to Simonov. But on this point I was not satisfied at all. It was as though I were worried only by Liza. "What if she comes," I thought incessantly, "well, it doesn't matter, let her come! H'm! it's horrid that she should see, for instance, how I live. Yesterday I seemed such a hero to her, while now, h'm! It's horrid, though, that I have let myself go so, the room looks like a beggar's. And I brought myself to go out to dinner in such a suit! And my American leather sofa with the stuffing sticking out. And my dressing-gown, which will not cover me, such tatters, and she will see all this and she will see Apollon. That beast is certain to insult her. He will fasten upon her in order to be rude to me. And I, of course, shall be panic-stricken as usual, I shall begin bowing and scraping before her and pulling my dressing-gown round me, I shall begin smiling, telling lies. Oh, the beastliness! And it isn't the beastliness of it that matters most! There is something more important, more loathsome, viler! Yes, viler! And to put on that dishonest lying mask again! ..."

When I reached that thought I fired up all at once.

"Why dishonest? How dishonest? I was speaking sincerely last night. I remember there was real feeling in me, too. What I wanted was to excite an honourable feeling in her Her crying was a good thing, it will have a good effect."

Yet I could not feel at ease. All that evening, even when I had come back home, even after nine o'clock, when I calculated that Liza could not possibly come, still she haunted me, and what was worse, she came back to my mind always in the same position. One moment out of all that had happened last night stood vividly before my imagination; the moment when I struck a match and saw her pale, distorted face, with its look of torture. And what a pitiful, what an unnatural, what a distorted smile she had at that moment! But I did not know then, that fifteen years later I should still in my imagination see Liza, always with the pitiful, distorted, inappropriate smile which was on her face at that minute.

Next day I was ready again to look upon it all as nonsense, due to over-excited nerves, and, above all, as EXAGGERATED. I was always conscious of that weak point of mine, and sometimes very much afraid of it. "I exaggerate everything, that is where I go wrong," I repeated to myself every hour. But, however, "Liza will very likely come all

the same,” was the refrain with which all my reflections ended. I was so uneasy that I sometimes flew into a fury: “She’ll come, she is certain to come!” I cried, running about the room, “if not today, she will come tomorrow; she’ll find me out! The damnable romanticism of these pure hearts! Oh, the vileness—oh, the silliness—oh, the stupidity of these ‘wretched sentimental souls!’ Why, how fail to understand? How could one fail to understand? ...”

But at this point I stopped short, and in great confusion, indeed.

And how few, how few words, I thought, in passing, were needed; how little of the idyllic (and affectedly, bookishly, artificially idyllic too) had sufficed to turn a whole human life at once according to my will. That’s virginity, to be sure! Freshness of soil!

At times a thought occurred to me, to go to her, “to tell her all,” and beg her not to come to me. But this thought stirred such wrath in me that I believed I should have crushed that “damned” Liza if she had chanced to be near me at the time. I should have insulted her, have spat at her, have turned her out, have struck her!

One day passed, however, another and another; she did not come and I began to grow calmer. I felt particularly bold and cheerful after nine o’clock, I even sometimes began dreaming, and rather sweetly: I, for instance, became the salvation of Liza, simply through her coming to me and my talking to her I develop her, educate her. Finally, I notice that she loves me, loves me passionately. I pretend not to understand (I don’t know, however, why I pretend, just for effect, perhaps). At last all confusion, transfigured, trembling and sobbing, she flings herself at my feet and says that I am her saviour, and that she loves me better than anything in the world. I am amazed, but “Liza,” I say, “can you imagine that I have not noticed your love? I saw it all, I divined it, but I did not dare to approach you first, because I had an influence over you and was afraid that you would force yourself, from gratitude, to respond to my love, would try to rouse in your heart a feeling which was perhaps absent, and I did not wish that ... because it would be tyranny ... it would be indelicate (in short, I launch off at that point into European, inexplicably lofty subtleties a la George Sand), but now, now you are mine, you are my creation, you are pure, you are good, you are my noble wife.

‘Into my house come bold and free, Its rightful mistress there to be’.”

Then we begin living together, go abroad and so on, and so on. In fact, in the end it seemed vulgar to me myself, and I began putting out my tongue at myself.

Besides, they won’t let her out, “the hussy!” I thought. They don’t let them go out very readily, especially in the evening (for some reason I fancied she would come in the evening, and at seven o’clock precisely). Though she did say she was not altogether a slave there yet, and had certain rights; so, h’m! Damn it all, she will come, she is sure to come!

It was a good thing, in fact, that Apollon distracted my attention at that time by his rudeness. He drove me beyond all patience! He was the bane of my life, the curse laid upon me by Providence. We had been squabbling continually for years, and I hated him. My God, how I hated him! I believe I had never hated anyone in my life as I

hated him, especially at some moments. He was an elderly, dignified man, who worked part of his time as a tailor. But for some unknown reason he despised me beyond all measure, and looked down upon me insufferably. Though, indeed, he looked down upon everyone. Simply to glance at that flaxen, smoothly brushed head, at the tuft of hair he combed up on his forehead and oiled with sunflower oil, at that dignified mouth, compressed into the shape of the letter V, made one feel one was confronting a man who never doubted of himself. He was a pedant, to the most extreme point, the greatest pedant I had met on earth, and with that had a vanity only befitting Alexander of Macedon. He was in love with every button on his coat, every nail on his fingers—absolutely in love with them, and he looked it! In his behaviour to me he was a perfect tyrant, he spoke very little to me, and if he chanced to glance at me he gave me a firm, majestically self-confident and invariably ironical look that drove me sometimes to fury. He did his work with the air of doing me the greatest favour, though he did scarcely anything for me, and did not, indeed, consider himself bound to do anything. There could be no doubt that he looked upon me as the greatest fool on earth, and that “he did not get rid of me” was simply that he could get wages from me every month. He consented to do nothing for me for seven roubles a month. Many sins should be forgiven me for what I suffered from him. My hatred reached such a point that sometimes his very step almost threw me into convulsions. What I loathed particularly was his lisp. His tongue must have been a little too long or something of that sort, for he continually lisped, and seemed to be very proud of it, imagining that it greatly added to his dignity. He spoke in a slow, measured tone, with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on the ground. He maddened me particularly when he read aloud the psalms to himself behind his partition. Many a battle I waged over that reading! But he was awfully fond of reading aloud in the evenings, in a slow, even, sing-song voice, as though over the dead. It is interesting that that is how he has ended: he hires himself out to read the psalms over the dead, and at the same time he kills rats and makes blacking. But at that time I could not get rid of him, it was as though he were chemically combined with my existence. Besides, nothing would have induced him to consent to leave me. I could not live in furnished lodgings: my lodging was my private solitude, my shell, my cave, in which I concealed myself from all mankind, and Apollon seemed to me, for some reason, an integral part of that flat, and for seven years I could not turn him away.

To be two or three days behind with his wages, for instance, was impossible. He would have made such a fuss, I should not have known where to hide my head. But I was so exasperated with everyone during those days, that I made up my mind for some reason and with some object to PUNISH Apollon and not to pay him for a fortnight the wages that were owing him. I had for a long time—for the last two years—been intending to do this, simply in order to teach him not to give himself airs with me, and to show him that if I liked I could withhold his wages. I purposed to say nothing to him about it, and was purposely silent indeed, in order to score off his pride and force him to be the first to speak of his wages. Then I would take the seven roubles out of

a drawer, show him I have the money put aside on purpose, but that I won't, I won't, I simply won't pay him his wages, I won't just because that is "what I wish," because "I am master, and it is for me to decide," because he has been disrespectful, because he has been rude; but if he were to ask respectfully I might be softened and give it to him, otherwise he might wait another fortnight, another three weeks, a whole month

But angry as I was, yet he got the better of me. I could not hold out for four days. He began as he always did begin in such cases, for there had been such cases already, there had been attempts (and it may be observed I knew all this beforehand, I knew his nasty tactics by heart). He would begin by fixing upon me an exceedingly severe stare, keeping it up for several minutes at a time, particularly on meeting me or seeing me out of the house. If I held out and pretended not to notice these stares, he would, still in silence, proceed to further tortures. All at once, A PROPOS of nothing, he would walk softly and smoothly into my room, when I was pacing up and down or reading, stand at the door, one hand behind his back and one foot behind the other, and fix upon me a stare more than severe, utterly contemptuous. If I suddenly asked him what he wanted, he would make me no answer, but continue staring at me persistently for some seconds, then, with a peculiar compression of his lips and a most significant air, deliberately turn round and deliberately go back to his room. Two hours later he would come out again and again present himself before me in the same way. It had happened that in my fury I did not even ask him what he wanted, but simply raised my head sharply and imperiously and began staring back at him. So we stared at one another for two minutes; at last he turned with deliberation and dignity and went back again for two hours.

If I were still not brought to reason by all this, but persisted in my revolt, he would suddenly begin sighing while he looked at me, long, deep sighs as though measuring by them the depths of my moral degradation, and, of course, it ended at last by his triumphing completely: I raged and shouted, but still was forced to do what he wanted.

This time the usual staring manoeuvres had scarcely begun when I lost my temper and flew at him in a fury. I was irritated beyond endurance apart from him.

"Stay," I cried, in a frenzy, as he was slowly and silently turning, with one hand behind his back, to go to his room. "Stay! Come back, come back, I tell you!" and I must have bawled so unnaturally, that he turned round and even looked at me with some wonder. However, he persisted in saying nothing, and that infuriated me.

"How dare you come and look at me like that without being sent for? Answer!"

After looking at me calmly for half a minute, he began turning round again.

"Stay!" I roared, running up to him, "don't stir! There. Answer, now: what did you come in to look at?"

"If you have any order to give me it's my duty to carry it out," he answered, after another silent pause, with a slow, measured lisp, raising his eyebrows and calmly twisting his head from one side to another, all this with exasperating composure.

“That’s not what I am asking you about, you torturer!” I shouted, turning crimson with anger. “I’ll tell you why you came here myself: you see, I don’t give you your wages, you are so proud you don’t want to bow down and ask for it, and so you come to punish me with your stupid stares, to worry me and you have no sus-pic-ion how stupid it is— stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid! ...”

He would have turned round again without a word, but I seized him.

“Listen,” I shouted to him. “Here’s the money, do you see, here it is,” (I took it out of the table drawer); “here’s the seven roubles complete, but you are not going to have it, you ... are ... not ... going ... to ... have it until you come respectfully with bowed head to beg my pardon. Do you hear?”

“That cannot be,” he answered, with the most unnatural self-confidence.

“It shall be so,” I said, “I give you my word of honour, it shall be!”

“And there’s nothing for me to beg your pardon for,” he went on, as though he had not noticed my exclamations at all. “Why, besides, you called me a ‘torturer,’ for which I can summon you at the police-station at any time for insulting behaviour.”

“Go, summon me,” I roared, “go at once, this very minute, this very second! You are a torturer all the same! a torturer!”

But he merely looked at me, then turned, and regardless of my loud calls to him, he walked to his room with an even step and without looking round.

“If it had not been for Liza nothing of this would have happened,” I decided inwardly. Then, after waiting a minute, I went myself behind his screen with a dignified and solemn air, though my heart was beating slowly and violently.

“Apollon,” I said quietly and emphatically, though I was breathless, “go at once without a minute’s delay and fetch the police-officer.”

He had meanwhile settled himself at his table, put on his spectacles and taken up some sewing. But, hearing my order, he burst into a guffaw.

“At once, go this minute! Go on, or else you can’t imagine what will happen.”

“You are certainly out of your mind,” he observed, without even raising his head, lisping as deliberately as ever and threading his needle. “Whoever heard of a man sending for the police against himself? And as for being frightened—you are upsetting yourself about nothing, for nothing will come of it.”

“Go!” I shrieked, clutching him by the shoulder. I felt I should strike him in a minute.

But I did not notice the door from the passage softly and slowly open at that instant and a figure come in, stop short, and begin staring at us in perplexity I glanced, nearly swooned with shame, and rushed back to my room. There, clutching at my hair with both hands, I leaned my head against the wall and stood motionless in that position.

Two minutes later I heard Apollon’s deliberate footsteps. “There is some woman asking for you,” he said, looking at me with peculiar severity. Then he stood aside and let in Liza. He would not go away, but stared at us sarcastically.

“Go away, go away,” I commanded in desperation. At that moment my clock began whirring and wheezing and struck seven.

IX

“Into my house come bold and free, Its rightful mistress there to be.”

I stood before her crushed, crestfallen, revoltingly confused, and I believe I smiled as I did my utmost to wrap myself in the skirts of my ragged wadded dressing-gown—exactly as I had imagined the scene not long before in a fit of depression. After standing over us for a couple of minutes Apollon went away, but that did not make me more at ease. What made it worse was that she, too, was overwhelmed with confusion, more so, in fact, than I should have expected. At the sight of me, of course.

“Sit down,” I said mechanically, moving a chair up to the table, and I sat down on the sofa. She obediently sat down at once and gazed at me open-eyed, evidently expecting something from me at once. This naivete of expectation drove me to fury, but I restrained myself.

She ought to have tried not to notice, as though everything had been as usual, while instead of that, she ... and I dimly felt that I should make her pay dearly for ALL THIS.

“You have found me in a strange position, Liza,” I began, stammering and knowing that this was the wrong way to begin. “No, no, don’t imagine anything,” I cried, seeing that she had suddenly flushed. “I am not ashamed of my poverty On the contrary, I look with pride on my poverty. I am poor but honourable One can be poor and honourable,” I muttered. “However ... would you like tea?”

“No,” she was beginning.

“Wait a minute.”

I leapt up and ran to Apollon. I had to get out of the room somehow.

“Apollon,” I whispered in feverish haste, flinging down before him the seven roubles which had remained all the time in my clenched fist, “here are your wages, you see I give them to you; but for that you must come to my rescue: bring me tea and a dozen rusks from the restaurant. If you won’t go, you’ll make me a miserable man! You don’t know what this woman is This is—everything! You may be imagining something But you don’t know what that woman is! ...”

Apollon, who had already sat down to his work and put on his spectacles again, at first glanced askance at the money without speaking or putting down his needle; then, without paying the slightest attention to me or making any answer, he went on busying himself with his needle, which he had not yet threaded. I waited before him for three minutes with my arms crossed A LA NAPOLEON. My temples were moist with sweat. I was pale, I felt it. But, thank God, he must have been moved to pity, looking at me. Having threaded his needle he deliberately got up from his seat, deliberately moved back his chair, deliberately took off his spectacles, deliberately counted the money, and finally asking me over his shoulder: “Shall I get a whole portion?” deliberately walked out of the room. As I was going back to Liza, the thought occurred to me on the way: shouldn’t I run away just as I was in my dressing-gown, no matter where, and then let happen what would?

I sat down again. She looked at me uneasily. For some minutes we were silent.

"I will kill him," I shouted suddenly, striking the table with my fist so that the ink spurted out of the inkstand.

"What are you saying!" she cried, starting.

"I will kill him! kill him!" I shrieked, suddenly striking the table in absolute frenzy, and at the same time fully understanding how stupid it was to be in such a frenzy. "You don't know, Liza, what that torturer is to me. He is my torturer ... He has gone now to fetch some rusks; he ..."

And suddenly I burst into tears. It was an hysterical attack. How ashamed I felt in the midst of my sobs; but still I could not restrain them.

She was frightened.

"What is the matter? What is wrong?" she cried, fussing about me.

"Water, give me water, over there!" I muttered in a faint voice, though I was inwardly conscious that I could have got on very well without water and without muttering in a faint voice. But I was, what is called, PUTTING IT ON, to save appearances, though the attack was a genuine one.

She gave me water, looking at me in bewilderment. At that moment Apollon brought in the tea. It suddenly seemed to me that this commonplace, prosaic tea was horribly undignified and paltry after all that had happened, and I blushed crimson. Liza looked at Apollon with positive alarm. He went out without a glance at either of us.

"Liza, do you despise me?" I asked, looking at her fixedly, trembling with impatience to know what she was thinking.

She was confused, and did not know what to answer.

"Drink your tea," I said to her angrily. I was angry with myself, but, of course, it was she who would have to pay for it. A horrible spite against her suddenly surged up in my heart; I believe I could have killed her. To revenge myself on her I swore inwardly not to say a word to her all the time. "She is the cause of it all," I thought.

Our silence lasted for five minutes. The tea stood on the table; we did not touch it. I had got to the point of purposely refraining from beginning in order to embarrass her further; it was awkward for her to begin alone. Several times she glanced at me with mournful perplexity. I was obstinately silent. I was, of course, myself the chief sufferer, because I was fully conscious of the disgusting meanness of my spiteful stupidity, and yet at the same time I could not restrain myself.

"I want to... get away ... from there altogether," she began, to break the silence in some way, but, poor girl, that was just what she ought not to have spoken about at such a stupid moment to a man so stupid as I was. My heart positively ached with pity for her tactless and unnecessary straightforwardness. But something hideous at once stifled all compassion in me; it even provoked me to greater venom. I did not care what happened. Another five minutes passed.

"Perhaps I am in your way," she began timidly, hardly audibly, and was getting up.

But as soon as I saw this first impulse of wounded dignity I positively trembled with spite, and at once burst out.

“Why have you come to me, tell me that, please?” I began, gasping for breath and regardless of logical connection in my words. I longed to have it all out at once, at one burst; I did not even trouble how to begin. “Why have you come? Answer, answer,” I cried, hardly knowing what I was doing. “I’ll tell you, my good girl, why you have come. You’ve come because I talked sentimental stuff to you then. So now you are soft as butter and longing for fine sentiments again. So you may as well know that I was laughing at you then. And I am laughing at you now. Why are you shuddering? Yes, I was laughing at you! I had been insulted just before, at dinner, by the fellows who came that evening before me. I came to you, meaning to thrash one of them, an officer; but I didn’t succeed, I didn’t find him; I had to avenge the insult on someone to get back my own again; you turned up, I vented my spleen on you and laughed at you. I had been humiliated, so I wanted to humiliate; I had been treated like a rag, so I wanted to show my power That’s what it was, and you imagined I had come there on purpose to save you. Yes? You imagined that? You imagined that?”

I knew that she would perhaps be muddled and not take it all in exactly, but I knew, too, that she would grasp the gist of it, very well indeed. And so, indeed, she did. She turned white as a handkerchief, tried to say something, and her lips worked painfully; but she sank on a chair as though she had been felled by an axe. And all the time afterwards she listened to me with her lips parted and her eyes wide open, shuddering with awful terror. The cynicism, the cynicism of my words overwhelmed her

“Save you!” I went on, jumping up from my chair and running up and down the room before her. “Save you from what? But perhaps I am worse than you myself. Why didn’t you throw it in my teeth when I was giving you that sermon: ‘But what did you come here yourself for? was it to read us a sermon?’ Power, power was what I wanted then, sport was what I wanted, I wanted to wring out your tears, your humiliation, your hysteria—that was what I wanted then! Of course, I couldn’t keep it up then, because I am a wretched creature, I was frightened, and, the devil knows why, gave you my address in my folly. Afterwards, before I got home, I was cursing and swearing at you because of that address, I hated you already because of the lies I had told you. Because I only like playing with words, only dreaming, but, do you know, what I really want is that you should all go to hell. That is what I want. I want peace; yes, I’d sell the whole world for a farthing, straight off, so long as I was left in peace. Is the world to go to pot, or am I to go without my tea? I say that the world may go to pot for me so long as I always get my tea. Did you know that, or not? Well, anyway, I know that I am a blackguard, a scoundrel, an egoist, a sluggard. Here I have been shuddering for the last three days at the thought of your coming. And do you know what has worried me particularly for these three days? That I posed as such a hero to you, and now you would see me in a wretched torn dressing-gown, beggarly, loathsome. I told you just now that I was not ashamed of my poverty; so you may as well know that I am ashamed of it; I am more ashamed of it than of anything, more afraid of it than of being found out if I were a thief, because I am as vain as though I had been skinned

and the very air blowing on me hurt. Surely by now you must realise that I shall never forgive you for having found me in this wretched dressing-gown, just as I was flying at Apollon like a spiteful cur. The saviour, the former hero, was flying like a mangy, unkempt sheep-dog at his lackey, and the lackey was jeering at him! And I shall never forgive you for the tears I could not help shedding before you just now, like some silly woman put to shame! And for what I am confessing to you now, I shall never forgive you either! Yes—you must answer for it all because you turned up like this, because I am a blackguard, because I am the nastiest, stupidest, absurdest and most envious of all the worms on earth, who are not a bit better than I am, but, the devil knows why, are never put to confusion; while I shall always be insulted by every louse, that is my doom! And what is it to me that you don't understand a word of this! And what do I care, what do I care about you, and whether you go to ruin there or not? Do you understand? How I shall hate you now after saying this, for having been here and listening. Why, it's not once in a lifetime a man speaks out like this, and then it is in hysterics! ... What more do you want? Why do you still stand confronting me, after all this? Why are you worrying me? Why don't you go?"

But at this point a strange thing happened. I was so accustomed to think and imagine everything from books, and to picture everything in the world to myself just as I had made it up in my dreams beforehand, that I could not all at once take in this strange circumstance. What happened was this: Liza, insulted and crushed by me, understood a great deal more than I imagined. She understood from all this what a woman understands first of all, if she feels genuine love, that is, that I was myself unhappy.

The frightened and wounded expression on her face was followed first by a look of sorrowful perplexity. When I began calling myself a scoundrel and a blackguard and my tears flowed (the tirade was accompanied throughout by tears) her whole face worked convulsively. She was on the point of getting up and stopping me; when I finished she took no notice of my shouting: "Why are you here, why don't you go away?" but realised only that it must have been very bitter to me to say all this. Besides, she was so crushed, poor girl; she considered herself infinitely beneath me; how could she feel anger or resentment? She suddenly leapt up from her chair with an irresistible impulse and held out her hands, yearning towards me, though still timid and not daring to stir At this point there was a revulsion in my heart too. Then she suddenly rushed to me, threw her arms round me and burst into tears. I, too, could not restrain myself, and sobbed as I never had before.

"They won't let me ... I can't be good!" I managed to articulate; then I went to the sofa, fell on it face downwards, and sobbed on it for a quarter of an hour in genuine hysterics. She came close to me, put her arms round me and stayed motionless in that position. But the trouble was that the hysterics could not go on for ever, and (I am writing the loathsome truth) lying face downwards on the sofa with my face thrust into my nasty leather pillow, I began by degrees to be aware of a far-away, involuntary but irresistible feeling that it would be awkward now for me to raise my head and look

Liza straight in the face. Why was I ashamed? I don't know, but I was ashamed. The thought, too, came into my overwrought brain that our parts now were completely changed, that she was now the heroine, while I was just a crushed and humiliated creature as she had been before me that night—four days before And all this came into my mind during the minutes I was lying on my face on the sofa.

My God! surely I was not envious of her then.

I don't know, to this day I cannot decide, and at the time, of course, I was still less able to understand what I was feeling than now. I cannot get on without domineering and tyrannising over someone, but ... there is no explaining anything by reasoning and so it is useless to reason.

I conquered myself, however, and raised my head; I had to do so sooner or later ... and I am convinced to this day that it was just because I was ashamed to look at her that another feeling was suddenly kindled and flamed up in my heart ... a feeling of mastery and possession. My eyes gleamed with passion, and I gripped her hands tightly. How I hated her and how I was drawn to her at that minute! The one feeling intensified the other. It was almost like an act of vengeance. At first there was a look of amazement, even of terror on her face, but only for one instant. She warmly and rapturously embraced me.

X

A quarter of an hour later I was rushing up and down the room in frenzied impatience, from minute to minute I went up to the screen and peeped through the crack at Liza. She was sitting on the ground with her head leaning against the bed, and must have been crying. But she did not go away, and that irritated me. This time she understood it all. I had insulted her finally, but ... there's no need to describe it. She realised that my outburst of passion had been simply revenge, a fresh humiliation, and that to my earlier, almost causeless hatred was added now a PERSONAL HATRED, born of envy Though I do not maintain positively that she understood all this distinctly; but she certainly did fully understand that I was a despicable man, and what was worse, incapable of loving her. I know I shall be told that this is incredible—but it is incredible to be as spiteful and stupid as I was; it may be added that it was strange I should not love her, or at any rate, appreciate her love. Why is it strange? In the first place, by then I was incapable of love, for I repeat, with me loving meant tyrannising and showing my moral superiority. I have never in my life been able to imagine any other sort of love, and have nowadays come to the point of sometimes thinking that love really consists in the right—freely given by the beloved object—to tyrannise over her.

Even in my underground dreams I did not imagine love except as a struggle. I began it always with hatred and ended it with moral subjugation, and afterwards I never knew what to do with the subjugated object. And what is there to wonder at in

that, since I had succeeded in so corrupting myself, since I was so out of touch with “real life,” as to have actually thought of reproaching her, and putting her to shame for having come to me to hear “fine sentiments”; and did not even guess that she had come not to hear fine sentiments, but to love me, because to a woman all reformation, all salvation from any sort of ruin, and all moral renewal is included in love and can only show itself in that form.

I did not hate her so much, however, when I was running about the room and peeping through the crack in the screen. I was only insufferably oppressed by her being here. I wanted her to disappear. I wanted “peace,” to be left alone in my underground world. Real life oppressed me with its novelty so much that I could hardly breathe.

But several minutes passed and she still remained, without stirring, as though she were unconscious. I had the shamelessness to tap softly at the screen as though to remind her She started, sprang up, and flew to seek her kerchief, her hat, her coat, as though making her escape from me Two minutes later she came from behind the screen and looked with heavy eyes at me. I gave a spiteful grin, which was forced, however, to KEEP UP APPEARANCES, and I turned away from her eyes.

“Good-bye,” she said, going towards the door.

I ran up to her, seized her hand, opened it, thrust something in it and closed it again. Then I turned at once and dashed away in haste to the other corner of the room to avoid seeing, anyway

I did mean a moment since to tell a lie—to write that I did this accidentally, not knowing what I was doing through foolishness, through losing my head. But I don’t want to lie, and so I will say straight out that I opened her hand and put the money in it ... from spite. It came into my head to do this while I was running up and down the room and she was sitting behind the screen. But this I can say for certain: though I did that cruel thing purposely, it was not an impulse from the heart, but came from my evil brain. This cruelty was so affected, so purposely made up, so completely a product of the brain, of books, that I could not even keep it up a minute—first I dashed away to avoid seeing her, and then in shame and despair rushed after Liza. I opened the door in the passage and began listening.

“Liza! Liza!” I cried on the stairs, but in a low voice, not boldly. There was no answer, but I fancied I heard her footsteps, lower down on the stairs.

“Liza!” I cried, more loudly.

No answer. But at that minute I heard the stiff outer glass door open heavily with a creak and slam violently; the sound echoed up the stairs.

She had gone. I went back to my room in hesitation. I felt horribly oppressed.

I stood still at the table, beside the chair on which she had sat and looked aimlessly before me. A minute passed, suddenly I started; straight before me on the table I saw In short, I saw a crumpled blue five-rouble note, the one I had thrust into her hand a minute before. It was the same note; it could be no other, there was no other in the flat. So she had managed to fling it from her hand on the table at the moment when I had dashed into the further corner.

Well! I might have expected that she would do that. Might I have expected it? No, I was such an egoist, I was so lacking in respect for my fellow-creatures that I could not even imagine she would do so. I could not endure it. A minute later I flew like a madman to dress, flinging on what I could at random and ran headlong after her. She could not have got two hundred paces away when I ran out into the street.

It was a still night and the snow was coming down in masses and falling almost perpendicularly, covering the pavement and the empty street as though with a pillow. There was no one in the street, no sound was to be heard. The street lamps gave a disconsolate and useless glimmer. I ran two hundred paces to the cross-roads and stopped short.

Where had she gone? And why was I running after her?

Why? To fall down before her, to sob with remorse, to kiss her feet, to entreat her forgiveness! I longed for that, my whole breast was being rent to pieces, and never, never shall I recall that minute with indifference. But—what for? I thought. Should I not begin to hate her, perhaps, even tomorrow, just because I had kissed her feet today? Should I give her happiness? Had I not recognised that day, for the hundredth time, what I was worth? Should I not torture her?

I stood in the snow, gazing into the troubled darkness and pondered this.

“And will it not be better?” I mused fantastically, afterwards at home, stifling the living pang of my heart with fantastic dreams. “Will it not be better that she should keep the resentment of the insult for ever? Resentment—why, it is purification; it is a most stinging and painful consciousness! Tomorrow I should have defiled her soul and have exhausted her heart, while now the feeling of insult will never die in her heart, and however loathsome the filth awaiting her—the feeling of insult will elevate and purify her ... by hatred ... h'm! ... perhaps, too, by forgiveness Will all that make things easier for her though? ...”

And, indeed, I will ask on my own account here, an idle question: which is better—cheap happiness or exalted sufferings? Well, which is better?

So I dreamed as I sat at home that evening, almost dead with the pain in my soul. Never had I endured such suffering and remorse, yet could there have been the faintest doubt when I ran out from my lodging that I should turn back half-way? I never met Liza again and I have heard nothing of her. I will add, too, that I remained for a long time afterwards pleased with the phrase about the benefit from resentment and hatred in spite of the fact that I almost fell ill from misery.

... .

Even now, so many years later, all this is somehow a very evil memory. I have many evil memories now, but ... hadn't I better end my “Notes” here? I believe I made a mistake in beginning to write them, anyway I have felt ashamed all the time I've been writing this story; so it's hardly literature so much as a corrective punishment. Why, to tell long stories, showing how I have spoiled my life through morally rotting in my corner, through lack of fitting environment, through divorce from real life, and rankling spite in my underground world, would certainly not be interesting; a novel

needs a hero, and all the traits for an anti-hero are EXPRESSLY gathered together here, and what matters most, it all produces an unpleasant impression, for we are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less. We are so divorced from it that we feel at once a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it. Why, we have come almost to looking upon real life as an effort, almost as hard work, and we are all privately agreed that it is better in books. And why do we fuss and fume sometimes? Why are we perverse and ask for something else? We don't know what ourselves. It would be the worse for us if our petulant prayers were answered. Come, try, give any one of us, for instance, a little more independence, untie our hands, widen the spheres of our activity, relax the control and we ... yes, I assure you ... we should be begging to be under control again at once. I know that you will very likely be angry with me for that, and will begin shouting and stamping. Speak for yourself, you will say, and for your miseries in your underground holes, and don't dare to say all of us—excuse me, gentlemen, I am not justifying myself with that “all of us.” As for what concerns me in particular I have only in my life carried to an extreme what you have not dared to carry halfway, and what's more, you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in deceiving yourselves. So that perhaps, after all, there is more life in me than in you. Look into it more carefully! Why, we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called? Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men—men with a real individual body and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalised man. We are stillborn, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living fathers, and that suits us better and better. We are developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an idea. But enough; I don't want to write more from “Underground.”

The notes of this paradoxalist do not end here, however. He could not refrain from going on with them, but it seems to us that we may stop here.

Poor Folk

Translated by C.J. Hogarth

April

April 8th

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—How happy I was last night—how immeasurably, how impossibly happy! That was because for once in your life you had relented so far as to obey my wishes. At about eight o'clock I awoke from sleep (you know, my beloved one, that I always like to sleep for a short hour after my work is done)—I awoke, I say, and, lighting a candle, prepared my paper to write, and trimmed my pen. Then suddenly, for some reason or another, I raised my eyes—and felt my very heart leap within me! For you had understood what I wanted, you had understood what my heart was craving for. Yes, I perceived that a corner of the curtain in your window had been looped up and fastened to the cornice as I had suggested should be done; and it seemed to me that your dear face was glimmering at the window, and that you were looking at me from out of the darkness of your room, and that you were thinking of me. Yet how vexed I felt that I could not distinguish your sweet face clearly! For there was a time when you and I could see one another without any difficulty at all. Ah me, but old age is not always a blessing, my beloved one! At this very moment everything is standing awry to my eyes, for a man needs only to work late overnight in his writing of something or other for, in the morning, his eyes to be red, and the tears to be gushing from them in a way that makes him ashamed to be seen before strangers. However, I was able to picture to myself your beaming smile, my angel—your kind, bright smile; and in my heart there lurked just such a feeling as on the occasion when I first kissed you, my little Barbara. Do you remember that, my darling? Yet somehow you seemed to be threatening me with your tiny finger. Was it so, little wanton? You must write and tell me about it in your next letter.

But what think you of the plan of the curtain, Barbara? It is a charming one, is it not? No matter whether I be at work, or about to retire to rest, or just awaking from sleep, it enables me to know that you are thinking of me, and remembering me—that you are both well and happy. Then when you lower the curtain, it means that it is time that I, Makar Alexievitch, should go to bed; and when again you raise the curtain, it means that you are saying to me, “Good morning,” and asking me how I am, and whether I have slept well. “As for myself,” adds the curtain, “I am altogether in good health and spirits, glory be to God!” Yes, my heart's delight, you see how easy a plan it was to devise, and how much writing it will save us! It is a clever plan, is it not? And it was my own invention, too! Am I not cunning in such matters, Barbara Alexievna?

Well, next let me tell you, dearest, that last night I slept better and more soundly than I had ever hoped to do, and that I am the more delighted at the fact in that, as you know, I had just settled into a new lodging—a circumstance only too apt to keep one from sleeping! This morning, too, I arose (joyous and full of love) at cockcrow. How good seemed everything at that hour, my darling! When I opened my window I could see the sun shining, and hear the birds singing, and smell the air laden with scents of spring. In short, all nature was awaking to life again. Everything was in consonance with my mood; everything seemed fair and spring-like. Moreover, I had a fancy that I should fare well today. But my whole thoughts were bent upon you. “Surely,” thought I, “we mortals who dwell in pain and sorrow might with reason envy the birds of heaven which know not either!” And my other thoughts were similar to these. In short, I gave myself up to fantastic comparisons. A little book which I have says the same kind of thing in a variety of ways. For instance, it says that one may have many, many fancies, my Barbara—that as soon as the spring comes on, one’s thoughts become uniformly pleasant and sportive and witty, for the reason that, at that season, the mind inclines readily to tenderness, and the world takes on a more roseate hue. From that little book of mine I have culled the following passage, and written it down for you to see. In particular does the author express a longing similar to my own, where he writes:

“Why am I not a bird free to seek its quest?”

And he has written much else, God bless him!

But tell me, my love—where did you go for your walk this morning? Even before I had started for the office you had taken flight from your room, and passed through the courtyard—yes, looking as vernal-like as a bird in spring. What rapture it gave me to see you! Ah, little Barbara, little Barbara, you must never give way to grief, for tears are of no avail, nor sorrow. I know this well—I know it of my own experience. So do you rest quietly until you have regained your health a little. But how is our good Thedora? What a kind heart she has! You write that she is now living with you, and that you are satisfied with what she does. True, you say that she is inclined to grumble, but do not mind that, Barbara. God bless her, for she is an excellent soul!

But what sort of an abode have I lighted upon, Barbara Alexievna? What sort of a tenement, do you think, is this? Formerly, as you know, I used to live in absolute stillness—so much so that if a fly took wing it could plainly be heard buzzing. Here, however, all is turmoil and shouting and clatter. The PLAN of the tenement you know already. Imagine a long corridor, quite dark, and by no means clean. To the right a dead wall, and to the left a row of doors stretching as far as the line of rooms extends. These rooms are tenanted by different people—by one, by two, or by three lodgers as the case may be, but in this arrangement there is no sort of system, and the place is a perfect Noah’s Ark. Most of the lodgers are respectable, educated, and even bookish people. In particular they include a tchinovnik (one of the literary staff in some government department), who is so well-read that he can expound Homer or any other author—in fact, ANYTHING, such a man of talent is he! Also, there are a couple of officers (for ever playing cards), a midshipman, and an English tutor. But, to

amuse you, dearest, let me describe these people more categorically in my next letter, and tell you in detail about their lives. As for our landlady, she is a dirty little old woman who always walks about in a dressing-gown and slippers, and never ceases to shout at Theresa. I myself live in the kitchen—or, rather, in a small room which forms part of the kitchen. The latter is a very large, bright, clean, cheerful apartment with three windows in it, and a partition-wall which, running outwards from the front wall, makes a sort of little den, a sort of extra room, for myself. Everything in this den is comfortable and convenient, and I have, as I say, a window to myself. So much for a description of my dwelling-place. Do not think, dearest, that in all this there is any hidden intention. The fact that I live in the kitchen merely means that I live behind the partition wall in that apartment—that I live quite alone, and spend my time in a quiet fashion compounded of trifles. For furniture I have provided myself with a bed, a table, a chest of drawers, and two small chairs. Also, I have suspended an ikon. True, better rooms MAY exist in the world than this—much better rooms; yet COMFORT is the chief thing. In fact, I have made all my arrangements for comfort's sake alone; so do not for a moment imagine that I had any other end in view. And since your window happens to be just opposite to mine, and since the courtyard between us is narrow and I can see you as you pass,—why, the result is that this miserable wretch will be able to live at once more happily and with less outlay. The dearest room in this house costs, with board, thirty-five roubles—more than my purse could well afford; whereas MY room costs only twenty-four, though formerly I used to pay thirty, and so had to deny myself many things (I could drink tea but seldom, and never could indulge in tea and sugar as I do now). But, somehow, I do not like having to go without tea, for everyone else here is respectable, and the fact makes me ashamed. After all, one drinks tea largely to please one's fellow men, Barbara, and to give oneself tone and an air of gentility (though, of myself, I care little about such things, for I am not a man of the finicking sort). Yet think you that, when all things needful—boots and the rest—have been paid for, much will remain? Yet I ought not to grumble at my salary,—I am quite satisfied with it; it is sufficient. It has sufficed me now for some years, and, in addition, I receive certain gratuities.

Well good-bye, my darling. I have bought you two little pots of geraniums—quite cheap little pots, too—as a present. Perhaps you would also like some mignonette? Mignonette it shall be if only you will write to inform me of everything in detail. Also, do not misunderstand the fact that I have taken this room, my dearest. Convenience and nothing else, has made me do so. The snugness of the place has caught my fancy. Also. I shall be able to save money here, and to hoard it against the future. Already I have saved a little money as a beginning. Nor must you despise me because I am such an insignificant old fellow that a fly could break me with its wing. True, I am not a swashbuckler; but perhaps there may also abide in me the spirit which should pertain to every man who is at once resigned and sure of himself. Good-bye, then, again, my angel. I have now covered close upon a whole two sheets of notepaper, though I ought

long ago to have been starting for the office. I kiss your hands, and remain ever your devoted slave, your faithful friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

P.S.—One thing I beg of you above all things—and that is, that you will answer this letter as FULLY as possible. With the letter I send you a packet of bonbons. Eat them for your health's sake, nor, for the love of God, feel any uneasiness about me. Once more, dearest one, good-bye.

April 8th

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Do you know, must quarrel with you. Yes, good Makar Alexievitch, I really cannot accept your presents, for I know what they must have cost you—I know to what privations and self-denial they must have led. How many times have I not told you that I stand in need of NOTHING, of absolutely NOTHING, as well as that I shall never be in a position to recompense you for all the kindly acts with which you have loaded me? Why, for instance, have you sent me geraniums? A little sprig of balsam would not have mattered so much—but geraniums! Only have I to let fall an unguarded word—for example, about geraniums—and at once you buy me some! How much they must have cost you! Yet what a charm there is in them, with their flaming petals! Wherever did you get these beautiful plants? I have set them in my window as the most conspicuous place possible, while on the floor I have placed a bench for my other flowers to stand on (since you are good enough to enrich me with such presents). Unfortunately, Thedora, who, with her sweeping and polishing, makes a perfect sanctuary of my room, is not over-pleased at the arrangement. But why have you sent me also bonbons? Your letter tells me that something special is afoot with you, for I find in it so much about paradise and spring and sweet odours and the songs of birds. Surely, thought I to myself when I received it, this is as good as poetry! Indeed, verses are the only thing that your letter lacks, Makar Alexievitch. And what tender feelings I can read in it—what roseate-coloured fancies! To the curtain, however, I had never given a thought. The fact is that when I moved the flower-pots, it LOOPED ITSELF up. There now!

Ah, Makar Alexievitch, you neither speak of nor give any account of what you have spent upon me. You hope thereby to deceive me, to make it seem as though the cost always falls upon you alone, and that there is nothing to conceal. Yet I KNOW that for my sake you deny yourself necessaries. For instance, what has made you go and take the room which you have done, where you will be worried and disturbed, and where you have neither elbow-space nor comfort—you who love solitude, and never like to have any one near you? To judge from your salary, I should think that you might well live in greater ease than that. Also, Thedora tells me that your circumstances used to be much more affluent than they are at present. Do you wish, then, to persuade me that your whole existence has been passed in loneliness and want and gloom, with never a

cheering word to help you, nor a seat in a friend's chimney-corner? Ah, kind comrade, how my heart aches for you! But do not overtask your health, Makar Alexievitch. For instance, you say that your eyes are over-weak for you to go on writing in your office by candle-light. Then why do so? I am sure that your official superiors do not need to be convinced of your diligence!

Once more I implore you not to waste so much money upon me. I know how much you love me, but I also know that you are not rich... . This morning I too rose in good spirits. Thedora had long been at work; and it was time that I too should bestir myself. Indeed I was yearning to do so, so I went out for some silk, and then sat down to my labours. All the morning I felt light-hearted and cheerful. Yet now my thoughts are once more dark and sad— once more my heart is ready to sink.

Ah, what is going to become of me? What will be my fate? To have to be so uncertain as to the future, to have to be unable to foretell what is going to happen, distresses me deeply. Even to look back at the past is horrible, for it contains sorrow that breaks my very heart at the thought of it. Yes, a whole century in tears could I spend because of the wicked people who have wrecked my life!

But dusk is coming on, and I must set to work again. Much else should I have liked to write to you, but time is lacking, and I must hasten. Of course, to write this letter is a pleasure enough, and could never be wearisome; but why do you not come to see me in person? Why do you not, Makar Alexievitch? You live so close to me, and at least SOME of your time is your own. I pray you, come. I have just seen Theresa. She was looking so ill, and I felt so sorry for her, that I gave her twenty kopecks. I am almost falling asleep. Write to me in fullest detail, both concerning your mode of life, and concerning the people who live with you, and concerning how you fare with them. I should so like to know! Yes, you must write again. Tonight I have purposely looped the curtain up. Go to bed early, for, last night, I saw your candle burning until nearly midnight. Goodbye! I am now feeling sad and weary. Ah that I should have to spend such days as this one has been. Again good-bye.—Your friend,

BARBARA DOBROSELOVA.

April 8th

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—To think that a day like this should have fallen to my miserable lot! Surely you are making fun of an old man? ... However, it was my own fault—my own fault entirely. One ought not to grow old holding a lock of Cupid's hair in one's hand. Naturally one is misunderstood.... Yet man is sometimes a very strange being. By all the Saints, he will talk of doing things, yet leave them undone, and remain looking the kind of fool from whom may the Lord preserve us! ... Nay, I am not angry, my beloved; I am only vexed to think that I should have written to you in such stupid, flowery phraseology. Today I went hopping and skipping to the office, for my heart was under your influence, and my soul was keeping holiday, as it

were. Yes, everything seemed to be going well with me. Then I betook myself to my work. But with what result? I gazed around at the old familiar objects, at the old familiar grey and gloomy objects. They looked just the same as before. Yet WERE those the same inkstains, the same tables and chairs, that I had hitherto known? Yes, they WERE the same, exactly the same; so why should I have gone off riding on Pegasus' back? Whence had that mood arisen? It had arisen from the fact that a certain sun had beamed upon me, and turned the sky to blue. But why so? Why is it, sometimes, that sweet odours seem to be blowing through a courtyard where nothing of the sort can be? They must be born of my foolish fancy, for a man may stray so far into sentiment as to forget his immediate surroundings, and to give way to the superfluity of fond ardour with which his heart is charged. On the other hand, as I walked home from the office at nightfall my feet seemed to lag, and my head to be aching. Also, a cold wind seemed to be blowing down my back (enraptured with the spring, I had gone out clad only in a thin overcoat). Yet you have misunderstood my sentiments, dearest. They are altogether different to what you suppose. It is a purely paternal feeling that I have for you. I stand towards you in the position of a relative who is bound to watch over your lonely orphanhood. This I say in all sincerity, and with a single purpose, as any kinsman might do. For, after all, I AM a distant kinsman of yours—the seventh drop of water in the pudding, as the proverb has it—yet still a kinsman, and at the present time your nearest relative and protector, seeing that where you had the right to look for help and protection, you found only treachery and insult. As for poetry, I may say that I consider it unbecoming for a man of my years to devote his faculties to the making of verses. Poetry is rubbish. Even boys at school ought to be whipped for writing it.

Why do you write thus about “comfort” and “peace” and the rest? I am not a fastidious man, nor one who requires much. Never in my life have I been so comfortable as now. Why, then, should I complain in my old age? I have enough to eat, I am well dressed and booted. Also, I have my diversions. You see, I am not of noble blood. My father himself was not a gentleman; he and his family had to live even more plainly than I do. Nor am I a milksop. Nevertheless, to speak frankly, I do not like my present abode so much as I used to like my old one. Somehow the latter seemed more cosy, dearest. Of course, this room is a good one enough; in fact, in SOME respects it is the more cheerful and interesting of the two. I have nothing to say against it—no. Yet I miss the room that used to be so familiar to me. Old lodgers like myself soon grow as attached to our chattels as to a kinsman. My old room was such a snug little place! True, its walls resembled those of any other room—I am not speaking of that; the point is that the recollection of them seems to haunt my mind with sadness. Curious that recollections should be so mournful! Even what in that room used to vex me and inconvenience me now looms in a purified light, and figures in my imagination as a thing to be desired. We used to live there so quietly—I and an old landlady who is now dead. How my heart aches to remember her, for she was a good woman, and never overcharged for her rooms. Her whole time was spent in making patchwork quilts with

knitting-needles that were an arshin [An ell.] long. Oftentimes we shared the same candle and board. Also she had a granddaughter, Masha—a girl who was then a mere baby, but must now be a girl of thirteen. This little piece of mischief, how she used to make us laugh the day long! We lived together, a happy family of three. Often of a long winter's evening we would first have tea at the big round table, and then betake ourselves to our work; the while that, to amuse the child and to keep her out of mischief, the old lady would set herself to tell stories. What stories they were!—though stories less suitable for a child than for a grown-up, educated person. My word! Why, I myself have sat listening to them, as I smoked my pipe, until I have forgotten about work altogether. And then, as the story grew grimmer, the little child, our little bag of mischief, would grow thoughtful in proportion, and clasp her rosy cheeks in her tiny hands, and, hiding her face, press closer to the old landlady. Ah, how I loved to see her at those moments! As one gazed at her one would fail to notice how the candle was flickering, or how the storm was swishing the snow about the courtyard. Yes, that was a goodly life, my Barbara, and we lived it for nearly twenty years... . How my tongue does carry me away! Maybe the subject does not interest you, and I myself find it a not over-easy subject to recall—especially at the present time.

Darkness is falling, and Theresa is busying herself with something or another. My head and my back are aching, and even my thoughts seem to be in pain, so strangely do they occur. Yes, my heart is sad today, Barbara.... What is it you have written to me? —“Why do you not come in PERSON to see me?” Dear one, what would people say? I should have but to cross the courtyard for people to begin noticing us, and asking themselves questions. Gossip and scandal would arise, and there would be read into the affair quite another meaning than the real one. No, little angel, it were better that I should see you tomorrow at Vespers. That will be the better plan, and less hurtful to us both. Nor must you chide me, beloved, because I have written you a letter like this (reading it through, I see it to be all odds and ends); for I am an old man now, dear Barbara, and an uneducated one. Little learning had I in my youth, and things refuse to fix themselves in my brain when I try to learn them anew. No, I am not skilled in letter-writing, Barbara, and, without being told so, or any one laughing at me for it, I know that, whenever I try to describe anything with more than ordinary distinctness, I fall into the mistake of talking sheer rubbish... . I saw you at your window today—yes, I saw you as you were drawing down the blind! Good-bye, goodbye, little Barbara, and may God keep you! Good-bye, my own Barbara Alexievna!—Your sincere friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

P.S.—Do not think that I could write to you in a satirical vein, for I am too old to show my teeth to no purpose, and people would laugh at me, and quote our Russian proverb: “Who diggeth a pit for another one, the same shall fall into it himself.”

April 9th

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Are not you, my friend and benefactor, just a little ashamed to repine and give way to such despondency? And surely you are not offended with me? Ah! Though often thoughtless in my speech, I never should have imagined that you would take my words as a jest at your expense. Rest assured that NEVER should I make sport of your years or of your character. Only my own levity is at fault; still more, the fact that I am so weary of life.

What will such a feeling not engender? To tell you the truth, I had supposed that YOU were jesting in your letter; wherefore, my heart was feeling heavy at the thought that you could feel so displeased with me. Kind comrade and helper, you will be doing me an injustice if for a single moment you ever suspect that I am lacking in feeling or in gratitude towards you. My heart, believe me, is able to appraise at its true worth all that you have done for me by protecting me from my enemies, and from hatred and persecution. Never shall I cease to pray to God for you; and, should my prayers ever reach Him and be received of Heaven, then assuredly fortune will smile upon you!

Today I am not well. By turns I shiver and flush with heat, and Thedora is greatly disturbed about me... . Do not scruple to come and see me, Makar Alexievitch. How can it concern other people what you do? You and I are well enough acquainted with each other, and one's own affairs are one's own affairs. Goodbye, Makar Alexievitch, for I have come to the end of all I had to say, and am feeling too unwell to write more. Again I beg of you not to be angry with me, but to rest assured of my constant respect and attachment.—Your humble, devoted servant,
BARBARA DOBROSELOVA.

April 12th

DEAREST MISTRESS BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I pray you, my beloved, to tell me what ails you. Every one of your letters fills me with alarm. On the other hand, in every letter I urge you to be more careful of yourself, and to wrap up yourself warmly, and to avoid going out in bad weather, and to be in all things prudent. Yet you go and disobey me! Ah, little angel, you are a perfect child! I know well that you are as weak as a blade of grass, and that, no matter what wind blows upon you, you are ready to fade. But you must be careful of yourself, dearest; you MUST look after yourself better; you MUST avoid all risks, lest you plunge your friends into desolation and despair.

Dearest, you also express a wish to learn the details of my daily life and surroundings. That wish I hasten to satisfy. Let me begin at the beginning, since, by doing so, I shall explain things more systematically. In the first place, on entering this house, one passes into a very bare hall, and thence along a passage to a mean staircase. The reception room, however, is bright, clean, and spacious, and is lined with redwood and metal-work. But the scullery you would not care to see; it is greasy, dirty, and odoriferous,

while the stairs are in rags, and the walls so covered with filth that the hand sticks fast wherever it touches them. Also, on each landing there is a medley of boxes, chairs, and dilapidated wardrobes; while the windows have had most of their panes shattered, and everywhere stand washtubs filled with dirt, litter, eggshells, and fish-bladders. The smell is abominable. In short, the house is not a nice one.

As to the disposition of the rooms, I have described it to you already. True, they are convenient enough, yet every one of them has an ATMOSPHERE. I do not mean that they smell badly so much as that each of them seems to contain something which gives forth a rank, sickly-sweet odour. At first the impression is an unpleasant one, but a couple of minutes will suffice to dissipate it, for the reason that EVERYTHING here smells—people's clothes, hands, and everything else—and one grows accustomed to the rankness. Canaries, however, soon die in this house. A naval officer here has just bought his fifth. Birds cannot live long in such an air. Every morning, when fish or beef is being cooked, and washing and scrubbing are in progress, the house is filled with steam. Always, too, the kitchen is full of linen hanging out to dry; and since my room adjoins that apartment, the smell from the clothes causes me not a little annoyance. However, one can grow used to anything.

From earliest dawn the house is astir as its inmates rise, walk about, and stamp their feet. That is to say, everyone who has to go to work then gets out of bed. First of all, tea is partaken of. Most of the tea-urns belong to the landlady; and since there are not very many of them, we have to wait our turn. Anyone who fails to do so will find his teapot emptied and put away. On the first occasion, that was what happened to myself. Well, is there anything else to tell you? Already I have made the acquaintance of the company here. The naval officer took the initiative in calling upon me, and his frankness was such that he told me all about his father, his mother, his sister (who is married to a lawyer of Tula), and the town of Kronstadt. Also, he promised me his patronage, and asked me to come and take tea with him. I kept the appointment in a room where card-playing is continually in progress; and, after tea had been drunk, efforts were made to induce me to gamble. Whether or not my refusal seemed to the company ridiculous I cannot say, but at all events my companions played the whole evening, and were playing when I left. The dust and smoke in the room made my eyes ache. I declined, as I say, to play cards, and was, therefore, requested to discourse on philosophy, after which no one spoke to me at all—a result which I did not regret. In fact, I have no intention of going there again, since every one is for gambling, and for nothing but gambling. Even the literary tchinovnik gives such parties in his room—though, in his case, everything is done delicately and with a certain refinement, so that the thing has something of a retiring and innocent air.

In passing, I may tell you that our landlady is NOT a nice woman. In fact, she is a regular beldame. You have seen her once, so what do you think of her? She is as lanky as a plucked chicken in consumption, and, with Phaldoni (her servant), constitutes the entire staff of the establishment. Whether or not Phaldoni has any other name I do not know, but at least he answers to this one, and every one calls him by it.

A red-haired, swine-jowled, snub-nosed, crooked lout, he is for ever wrangling with Theresa, until the pair nearly come to blows. In short, life is not overly pleasant in this place. Never at any time is the household wholly at rest, for always there are people sitting up to play cards. Sometimes, too, certain things are done of which it would be shameful for me to speak. In particular, hardened though I am, it astonishes me that men WITH FAMILIES should care to live in this Sodom. For example, there is a family of poor folk who have rented from the landlady a room which does not adjoin the other rooms, but is set apart in a corner by itself. Yet what quiet people they are! Not a sound is to be heard from them. The father—he is called Gorshkov—is a little grey-headed tchinovnik who, seven years ago, was dismissed from public service, and now walks about in a coat so dirty and ragged that it hurts one to see it. Indeed it is a worse coat even than mine! Also, he is so thin and frail (at times I meet him in the corridor) that his knees quake under him, his hands and head are tremulous with some disease (God only knows what!), and he so fears and distrusts everybody that he always walks alone. Reserved though I myself am, he is even worse. As for his family, it consists of a wife and three children. The eldest of the latter—a boy—is as frail as his father, while the mother—a woman who, formerly, must have been good looking, and still has a striking aspect in spite of her pallor—goes about in the sorriest of rags. Also I have heard that they are in debt to our landlady, as well as that she is not overly kind to them. Moreover, I have heard that Gorshkov lost his post through some unpleasantness or other—through a legal suit or process of which I could not exactly tell you the nature. Yes, they certainly are poor—Oh, my God, how poor! At the same time, never a sound comes from their room. It is as though not a soul were living in it. Never does one hear even the children— which is an unusual thing, seeing that children are ever ready to sport and play, and if they fail to do so it is a bad sign. One evening when I chanced to be passing the door of their room, and all was quiet in the house, I heard through the door a sob, and then a whisper, and then another sob, as though somebody within were weeping, and with such subdued bitterness that it tore my heart to hear the sound. In fact, the thought of these poor people never left me all night, and quite prevented me from sleeping.

Well, good-bye, my little Barbara, my little friend beyond price. I have described to you everything to the best of my ability. All today you have been in my thoughts; all today my heart has been yearning for you. I happen to know, dearest one, that you lack a warm cloak. To me too, these St. Petersburg springs, with their winds and their snow showers, spell death. Good heavens, how the breezes bite one! Do not be angry, beloved, that I should write like this. Style I have not. Would that I had! I write just what wanders into my brain, in the hope that I may cheer you up a little. Of course, had I had a good education, things might have been different; but, as things were, I could not have one. Never did I learn even to do simple sums!—Your faithful and unchangeable friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

April 25th

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Today I met my cousin Sasha. To see her going to wrack and ruin shocked me terribly. Moreover, it has reached me, through a side wind, that she has been making inquiry for me, and dogging my footsteps, under the pretext that she wishes to pardon me, to forget the past, and to renew our acquaintance. Well, among other things she told me that, whereas you are not a kinsman of mine, that she is my nearest relative; that you have no right whatever to enter into family relations with us; and that it is wrong and shameful for me to be living upon your earnings and charity. Also, she said that I must have forgotten all that she did for me, though thereby she saved both myself and my mother from starvation, and gave us food and drink; that for two and a half years we caused her great loss; and, above all things, that she excused us what we owed her. Even my poor mother she did not spare. Would that she, my dead parent, could know how I am being treated! But God knows all about it... . Also, Anna declared that it was solely through my own fault that my fortunes declined after she had bettered them; that she is in no way responsible for what then happened; and that I have but myself to blame for having been either unable or unwilling to defend my honour. Great God! WHO, then, has been at fault? According to Anna, Hospodin [Mr.] Bwikov was only right when he declined to marry a woman who— But need I say it? It is cruel to hear such lies as hers. What is to become of me I do not know. I tremble and sob and weep. Indeed, even to write this letter has cost me two hours. At least it might have been thought that Anna would have confessed HER share in the past. Yet see what she says! ... For the love of God do not be anxious about me, my friend, my only benefactor. Thedora is over apt to exaggerate matters. I am not REALLY ill. I have merely caught a little cold. I caught it last night while I was walking to Bolkovo, to hear Mass sung for my mother. Ah, mother, my poor mother! Could you but rise from the grave and learn what is being done to your daughter!

B. D.

May

May 20th

MY DEAREST LITTLE BARBARA,—I am sending you a few grapes, which are good for a convalescent person, and strongly recommended by doctors for the allayment of fever. Also, you were saying the other day that you would like some roses; wherefore, I now send you a bunch. Are you at all able to eat, my darling?—for that is the chief point which ought to be seen to. Let us thank God that the past and all its unhappiness are gone! Yes, let us give thanks to Heaven for that much! As for books, I cannot get hold of any, except for a book which, written in excellent style, is, I believe, to be had here. At all events, people keep praising it very much, and I have begged the loan of it for myself. Should you too like to read it? In this respect, indeed, I feel nervous, for the reason that it is so difficult to divine what your taste in books may be, despite my knowledge of your character. Probably you would like poetry—the poetry of sentiment and of love making? Well, I will send you a book of MY OWN poems. Already I have copied out part of the manuscript.

Everything with me is going well; so pray do not be anxious on my account, beloved. What Thedora told you about me was sheer rubbish. Tell her from me that she has not been speaking the truth. Yes, do not fail to give this mischief-maker my message. It is not the case that I have gone and sold a new uniform. Why should I do so, seeing that I have forty roubles of salary still to come to me? Do not be uneasy, my darling. Thedora is a vindictive woman—merely a vindictive woman. We shall yet see better days. Only do you get well, my angel—only do you get well, for the love of God, lest you grieve an old man. Also, who told you that I was looking thin? Slanders again—nothing but slanders! I am as healthy as could be, and have grown so fat that I am ashamed to be so sleek of paunch. Would that you were equally healthy! ... Now goodbye, my angel. I kiss every one of your tiny fingers, and remain ever your constant friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

P.S.—But what is this, dearest one, that you have written to me? Why do you place me upon such a pedestal? Moreover, how could I come and visit you frequently? How, I repeat? Of course, I might avail myself of the cover of night; but, alas! the season of the year is what it is, and includes no night time to speak of. In fact, although, throughout your illness and delirium, I scarcely left your side for a moment, I cannot think how I contrived to do the many things that I did. Later, I ceased to visit you at all, for the reason that people were beginning to notice things, and to ask me questions. Yet, even so, a scandal has arisen. Theresa I trust thoroughly, for she is not a talkative woman; but consider how it will be when the truth comes out in its entirety! What

THEN will folk not say and think? Nevertheless, be of good cheer, my beloved, and regain your health. When you have done so we will contrive to arrange a rendezvous out of doors.

June

June 1st

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—So eager am I to do something that will please and divert you in return for your care, for your ceaseless efforts on my behalf—in short, for your love for me— that I have decided to beguile a leisure hour for you by delving into my locker, and extracting thence the manuscript which I send you herewith. I began it during the happier period of my life, and have continued it at intervals since. So often have you asked me about my former existence—about my mother, about Pokrovski, about my sojourn with Anna Thedorovna, about my more recent misfortunes; so often have you expressed an earnest desire to read the manuscript in which (God knows why) I have recorded certain incidents of my life, that I feel no doubt but that the sending of it will give you sincere pleasure. Yet somehow I feel depressed when I read it, for I seem now to have grown twice as old as I was when I penned its concluding lines. Ah, Makar Alexievitch, how weary I am—how this insomnia tortures me! Convalescence is indeed a hard thing to bear!

B. D.

Manuscript

1

UP to the age of fourteen, when my father died, my childhood was the happiest period of my life. It began very far away from here— in the depths of the province of Tula, where my father filled the position of steward on the vast estates of the Prince P—. Our house was situated in one of the Prince's villages, and we lived a quiet, obscure, but happy, life. A gay little child was I—my one idea being ceaselessly to run about the fields and the woods and the garden. No one ever gave me a thought, for my father was always occupied with business affairs, and my mother with her housekeeping. Nor did any one ever give me any lessons—a circumstance for which I was not sorry. At earliest dawn I would hie me to a pond or a copse, or to a hay or a harvest field, where the sun could warm me, and I could roam wherever I liked, and scratch my hands with bushes, and tear my clothes in pieces. For this I used to get blamed afterwards, but I did not care.

Had it befallen me never to quit that village—had it befallen me to remain for ever in that spot—I should always have been happy; but fate ordained that I should leave my birthplace even before my girlhood had come to an end. In short, I was only twelve years old when we removed to St. Petersburg. Ah! how it hurts me to recall the mournful gatherings before our departure, and to recall how bitterly I wept when the time came for us to say farewell to all that I had held so dear! I remember throwing myself upon my father's neck, and beseeching him with tears to stay in the country a little longer; but he bid me be silent, and my mother, adding her tears to mine, explained that business matters compelled us to go. As a matter of fact, old Prince P— had just died, and his heirs had dismissed my father from his post; whereupon, since he had a little money privately invested in St. Petersburg, he bethought him that his personal presence in the capital was necessary for the due management of his affairs. It was my mother who told me this. Consequently we settled here in St. Petersburg, and did not again move until my father died.

How difficult I found it to grow accustomed to my new life! At the time of our removal to St. Petersburg it was autumn—a season when, in the country, the weather is clear and keen and bright, all agricultural labour has come to an end, the great sheaves of corn are safely garnered in the byre, and the birds are flying hither and thither in clamorous flocks. Yes, at that season the country is joyous and fair, but here in St. Petersburg, at the time when we reached the city, we encountered nothing but rain, bitter autumn frosts, dull skies, ugliness, and crowds of strangers who looked hostile, discontented, and disposed to take offence. However, we managed to settle down—though I remember that in our new home there was much noise and confusion as we set the establishment in order. After this my father was seldom at home, and my mother had few spare moments; wherefore, I found myself forgotten.

The first morning after our arrival, when I awoke from sleep, how sad I felt! I could see that our windows looked out upon a drab space of wall, and that the street below was littered with filth. Passers-by were few, and as they walked they kept muffling themselves up against the cold.

Then there ensued days when dullness and depression reigned supreme. Scarcely a relative or an acquaintance did we possess in St. Petersburg, and even Anna Thedorovna and my father had come to loggerheads with one another, owing to the fact that he owed her money. In fact, our only visitors were business callers, and as a rule these came but to wrangle, to argue, and to raise a disturbance. Such visits would make my father look very discontented, and seem out of temper. For hours and hours he would pace the room with a frown on his face and a brooding silence on his lips. Even my mother did not dare address him at these times, while, for my own part, I used to sit reading quietly and humbly in a corner—not venturing to make a movement of any sort.

Three months after our arrival in St. Petersburg I was sent to a boarding-school. Here I found myself thrown among strange people; here everything was grim and uninviting, with teachers continually shouting at me, and my fellow-pupils for ever

holding me up to derision, and myself constantly feeling awkward and uncouth. How strict, how exacting was the system! Appointed hours for everything, a common table, ever-insistent teachers! These things simply worried and tortured me. Never from the first could I sleep, but used to weep many a chill, weary night away. In the evenings everyone would have to repeat or to learn her lessons. As I crouched over a dialogue or a vocabulary, without daring even to stir, how my thoughts would turn to the chimney-corner at home, to my father, to my mother, to my old nurse, to the tales which the latter had been used to tell! How sad it all was! The memory of the merest trifle at home would please me, and I would think and think how nice things used to be at home. Once more I would be sitting in our little parlour at tea with my parents—in the familiar little parlour where everything was snug and warm! How ardently, how convulsively I would seem to be embracing my mother! Thus I would ponder, until at length tears of sorrow would softly gush forth and choke my bosom, and drive the lessons out of my head. For I never could master the tasks of the morrow; no matter how much my mistress and fellow-pupils might gird at me, no matter how much I might repeat my lessons over and over to myself, knowledge never came with the morning. Consequently, I used to be ordered the kneeling punishment, and given only one meal in the day. How dull and dispirited I used to feel! From the first my fellow-pupils used to tease and deride and mock me whenever I was saying my lessons. Also, they used to pinch me as we were on our way to dinner or tea, and to make groundless complaints of me to the head mistress. On the other hand, how heavenly it seemed when, on Saturday evening, my old nurse arrived to fetch me! How I would embrace the old woman in transports of joy! After dressing me, and wrapping me up, she would find that she could scarcely keep pace with me on the way home, so full was I of chatter and tales about one thing and another. Then, when I had arrived home merry and lighthearted, how fervently I would embrace my parents, as though I had not seen them for ten years. Such a fussing would there be—such a talking and a telling of tales! To everyone I would run with a greeting, and laugh, and giggle, and scamper about, and skip for very joy. True, my father and I used to have grave conversations about lessons and teachers and the French language and grammar; yet we were all very happy and contented together. Even now it thrills me to think of those moments. For my father's sake I tried hard to learn my lessons, for I could see that he was spending his last kopeck upon me, and himself subsisting God knows how. Every day he grew more morose and discontented and irritable; every day his character kept changing for the worse. He had suffered an influx of debts, nor were his business affairs prospering. As for my mother, she was afraid even to say a word, or to weep aloud, for fear of still further angering him. Gradually she sickened, grew thinner and thinner, and became taken with a painful cough. Whenever I reached home from school I would find every one low-spirited, and my mother shedding silent tears, and my father raging. Bickering and high words would arise, during which my father was wont to declare that, though he no longer derived the smallest pleasure or relaxation from life, and had spent his last coin upon my education, I had not yet mastered the French language. In short,

everything began to go wrong, to turn to unhappiness; and for that circumstance, my father took vengeance upon myself and my mother. How he could treat my poor mother so I cannot understand. It used to rend my heart to see her, so hollow were her cheeks becoming, so sunken her eyes, so hectic her face. But it was chiefly around myself that the disputes raged. Though beginning only with some trifle, they would soon go on to God knows what. Frequently, even I myself did not know to what they related. Anything and everything would enter into them, for my father would say that I was an utter dunce at the French language; that the head mistress of my school was a stupid, common sort of women who cared nothing for morals; that he (my father) had not yet succeeded in obtaining another post; that Lamonde's "Grammar" was a wretched book—even a worse one than Zapolski's; that a great deal of money had been squandered upon me; that it was clear that I was wasting my time in repeating dialogues and vocabularies; that I alone was at fault, and that I must answer for everything. Yet this did not arise from any WANT OF LOVE for me on the part of my father, but rather from the fact that he was incapable of putting himself in my own and my mother's place. It came of a defect of character.

All these cares and worries and disappointments tortured my poor father until he became moody and distrustful. Next he began to neglect his health. with the result that, catching a chill, he died, after a short illness, so suddenly and unexpectedly that for a few days we were almost beside ourselves with the shock — my mother, in particular, lying for a while in such a state of torpor that I had fears for her reason. The instant my father was dead creditors seemed to spring up out of the ground, and to assail us en masse. Everything that we possessed had to be surrendered to them, including a little house which my father had bought six months after our arrival in St. Petersburg. How matters were finally settled I do not know, but we found ourselves roofless, shelterless, and without a copper. My mother was grievously ill, and of means of subsistence we had none. Before us there loomed only ruin, sheer ruin. At the time I was fourteen years old. Soon afterwards Anna Theodorovna came to see us, saying that she was a lady of property and our relative; and this my mother confirmed—though, true, she added that Anna was only a very DISTANT relative. Anna had never taken the least notice of us during my father's lifetime, yet now she entered our presence with tears in her eyes, and an assurance that she meant to better our fortunes. Having condoled with us on our loss and destitute position, she added that my father had been to blame for everything, in that he had lived beyond his means, and taken upon himself more than he was able to perform. Also, she expressed a wish to draw closer to us, and to forget old scores; and when my mother explained that, for her own part, she harboured no resentment against Anna, the latter burst into tears, and, hurrying my mother away to church, then and there ordered Mass to be said for the "dear departed," as she called my father. In this manner she effected a solemn reconciliation with my mother.

Next, after long negotiations and vacillations, coupled with much vivid description of our destitute position, our desolation, and our helplessness, Anna invited us to pay

her (as she expressed it) a “return visit.” For this my mother duly thanked her, and considered the invitation for a while; after which, seeing that there was nothing else to be done, she informed Anna Theodorovna that she was prepared, gratefully, to accept her offer. Ah, how I remember the morning when we removed to Vassilievski Island! [A quarter of St. Petersburg.] It was a clear, dry, frosty morning in autumn. My mother could not restrain her tears, and I too felt depressed. Nay, my very heart seemed to be breaking under a strange, undefined load of sorrow. How terrible it all seemed! ...

2

AT first—that is to say, until my mother and myself grew used to our new abode—we found living at Anna Theodorovna’s both strange and disagreeable. The house was her own, and contained five rooms, three of which she shared with my orphaned cousin, Sasha (whom she had brought up from babyhood); a fourth was occupied by my mother and myself; and the fifth was rented of Anna by a poor student named Pokrovski. Although Anna lived in good style—in far better style than might have been expected—her means and her avocation were conjectural. Never was she at rest; never was she not busy with some mysterious something or other. Also, she possessed a wide and varied circle of friends. The stream of callers was perpetual—although God only knows who they were, or what their business was. No sooner did my mother hear the door-bell ring than off she would carry me to our own apartment. This greatly displeased Anna, who used again and again to assure my mother that we were too proud for our station in life. In fact, she would sulk for hours about it. At the time I could not understand these reproaches, and it was not until long afterwards that I learned—or rather, I guessed—why eventually my mother declared that she could not go on living with Anna. Yes, Anna was a bad woman. Never did she let us alone. As to the exact motive why she had asked us to come and share her house with her I am still in the dark. At first she was not altogether unkind to us but, later, she revealed to us her real character—as soon, that is to say, as she saw that we were at her mercy, and had nowhere else to go. Yes, in early days she was quite kind to me—even offensively so, but afterwards, I had to suffer as much as my mother. Constantly did Anna reproach us; constantly did she remind us of her benefactions, and introduce us to her friends as poor relatives of hers whom, out of goodness of heart and for the love of Christ, she had received into her bosom. At table, also, she would watch every mouthful that we took; and, if our appetite failed, immediately she would begin as before, and reiterate that we were over-dainty, that we must not assume that riches would mean happiness, and that we had better go and live by ourselves. Moreover, she never ceased to inveigh against my father—saying that he had sought to be better than other people, and thereby had brought himself to a bad end; that he had left his wife and daughter destitute; and that, but for the fact that we had happened to meet with a kind and sympathetic Christian soul, God alone knew where we should have laid our heads, save in the street. What did that woman not say? To hear her was not so much galling as

disgusting. From time to time my mother would burst into tears, her health grew worse from day to day, and her body was becoming sheer skin and bone. All the while, too, we had to work—to work from morning till night, for we had contrived to obtain some employment as occasional sempstresses. This, however, did not please Anna, who used to tell us that there was no room in her house for a modiste's establishment. Yet we had to get clothes to wear, to provide for unforeseen expenses, and to have a little money at our disposal in case we should some day wish to remove elsewhere. Unfortunately, the strain undermined my mother's health, and she became gradually weaker. Sickness, like a cankerworm, was gnawing at her life, and dragging her towards the tomb. Well could I see what she was enduring, what she was suffering. Yes, it all lay open to my eyes.

Day succeeded day, and each day was like the last one. We lived a life as quiet as though we had been in the country. Anna herself grew quieter in proportion as she came to realise the extent of her power over us. In nothing did we dare to thwart her. From her portion of the house our apartment was divided by a corridor, while next to us (as mentioned above) dwelt a certain Pokrovski, who was engaged in teaching Sasha the French and German languages, as well as history and geography—"all the sciences," as Anna used to say. In return for these services he received free board and lodging. As for Sasha, she was a clever, but rude and uncouth, girl of thirteen. On one occasion Anna remarked to my mother that it might be as well if I also were to take some lessons, seeing that my education had been neglected at school; and, my mother joyfully assenting, I joined Sasha for a year in studying under this Pokrovski.

The latter was a poor—a very poor—young man whose health would not permit of his undertaking the regular university course. Indeed, it was only for form's sake that we called him "The Student." He lived in such a quiet, humble, retiring fashion that never a sound reached us from his room. Also, his exterior was peculiar—he moved and walked awkwardly, and uttered his words in such a strange manner that at first I could never look at him without laughing. Sasha was for ever playing tricks upon him—more especially when he was giving us our lessons. But unfortunately, he was of a temperament as excitable as herself. Indeed, he was so irritable that the least trifle would send him into a frenzy, and set him shouting at us, and complaining of our conduct. Sometimes he would even rush away to his room before school hours were over, and sit there for days over his books, of which he had a store that was both rare and valuable. In addition, he acted as teacher at another establishment, and received payment for his services there; and, whenever he had received his fees for this extra work, he would hasten off and purchase more books.

In time I got to know and like him better, for in reality he was a good, worthy fellow—more so than any of the people with whom we otherwise came in contact. My mother in particular had a great respect for him, and, after herself, he was my best friend. But at first I was just an overgrown hoyden, and joined Sasha in playing the fool. For hours we would devise tricks to anger and distract him, for he looked extremely ridiculous when he was angry, and so diverted us the more (ashamed though I am

now to admit it). But once, when we had driven him nearly to tears, I heard him say to himself under his breath, "What cruel children!" and instantly I repented—I began to feel sad and ashamed and sorry for him. I reddened to my ears, and begged him, almost with tears, not to mind us, nor to take offence at our stupid jests. Nevertheless, without finishing the lesson, he closed his book, and departed to his own room. All that day I felt torn with remorse. To think that we two children had forced him, the poor, the unhappy one, to remember his hard lot! And at night I could not sleep for grief and regret. Remorse is said to bring relief to the soul, but it is not so. How far my grief was internally connected with my conceit I do not know, but at least I did not wish him to think me a baby, seeing that I had now reached the age of fifteen years. Therefore, from that day onwards I began to torture my imagination with devising a thousand schemes which should compel Pokrovski to alter his opinion of me. At the same time, being yet shy and reserved by nature, I ended by finding that, in my present position, I could make up my mind to nothing but vague dreams (and such dreams I had). However, I ceased to join Sasha in playing the fool, while Pokrovski, for his part, ceased to lose his temper with us so much. Unfortunately this was not enough to satisfy my self-esteem.

At this point, I must say a few words about the strangest, the most interesting, the most pitiable human being that I have ever come across. I speak of him now—at this particular point in these memoirs—for the reason that hitherto I had paid him no attention whatever, and began to do so now only because everything connected with Pokrovski had suddenly become of absorbing interest in my eyes.

Sometimes there came to the house a ragged, poorly-dressed, grey-headed, awkward, amorphous—in short, a very strange-looking—little old man. At first glance it might have been thought that he was perpetually ashamed of something—that he had on his conscience something which always made him, as it were, bristle up and then shrink into himself. Such curious starts and grimaces did he indulge in that one was forced to conclude that he was scarcely in his right mind. On arriving, he would halt for a while by the window in the hall, as though afraid to enter; until, should any one happen to pass in or out of the door—whether Sasha or myself or one of the servants (to the latter he always resorted the most readily, as being the most nearly akin to his own class)—he would begin to gesticulate and to beckon to that person, and to make various signs. Then, should the person in question nod to him, or call him by name (the recognised token that no other visitor was present, and that he might enter freely), he would open the door gently, give a smile of satisfaction as he rubbed his hands together, and proceed on tiptoe to young Pokrovski's room. This old fellow was none other than Pokrovski's father.

Later I came to know his story in detail. Formerly a civil servant, he had possessed no additional means, and so had occupied a very low and insignificant position in the service. Then, after his first wife (mother of the younger Pokrovski) had died, the widower bethought him of marrying a second time, and took to himself a tradesman's daughter, who soon assumed the reins over everything, and brought the home to rack

and ruin, so that the old man was worse off than before. But to the younger Pokrovski, fate proved kinder, for a landowner named Bwikov, who had formerly known the lad's father and been his benefactor, took the boy under his protection, and sent him to school. Another reason why this Bwikov took an interest in young Pokrovski was that he had known the lad's dead mother, who, while still a serving-maid, had been befriended by Anna Theodorovna, and subsequently married to the elder Pokrovski. At the wedding Bwikov, actuated by his friendship for Anna, conferred upon the young bride a dowry of five thousand roubles; but whither that money had since disappeared I cannot say. It was from Anna's lips that I heard the story, for the student Pokrovski was never prone to talk about his family affairs. His mother was said to have been very good-looking; wherefore, it is the more mysterious why she should have made so poor a match. She died when young—only four years after her espousal.

From school the young Pokrovski advanced to a gymnasium, [Secondary school.] and thence to the University, where Bwikov, who frequently visited the capital, continued to accord the youth his protection. Gradually, however, ill health put an end to the young man's university course; whereupon Bwikov introduced and personally recommended him to Anna Theodorovna, and he came to lodge with her on condition that he taught Sasha whatever might be required of him.

Grief at the harshness of his wife led the elder Pokrovski to plunge into dissipation, and to remain in an almost permanent condition of drunkenness. Constantly his wife beat him, or sent him to sit in the kitchen—with the result that in time, he became so inured to blows and neglect, that he ceased to complain. Still not greatly advanced in years, he had nevertheless endangered his reason through evil courses—his only sign of decent human feeling being his love for his son. The latter was said to resemble his dead mother as one pea may resemble another. What recollections, therefore, of the kind helpmeet of former days may not have moved the breast of the poor broken old man to this boundless affection for the boy? Of naught else could the father ever speak but of his son, and never did he fail to visit him twice a week. To come oftener he did not dare, for the reason that the younger Pokrovski did not like these visits of his father's. In fact, there can be no doubt that the youth's greatest fault was his lack of filial respect. Yet the father was certainly rather a difficult person to deal with, for, in the first place, he was extremely inquisitive, while, in the second place, his long-winded conversation and questions—questions of the most vapid and senseless order conceivable—always prevented the son from working. Likewise, the old man occasionally arrived there drunk. Gradually, however, the son was weaning his parent from his vicious ways and everlasting inquisitiveness, and teaching the old man to look upon him, his son, as an oracle, and never to speak without that son's permission.

On the subject of his Petinka, as he called him, the poor old man could never sufficiently rhapsodise and dilate. Yet when he arrived to see his son he almost invariably had on his face a downcast, timid expression that was probably due to uncertainty concerning the way in which he would be received. For a long time he would hesitate to enter, and if I happened to be there he would question me for twenty minutes or so

as to whether his Petinka was in good health, as well as to the sort of mood he was in, whether he was engaged on matters of importance, what precisely he was doing (writing or meditating), and so on. Then, when I had sufficiently encouraged and reassured the old man, he would make up his mind to enter, and quietly and cautiously open the door. Next, he would protrude his head through the chink, and if he saw that his son was not angry, but threw him a nod, he would glide noiselessly into the room, take off his scarf, and hang up his hat (the latter perennially in a bad state of repair, full of holes, and with a smashed brim)—the whole being done without a word or a sound of any kind. Next, the old man would seat himself warily on a chair, and, never removing his eyes from his son, follow his every movement, as though seeking to gauge Petinka's state of mind. On the other hand, if the son was not in good spirits, the father would make a note of the fact, and at once get up, saying that he had "only called for a minute or two," that, "having been out for a long walk, and happening at the moment to be passing," he had "looked in for a moment's rest." Then silently and humbly the old man would resume his hat and scarf; softly he would open the door, and noiselessly depart with a forced smile on his face—the better to bear the disappointment which was seething in his breast, the better to help him not to show it to his son.

On the other hand, whenever the son received his father civilly the old man would be struck dumb with joy. Satisfaction would beam in his face, in his every gesture, in his every movement. And if the son deigned to engage in conversation with him, the old man always rose a little from his chair, and answered softly, sympathetically, with something like reverence, while strenuously endeavouring to make use of the most *recherche* (that is to say, the most ridiculous) expressions. But, alas! He had not the gift of words. Always he grew confused, and turned red in the face; never did he know what to do with his hands or with himself. Likewise, whenever he had returned an answer of any kind, he would go on repeating the same in a whisper, as though he were seeking to justify what he had just said. And if he happened to have returned a good answer, he would begin to preen himself, and to straighten his waistcoat, frockcoat and tie, and to assume an air of conscious dignity. Indeed, on these occasions he would feel so encouraged, he would carry his daring to such a pitch, that, rising softly from his chair, he would approach the bookshelves, take thence a book, and read over to himself some passage or another. All this he would do with an air of feigned indifference and sangfroid, as though he were free ALWAYS to use his son's books, and his son's kindness were no rarity at all. Yet on one occasion I saw the poor old fellow actually turn pale on being told by his son not to touch the books. Abashed and confused, he, in his awkward hurry, replaced the volume wrong side uppermost; whereupon, with a supreme effort to recover himself, he turned it round with a smile and a blush, as though he were at a loss how to view his own misdemeanour. Gradually, as already said, the younger Pokrovski weaned his father from his dissipated ways by giving him a small coin whenever, on three successive occasions, he (the father) arrived sober. Sometimes, also, the younger man would buy the older one shoes, or a tie, or a waistcoat; whereafter, the old man would be as proud of his acquisition as a peacock.

Not infrequently, also, the old man would step in to visit ourselves, and bring Sasha and myself gingerbread birds or apples, while talking unceasingly of Petinka. Always he would beg of us to pay attention to our lessons, on the plea that Petinka was a good son, an exemplary son, a son who was in twofold measure a man of learning; after which he would wink at us so quizzingly with his left eye, and twist himself about in such amusing fashion, that we were forced to burst out laughing. My mother had a great liking for him, but he detested Anna Theodorovna—although in her presence he would be quieter than water and lowlier than the earth.

Soon after this I ceased to take lessons of Pokrovski. Even now he thought me a child, a raw schoolgirl, as much as he did Sasha; and this hurt me extremely, seeing that I had done so much to expiate my former behaviour. Of my efforts in this direction no notice had been taken, and the fact continued to anger me more and more. Scarcely ever did I address a word to my tutor between school hours, for I simply could not bring myself to do it. If I made the attempt I only grew red and confused, and rushed away to weep in a corner. How it would all have ended I do not know, had not a curious incident helped to bring about a rapprochement. One evening, when my mother was sitting in Anna Theodorovna's room, I crept on tiptoe to Pokrovski's apartment, in the belief that he was not at home. Some strange impulse moved me to do so. True, we had lived cheek by jowl with one another; yet never once had I caught a glimpse of his abode. Consequently my heart beat loudly - so loudly, indeed, that it seemed almost to be bursting from my breast. On entering the room I glanced around me with tense interest. The apartment was very poorly furnished, and bore few traces of orderliness. On table and chairs there lay heaps of books; everywhere were books and papers. Then a strange thought entered my head, as well as, with the thought, an unpleasant feeling of irritation. It seemed to me that my friendship, my heart's affection, meant little to him, for HE was well-educated, whereas I was stupid, and had learned nothing, and had read not a single book. So I stood looking wistfully at the long bookshelves where they groaned under their weight of volumes. I felt filled with grief, disappointment, and a sort of frenzy. I felt that I MUST read those books, and decided to do so—to read them one by one, and with all possible speed. Probably the idea was that, by learning whatsoever HE knew, I should render myself more worthy of his friendship. So, I made a rush towards the bookcase nearest me, and, without stopping further to consider matters, seized hold of the first dusty tome upon which my hands chanced to alight, and, reddening and growing pale by turns, and trembling with fear and excitement, clasped the stolen book to my breast with the intention of reading it by candle light while my mother lay asleep at night.

But how vexed I felt when, on returning to our own room, and hastily turning the pages, only an old, battered worm-eaten Latin work greeted my eyes! Without loss of time I retraced my steps. Just when I was about to replace the book I heard a noise in the corridor outside, and the sound of footsteps approaching. Fumblingly I hastened to complete what I was about, but the tiresome book had become so tightly wedged into its row that, on being pulled out, it caused its fellows to close up too compactly

to leave any place for their comrade. To insert the book was beyond my strength; yet still I kept pushing and pushing at the row. At last the rusty nail which supported the shelf (the thing seemed to have been waiting on purpose for that moment!) broke off short; with the result that the shelf descended with a crash, and the books piled themselves in a heap on the floor! Then the door of the room opened, and Pokrovski entered!

I must here remark that he never could bear to have his possessions tampered with. Woe to the person, in particular, who touched his books! Judge, therefore, of my horror when books small and great, books of every possible shape and size and thickness, came tumbling from the shelf, and flew and sprang over the table, and under the chairs, and about the whole room. I would have turned and fled, but it was too late. "All is over!" thought I. "All is over! I am ruined, I am undone! Here have I been playing the fool like a ten-year-old child! What a stupid girl I am! The monstrous fool!"

Indeed, Pokrovski was very angry. "What? Have you not done enough?" he cried. "Are you not ashamed to be for ever indulging in such pranks? Are you NEVER going to grow sensible?" With that he darted forward to pick up the books, while I bent down to help him.

"You need not, you need not!" he went on. "You would have done far better not to have entered without an invitation."

Next, a little mollified by my humble demeanour, he resumed in his usual tutorial tone—the tone which he had adopted in his new-found role of preceptor:

"When are you going to grow steadier and more thoughtful? Consider yourself for a moment. You are no longer a child, a little girl, but a maiden of fifteen."

Then, with a desire (probably) to satisfy himself that I was no longer a being of tender years, he threw me a glance—but straightway reddened to his very ears. This I could not understand, but stood gazing at him in astonishment. Presently, he straightened himself a little, approached me with a sort of confused expression, and haltingly said something—probably it was an apology for not having before perceived that I was now a grown-up young person. But the next moment I understood. What I did I hardly know, save that, in my dismay and confusion, I blushed even more hotly than he had done and, covering my face with my hands, rushed from the room.

What to do with myself for shame I could not think. The one thought in my head was that he had surprised me in his room. For three whole days I found myself unable to raise my eyes to his, but blushed always to the point of weeping. The strangest and most confused of thoughts kept entering my brain. One of them—the most extravagant—was that I should dearly like to go to Pokrovski, and to explain to him the situation, and to make full confession, and to tell him everything without concealment, and to assure him that I had not acted foolishly as a minx, but honestly and of set purpose. In fact, I DID make up my mind to take this course, but lacked the necessary courage to do it. If I had done so, what a figure I should have cut! Even now I am ashamed to think of it.

A few days later, my mother suddenly fell dangerously ill. For two days past she had not left her bed, while during the third night of her illness she became seized with fever and delirium. I also had not closed my eyes during the previous night, but now waited upon my mother, sat by her bed, brought her drink at intervals, and gave her medicine at duly appointed hours. The next night I suffered terribly. Every now and then sleep would cause me to nod, and objects grow dim before my eyes. Also, my head was turning dizzy, and I could have fainted for very weariness. Yet always my mother's feeble moans recalled me to myself as I started, momentarily awoke, and then again felt drowsiness overcoming me. What torture it was! I do not know, I cannot clearly remember, but I think that, during a moment when wakefulness was thus contending with slumber, a strange dream, a horrible vision, visited my overwrought brain, and I awoke in terror. The room was nearly in darkness, for the candle was flickering, and throwing stray beams of light which suddenly illuminated the room, danced for a moment on the walls, and then disappeared. Somehow I felt afraid—a sort of horror had come upon me—my imagination had been over-excited by the evil dream which I had experienced, and a feeling of oppression was crushing my heart.... I leapt from the chair, and involuntarily uttered a cry—a cry wrung from me by the terrible, torturing sensation that was upon me. Presently the door opened, and Pokrovski entered.

I remember that I was in his arms when I recovered my senses. Carefully seating me on a bench, he handed me a glass of water, and then asked me a few questions—though how I answered them I do not know. “You yourself are ill,” he said as he took my hand. “You yourself are VERY ill. You are feverish, and I can see that you are knocking yourself out through your neglect of your own health. Take a little rest. Lie down and go to sleep. Yes, lie down, lie down,” he continued without giving me time to protest. Indeed, fatigue had so exhausted my strength that my eyes were closing from very weakness. So I lay down on the bench with the intention of sleeping for half an hour only; but, I slept till morning. Pokrovski then awoke me, saying that it was time for me to go and give my mother her medicine.

When the next evening, about eight o'clock, I had rested a little and was preparing to spend the night in a chair beside my mother (fixedly meaning not to go to sleep this time), Pokrovski suddenly knocked at the door. I opened it, and he informed me that, since, possibly, I might find the time wearisome, he had brought me a few books to read. I accepted the books, but do not, even now, know what books they were, nor whether I looked into them, despite the fact that I never closed my eyes the whole night long. The truth was that a strange feeling of excitement was preventing me from sleeping, and I could not rest long in any one spot, but had to keep rising from my chair, and walking about the room. Throughout my whole being there seemed to be diffused a kind of elation—of elation at Pokrovski's attentions, at the thought that he was anxious and uneasy about me. Until dawn I pondered and dreamed; and though I felt sure Pokrovski would not again visit us that night, I gave myself up to fancies concerning what he might do the following evening.

That evening, when everyone else in the house had retired to rest, Pokrovski opened his door, and opened a conversation from the threshold of his room. Although, at this distance of time, I cannot remember a word of what we said to one another, I remember that I blushed, grew confused, felt vexed with myself, and awaited with impatience the end of the conversation although I myself had been longing for the meeting to take place, and had spent the day in dreaming of it, and devising a string of suitable questions and replies. Yes, that evening saw the first strand in our friendship knitted; and each subsequent night of my mother's illness we spent several hours together. Little by little I overcame his reserve, but found that each of these conversations left me filled with a sense of vexation at myself. At the same time, I could see with secret joy and a sense of proud elation that I was leading him to forget his tiresome books. At last the conversation turned jestingly upon the upsetting of the shelf. The moment was a peculiar one, for it came upon me just when I was in the right mood for self-revelation and candour. In my ardour, my curious phase of exaltation, I found myself led to make a full confession of the fact that I had become wishful to learn, to KNOW, something, since I had felt hurt at being taken for a chit, a mere baby... I repeat that that night I was in a very strange frame of mind. My heart was inclined to be tender, and there were tears standing in my eyes. Nothing did I conceal as I told him about my friendship for him, about my desire to love him, about my scheme for living in sympathy with him and comforting him, and making his life easier. In return he threw me a look of confusion mingled with astonishment, and said nothing. Then suddenly I began to feel terribly pained and disappointed, for I conceived that he had failed to understand me, or even that he might be laughing at me. Bursting into tears like a child, I sobbed, and could not stop myself, for I had fallen into a kind of fit; whereupon he seized my hand, kissed it, and clasped it to his breast—saying various things, meanwhile, to comfort me, for he was labouring under a strong emotion. Exactly what he said I do not remember—I merely wept and laughed by turns, and blushed, and found myself unable to speak a word for joy. Yet, for all my agitation, I noticed that about him there still lingered an air of constraint and uneasiness. Evidently, he was lost in wonder at my enthusiasm and raptures—at my curiously ardent, unexpected, consuming friendship. It may be that at first he was amazed, but that afterwards he accepted my devotion and words of invitation and expressions of interest with the same simple frankness as I had offered them, and responded to them with an interest, a friendliness, a devotion equal to my own, even as a friend or a brother would do. How happy, how warm was the feeling in my heart! Nothing had I concealed or repressed. No, I had bared all to his sight, and each day would see him draw nearer to me.

Truly I could not say what we did not talk about during those painful, yet rapturous, hours when, by the trembling light of a lamp, and almost at the very bedside of my poor sick mother, we kept midnight tryst. Whatsoever first came into our heads we spoke of—whatsoever came riven from our hearts, whatsoever seemed to call for utterance, found voice. And almost always we were happy. What a grievous, yet joyous, period it was—a period grievous and joyous at the same time! To this day it both hurts and

delights me to recall it. Joyous or bitter though it was, its memories are yet painful. At least they seem so to me, though a certain sweetness assuaged the pain. So, whenever I am feeling heartsick and oppressed and jaded and sad those memories return to freshen and revive me, even as drops of evening dew return to freshen and revive, after a sultry day, the poor faded flower which has long been drooping in the noontide heat.

My mother grew better, but still I continued to spend the nights on a chair by her bedside. Often, too, Pokrovski would give me books. At first I read them merely so as to avoid going to sleep, but afterwards I examined them with more attention, and subsequently with actual avidity, for they opened up to me a new, an unexpected, an unknown, an unfamiliar world. New thoughts, added to new impressions, would come pouring into my heart in a rich flood; and the more emotion, the more pain and labour, it cost me to assimilate these new impressions, the dearer did they become to me, and the more gratefully did they stir my soul to its very depths. Crowding into my heart without giving it time even to breathe, they would cause my whole being to become lost in a wondrous chaos. Yet this spiritual ferment was not sufficiently strong wholly to undo me. For that I was too fanciful, and the fact saved me.

With the passing of my mother's illness the midnight meetings and long conversations between myself and Pokrovski came to an end. Only occasionally did we exchange a few words with one another— words, for the most part, that were of little purport or substance, yet words to which it delighted me to apportion their several meanings, their peculiar secret values. My life had now become full— I was happy; I was quietly, restfully happy. Thus did several weeks elapse....

One day the elder Pokrovski came to see us, and chattered in a brisk, cheerful, garrulous sort of way. He laughed, launched out into witticisms, and, finally, resolved the riddle of his transports by informing us that in a week's time it would be his Petinka's birthday, when, in honour of the occasion, he (the father) meant to don a new jacket (as well as new shoes which his wife was going to buy for him), and to come and pay a visit to his son. In short, the old man was perfectly happy, and gossiped about whatsoever first entered his head.

My lover's birthday! Thenceforward, I could not rest by night or day. Whatever might happen, it was my fixed intention to remind Pokrovski of our friendship by giving him a present. But what sort of present? Finally, I decided to give him books. I knew that he had long wanted to possess a complete set of Pushkin's works, in the latest edition; so, I decided to buy Pushkin. My private fund consisted of thirty roubles, earned by handiwork, and designed eventually to procure me a new dress, but at once I dispatched our cook, old Matrena, to ascertain the price of such an edition. Horrors! The price of the eleven volumes, added to extra outlay upon the binding, would amount to at least SIXTY roubles! Where was the money to come from? I thought and thought, yet could not decide. I did not like to resort to my mother. Of course she would help me, but in that case every one in the house would become aware of my gift, and the gift itself would assume the guise of a recompense—of payment for Pokrovski's labours on my behalf during the past year; whereas, I wished to present the gift ALONE, and

without the knowledge of anyone. For the trouble that he had taken with me I wished to be his perpetual debtor—to make him no payment at all save my friendship. At length, I thought of a way out of the difficulty.

I knew that of the hucksters in the Gostinni Dvor one could sometimes buy a book—even one that had been little used and was almost entirely new—for a half of its price, provided that one haggled sufficiently over it; wherefore I determined to repair thither. It so happened that, next day, both Anna Thedorovna and ourselves were in want of sundry articles; and since my mother was unwell and Anna lazy, the execution of the commissions devolved upon me, and I set forth with Matrena.

Luckily, I soon chanced upon a set of Pushkin, handsomely bound, and set myself to bargain for it. At first more was demanded than would have been asked of me in a shop; but afterwards—though not without a great deal of trouble on my part, and several feints at departing—I induced the dealer to lower his price, and to limit his demands to ten roubles in silver. How I rejoiced that I had engaged in this bargaining! Poor Matrena could not imagine what had come to me, nor why I so desired to buy books. But, oh horror of horrors! As soon as ever the dealer caught sight of my capital of thirty roubles in notes, he refused to let the Pushkin go for less than the sum he had first named; and though, in answer to my prayers and protestations, he eventually yielded a little, he did so only to the tune of two-and-a-half roubles more than I possessed, while swearing that he was making the concession for my sake alone, since I was “a sweet young lady,” and that he would have done so for no one else in the world. To think that only two-and-a-half roubles should still be wanting! I could have wept with vexation. Suddenly an unlooked-for circumstance occurred to help me in my distress.

Not far away, near another table that was heaped with books, I perceived the elder Pokrovski, and a crowd of four or five hucksters plaguing him nearly out of his senses. Each of these fellows was proffering the old man his own particular wares; and while there was nothing that they did not submit for his approval, there was nothing that he wished to buy. The poor old fellow had the air of a man who is receiving a thrashing. What to make of what he was being offered him he did not know. Approaching him, I inquired what he happened to be doing there; whereat the old man was delighted, since he liked me (it may be) no less than he did Petinka.

“I am buying some books, Barbara Alexievna,” said he, “I am buying them for my Petinka. It will be his birthday soon, and since he likes books I thought I would get him some.”

The old man always expressed himself in a very roundabout sort of fashion, and on the present occasion he was doubly, terribly confused. Of no matter what book he asked the price, it was sure to be one, two, or three roubles. The larger books he could not afford at all; he could only look at them wistfully, fumble their leaves with his finger, turn over the volumes in his hands, and then replace them. “No, no, that is too dear,” he would mutter under his breath. “I must go and try somewhere else.” Then again he would fall to examining copy-books, collections of poems, and almanacs of the cheaper order.

“Why should you buy things like those?” I asked him. “They are such rubbish!”

“No, no!” he replied. “See what nice books they are! Yes, they ARE nice books!” Yet these last words he uttered so lingeringly that I could see he was ready to weep with vexation at finding the better sorts of books so expensive. Already a little tear was trickling down his pale cheeks and red nose. I inquired whether he had much money on him; whereupon the poor old fellow pulled out his entire stock, wrapped in a piece of dirty newspaper, and consisting of a few small silver coins, with twenty kopecks in copper. At once I seized the lot, and, dragging him off to my huckster, said: “Look here. These eleven volumes of Pushkin are priced at thirty-two-and-a-half roubles, and I have only thirty roubles. Let us add to them these two-and-a-half roubles of yours, and buy the books together, and make them our joint gift.” The old man was overjoyed, and pulled out his money en masse; whereupon the huckster loaded him with our common library. Stuffing it into his pockets, as well as filling both arms with it, he departed homewards with his prize, after giving me his word to bring me the books privately on the morrow.

Next day the old man came to see his son, and sat with him, as usual, for about an hour; after which he visited ourselves, wearing on his face the most comical, the most mysterious expression conceivable. Smiling broadly with satisfaction at the thought that he was the possessor of a secret, he informed me that he had stealthily brought the books to our rooms, and hidden them in a corner of the kitchen, under Matrena’s care. Next, by a natural transition, the conversation passed to the coming fete-day; whereupon, the old man proceeded to hold forth extensively on the subject of gifts. The further he delved into his thesis, and the more he expounded it, the clearer could I see that on his mind there was something which he could not, dared not, divulge. So I waited and kept silent. The mysterious exaltation, the repressed satisfaction which I had hitherto discerned in his antics and grimaces and left-eyed winks gradually disappeared, and he began to grow momentarily more anxious and uneasy. At length he could contain himself no longer.

“Listen, Barbara Alexievna,” he said timidly. “Listen to what I have got to say to you. When his birthday is come, do you take TEN of the books, and give them to him yourself—that is, FOR yourself, as being YOUR share of the gift. Then I will take the eleventh book, and give it to him MYSELF, as being my gift. If we do that, you will have a present for him and I shall have one—both of us alike.”

“Why do you not want us to present our gifts together, Zachar Petrovitch?” I asked him.

“Oh, very well,” he replied. “Very well, Barbara Alexievna. Only- only, I thought that—”

The old man broke off in confusion, while his face flushed with the exertion of thus expressing himself. For a moment or two he sat glued to his seat.

“You see,” he went on, “I play the fool too much. I am forever playing the fool, and cannot help myself, though I know that it is wrong to do so. At home it is often cold, and sometimes there are other troubles as well, and it all makes me depressed.

Well, whenever that happens, I indulge a little, and occasionally drink too much. Now, Petinka does not like that; he loses his temper about it, Barbara Alexievna, and scolds me, and reads me lectures. So I want by my gift to show him that I am mending my ways, and beginning to conduct myself better. For a long time past, I have been saving up to buy him a book—yes, for a long time past I have been saving up for it, since it is seldom that I have any money, unless Petinka happens to give me some. He knows that, and, consequently, as soon as ever he perceives the use to which I have put his money, he will understand that it is for his sake alone that I have acted.”

My heart ached for the old man. Seeing him looking at me with such anxiety, I made up my mind without delay.

“I tell you what,” I said. “Do you give him all the books.”

“ALL?” he ejaculated. “ALL the books?”

“Yes, all of them.”

“As my own gift?” “Yes, as your own gift.”

“As my gift alone?”

“Yes, as your gift alone.”

Surely I had spoken clearly enough, yet the old man seemed hardly to understand me.

“Well,” said he after reflection, “that certainly would be splendid—certainly it would be most splendid. But what about yourself, Barbara Alexievna?”

“Oh, I shall give your son nothing.”

“What?” he cried in dismay. “Are you going to give Petinka nothing—do you WISH to give him nothing?” So put about was the old fellow with what I had said, that he seemed almost ready to renounce his own proposal if only I would give his son something. What a kind heart he had! I hastened to assure him that I should certainly have a gift of some sort ready, since my one wish was to avoid spoiling his pleasure.

“Provided that your son is pleased,” I added, “and that you are pleased, I shall be equally pleased, for in my secret heart I shall feel as though I had presented the gift.”

This fully reassured the old man. He stopped with us another couple of hours, yet could not sit still for a moment, but kept jumping up from his seat, laughing, cracking jokes with Sasha, bestowing stealthy kisses upon myself, pinching my hands, and making silent grimaces at Anna Theodorovna. At length, she turned him out of the house. In short, his transports of joy exceeded anything that I had yet beheld.

On the festal day he arrived exactly at eleven o’clock, direct from Mass. He was dressed in a carefully mended frockcoat, a new waistcoat, and a pair of new shoes, while in his arms he carried our pile of books. Next we all sat down to coffee (the day being Sunday) in Anna Theodorovna’s parlour. The old man led off the meal by saying that Pushkin was a magnificent poet. Thereafter, with a return to shamefacedness and confusion, he passed suddenly to the statement that a man ought to conduct himself properly; that, should he not do so, it might be taken as a sign that he was in some way overindulging himself; and that evil tendencies of this sort led to the man’s ruin and degradation. Then the orator sketched for our benefit some terrible instances of

such incontinence, and concluded by informing us that for some time past he had been mending his own ways, and conducting himself in exemplary fashion, for the reason that he had perceived the justice of his son's precepts, and had laid them to heart so well that he, the father, had really changed for the better: in proof whereof, he now begged to present to the said son some books for which he had long been setting aside his savings.

As I listened to the old man I could not help laughing and crying in a breath. Certainly he knew how to lie when the occasion required! The books were transferred to his son's room, and arranged upon a shelf, where Pokrovski at once guessed the truth about them. Then the old man was invited to dinner and we all spent a merry day together at cards and forfeits. Sasha was full of life, and I rivalled her, while Pokrovski paid me numerous attentions, and kept seeking an occasion to speak to me alone. But to allow this to happen I refused. Yes, taken all in all, it was the happiest day that I had known for four years.

But now only grievous, painful memories come to my recollection, for I must enter upon the story of my darker experiences. It may be that that is why my pen begins to move more slowly, and seems as though it were going altogether to refuse to write. The same reason may account for my having undertaken so lovingly and enthusiastically a recounting of even the smallest details of my younger, happier days. But alas! those days did not last long, and were succeeded by a period of black sorrow which will close only God knows when!

My misfortunes began with the illness and death of Pokrovski, who was taken worse two months after what I have last recorded in these memoirs. During those two months he worked hard to procure himself a livelihood since hitherto he had had no assured position. Like all consumptives, he never—not even up to his last moment—altogether abandoned the hope of being able to enjoy a long life. A post as tutor fell in his way, but he had never liked the profession; while for him to become a civil servant was out of the question, owing to his weak state of health. Moreover, in the latter capacity he would have had to have waited a long time for his first instalment of salary. Again, he always looked at the darker side of things, for his character was gradually being warped, and his health undermined by his illness, though he never noticed it. Then autumn came on, and daily he went out to business—that is to say, to apply for and to canvass for posts—clad only in a light jacket; with the result that, after repeated soakings with rain, he had to take to his bed, and never again left it. He died in mid-autumn at the close of the month of October.

Throughout his illness I scarcely ever left his room, but waited on him hand and foot. Often he could not sleep for several nights at a time. Often, too, he was unconscious, or else in a delirium; and at such times he would talk of all sorts of things—of his work, of his books, of his father, of myself. At such times I learned much which I had not hitherto known or divined about his affairs. During the early part of his illness everyone in the house looked askance at me, and Anna Theodorovna would nod her head in a meaning manner; but, I always looked them straight in the face, and gradually

they ceased to take any notice of my concern for Pokrovski. At all events my mother ceased to trouble her head about it.

Sometimes Pokrovski would know who I was, but not often, for more usually he was unconscious. Sometimes, too, he would talk all night with some unknown person, in dim, mysterious language that caused his gasping voice to echo hoarsely through the narrow room as through a sepulchre; and at such times, I found the situation a strange one. During his last night he was especially lightheaded, for then he was in terrible agony, and kept rambling in his speech until my soul was torn with pity. Everyone in the house was alarmed, and Anna Theodorovna fell to praying that God might soon take him. When the doctor had been summoned, the verdict was that the patient would die with the morning.

That night the elder Pokrovski spent in the corridor, at the door of his son's room. Though given a mattress to lie upon, he spent his time in running in and out of the apartment. So broken with grief was he that he presented a dreadful spectacle, and appeared to have lost both perception and feeling. His head trembled with agony, and his body quivered from head to foot as at times he murmured to himself something which he appeared to be debating. Every moment I expected to see him go out of his mind. Just before dawn he succumbed to the stress of mental agony, and fell asleep on his mattress like a man who has been beaten; but by eight o'clock the son was at the point of death, and I ran to wake the father. The dying man was quite conscious, and bid us all farewell. Somehow I could not weep, though my heart seemed to be breaking.

The last moments were the most harassing and heartbreaking of all. For some time past Pokrovski had been asking for something with his failing tongue, but I had been unable to distinguish his words. Yet my heart had been bursting with grief. Then for an hour he had lain quieter, except that he had looked sadly in my direction, and striven to make some sign with his death-cold hands. At last he again essayed his piteous request in a hoarse, deep voice, but the words issued in so many inarticulate sounds, and once more I failed to divine his meaning. By turns I brought each member of the household to his bedside, and gave him something to drink, but he only shook his head sorrowfully. Finally, I understood what it was he wanted. He was asking me to draw aside the curtain from the window, and to open the casements. Probably he wished to take his last look at the daylight and the sun and all God's world. I pulled back the curtain, but the opening day was as dull and mournful—looking as though it had been the fast-flickering life of the poor invalid. Of sunshine there was none. Clouds overlaid the sky as with a shroud of mist, and everything looked sad, rainy, and threatening under a fine drizzle which was beating against the window-panes, and streaking their dull, dark surfaces with runlets of cold, dirty moisture. Only a scanty modicum of daylight entered to war with the trembling rays of the ikon lamp. The dying man threw me a wistful look, and nodded. The next moment he had passed away.

The funeral was arranged for by Anna Theodorovna. A plain coffin was bought, and a broken-down hearse hired; while, as security for this outlay, she seized the dead man's books and other articles. Nevertheless, the old man disputed the books with her, and, raising an uproar, carried off as many of them as he could— stuffing his pockets full, and even filling his hat. Indeed, he spent the next three days with them thus, and refused to let them leave his sight even when it was time for him to go to church. Throughout he acted like a man bereft of sense and memory. With quaint assiduity he busied himself about the bier—now straightening the candlestick on the dead man's breast, now snuffing and lighting the other candles. Clearly his thoughts were powerless to remain long fixed on any subject. Neither my mother nor Anna Theodorovna were present at the requiem, for the former was ill and the latter was at loggerheads with the old man. Only myself and the father were there. During the service a sort of panic, a sort of premonition of the future, came over me, and I could hardly hold myself upright. At length the coffin had received its burden and was screwed down; after which the bearers placed it upon a bier, and set out. I accompanied the cortege only to the end of the street. Here the driver broke into a trot, and the old man started to run behind the hearse—sobbing loudly, but with the motion of his running ever and anon causing the sobs to quaver and become broken off. Next he lost his hat, the poor old fellow, yet would not stop to pick it up, even though the rain was beating upon his head, and a wind was rising and the sleet kept stinging and lashing his face. It seemed as though he were impervious to the cruel elements as he ran from one side of the hearse to the other—the skirts of his old greatcoat flapping about him like a pair of wings. From every pocket of the garment protruded books, while in his hand he carried a specially large volume, which he hugged closely to his breast. The passers-by uncovered their heads and crossed themselves as the cortege passed, and some of them, having done so, remained staring in amazement at the poor old man. Every now and then a book would slip from one of his pockets and fall into the mud; whereupon somebody, stopping him, would direct his attention to his loss, and he would stop, pick up the book, and again set off in pursuit of the hearse. At the corner of the street he was joined by a ragged old woman; until at length the hearse turned a corner, and became hidden from my eyes. Then I went home, and threw myself, in a transport of grief, upon my mother's breast—clasping her in my arms, kissing her amid a storm of sobs and tears, and clinging to her form as though in my embraces I were holding my last friend on earth, that I might preserve her from death. Yet already death was standing over her....

June 11th

How I thank you for our walk to the Islands yesterday, Makar Alexievitch! How fresh and pleasant, how full of verdure, was everything! And I had not seen anything green for such a long time! During my illness I used to think that I should never get

better, that I was certainly going to die. Judge, then, how I felt yesterday! True, I may have seemed to you a little sad, and you must not be angry with me for that. Happy and light-hearted though I was, there were moments, even at the height of my felicity, when, for some unknown reason, depression came sweeping over my soul. I kept weeping about trifles, yet could not say why I was grieved. The truth is that I am unwell—so much so, that I look at everything from the gloomy point of view. The pale, clear sky, the setting sun, the evening stillness—ah, somehow I felt disposed to grieve and feel hurt at these things; my heart seemed to be over-charged, and to be calling for tears to relieve it. But why should I write this to you? It is difficult for my heart to express itself; still more difficult for it to forego self-expression. Yet possibly you may understand me. Tears and laughter! ... How good you are, Makar Alexievitch! Yesterday you looked into my eyes as though you could read in them all that I was feeling—as though you were rejoicing at my happiness. Whether it were a group of shrubs or an alleyway or a vista of water that we were passing, you would halt before me, and stand gazing at my face as though you were showing me possessions of your own. It told me how kind is your nature, and I love you for it. Today I am again unwell, for yesterday I wetted my feet, and took a chill. Thedora also is unwell; both of us are ailing. Do not forget me. Come and see me as often as you can.—Your own,

BARBARA ALEXIEVNA.

June 12th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA—I had supposed that you meant to describe our doings of the other day in verse; yet from you there has arrived only a single sheet of writing. Nevertheless, I must say that, little though you have put into your letter, that little is not expressed with rare beauty and grace. Nature, your descriptions of rural scenes, your analysis of your own feelings—the whole is beautifully written. Alas, I have no such talent! Though I may fill a score of pages, nothing comes of it—I might as well never have put pen to paper. Yes, this I know from experience.

You say, my darling, that I am kind and good, that I could not harm my fellow-men, that I have power to comprehend the goodness of God (as expressed in nature's handiwork), and so on. It may all be so, my dearest one—it may all be exactly as you say. Indeed, I think that you are right. But if so, the reason is that when one reads such a letter as you have just sent me, one's heart involuntarily softens, and affords entrance to thoughts of a graver and weightier order. Listen, my darling; I have something to tell you, my beloved one.

I will begin from the time when I was seventeen years old and first entered the service—though I shall soon have completed my thirtieth year of official activity. I may say that at first I was much pleased with my new uniform; and, as I grew older, I grew in mind, and fell to studying my fellow-men. Likewise I may say that I lived an upright life—so much so that at last I incurred persecution. This you may not believe,

but it is true. To think that men so cruel should exist! For though, dearest one, I am dull and of no account, I have feelings like everyone else. Consequently, would you believe it, Barbara, when I tell you what these cruel fellows did to me? I feel ashamed to tell it you—and all because I was of a quiet, peaceful, good-natured disposition!

Things began with “this or that, Makar Alexievitch, is your fault.” Then it went on to “I need hardly say that the fault is wholly Makar Alexievitch’s.” Finally it became “OF COURSE Makar Alexievitch is to blame.” Do you see the sequence of things, my darling? Every mistake was attributed to me, until “Makar Alexievitch” became a byword in our department. Also, while making of me a proverb, these fellows could not give me a smile or a civil word. They found fault with my boots, with my uniform, with my hair, with my figure. None of these things were to their taste: everything had to be changed. And so it has been from that day to this. True, I have now grown used to it, for I can grow accustomed to anything (being, as you know, a man of peaceable disposition, like all men of small stature)—yet why should these things be? Whom have I harmed? Whom have I ever supplanted? Whom have I ever traduced to his superiors? No, the fault is that more than once I have asked for an increase of salary. But have I ever CABALLED for it? No, you would be wrong in thinking so, my dearest one. HOW could I ever have done so? You yourself have had many opportunities of seeing how incapable I am of deceit or chicanery.

Why then, should this have fallen to my lot? ... However, since you think me worthy of respect, my darling, I do not care, for you are far and away the best person in the world... . What do you consider to be the greatest social virtue? In private conversation Evstafi Ivanovitch once told me that the greatest social virtue might be considered to be an ability to get money to spend. Also, my comrades used jestingly (yes, I know only jestingly) to propound the ethical maxim that a man ought never to let himself become a burden upon anyone. Well, I am a burden upon no one. It is my own crust of bread that I eat; and though that crust is but a poor one, and sometimes actually a maggoty one, it has at least been EARNED, and therefore, is being put to a right and lawful use. What therefore, ought I to do? I know that I can earn but little by my labours as a copyist; yet even of that little I am proud, for it has entailed WORK, and has wrung sweat from my brow. What harm is there in being a copyist? “He is only an amanuensis,” people say of me. But what is there so disgraceful in that? My writing is at least legible, neat, and pleasant to look upon—and his Excellency is satisfied with it. Indeed, I transcribe many important documents. At the same time, I know that my writing lacks STYLE, which is why I have never risen in the service. Even to you, my dear one, I write simply and without tricks, but just as a thought may happen to enter my head. Yes, I know all this; but if everyone were to become a fine writer, who would there be left to act as copyists? ... Whatsoever questions I may put to you in my letters, dearest, I pray you to answer them. I am sure that you need me, that I can be of use to you; and, since that is so, I must not allow myself to be distracted by any trifle. Even if I be likened to a rat, I do not care, provided that that particular rat be

wanted by you, and be of use in the world, and be retained in its position, and receive its reward. But what a rat it is!

Enough of this, dearest one. I ought not to have spoken of it, but I lost my temper. Still, it is pleasant to speak the truth sometimes. Goodbye, my own, my darling, my sweet little comforter! I will come to you soon—yes, I will certainly come to you. Until I do so, do not fret yourself. With me I shall be bringing a book. Once more goodbye.—Your heartfelt well-wisher,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

June 20th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH—I am writing to you post-haste—I am hurrying my utmost to get my work finished in time. What do you suppose is the reason for this? It is because an opportunity has occurred for you to make a splendid purchase. Thedora tells me that a retired civil servant of her acquaintance has a uniform to sell—one cut to regulation pattern and in good repair, as well as likely to go very cheap. Now, DO not tell me that you have not got the money, for I know from your own lips that you HAVE. Use that money, I pray you, and do not hoard it. See what terrible garments you walk about in! They are shameful—they are patched all over! In fact, you have nothing new whatever. That this is so, I know for certain, and I care not WHAT you tell me about it. So listen to me for once, and buy this uniform. Do it for MY sake. Do it to show that you really love me.

You have sent me some linen as a gift. But listen to me, Makar Alexievitch. You are simply ruining yourself. Is it a jest that you should spend so much money, such a terrible amount of money, upon me? How you love to play the spendthrift! I tell you that I do not need it, that such expenditure is unnecessary. I know, I am CERTAIN, that you love me—therefore, it is useless to remind me of the fact with gifts. Nor do I like receiving them, since I know how much they must have cost you. No—put your money to a better use. I beg, I beseech of you, to do so. Also, you ask me to send you a continuation of my memoirs—to conclude them. But I know not how I contrived even to write as much of them as I did; and now I have not the strength to write further of my past, nor the desire to give it a single thought. Such recollections are terrible to me. Most difficult of all is it for me to speak of my poor mother, who left her destitute daughter a prey to villains. My heart runs blood whenever I think of it; it is so fresh in my memory that I cannot dismiss it from my thoughts, nor rest for its insistence, although a year has now elapsed since the events took place. But all this you know.

Also, I have told you what Anna Thedorovna is now intending. She accuses me of ingratitude, and denies the accusations made against herself with regard to Monsieur Bwikov. Also, she keeps sending for me, and telling me that I have taken to evil courses, but that if I will return to her, she will smooth over matters with Bwikov, and force him to confess his fault. Also, she says that he desires to give me a dowry. Away with

them all! I am quite happy here with you and good Thedora, whose devotion to me reminds me of my old nurse, long since dead. Distant kinsman though you may be, I pray you always to defend my honour. Other people I do not wish to know, and would gladly forget if I could... . What are they wanting with me now? Thedora declares it all to be a trick, and says that in time they will leave me alone. God grant it be so!

B. D.

June 21st.

MY OWN, MY DARLING,—I wish to write to you, yet know not where to begin. Things are as strange as though we were actually living together. Also I would add that never in my life have I passed such happy days as I am spending at present. 'Tis as though God had blessed me with a home and a family of my own! Yes, you are my little daughter, beloved. But why mention the four sorry roubles that I sent you? You needed them; I know that from Thedora herself, and it will always be a particular pleasure to me to gratify you in anything. It will always be my one happiness in life. Pray, therefore, leave me that happiness, and do not seek to cross me in it. Things are not as you suppose. I have now reached the sunshine since, in the first place, I am living so close to you as almost to be with you (which is a great consolation to my mind), while, in the second place, a neighbour of mine named Rataziaev (the retired official who gives the literary parties) has today invited me to tea. This evening, therefore, there will be a gathering at which we shall discuss literature! Think of that my darling! Well, goodbye now. I have written this without any definite aim in my mind, but solely to assure you of my welfare. Through Theresa I have received your message that you need an embroidered cloak to wear, so I will go and purchase one. Yes, tomorrow I mean to purchase that embroidered cloak, and so give myself the pleasure of having satisfied one of your wants. I know where to go for such a garment. For the time being I remain your sincere friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

June 22nd.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I have to tell you that a sad event has happened in this house—an event to excite one's utmost pity. This morning, about five o'clock, one of Gorshkov's children died of scarlatina, or something of the kind. I have been to pay the parents a visit of condolence, and found them living in the direst poverty and disorder. Nor is that surprising, seeing that the family lives in a single room, with only a screen to divide it for decency's sake. Already the coffin was standing in their midst—a plain but decent shell which had been bought ready-made. The child, they told me, had been a boy of nine, and full of promise. What a pitiful spectacle!

Though not weeping, the mother, poor woman, looked broken with grief. After all, to have one burden the less on their shoulders may prove a relief, though there are still two children left—a babe at the breast and a little girl of six! How painful to see these suffering children, and to be unable to help them! The father, clad in an old, dirty frockcoat, was seated on a dilapidated chair. Down his cheeks there were coursing tears—though less through grief than owing to a long-standing affliction of the eyes. He was so thin, too! Always he reddens in the face when he is addressed, and becomes too confused to answer. A little girl, his daughter, was leaning against the coffin—her face looking so worn and thoughtful, poor mite! Do you know, I cannot bear to see a child look thoughtful. On the floor there lay a rag doll, but she was not playing with it as, motionless, she stood there with her finger to her lips. Even a bon-bon which the landlady had given her she was not eating. Is it not all sad, sad, Barbara?

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

June 25th.

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH—I return you your book. In my opinion it is a worthless one, and I would rather not have it in my possession. Why do you save up your money to buy such trash? Except in jest, do such books really please you? However, you have now promised to send me something else to read. I will share the cost of it. Now, farewell until we meet again. I have nothing more to say.

B. D.

June 26th.

MY DEAR LITTLE BARBARA—To tell you the truth, I myself have not read the book of which you speak. That is to say, though I began to read it, I soon saw that it was nonsense, and written only to make people laugh. “However,” thought I, “it is at least a CHEERFUL work, and so may please Barbara.” That is why I sent it you.

Rataziaev has now promised to give me something really literary to read; so you shall soon have your book, my darling. He is a man who reflects; he is a clever fellow, as well as himself a writer—such a writer! His pen glides along with ease, and in such a style (even when he is writing the most ordinary, the most insignificant of articles) that I have often remarked upon the fact, both to Phaldoni and to Theresa. Often, too, I go to spend an evening with him. He reads aloud to us until five o’clock in the morning, and we listen to him. It is a revelation of things rather than a reading. It is charming, it is like a bouquet of flowers—there is a bouquet of flowers in every line of each page. Besides, he is such an approachable, courteous, kind-hearted fellow! What am I compared with him? Why, nothing, simply nothing! He is a man of reputation, whereas I—well, I do not exist at all. Yet he condescends to my level. At this very

moment I am copying out a document for him. But you must not think that he finds any DIFFICULTY in condescending to me, who am only a copyist. No, you must not believe the base gossip that you may hear. I do copying work for him simply in order to please myself, as well as that he may notice me—a thing that always gives me pleasure. I appreciate the delicacy of his position. He is a good—a very good—man, and an unapproachable writer.

What a splendid thing is literature, Barbara—what a splendid thing! This I learnt before I had known Rataziaev even for three days. It strengthens and instructs the heart of man... . No matter what there be in the world, you will find it all written down in Rataziaev's works. And so well written down, too! Literature is a sort of picture—a sort of picture or mirror. It connotes at once passion, expression, fine criticism, good learning, and a document. Yes, I have learned this from Rataziaev himself. I can assure you, Barbara, that if only you could be sitting among us, and listening to the talk (while, with the rest of us, you smoked a pipe), and were to hear those present begin to argue and dispute concerning different matters, you would feel of as little account among them as I do; for I myself figure there only as a blockhead, and feel ashamed, since it takes me a whole evening to think of a single word to interpolate—and even then the word will not come! In a case like that a man regrets that, as the proverb has it, he should have reached man's estate but not man's understanding... . What do I do in my spare time? I sleep like a fool, though I would far rather be occupied with something else—say, with eating or writing, since the one is useful to oneself, and the other is beneficial to one's fellows. You should see how much money these fellows contrive to save! How much, for instance, does not Rataziaev lay by? A few days' writing, I am told, can earn him as much as three hundred roubles! Indeed, if a man be a writer of short stories or anything else that is interesting, he can sometimes pocket five hundred roubles, or a thousand, at a time! Think of it, Barbara! Rataziaev has by him a small manuscript of verses, and for it he is asking—what do you think? Seven thousand roubles! Why, one could buy a whole house for that sum! He has even refused five thousand for a manuscript, and on that occasion I reasoned with him, and advised him to accept the five thousand. But it was of no use. "For," said he, "they will soon offer me seven thousand," and kept to his point, for he is a man of some determination.

Suppose, now, that I were to give you an extract from "Passion in Italy" (as another work of his is called). Read this, dearest Barbara, and judge for yourself:

"Vladimir started, for in his veins the lust of passion had welled until it had reached boiling point.

"'Countess,' he cried, 'do you know how terrible is this adoration of mine, how infinite this madness? No! My fancies have not deceived me—I love you ecstatically, diabolically, as a madman might! All the blood that is in your husband's body could never quench the furious, surging rapture that is in my soul! No puny obstacle could thwart the all-destroying, infernal flame which is eating into my exhausted breast! Oh Zinaida, my Zinaida!'

“‘Vladimir!’ she whispered, almost beside herself, as she sank upon his bosom.

“‘My Zinaida!’ cried the enraptured Smileski once more.

“His breath was coming in sharp, broken pants. The lamp of love was burning brightly on the altar of passion, and searing the hearts of the two unfortunate sufferers.

“‘Vladimir!’ again she whispered in her intoxication, while her bosom heaved, her cheeks glowed, and her eyes flashed fire.

“Thus was a new and dread union consummated.

“Half an hour later the aged Count entered his wife’s boudoir.

“‘How now, my love?’ said he. ‘Surely it is for some welcome guest beyond the common that you have had the samovar [Tea-urn.] thus prepared?’ And he smote her lightly on the cheek.”

What think you of THAT, Barbara? True, it is a little too outspoken—there can be no doubt of that; yet how grand it is, how splendid! With your permission I will also quote you an extract from Rataziaev’s story, Ermak and Zuleika:

“‘You love me, Zuleika? Say again that you love me, you love me!’

“‘I DO love you, Ermak,’ whispered Zuleika.

“‘Then by heaven and earth I thank you! By heaven and earth you have made me happy! You have given me all, all that my tortured soul has for immemorial years been seeking! ‘Tis for this that you have led me hither, my guiding star—‘tis for this that you have conducted me to the Girdle of Stone! To all the world will I now show my Zuleika, and no man, demon or monster of Hell, shall bid me nay! Oh, if men would but understand the mysterious passions of her tender heart, and see the poem which lurks in each of her little tears! Suffer me to dry those tears with my kisses! Suffer me to drink of those heavenly drops, Oh being who art not of this earth!’

“‘Ermak,’ said Zuleika, ‘the world is cruel, and men are unjust. But LET them drive us from their midst—let them judge us, my beloved Ermak! What has a poor maiden who was reared amid the snows of Siberia to do with their cold, icy, self-sufficient world? Men cannot understand me, my darling, my sweetheart.’

“‘Is that so? Then shall the sword of the Cossacks sing and whistle over their heads!’ cried Ermak with a furious look in his eyes.”

What must Ermak have felt when he learnt that his Zuleika had been murdered, Barbara?—that, taking advantages of the cover of night, the blind old Kouchoum had, in Ermak’s absence, broken into the latter’s tent, and stabbed his own daughter in mistake for the man who had robbed him of sceptre and crown?

“‘Oh that I had a stone whereon to whet my sword!’ cried Ermak in the madness of his wrath as he strove to sharpen his steel blade upon the enchanted rock. ‘I would have his blood, his blood! I would tear him limb from limb, the villain!’”

Then Ermak, unable to survive the loss of his Zuleika, throws himself into the Irtisch, and the tale comes to an end.

Here, again, is another short extract—this time written in a more comical vein, to make people laugh:

“Do you know Ivan Prokofievitch Zheltopuzh? He is the man who took a piece out of Prokofi Ivanovitch’s leg. Ivan’s character is one of the rugged order, and therefore, one that is rather lacking in virtue. Yet he has a passionate relish for radishes and honey. Once he also possessed a friend named Pelagea Antonovna. Do you know Pelagea Antonovna? She is the woman who always puts on her petticoat wrong side outwards.”

What humour, Barbara—what purest humour! We rocked with laughter when he read it aloud to us. Yes, that is the kind of man he is. Possibly the passage is a trifle over-frolicsome, but at least it is harmless, and contains no freethought or liberal ideas. In passing, I may say that Rataziaev is not only a supreme writer, but also a man of upright life—which is more than can be said for most writers.

What, do you think, is an idea that sometimes enters my head? In fact, what if I myself were to write something? How if suddenly a book were to make its appearance in the world bearing the title of “The Poetical Works of Makar Dievushkin”? What THEN, my angel? How should you view, should you receive, such an event? I may say of myself that never, after my book had appeared, should I have the hardihood to show my face on the Nevski Prospect; for would it not be too dreadful to hear every one saying, “Here comes the literateur and poet, Dievushkin—yes, it is Dievushkin himself”? What, in such a case, should I do with my feet (for I may tell you that almost always my shoes are patched, or have just been resoled, and therefore look anything but becoming)? To think that the great writer Dievushkin should walk about in patched footgear! If a duchess or a countess should recognise me, what would she say, poor woman? Perhaps, though, she would not notice my shoes at all, since it may reasonably be supposed that countesses do not greatly occupy themselves with footgear, especially with the footgear of civil service officials (footgear may differ from footgear, it must be remembered). Besides, I should find that the countess had heard all about me, for my friends would have betrayed me to her—Rataziaev among the first of them, seeing that he often goes to visit Countess V., and practically lives at her house. She is said to be a woman of great intellect and wit. An artful dog, that Rataziaev!

But enough of this. I write this sort of thing both to amuse myself and to divert your thoughts. Goodbye now, my angel. This is a long epistle that I am sending you, but the reason is that today I feel in good spirits after dining at Rataziaev’s. There I came across a novel which I hardly know how to describe to you. Do not think the worse of me on that account, even though I bring you another book instead (for I certainly mean to bring one). The novel in question was one of Paul de Kock’s, and not a novel for you to read. No, no! Such a work is unfit for your eyes. In fact, it is said to have greatly offended the critics of St. Petersburg. Also, I am sending you a pound of bonbons—bought specially for yourself. Each time that you eat one, beloved, remember the sender. Only, do not bite the iced ones, but suck them gently, lest they make your teeth ache. Perhaps, too, you like comfits? Well, write and tell me if it is so. Goodbye, goodbye. Christ watch over you, my darling!—Always your faithful friend,
MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

June 27th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH—Thedora tells me that, should I wish, there are some people who will be glad to help me by obtaining me an excellent post as governess in a certain house. What think you, my friend? Shall I go or not? Of course, I should then cease to be a burden to you, and the post appears to be a comfortable one. On the other hand, the idea of entering a strange house appals me. The people in it are landed gentry, and they will begin to ask me questions, and to busy themselves about me. What answers shall I then return? You see, I am now so unused to society—so shy! I like to live in a corner to which I have long grown used. Yes, the place with which one is familiar is always the best. Even if for companion one has but sorrow, that place will still be the best.... God alone knows what duties the post will entail. Perhaps I shall merely be required to act as nursemaid; and in any case, I hear that the governess there has been changed three times in two years. For God's sake, Makar Alexievitch, advise me whether to go or not. Why do you never come near me now? Do let my eyes have an occasional sight of you. Mass on Sundays is almost the only time when we see one another. How retiring you have become! So also have I, even though, in a way, I am your kinswoman. You must have ceased to love me, Makar Alexievitch. I spend many a weary hour because of it. Sometimes, when dusk is falling, I find myself lonely—oh, so lonely! Thedora has gone out somewhere, and I sit here and think, and think, and think. I remember all the past, its joys and its sorrows. It passes before my eyes in detail, it glimmers at me as out of a mist; and as it does so, well-known faces appear, which seem actually to be present with me in this room! Most frequently of all, I see my mother. Ah, the dreams that come to me! I feel that my health is breaking, so weak am I. When this morning I arose, sickness took me until I vomited and vomited. Yes, I feel, I know, that death is approaching. Who will bury me when it has come? Who will visit my tomb? Who will sorrow for me? And now it is in a strange place, in the house of a stranger, that I may have to die! Yes, in a corner which I do not know! ... My God, how sad a thing is life! ... Why do you send me comfits to eat? Whence do you get the money to buy them? Ah, for God's sake keep the money, keep the money. Thedora has sold a carpet which I have made. She got fifty roubles for it, which is very good—I had expected less. Of the fifty roubles I shall give Thedora three, and with the remainder make myself a plain, warm dress. Also, I am going to make you a waistcoat—to make it myself, and out of good material.

Also, Thedora has brought me a book—"The Stories of Bielkin"—which I will forward you, if you would care to read it. Only, do not soil it, nor yet retain it, for it does not belong to me. It is by Pushkin. Two years ago I read these stories with my mother, and it would hurt me to read them again. If you yourself have any books, pray let me have them—so long as they have not been obtained from Rataziaev. Probably he will be giving you one of his own works when he has had one printed. How is it that his compositions please you so much, Makar Alexievitch? I think them SUCH rubbish!

—Now goodbye. How I have been chattering on! When feeling sad, I always like to talk of something, for it acts upon me like medicine—I begin to feel easier as soon as I have uttered what is preying upon my heart. Good bye, good-bye, my friend—Your own

B. D.

June 28th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA—Away with melancholy! Really, beloved, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you allow such thoughts to enter your head? Really and truly you are quite well; really and truly you are, my darling. Why, you are blooming —simply blooming. True, I see a certain touch of pallor in your face, but still you are blooming. A fig for dreams and visions! Yes, for shame, dearest! Drive away those fancies; try to despise them. Why do I sleep so well? Why am I never ailing? Look at ME, beloved. I live well, I sleep peacefully, I retain my health, I can ruffle it with my juniors. In fact, it is a pleasure to see me. Come, come, then, sweetheart! Let us have no more of this. I know that that little head of yours is capable of any fancy—that all too easily you take to dreaming and repining; but for my sake, cease to do so.

Are you to go to these people, you ask me? Never! No, no, again no! How could you think of doing such a thing as taking a journey? I will not allow it—I intend to combat your intention with all my might. I will sell my frockcoat, and walk the streets in my shirt sleeves, rather than let you be in want. But no, Barbara. I know you, I know you. This is merely a trick, merely a trick. And probably Thedora alone is to blame for it. She appears to be a foolish old woman, and to be able to persuade you to do anything. Do not believe her, my dearest. I am sure that you know what is what, as well as SHE does. Eh, sweetheart? She is a stupid, quarrelsome, rubbish-talking old woman who brought her late husband to the grave. Probably she has been plaguing you as much as she did him. No, no, dearest; you must not take this step. What should I do then? What would there be left for ME to do? Pray put the idea out of your head. What is it you lack here? I cannot feel sufficiently overjoyed to be near you, while, for your part, you love me well, and can live your life here as quietly as you wish. Read or sew, whichever you like—or read and do not sew. Only, do not desert me. Try, yourself, to imagine how things would seem after you had gone. Here am I sending you books, and later we will go for a walk. Come, come, then, my Barbara! Summon to your aid your reason, and cease to babble of trifles.

As soon as I can I will come and see you, and then you shall tell me the whole story. This will not do, sweetheart; this certainly will not do. Of course, I know that I am not an educated man, and have received but a sorry schooling, and have had no inclination for it, and think too much of Rataziaev, if you will; but he is my friend, and therefore, I must put in a word or two for him. Yes, he is a splendid writer. Again and again I

assert that he writes magnificently. I do not agree with you about his works, and never shall. He writes too ornately, too laconically, with too great a wealth of imagery and imagination. Perhaps you have read him without insight, Barbara? Or perhaps you were out of spirits at the time, or angry with Thedora about something, or worried about some mischance? Ah, but you should read him sympathetically, and, best of all, at a time when you are feeling happy and contented and pleasantly disposed—for instance, when you have a bonbon or two in your mouth. Yes, that is the way to read Rataziaev. I do not dispute (indeed, who would do so?) that better writers than he exist—even far better; but they are good, and he is good too—they write well, and he writes well. It is chiefly for his own sake that he writes, and he is to be approved for so doing.

Now goodbye, dearest. More I cannot write, for I must hurry away to business. Be of good cheer, and the Lord God watch over you!— Your faithful friend,
MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

P.S.—Thank you so much for the book, darling! I will read it through, this volume of Pushkin, and tonight come to you.

MY DEAR MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH—No, no, my friend, I must not go on living near you. I have been thinking the matter over, and come to the conclusion that I should be doing very wrong to refuse so good a post. I should at least have an assured crust of bread; I might at least set to work to earn my employers' favour, and even try to change my character if required to do so. Of course it is a sad and sorry thing to have to live among strangers, and to be forced to seek their patronage, and to conceal and constrain one's own personality— but God will help me. I must not remain forever a recluse, for similar chances have come my way before. I remember how, when a little girl at school, I used to go home on Sundays and spend the time in frisking and dancing about. Sometimes my mother would chide me for so doing, but I did not care, for my heart was too joyous, and my spirits too buoyant, for that. Yet as the evening of Sunday came on, a sadness as of death would overtake me, for at nine o'clock I had to return to school, where everything was cold and strange and severe—where the governesses, on Mondays, lost their tempers, and nipped my ears, and made me cry. On such occasions I would retire to a corner and weep alone; concealing my tears lest I should be called lazy. Yet it was not because I had to study that I used to weep, and in time I grew more used to things, and, after my schooldays were over, shed tears only when I was parting with friends... .

It is not right for me to live in dependence upon you. The thought tortures me. I tell you this frankly, for the reason that frankness with you has become a habit. Cannot I see that daily, at earliest dawn, Thedora rises to do washing and scrubbing, and remains working at it until late at night, even though her poor old bones must be aching for want of rest? Cannot I also see that YOU are ruining yourself for me, and hoarding your last kopeck that you may spend it on my behalf? You ought not so to act, my friend, even though you write that you would rather sell your all than let me want for anything. I believe in you, my friend—I entirely believe in your good heart;

but, you say that to me now (when, perhaps, you have received some unexpected sum or gratuity) and there is still the future to be thought of. You yourself know that I am always ailing—that I cannot work as you do, glad though I should be of any work if I could get it; so what else is there for me to do? To sit and repine as I watch you and Thedora? But how would that be of any use to you? AM I necessary to you, comrade of mine? HAVE I ever done you any good? Though I am bound to you with my whole soul, and love you dearly and strongly and wholeheartedly, a bitter fate has ordained that that love should be all that I have to give—that I should be unable, by creating for you subsistence, to repay you for all your kindness. Do not, therefore, detain me longer, but think the matter out, and give me your opinion on it. In expectation of which I remain your sweetheart,

B. D.

July

July 1st.

Rubbish, rubbish, Barbara!—What you say is sheer rubbish. Stay here, rather, and put such thoughts out of your head. None of what you suppose is true. I can see for myself that it is not. Whatsoever you lack here, you have but to ask me for it. Here you love and are loved, and we might easily be happy and contented together. What could you want more? What have you to do with strangers? You cannot possibly know what strangers are like. I know it, though, and could have told you if you had asked me. There is a stranger whom I know, and whose bread I have eaten. He is a cruel man, Barbara—a man so bad that he would be unworthy of your little heart, and would soon tear it to pieces with his railings and reproaches and black looks. On the other hand, you are safe and well here—you are as safe as though you were sheltered in a nest. Besides, you would, as it were, leave me with my head gone. For what should I have to do when you were gone? What could I, an old man, find to do? Are you not necessary to me? Are you not useful to me? Eh? Surely you do not think that you are not useful? You are of great use to me, Barbara, for you exercise a beneficial influence upon my life. Even at this moment, as I think of you, I feel cheered, for always I can write letters to you, and put into them what I am feeling, and receive from you detailed answers.... I have bought you a wardrobe, and also procured you a bonnet; so you see that you have only to give me a commission for it to be executed... . No—in what way are you not useful? What should I do if I were deserted in my old age? What would become of me? Perhaps you never thought of that, Barbara—perhaps you never said to yourself, “How could HE get on without me?” You see, I have grown so accustomed to you. What else would it end in, if you were to go away? Why, in my hiking to the Neva’s bank and doing away with myself. Ah, Barbara, darling, I can see that you want me to be taken away to the Volkovo Cemetery in a broken-down old hearse, with some poor outcast of the streets to accompany my coffin as chief mourner, and the gravediggers to heap my body with clay, and depart and leave me there. How wrong of you, how wrong of you, my beloved! Yes, by heavens, how wrong of you! I am returning you your book, little friend; and ,if you were to ask of me my opinion of it, I should say that never before in my life had I read a book so splendid. I keep wondering how I have hitherto contrived to remain such an owl. For what have I ever done? From what wilds did I spring into existence? I KNOW nothing—I know simply NOTHING. My ignorance is complete. Frankly, I am not an educated man,

for until now I have read scarcely a single book—only “A Portrait of Man” (a clever enough work in its way), “The Boy Who Could Play Many Tunes Upon Bells”, and “Ivik’s Storks”. That is all. But now I have also read “The Station Overseer” in your little volume; and it is wonderful to think that one may live and yet be ignorant of the fact that under one’s very nose there may be a book in which one’s whole life is described as in a picture. Never should I have guessed that, as soon as ever one begins to read such a book, it sets one on both to remember and to consider and to foretell events. Another reason why I liked this book so much is that, though, in the case of other works (however clever they be), one may read them, yet remember not a word of them (for I am a man naturally dull of comprehension, and unable to read works of any great importance),—although, as I say, one may read such works, one reads such a book as YOURS as easily as though it had been written by oneself, and had taken possession of one’s heart, and turned it inside out for inspection, and were describing it in detail as a matter of perfect simplicity. Why, I might almost have written the book myself! Why not, indeed? I can feel just as the people in the book do, and find myself in positions precisely similar to those of, say, the character Samson Virin. In fact, how many good-hearted wretches like Virin are there not walking about amongst us? How easily, too, it is all described! I assure you, my darling, that I almost shed tears when I read that Virin so took to drink as to lose his memory, become morose, and spend whole days over his liquor; as also that he choked with grief and wept bitterly when, rubbing his eyes with his dirty hand, he bethought him of his wandering lamb, his daughter Dunasha! How natural, how natural! You should read the book for yourself. The thing is actually alive. Even I can see that; even I can realise that it is a picture cut from the very life around me. In it I see our own Theresa (to go no further) and the poor Tchinovnik—who is just such a man as this Samson Virin, except for his surname of Gorshkov. The book describes just what might happen to ourselves—to myself in particular. Even a count who lives in the Nevski Prospect or in Naberezhnaia Street might have a similar experience, though he might APPEAR to be different, owing to the fact that his life is cast on a higher plane. Yes, just the same things might happen to him—just the same things... . Here you are wishing to go away and leave us; yet, be careful lest it would not be I who had to pay the penalty of your doing so. For you might ruin both yourself and me. For the love of God, put away these thoughts from you, my darling, and do not torture me in vain. How could you, my poor little unfledged nestling, find yourself food, and defend yourself from misfortune, and ward off the wiles of evil men? Think better of it, Barbara, and pay no more heed to foolish advice and calumny, but read your book again, and read it with attention. It may do you much good.

I have spoken of Rataziaev’s “The Station Overseer”. However, the author has told me that the work is old-fashioned, since, nowadays, books are issued with illustrations and embellishments of different sorts (though I could not make out all that he said). Pushkin he adjudges a splendid poet, and one who has done honour to Holy Russia. Read your book again, Barbara, and follow my advice, and make an old man happy.

The Lord God Himself will reward you. Yes, He will surely reward you.—Your faithful friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Today Thedora came to me with fifteen roubles in silver. How glad was the poor woman when I gave her three of them! I am writing to you in great haste, for I am busy cutting out a waistcoat to send to you—buff, with a pattern of flowers. Also I am sending you a book of stories; some of which I have read myself, particularly one called “The Cloak.” ... You invite me to go to the theatre with you. But will it not cost too much? Of course we might sit in the gallery. It is a long time (indeed I cannot remember when I last did so) since I visited a theatre! Yet I cannot help fearing that such an amusement is beyond our means. Thedora keeps nodding her head, and saying that you have taken to living above your income. I myself divine the same thing by the amount which you have spent upon me. Take care, dear friend, that misfortune does not come of it, for Thedora has also informed me of certain rumours concerning your inability to meet your landlady’s bills. In fact, I am very anxious about you. Now, goodbye, for I must hasten away to see about another matter—about the changing of the ribands on my bonnet.

P.S—Do you know, if we go to the theatre, I think that I shall wear my new hat and black mantilla. Will that not look nice?

July 7th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA—SO much for yesterday! Yes, dearest, we have both been caught playing the fool, for I have become thoroughly bitten with the actress of whom I spoke. Last night I listened to her with all my ears, although, strangely enough, it was practically my first sight of her, seeing that only once before had I been to the theatre. In those days I lived cheek by jowl with a party of five young men—a most noisy crew- and one night I accompanied them, willy-nilly, to the theatre, though I held myself decently aloof from their doings, and only assisted them for company’s sake. How those fellows talked to me of this actress! Every night when the theatre was open, the entire band of them (they always seemed to possess the requisite money) would betake themselves to that place of entertainment, where they ascended to the gallery, and clapped their hands, and repeatedly recalled the actress in question. In fact, they went simply mad over her. Even after we had returned home they would give me no rest, but would go on talking about her all night, and calling her their Glasha, and declaring themselves to be in love with “the canary-bird of their hearts.” My defenseless self, too, they would plague about the woman, for I was as young as they. What a figure I must have cut with them on the fourth tier of the gallery! Yet, I never got a sight of more than just a corner of the curtain, but had to content myself with listening. She had a fine, resounding, mellow voice like a nightingale’s, and we all of us used to clap our hands loudly, and to shout at the top of our lungs. In short, we

came very near to being ejected. On the first occasion I went home walking as in a mist, with a single rouble left in my pocket, and an interval of ten clear days confronting me before next pay-day. Yet, what think you, dearest? The very next day, before going to work, I called at a French perfumer's, and spent my whole remaining capital on some eau-de- Cologne and scented soap! Why I did so I do not know. Nor did I dine at home that day, but kept walking and walking past her windows (she lived in a fourth-storey flat on the Nevski Prospect). At length I returned to my own lodging, but only to rest a short hour before again setting off to the Nevski Prospect and resuming my vigil before her windows. For a month and a half I kept this up—dangling in her train. Sometimes I would hire cabs, and discharge them in view of her abode; until at length I had entirely ruined myself, and got into debt. Then I fell out of love with her—I grew weary of the pursuit... . You see, therefore, to what depths an actress can reduce a decent man. In those days I was young. Yes, in those days I was VERY young.

M. D.

July 8th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—The book which I received from you on the 6th of this month I now hasten to return, while at the same time hastening also to explain matters to you in this accompanying letter. What a misfortune, my beloved, that you should have brought me to such a pass! Our lots in life are apportioned by the Almighty according to our human deserts. To such a one He assigns a life in a general's epaulets or as a privy councillor—to such a one, I say, He assigns a life of command; whereas to another one, He allots only a life of uncomplaining toil and suffering. These things are calculated according to a man's CAPACITY. One man may be capable of one thing, and another of another, and their several capacities are ordered by the Lord God himself. I have now been thirty years in the public service, and have fulfilled my duties irreproachably, remained abstemious, and never been detected in any unbecoming behaviour. As a citizen, I may confess—I confess it freely—I have been guilty of certain shortcomings; yet those shortcomings have been combined with certain virtues. I am respected by my superiors, and even his Excellency has had no fault to find with me; and though I have never been shown any special marks of favour, I know that every one finds me at least satisfactory. Also, my writing is sufficiently legible and clear. Neither too rounded nor too fine, it is a running hand, yet always suitable. Of our staff only Ivan Prokofievitch writes a similar hand. Thus have I lived till the grey hairs of my old age; yet I can think of no serious fault committed. Of course, no one is free from MINOR faults. Everyone has some of them, and you among the rest, my beloved. But in grave or in audacious offences never have I been detected, nor in infringements of regulations, nor in breaches of the public peace. No, never! This you surely know, even as the author of your book must have known it. Yes, he

also must have known it when he sat down to write. I had not expected this of you, my Barbara. I should never have expected it.

What? In future I am not to go on living peacefully in my little corner, poor though that corner be I am not to go on living, as the proverb has it, without muddying the water, or hurting any one, or forgetting the fear of the Lord God and of oneself? I am not to see, forsooth, that no man does me an injury, or breaks into my home—I am not to take care that all shall go well with me, or that I have clothes to wear, or that my shoes do not require mending, or that I be given work to do, or that I possess sufficient meat and drink? Is it nothing that, where the pavement is rotten, I have to walk on tiptoe to save my boots? If I write to you overmuch concerning myself, is it concerning ANOTHER man, rather, that I ought to write—concerning HIS wants, concerning HIS lack of tea to drink (and all the world needs tea)? Has it ever been my custom to pry into other men's mouths, to see what is being put into them? Have I ever been known to offend any one in that respect? No, no, beloved! Why should I desire to insult other folks when they are not molesting ME? Let me give you an example of what I mean. A man may go on slaving and slaving in the public service, and earn the respect of his superiors (for what it is worth), and then, for no visible reason at all, find himself made a fool of. Of course he may break out now and then (I am not now referring only to drunkenness), and (for example) buy himself a new pair of shoes, and take pleasure in seeing his feet looking well and smartly shod. Yes, I myself have known what it is to feel like that (I write this in good faith). Yet I am nonetheless astonished that Thedor Thedorovitch should neglect what is being said about him, and take no steps to defend himself. True, he is only a subordinate official, and sometimes loves to rate and scold; yet why should he not do so—why should he not indulge in a little vituperation when he feels like it? Suppose it to be NECESSARY, for FORM'S sake, to scold, and to set everyone right, and to shower around abuse (for, between ourselves, Barbara, our friend cannot get on WITHOUT abuse—so much so that every one humours him, and does things behind his back)? Well, since officials differ in rank, and every official demands that he shall be allowed to abuse his fellow officials in proportion to his rank, it follows that the TONE also of official abuse should become divided into ranks, and thus accord with the natural order of things. All the world is built upon the system that each one of us shall have to yield precedence to some other one, as well as to enjoy a certain power of abusing his fellows. Without such a provision the world could not get on at all, and simple chaos would ensue. Yet I am surprised that our Thedor should continue to overlook insults of the kind that he endures.

Why do I do my official work at all? Why is that necessary? Will my doing of it lead anyone who reads it to give me a greatcoat, or to buy me a new pair of shoes? No, Barbara. Men only read the documents, and then require me to write more. Sometimes a man will hide himself away, and not show his face abroad, for the mere reason that, though he has done nothing to be ashamed of, he dreads the gossip and slandering which are everywhere to be encountered. If his civic and family life have to do with literature, everything will be printed and read and laughed over and discussed; until at

length, he hardly dare show his face in the street at all, seeing that he will have been described by report as recognisable through his gait alone! Then, when he has amended his ways, and grown gentler (even though he still continues to be loaded with official work), he will come to be accounted a virtuous, decent citizen who has deserved well of his comrades, rendered obedience to his superiors, wished noone any evil, preserved the fear of God in his heart, and died lamented. Yet would it not be better, instead of letting the poor fellow die, to give him a cloak while yet he is ALIVE—to give it to this same Thedor Thedorovitch (that is to say, to myself)? Yes, 'twere far better if, on hearing the tale of his subordinate's virtues, the chief of the department were to call the deserving man into his office, and then and there to promote him, and to grant him an increase of salary. Thus vice would be punished, virtue would prevail, and the staff of that department would live in peace together. Here we have an example from everyday, commonplace life. How, therefore, could you bring yourself to send me that book, my beloved? It is a badly conceived work, Barbara, and also unreal, for the reason that in creation such a Tchinovnik does not exist. No, again I protest against it, little Barbara; again I protest.—Your most humble, devoted servant,

M. D.

July 27th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Your latest conduct and letters had frightened me, and left me thunderstruck and plunged in doubt, until what you have said about Thedor explained the situation. Why despair and go into such frenzies, Makar Alexievitch? Your explanations only partially satisfy me. Perhaps I did wrong to insist upon accepting a good situation when it was offered me, seeing that from my last experience in that way I derived a shock which was anything but a matter for jesting. You say also that your love for me has compelled you to hide yourself in retirement. Now, how much I am indebted to you I realised when you told me that you were spending for my benefit the sum which you are always reported to have laid by at your bankers; but, now that I have learnED that you never possessed such a fund, but that, on hearing of my destitute plight, and being moved by it, you decided to spend upon me the whole of your salary—even to forestall it—and when I had fallen ill, actually to sell your clothes—when I learnED all this I found myself placed in the harassing position of not knowing how to accept it all, nor what to think of it. Ah, Makar Alexievitch! You ought to have stopped at your first acts of charity—acts inspired by sympathy and the love of kinsfolk, rather than have continued to squander your means upon what was unnecessary. Yes, you have betrayed our friendship, Makar Alexievitch, in that you have not been open with me; and, now that I see that your last coin has been spent upon dresses and bon-bons and excursions and books and visits to the theatre for me, I weep bitter tears for my unpardonable improvidence in having accepted these things without giving so much as a thought to your welfare.

Yes, all that you have done to give me pleasure has become converted into a source of grief, and left behind it only useless regret. Of late I have remarked that you were looking depressed; and though I felt fearful that something unfortunate was impending, what has happened would otherwise never have entered my head. To think that your better sense should so play you false, Makar Alexievitch! What will people think of you, and say of you? Who will want to know you? You whom, like everyone else, I have valued for your goodness of heart and modesty and good sense—YOU, I say, have now given way to an unpleasant vice of which you seem never before to have been guilty. What were my feelings when Thedora informed me that you had been discovered drunk in the street, and taken home by the police? Why, I felt petrified with astonishment—although, in view of the fact that you had failed me for four days, I had been expecting some such extraordinary occurrence. Also, have you thought what your superiors will say of you when they come to learn the true reason of your absence? You say that everyone is laughing at you, that every one has learned of the bond which exists between us, and that your neighbours habitually refer to me with a sneer. Pay no attention to this, Makar Alexievitch; for the love of God, be comforted. Also, the incident between you and the officers has much alarmed me, although I had heard certain rumours concerning it. Pray explain to me what it means. You write, too, that you have been afraid to be open with me, for the reason that your confessions might lose you my friendship. Also, you say that you are in despair at the thought of being unable to help me in my illness, owing to the fact that you have sold everything which might have maintained me, and preserved me in sickness, as well as that you have borrowed as much as it is possible for you to borrow, and are daily experiencing unpleasantness with your landlady. Well, in failing to reveal all this to me you chose the worse course. Now, however, I know all. You have forced me to recognise that I have been the cause of your unhappy plight, as well as that my own conduct has brought upon myself a twofold measure of sorrow. The fact leaves me thunderstruck, Makar Alexievitch. Ah, friend, an infectious disease is indeed a misfortune, for now we poor and miserable folk must perforce keep apart from one another, lest the infection be increased. Yes, I have brought upon you calamities which never before in your humble, solitary life you had experienced. This tortures and exhausts me more than I can tell to think of.

Write to me quite frankly. Tell me how you came to embark upon such a course of conduct. Comfort, oh, comfort me if you can. It is not self-love that prompts me to speak of my own comforting, but my friendship and love for you, which will never fade from my heart. Goodbye. I await your answer with impatience. You have thought but poorly of me, Makar Alexievitch.—Your friend and lover,

BARBARA DOBROSELOVA.

July 28th.

MY PRICELESS BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—What am I to say to you, now that all is over, and we are gradually returning to our old position? You say that you are anxious as to what will be thought of me. Let me tell you that the dearest thing in life to me is my self-respect; wherefore, in informing you of my misfortunes and misconduct, I would add that none of my superiors know of my doings, nor ever will know of them, and that therefore, I still enjoy a measure of respect in that quarter. Only one thing do I fear— I fear gossip. Garrulous though my landlady be, she said but little when, with the aid of your ten roubles, I today paid her part of her account; and as for the rest of my companions, they do not matter at all. So long as I have not borrowed money from them, I need pay them no attention. To conclude my explanations, let me tell you that I value your respect for me above everything in the world, and have found it my greatest comfort during this temporary distress of mine. Thank God, the first shock of things has abated, now that you have agreed not to look upon me as faithless and an egotist simply because I have deceived you. I wish to hold you to myself, for the reason that I cannot bear to part with you, and love you as my guardian angel... . I have now returned to work, and am applying myself diligently to my duties. Also, yesterday Evstafi Ivanovitch exchanged a word or two with me. Yet I will not conceal from you the fact that my debts are crushing me down, and that my wardrobe is in a sorry state. At the same time, these things do not REALLY matter and I would bid you not despair about them. Send me, however, another half-rouble if you can (though that half-rouble will stab me to the heart—stab me with the thought that it is not I who am helping you, but YOU who are helping ME). Thedora has done well to get those fifteen roubles for you. At the moment, fool of an old man that I am, I have no hope of acquiring any more money; but as soon as ever I do so, I will write to you and let you know all about it. What chiefly worries me is the fear of gossip. Goodbye, little angel. I kiss your hands, and beseech you to regain your health. If this is not a detailed letter, the reason is that I must soon be starting for the office, in order that, by strict application to duty, I may make amends for the past. Further information concerning my doings (as well as concerning that affair with the officers) must be deferred until tonight.—Your affectionate and respectful friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

July 28th.

DEAREST LITTLE BARBARA,—It is YOU who have committed a fault— and one which must weigh heavily upon your conscience. Indeed, your last letter has amazed and confounded me,—so much so that, on once more looking into the recesses of my heart, I perceive that I was perfectly right in what I did. Of course I am not now referring to my debauch (no, indeed!), but to the fact that I love you, and to the fact

that it is unwise of me to love you— very unwise. You know not how matters stand, my darling. You know not why I am BOUND to love you. Otherwise you would not say all that you do. Yet I am persuaded that it is your head rather than your heart that is speaking. I am certain that your heart thinks very differently.

What occurred that night between myself and those officers I scarcely know, I scarcely remember. You must bear in mind that for some time past I have been in terrible distress—that for a whole month I have been, so to speak, hanging by a single thread. Indeed, my position has been most pitiable. Though I hid myself from you, my landlady was forever shouting and railing at me. This would not have mattered a jot—the horrible old woman might have shouted as much as she pleased—had it not been that, in the first place, there was the disgrace of it, and, in the second place, she had somehow learned of our connection, and kept proclaiming it to the household until I felt perfectly deafened, and had to stop my ears. The point, however, is that other people did not stop their ears, but, on the contrary, pricked them. Indeed, I am at a loss what to do.

Really this wretched rabble has driven me to extremities. It all began with my hearing a strange rumour from Thedora—namely, that an unworthy suitor had been to visit you, and had insulted you with an improper proposal. That he had insulted you deeply I knew from my own feelings, for I felt insulted in an equal degree. Upon that, my angel, I went to pieces, and, losing all self- control, plunged headlong. Bursting into an unspeakable frenzy, I was at once going to call upon this villain of a seducer— though what to do next I knew not, seeing that I was fearful of giving you offence. Ah, what a night of sorrow it was, and what a time of gloom, rain, and sleet! Next, I was returning home, but found myself unable to stand upon my feet. Then Emelia Ilyitch happened to come by. He also is a tchinovnik—or rather, was a tchinovnik, since he was turned out of the service some time ago. What he was doing there at that moment I do not know; I only know that I went with him... . Surely it cannot give you pleasure to read of the misfortunes of your friend—of his sorrows, and of the temptations which he experienced? ... On the evening of the third day Emelia urged me to go and see the officer of whom I have spoken, and whose address I had learned from our dvornik. More strictly speaking, I had noticed him when, on a previous occasion, he had come to play cards here, and I had followed him home. Of course I now see that I did wrong, but I felt beside myself when I heard them telling him stories about me. Exactly what happened next I cannot remember. I only remember that several other officers were present as well as he. Or it may be that I saw everything double—God alone knows. Also, I cannot exactly remember what I said. I only remember that in my fury I said a great deal. Then they turned me out of the room, and threw me down the staircase— pushed me down it, that is to say. How I got home you know. That is all. Of course, later I blamed myself, and my pride underwent a fall; but no extraneous person except yourself knows of the affair, and in any case it does not matter. Perhaps the affair is as you imagine it to have been, Barbara? One thing I know for certain, and that is that last year one of our lodgers, Aksenti Osipovitch, took a similar liberty with

Peter Petrovitch, yet kept the fact secret, an absolute secret. He called him into his room (I happened to be looking through a crack in the partition-wall), and had an explanation with him in the way that a gentleman should—noone except myself being a witness of the scene; whereas, in my own case, I had no explanation at all. After the scene was over, nothing further transpired between Aksenti Osipovitch and Peter Petrovitch, for the reason that the latter was so desirous of getting on in life that he held his tongue. As a result, they bow and shake hands whenever they meet... I will not dispute the fact that I have erred most grievously—that I should never dare to dispute, or that I have fallen greatly in my own estimation; but, I think I was fated from birth so to do—and one cannot escape fate, my beloved. Here, therefore, is a detailed explanation of my misfortunes and sorrows, written for you to read whenever you may find it convenient. I am far from well, beloved, and have lost all my gaiety of disposition, but I send you this letter as a token of my love, devotion, and respect, Oh dear lady of my affections.— Your humble servant,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

July 29th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—I have read your two letters, and they make my heart ache. See here, dear friend of mine. You pass over certain things in silence, and write about a PORTION only of your misfortunes. Can it be that the letters are the outcome of a mental disorder? ... Come and see me, for God's sake. Come today, direct from the office, and dine with us as you have done before. As to how you are living now, or as to what settlement you have made with your landlady, I know not, for you write nothing concerning those two points, and seem purposely to have left them unmentioned. Au revoir, my friend. Come to me today without fail. You would do better ALWAYS to dine here. Thedora is an excellent cook. Goodbye—Your own,

BARBARA DOBROSELOVA.

August

August 1st.

MY DARLING BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—Thank God that He has sent you a chance of repaying my good with good. I believe in so doing, as well as in the sweetness of your angelic heart. Therefore, I will not reproach you. Only I pray you, do not again blame me because in the decline of my life I have played the spendthrift. It was such a sin, was it not?—such a thing to do? And even if you would still have it that the sin was there, remember, little friend, what it costs me to hear such words fall from your lips. Do not be vexed with me for saying this, for my heart is fainting. Poor people are subject to fancies—this is a provision of nature. I myself have had reason to know this. The poor man is exacting. He cannot see God’s world as it is, but eyes each passer-by askance, and looks around him uneasily in order that he may listen to every word that is being uttered. May not people be talking of him? How is it that he is so unsightly? What is he feeling at all? What sort of figure is he cutting on the one side or on the other? It is matter of common knowledge, my Barbara, that the poor man ranks lower than a rag, and will never earn the respect of any one. Yes, write about him as you like—let scribblers say what they choose about him— he will ever remain as he was. And why is this? It is because, from his very nature, the poor man has to wear his feelings on his sleeve, so that nothing about him is sacred, and as for his self-respect—! Well, Emelia told me the other day that once, when he had to collect subscriptions, official sanction was demanded for every single coin, since people thought that it would be no use paying their money to a poor man. Nowadays charity is strangely administered. Perhaps it has always been so. Either folk do not know how to administer it, or they are adept in the art—one of the two. Perhaps you did not know this, so I beg to tell it you. And how comes it that the poor man knows, is so conscious of it all? The answer is—by experience. He knows because any day he may see a gentleman enter a restaurant and ask himself, “What shall I have to eat today? I will have such and such a dish,” while all the time the poor man will have nothing to eat that day but gruel. There are men, too—wretched busybodies—who walk about merely to see if they can find some wretched tchinovnik or broken-down official who has got toes projecting from his boots or his hair uncut! And when they have found such a one they make a report of the circumstance, and their rubbish gets entered on the file.... But what does it matter to you if my hair lacks the shears? If you will forgive me what may seem to you a piece of rudeness, I declare that the poor man is ashamed

of such things with the sensitiveness of a young girl. YOU, for instance, would not care (pray pardon my bluntness) to unrobe yourself before the public eye; and in the same way, the poor man does not like to be pried at or questioned concerning his family relations, and so forth. A man of honour and self-respect such as I am finds it painful and grievous to have to consort with men who would deprive him of both.

Today I sat before my colleagues like a bear's cub or a plucked sparrow, so that I fairly burned with shame. Yes, it hurt me terribly, Barbara. Naturally one blushes when one can see one's naked toes projecting through one's boots, and one's buttons hanging by a single thread! As though on purpose, I seemed, on this occasion, to be peculiarly dishevelled. No wonder that my spirits fell. When I was talking on business matters to Stepan Karlovitch, he suddenly exclaimed, for no apparent reason, "Ah, poor old Makar Alexievitch!" and then left the rest unfinished. But I knew what he had in his mind, and blushed so hotly that even the bald patch on my head grew red. Of course the whole thing is nothing, but it worries me, and leads to anxious thoughts. What can these fellows know about me? God send that they know nothing! But I confess that I suspect, I strongly suspect, one of my colleagues. Let them only betray me! They would betray one's private life for a groat, for they hold nothing sacred.

I have an idea who is at the bottom of it all. It is Rataziaev. Probably he knows someone in our department to whom he has recounted the story with additions. Or perhaps he has spread it abroad in his own department, and thence, it has crept and crawled into ours. Everyone here knows it, down to the last detail, for I have seen them point at you with their fingers through the window. Oh yes, I have seen them do it. Yesterday, when I stepped across to dine with you, the whole crew were hanging out of the window to watch me, and the landlady exclaimed that the devil was in young people, and called you certain unbecoming names. But this is as nothing compared with Rataziaev's foul intention to place us in his books, and to describe us in a satire. He himself has declared that he is going to do so, and other people say the same. In fact, I know not what to think, nor what to decide. It is no use concealing the fact that you and I have sinned against the Lord God.... You were going to send me a book of some sort, to divert my mind—were you not, dearest? What book, though, could now divert me? Only such books as have never existed on earth. Novels are rubbish, and written for fools and for the idle. Believe me, dearest, I know it through long experience. Even should they vaunt Shakespeare to you, I tell you that Shakespeare is rubbish, and proper only for lampoons—Your own,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

August 2nd.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—Do not disquiet yourself. God will grant that all shall turn out well. Thedora has obtained a quantity of work, both for me and herself, and we are setting about it with a will. Perhaps it will put us straight again.

Thedora suspects my late misfortunes to be connected with Anna Thedorovna; but I do not care—I feel extraordinarily cheerful today. So you are thinking of borrowing more money? If so, may God preserve you, for you will assuredly be ruined when the time comes for repayment! You had far better come and live with us here for a little while. Yes, come and take up your abode here, and pay no attention whatever to what your landlady says. As for the rest of your enemies and ill-wishers, I am certain that it is with vain imaginings that you are vexing yourself... . In passing, let me tell you that your style differs greatly from letter to letter. Goodbye until we meet again. I await your coming with impatience—Your own,

B. D.

August 3rd.

MY ANGEL, BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I hasten to inform you, Oh light of my life, that my hopes are rising again. But, little daughter of mine—do you really mean it when you say that I am to indulge in no more borrowings? Why, I could not do without them. Things would go badly with us both if I did so. You are ailing. Consequently, I tell you roundly that I **MUST** borrow, and that I must continue to do so.

Also, I may tell you that my seat in the office is now next to that of a certain Emelia Ivanovitch. He is not the Emelia whom you know, but a man who, like myself, is a privy councillor, as well as represents, with myself, the senior and oldest official in our department. Likewise he is a good, disinterested soul, and one that is not over-talkative, though a true bear in appearance and demeanour. Industrious, and possessed of a handwriting purely English, his caligraphy is, it must be confessed, even worse than my own. Yes, he is a good soul. At the same time, we have never been intimate with one another. We have done no more than exchange greetings on meeting or parting, borrow one another's penknife if we needed one, and, in short, observe such bare civilities as convention demands. Well, today he said to me, "Makar Alexievitch, what makes you look so thoughtful?" and inasmuch as I could see that he wished me well, I told him all— or, rather, I did not tell him **EVERYTHING**, for that I do to no man (I have not the heart to do it); I told him just a few scattered details concerning my financial straits. "Then you ought to borrow," said he. "You ought to obtain a loan of Peter Petrovitch, who does a little in that way. I myself once borrowed some money of him, and he charged me fair and light interest." Well, Barbara, my heart leapt within me at these words. I kept thinking and thinking, —if only God would put it into the mind of Peter Petrovitch to be my benefactor by advancing me a loan!" I calculated that with its aid I might both repay my landlady and assist yourself and get rid of my surroundings (where I can hardly sit down to table without the rascals making jokes about me). Sometimes his Excellency passes our desk in the office. He glances at me, and cannot but perceive how poorly I am dressed. Now, neatness and cleanliness are two of his strongest points. Even though he says nothing, I feel ready to die with

shame when he approaches. Well, hardening my heart, and putting my diffidence into my ragged pocket, I approached Peter Petrovitch, and halted before him more dead than alive. Yet I was hopeful, and though, as it turned out, he was busily engaged in talking to Thedosei Ivanovitch, I walked up to him from behind, and plucked at his sleeve. He looked away from me, but I recited my speech about thirty roubles, et cetera, et cetera, of which, at first, he failed to catch the meaning. Even when I had explained matters to him more fully, he only burst out laughing, and said nothing. Again I addressed to him my request; whereupon, asking me what security I could give, he again buried himself in his papers, and went on writing without deigning me even a second glance. Dismay seized me. "Peter Petrovitch," I said, "I can offer you no security," but to this I added an explanation that some salary would, in time, be due to me, which I would make over to him, and account the loan my first debt. At that moment someone called him away, and I had to wait a little. On returning, he began to mend his pen as though he had not even noticed that I was there. But I was for myself this time. "Peter Petrovitch," I continued, "can you not do ANYTHING?" Still he maintained silence, and seemed not to have heard me. I waited and waited. At length I determined to make a final attempt, and plucked him by the sleeve. He muttered something, and, his pen mended, set about his writing. There was nothing for me to do but to depart. He and the rest of them are worthy fellows, dearest—that I do not doubt—but they are also proud, very proud. What have I to do with them? Yet I thought I would write and tell you all about it. Meanwhile Emelia Ivanovitch had been encouraging me with nods and smiles. He is a good soul, and has promised to recommend me to a friend of his who lives in Viborskaia Street and lends money. Emelia declares that this friend will certainly lend me a little; so tomorrow, beloved, I am going to call upon the gentleman in question... . What do you think about it? It would be a pity not to obtain a loan. My landlady is on the point of turning me out of doors, and has refused to allow me any more board. Also, my boots are wearing through, and have lost every button—and I do not possess another pair! Could anyone in a government office display greater shabbiness? It is dreadful, my Barbara—it is simply dreadful!

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

August 4th.

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—For God's sake borrow some money as soon as you can. I would not ask this help of you were it not for the situation in which I am placed. Thedora and myself cannot remain any longer in our present lodgings, for we have been subjected to great unpleasantness, and you cannot imagine my state of agitation and dismay. The reason is that this morning we received a visit from an elderly—almost an old—man whose breast was studded with orders. Greatly surprised, I asked him what he wanted (for at the moment Thedora had gone out

shopping); whereupon he began to question me as to my mode of life and occupation, and then, without waiting for an answer, informed me that he was uncle to the officer of whom you have spoken; that he was very angry with his nephew for the way in which the latter had behaved, especially with regard to his slandering of me right and left; and that he, the uncle, was ready to protect me from the young spendthrift's insolence. Also, he advised me to have nothing to say to young fellows of that stamp, and added that he sympathised with me as though he were my own father, and would gladly help me in any way he could. At this I blushed in some confusion, but did not greatly hasten to thank him. Next, he took me forcibly by the hand, and, tapping my cheek, said that I was very good-looking, and that he greatly liked the dimples in my face (God only knows what he meant!). Finally he tried to kiss me, on the plea that he was an old man, the brute! At this moment Thedora returned; whereupon, in some confusion, he repeated that he felt a great respect for my modesty and virtue, and that he much wished to become acquainted with me; after which he took Thedora aside, and tried, on some pretext or another, to give her money (though of course she declined it). At last he took himself off—again reiterating his assurances, and saying that he intended to return with some earrings as a present; that he advised me to change my lodgings; and, that he could recommend me a splendid flat which he had in his mind's eye as likely to cost me nothing. Yes, he also declared that he greatly liked me for my purity and good sense; that I must beware of dissolute young men; and that he knew Anna Thedorovna, who had charged him to inform me that she would shortly be visiting me in person. Upon that, I understood all. What I did next I scarcely know, for I had never before found myself in such a position; but I believe that I broke all restraints, and made the old man feel thoroughly ashamed of himself—Thedora helping me in the task, and well-nigh turning him neck and crop out of the tenement. Neither of us doubt that this is Anna Thedorovna's work—for how otherwise could the old man have got to know about us?

Now, therefore, Makar Alexievitch, I turn to you for help. Do not, for God's sake, leave me in this plight. Borrow all the money that you can get, for I have not the wherewithal to leave these lodgings, yet cannot possibly remain in them any longer. At all events, this is Thedora's advice. She and I need at least twenty-five roubles, which I will repay you out of what I earn by my work, while Thedora shall get me additional work from day to day, so that, if there be heavy interest to pay on the loan, you shall not be troubled with the extra burden. Nay, I will make over to you all that I possess if only you will continue to help me. Truly, I grieve to have to trouble you when you yourself are so hardly situated, but my hopes rest upon you, and upon you alone. Goodbye, Makar Alexievitch. Think of me, and may God speed you on your errand!

B.D.

August 4th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—These unlooked-for blows have shaken me terribly, and these strange calamities have quite broken my spirit. Not content with trying to bring you to a bed of sickness, these lickspittles and pestilent old men are trying to bring me to the same. And I assure you that they are succeeding—I assure you that they are. Yet I would rather die than not help you. If I cannot help you I SHALL die; but, to enable me to help you, you must flee like a bird out of the nest where these owls, these birds of prey, are seeking to peck you to death. How distressed I feel, my dearest! Yet how cruel you yourself are! Although you are enduring pain and insult, although you, little nestling, are in agony of spirit, you actually tell me that it grieves you to disturb me, and that you will work off your debt to me with the labour of your own hands! In other words, you, with your weak health, are proposing to kill yourself in order to relieve me to term of my financial embarrassments! Stop a moment, and think what you are saying. WHY should you sew, and work, and torture your poor head with anxiety, and spoil your beautiful eyes, and ruin your health? Why, indeed? Ah, little Barbara, little Barbara! Do you not see that I shall never be any good to you, never any good to you? At all events, I myself see it. Yet I WILL help you in your distress. I WILL overcome every difficulty, I WILL get extra work to do, I WILL copy out manuscripts for authors, I WILL go to the latter and force them to employ me, I WILL so apply myself to the work that they shall see that I am a good copyist (and good copyists, I know, are always in demand). Thus there will be no need for you to exhaust your strength, nor will I allow you to do so—I will not have you carry out your disastrous intention... Yes, little angel, I will certainly borrow some money. I would rather die than not do so. Merely tell me, my own darling, that I am not to shrink from heavy interest, and I will not shrink from it, I will not shrink from it—nay, I will shrink from nothing. I will ask for forty roubles, to begin with. That will not be much, will it, little Barbara? Yet will any one trust me even with that sum at the first asking? Do you think that I am capable of inspiring confidence at the first glance? Would the mere sight of my face lead any one to form of me a favourable opinion? Have I ever been able, remember you, to appear to anyone in a favourable light? What think you? Personally, I see difficulties in the way, and feel sick at heart at the mere prospect. However, of those forty roubles I mean to set aside twenty-five for yourself, two for my landlady, and the remainder for my own spending. Of course, I ought to give more than two to my landlady, but you must remember my necessities, and see for yourself that that is the most that can be assigned to her. We need say no more about it. For one rouble I shall buy me a new pair of shoes, for I scarcely know whether my old ones will take me to the office tomorrow morning. Also, a new neck-scarf is indispensable, seeing that the old one has now passed its first year; but, since you have promised to make of your old apron not only a scarf, but also a shirt-front, I need think no more of the article in question. So much for shoes and scarves. Next, for buttons. You yourself will agree that I cannot do without buttons; nor is there on my garments a single hem unfrayed.

I tremble when I think that some day his Excellency may perceive my untidiness, and say—well, what will he NOT say? Yet I shall never hear what he says, for I shall have expired where I sit—expired of mere shame at the thought of having been thus exposed. Ah, dearest! ... Well, my various necessities will have left me three roubles to go on with. Part of this sum I shall expend upon a half-pound of tobacco—for I cannot live without tobacco, and it is nine days since I last put a pipe into my mouth. To tell the truth, I shall buy the tobacco without acquainting you with the fact, although I ought not so to do. The pity of it all is that, while you are depriving yourself of everything, I keep solacing myself with various amenities— which is why I am telling you this, that the pangs of conscience may not torment me. Frankly, I confess that I am in desperate straits—in such straits as I have never yet known. My landlady flouts me, and I enjoy the respect of noone; my arrears and debts are terrible; and in the office, though never have I found the place exactly a paradise, noone has a single word to say to me. Yet I hide, I carefully hide, this from every one. I would hide my person in the same way, were it not that daily I have to attend the office where I have to be constantly on my guard against my fellows. Nevertheless, merely to be able to CONFESS this to you renews my spiritual strength. We must not think of these things, Barbara, lest the thought of them break our courage. I write them down merely to warn you NOT to think of them, nor to torture yourself with bitter imaginings. Yet, my God, what is to become of us? Stay where you are until I can come to you; after which I shall not return hither, but simply disappear. Now I have finished my letter, and must go and shave myself, inasmuch as, when that is done, one always feels more decent, as well as consorts more easily with decency. God speed me! One prayer to Him, and I must be off.

M. DIEVUSHKIN.

August 5th.

DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH, - You must not despair. Away with melancholy! I am sending you thirty kopecks in silver, and regret that I cannot send you more. Buy yourself what you most need until tomorrow. I myself have almost nothing left, and what I am going to do I know not. Is it not dreadful, Makar Alexievitch? Yet do not be downcast—it is no good being that. Thedora declares that it would not be a bad thing if we were to remain in this tenement, since if we left it suspicions would arise, and our enemies might take it into their heads to look for us. On the other hand, I do not think it would be well for us to remain here. If I were feeling less sad I would tell you my reason.

What a strange man you are, Makar Alexievitch! You take things so much to heart that you never know what it is to be happy. I read your letters attentively, and can see from them that, though you worry and disturb yourself about me, you never give a thought to yourself. Yes, every letter tells me that you have a kind heart; but I tell

YOU that that heart is overly kind. So I will give you a little friendly advice, Makar Alexievitch. I am full of gratitude towards you—I am indeed full for all that you have done for me, I am most sensible of your goodness; but, to think that I should be forced to see that, in spite of your own troubles (of which I have been the involuntary cause), you live for me alone—you live but for MY joys and MY sorrows and MY affection! If you take the affairs of another person so to heart, and suffer with her to such an extent, I do not wonder that you yourself are unhappy. Today, when you came to see me after office-work was done, I felt afraid even to raise my eyes to yours, for you looked so pale and desperate, and your face had so fallen in. Yes, you were dreading to have to tell me of your failure to borrow money—you were dreading to have to grieve and alarm me; but, when you saw that I came very near to smiling, the load was, I know, lifted from your heart. So do not be despondent, do not give way, but allow more rein to your better sense. I beg and implore this of you, for it will not be long before you see things take a turn for the better. You will but spoil your life if you constantly lament another person's sorrow. Goodbye, dear friend. I beseech you not to be over-anxious about me.

B. D.

August 5th.

MY DARLING LITTLE BARBARA,—This is well, this is well, my angel! So you are of opinion that the fact that I have failed to obtain any money does not matter? Then I too am reassured, I too am happy on your account. Also, I am delighted to think that you are not going to desert your old friend, but intend to remain in your present lodgings. Indeed, my heart was overcharged with joy when I read in your letter those kindly words about myself, as well as a not wholly unmerited recognition of my sentiments. I say this not out of pride, but because now I know how much you love me to be thus solicitous for my feelings. How good to think that I may speak to you of them! You bid me, darling, not be faint-hearted. Indeed, there is no need for me to be so. Think, for instance, of the pair of shoes which I shall be wearing to the office tomorrow! The fact is that over-brooding proves the undoing of a man—his complete undoing. What has saved me is the fact that it is not for myself that I am grieving, that I am suffering, but for YOU. Nor would it matter to me in the least that I should have to walk through the bitter cold without an overcoat or boots—I could bear it, I could well endure it, for I am a simple man in my requirements; but the point is—what would people say, what would every envious and hostile tongue exclaim, when I was seen without an overcoat? It is for OTHER folk that one wears an overcoat and boots. In any case, therefore, I should have needed boots to maintain my name and reputation; to both of which my ragged footgear would otherwise have spelled ruin. Yes, it is so, my beloved, and you may believe an old man who has had many years

of experience, and knows both the world and mankind, rather than a set of scribblers and daubers.

But I have not yet told you in detail how things have gone with me today. During the morning I suffered as much agony of spirit as might have been experienced in a year. 'Twas like this: First of all, I went out to call upon the gentleman of whom I have spoken. I started very early, before going to the office. Rain and sleet were falling, and I hugged myself in my greatcoat as I walked along. "Lord," thought I, "pardon my offences, and send me fulfilment of all my desires;" and as I passed a church I crossed myself, repented of my sins, and reminded myself that I was unworthy to hold communication with the Lord God. Then I retired into myself, and tried to look at nothing; and so, walking without noticing the streets, I proceeded on my way. Everything had an empty air, and everyone whom I met looked careworn and preoccupied, and no wonder, for who would choose to walk abroad at such an early hour, and in such weather? Next a band of ragged workmen met me, and jostled me boorishly as they passed; upon which nervousness overtook me, and I felt uneasy, and tried hard not to think of the money that was my errand. Near the Voskresenski Bridge my feet began to ache with weariness, until I could hardly pull myself along; until presently I met with Ermolaev, a writer in our office, who, stepping aside, halted, and followed me with his eyes, as though to beg of me a glass of vodka. "Ah, friend," thought I, "go YOU to your vodka, but what have I to do with such stuff?" Then, sadly weary, I halted for a moment's rest, and thereafter dragged myself further on my way. Purposely I kept looking about me for something upon which to fasten my thoughts, with which to distract, to encourage myself; but there was nothing. Not a single idea could I connect with any given object, while, in addition, my appearance was so draggled that I felt utterly ashamed of it. At length I perceived from afar a gabled house that was built of yellow wood. This, I thought, must be the residence of the Monsieur Markov whom Emelia Ivanovitch had mentioned to me as ready to lend money on interest. Half unconscious of what I was doing, I asked a watchman if he could tell me to whom the house belonged; whereupon grudgingly, and as though he were vexed at something, the fellow muttered that it belonged to one Markov. Are ALL watchmen so unfeeling? Why did this one reply as he did? In any case I felt disagreeably impressed, for like always answers to like, and, no matter what position one is in, things invariably appear to correspond to it. Three times did I pass the house and walk the length of the street; until the further I walked, the worse became my state of mind. "No, never, never will he lend me anything!" I thought to myself, "He does not know me, and my affairs will seem to him ridiculous, and I shall cut a sorry figure. However, let fate decide for me. Only, let Heaven send that I do not afterwards repent me, and eat out my heart with remorse!" Softly I opened the wicket-gate. Horrors! A great ragged brute of a watch-dog came flying out at me, and foaming at the mouth, and nearly jumping out his skin! Curious is it to note what little, trivial incidents will nearly make a man crazy, and strike terror to his heart, and annihilate the firm purpose with which he has armed himself. At all events, I approached the house more dead than alive, and walked straight into another

catastrophe. That is to say, not noticing the slipperiness of the threshold, I stumbled against an old woman who was filling milk-jugs from a pail, and sent the milk flying in every direction! The foolish old dame gave a start and a cry, and then demanded of me whither I had been coming, and what it was I wanted; after which she rated me soundly for my awkwardness. Always have I found something of the kind befall me when engaged on errands of this nature. It seems to be my destiny invariably to run into something. Upon that, the noise and the commotion brought out the mistress of the house—an old beldame of mean appearance. I addressed myself directly to her: “Does Monsieur Markov live here?” was my inquiry. “No,” she replied, and then stood looking at me civilly enough. “But what want you with him?” she continued; upon which I told her about Emelia Ivanovitch and the rest of the business. As soon as I had finished, she called her daughter—a barefooted girl in her teens—and told her to summon her father from upstairs. Meanwhile, I was shown into a room which contained several portraits of generals on the walls and was furnished with a sofa, a large table, and a few pots of mignonette and balsam. “Shall I, or shall I not (come weal, come woe) take myself off?” was my thought as I waited there. Ah, how I longed to run away! “Yes,” I continued, “I had better come again tomorrow, for the weather may then be better, and I shall not have upset the milk, and these generals will not be looking at me so fiercely.” In fact, I had actually begun to move towards the door when Monsieur Markov entered—a grey-headed man with thievish eyes, and clad in a dirty dressing-gown fastened with a belt. Greetings over, I stumbled out something about Emelia Ivanovitch and forty roubles, and then came to a dead halt, for his eyes told me that my errand had been futile. “No.” said he, “I have no money. Moreover, what security could you offer?” I admitted that I could offer none, but again added something about Emelia, as well as about my pressing needs. Markov heard me out, and then repeated that he had no money. “Ah,” thought I, “I might have known this—I might have foreseen it!” And, to tell the truth, Barbara, I could have wished that the earth had opened under my feet, so chilled did I feel as he said what he did, so numbed did my legs grow as shivers began to run down my back. Thus I remained gazing at him while he returned my gaze with a look which said, “Well now, my friend? Why do you not go since you have no further business to do here?” Somehow I felt conscience-stricken. “How is it that you are in such need of money?” was what he appeared to be asking; whereupon I opened my mouth (anything rather than stand there to no purpose at all!) but found that he was not even listening. “I have no money,” again he said, “or I would lend you some with pleasure.” Several times I repeated that I myself possessed a little, and that I would repay any loan from him punctually, most punctually, and that he might charge me what interest he liked, since I would meet it without fail. Yes, at that moment I remembered our misfortunes, our necessities, and I remembered your half-rouble. “No,” said he, “I can lend you nothing without security,” and clinched his assurance with an oath, the robber!

How I contrived to leave the house and, passing through Viborskaia Street, to reach the Voskresenski Bridge I do not know. I only remember that I felt terribly weary, cold,

and starved, and that it was ten o'clock before I reached the office. Arriving, I tried to clean myself up a little, but Sniegirev, the porter, said that it was impossible for me to do so, and that I should only spoil the brush, which belonged to the Government. Thus, my darling, do such fellows rate me lower than the mat on which they wipe their boots! What is it that will most surely break me? It is not the want of money, but the LITTLE worries of life—these whisperings and nods and jeers. Anyday his Excellency himself may round upon me. Ah, dearest, my golden days are gone. Today I have spent in reading your letters through; and the reading of them has made me sad. Goodbye, my own, and may the Lord watch over you!

M. DIEVUSHKIN.

P.S.—To conceal my sorrow I would have written this letter half jestingly; but, the faculty of jesting has not been given me. My one desire, however, is to afford you pleasure. Soon I will come and see you, dearest. Without fail I will come and see you.

August 11th.

O Barbara Alexievna, I am undone—we are both of us undone! Both of us are lost beyond recall! Everything is ruined—my reputation, my self-respect, all that I have in the world! And you as much as I. Never shall we retrieve what we have lost. I— I have brought you to this pass, for I have become an outcast, my darling. Everywhere I am laughed at and despised. Even my landlady has taken to abusing me. Today she overwhelmed me with shrill reproaches, and abased me to the level of a hearth-brush. And last night, when I was in Rataziaev's rooms, one of his friends began to read a scribbled note which I had written to you, and then inadvertently pulled out of my pocket. Oh beloved, what laughter there arose at the recital! How those scoundrels mocked and derided you and myself! I walked up to them and accused Rataziaev of breaking faith. I said that he had played the traitor. But he only replied that I had been the betrayer in the case, by indulging in various amours. "You have kept them very dark though, Mr. Lovelace!" said he— and now I am known everywhere by this name of "Lovelace." They know EVERYTHING about us, my darling, EVERYTHING— both about you and your affairs and about myself; and when today I was for sending Phaldoni to the bakeshop for something or other, he refused to go, saying that it was not his business. "But you MUST go," said I. "I will not," he replied. "You have not paid my mistress what you owe her, so I am not bound to run your errands." At such an insult from a raw peasant I lost my temper, and called him a fool; to which he retorted in a similar vein. Upon this I thought that he must be drunk, and told him so; whereupon he replied: "WHAT say you that I am? Suppose you yourself go and sober up, for I know that the other day you went to visit a woman, and that you got drunk with her on two grivenniks." To such a pass have things come! I feel ashamed to be seen alive. I am, as it were, a man proclaimed; I am in a worse plight even than

a tramp who has lost his passport. How misfortunes are heaping themselves upon me! I am lost—I am lost for ever!

M. D.

August 13th.

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—It is true that misfortune is following upon misfortune. I myself scarcely know what to do. Yet, no matter how you may be fairing, you must not look for help from me, for only today I burned my left hand with the iron! At one and the same moment I dropped the iron, made a mistake in my work, and burned myself! So now I can no longer work. Also, these three days past, Thedora has been ailing. My anxiety is becoming positively torturous. Nevertheless, I send you thirty kopecks— almost the last coins that I have left to me, much as I should have liked to have helped you more when you are so much in need. I feel vexed to the point of weeping. Goodbye, dear friend of mine. You will bring me much comfort if only you will come and see me today.

B. D.

August 14th.

What is the matter with you, Makar Alexievitch? Surely you cannot fear the Lord God as you ought to do? You are not only driving me to distraction but also ruining yourself with this eternal solicitude for your reputation. You are a man of honour, nobility of character, and self-respect, as everyone knows; yet, at any moment, you are ready to die with shame! Surely you should have more consideration for your grey hairs. No, the fear of God has departed from you. Thedora has told you that it is out of my power to render you anymore help. See, therefore, to what a pass you have brought me! Probably you think it is nothing to me that you should behave so badly; probably you do not realise what you have made me suffer. I dare not set foot on the staircase here, for if I do so I am stared at, and pointed at, and spoken about in the most horrible manner. Yes, it is even said of me that I am “united to a drunkard.” What a thing to hear! And whenever you are brought home drunk folk say, “They are carrying in that tchinovnik.” THAT is not the proper way to make me help you. I swear that I MUST leave this place, and go and get work as a cook or a laundress. It is impossible for me to stay here. Long ago I wrote and asked you to come and see me, yet you have not come. Truly my tears and prayers must mean NOTHING to you, Makar Alexievitch! Whence, too, did you get the money for your debauchery? For the love of God be more careful of yourself, or you will be ruined. How shameful, how abominable of you! So the landlady would not admit you last night, and you spent the night on the doorstep? Oh, I know all about it. Yet if only you could have seen

my agony when I heard the news! ... Come and see me, Makar Alexievitch, and we will once more be happy together. Yes, we will read together, and talk of old times, and Thedora shall tell you of her pilgrimages in former days. For God's sake beloved, do not ruin both yourself and me. I live for you alone; it is for your sake alone that I am still here. Be your better self once more—the self which still can remain firm in the face of misfortune. Poverty is no crime; always remember that. After all, why should we despair? Our present difficulties will pass away, and God will right us. Only be brave. I send you two grivenniks for the purchase of some tobacco or anything else that you need; but ,for the love of heaven, do not spend the money foolishly. Come you and see me soon; come without fail. Perhaps you may be ashamed to meet me, as you were before, but you NEED not feel like that—such shame would be misplaced. Only do bring with you sincere repentance and trust in God, who orders all things for the best.

B. D.

August 19th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA, -Yes, I AM ashamed to meet you, my darling—I AM ashamed. At the same time, what is there in all this? Why should we not be cheerful again? Why should I mind the soles of my feet coming through my boots? The sole of one's foot is a mere bagatelle—it will never be anything but just a base, dirty sole. And shoes do not matter, either. The Greek sages used to walk about without them, so why should we coddle ourselves with such things? Yet why, also, should I be insulted and despised because of them? Tell Thedora that she is a rubbishy, tiresome, gabbling old woman, as well as an inexpressibly foolish one. As for my grey hairs, you are quite wrong about them, inasmuch as I am not such an old man as you think. Emelia sends you his greeting. You write that you are in great distress, and have been weeping. Well, I too am in great distress, and have been weeping. Nay, nay. I wish you the best of health and happiness, even as I am well and happy myself, so long as I may remain, my darling,—Your friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

August 21st.

MY DEAR AND KIND BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I feel that I am guilty, I feel that I have sinned against you. Yet also I feel, from what you say, that it is no use for me so to feel. Even before I had sinned I felt as I do now; but I gave way to despair, and the more so as recognised my fault. Darling, I am not cruel or hardhearted. To rend your little soul would be the act of a blood-thirsty tiger, whereas I have the heart of a sheep. You yourself know that I am not addicted to bloodthirstiness, and therefore

that I cannot really be guilty of the fault in question, seeing that neither my mind nor my heart have participated in it.

Nor can I understand wherein the guilt lies. To me it is all a mystery. When you sent me those thirty kopecks, and thereafter those two grivenniks, my heart sank within me as I looked at the poor little money. To think that though you had burned your hand, and would soon be hungry, you could write to me that I was to buy tobacco! What was I to do? Remorselessly to rob you, an orphan, as any brigand might do? I felt greatly depressed, dearest. That is to say, persuaded that I should never do any good with my life, and that I was inferior even to the sole of my own boot, I took it into my head that it was absurd for me to aspire at all— rather, that I ought to account myself a disgrace and an abomination. Once a man has lost his self-respect, and has decided to abjure his better qualities and human dignity, he falls headlong, and cannot choose but do so. It is decreed of fate, and therefore I am not guilty in this respect.

That evening I went out merely to get a breath of fresh air, but one thing followed another— the weather was cold, all nature was looking mournful, and I had fallen in with Emelia. This man had spent everything that he possessed, and, at the time I met him, had not for two days tasted a crust of bread. He had tried to raise money by pawning, but what articles he had for the purpose had been refused by the pawnbrokers. It was more from sympathy for a fellow-man than from any liking for the individual that I yielded. That is how the fault arose, dearest.

He spoke of you, and I mingled my tears with his. Yes, he is a man of kind, kind heart—a man of deep feeling. I often feel as he did, dearest, and, in addition, I know how beholden to you I am. As soon as ever I got to know you I began both to realise myself and to love you; for until you came into my life I had been a lonely man—I had been, as it were, asleep rather than alive. In former days my rascally colleagues used to tell me that I was unfit even to be seen; in fact, they so disliked me that at length I began to dislike myself, for, being frequently told that I was stupid, I began to believe that I really was so. But the instant that YOU came into my life, you lightened the dark places in it, you lightened both my heart and my soul. Gradually, I gained rest of spirit, until I had come to see that I was no worse than other men, and that, though I had neither style nor brilliancy nor polish, I was still a MAN as regards my thoughts and feelings. But now, alas! pursued and scorned of fate, I have again allowed myself to abjure my own dignity. Oppressed of misfortune, I have lost my courage. Here is my confession to you, dearest. With tears I beseech you not to inquire further into the matter, for my heart is breaking, and life has grown indeed hard and bitter for me—Beloved, I offer you my respect, and remain ever your faithful friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September

September 3rd.

The reason why I did not finish my last letter, Makar Alexievitch, was that I found it so difficult to write. There are moments when I am glad to be alone—to grieve and repine without any one to share my sorrow: and those moments are beginning to come upon me with ever-increasing frequency. Always in my reminiscences I find something which is inexplicable, yet strongly attractive—so much so that for hours together I remain insensible to my surroundings, oblivious of reality. Indeed, in my present life there is not a single impression that I encounter—pleasant or the reverse—which does not recall to my mind something of a similar nature in the past. More particularly is this the case with regard to my childhood, my golden childhood. Yet such moments always leave me depressed. They render me weak, and exhaust my powers of fancy; with the result that my health, already not good, grows steadily worse.

However, this morning it is a fine, fresh, cloudless day, such as we seldom get in autumn. The air has revived me and I greet it with joy. Yet to think that already the fall of the year has come! How I used to love the country in autumn! Then but a child, I was yet a sensitive being who loved autumn evenings better than autumn mornings. I remember how beside our house, at the foot of a hill, there lay a large pond, and how the pond—I can see it even now!—shone with a broad, level surface that was as clear as crystal. On still evenings this pond would be at rest, and not a rustle would disturb the trees which grew on its banks and overhung the motionless expanse of water. How fresh it used to seem, yet how cold! The dew would be falling upon the turf, lights would be beginning to shine forth from the huts on the pond's margin, and the cattle would be wending their way home. Then quietly I would slip out of the house to look at my beloved pond, and forget myself in contemplation. Here and there a fisherman's bundle of brushwood would be burning at the water's edge, and sending its light far and wide over the surface. Above, the sky would be of a cold blue colour, save for a fringe of flame-coloured streaks on the horizon that kept turning ever paler and paler; and when the moon had come out there would be wafted through the limpid air the sounds of a frightened bird fluttering, of a bulrush rubbing against its fellows in the gentle breeze, and of a fish rising with a splash. Over the dark water there would gather a thin, transparent mist; and though, in the distance, night would be looming, and seemingly enveloping the entire horizon, everything closer at hand would be standing out as though shaped with a chisel—banks, boats, little islands,

and all. Beside the margin a derelict barrel would be turning over and over in the water; a switch of laburnum, with yellowing leaves, would go meandering through the reeds; and a belated gull would flutter up, dive again into the cold depths, rise once more, and disappear into the mist. How I would watch and listen to these things! How strangely good they all would seem! But I was a mere infant in those days—a mere child.

Yes, truly I loved autumn-tide—the late autumn when the crops are garnered, and field work is ended, and the evening gatherings in the huts have begun, and everyone is awaiting winter. Then does everything become more mysterious, the sky frowns with clouds, yellow leaves strew the paths at the edge of the naked forest, and the forest itself turns black and blue—more especially at eventide when damp fog is spreading and the trees glimmer in the depths like giants, like formless, weird phantoms. Perhaps one may be out late, and had got separated from one's companions. Oh horrors! Suddenly one starts and trembles as one seems to see a strange-looking being peering from out of the darkness of a hollow tree, while all the while the wind is moaning and rattling and howling through the forest—moaning with a hungry sound as it strips the leaves from the bare boughs, and whirls them into the air. High over the tree-tops, in a widespread, trailing, noisy crew, there fly, with resounding cries, flocks of birds which seem to darken and overlay the very heavens. Then a strange feeling comes over one, until one seems to hear the voice of some one whispering: "Run, run, little child! Do not be out late, for this place will soon have become dreadful! Run, little child! Run!" And at the words terror will possess one's soul, and one will rush and rush until one's breath is spent—until, panting, one has reached home.

At home, however, all will look bright and bustling as we children are set to shell peas or poppies, and the damp twigs crackle in the stove, and our mother comes to look fondly at our work, and our old nurse, Iliana, tells us stories of bygone days, or terrible legends concerning wizards and dead men. At the recital we little ones will press closer to one another, yet smile as we do so; when suddenly, everyone becomes silent. Surely somebody has knocked at the door? ... But nay, nay; it is only the sound of Frolovna's spinning-wheel. What shouts of laughter arise! Later one will be unable to sleep for fear of the strange dreams which come to visit one; or, if one falls asleep, one will soon wake again, and, afraid to stir, lie quaking under the coverlet until dawn. And in the morning, one will arise as fresh as a lark and look at the window, and see the fields overlaid with hoarfrost, and fine icicles hanging from the naked branches, and the pond covered over with ice as thin as paper, and a white steam rising from the surface, and birds flying overhead with cheerful cries. Next, as the sun rises, he throws his glittering beams everywhere, and melts the thin, glassy ice until the whole scene has come to look bright and clear and exhilarating; and as the fire begins to crackle again in the stove, we sit down to the tea-urn, while, chilled with the night cold, our black dog, Polkan, will look in at us through the window, and wag his tail with a cheerful air. Presently, a peasant will pass the window in his cart bound for the forest to cut firewood, and the whole party will feel merry and contented together. Abundant grain lies stored in

the byres, and great stacks of wheat are glowing comfortably in the morning sunlight. Everyone is quiet and happy, for God has blessed us with a bounteous harvest, and we know that there will be abundance of food for the wintertide. Yes, the peasant may rest assured that his family will not want for aught. Song and dance will arise at night from the village girls, and on festival days everyone will repair to God's house to thank Him with grateful tears for what He has done Ah, a golden time was my time of childhood! ...

Carried away by these memories, I could weep like a child. Everything, everything comes back so clearly to my recollection! The past stands out so vividly before me! Yet in the present everything looks dim and dark! How will it all end?—how? Do you know, I have a feeling, a sort of sure premonition, that I am going to die this coming autumn; for I feel terribly, oh so terribly ill! Often do I think of death, yet feel that I should not like to die here and be laid to rest in the soil of St. Petersburg. Once more I have had to take to my bed, as I did last spring, for I have never really recovered. Indeed I feel so depressed! Thedora has gone out for the day, and I am alone. For a long while past I have been afraid to be left by myself, for I keep fancying that there is someone else in the room, and that that someone is speaking to me. Especially do I fancy this when I have gone off into a reverie, and then suddenly awoken from it, and am feeling bewildered. That is why I have made this letter such a long one; for, when I am writing, the mood passes away. Goodbye. I have neither time nor paper left for more, and must close. Of the money which I saved to buy a new dress and hat, there remains but a single rouble; but, I am glad that you have been able to pay your landlady two roubles, for they will keep her tongue quiet for a time. And you must repair your wardrobe.

Goodbye once more. I am so tired! Nor can I think why I am growing so weak—why it is that even the smallest task now wearies me? Even if work should come my way, how am I to do it? That is what worries me above all things.

B. D.

September 5th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA,—Today I have undergone a variety of experiences. In the first place, my head has been aching, and towards evening I went out to get a breath of fresh air along the Fontanka Canal. The weather was dull and damp, and even by six o'clock, darkness had begun to set in. True, rain was not actually falling, but only a mist like rain, while the sky was streaked with masses of trailing cloud. Crowds of people were hurrying along Naberezhnaia Street, with faces that looked strange and dejected. There were drunken peasants; snub-nosed old harridans in slippers; bareheaded artisans; cab drivers; every species of beggar; boys; a locksmith's apprentice in a striped smock, with lean, emaciated features which seemed to have been washed in rancid oil; an ex-soldier who was offering penknives and copper rings

for sale; and so on, and so on. It was the hour when one would expect to meet no other folk than these. And what a quantity of boats there were on the canal. It made one wonder how they could all find room there. On every bridge were old women selling damp gingerbread or withered apples, and every woman looked as damp and dirty as her wares. In short, the Fontanka is a saddening spot for a walk, for there is wet granite under one's feet, and tall, dingy buildings on either side of one, and wet mist below and wet mist above. Yes, all was dark and gloomy there this evening.

By the time I had returned to Gorokhovaia Street darkness had fallen and the lamps had been lit. However, I did not linger long in that particular spot, for Gorokhovaia Street is too noisy a place. But what sumptuous shops and stores it contains! Everything sparkles and glitters, and the windows are full of nothing but bright colours and materials and hats of different shapes. One might think that they were decked merely for display; but no,—people buy these things, and give them to their wives! Yes, it IS a sumptuous place. Hordes of German hucksters are there, as well as quite respectable traders. And the quantities of carriages which pass along the street! One marvels that the pavement can support so many splendid vehicles, with windows like crystal, linings made of silk and velvet, and lacqueys dressed in epaulets and wearing swords! Into some of them I glanced, and saw that they contained ladies of various ages. Perhaps they were princesses and countesses! Probably at that hour such folk would be hastening to balls and other gatherings. In fact, it was interesting to be able to look so closely at a princess or a great lady. They were all very fine. At all events, I had never before seen such persons as I beheld in those carriages... .

Then I thought of you. Ah, my own, my darling, it is often that I think of you and feel my heart sink. How is it that YOU are so unfortunate, Barbara? How is it that YOU are so much worse off than other people? In my eyes you are kind-hearted, beautiful, and clever— why, then, has such an evil fate fallen to your lot? How comes it that you are left desolate—you, so good a human being! While to others happiness comes without an invitation at all? Yes, I know—I know it well—that I ought not to say it, for to do so savours of free-thought; but why should that raven, Fate, croak out upon the fortunes of one person while she is yet in her mother's womb, while another person it permits to go forth in happiness from the home which has reared her? To even an idiot of an Ivanushka such happiness is sometimes granted. "You, you fool Ivanushka," says Fate, "shall succeed to your grandfather's money-bags, and eat, drink, and be merry; whereas YOU (such and such another one) shall do no more than lick the dish, since that is all that you are good for." Yes, I know that it is wrong to hold such opinions, but involuntarily the sin of so doing grows upon one's soul. Nevertheless, it is you, my darling, who ought to be riding in one of those carriages. Generals would have come seeking your favour, and, instead of being clad in a humble cotton dress, you would have been walking in silken and golden attire. Then you would not have been thin and wan as now, but fresh and plump and rosy-cheeked as a figure on a sugar-cake. Then should I too have been happy—happy if only I could look at your lighted windows from the street, and watch your shadow— happy if only I could think

that you were well and happy, my sweet little bird! Yet how are things in reality? Not only have evil folk brought you to ruin, but there comes also an old rascal of a libertine to insult you! Just because he struts about in a frockcoat, and can ogle you through a gold-mounted lorgnette, the brute thinks that everything will fall into his hands—that you are bound to listen to his insulting condescension! Out upon him! But why is this? It is because you are an orphan, it is because you are unprotected, it is because you have no powerful friend to afford you the decent support which is your due. WHAT do such facts matter to a man or to men to whom the insulting of an orphan is an offence allowed? Such fellows are not men at all, but mere vermin, no matter what they think themselves to be. Of that I am certain. Why, an organ-grinder whom I met in Gorokhovaia Street would inspire more respect than they do, for at least he walks about all day, and suffers hunger—at least he looks for a stray, superfluous groat to earn him subsistence, and is, therefore, a true gentleman, in that he supports himself. To beg alms he would be ashamed; and, moreover, he works for the benefit of mankind just as does a factory machine. “So far as in me lies,” says he, “I will give you pleasure.” True, he is a pauper, and nothing but a pauper; but, at least he is an HONOURABLE pauper. Though tired and hungry, he still goes on working—working in his own peculiar fashion, yet still doing honest labour. Yes, many a decent fellow whose labour may be disproportionate to its utility pulls the forelock to no one, and begs his bread of no one. I myself resemble that organ-grinder. That is to say, though not exactly he, I resemble him in this respect, that I work according to my capabilities, and so far as in me lies. More could be asked of no one; nor ought I to be adjudged to do more.

Apropos of the organ-grinder, I may tell you, dearest, that today I experienced a double misfortune. As I was looking at the grinder, certain thoughts entered my head and I stood wrapped in a reverie. Some cabmen also had halted at the spot, as well as a young girl, with a yet smaller girl who was dressed in rags and tatters. These people had halted there to listen to the organ-grinder, who was playing in front of some one's windows. Next, I caught sight of a little urchin of about ten—a boy who would have been good-looking but for the fact that his face was pinched and sickly. Almost barefooted, and clad only in a shirt, he was standing agape to listen to the music—a pitiful childish figure. Nearer to the grinder a few more urchins were dancing, but in the case of this lad his hands and feet looked numbed, and he kept biting the end of his sleeve and shivering. Also, I noticed that in his hands he had a paper of some sort. Presently a gentleman came by, and tossed the grinder a small coin, which fell straight into a box adorned with a representation of a Frenchman and some ladies. The instant he heard the rattle of the coin, the boy started, looked timidly round, and evidently made up his mind that I had thrown the money; whereupon, he ran to me with his little hands all shaking, and said in a tremulous voice as he proffered me his paper: “Pl-please sign this.” I turned over the paper, and saw that there was written on it what is usual under such circumstances. “Kind friends I am a sick mother with three hungry children. Pray help me. Though soon I shall be dead, yet, if you will not

forget my little ones in this world, neither will I forget you in the world that is to come." The thing seemed clear enough; it was a matter of life and death. Yet what was I to give the lad? Well, I gave him nothing. But my heart ached for him. I am certain that, shivering with cold though he was, and perhaps hungry, the poor lad was not lying. No, no, he was not lying.

The shameful point is that so many mothers take no care of their children, but send them out, half-clad, into the cold. Perhaps this lad's mother also was a feckless old woman, and devoid of character? Or perhaps she had no one to work for her, but was forced to sit with her legs crossed—a veritable invalid? Or perhaps she was just an old rogue who was in the habit of sending out pinched and hungry boys to deceive the public? What would such a boy learn from begging letters? His heart would soon be rendered callous, for, as he ran about begging, people would pass him by and give him nothing. Yes, their hearts would be as stone, and their replies rough and harsh. "Away with you!" they would say. "You are seeking but to trick us." He would hear that from every one, and his heart would grow hard, and he would shiver in vain with the cold, like some poor little fledgling that has fallen out of the nest. His hands and feet would be freezing, and his breath coming with difficulty; until, look you, he would begin to cough, and disease, like an unclean parasite, would worm its way into his breast until death itself had overtaken him—overtaken him in some foetid corner whence there was no chance of escape. Yes, that is what his life would become.

There are many such cases. Ah, Barbara, it is hard to hear "For Christ's sake!" and yet pass the suppliant by and give nothing, or say merely: "May the Lord give unto you!" Of course, SOME supplications mean nothing (for supplications differ greatly in character). Occasionally supplications are long, drawn-out and drawling, stereotyped and mechanical—they are purely begging supplications. Requests of this kind it is less hard to refuse, for they are purely professional and of long standing. "The beggar is overdoing it," one thinks to oneself. "He knows the trick too well." But there are other supplications which voice a strange, hoarse, unaccustomed note, like that today when I took the poor boy's paper. He had been standing by the kerbstone without speaking to anybody—save that at last to myself he said, "For the love of Christ give me a groat!" in a voice so hoarse and broken that I started, and felt a queer sensation in my heart, although I did not give him a groat. Indeed, I had not a groat on me. Rich folk dislike hearing poor people complain of their poverty. "They disturb us," they say, "and are impertinent as well. Why should poverty be so impertinent? Why should its hungry moans prevent us from sleeping?"

To tell you the truth, my darling, I have written the foregoing not merely to relieve my feelings, but, also, still more, to give you an example of the excellent style in which I can write. You yourself will recognise that my style was formed long ago, but of late such fits of despondency have seized upon me that my style has begun to correspond to my feelings; and though I know that such correspondence gains one little, it at least renders one a certain justice. For not unfrequently it happens that, for some reason or another, one feels abased, and inclined to value oneself at nothing, and to account

oneself lower than a dishclout; but this merely arises from the fact that at the time one is feeling harassed and depressed, like the poor boy who today asked of me alms. Let me tell you an allegory, dearest, and do you hearken to it. Often, as I hasten to the office in the morning, I look around me at the city—I watch it awaking, getting out of bed, lighting its fires, cooking its breakfast, and becoming vocal; and at the sight, I begin to feel smaller, as though some one had dealt me a rap on my inquisitive nose. Yes, at such times I slink along with a sense of utter humiliation in my heart. For one would have but to see what is passing within those great, black, grimy houses of the capital, and to penetrate within their walls, for one at once to realise what good reason there is for self-depredation and heart-searching. Of course, you will note that I am speaking figuratively rather than literally.

Let us look at what is passing within those houses. In some dingy corner, perhaps, in some damp kennel which is supposed to be a room, an artisan has just awakened from sleep. All night he has dreamt—IF such an insignificant fellow is capable of dreaming?—about the shoes which last night he mechanically cut out. He is a master-shoemaker, you see, and therefore able to think of nothing but his one subject of interest. Nearby are some squalling children and a hungry wife. Nor is he the only man that has to greet the day in this fashion. Indeed, the incident would be nothing—it would not be worth writing about, save for another circumstance. In that same house ANOTHER person—a person of great wealth—may also have been dreaming of shoes; but, of shoes of a very different pattern and fashion (in a manner of speaking, if you understand my metaphor, we are all of us shoemakers). This, again, would be nothing, were it not that the rich person has no one to whisper in his ear: “Why dost thou think of such things? Why dost thou think of thyself alone, and live only for thyself—thou who art not a shoemaker? THY children are not ailing. THY wife is not hungry. Look around thee. Can’st thou not find a subject more fitting for thy thoughts than thy shoes?” That is what I want to say to you in allegorical language, Barbara. Maybe it savours a little of free-thought, dearest; but, such ideas WILL keep arising in my mind and finding utterance in impetuous speech. Why, therefore, should one not value oneself at a groat as one listens in fear and trembling to the roar and turmoil of the city? Maybe you think that I am exaggerating things—that this is a mere whim of mine, or that I am quoting from a book? No, no, Barbara. You may rest assured that it is not so. Exaggeration I abhor, with whims I have nothing to do, and of quotation I am guiltless.

I arrived home today in a melancholy mood. Sitting down to the table, I had warmed myself some tea, and was about to drink a second glass of it, when there entered Gorshkov, the poor lodger. Already, this morning, I had noticed that he was hovering around the other lodgers, and also seeming to want to speak to myself. In passing I may say that his circumstances are infinitely worse than my own; for, only think of it, he has a wife and children! Indeed, if I were he, I do not know what I should do. Well, he entered my room, and bowed to me with the pus standing, as usual, in drops on his eyelashes, his feet shuffling about, and his tongue unable, at first, to articulate a

word. I motioned him to a chair (it was a dilapidated enough one, but I had no other), and asked him to have a glass of tea. To this he demurred—for quite a long time he demurred, but at length he accepted the offer. Next, he was for drinking the tea without sugar, and renewed his excuses, but upon the sugar I insisted. After long resistance and many refusals, he DID consent to take some, but only the smallest possible lump; after which, he assured me that his tea was perfectly sweet. To what depths of humility can poverty reduce a man! “Well, what is it, my good sir?” I inquired of him; whereupon he replied: “It is this, Makar Alexievitch. You have once before been my benefactor. Pray again show me the charity of God, and assist my unfortunate family. My wife and children have nothing to eat. To think that a father should have to say this!” I was about to speak again when he interrupted me. “You see,” he continued, “I am afraid of the other lodgers here. That is to say, I am not so much afraid of, as ashamed to address them, for they are a proud, conceited lot of men. Nor would I have troubled even you, my friend and former benefactor, were it not that I know that you yourself have experienced misfortune and are in debt; wherefore, I have ventured to come and make this request of you, in that I know you not only to be kind-hearted, but also to be in need, and for that reason the more likely to sympathise with me in my distress.” To this he added an apology for his awkwardness and presumption. I replied that, glad though I should have been to serve him, I had nothing, absolutely nothing, at my disposal. “Ah, Makar Alexievitch,” he went on, “surely it is not much that I am asking of you? My-my wife and children are starving. C-could you not afford me just a grivennik? ” At that my heart contracted, “How these people put me to shame!” thought I. But I had only twenty kopecks left, and upon them I had been counting for meeting my most pressing requirements. “No, good sir, I cannot,” said I. “Well, what you will,” he persisted. “Perhaps ten kopecks?” Well I got out my cash-box, and gave him the twenty. It was a good deed. To think that such poverty should exist! Then I had some further talk with him. “How is it,” I asked him, “that, though you are in such straits, you have hired a room at five roubles?” He replied that though, when he engaged the room six months ago, he paid three months’ rent in advance, his affairs had subsequently turned out badly, and never righted themselves since. You see, Barbara, he was sued at law by a merchant who had defrauded the Treasury in the matter of a contract. When the fraud was discovered the merchant was prosecuted, but the transactions in which he had engaged involved Gorshkov, although the latter had been guilty only of negligence, want of prudence, and culpable indifference to the Treasury’s interests. True, the affair had taken place some years ago, but various obstacles had since combined to thwart Gorshkov. “Of the disgrace put upon me,” said he to me, “I am innocent. True, I to a certain extent disobeyed orders, but never did I commit theft or embezzlement.” Nevertheless the affair lost him his character. He was dismissed the service, and though not adjudged capitally guilty, has been unable since to recover from the merchant a large sum of money which is his by right, as spared to him (Gorshkov) by the legal tribunal. True, the tribunal in question did not altogether believe in Gorshkov, but I do so. The matter is of a nature so complex and crooked that

probably a hundred years would be insufficient to unravel it; and, though it has now to a certain extent been cleared up, the merchant still holds the key to the situation. Personally I side with Gorshkov, and am very sorry for him. Though lacking a post of any kind, he still refuses to despair, though his resources are completely exhausted. Yes, it is a tangled affair, and meanwhile he must live, for, unfortunately, another child which has been born to him has entailed upon the family fresh expenses. Also, another of his children recently fell ill and died—which meant yet further expense. Lastly, not only is his wife in bad health, but he himself is suffering from a complaint of long standing. In short, he has had a very great deal to undergo. Yet he declares that daily he expects a favourable issue to his affair—that he has no doubt of it whatever. I am terribly sorry for him, and said what I could to give him comfort, for he is a man who has been much bullied and misled. He had come to me for protection from his troubles, so I did my best to soothe him. Now, goodbye, my darling. May Christ watch over you and preserve your health. Dearest one, even to think of you is like medicine to my ailing soul. Though I suffer for you, I at least suffer gladly.—Your true friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 9th.

MY DEAREST BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I am beside myself as I take up my pen, for a most terrible thing has happened. My head is whirling round. Ah, beloved, how am I to tell you about it all? I had never foreseen what has happened. But no—I cannot say that I had NEVER foreseen it, for my mind DID get an inkling of what was coming, through my seeing something very similar to it in a dream.

I will tell you the whole story—simply, and as God may put it into my heart. Today I went to the office as usual, and, upon arrival, sat down to write. You must know that I had been engaged on the same sort of work yesterday, and that, while executing it, I had been approached by Timothei Ivanovitch with an urgent request for a particular document. “Makar Alexievitch,” he had said, “pray copy this out for me. Copy it as quickly and as carefully as you can, for it will require to be signed today.” Also let me tell you, dearest, that yesterday I had not been feeling myself, nor able to look at anything. I had been troubled with grave depression—my breast had felt chilled, and my head clouded. All the while I had been thinking of you, my darling. Well, I set to work upon the copying, and executed it cleanly and well, except for the fact that, whether the devil confused my mind, or a mysterious fate so ordained, or the occurrence was simply bound to happen, I left out a whole line of the document, and thus made nonsense of it! The work had been given me too late for signature last night, so it went before his Excellency this morning. I reached the office at my usual hour, and sat down beside Emelia Ivanovitch. Here I may remark that for a long time past I have been feeling twice as shy and diffident as I used to do; I have been finding it impossible to look people in the face. Let only a chair creak, and I become more

dead than alive. Today, therefore, I crept humbly to my seat and sat down in such a crouching posture that Efim Akimovitch (the most touchy man in the world) said to me sotto voce: "What on earth makes you sit like that, Makar Alexievitch?" Then he pulled such a grimace that everyone near us rocked with laughter at my expense. I stopped my ears, frowned, and sat without moving, for I found this the best method of putting a stop to such merriment. All at once I heard a bustle and a commotion and the sound of someone running towards us. Did my ears deceive me? It was I who was being summoned in peremptory tones! My heart started to tremble within me, though I could not say why. I only know that never in my life before had it trembled as it did then. Still I clung to my chair—-and at that moment was hardly myself at all. The voices were coming nearer and nearer, until they were shouting in my ear: "Dievushkin! Dievushkin! Where is Dievushkin?" Then at length I raised my eyes, and saw before me Evstafi Ivanovitch. He said to me: "Makar Alexievitch, go at once to his Excellency. You have made a mistake in a document." That was all, but it was enough, was it not? I felt dead and cold as ice—I felt absolutely deprived of the power of sensation; but, I rose from my seat and went whither I had been bidden. Through one room, through two rooms, through three rooms I passed, until I was conducted into his Excellency's cabinet itself. Of my thoughts at that moment I can give no exact account. I merely saw his Excellency standing before me, with a knot of people around him. I have an idea that I did not salute him—that I forgot to do so. Indeed, so panic-stricken was I, that my teeth were chattering and my knees knocking together. In the first place, I was greatly ashamed of my appearance (a glance into a mirror on the right had frightened me with the reflection of myself that it presented), and, in the second place, I had always been accustomed to comport myself as though no such person as I existed. Probably his Excellency had never before known that I was even alive. Of course, he might have heard, in passing, that there was a man named Dievushkin in his department; but never for a moment had he had any intercourse with me.

He began angrily: "What is this you have done, sir? Why are you not more careful? The document was wanted in a hurry, and you have gone and spoiled it. What do you think of it?"—the last being addressed to Evstafi Ivanovitch. More I did not hear, except for some flying exclamations of "What negligence and carelessness! How awkward this is!" and so on. I opened my mouth to say something or other; I tried to beg pardon, but could not. To attempt to leave the room, I had not the hardihood. Then there happened something the recollection of which causes the pen to tremble in my hand with shame. A button of mine—the devil take it!—a button of mine that was hanging by a single thread suddenly broke off, and hopped and skipped and rattled and rolled until it had reached the feet of his Excellency himself—this amid a profound general silence! THAT was what came of my intended self-justification and plea for mercy! THAT was the only answer that I had to return to my chief!

The sequel I shudder to relate. At once his Excellency's attention became drawn to my figure and costume. I remembered what I had seen in the mirror, and hastened to pursue the button. Obstinacy of a sort seized upon me, and I did my best to arrest the

thing, but it slipped away, and kept turning over and over, so that I could not grasp it, and made a sad spectacle of myself with my awkwardness. Then there came over me a feeling that my last remaining strength was about to leave me, and that all, all was lost—reputation, manhood, everything! In both ears I seemed to hear the voices of Theresa and Phaldoni. At length, however, I grasped the button, and, raising and straightening myself, stood humbly with clasped hands—looking a veritable fool! But no. First of all I tried to attach the button to the ragged threads, and smiled each time that it broke away from them, and smiled again. In the beginning his Excellency had turned away, but now he threw me another glance, and I heard him say to Evstafi Ivanovitch: “What on earth is the matter with the fellow? Look at the figure he cuts! Who to God is he? Ah, beloved, only to hear that, “Who to God is he? Truly I had made myself a marked man! In reply to his Excellency Evstafi murmured: “He is no one of any note, though his character is good. Besides, his salary is sufficient as the scale goes.” “Very well, then; but help him out of his difficulties somehow,” said his Excellency. “Give him a trifle of salary in advance.” “It is all forestalled,” was the reply. “He drew it some time ago. But his record is good. There is nothing against him.” At this I felt as though I were in Hell fire. I could actually have died! “Well, well,” said his Excellency, “let him copy out the document a second time. Dievushkin, come here. You are to make another copy of this paper, and to make it as quickly as possible.” With that he turned to some other officials present, issued to them a few orders, and the company dispersed. No sooner had they done so than his Excellency hurriedly pulled out a pocket-book, took thence a note for a hundred roubles, and, with the words, “Take this. It is as much as I can afford. Treat it as you like,” placed the money in my hand! At this, dearest, I started and trembled, for I was moved to my very soul. What next I did I hardly know, except that I know that I seized his Excellency by the hand. But he only grew very red, and then—no, I am not departing by a hair’s-breadth from the truth—it is true—that he took this unworthy hand in his, and shook it! Yes, he took this hand of mine in his, and shook it, as though I had been his equal, as though I had been a general like himself! “Go now,” he said. “This is all that I can do for you. Make no further mistakes, and I will overlook your fault.”

What I think about it is this: I beg of you and of Thedora, and had I any children I should beg of them also, to pray ever to God for his Excellency. I should say to my children: “For your father you need not pray; but for his Excellency, I bid you pray until your lives shall end.” Yes, dear one—I tell you this in all solemnity, so hearken well unto my words—that though, during these cruel days of our adversity, I have nearly died of distress of soul at the sight of you and your poverty, as well as at the sight of myself and my abasement and helplessness, I yet care less for the hundred roubles which his Excellency has given me than for the fact that he was good enough to take the hand of a wretched drunkard in his own and press it. By that act he restored me to myself. By that act he revived my courage, he made life forever sweet to me... . Yes, sure am I that, sinner though I be before the Almighty, my prayers for the happiness and prosperity of his Excellency will yet ascend to the Heavenly Throne! ...

But, my darling, for the moment I am terribly agitated and distraught. My heart is beating as though it would burst my breast, and all my body seems weak... . I send you forty-five roubles in notes. Another twenty I shall give to my landlady, and the remaining thirty-five I shall keep—twenty for new clothes and fifteen for actual living expenses. But these experiences of the morning have shaken me to the core, and I must rest awhile. It is quiet, very quiet, here. My breath is coming in jerks—deep down in my breast I can hear it sobbing and trembling... . I will come and see you soon, but at the moment my head is aching with these various sensations. God sees all things, my darling, my priceless treasure!—Your steadfast friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 10th.

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—I am unspeakably rejoiced at your good fortune, and fully appreciate the kindness of your superior. Now, take a rest from your cares. Only do not AGAIN spend money to no advantage. Live as quietly and as frugally as possible, and from today begin always to set aside something, lest misfortune again overtake you. Do not, for God's sake, worry yourself—Thedora and I will get on somehow. Why have you sent me so much money? I really do not need it—what I had already would have been quite sufficient. True, I shall soon be needing further funds if I am to leave these lodgings, but Thedora is hoping before long to receive repayment of an old debt. Of course, at least TWENTY roubles will have to be set aside for indispensable requirements, but theremainder shall be returned to you. Pray take care of it, Makar Alexievitch. Now, goodbye. May your life continue peacefully, and may you preserve your health and spirits. I would have written to you at greater length had I not felt so terribly weary. Yesterday I never left my bed. I am glad that you have promised to come and see me. Yes, you MUST pay me a visit.

B. D.

September 11th.

MY DARLING BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I implore you not to leave me now that I am once more happy and contented. Disregard what Thedora says, and I will do anything in the world for you. I will behave myself better, even if only out of respect for his Excellency, and guard my every action. Once more we will exchange cheerful letters with one another, and make mutual confidence of our thoughts and joys and sorrows (if so be that we shall know any more sorrows?). Yes, we will live twice as happily and comfortably as of old. Also, we will exchange books... . Angel of my heart, a great change has taken place in my fortunes—a change very much for the better. My landlady has become more accommodating; Theresa has recovered her senses; even

Phaldoni springs to do my bidding. Likewise, I have made my peace with Rataziaev. He came to see me of his own accord, the moment that he heard the glad tidings. There can be no doubt that he is a good fellow, that there is no truth in the slanders that one hears of him. For one thing, I have discovered that he never had any intention of putting me and yourself into a book. This he told me himself, and then read to me his latest work. As for his calling me “Lovelace,” he had intended no rudeness or indecency thereby. The term is merely one of foreign derivation, meaning a clever fellow, or, in more literary and elegant language, a gentleman with whom one must reckon. That is all; it was a mere harmless jest, my beloved. Only ignorance made me lose my temper, and I have expressed to him my regret... . How beautiful is the weather today, my little Barbara! True, there was a slight frost in the early morning, as though scattered through a sieve, but it was nothing, and the breeze soon freshened the air. I went out to buy some shoes, and obtained a splendid pair. Then, after a stroll along the Nevski Prospect, I read “The Daily Bee”. This reminds me that I have forgotten to tell you the most important thing of all. It happened like this:

This morning I had a talk with Emelia Ivanovitch and Aksenti Michaelovitch concerning his Excellency. Apparently, I am not the only person to whom he has acted kindly and been charitable, for he is known to the whole world for his goodness of heart. In many quarters his praises are to be heard; in many quarters he has called forth tears of gratitude. Among other things, he undertook the care of an orphaned girl, and married her to an official, the son of a poor widow, and found this man place in a certain chancellory, and in other ways benefited him. Well, dearest, I considered it to be my duty to add my mite by publishing abroad the story of his Excellency’s gracious treatment of myself. Accordingly, I related the whole occurrence to my interlocutors, and concealed not a single detail. In fact, I put my pride into my pocket—though why should I feel ashamed of having been elated by such an occurrence? “Let it only be noised afield,” said I to myself, and it will resound greatly to his Excellency’s credit.—So I expressed myself enthusiastically on the subject and never faltered. On the contrary, I felt proud to have such a story to tell. I referred to every one concerned (except to yourself, of course, dearest)—to my landlady, to Phaldoni, to Rataziaev, to Markov. I even mentioned the matter of my shoes! Some of those standing by laughed—in fact every one present did so, but probably it was my own figure or the incident of my shoes—more particularly the latter—that excited merriment, for I am sure it was not meant ill-naturedly. My hearers may have been young men, or well off; certainly they cannot have been laughing with evil intent at what I had said. Anything against his Excellency CANNOT have been in their thoughts. Eh, Barbara?

Even now I cannot wholly collect my faculties, so upset am I by recent events... . Have you any fuel to go on with, Barbara? You must not expose yourself to cold. Also, you have depressed my spirits with your fears for the future. Daily I pray to God on your behalf. Ah, HOW I pray to Him! ... Likewise, have you any woollen stockings to wear, and warm clothes generally? Mind you, if there is anything you need, you must

not hurt an old man's feelings by failing to apply to him for what you require. The bad times are gone now, and the future is looking bright and fair.

But what bad times they were, Barbara, even though they be gone, and can no longer matter! As the years pass on we shall gradually recover ourselves. How clearly I remember my youth! In those days I never had a kopeck to spare. Yet, cold and hungry though I was, I was always light-hearted. In the morning I would walk the Nevski Prospect, and meet nice-looking people, and be happy all day. Yes, it was a glorious, a glorious time! It was good to be alive, especially in St. Petersburg. Yet it is but yesterday that I was beseeching God with tears to pardon me my sins during the late sorrowful period—to pardon me my murmurings and evil thoughts and gambling and drunkenness. And you I remembered in my prayers, for you alone have encouraged and comforted me, you alone have given me advice and instruction. I shall never forget that, dearest. Today I gave each one of your letters a kiss... . Goodbye, beloved. I have been told that there is going to be a sale of clothing somewhere in this neighbourhood. Once more goodbye, goodbye, my angel—Yours in heart and soul,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 15th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—I am in terrible distress. I feel sure that something is about to happen. The matter, my beloved friend, is that Monsieur Bwikov is again in St. Petersburg, for Thedora has met him. He was driving along in a drozhki, but, on meeting Thedora, he ordered the coachman to stop, sprang out, and inquired of her where she was living; but this she would not tell him. Next, he said with a smile that he knew quite well who was living with her (evidently Anna Thedorovna had told him); whereupon Thedora could hold out no longer, but then and there, in the street, railed at and abused him—telling him that he was an immoral man, and the cause of all my misfortunes. To this he replied that a person who did not possess a groat must surely be rather badly off; to which Thedora retorted that I could always either live by the labour of my hands or marry—that it was not so much a question of my losing posts as of my losing my happiness, the ruin of which had led almost to my death. In reply he observed that, though I was still quite young, I seemed to have lost my wits, and that my “virtue appeared to be under a cloud” (I quote his exact words). Both I and Thedora had thought that he does not know where I live; but, last night, just as I had left the house to make a few purchases in the Gostinni Dvor, he appeared at our rooms (evidently he had not wanted to find me at home), and put many questions to Thedora concerning our way of living. Then, after inspecting my work, he wound up with: “Who is this tchinovnik friend of yours?” At the moment you happened to be passing through the courtyard, so Thedora pointed you out, and the man peered at you, and laughed. Thedora next asked him to depart—telling him that I was still ill from grief, and that it would give me great pain

to see him there; to which, after a pause, he replied that he had come because he had had nothing better to do. Also, he was for giving Thedora twenty-five roubles, but, of course, she declined them. What does it all mean? Why has he paid this visit? I cannot understand his getting to know about me. I am lost in conjecture. Thedora, however, says that Aksinia, her sister-in-law (who sometimes comes to see her), is acquainted with a laundress named Nastasia, and that this woman has a cousin in the position of watchman to a department of which a certain friend of Anna Thedorovna's nephew forms one of the staff. Can it be, therefore, that an intrigue has been hatched through THIS channel? But Thedora may be entirely mistaken. We hardly know what to think. What if he should come again? The very thought terrifies me. When Thedora told me of this last night such terror seized upon me that I almost swooned away. What can the man be wanting? At all events, I refuse to know such people. What have they to do with my wretched self? Ah, how I am haunted with anxiety, for every moment I keep thinking that Bwikov is at hand! WHAT will become of me? WHAT MORE has fate in store for me? For Christ's sake come and see me, Makar Alexievitch! For Christ's sake come and see me soon!

September 18th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—Today there took place in this house a most lamentable, a most mysterious, a most unlooked-for occurrence. First of all, let me tell you that poor Gorshkov has been entirely absolved of guilt. The decision has been long in coming, but this morning he went to hear the final resolution read. It was entirely in his favour. Any culpability which had been imputed to him for negligence and irregularity was removed by the resolution. Likewise, he was authorised to recover of the merchant a large sum of money. Thus, he stands entirely justified, and has had his character cleansed from all stain. In short, he could not have wished for a more complete vindication. When he arrived home at three o'clock he was looking as white as a sheet, and his lips were quivering. Yet there was a smile on his face as he embraced his wife and children. In a body the rest of us ran to congratulate him, and he was greatly moved by the act. Bowing to us, he pressed our hands in turn. As he did so I thought, somehow, that he seemed to have grown taller and straighter, and that the pus-drops seemed to have disappeared from his eyelashes. Yet how agitated he was, poor fellow! He could not rest quietly for two minutes together, but kept picking up and then dropping whatsoever came to his hand, and bowing and smiling without intermission, and sitting down and getting up, and again sitting down, and chattering God only knows what about his honour and his good name and his little ones. How he did talk—yes, and weep too! Indeed, few of ourselves could refrain from tears; although Rataziaev remarked (probably to encourage Gorshkov) that honour mattered nothing when one had nothing to eat, and that money was the chief thing in the world, and that for it alone ought God to be thanked. Then he slapped Gorshkov on the shoulder,

but I thought that Gorshkov somehow seemed hurt at this. He did not express any open displeasure, but threw Rataziaev a curious look, and removed his hand from his shoulder. ONCE upon a time he would not have acted thus; but characters differ. For example, I myself should have hesitated, at such a season of rejoicing, to seem proud, even though excessive deference and civility at such a moment might have been construed as a lapse both of moral courage and of mental vigour. However, this is none of my business. All that Gorshkov said was: "Yes, money IS a good thing, glory be to God!" In fact, the whole time that we remained in his room he kept repeating to himself: "Glory be to God, glory be to God!" His wife ordered a richer and more delicate meal than usual, and the landlady herself cooked it, for at heart she is not a bad woman. But until the meal was served Gorshkov could not remain still. He kept entering everyone's room in turn (whether invited thither or not), and, seating himself smilingly upon a chair, would sometimes say something, and sometimes not utter a word, but get up and go out again. In the naval officer's room he even took a pack of playing-cards into his hand, and was thereupon invited to make a fourth in a game; but after losing a few times, as well as making several blunders in his play, he abandoned the pursuit. "No," said he, "that is the sort of man that I am—that is all that I am good for," and departed. Next, encountering myself in the corridor, he took my hands in his, and gazed into my face with a rather curious air. Then he pressed my hands again, and moved away still smiling, smiling, but in an odd, weary sort of manner, much as a corpse might smile. Meanwhile his wife was weeping for joy, and everything in their room was decked in holiday guise. Presently dinner was served, and after they had dined Gorshkov said to his wife: "See now, dearest, I am going to rest a little while;" and with that went to bed. Presently he called his little daughter to his side, and, laying his hand upon the child's head, lay a long while looking at her. Then he turned to his wife again, and asked her: "What of Petinka? Where is our Petinka?" whereupon his wife crossed herself, and replied: "Why, our Petinka is dead!" "Yes, yes, I know—of course," said her husband. "Petinka is now in the Kingdom of Heaven." This showed his wife that her husband was not quite in his right senses—that the recent occurrence had upset him; so she said: "My dearest, you must sleep awhile." "I will do so," he replied, "—at once—I am rather—" And he turned over, and lay silent for a time. Then again he turned round and tried to say something, but his wife could not hear what it was. "What do you say?" she inquired, but he made no reply. Then again she waited a few moments until she thought to herself, "He has gone to sleep," and departed to spend an hour with the landlady. At the end of that hour she returned— only to find that her husband had not yet awoken, but was still lying motionless. "He is sleeping very soundly," she reflected as she sat down and began to work at something or other. Since then she has told us that when half an hour or so had elapsed she fell into a reverie. What she was thinking of she cannot remember, save that she had forgotten altogether about her husband. Then she awoke with a curious sort of sensation at her heart. The first thing that struck her was the deathlike stillness of the room. Glancing at the bed, she perceived her husband to be lying in the same position as before. Thereupon she

approached him, turned the coverlet back, and saw that he was stiff and cold— that he had died suddenly, as though smitten with a stroke. But of what precisely he died God only knows. The affair has so terribly impressed me that even now I cannot fully collect my thoughts. It would scarcely be believed that a human being could die so simply—and he such a poor, needy wretch, this Gorshkov! What a fate, what a fate, to be sure! His wife is plunged in tears and panic-stricken, while his little daughter has run away somewhere to hide herself. In their room, however, all is bustle and confusion, for the doctors are about to make an autopsy on the corpse. But I cannot tell you things for certain; I only know that I am most grieved, most grieved. How sad to think that one never knows what even a day, what even an hour, may bring forth! One seems to die to so little purpose! .-Your own

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 19th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I hasten to let you know that Ratazi-
aev has found me some work to do for a certain writer—the latter having submitted to him a large manuscript. Glory be to God, for this means a large amount of work to do. Yet, though the copy is wanted in haste, the original is so carelessly written that I hardly know how to set about my task. Indeed, certain parts of the manuscript are almost undecipherable. I have agreed to do the work for forty kopecks a sheet. You see therefore (and this is my true reason for writing to you), that we shall soon be receiving money from an extraneous source. Goodbye now, as I must begin upon my labours.—Your sincere friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 23rd.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—I have not written to you these three days past for the reason that I have been so worried and alarmed.

Three days ago Bwikov came again to see me. At the time I was alone, for Thedora had gone out somewhere. As soon as I opened the door the sight of him so terrified me that I stood rooted to the spot, and could feel myself turning pale. Entering with his usual loud laugh, he took a chair, and sat down. For a long while I could not collect my thoughts; I just sat where I was, and went on with my work. Soon his smile faded, for my appearance seemed somehow to have struck him. You see, of late I have grown thin, and my eyes and cheeks have fallen in, and my face has become as white as a sheet; so that anyone who knew me a year ago would scarcely recognise me now. After a prolonged inspection, Bwikov seemed to recover his spirits, for he said something to which I duly replied. Then again he laughed. Thus he sat for a whole hour- -talking to

me the while, and asking me questions about one thing and another. At length, just before he rose to depart, he took me by the hand, and said (to quote his exact words): "Between ourselves, Barbara Alexievna, that kinswoman of yours and my good friend and acquaintance—I refer to Anna Thedorovna - is a very bad woman " (he also added a grosser term of opprobrium). "First of all she led your cousin astray, and then she ruined yourself. I also have behaved like a villain, but such is the way of the world." Again he laughed. Next, having remarked that, though not a master of eloquence, he had always considered that obligations of gentility obliged him to have with me a clear and outspoken explanation, he went on to say that he sought my hand in marriage; that he looked upon it as a duty to restore to me my honour; that he could offer me riches; that, after marriage, he would take me to his country seat in the Steppes, where we would hunt hares; that he intended never to visit St. Petersburg again, since everything there was horrible, and he had to entertain a worthless nephew whom he had sworn to disinherit in favour of a legal heir; and, finally, that it was to obtain such a legal heir that he was seeking my hand in marriage. Lastly, he remarked that I seemed to be living in very poor circumstances (which was not surprising, said he, in view of the kennel that I inhabited); that I should die if I remained a month longer in that den; that all lodgings in St. Petersburg were detestable; and that he would be glad to know if I was in want of anything.

So thunderstruck was I with the proposal that I could only burst into tears. These tears he interpreted as a sign of gratitude, for he told me that he had always felt assured of my good sense, cleverness, and sensibility, but that hitherto he had hesitated to take this step until he should have learned precisely how I was getting on. Next he asked me some questions about YOU; saying that he had heard of you as a man of good principle, and that since he was unwilling to remain your debtor, would a sum of five hundred roubles repay you for all you had done for me? To this I replied that your services to myself had been such as could never be requited with money; whereupon, he exclaimed that I was talking rubbish and nonsense; that evidently I was still young enough to read poetry; that romances of this kind were the undoing of young girls, that books only corrupted morality, and that, for his part, he could not abide them. "You ought to live as long as I have done," he added, "and THEN you will see what men can be."

With that he requested me to give his proposal my favourable consideration—saying that he would not like me to take such an important step unguardedly, since want of thought and impetuosity often spelt ruin to youthful inexperience, but that he hoped to receive an answer in the affirmative. "Otherwise," said he, "I shall have no choice but to marry a certain merchant's daughter in Moscow, in order that I may keep my vow to deprive my nephew of the inheritance.—Then he pressed five hundred roubles into my hand—to buy myself some bonbons, as he phrased it—and wound up by saying that in the country I should grow as fat as a doughnut or a cheese rolled in butter; that at the present moment he was extremely busy; and that, deeply engaged in business

though he had been all day, he had snatched the present opportunity of paying me a visit. At length he departed.

For a long time I sat plunged in reflection. Great though my distress of mind was, I soon arrived at a decision.... My friend, I am going to marry this man; I have no choice but to accept his proposal. If anyone could save me from this squalor, and restore to me my good name, and avert from me future poverty and want and misfortune, he is the man to do it. What else have I to look for from the future? What more am I to ask of fate? Thedora declares that one need NEVER lose one's happiness; but what, I ask HER, can be called happiness under such circumstances as mine? At all events I see no other road open, dear friend. I see nothing else to be done. I have worked until I have ruined my health. I cannot go on working forever. Shall I go out into the world? Nay; I am worn to a shadow with grief, and become good for nothing. Sickly by nature, I should merely be a burden upon other folks. Of course this marriage will not bring me paradise, but what else does there remain, my friend—what else does there remain? What other choice is left?

I had not asked your advice earlier for the reason that I wanted to think the matter over alone. However, the decision which you have just read is unalterable, and I am about to announce it to Bwikov himself, who in any case has pressed me for a speedy reply, owing to the fact (so he says) that his business will not wait nor allow him to remain here longer, and that therefore, no trifle must be allowed to stand in its way. God alone knows whether I shall be happy, but my fate is in His holy, His inscrutable hand, and I have so decided. Bwikov is said to be kind-hearted. He will at least respect me, and perhaps I shall be able to return that respect. What more could be looked for from such a marriage?

I have now told you all, Makar Alexievitch, and feel sure that you will understand my despondency. Do not, however, try to divert me from my intention, for all your efforts will be in vain. Think for a moment; weigh in your heart for a moment all that has led me to take this step. At first my anguish was extreme, but now I am quieter. What awaits me I know not. What must be must be, and as God may send....

Bwikov has just arrived, so I am leaving this letter unfinished. Otherwise I had much else to say to you. Bwikov is even now at the door! ...

September 23rd.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I hasten to reply to you—I hasten to express to you my extreme astonishment... . In passing, I may mention that yesterday we buried poor Gorshkov... .

Yes, Bwikov has acted nobly, and you have no choice but to accept him. All things are in God's hands. This is so, and must always be so; and the purposes of the Divine Creator are at once good and inscrutable, as also is Fate, which is one with Him... .

Theedora will share your happiness—for, of course, you will be happy, and free from want, darling, dearest, sweetest of angels! But why should the matter be so hurried? Oh, of course—Monsieur Bwikov's business affairs. Only a man who has no affairs to see to can afford to disregard such things. I got a glimpse of Monsieur Bwikov as he was leaving your door. He is a fine-looking man—a very fine-looking man; though that is not the point that I should most have noticed had I been quite myself at the time...

In the future shall we be able to write letters to one another? I keep wondering and wondering what has led you to say all that you have said. To think that just when twenty pages of my copying are completed THIS has happened! ... I suppose you will be able to make many purchases now—to buy shoes and dresses and all sorts of things? Do you remember the shops in Gorokhovaia Street of which I used to speak? ...

But no. You ought not to go out at present—you simply ought not to, and shall not. Presently, you will be able to buy many, many things, and to keep a carriage. Also, at present the weather is bad. Rain is descending in pailfuls, and it is such a soaking kind of rain that—that you might catch cold from it, my darling, and the chill might go to your heart. Why should your fear of this man lead you to take such risks when all the time I am here to do your bidding? So Theedora declares great happiness to be awaiting you, does she? She is a gossiping old woman, and evidently desires to ruin you.

Shall you be at the all-night Mass this evening, dearest? I should like to come and see you there. Yes, Bwikov spoke but the truth when he said that you are a woman of virtue, wit, and good feeling. Yet I think he would do far better to marry the merchant's daughter. What think YOU about it? Yes, 'twould be far better for him. As soon as it grows dark tonight I mean to come and sit with you for an hour. Tonight twilight will close in early, so I shall soon be with you. Yes, come what may, I mean to see you for an hour. At present, I suppose, you are expecting Bwikov, but I will come as soon as he has gone. So stay at home until I have arrived, dearest.

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 27th.

DEAR MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH, -Bwikov has just informed me that I must have at least three dozen linen blouses; so I must go at once and look for sempstresses to make two out of the three dozen, since time presses. Indeed, Monsieur Bwikov is quite angry about the fuss which these fripperies are entailing, seeing that there remain but five days before the wedding, and we are to depart on the following day. He keeps rushing about and declaring that no time ought to be wasted on trifles. I am terribly worried, and scarcely able to stand on my feet. There is so much to do, and, perhaps, so much that were better left undone! Moreover, I have no blond or other lace; so THERE is another item to be purchased, since Bwikov declares that he cannot have his bride look like a cook, but, on the contrary, she must "put the noses of the great

ladies out of joint.” That is his expression. I wish, therefore, that you would go to Madame Chiffon’s, in Gorokhovaia Street, and ask her, in the first place, to send me some sempstresses, and, in the second place, to give herself the trouble of coming in person, as I am too ill to go out. Our new flat is very cold, and still in great disorder. Also, Bwikov has an aunt who is at her last gasp through old age, and may die before our departure. He himself, however, declares this to be nothing, and says that she will soon recover. He is not yet living with me, and I have to go running hither and thither to find him. Only Thedora is acting as my servant, together with Bwikov’s valet, who oversees everything, but has been absent for the past three days.

Each morning Bwikov goes to business, and loses his temper. Yesterday he even had some trouble with the police because of his thrashing the steward of these buildings... I have no one to send with this letter so I am going to post it... Ah! I had almost forgotten the most important point—which is that I should like you to go and tell Madame Chiffon that I wish the blond lace to be changed in conformity with yesterday’s patterns, if she will be good enough to bring with her a new assortment. Also say that I have altered my mind about the satin, which I wish to be tamboured with crochet-work; also, that tambour is to be used with monograms on the various garments. Do you hear? Tambour, not smooth work. Do not forget that it is to be tambour. Another thing I had almost forgotten, which is that the lappets of the fur cloak must be raised, and the collar bound with lace. Please tell her these things, Makar Alexievitch.—Your friend,

B. D.

P.S.—I am so ashamed to trouble you with my commissions! This is the third morning that you will have spent in running about for my sake. But what else am I to do? The whole place is in disorder, and I myself am ill. Do not be vexed with me, Makar Alexievitch. I am feeling so depressed! What is going to become of me, dear friend, dear, kind, old Makar Alexievitch? I dread to look forward into the future. Somehow I feel apprehensive; I am living, as it were, in a mist. Yet, for God’s sake, forget none of my commissions. I am so afraid lest you should make a mistake! Remember that everything is to be tambour work, not smooth.

September 27th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—I have carefully fulfilled your commissions. Madame Chiffon informs me that she herself had thought of using tambour work as being more suitable (though I did not quite take in all she said). Also, she has informed me that, since you have given certain directions in writing, she has followed them (though again I do not clearly remember all that she said—I only remember that she said a very great deal, for she is a most tiresome old woman). These observations she will soon be repeating to you in person. For myself, I feel absolutely exhausted, and have not been to the office today...

Do not despair about the future, dearest. To save you trouble I would visit every shop in St. Petersburg. You write that you dare not look forward into the future. But by tonight, at seven o'clock, you will have learned all, for Madame Chiffon will have arrived in person to see you. Hope on, and everything will order itself for the best. Of course, I am referring only to these accursed gewgaws, to these frills and fripperies! Ah me, ah me, how glad I shall be to see you, my angel! Yes, how glad I shall be! Twice already today I have passed the gates of your abode. Unfortunately, this Bwikov is a man of such choler that—Well, things are as they are.

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 28th.

MY DEAREST MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—For God's sake go to the jeweller's, and tell him that, after all, he need not make the pearl and emerald earrings. Monsieur Bwikov says that they will cost him too much, that they will burn a veritable hole in his pocket. In fact, he has lost his temper again, and declares that he is being robbed. Yesterday he added that, had he but known, but foreseen, these expenses, he would never have married. Also, he says that, as things are, he intends only to have a plain wedding, and then to depart. "You must not look for any dancing or festivity or entertainment of guests, for our gala times are still in the air." Such were his words. God knows I do not want such things, but none the less Bwikov has forbidden them. I made him no answer on the subject, for he is a man all too easily irritated. What, what is going to become of me?

B. D.

September 28th.

MY BELOVED BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—All is well as regards the jeweller. Unfortunately, I have also to say that I myself have fallen ill, and cannot rise from bed. Just when so many things need to be done, I have gone and caught a chill, the devil take it! Also I have to tell you that, to complete my misfortunes, his Excellency has been pleased to become stricter. Today he railed at and scolded Emelia Ivanovitch until the poor fellow was quite put about. That is the sum of my news.

No—there is something else concerning which I should like to write to you, but am afraid to obtrude upon your notice. I am a simple, dull fellow who writes down whatsoever first comes into his head—Your friend,

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 29th.

MY OWN BARBARA ALEXIEVNA,—Today, dearest, I saw Thedora, who informed me that you are to be married tomorrow, and on the following day to go away—for which purpose Bwikov has ordered a post-chaise....

Well, of the incident of his Excellency, I have already told you. Also I have verified the bill from the shop in Gorokhovaia Street. It is correct, but very long. Why is Monsieur Bwikov so out of humour with you? Nay, but you must be of good cheer, my darling. I am so, and shall always be so, so long as you are happy. I should have come to the church tomorrow, but, alas, shall be prevented from doing so by the pain in my loins. Also, I would have written an account of the ceremony, but that there will be no one to report to me the details... .

Yes, you have been a very good friend to Thedora, dearest. You have acted kindly, very kindly, towards her. For every such deed God will bless you. Good deeds never go unrewarded, nor does virtue ever fail to win the crown of divine justice, be it early or be it late. Much else should I have liked to write to you. Every hour, every minute I could occupy in writing. Indeed I could write to you forever! Only your book, “The Stories of Bielkin”, is left to me. Do not deprive me of it, I pray you, but suffer me to keep it. It is not so much because I wish to read the book for its own sake, as because winter is coming on, when the evenings will be long and dreary, and one will want to read at least SOMETHING.

Do you know, I am going to move from my present quarters into your old ones, which I intend to rent from Thedora; for I could never part with that good old woman. Moreover, she is such a splendid worker. Yesterday I inspected your empty room in detail, and inspected your embroidery-frame, with the work still hanging on it. It had been left untouched in its corner. Next, I inspected the work itself, of which there still remained a few remnants, and saw that you had used one of my letters for a spool upon which to wind your thread. Also, on the table I found a scrap of paper which had written on it, “My dearest Makar Alexievitch I hasten to—” that was all. Evidently, someone had interrupted you at an interesting point. Lastly, behind a screen there was your little bed... . Oh darling of darlings!!! ... Well, goodbye now, goodbye now, but for God’s sake send me something in answer to this letter!

MAKAR DIEVUSHKIN.

September 30th.

MY BELOVED MAKAR ALEXIEVITCH,—All is over! The die is cast! What my lot may have in store I know not, but I am submissive to the will of God. Tomorrow, then, we depart. For the last time, I take my leave of you, my friend beyond price, my benefactor, my dear one! Do not grieve for me, but try to live happily. Think of me sometimes, and may the blessing of Almighty God light upon you! For myself, I shall

often have you in remembrance, and recall you in my prayers. Thus our time together has come to an end. Little comfort in my new life shall I derive from memories of the past. The more, therefore, shall I cherish the recollection of you, and the dearer will you ever be to my heart. Here, you have been my only friend; here, you alone have loved me. Yes, I have seen all, I have known all—I have throughout known how well you love me. A single smile of mine, a single stroke from my pen, has been able to make you happy... . But now you must forget me... . How lonely you will be! Why should you stay here at all, kind, inestimable, but solitary, friend of mine?

To your care I entrust the book, the embroidery frame, and the letter upon which I had begun. When you look upon the few words which the letter contains you will be able mentally to read in thought all that you would have liked further to hear or receive from me—all that I would so gladly have written, but can never now write. Think sometimes of your poor little Barbara who loved you so well. All your letters I have left behind me in the top drawer of Thedora's chest of drawers... You write that you are ill, but Monsieur Bwikov will not let me leave the house today; so that I can only write to you. Also, I will write again before long. That is a promise. Yet God only knows when I shall be able to do so... .

Now we must bid one another forever farewell, my friend, my beloved, my own! Yes, it must be forever! Ah, how at this moment I could embrace you! Goodbye, dear friend—goodbye, goodbye! May you ever rest well and happy! To the end I shall keep you in my prayers. How my heart is aching under its load of sorrow! ... Monsieur Bwikov is just calling for me... .—Your ever loving

B.

P.S.—My heart is full! It is full to bursting of tears! Sorrow has me in its grip, and is tearing me to pieces. Goodbye. My God, what grief! Do not, do not forget your poor Barbara!

BELOVED BARBARA—MY JEWEL, MY PRICELESS ONE,—You are now almost en route, you are now just about to depart! Would that they had torn my heart out of my breast rather than have taken you away from me! How could you allow it? You weep, yet you go! And only this moment I have received from you a letter stained with your tears! It must be that you are departing unwillingly; it must be that you are being abducted against your will; it must be that you are sorry for me; it must be that—that you LOVE me! ...

Yet how will it fare with you now? Your heart will soon have become chilled and sick and depressed. Grief will soon have sucked away its life; grief will soon have rent it in twain! Yes, you will die where you be, and be laid to rest in the cold, moist earth where there is no one to bewail you. Monsieur Bwikov will only be hunting hares! ...

Ah, my darling, my darling! WHY did you come to this decision? How could you bring yourself to take such a step? What have you done, have you done, have you done? Soon they will be carrying you away to the tomb; soon your beauty will have become defiled, my angel. Ah, dearest one, you are as weak as a feather. And where have I been all this time? What have I been thinking of? I have treated you merely as

a forward child whose head was aching. Fool that I was, I neither saw nor understood. I have behaved as though, right or wrong, the matter was in no way my concern. Yes, I have been running about after fripperies! ... Ah, but I WILL leave my bed. Tomorrow I WILL rise sound and well, and be once more myself... .

Dearest, I could throw myself under the wheels of a passing vehicle rather than that you should go like this. By what right is it being done? ... I will go with you; I will run behind your carriage if you will not take me—yes, I will run, and run so long as the power is in me, and until my breath shall have failed. Do you know whither you are going? Perhaps you will not know, and will have to ask me? Before you there lie the Steppes, my darling—only the Steppes, the naked Steppes, the Steppes that are as bare as the palm of my hand. THERE there live only heartless old women and rude peasants and drunkards. THERE the trees have already shed their leaves. THERE there abide but rain and cold. Why should you go thither? True, Monsieur Bwikov will have his diversions in that country—he will be able to hunt the hare; but what of yourself? Do you wish to become a mere estate lady? Nay; look at yourself, my seraph of heaven. Are you in any way fitted for such a role? How could you play it? To whom should I write letters? To whom should I send these missives? Whom should I call “my darling”? To whom should I apply that name of endearment? Where, too, could I find you?

When you are gone, Barbara, I shall die—for certain I shall die, for my heart cannot bear this misery. I love you as I love the light of God; I love you as my own daughter; to you I have devoted my love in its entirety; only for you have I lived at all; only because you were near me have I worked and copied manuscripts and committed my views to paper under the guise of friendly letters.

Perhaps you did not know all this, but it has been so. How, then, my beloved, could you bring yourself to leave me? Nay, you MUST not go—it is impossible, it is sheerly, it is utterly, impossible. The rain will fall upon you, and you are weak, and will catch cold. The floods will stop your carriage. No sooner will it have passed the city barriers than it will break down, purposely break down. Here, in St. Petersburg, they are bad builders of carriages. Yes, I know well these carriage-builders. They are jerry-builders who can fashion a toy, but nothing that is durable. Yes, I swear they can make nothing that is durable... . All that I can do is to go upon my knees before Monsieur Bwikov, and to tell him all, to tell him all. Do you also tell him all, dearest, and reason with him. Tell him that you MUST remain here, and must not go. Ah, why did he not marry that merchant’s daughter in Moscow? Let him go and marry her now. She would suit him far better and for reasons which I well know. Then I could keep you. For what is he to you, this Monsieur Bwikov? Why has he suddenly become so dear to your heart? Is it because he can buy you gewgaws? What are THEY? What use are THEY? They are so much rubbish. One should consider human life rather than mere finery.

Nevertheless, as soon as I have received my next instalment of salary I mean to buy you a new cloak. I mean to buy it at a shop with which I am acquainted. Only, you must wait until my next installment is due, my angel of a Barbara. Ah, God, my

God! To think that you are going away into the Steppes with Monsieur Bwikov—that you are going away never to return! ... Nay, nay, but you SHALL write to me. You SHALL write me a letter as soon as you have started, even if it be your last letter of all, my dearest. Yet will it be your last letter? How has it come about so suddenly, so irrevocably, that this letter should be your last? Nay, nay; I will write, and you shall write—yes, NOW, when at length I am beginning to improve my style. Style? I do not know what I am writing. I never do know what I am writing. I could not possibly know, for I never read over what I have written, nor correct its orthography. At the present moment, I am writing merely for the sake of writing, and to put as much as possible into this last letter of mine... .

Ah, dearest, my pet, my own darling!...

The Possessed or The Devils

Translated by Constance Garnett, 1916

“Strike me dead, the track has vanished, Well, what now? We’ve lost the way,
Demons have bewitched our horses, Led us in the wilds astray.

What a number! Whither drift they? What’s the mournful dirge they sing? Do they
hail a witch’s marriage Or a goblin’s burying?”

A. Pushkin.

“And there was one herd of many swine feeding on this mountain; and they besought
him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

“Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine; and the herd ran
violently down a steep place into the lake and were choked.

“When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in
the city and in the country.

“Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus and found the man,
out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his
right mind; and they were afraid.”

Luke, ch. viii. 32-37.

Part 1

Chapter 1: Introductory Some Details of the Biography of That Highly Respected Gentleman Stefan Teofimovitch Verhovensky

1

IN UNDERTAKING to describe the recent and strange incidents in our town, till lately wrapped in uneventful obscurity, I find myself forced in absence of literary skill to begin my story rather far back, that is to say, with certain biographical details concerning that talented and highly-esteemed gentleman, Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky. I trust that these details may at least serve as an introduction, while my projected story itself will come later.

I will say at once that Stepan Trofimovitch had always filled a particular role among us, that of the progressive patriot, so to say, and he was passionately fond of playing the part—so much so that I really believe he could not have existed without it. Not that I would put him on a level with an actor at a theatre, God forbid, for I really have a respect for him. This may all have been the effect of habit, or rather, more exactly of a generous propensity he had from his earliest years for indulging in an agreeable day-dream in which he figured as a picturesque public character. He fondly loved, for instance, his position as a “persecuted” man and, so to speak, an “exile.” There is a sort of traditional glamour about those two little words that fascinated him once for all and, exalting him gradually in his own opinion, raised him in the course of years to a lofty pedestal very gratifying to vanity. In an English satire of the last century, Gulliver, returning from the land of the Lilliputians where the people were only three or four inches high, had grown so accustomed to consider himself a giant among them, that as he walked along the streets of London he could not help crying out to carriages and passers-by to be careful and get out of his way for fear he should crush them, imagining that they were little and he was still a giant. He was laughed at and abused for it, and rough coachmen even lashed at the giant with their whips. But was that just? What may not be done by habit? Habit had brought Stepan Trofimovitch almost to the same position, but in a more innocent and inoffensive form, if one may use such expressions, for he was a most excellent man.

I am even inclined to suppose that towards the end he had been entirely forgotten everywhere; but still it cannot be said that his name had never been known. It is beyond question that he had at one time belonged to a certain distinguished constellation of celebrated leaders of the last generation, and at one time—though only for the briefest moment—his name was pronounced by many hasty persons of that day almost as though it were on a level with the names of Tchaadaev, of Byelinsky, of Granovsky, and of Herzen, who had only just begun to write abroad. But Stepan Trofimovitch's activity ceased almost at the moment it began, owing, so to say, to a "vortex of combined circumstances." And would you believe it? It turned out afterwards that there had been no "vortex" and even no "circumstances," at least in that connection. I only learned the other day to my intense amazement, though on the most unimpeachable authority, that Stepan Trofimovitch had lived among us in our province not as an "exile" as we were accustomed to believe, and had never even been under police supervision at all. Such is the force of imagination! All his life he sincerely believed that in certain spheres he was a constant cause of apprehension, that every step he took was watched and noted, and that each one of the three governors who succeeded one another during twenty years in our province came with special and uneasy ideas concerning him, which had, by higher powers, been impressed upon each before everything else, on receiving the appointment. Had anyone assured the honest man on the most irrefutable grounds that he had nothing to be afraid of, he would certainly have been offended. Yet Stepan Trofimovitch was a most intelligent and gifted man, even, so to say, a man of science, though indeed, in science ... well, in fact he had not done such great things in science. I believe indeed he had done nothing at all. But that's very often the case, of course, with men of science among us in Russia.

He came back from abroad and was brilliant in the capacity of lecturer at the university, towards the end of the forties. He only had time to deliver a few lectures, I believe they were about the Arabs; he maintained, too, a brilliant thesis on the political and Hanseatic importance of the German town Hanau, of which there was promise in the epoch between 1413 and 1428, and on the special and obscure reasons why that promise was never fulfilled. This dissertation was a cruel and skilful thrust at the Slavophiles of the day, and at once made him numerous and irreconcilable enemies among them. Later on—after he had lost his post as lecturer, however—he published (by way of revenge, so to say, and to show them what a man they had lost) in a progressive monthly review, which translated Dickens and advocated the views of George Sand, the beginning of a very profound investigation into the causes, I believe, of the extraordinary moral nobility of certain knights at a certain epoch or something of that nature.

Some lofty and exceptionally noble idea was maintained in it, anyway. It was said afterwards that the continuation was hurriedly forbidden and even that the progressive review had to suffer for having printed the first part. That may very well have been so, for what was not possible in those days? Though, in this case, it is more likely that there was nothing of the kind, and that the author himself was too lazy to conclude

his essay. He cut short his lectures on the Arabs because, somehow and by some one (probably one of his reactionary enemies) a letter had been seized giving an account of certain circumstances, in consequence of which some one had demanded an explanation from him. I don't know whether the story is true, but it was asserted that at the same time there was discovered in Petersburg a vast, unnatural, and illegal conspiracy of thirty people which almost shook society to its foundations. It was said that they were positively on the point of translating Fourier. As though of design a poem of Stepan Trofimovitch's was seized in Moscow at that very time, though it had been written six years before in Berlin in his earliest youth, and manuscript copies had been passed round a circle consisting of two poetical amateurs and one student. This poem is lying now on my table. No longer ago than last year I received a recent copy in his own handwriting from Stepan Trofimovitch himself, signed by him, and bound in a splendid red leather binding. It is not without poetic merit, however, and even a certain talent. It's strange, but in those days (or to be more exact, in the thirties) people were constantly composing in that style. I find it difficult to describe the subject, for I really do not understand it. It is some sort of an allegory in lyrical-dramatic form, recalling the second part of Faust. The scene opens with a chorus of women, followed by a chorus of men, then a chorus of incorporeal powers of some sort, and at the end of all a chorus of spirits not yet living but very eager to come to life. All these choruses sing about something very indefinite, for the most part about somebody's curse, but with a tinge of the higher humour. But the scene is suddenly changed. There begins a sort of "festival of life" at which even insects sing, a tortoise comes on the scene with certain sacramental Latin words, and even, if I remember aright, a mineral sings about something that is a quite inanimate object. In fact, they all sing continually, or if they converse, it is simply to abuse one another vaguely, but again with a tinge of higher meaning. At last the scene is changed again; a wilderness appears, and among the rocks there wanders a civilized young man who picks and sucks certain herbs. Asked by a fairy why he sucks these herbs, he answers that, conscious of a superfluity of life in himself, he seeks forgetfulness, and finds it in the juice of these herbs, but that his great desire is to lose his reason at once (a desire possibly superfluous). Then a youth of indescribable beauty rides in on a black steed, and an immense multitude of all nations follow him. The youth represents death, for whom all the peoples are yearning. And finally, in the last scene we are suddenly shown the Tower of Babel, and certain athletes at last finish building it with a song of new hope, and when at length they complete the topmost pinnacle, the lord (of Olympia, let us say) takes flight in a comic fashion, and man, grasping the situation and seizing his place, at once begins a new life with new insight into things. Well, this poem was thought at that time to be dangerous. Last year I proposed to Stepan Trofimovitch to publish it, on the ground of its perfect harmlessness nowadays, but he declined the suggestion with evident dissatisfaction. My view of its complete harmlessness evidently displeased him, and I even ascribe to it a certain coldness on his part, which lasted two whole months.

And what do you think? Suddenly, almost at the time I proposed printing it here, our poem was published abroad in a collection of revolutionary verse, without the knowledge of Stepan Trofimovitch. He was at first alarmed, rushed to the governor, and wrote a noble letter in self-defence to Petersburg. He read it to me twice, but did not send it, not knowing to whom to address it. In fact he was in a state of agitation for a whole month, but I am convinced that in the secret recesses of his heart he was enormously flattered. He almost took the copy of the collection to bed with him, and kept it hidden under his mattress in the daytime; he positively would not allow the women to turn his bed, and although he expected every day a telegram, he held his head high. No telegram came. Then he made friends with me again, which is a proof of the extreme kindness of his gentle and unresentful heart.

2

Of course I don't assert that he had never suffered for his convictions at all, but I am fully convinced that he might have gone on lecturing on his Arabs as long as he liked, if he had only given the necessary explanations. But he was too lofty, and he proceeded with peculiar haste to assure himself that his career was ruined for ever "by the vortex of circumstance." And if the whole truth is to be told the real cause of the change in his career was the very delicate proposition which had been made before and was then renewed by Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin, a lady of great wealth, the wife of a lieutenant-general, that he should undertake the education and the whole intellectual development of her only son in the capacity of a superior sort of teacher and friend, to say nothing of a magnificent salary. This proposal had been made to him the first time in Berlin, at the moment when he was first left a widower. His first wife was a frivolous girl from our province, whom he married in his early and unthinking youth, and apparently he had had a great deal of trouble with this young person, charming as she was, owing to the lack of means for her support; and also from other, more delicate, reasons. She died in Paris after three years' separation from him, leaving him a son of five years old; "the fruit of our first, joyous, and unclouded love," were the words the sorrowing father once let fall in my presence.

The child had, from the first, been sent back to Russia, where he was brought up in the charge of distant cousins in some remote region. Stepan Trofimovitch had declined Varvara Petrovna's proposal on that occasion and had quickly married again, before the year was over, a taciturn Berlin girl, and, what makes it more strange, there was no particular necessity for him to do so. But apart from his marriage there were, it appears, other reasons for his declining the situation. He was tempted by the resounding fame of a professor, celebrated at that time, and he, in his turn, hastened to the lecturer's chair for which he had been preparing himself, to try his eagle wings in flight. But now with singed wings he naturally remembered the proposition which even then had made him hesitate. The sudden death of his second wife, who did not live a year with him, settled the matter decisively. To put it plainly it was all brought about

by the passionate sympathy and priceless, so to speak, classic friendship of Varvara Petrovna, if one may use such an expression of friendship. He flung himself into the arms of this friendship, and his position was settled for more than twenty years. I use the expression "flung himself into the arms of," but God forbid that anyone should fly to idle and superfluous conclusions. These embraces must be understood only in the most loftily moral sense. The most refined and delicate tie united these two beings, both so remarkable, for ever.

The post of tutor was the more readily accepted too, as the property—a very small one—left to Stepan Trofimovitch by his first wife was close to Skvoreshniki, the Stavrogins' magnificent estate on the outskirts of our provincial town. Besides, in the stillness of his study, far from the immense burden of university work, it was always possible to devote himself to the service of science, and to enrich the literature of his country with erudite studies. These works did not appear. But on the other hand it did appear possible to spend the rest of his life, more than twenty years, "a reproach incarnate," so to speak, to his native country, in the words of a popular poet:

Reproach incarnate thou didst stand
Erect before thy Fatherland,
O Liberal idealist!

But the person to whom the popular poet referred may perhaps have had the right to adopt that pose for the rest of his life if he had wished to do so, though it must have been tedious. Our Stepan Trofimovitch was, to tell the truth, only an imitator compared with such people; moreover, he had grown weary of standing erect and often lay down for a while. But, to do him justice, the "incarnation of reproach" was preserved even in the recumbent attitude, the more so as that was quite sufficient for the province. You should have seen him at our club when he sat down to cards. His whole figure seemed to exclaim "Cards! Me sit down to whist with you! Is it consistent? Who is responsible for it? Who has shattered my energies and turned them to whist? Ah, perish, Russia!" and he would majestically trump with a heart.

And to tell the truth he dearly loved a game of cards, which led him, especially in later years, into frequent and unpleasant skirmishes with Varvara Petrovna, particularly as he was always losing. But of that later. I will only observe that he was a man of tender conscience (that is, sometimes) and so was often depressed. In the course of his twenty years' friendship with Varvara Petrovna he used regularly, three or four times a year, to sink into a state of "patriotic grief," as it was called among us, or rather really into an attack of spleen, but our estimable Varvara Petrovna preferred the former phrase. Of late years his grief had begun to be not only patriotic, but at times alcoholic too; but Varvara Petrovna's alertness succeeded in keeping him all his life from trivial inclinations. And he needed some one to look after him indeed, for he sometimes behaved very oddly: in the midst of his exalted sorrow he would begin laughing like any simple peasant. There were moments when he began to take a humorous tone even about himself. But there was nothing Varvara Petrovna dreaded so much as a humorous tone. She was a woman of the classic type, a female Maecenas,

invariably guided only by the highest considerations. The influence of this exalted lady over her poor friend for twenty years is a fact of the first importance. I shall need to speak of her more particularly, which I now proceed to do.

3

There are strange friendships. The two friends are always ready to fly at one another, and go on like that all their lives, and yet they cannot separate. Parting, in fact, is utterly impossible. The one who has begun the quarrel and separated will be the first to fall ill and even die, perhaps, if the separation comes off. I know for a positive fact that several times Stepan Trofimovitch has jumped up from the sofa and beaten the wall with his fists after the most 'intimate and emotional tete-a-tete with Varvara Petrovna.

This proceeding was by no means an empty symbol; indeed, on one occasion, he broke some plaster off the wall. It may be asked how I come to know such delicate details. What if I were myself a witness of it? What if Stepan Trofimovitch himself has, on more than one occasion, sobbed on my shoulder while he described to me in lurid colours all his most secret feelings. (And what was there he did not say at such times!) But what almost always happened after these tearful outbreaks was that next day he was ready to crucify himself for his ingratitude. He would send for me in a hurry or run over to see me simply to assure me that Varvara Petrovna was "an angel of honour and delicacy, while he was very much the opposite." He did not only run to confide in me, but, on more than one occasion, described it all to her in the most eloquent letter, and wrote a full signed confession that no longer ago than the day before he had told an outsider that she kept him out of vanity, that she was envious of his talents and erudition, that she hated him and was only afraid to express her hatred openly, dreading that he would leave her and so damage her literary reputation, that this drove him to self-contempt, and he was resolved to die a violent death, and that he was waiting for the final word from her which would decide everything, and so on and so on in the same style. You can fancy after this what an hysterical pitch the nervous outbreaks of this most innocent of all fifty-year-old infants sometimes reached! I once read one of these letters after some quarrel between them, arising from a trivial matter, but growing venomous as it went on. I was horrified and besought him not to send it.

"I must ... more honourable ... duty ... I shall die if I don't confess everything, everything!" he answered almost in delirium, and he did send the letter.

That was the difference between them, that Varvara Petrovna never would have sent such a letter. It is true that he was passionately fond of writing, he wrote to her though he lived in the same house, and during hysterical interludes he would write two letters a day. I know for a fact that she always read these letters with the greatest attention, even when she received two a day, and after reading them she put them away in a special drawer, sorted and annotated; moreover, she pondered them in her

heart. But she kept her friend all day without an answer, met him as though there were nothing the matter, exactly as though nothing special had happened the day before. By degrees she broke him in so completely that at last he did not himself dare to allude to what had happened the day before, and only glanced into her eyes at times. But she never forgot anything, while he sometimes forgot too quickly, and encouraged by her composure he would not infrequently, if friends came in, laugh and make jokes over the champagne the very same day. With what malignancy she must have looked at him at such moments, while he noticed nothing! Perhaps in a week's time, a month's time, or even six months later, chancing to recall some phrase in such a letter, and then the whole letter with all its attendant circumstances, he would suddenly grow hot with shame, and be so upset that he fell ill with one of his attacks of "summer cholera." These attacks of a sort of "summer cholera" were, in some cases, the regular consequence of his nervous agitations and were an interesting peculiarity of his physical constitution.

No doubt Varvara Petrovna did very often hate him. But there was one thing he had not discerned up to the end: that was that he had become for her a son, her creation, even, one may say, her invention; he had become flesh of her flesh, and she kept and supported him not simply from "envy of his talents." And how wounded she must have been by such suppositions! An inexhaustible love for him lay concealed in her heart in the midst of continual hatred, jealousy, and contempt. She would not let a speck of dust fall upon him, coddled him up for twenty-two years, would not have slept for nights together if there were the faintest breath against his reputation as a poet, a learned man, and a public character. She had invented him, and had been the first to believe in her own invention. He was, after a fashion, her day-dream... . But in return she exacted a great deal from him, sometimes even slavishness. It was incredible how long she harboured resentment. I have two anecdotes to tell about that.

4

On one occasion, just at the time when the first rumours of the emancipation of the serfs were in the air, when all Russia was exulting and making ready for a complete regeneration, Varvara Petrovna was visited by a baron from Petersburg, a man of the highest connections, and very closely associated with the new reform. Varvara Petrovna prized such visits highly, as her connections in higher circles had grown weaker and weaker since the death of her husband, and had at last ceased altogether. The baron spent an hour drinking tea with her. There was no one else present but Stepan Trofimovitch, whom Varvara Petrovna invited and exhibited. The baron had heard something about him before or affected to have done so, but paid little attention to him at tea. Stepan Trofimovitch of course was incapable of making a social blunder, and his manners were most elegant. Though I believe he was by no means of exalted origin, yet it happened that he had from earliest childhood been brought up in a Moscow household—of high rank, and consequently was well bred. He spoke French

like a Parisian. Thus the baron was to have seen from the first glance the sort of people with whom Varvara Petrovna surrounded herself, even in provincial seclusion. But things did not fall out like this. When the baron positively asserted the absolute truth of the rumours of the great reform, which were then only just beginning to be heard, Stepan Trofimovitch could not contain himself, and suddenly shouted "Hurrah!" and even made some gesticulation indicative of delight. His ejaculation was not over-loud and quite polite, his delight was even perhaps premeditated, and his gesture purposely studied before the looking-glass half an hour before tea. But something must have been amiss with it, for the baron permitted himself a faint smile, though he, at once, with extraordinary courtesy, put in a phrase concerning the universal and befitting emotion of all Russian hearts in view of the great event. Shortly afterwards he took his leave and at parting did not forget to hold out two fingers to Stepan Trofimovitch. On returning to the drawing-room Varvara Petrovna was at first silent for two or three minutes, and seemed to be looking for something on the table. Then she turned to Stepan Trofimovitch, and with pale face and flashing eyes she hissed in a whisper:

"I shall never forgive you for that!"

Next day she met her friend as though nothing had happened, she never referred to the incident, but thirteen years afterwards, at a tragic moment, she recalled it and reproached him with it, and she turned pale, just as she had done thirteen years before. Only twice in the course of her life did she say to him:

"I shall never forgive you for that!"

The incident with the baron was the second time, but the first incident was so characteristic and had so much influence on the fate of Stepan Trofimovitch that I venture to refer to that too.

It was in 1855, in spring-time, in May, just after the news had reached Skvoreshniki of the death of Lieutenant-General Gavrogin, a frivolous old gentleman who died of a stomach ailment on the way to the Crimea, where he was hastening to 'join the army on active service. Varvara Petrovna was left a widow and put on deep mourning. She could not, it is true, deplore his death very deeply, since, for the last four years, she had been completely separated from him owing to incompatibility of temper, and was giving him an allowance. (The Lieutenant-General himself had nothing but one hundred and fifty serfs and his pay, besides his position and his connections. All the money and Skvoreshniki belonged to Varvara Petrovna, the only daughter of a very rich contractor.) Yet she was shocked by the suddenness of the news, and retired into complete solitude. Stepan Trofimovitch, of course, was always at her side.

May was in its full beauty. The evenings were exquisite. The wild cherry was in flower. The two friends walked every evening in the garden and used to sit till nightfall in the arbour, and pour out their thoughts and feelings to one another. They had poetic moments. Under the influence of the change in her position Varvara Petrovna talked more than usual. She, as it were, clung to the heart of her friend, and this continued for several evenings. A strange idea suddenly came over Stepan Trofimovitch: "Was not the inconsolable widow reckoning upon him, and expecting from him, when her mourning

was over, the offer of his hand?" A cynical idea, but the very loftiness of a man's nature sometimes increases a disposition to cynical ideas if only from the many-sidedness of his culture. He began to look more deeply into it, and thought it seemed like it. He pondered: "Her fortune is immense, of course, but ..." Varvara Petrovna certainly could not be called a beauty. She was a tall, yellow, bony woman with an extremely long face, suggestive of a horse. Stepan Trofimovitch hesitated more and more, he was tortured by doubts, he positively shed tears of indecision once or twice (he wept not infrequently). In the evenings, that is to say in the arbour, his countenance involuntarily began to express something capricious and ironical, something coquettish and at the same time condescending. This is apt to happen as it were by accident, and the more gentlemanly the man the more noticeable it is. Goodness only knows what one is to think about it, but it's most likely that nothing had begun working in her heart that could have fully justified Stepan Trofimovitch's suspicions. Moreover, she would not have changed her name, Stavrogin, for his name, famous as it was. Perhaps there was nothing in it but the play of femininity on her side; the manifestation of an unconscious feminine yearning so natural in some extremely feminine types. However, I won't answer for it; the depths of the female heart have not been explored to this day. But I must continue.

It is to be supposed that she soon inwardly guessed the significance of her friend's strange expression; she was quick and observant, and he was sometimes extremely guileless. But the evenings went on as before, and their conversations were just as poetic and interesting. And behold on one occasion at nightfall, after the most lively and poetical conversation, they parted affectionately, warmly pressing each other's hands at the steps of the lodge where Stepan Trofimovitch slept. Every summer he used to move into this little lodge which stood adjoining the huge seignorial house of Skvoreshniki, almost in the garden. He had only just gone in, and in restless hesitation taken a cigar, and not having yet lighted it, was standing weary and motionless before the open window, gazing at the light feathery white clouds gliding around the bright moon, when suddenly a faint rustle made him start and turn round. Varvara Petrovna, whom he had left only four minutes earlier, was standing before him again. Her yellow face was almost blue. Her lips were pressed tightly together and twitching at the corners. For ten full seconds she looked him in the eyes in silence with a firm relentless gaze, and suddenly whispered rapidly:

"I shall never forgive you for this!"

When, ten years later, Stepan Trofimovitch, after closing the doors, told me this melancholy tale in a whisper, he vowed that he had been so petrified on the spot that he had not seen or heard how Varvara Petrovna had disappeared. As she never once afterwards alluded to the incident and everything went on as though nothing had happened, he was all his life inclined to the idea that it was all an hallucination, a symptom of illness, the more so as he was actually taken ill that very night and was indisposed for a fortnight, which, by the way, cut short the interviews in the arbour.

But in spite of his vague theory of hallucination he seemed every day, all his life, to be expecting the continuation, and, so to say, the denouement of this affair. He

could not believe that that was the end of it! And if so he must have looked strangely sometimes at his friend.

5

She had herself designed the costume for him which he wore for the rest of his life. It was elegant and characteristic; a long black frock-coat, buttoned almost to the top, but stylishly cut; a soft hat (in summer a straw hat) with a wide brim, a white batiste cravat with a full bow and hanging ends, a cane with a silver knob; his hair flowed on to his shoulders. It was dark brown, and only lately had begun to get a little grey. He was clean-shaven. He was said to have been very handsome in his youth. And, to my mind, he was still an exceptionally impressive figure even in old age. Besides, who can talk of old age at fifty-three? From his special pose as a patriot, however, he did not try to appear younger, but seemed rather “to pride himself on the solidity of his age, and, dressed as described, tall and thin with flowing hair, he looked almost like a patriarch, or even more like the portrait of the poet Kukolnik, engraved in the edition of his works published in 1830 or thereabouts. This resemblance was especially striking when he sat in the garden in summertime, on a seat under a bush of flowering lilac, with both hands propped on his cane and an open book beside him, musing poetically over the setting sun. In regard to books I may remark that he came in later years rather to avoid reading. But that was only quite towards the end. The papers and magazines ordered in great profusion by Varvara Petrovna he was continually reading. He never lost interest in the successes of Russian literature either, though he always maintained a dignified attitude with regard to them. He was at one time engrossed in the study of our home and foreign politics, but he soon gave up the undertaking with a gesture of despair. It sometimes happened that he would take De Tocqueville with him into the garden while he had a Paul de Kock in his pocket. But these are trivial matters.

I must observe in parenthesis about the portrait of Kukolnik; the engraving had first come into the hands of Varvara Petrovna when she was a girl in a high-class boarding-school in Moscow. She fell in love with the portrait at once, after the habit of all girls at school who fall in love with anything they come across, as well as with their teachers, especially the drawing and writing masters. What is interesting in this, though, is not the characteristics of girls but the fact that even at fifty Varvara Petrovna kept the engraving among her most intimate and treasured possessions, so that perhaps it was only on this account that she had designed for Stepan Trofimovitch a costume somewhat like the poet's in the engraving. But that, of course, is a trifling matter too.

For the first years or, more accurately, for the first half of the time he spent with Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovitch was still planning a book and every day seriously prepared to write it. But during the later period he must have forgotten even what he had done. More and more frequently he used to say to us:

“I seem to be ready for work, my materials are collected, yet the work doesn’t get done! Nothing is done!”

And he would bow his head dejectedly. No doubt this was calculated to increase his prestige in our eyes as a martyr to science, but he himself was longing for something else. “They have forgotten me! I’m no use to anyone!” broke from him more than once. This intensified depression took special hold of him towards the end of the fifties. Varvara Petrovna realised at last that it was a serious matter. Besides, she could not endure the idea that her friend was forgotten and useless. To distract him and at the same time to renew his fame she carried him off to Moscow, where she had fashionable acquaintances in the literary and scientific world; but it appeared that Moscow too was unsatisfactory.

It was a peculiar time; something new was beginning, quite unlike the stagnation of the past, something very strange too, though it was felt everywhere, even at Skvoreshniki. Rumours of all sorts reached us. The facts were generally more or less well known, but it was evident that in addition to the facts there were certain ideas accompanying them, and what’s more, a great number of them. And this was perplexing. It was impossible to estimate and find out exactly what was the drift of these ideas. Varvara Petrovna was prompted by the feminine composition of her character to a compelling desire to penetrate the secret of them. She took to reading newspapers and magazines, prohibited publications printed abroad and even the revolutionary manifestoes which were just beginning to appear at the time (she was able to procure them all); but this only set her head in a whirl. She fell to writing letters; she got few answers, and they grew more incomprehensible as time went on. Stepan Trofimovitch was solemnly called upon to explain “these ideas” to her once for all, but she remained distinctly dissatisfied with his explanations.

Stepan Trofimovitch’s view of the general movement was supercilious in the extreme. In his eyes all it amounted to was that he was forgotten and of no use. At last his name was mentioned, at first in periodicals published abroad as that of an exiled martyr, and immediately afterwards in Petersburg as that of a former star in a celebrated constellation. He was even for some reason compared with Radishtchev. Then some one printed the statement that he was dead and promised an obituary notice of him. Stepan Trofimovitch instantly perked up and assumed an air of immense dignity. All his disdain for his contemporaries evaporated and he began to cherish the dream of joining the movement and showing his powers. Varvara Petrovna’s faith in everything instantly revived and she was thrown into a violent ferment. It was decided to go to Petersburg without a moment’s delay, to find out everything on the spot, to go into everything personally, and, if possible, to throw themselves heart and soul into the new movement. Among other things she announced that she was prepared to found a magazine of her own, and henceforward to devote her whole life to it. Seeing what it had come to, Stepan Trofimovitch became more condescending than ever, and on the journey began to behave almost patronisingly to Varvara Petrovna—which she at once laid up in her heart against him. She had, however, another very important reason for

the trip, which was to renew her connections in higher spheres. It was necessary, as far as she could, to remind the world of her existence, or at any rate to make an attempt to do so. The ostensible object of the journey was to see her only son, who was just finishing his studies at a Petersburg lyceum.

6

They spent almost the whole winter season in Petersburg. But by Lent everything burst like a rainbow-coloured soap-bubble.

Their dreams were dissipated, and the muddle, far from being cleared up, had become even more revoltingly incomprehensible. To begin with, connections with the higher spheres were not established, or only on a microscopic scale, and by humiliating exertions. In her mortification Varvara Petrovna threw herself heart and soul into the "new ideas," and began giving evening receptions. She invited literary people, and they were brought to her at once in multitudes. Afterwards they came of themselves without invitation, one brought another. Never had she seen such literary men. They were incredibly vain, but quite open in their vanity, as though they were performing a duty by the display of it. Some (but by no means all) of them even turned up intoxicated, seeming, however, to detect in this a peculiar, only recently discovered, merit. They were all strangely proud of something. On every face was written that they had only just discovered some extremely important secret. They abused one another, and took credit to themselves for it. It was rather difficult to find out what they had written exactly, but among them there were critics, novelists, dramatists, satirists, and exposers of abuses. Stepan Trofimovitch penetrated into their very highest circle from which the movement was directed. Incredible heights had to be scaled to reach this group; but they gave him a cordial welcome, though, of course, no one of them had ever heard of him or knew anything about him except that he "represented an idea." His manoeuvres among them were so successful that he got them twice to Varvara Petrovna's salon in spite of their Olympian grandeur. These people were very serious and very polite; they behaved nicely; the others were evidently afraid of them; but it was obvious that they had no time to spare. Two or three former literary celebrities who happened to be in Petersburg, and with whom Varvara Petrovna had long maintained a most refined correspondence, came also. But to her surprise these genuine and quite indubitable celebrities were stiller than water, humbler than the grass, and some of them simply hung on to this new rabble, and were shamefully cringing before them. At first Stepan Trofimovitch was a success. People caught at him and began to exhibit him at public literary gatherings. The first time he came on to the platform at some public reading in which he was to take part, he was received with enthusiastic clapping which lasted for five minutes. He recalled this with tears nine years afterwards, though rather from his natural artistic sensibility than from gratitude. "I swear, and I'm ready to bet," he declared (but only to me, and in secret), "that not one of that audience knew anything whatever about me." A noteworthy admission. He must have had a keen intelligence

since he was capable of grasping his position so clearly even on the platform, even in such a state of exaltation; it also follows that he had not a keen intelligence if, nine years afterwards, he could not recall it without mortification, he was made to sign two or three collective protests (against what he did not know); he signed them. Varvara Petrovna too was made to protest against some "disgraceful action" and she signed too. The majority of these new people, however, though they visited Varvara Petrovna, felt themselves for some reason called upon to regard her with contempt, and with undisguised irony. Stepan Trofimovitch hinted to me at bitter moments afterwards that it was from that time she had been envious of him. She saw, of course, that she could not get on with these people, yet she received them eagerly, with all the hysterical impatience of her sex, and, what is more, she expected something. At her parties she talked little, although she could talk, but she listened the more. They talked of the abolition of the censorship, and of phonetic spelling, of the substitution of the Latin characters for the Russian alphabet, of some one's having been sent into exile the day before, of some scandal, of the advantage of splitting Russia into nationalities united in a free federation, of the abolition of the army and the navy, of the restoration of Poland as far as the Dnieper, of the peasant reforms, and of the manifestoes, of the abolition of the hereditary principle, of the family, of children, and of priests, of women's rights, of Kraevsky's house, for which no one ever seemed able to forgive Mr. Kraevsky, and so on, and so on. It was evident that in this mob of new people there were many impostors, but undoubtedly there were also many honest and very attractive people, in spite of some surprising characteristics in them. The honest ones were far more difficult to understand than the coarse and dishonest, but it was impossible to tell which was being made a tool of by the other. When Varvara Petrovna announced her idea of founding a magazine, people flocked to her in even larger numbers, but charges of being a capitalist and an exploiter of labour were showered upon her to her face. The rudeness of these accusations was only equalled by their unexpectedness. The aged General Ivan Ivanovitch Drozdov, an old friend and comrade of the late General Stavrogin's, known to us all here as an extremely stubborn and irritable, though very estimable, man (in his own way, of course), who ate a great deal, and was dreadfully afraid of atheism, quarrelled at one of Varvara Petrovna's parties with a distinguished young man. The latter at the first word exclaimed, "You must be a general if you talk like that," meaning that he could find no word of abuse worse than "general."

Ivan Ivanovitch flew into a terrible passion: "Yes, sir, I am a general, and a lieutenant-general, and I have served my Tsar, and you, sir, are a puppy and an infidel!"

An outrageous scene followed. Next day the incident was exposed in print, and they began getting up a collective protest against Varvara Petrovna's disgraceful conduct in not having immediately turned the general out. In an illustrated paper there appeared a malignant caricature in which Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovitch, and General Drozdov were depicted as three reactionary friends. There were verses attached to this caricature written by a popular poet especially for the occasion. I may observe, for my own part, that many persons of general's rank certainly have an absurd habit of

saying, "I have served my Tsar "... just as though they had not the same Tsar as all the rest of us, their simple fellow-subjects, but had a special Tsar of their own.

It was impossible, of course, to remain any longer in Petersburg, all the more so as Stepan Trofimovitch was overtaken by a complete fiasco. He could not resist talking of the claims of art, and they laughed at him more loudly as time went on. At his last lecture he thought to impress them with patriotic eloquence, hoping to touch their hearts, and reckoning on the respect inspired by his "persecution." He did not attempt to dispute the uselessness and absurdity of the word "fatherland," acknowledged the pernicious influence of religion, but firmly and loudly declared that boots were of less consequence than Pushkin; of much less, indeed. He was hissed so mercilessly that he burst into tears, there and then, on the platform. Varvara Petrovna took him home more dead than alive. "On m'a traits, comme un vieux bonnet de coton," he babbled senselessly. She was looking after him all night, giving him laurel-drops and repeating to him till daybreak, "You will still be of use; you will still make your mark; you will be appreciated ... in another place."

Early next morning five literary men called on Varvara Petrovna, three of them complete strangers, whom she had ever set eyes on before. With a stern air they informed her that they had looked into the question of her magazine, and had brought her their decision on the subject. Varvara Petrovna had never authorised anyone to look into or decide anything concerning her magazine. Their decision was that, having founded the magazine, she should at once hand it over to them with the capital to run it, on the basis of a co-operative society. She herself was to go back to Skvoreshniki, not forgetting to take with her Stepan Trofimovitch, who was "out of date." From delicacy they agreed to recognise the right of property in her case, and to send her every year a sixth part of the net profits. What was most touching about it was that of these five men, four certainly were not actuated by any mercenary motive, and were simply acting in the interests of the "cause."

"We came away utterly at a loss," Stepan Trofimovitch used to say afterwards. "I couldn't make head or tail of it, and kept muttering, I remember, to the rumble of the train:

'Vyek, and vyek, and Lyov Kambek, Lyov Kambek and vyek, and vyek.'

and goodness knows what, all the way to Moscow. It was only in Moscow that I came to myself—as though we really might find something different there."

"Oh, my friends!" he would exclaim to us sometimes with fervour, "you cannot imagine what wrath and sadness overcome your whole soul when a great idea, which you have long cherished as holy, is caught up by the ignorant and dragged forth before fools like themselves into the street, and you suddenly meet it in the market unrecognisable, in the mud, absurdly set up, without proportion, without harmony, the plaything of foolish louts! No! In our day it was not so, and it was not this for which we strove. No, no, not this at all. I don't recognise it. ... Our day will come again and will turn all the tottering fabric of to-day into a true path. If not, what will happen? ..."

Immediately on their return from Petersburg Varvara Petrovna sent her friend abroad to “recruit”; and, indeed, it was necessary for them to part for a time, she felt that. Stepan Trofimovitch was delighted to go.

“There I shall revive!” he exclaimed. “There, at last, I shall set to work!” But in the first of his letters from Berlin he struck his usual note:

“My heart is broken!” he wrote to Varvara Petrovna. “I can forget nothing! Here, in Berlin, everything brings back to me my old past, my first raptures and my first agonies. Where is she? Where are they both? Where are you two angels of whom I was never worthy? Where is my son, my beloved son? And last of all, where am I, where is my old self, strong as steel, firm as a rock, when now some Andreev, our orthodox clown with a beard, pent briser man existence en deux”— and so on.

As for Stepan Trofimovitch’s son, he had only seen him twice in his life, the first time when he was born and the second time lately in Petersburg, where the young man was preparing to enter the university. The boy had been all his life, as we have said already, brought up by his aunts (at Varvara Petrovna’s expense) in a remote province, nearly six hundred miles from Skvoreshniki. As for Andreev, he was nothing more or less than our local shopkeeper, a very eccentric fellow, a self-taught archaeologist who had a passion for collecting Russian antiquities and sometimes tried to outshine Stepan Trofimovitch in erudition and in the progressiveness of his opinions. This worthy shopkeeper, with a grey beard and silver-rimmed spectacles, still owed Stepan Trofimovitch four hundred roubles for some acres of timber he had bought on the latter’s little estate (near Skvoreshniki). Though Varvara Petrovna had liberally provided her friend with funds when she sent him to Berlin, yet Stepan Trofimovitch had, before starting, particularly reckoned on getting that four hundred roubles, probably for his secret expenditure, and was ready to cry when Andreev asked leave to defer payment for a month, which he had a right to do, since he had brought the first installments of the money almost six months in advance to meet Stepan Trofimovitch’s special need at the time.

Varvara Petrovna read this first letter greedily, and underlining in pencil the exclamation: “Where are they both?” numbered it and put it away in a drawer. He had, of course, referred to his two deceased wives. The second letter she received from Berlin was in a different strain:

“I am working twelve hours out of the twenty-four.” (“Eleven would be enough,” muttered Varvara Petrovna.) “I’m rummaging in the libraries, collating, copying, rushing about. I’ve visited the professors. I have renewed my acquaintance with the delightful Dundasov family. What a charming creature Lizaveta Mkolaevna is even now! She sends you her greetings. Her young husband and three nephews are all in Berlin. I sit up talking till daybreak with the young people and we have almost Athenian evenings, Athenian, I mean, only in their intellectual subtlety and refinement. Everything is in noble style; Â» great deal of music, Spanish airs, dreams of the regeneration of all

humanity, ideas of eternal beauty, of the Sistine Madonna, light interspersed with darkness, but there are spots even on the sun! Oh, my friend, my noble, faithful friend! In heart I am with you and am yours; with you alone, always, en tout pays, even in le pays de Makar et de ses veaux, of which we often used to talk in agitation in Petersburg, do you remember, before we came away. I think of it with a smile. Crossing the frontier I felt myself in safety, a sensation, strange and new, for the first time after so many years"—and so on and so on.

"Come, it's all nonsense!" Varvara Petrovna commented, folding up that letter too. "If he's up till daybreak with his Athenian nights, he isn't at his books for twelve hours a day. Was he drunk when he wrote it? That Dundasov woman dares to send me greetings! But there, let him amuse himself!"

The phrase "dans le pays de Makar et de ses veaux" meant: "wherever Makar may drive his calves." Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes purposely translated Russian proverbs and traditional sayings into French in the most stupid way, though no doubt he was able to understand and translate them better. But he did it from a feeling that it was chic, and thought it witty.

But he did not amuse himself for long. He could not hold out for four months, and was soon flying back to Skvoreshniki. His last letters consisted of nothing but outpourings of the most sentimental love for his absent friend, and were literally wet with tears. There are natures extremely attached to home like lap-dogs. The meeting of the friends was enthusiastic. Within two days everything was as before and even duller than before. "My friend," Stepan Trofimovitch said to me a fortnight after, in dead secret, "I have discovered something awful for me ... something new: je suis un simple dependent, et rien de plus! Mais r-r-rien de plus ." "

8

After this we had a period of stagnation which lasted nine years. The hysterical outbreaks and sobbings on my shoulder that recurred at regular intervals did not in the least mar our prosperity. I wonder that Stepan Trofimovitch did not grow stout during this period. His nose was a little redder, and his manner had gained in urbanity, that was all. By degrees a circle of friends had formed around him, although it was never a very large one. Though Varvara Petrovna had little to do with the circle, yet we all recognised her as our patroness. After the lesson she had received in Petersburg, she settled down in our town for good. In winter she lived in her town house and spent the summer on her estate in the neighbourhood. She had never enjoyed so much consequence and prestige in our provincial society as during the last seven years of this period, that is up to the time of the appointment of our present governor. Our former governor, the mild Ivan Ossipovitch, who will never be forgotten among us, was a near relation of Varvara Petrovna's, and had at one time been under obligations to her. His wife trembled at the very thought of displeasing her, while the homage paid her by provincial society was carried almost to a pitch that suggested idolatry. So

Stepan Trofimovitch, too, had a good time. He was a member of the club, lost at cards majestically, and was everywhere treated with respect, though many people regarded him only as a "learned man." Later on, when Varvara Petrovna allowed him to live in a separate house, we enjoyed greater freedom than before. Twice a week we used to meet at his house. We were a merry party, especially when he was not sparing of the champagne. The wine came from the shop of the same Andreev. The bill was paid twice a year by Varvara Petrovna, and on the day it was paid Stepan Trofimoivitch almost invariably suffered from an attack of his "summer cholera."

One of the first members of our circle was Liptin, an elderly provincial official, and a great liberal, who was reputed in the town to be an atheist. He had married for the second time a young and pretty wife with a dowry, and had, besides, three grown-up daughters. He brought up his family in the fear of God, and kept a tight hand over them. He was extremely stingy, and out of his salary had bought himself a house and amassed a fortune. He was an uncomfortable sort of man, and had not been in the service. He was not much respected in the town, and was not received in the best circles. Moreover, he was a scandal-monger, and had more than once had to smart for his back-biting, for which he had been badly punished by an officer, and again by a country gentleman, the respectable head of a family- But we liked his wit, his inquiring mind, his peculiar, malicious liveliness. Varvara Petrovna disliked him, but he always knew how to make up to her.

Nor did she care for Shatov, who became one of our circle during the last years of this period. Shatov had been a student and had been expelled from the university after some disturbance. In his childhood he had been a student of Stepan Trofimovitch's and was by birth a serf of Varvara Petrovna's, the son of a former valet of hers, Pavel Fyodoritch, and was greatly indebted to her bounty. She disliked him for his pride and ingratitude and could never forgive him for not having come straight to her on his expulsion from the university. On the contrary he had not even answered the letter she had expressly sent him at the time, and preferred to be a drudge in the family of a merchant of the new style, with whom he went abroad, looking after his children more in the position of a nurse than of a tutor. He was very eager to travel at the time. The children had a governess too, a lively young Russian lady, who also became one of the household on the eve of their departure, and had been engaged chiefly because she was so cheap. Two months later the merchant turned her out of the house for "free thinking." Shatov took himself off after her and soon afterwards married her in Geneva. They lived together about three weeks, and then parted as free people recognising no bonds, though, no doubt, also through poverty. He wandered about Europe alone for a long time afterwards, living God knows how; he is said to have blacked boots in the street, and to have been a porter in some dockyard. At last, a year before, he had returned to his native place among us and settled with an old aunt, whom he buried a month later. His sister Dasha, who had also been brought up by Varvara Petrovna, was a favourite of hers, and treated with respect and consideration in her house. He saw his sister rarely and was not on intimate terms with her. In our circle he was always

sullen, and never talkative; but from time to time, when his convictions were touched upon, he became morbidly irritable and very unrestrained in his language.

“One has to tie Shatov up and then argue with him,” Stepan Trofimovitch would sometimes say in joke, but he liked him.

Shatov had radically changed some of his former socialistic convictions abroad and had rushed to the opposite extreme. He was one of those idealistic beings common in Russia, who are suddenly struck by some overmastering idea which seems, as it were, to crush them at once, and sometimes for ever. They are never equal to coping with it, but put passionate faith in it, and their whole life passes afterwards, as it were, in the last agonies under the weight of the stone that has fallen upon them and half crushed them. In appearance Shatov was in complete harmony with his convictions: he was short, awkward, had a shock of flaxen hair, broad shoulders, thick lips, very thick overhanging white eyebrows, a wrinkled forehead, and a hostile, obstinately downcast, as it were shamefaced, expression in his eyes. His hair was always in a wild tangle and stood up in a shock which nothing could smooth. He was seven- or eight-and-twenty.

“I no longer wonder that his wife ran away from him,” Varvara Petrovna enunciated on one occasion after gazing intently at him. He tried to be neat in his dress, in spite of his extreme poverty. He refrained again from appealing to Varvara Petrovna, and struggled along as best he could, doing various jobs for tradespeople. At one time he served in a shop, at another he was on the point of going as an assistant clerk on a freight steamer, but he fell ill just at the time of sailing. It is hard to imagine what poverty he was capable of enduring without thinking about it at all. After his illness Varvara Petrovna sent him a hundred roubles, anonymously and in secret. He found out the secret, however, and after some reflection took the money and went to Varvara Petrovna to thank her. She received him with warmth, but on this occasion, too, he shamefully disappointed her. He only stayed five minutes, staring blankly at the ground and smiling stupidly in profound silence, and suddenly, at the most interesting point, without listening to what she was saying, he got up, made an uncouth sideways bow, helpless with confusion, caught against the lady’s expensive inlaid work-table, upsetting it on the floor and smashing it to atoms, and walked out nearly dead with shame. Liputin blamed him severely afterwards for having accepted the hundred roubles and having even gone to thank Varvara Petrovna for them, instead of having returned the money with contempt, because it had come from his former despotic mistress. He lived in solitude on the outskirts of the town, and did not like any of us to go and see him. He used to turn up invariably at Stepan Trofimovitch’s evenings, and borrowed newspapers and books from him.

There was another young man who always came, one Virginsky, a clerk in the service here, who had something in common with Shatov, though on the surface he seemed his complete opposite in every respect. He was a “family man” too. He was a pathetic and very quiet young man though he was thirty; he had considerable education though he was chiefly self-taught. He was poor, married, and in the service, and supported the aunt and sister of his wife. His wife and all the ladies of his family professed the very

latest convictions, but in rather a crude form. It was a case of "an idea dragged forth into the street," as Stepan Trofimovitch had expressed it upon a former occasion. They got it all out of books, and at the first hint coming from any of our little progressive corners in Petersburg they were prepared to throw anything overboard, so soon as they were advised to do so, Madame Virginsky practised as a midwife in the town. She had lived a long while in Petersburg as a girl. Virginsky himself was a man of rare single-heartedness, and I have seldom met more honest fervour.

"I will never, never, abandon these bright hopes," he used to say to me with shining eyes. Of these "bright hopes" he always spoke quietly, in a blissful half-whisper, as it were secretly. He was rather tall, but extremely thin and narrow-shouldered, and had extraordinarily lank hair of a reddish hue. All Stepan Trofimovitch's condescending gibes at some of his opinions he accepted mildly, answered him sometimes very seriously, and often nonplussed him. Stepan Trofimovitch treated him very kindly, and indeed he behaved like a father to all of us. "You are all half-hearted chickens," he observed to Virginsky in joke. "All who are like you, though in you, Virginsky, I have not observed that narrow-mindedness I found in Petersburg, chez ces siminaristes. But you're a half-hatched chicken all the same. Shatov would give anything to hatch out,, but he's half-hatched too."

"And I?" Liputin inquired.

"You're simply the golden mean which will get on anywhere in its own way." Liputin was offended.

The story was told of Virginsky, and it was unhappily only too true, that before his wife had spent a year in lawful wedlock with him she announced that he was superseded and that she preferred Lebyadkin. This Lebyadkin, a stranger to the town, turned out afterwards to be a very dubious character, and not a retired captain as he represented himself to be. He could do nothing but twist his moustache, drink, and chatter the most inept nonsense that can possibly be imagined. This fellow, who was utterly lacking in delicacy, at once settled in his house, glad to live at another man's expense, ate and slept there and came, in the end, to treating the master of the house with condescension. It was asserted that when Virginsky's wife had announced to him that he was superseded he said to her:

"My dear, hitherto I have only loved you, but now I respect you," but I doubt whether this renunciation, worthy of ancient Rome, was ever really uttered. On the contrary they say that he wept violently. A fortnight after he was superseded, all of them, in a "family party," went one day for a picnic to a wood outside the town to drink tea with their friends. Virginsky was in a feverishly lively mood and took part in the dances. But suddenly, without any preliminary quarrel, he seized the giant Lebyadkin with both hands, by the hair, just as the latter was dancing a can-can solo, pushed him down, and began dragging him along with shrieks, shouts, and tears. The giant was so panic-stricken that he did not attempt to defend himself, and hardly uttered a sound all the time he was being dragged along. But afterwards he resented it with all the heat of an honourable man. Virginsky spent a whole night on his knees

begging his wife's forgiveness. But this forgiveness was not granted, as he refused to apologise to Lebyadkin; moreover, he was upbraided for the meanness of his ideas and his foolishness, the latter charge based on the fact that he knelt down in the interview with his wife. The captain soon disappeared and did not reappear in our town till quite lately, when he came with his sister, and with entirely different aims; but of him later. It was no wonder that the poor young husband sought our society and found comfort in it. But he never spoke of his home-life to us. On one occasion only, returning with me from Stepan Trofimovitch's, he made a remote allusion to his position, but clutching my hand at once he cried ardently:

"It's of no consequence. It's only a personal incident. It's no hindrance to the 'cause,' not the slightest!"

Stray guests visited our circle too; a Jew, called Lyamshin, and a Captain Kartusov came. An old gentleman of inquiring mind used to come at one time, but he died. Liputin brought an exiled Polish priest called Slontsevsky, and for a time we received him on principle, but afterwards we didn't keep it up.

9

At one time it was reported about the town that our little circle was a hotbed of nihilism, profligacy, and godlessness, and the rumour gained more and more strength. And yet we did nothing but indulge in the most harmless, agreeable, typically Russian, light-hearted liberal chatter. "The higher liberalism" and the "higher liberal," that is, a liberal without any definite aim, is only possible in Russia.

Stepan Trofimovitch, like every witty man, needed a listener, and, besides that, he needed the consciousness that he was fulfilling the lofty duty of disseminating ideas. And finally he had to have some one to drink champagne with, and over the wine to exchange light-hearted views of a certain sort, about Russia and the "Russian spirit," about God in general, and the "Russian God" in particular, to repeat for the hundredth time the same Russian scandalous stories that every one knew and everyone repeated. We had no distaste for the gossip of the town which often, indeed, led us to the most severe and loftily moral verdicts. We fell into generalising about humanity, made stern reflections on the future of Europe and mankind in general, authoritatively predicted that after Caesarism France would at once sink into the position of a second-rate power, and were firmly convinced that this might terribly easily and quickly come to pass. We had long ago predicted that the Pope would play the part of a simple archbishop in a united Italy, and were firmly convinced that this thousand-year-old question had, in our age of humanitarianism, industry, and railways, become a trifling matter. But, of course, "Russian higher liberalism" could not look at the question in any other way. Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes talked of art, and very well, though rather abstractly. He sometimes spoke of the friends of his youth—all names noteworthy in the history of Russian progress. He talked of them with emotion and reverence, though sometimes with envy. If we were very much bored, the Jew, Lyamshin (a little post-office clerk), a

wonderful performer on the piano, sat down to play, and in the intervals would imitate a pig, a thunderstorm, a confinement with the first cry of the baby, and so on, and so on; it was only for this that he was invited, indeed. If we had drunk a great deal—and that did happen sometimes, though not often—we flew into raptures, and even on one occasion sang the “Marseillaise” in chorus to the accompaniment of Lyamshin, though I don’t know how it went off. The great day, the nineteenth of February, we welcomed enthusiastically, and for a long time beforehand drank toasts in its honour. But that was long ago, before the advent of Shatov or Virginsky, when Stepan Trofimovitch was still living in the same house with Varvara Petrovna. For some time before the great day Stepan Trofimovitch fell into the habit of muttering to himself well-known, though rather far-fetched, lines which must have been written by some liberal landowner of the past:

“The peasant with his axe is coming,
Something terrible will happen.”

Something of that sort, I don’t remember the exact words. Varvara Petrovna overheard him on one occasion, and crying, “Nonsense, nonsense!” she went out of the room in a rage. Liputin, who happened to be present, observed malignantly to Stepan Trofimovitch:

“It’ll be a pity if their former serfs really do some mischief to messieurs les landowners to celebrate the occasion,” and he drew his forefinger round his throat.

“Cher ami,” Stepan Trofimovitch observed, “believe me that -this (he repeated the gesture) will never be of any use to our landowners nor to any of us in general. We shall never be capable of organising anything even without our heads, though our heads hinder our understanding more than anything.”

I may observe that many people among us anticipated that something extraordinary, such as Liputin predicted, would take place on the day of the emancipation, and those who held this view were the so-called “authorities” on the peasantry and the government. I believe Stepan Trofimovitch shared this idea, so much so that almost on the eve of the great day he began asking Varvara Petrovna’s leave to go abroad; in fact he began to be uneasy. But the great day passed, and some time passed after it, and the condescending smile reappeared on Stepan Trofimovitch’s lips. In our presence he delivered himself of some noteworthy thoughts on the character of the Russian in general, and the Russian peasant in particular.

“Like hasty people we have been in too great a hurry with our peasants,” he said in conclusion of a series of remarkable utterances. “We have made them the fashion, and a whole section of writers have for several years treated them as though they were newly discovered curiosities. We have put laurel-wreaths on lousy heads. The Russian village has given us only ‘Kamarinsky’ in a thousand years. A remarkable Russian poet who was also something of a wit, seeing the great Rachel on the stage for the first time cried in ecstasy, ‘I wouldn’t exchange Rachel for a peasant! ‘I am prepared to go further. I would’; give all the peasants in Russia for one Rachel. It’s high time to

look things in the face more soberly, and not to mix up our national rustic pitch with bouquet de l'Impératrice."

Liputin agreed at once, but remarked that one had to perjure oneself and praise the peasant all the same for the sake of being progressive, that even ladies in good society shed tears reading "Poor Anton," and that some of them even wrote from Paris to their bailiffs that they were, henceforward, to treat the peasants as humanely as possible.

It happened, and as ill-luck would have it just after the rumours of the Anton Petrov affair had reached us, that there was some disturbance in our province too, only about ten miles from Skvoreshniki, so that a detachment of soldiers was sent down in a hurry.

This time Stepan Trofimovitch was so much upset that he even frightened us. He cried out at the club that more troops were needed, that they ought to be telegraphed for from another province; he rushed off to the governor to protest that he had no hand in it, begged him not to allow his name on account of old associations to be brought into it, and offered to write about his protest to the proper quarter in Petersburg. Fortunately it all passed over quickly and ended in nothing, but I was surprised at Stepan Trofimovitch at the time.

Three years later, as every one knows, people were beginning to talk of nationalism, and "public opinion" first came upon the scene. Stepan Trofimovitch laughed a great deal.

"My friends," he instructed us, "if our nationalism has 'dawned' as they keep repeating in the papers—it's still at school, at some German 'Peterschule,' sitting over a German book and repeating its everlasting German lesson, and its German teacher will make it go down on its knees when he thinks fit. I think highly of the German teacher. But nothing has happened and nothing of the kind has dawned and everything is going on in the old way, that is, as ordained by God. To my thinking that should be enough for Russia, pour notre Sainte Russie. Besides, all this Slavism and nationalism is too old to be new. Nationalism, if you like, has never existed among us except as a distraction for gentlemen's clubs, and Moscow ones at that. I'm not talking of the days of Igor, of course. And besides it all comes of idleness. Everything in Russia comes of idleness, everything good and fine even. It all springs from the charming, cultured, whimsical idleness of our gentry! I'm ready to repeat it for thirty thousand years. We don't know how to live by our own labour. And as for the fuss they're making now about the 'dawn' of some sort of public opinion, has it so suddenly dropped from heaven without any warning? How is it they don't understand that before we can have an opinion of our own we must have work, our own work, our own initiative in things, our own experience. Nothing is to be gained for nothing. If we work we shall have an opinion of our own. But as we never shall work, our opinions will be formed for us by those who have hitherto done the work instead of us, that is, as always, Europe, the everlasting Germans—our teachers for the last two centuries. Moreover, Russia is too big a tangle for us to unravel alone without the Germans, and without hard work. For the last twenty years I've been sounding the alarm, and the summons to work. I've given up my life to that appeal, and, in my folly I put faith in it. Now I have lost faith

in it, but I sound the alarm still, and shall sound it to the' tomb. I will pull at the bell-ropes until they toll for my own requiem!"

"Alas! We could do nothing but assent. We applauded our teacher and with what warmth, indeed! And, after all, my friends, don't we still hear to-day, every hour, at every step, the game "charming," "clever," "liberal," old Russian nonsense? Our teacher believed in God.

"I can't understand why they make me out an infidel here," he used to say sometimes. "I believe in God, mais distinguons, I believe in Him as a Being who is conscious of Himself in me only. I cannot believe as my Nastasya (the servant) or like some country gentleman who believes 'to be on the safe side,' or like our dear Shatov—but no, Shatov doesn't come into it. Shitov believes 'on principle,' like a Moscow Slavophil. as for Christianity, for all my genuine respect for it, I'm not a Christian. I am more of an antique pagan, like the great Goethe, or like an ancient Greek. The very fact that Christianity has failed to understand woman is enough, as George Sand has so splendidly shown in one of her great 'novels. As for the bowings, fasting and all the rest of it, I don't understand what they have to do with me. However busy the informers may be here, I don't care to become a Jesuit. In the year 1847 Byelinsky, who was abroad, sent his famous letter to Gogol, and warmly reproached him for believing in some sort of God. Entre nous soit dit, I can imagine nothing more comic than the moment when Gogol (the Gogol of that period!) read that phrase, and ... the whole letter! But dismissing the humorous aspect, and, as I am fundamentally in agreement, I point to them and say—these were men! They knew how to love their people, they knew how to suffer for them, they knew how to sacrifice everything for them, yet they knew how to differ from them when they ought, and did not filch certain ideas from them. Could Byelinsky have sought salvation in Lenten oil, or peas with radish! ..." But at this point Shatov interposed.

"Those men of yours never loved the people, they didn't suffer for them, and didn't sacrifice anything for them, though they may have amused themselves by imagining it!" he growled sullenly, looking down, and moving impatiently in his chair.

"They didn't love the people!" yelled Stepan Trofimovitch. "Oh, how they loved Russia!"

"Neither Russia nor the people!" Shatov yelled too. with flashing eyes. "You can't love what you don't know and they had no conception of the Russian people. All of them peered at the Russian people through their fingers, and you do too; Byelinsky especially: from that very letter to Gogol one can see it. Byelinsky, like the Inquisitive Man in Krylov's fable, did not notice the elephant in the museum of curiosities, but concentrated his whole attention on the French Socialist beetles; he did not get beyond them. And yet perhaps he was cleverer than any of you. You've not only overlooked the people, you've taken up an attitude of disgusting contempt for them, if only because you could not imagine any but the French people, the Parisians indeed, and were ashamed that the Russians were not like them. That's the naked truth. And he who has no people has no God. You may be sure that all who cease to understand their own

people and lose their connection with them at once lose to the same extent the faith of their fathers, and become atheistic or indifferent. I'm speaking the truth! This is a fact which will be realised. That's why all of you and all of us now are either beastly atheists or careless, dissolute imbeciles, and nothing more. And you too, Stepan Trofimovitch, I don't make an exception of you at all! In fact, it is on your account I am speaking, let me tell you that!"

As a rule, after uttering such monologues (which happened to him pretty frequently) Shatov snatched up his cap and rushed to the door, in the full conviction that everything was now over, and that he had cut short all friendly relations with Stepan Trofimovitch for ever. But the latter always succeeded in stopping him in time.

"Hadn't we better make it up, Shatov, after all these endearments," he would say, benignly holding out his hand to him from his arm-chair.

Shatov, clumsy and bashful, disliked sentimentality. Externally he was rough, but inwardly, I believe, he had great delicacy. Although he often went too far, he was the first to suffer for it. Muttering something between his teeth in response to Stepan Trofimovitch's appeal, and shuffling with his feet like a bear, he gave a sudden and unexpected smile, put down his cap, and sat down in the same chair as before, with his eyes stubbornly fixed on the ground. Wine was, of course, brought in, and Stepan Trofimovitch proposed some suitable toast, for instance the memory of some leading man of the past.

Chapter 2: Prince Harry. Matchmaking.

1

THERE WAS ANOTHER being in the world to whom Varvara Petrovna was as much attached as she was to Stepan Trofimovitch, her only son, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch Stavrogin. It was to undertake his education that Stepan Trofimovitch had been engaged. The boy was at that time eight years old, and his frivolous father, General Stavrogin, was already living apart from Varvara Petrovna, so that the child grew up entirely in his mother's care. To do Stepan Trofimovitch justice, he knew how to win his pupil's heart. The whole secret of this lay in the fact that he was a child himself. I was not there in those days, and he continually felt the want of a real friend. He did not hesitate to make a friend of this little creature as soon as he had grown a little older. It somehow came to pass quite naturally that there seemed to be no discrepancy of age between them. More than once he awaked his ten- or eleven-year-old friend at night, simply to pour out his wounded feelings and weep before him, or to tell him some family secret, without realising that this was an outrageous proceeding. They threw themselves into each other's arms and wept. The boy knew that his mother loved him very much, but I doubt whether he cared much for her. She talked little to him and did not often interfere with him, but he

was always morbidly conscious of her intent, searching eyes fixed upon him. Yet the mother confided his whole instruction and moral education to Stepan Trofimovitch. At that time her faith in him was unshaken. One can't help believing that the tutor had rather a bad influence on his pupil's nerves. When at sixteen he was taken to a lyceum he was fragile-looking and pale, strangely quiet and dreamy. (Later on he was distinguished by great physical strength.) One must assume too that the friends went on weeping at night, throwing themselves in each other's arms, though their tears were not always due to domestic difficulties. Stepan Trofimovitch succeeded in reaching the deepest chords in his pupil's heart, and had aroused in him a vague sensation of that eternal, sacred yearning which some elect souls can never give up for cheap gratification when once they have tasted and known it. (There are some connoisseurs who prize this yearning more than the most complete satisfaction of it, if such were possible.) But in any case it was just as well that the pupil and the preceptor were, though none too soon, parted.

For the first two years the lad used to come home from the lyceum for the holidays. While Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovitch were staying in Petersburg he was sometimes present at the literary evenings at his mother's, he listened and looked on. He spoke little, and was quiet and shy as before. His manner to Stepan Trofimovitch was as affectionately attentive as ever, but there was a shade of reserve in it. He unmistakably avoided distressing, lofty subjects or reminiscences of the past. By his mother's wish he entered the army on completing the school course, and soon received a commission in one of the most brilliant regiments of the Horse Guards. He did not come to show himself to his mother in his uniform, and his letters from Petersburg began to be infrequent. Varvara Petrovna sent him money without stint, though after the emancipation the revenue from her estate was so diminished that at first her income was less than half what it had been before. She had, however, a considerable sum laid by through years of economy. She took great interest in her son's success in the highest Petersburg society. Where she had failed, the wealthy young officer with expectations succeeded. He renewed acquaintances which she had hardly dared to dream of, and was welcomed everywhere with pleasure. But very soon rather strange rumours reached Varvara Petrovna. The young man had suddenly taken to riotous living with a sort of frenzy. Not that he gambled or drank too much; there was only talk of savage recklessness, of running over people in the street with his horses, of brutal conduct to a lady of good society with whom he had a liaison and whom he afterwards publicly insulted. There was a callous nastiness about this affair. It was added, too, that he had developed into a regular bully, insulting people for the mere pleasure of insulting them. Varvara Petrovna was greatly agitated and distressed. Stepan Trofimovitch assured her that this was only the first riotous effervescence of a too richly endowed nature, that the storm would subside and that this was only like the youth of Prince Harry, who caroused with Falstaff, Poins, and Mrs. Quickly, as described by Shakespeare.

This time Varvara Petrovna did not cry out, "Nonsense, nonsense!" as she was very apt to do in later years in response to Stepan Trofimovitch. On the contrary she listened

very eagerly, asked him to explain this theory more exactly, took up Shakespeare herself and with great attention read the immortal chronicle. But it did not comfort her, and indeed she did not find the resemblance very striking. With feverish impatience she awaited answers to some of her letters. She had not long to wait for them. The fatal news soon reached her that "Prince Harry" had been involved in two duels almost at once, was entirely to blame for both of them, had killed one of his adversaries on the spot and had maimed the other and was awaiting his trial in consequence. The case ended in his being degraded to the ranks, deprived of the rights of a nobleman, and transferred to an infantry line regiment, and he only escaped worse punishment by special favour.

In 1863 he somehow succeeded in distinguishing himself; he received a cross, was promoted to be a non-commissioned officer, and rose rapidly to the rank of an officer. During this period Varvara Petrovna despatched perhaps hundreds of letters to the capital, full of prayers and supplications. She even stooped to some humiliation in this extremity. After his promotion the young man suddenly resigned his commission, but he did not come back to Skvoreshniki again, and gave up writing to his mother altogether. They learned by roundabout means that he was back in Petersburg, but that he was not to be met in the same society as before; he seemed to be in hiding. They found out that he was living in strange company, associating with the dregs of the population of Petersburg, with slip-shod government clerks, discharged military men, beggars of the higher class, and drunkards of all sorts—that he visited their filthy families, spent days and nights in dark slums and all sorts of low haunts, that he had sunk very low, that he was in rags, and that apparently he liked it. He did not ask his mother for money, he had his own little estate—once the property of his father, General Stavrogin, which yielded at least some revenue, and which, it was reported, he had let to a German from Saxony. At last his mother besought him to come to her, and "Prince Harry" made his appearance in our town. I had never set eyes on him before, but now I got a very distinct impression of him. He was a very handsome young man of five-and-twenty, and I must own I was impressed by him. I had expected to see a dirty ragamuffin, sodden with drink and debauchery. He was on the contrary, the most elegant gentleman I had ever met—extremely well dressed, with an air and manner only to be found in a man accustomed to culture and refinement. I was not the only person surprised. It was a surprise to all the townspeople to whom, of course, young Stavrogin's whole biography was well known in its minutest details, though one could not imagine how they had got hold of them, and, what was still more surprising, half of their stories about him turned out to be true.

All our ladies were wild over the new visitor. They were sharply divided into two parties, one of which adored him while the other half regarded him with a hatred that was almost blood-thirsty: but both were crazy about him. Some of them were particularly fascinated by the idea that he had perhaps a fateful secret hidden in his soul; others were positively delighted at the fact that he was a murderer. It appeared too that he had had a very good education and was indeed a man of considerable

culture. No great acquirements were needed, of course, to astonish us. But he could judge also of very interesting everyday affairs, and, what was of the utmost value, he judged of them with remarkable good sense. I must mention as a peculiar fact that almost from the first day we all of us thought him a very sensible fellow. He was not very talkative, he was elegant without exaggeration, surprisingly modest, and at the same time bold and self-reliant, as none of us were. Our dandies gazed at him with envy, and were completely eclipsed by him. His face, too, impressed me. His hair was of a peculiarly intense black, his light-coloured eyes were peculiarly light and calm, his complexion was peculiarly soft and white, the red in his cheeks was too bright and clear, his teeth were like pearls, and his lips like coral—one would have thought that he must be a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there seemed something repellent about him. It was said that his face suggested a mask; so much was said though, among other things they talked of his extraordinary physical strength. He was rather tall. Varvara Petrovna looked at him with pride, yet with continual uneasiness. He spent about six months among us—listless, quiet, rather morose. He made his appearance in society, and with unflinching propriety performed all the duties demanded by our provincial etiquette. He was related, on his father's side, to the governor, and was received by the latter as a near kinsman. But a few months passed and the wild beast showed his claws.

I may observe by the way, in parenthesis, that Ivan Ossipovitch, our dear mild governor, was rather like an old woman, though he was of good family and highly connected—which explains the fact that he remained so long among us, though he steadily avoided all the duties of his office. From his munificence and hospitality he ought rather to have been a marshal of nobility of the good old days than a governor in such busy times as ours. It was always said in the town that it was not he, but Varvara Petrovna who governed the province. Of course this was said sarcastically; however, it was certainly a falsehood. And, indeed, much wit was wasted on the subject among us. On the contrary, in later years, Varvara Petrovna purposely and consciously withdrew from anything like a position of authority, and, in spite of the extraordinary respect in which she was held by the whole province, voluntarily confined her influence within strict limits set up by herself. Instead of these higher responsibilities she suddenly took up the management of her estate, and, within two or three years, raised the revenue from it almost to what it had yielded in the past. Giving up her former romantic impulses (trips to Petersburg, plans for founding a magazine, and so on) she began to be careful and to save money. She kept even Stepan Trofimovitch at a distance, allowing him to take lodgings in another house (a change for which he had long been worrying her under various pretexts). Little by little Stepan Trofimovitch began to call her a prosaic woman, or more jestingly, "My prosaic friend." I need hardly say he only ventured on such jests in an extremely respectful form, and on rare, and carefully chosen, occasions.

All of us in her intimate circle felt—Stepan Trofimovitch more acutely than any of us—that her son had come to her almost, as it were, as a new hope, and even as a

sort of new aspiration. Her passion for her son dated from the time of his successes in Petersburg society, and grew more intense from the moment that he was degraded in the army. Yet she was evidently afraid of him, and seemed like a slave in his presence. It could be seen that she was afraid of something vague and mysterious which she could not have put into words, and she often stole searching glances at "Nicolas," scrutinising him reflectively ... and behold—the wild beast suddenly showed his claws.

2

Suddenly, apropos of nothing, our prince was guilty of incredible outrages upon various persons and, what was most striking these outrages were utterly unheard of, quite inconceivable, unlike anything commonly done, utterly silly and mischievous, quite unprovoked and objectless. One of the most respected of our club members, on our committee of management, Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, an elderly man of high rank in the service, had formed the innocent habit of declaring vehemently on all sorts of occasions: "No, you can't lead me by the nose!" Well, there is no harm in that. But one day at the club, when he brought out this phrase in connection with some heated discussion in the midst of a little group of members (all persons of some consequence) Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who was standing on one side, alone and unnoticed, suddenly went up to Pyotr Pavlovitch, took him unexpectedly and firmly with two fingers by the nose, and succeeded in leading him two or three steps across the room. He could have had no grudge against Mr. Gaganov. It might be thought to be a mere schoolboy prank, though, of course, a most unpardonable one. Yet, describing it afterwards, people said that he looked almost dreamy at the very instant of the operation, "as though he had gone out of his mind," but that was recalled and reflected upon long afterwards. In the excitement of the moment all they recalled was the minute after, when he certainly saw it all as it really was, and far from being confused smiled gaily and maliciously "without the slightest regret." There was a terrific outcry; he was surrounded. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch kept turning round, looking about him, answering nobody, and glancing curiously at the persons exclaiming around him. At last he seemed suddenly, as it were, to sink into thought again—so at least it was reported—frowned, went firmly up to the affronted Pyotr Pavlovitch, and with evident vexation said in a rapid mutter:

"You must forgive me, of course ... I really don't know what suddenly came over me ... it's silly."

The carelessness of his apology was almost equivalent to a fresh insult. The outcry was greater than ever. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch shrugged his shoulders and went away. All this was very stupid, to say nothing of its gross indecency—

A calculated and premeditated indecency as it seemed at first sight—and therefore a premeditated and utterly brutal insult to our whole society. So it was taken to be by every one. We began by promptly and unanimously striking young Stavrogin's name off the list of club members. Then it was decided to send an appeal in the name of the whole club to the governor, begging him at once (without waiting for the case

to be formally tried in court) to use “the administrative power entrusted to him” to restrain this dangerous ruffian, “this duelling bully from the capital, and so protect the tranquillity of all the gentry of our town from injurious encroachments.” It was added with angry resentment that” a law might be found to control even Mr. Stavrogin.” This phrase was prepared by way of a thrust at the governor on account of Varvara Petrovna. They elaborated it with relish. As ill luck would have it, the governor was not in the town at the time. He had gone to a little distance to stand godfather to the child of a very charming lady, recently left a widow in an interesting condition. But it was known that he would soon be back. In the meanwhile they got up a regular ovation for the respected and insulted gentleman; people embraced and kissed him; the whole town called upon him. It was even proposed to give a subscription dinner in his honour, and they only gave up the idea at his earnest request—reflecting possibly at last that the man had, after all, been pulled by the nose and that that was really nothing to congratulate him upon. Yet, how had it happened? How could it have happened? It is remarkable that no one in the whole town put down this savage act to madness. They must have been predisposed to expect such actions from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, even when he was sane. For my part I don’t know to this day how to explain it, in spite of the event that quickly followed and apparently explained everything, and conciliated every one. I will add also that, four years later, in reply to a discreet question from me about the incident at the club, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch answered, frowning: “I wasn’t quite well at the time.” But there is no need to anticipate events.

The general outburst of hatred with which every one fell upon the “ruffian and duelling bully from the capital” also struck me as curious. They insisted on seeing an insolent design and deliberate intention to insult our whole society at once. The truth was no one liked the fellow, but, on the contrary, he had set every one against him—and one wonders how. Up to the last incident he had never quarrelled with anyone, nor insulted anyone, but was as courteous as a gentleman in a fashion-plate, if only the latter were able to speak. I imagine that he was hated for his pride. Even our ladies, who had begun by adoring him, railed against him now, more loudly than the men. Varvara Petrovna was dreadfully overwhelmed. She confessed afterwards to Stepan Trofimovitch that she had had a foreboding of all this long before, that every day for the last six months she had been expecting “just something of that sort,” a remarkable admission on the part of his own mother. “It’s begun!” she thought to herself with a shudder. The morning after the incident at the club she cautiously but firmly approached the subject with her son, but the poor woman was trembling all over in spite of her firmness. She had not slept all night and even went out early to Stepan Trofimovitch’s lodgings to ask his advice, and shed tears there, a thing which she had never been known to do before anyone. She longed for “Nicolas” to say something to her, to deign to give some explanation. Nikolay, who was always so polite and respectful to his mother, listened to her for some time scowling, but very seriously. He suddenly got up without saying a word, kissed her hand and went away. That very evening, as though by design, he perpetrated another scandal. It was of a more

harmless and ordinary character than the first. Yet, owing to the state of the public mind, it increased the outcry in the town.

Our friend Liputin turned up and called on Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch immediately after the latter's interview with his mother, and earnestly begged for the honour of his company at a little party he was giving for his wife's birthday that evening. Varvara Petrovna had long watched with a pang at her heart her son's taste for such low company, but she had not dared to speak of it to him. He had made several acquaintances besides Liputin in the third rank of our society, and even in lower depths—he had a propensity for making such friends. He had never been in Liputin's house before, though he had met the man himself. He guessed that Liputin's invitation now was the consequence of the previous day's scandal, and that as a local liberal he was delighted at the scandal, genuinely believing that that was the proper way to treat stewards at the club, and that it was very well done. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled and promised to come.

A great number of guests had assembled. The company was not very presentable, but very sprightly. Liputin, vain and envious, only entertained visitors twice a year, but on those occasions he did it without stint. The most honoured of the invited guests, Stepan Trofimovitch, was prevented by illness from being present. Tea was handed, and there were refreshments and vodka in plenty. Cards were played at three tables, and while waiting for supper the young people got up a dance. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch led out Madame Liputin—a very pretty little woman who was dreadfully shy of him—took two turns round the room with her, sat down beside her, drew her into conversation and made her laugh. Noticing at last how pretty she was when she laughed, he suddenly, before all the company, seized her round the waist and kissed her on the lips two or three times with great relish. The poor frightened lady fainted. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch took his hat and went up to the husband, who stood petrified in the middle of the general excitement. Looking at him he, too, became confused and muttering hurriedly "Don't be angry," went away. Liputin ran after him in the entry, gave him his fur-coat with his own hands, and saw him down the stairs, bowing. But next day a rather amusing sequel followed this comparatively harmless prank—a sequel from which Liputin gained some credit, and of which he took the fullest possible advantage.

At ten o'clock in the morning Liputin's servant Agafya, an easy-mannered, lively, rosy-cheeked peasant woman of thirty, made her appearance at Stavrogin's house, with a message for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. She insisted on seeing "his honour himself." He had a very bad headache, but he went out. Varvara Petrovna succeeded in being present when the message was given.

"Sergay Vassilyevitch" (Liputin's name), Agafya rattled off briskly, "bade me first of all give you his respectful greetings and ask after your health, what sort of night your honour spent after yesterday's doings, and how your honour feels now after yesterday's doings?"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled.

“Give him my greetings and thank him, and tell your master from me, Agafya, that he’s the most sensible man in the town.”

“And he told me to answer that,” Agafya caught him up still more briskly, “that he knows that without your telling him, and wishes you the same.”

“Really! But how could he tell what I should say to you?”

“I can’t say in what way he could tell, but when I had set off and had gone right down the street, I heard something, and there he was, running after me without his cap. ‘I say, Agafya, if by any chance he says to you, ‘Tell your master that he has more sense than all the town,’ you tell him at once, don’t forget,’ The master himself knows that very well, and wishes you the same.’ “

3

At last the interview with the governor took place too. Our dear, mild, Ivan Ossipovitch had only just returned and only just had time to hear the angry complaint from the club. There was no doubt that something must be done, but he was troubled. The hospitable old man seemed also rather afraid of his young kinsman. He made up his mind, however, to induce him to apologise to the club and to his victim in satisfactory form, and, if required, by letter, and then to persuade him to leave us for a time, travelling, for instance, to improve his mind, in Italy, or in fact anywhere abroad. In the waiting-room in which on this occasion he received Nikolay Vsyevolotoyitch (who had been at other times privileged as a relation to wander all over the house unchecked), Alyosha Telyatnikov, a clerk of refined manners, who was also a member of the governor’s household, was sitting in a corner opening envelopes at a table, and in the next room, at the window nearest to the door, a stout and sturdy colonel, a former friend and colleague of the governor, was sitting alone reading the *Oolos*, paying no attention, of course, to what was taking place in the waiting-room; in fact, he had his back turned. Ivan Ossipovitch approached the subject in a roundabout way, almost in a “whisper, but kept getting a little muddled. Nikolay looked anything but cordial, not at all as a relation should. He was pale and sat looking down and continually moving his eyebrows as though trying to control acute pain.

“You have a kind heart and a generous one, Nicolas,” the old man put in among other things, “you’re a man of great culture, you’ve grown up in the highest circles, and here too your behaviour has hitherto been a model, which has been a great consolation to your mother, who is so precious to all of us. ... And now again everything has appeared in such an unaccountable light, so detrimental to all! I speak as a friend of your family, as an old man who loves you sincerely and a relation, at whose words you cannot take offence... . Tell me, what drives you to such reckless proceedings so contrary to all accepted rules and habits? What can be the meaning of such acts which seem almost like outbreaks of delirium?”

Nikolay listened with vexation and impatience. All at once there was a gleam of something sly and mocking in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what drives me to it," he said sullenly, and looking round him he bent down to Ivan Ossipovitch's ear. The refined Alyosha Telyatnikov moved three steps farther away towards the window, and the colonel coughed over the Qolos. Poor Ivan Ossipovitch hurriedly and trustfully inclined his ear-; he was exceedingly curious. And then something utterly incredible, though on the other side only too unmistakable, took place. The old man suddenly felt that, instead of telling him some interesting secret, Nikolay had seized the upper part of his ear between his teeth and was nipping it rather hard. He shuddered, and breath failed him.

"Nicolas, this is beyond a joke!" he moaned mechanically in a voice not his own.

Alyosha and the colonel had not yet grasped the situation, besides they couldn't see, and fancied up to the end that the two were whispering together; and yet the old man's desperate face alarmed them. They looked at one another with wide-open eyes, not knowing whether to rush to his assistance as agreed or to wait. Nikolay noticed this perhaps, and bit the harder.

"Nicolas! Nicolas!" his victim moaned again, "come ... you've had your joke, that's enough!"

In another moment the poor governor would certainly have died of terror; but the monster had mercy on him, and let go his ear. The old man's deadly terror lasted for a full minute, and it was followed by a sort of fit. Within half an hour Nikolay was arrested and removed for the time to the guard-room, where he was confined in a special cell, with a special sentinel at the door. This decision was a harsh one, but our mild governor was so angry that he was prepared to take the responsibility even if he had to face Varvara Petrovna. To the general amazement, when this lady arrived at the governor's in haste and in nervous irritation to discuss the matter with him at once, she was refused admittance, whereupon, without getting out of the carriage, she returned home, unable to believe her senses.

And at last everything was explained! At two o'clock in the morning the prisoner, who had till then been calm and had even slept, suddenly became noisy, began furiously beating on the door with his fists,—with unnatural strength wrenched the iron grating off the door, broke the window, and cut his hands all over. When the officer on duty ran with a detachment of men and the keys and ordered the cell to be opened that they might rush in and bind the maniac, it appeared that he was suffering from acute brain fever. He was taken home to his mother.

Everything was explained at once. All our three doctors gave it as their opinion that the patient might well have been in a delirious state for three days before, and that though he might have apparently been in possession of full consciousness and cunning, yet he might have been deprived of common sense and will, which was indeed borne out by the facts. So it turned out that Liputin had guessed the truth sooner than any one. Ivan Ossipovitch, who was a man of delicacy and feeling, was completely abashed. But what was striking was that he, too, had considered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch capable of any mad action even when in the full possession of his faculties. At the club, too, people were ashamed and wondered how it was they had failed to "see the elephant"

and had missed the only explanation of all these marvels: there were, of course, sceptics among them, but they could not long maintain their position.

Nikolay was in bed for more than two months. A famous doctor was summoned from Moscow for a consultation; the whole town called on Varvara Petrovna. She forgave them.—When in the spring Nikolay had completely recovered and assented without discussion to his mother's proposal that he should go for a tour to Italy, she begged him further to pay visits of farewell; to all the neighbours, and so far as possible to apologise where necessary. Nikolay agreed with great alacrity. It became known at the club that he had had a most delicate explanation with Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, at the house of the latter, who had been completely satisfied with his apology. As he went round to pay these calls Nikolay was very grave and even gloomy. Every one appeared to receive him sympathetically, but everybody seemed embarrassed and glad that he was going to Italy. Ivan Ossipovitch was positively tearful, but was, for some reason, unable to bring himself to embrace him, even at the final leave-taking. It is true that some of us retained the conviction that the scamp had simply been making fun of us, and that the illness was neither here nor there. He went to see Liputin too.

"Tell me," he said, "how could you guess beforehand what I should say about your sense and prime Agafya with an answer to it?"

"Why," laughed Liputin, "it was because I recognised that you were a clever man, and so I foresaw what your answer would be."

"Anyway, it was a remarkable coincidence. But, excuse me, did you consider me a sensible man and not insane when you sent Agafya?"

"For the cleverest and most rational, and I only pretended to believe that you were insane... . And you guessed at once what was in my mind, and sent a testimonial to my wit through Agafya."

"Well, there you're a little mistaken. I really was ... unwell ..." muttered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, frowning. "Bah!" he cried, "do you suppose I'm capable of attacking people when I'm in my senses? What object would there be in it?"

Liputin shrank together and didn't know what to answer. Nikolay turned pale or, at least, so it seemed to Liputin.

"You have a very peculiar way of looking at things, anyhow," Nikolay went on, "but as for Agafya, I understand, of course, that you simply sent her to be rude to me."

"I couldn't challenge you to a duel, could I?"

"Oh, no, of course! I seem to have heard that you're not fond of duels. ..."

"Why borrow from the French?" said Liputin, doubling up again.

"You're for nationalism, then?"

Liputin shrank into himself more than ever.

"Ba, ba! What do I see?" cried Nicolas, noticing a volume of *Considerant* in the most conspicuous place on the table. "You don't mean to say you're a Fourierist! I'm afraid you must be! And isn't this too borrowing from the French?" he laughed, tapping the book with his finger.

“No, that’s not taken from the French,” Liputin cried with positive fury, jumping up from his chair. “That is taken from the universal language of humanity, not simply from the French. From the language of the universal social republic and harmony of mankind, let me tell you! Not simply from the French!”

“Foo! hang it all! There’s no such language!” laughed Nikolay.

Sometimes a trifle will catch the attention and exclusively absorb it for a time. Most of what I have to tell of young Stavrogin will come later. But I will note now as a curious fact that of all the impressions made on him by his stay in our town, the one most sharply imprinted on his memory was the unsightly and almost abject figure of the little provincial official, the coarse and jealous family despot, the miserly money-lender who picked up the candle-ends and scraps left from dinner, and was at the same time a passionate believer in some visionary future “social harmony,” who at night gloated in ecstasies over fantastic pictures of a future phalanstery, in the approaching realisation of which, in Russia, and in our province, he believed as firmly as in his own existence. And that in the very place where he had saved up to buy himself a “little home,” where he had married for the second time, getting a dowry with his bride, where perhaps, for a hundred miles round there was not one man, himself included, who was the very least like a future member “of the universal human republic and social harmony.”

“God knows how these people come to exist!” Nikolay wondered, recalling sometimes the unlooked-for Fourierist.

4

Our prince travelled for over three years, so that he was almost forgotten in the town. We learned from Stepan Trofimovitch that he had travelled all over Europe, that he had even been in Egypt and had visited Jerusalem, and then had joined some scientific expedition to Iceland, and he actually did go to Iceland. It was reported too that he had spent one winter attending lectures in a German university. He did not write often to his mother, twice a year, or even less, but Varvara Petrovna was not angry or offended at this. She accepted submissively and without repining the relations that had been established once for all between her son and herself. She fretted for her “Nicolas” and dreamed of him continually. She kept her dreams and lamentations to herself. She seemed to have become less intimate even with Stepan Trofimovitch. She was forming secret projects, and seemed to have become more careful about money than ever. She was more than ever given to saving money and being angry at Stepan Trofimovitch’s losses at cards.

At last, in the April of this year, she received a letter from Paris from Praskovya Ivanovna Drozdov, the widow of the general and the friend of Varvara Petrovna’s childhood. Praskovya Ivanovna, whom Varvara Petrovna had not seen or corresponded with for eight years, wrote, informing her that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had become very intimate with them and a great friend of her only daughter, Liza, and that he was intending to accompany them to Switzerland, to Verney-Montreux, though in the

household of Count K. (a very influential personage in Petersburg), who was now staying in Paris. He was received like a son of the family, so that he almost lived at the count's. The letter was brief, and the object of it was perfectly clear, though it contained only a plain statement of the above-mentioned facts without drawing any inferences from them. Varvara Petrovna did not pause long to consider; she made up her mind instantly, made her preparations, and taking with her her protegee, Dasha (Shatov's sister), she set off in the middle of April for Paris, and from there went on to Switzerland. She returned in July, alone, leaving Dasha with the Drozdovs. She brought us the news that the Drozdovs themselves had promised to arrive among us by the end of August.

The Drozdovs, too, were landowners of our province, but the official duties of General Ivan Ivanovitch Drozdov (who had been a friend of Varvara Petrovna's and a colleague of her husband's) had always prevented them from visiting their magnificent estate. On the death of the general, which had taken place the year before, the inconsolable widow had gone abroad with her daughter, partly in order to try the grape-cure which she proposed to carry out at Verney-Montreux during the latter half of the summer. On their return to Russia they intended to settle in our province for good. She had a large house in the town which had stood empty for many years with the windows nailed up. They were wealthy people. Praskovya Ivanovna had been, in her first marriage, a Madame Tushin, and like her school-friend, Varvara Petrovna, was the daughter of a government contractor of the old school, and she too had been an heiress at her marriage. Tushin, a retired cavalry captain, was also a man of means, and of some ability. At his death he left a snug fortune to his only daughter Liza, a child of seven. Now that Lizaveta Nikolaevna was twenty-two her private fortune might confidently be reckoned at 200,000 roubles, to say nothing of the property—which was bound to come to her at the death of her mother, who had no children by her second marriage. Varvara Petrovna seemed to be very well satisfied with her expedition. In her own opinion she had succeeded in coming to a satisfactory understanding with Praskovya Ivanovna, and immediately on her arrival she confided everything to Stepan Trofimovitch. She was positively effusive with him as she had not been for a very long time.

“Hurrah!” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, and snapped his fingers.

He was in a perfect rapture, especially as he had spent the whole time of his friend's absence in extreme dejection. On setting off she had not even taken leave of him properly, and had said nothing of her plan to “that old woman,” dreading, perhaps, that he might chatter about it. She was cross with him at the time on account of a considerable gambling debt which she had suddenly discovered. But before she left Switzerland she had felt that on her return she must make up for it to her forsaken friend, especially as she had treated him very curtly for a long time past. Her abrupt and mysterious departure had made a profound and poignant impression on the timid heart of Stepan Trofimovitch, and to make matters worse he was beset with other difficulties at the same time. He was worried by a very considerable money obligation,

which had weighed upon him for a long time and which he could never hope to meet without Varvara Petrovna's assistance. Moreover, in the May of this year, the term of office of our mild and gentle Ivan Ossipovitch came to an end. He was superseded under rather unpleasant circumstances. Then, while Varvara Petrovna was still away, there followed the arrival of our new governor, Andrey Antonovitch von Lembke, and with that a change began at once to be perceptible in the attitude of almost the whole of our provincial society towards Varvara Petrovna, and consequently towards Stepan Trofimovitch. He had already had time anyway to make some disagreeable though valuable observations, and seemed very apprehensive alone without Varvara Petrovna. He had an agitating suspicion that he had already been mentioned to the governor as a dangerous man. He knew for a fact that some of our ladies meant to give up calling on Varvara Petrovna. Of our governor's wife (who was only expected to arrive in the autumn) it was reported that though she was, so it was heard, proud, she was a real aristocrat, and "not like that poor Varvara Petrovna." Everybody seemed to know for a fact, and in the greatest detail, that our governor's wife and Varvara Petrovna had met already in society and had parted enemies, so that the mere mention of Madame von Lembke's name would, it was said, make a painful impression on Varvara Petrovna. The confident and triumphant air of Varvara Petrovna, the contemptuous indifference with which she heard of the opinions of our provincial ladies and the agitation in local society, revived the flagging spirits of Stepan Trofimovitch and cheered him up at once. With peculiar, gleefully-obsequious humour, he was beginning to describe the new governor's arrival.

"You are no doubt aware, *excellente amie*," he said, jauntily and coquettishly drawing his words, "what is meant by a Russian administrator, speaking generally, and what is meant by a new Russian administrator, that is the newly-baked, newly-established ... ces interminables mots Russes! But I don't think you can know in practice what is meant by administrative ardour, and what sort of thing that is."

"Administrative ardour? I don't know what that is."

"Well ... Vous savez chez nous ... En un mot, set the most insignificant nonentity to sell miserable tickets at a railway station, and the nonentity will at once feel privileged to look down on you like a Jupiter, pour montrer son pouvoir when you go to take a ticket. 'Now then,' he says, 'I shall show you my power' ... and in them it comes to a genuine, administrative ardour. En un mot, I've read that some verger in one of our Russian churches abroad—*mais c'est ires curieux*—drove, literally drove a distinguished English family, *les dames charmantes*, out of the church before the beginning of the Lenten service ... vous savez ces chants et le livre de Job ... on the simple pretext that 'foreigners are not allowed to loaf about a Russian church, and that they must come at the time fixed... .' And he sent them into fainting fits. ... That verger was suffering from an attack of administrative ardour, et il a montre son pouvoir."

"Cut it short if you can, Stepan Trofimovitch."

“Mr. von Lembke is making a tour of the province now. En un mot, this Andrey Antonovitch, though he is a russified German and of the Orthodox persuasion, and even—I will say that for him—a remarkably handsome man of about forty ...”

“What makes you think he’s a handsome man? He has eyes like a sheep’s.”

“Precisely so. But in this I yield, of course, to the opinion of our ladies.”

“Let’s get on, Stepan Trofimovitch, I beg you! By the way, you’re wearing a red neck-tie. Is it long since you’ve taken to it?”

“I’ve ... I’ve only put it on to-day.”

“And do you take your constitutional? Do you go for a four-mile walk every day as the doctor told you to?”

“N-not ... always.”

“I knew you didn’t! I felt sure of that when I was in Switzerland!” she cried irritably. “Now you must go not four but six miles a day! You’ve grown terribly slack, terribly, terribly! You’re not simply getting old, you’re getting decrepit... . You shocked me when I first saw you just now, in spite of your red tie, quelle idee rouge! Go on about Von Lembke if you’ve really something to tell me, and do finish some time, I entreat you, I’m tired.”

“En un mot, I only wanted to say that he is one of those administrators who begin to have power at forty, who, till they’re forty, have been stagnating in insignificance and then suddenly come to the front through suddenly acquiring a wife, or some other equally desperate means... . That is, he has gone away now ... that is, I mean to say, it was at once whispered in both his ears that I am a corrupter of youth, and a hot-bed of provincial atheism... . He began making inquiries at once.”

“Is that true?”

“I took steps about it, in fact. When he was ‘informed’ that you ‘ruled the province,’ vous savez, he allowed himself to use the expression that ‘there shall be nothing of that sort in the future.’ “

“Did he say that?”

“That ‘there shall be nothing of the sort in future,’ and, avec cette morgue... . His wife, Yulia Mihailovna, we shall behold at the end of August, she’s coming straight from Petersburg.”

“From abroad. We met there.”

“Vraiment?”

“In Paris and in Switzerland. She’s related to the Drozdovs.”

“Related! What an extraordinary coincidence! They say she is ambitious and ... supposed to have great connections.”

“Nonsense! Connections indeed! She was an old maid without a farthing till she was five-and-forty. But now she’s hooked her Von Lembke, and, of course, her whole object is to push him forward. They’re both intriguers.”

“And they say she’s two years older than he is?”

“Five. Her mother used to wear out her skirts on my doorsteps in Moscow; she used to beg for an invitation to our balls as a favour when my husband was living. And this

creature used to sit all night alone in a corner without dancing, with her turquoise fly on her forehead, so that simply from pity I used to have to send her her first partner at two o'clock in the morning. She was five-and-twenty then, and they used to rig her out in short skirts like a little girl. It was improper to have them about at last."

"I seem to see that fly."

"I tell you, as soon as I arrived I was in the thick of an intrigue. You read Madame Drozdov's letter, of course. What could be clearer? What did I find? That fool Praskovya herself—she always was a fool—looked at me as much as to ask why I'd come. You can fancy how surprised I was. I looked round, and there was that Lembke woman at her tricks, and that cousin of hers—old Drozdov's nephew—it was all clear. You may be sure I changed all that in a twinkling, and Praskovya is on my side again, but what an intrigue

"In which you came off victor, however. Bismarck!"

"Without being a Bismarck I'm equal to falseness and stupidity wherever I meet it. falseness, and Praskovya's folly. I don't know when I've met such a flabby woman, and what's more her legs are swollen, and she's a good-natured simpleton, too. What can be more foolish than a good-natured simpleton?"

"A spiteful fool, ma bonne amie, a spiteful fool is still more foolish," Stepan Trofimovitch protested magnanimously.

"You're right, perhaps. Do you remember Liza?"

"Charmante enfant!"

"But she's not an enfant now, but a woman, and a woman of character. She's a generous, passionate creature, and what I like about her, she stands up to that confiding fool, her mother. There was almost a row over that cousin."

"Bah, and of course he's no relation of Lizaveta Nikolaevna's at all... . Has he designs on her?"

"You see, he's a young officer, not by any means talkative, modest in fact. I always want to be just. I fancy he is opposed to the intrigue himself, and isn't aiming at anything, and it was only the Von Lembke's tricks. He had a great respect for Nicolas. You understand, it all depends on Liza. But I left her on the best of terms with Nicolas, and he promised he would come to us in November. So it's only the Von Lembke who is intriguing, and Praskovya is a blind woman. She suddenly tells me that all my suspicions are fancy. I told her to her face she was a fool. I am ready to repeat it at the day of judgment. And if it hadn't been for Nicolas begging me to leave it for a time, I wouldn't have come away without unmasking that false woman. She's been trying to ingratiate herself with Count K. through Nicolas. She wants to come between mother and son. But Liza's on our side, and I came to an understanding with Praskovya. Do you know that Karmazinov is a relation of hers?"

"What? A relation of Madame von Lembke?"

"Yes, of hers. Distant."

"Karmazinov, the novelist?"

“Yes, the writer. Why does it surprise you? Of course he considers himself a great man. Stuck-up creature! She’s coming here with him. Now she’s making a fuss of him out there. She’s got a notion of setting up a sort of literary society here. He’s coming for a month, he wants to sell his last piece of property here. I very nearly met him in Switzerland, and was very anxious not to. Though I hope he will deign to recognise me. He wrote letters to me in the old days, he has been in my house. I should like you to dress better, Stepan Trofimovitch; you’re growing more slovenly every day... . Oh, how you torment me! What are you reading now?”

“I ... I ...”

“I understand. The same as ever, friends and drinking, the club and cards, and the reputation of an atheist. I don’t like that reputation, Stepan Trofimovitch; I don’t care for you to be called an atheist, particularly now. I didn’t care for it in old days, for it’s all nothing but empty chatter. It must be said at last.”

“Mais, ma chere ...”

“Listen, Stepan Trofimovitch, of course I’m ignorant compared with you on all learned subjects, but as I was travelling here I thought a great deal about you. I’ve come to one conclusion.”

“What conclusion?”

“That you and I are not the wisest people in the world, but that there are people wiser than we are.”

“Witty and apt. If there are people wiser than we are, then there are people more right than we are, and we may be mistaken, you mean? Mais, ma bonne amie, granted that I may make a mistake, yet have I not the common, human, eternal, supreme [right of freedom of conscience? I have the right not to be bigoted or superstitious if I don’t wish to, and for that I shall naturally be hated by certain persons to the end of time. Et puis, comme on trouve toujours plus de moines que de raison, and as I thoroughly agree with that ...”

“What, what did you say?”

“I said, on trouve, toujours plus de moines que de raison, and as I thoroughly ...”

“I’m sure that’s not your saying. You must have taken it from somewhere.”

“It was Pascal said that.”

“Just as I thought ...it’s not your own. Why don’t you ever say anything like that yourself, so shortly and to the point, instead of dragging things out to such a length? That’s much, better than what you said just now about administrative ardour...”

“Ma foi, chere ... why? In the first place probably because I’m not a Pascal after all, et puis ... secondly, we Russians never can say anything in our own language... . We never have said anything hitherto, at any rate... .”

“H’m! That’s not true, perhaps. Anyway, you’d better make a note of such phrases, and remember them, you know, in case you have to talk... . Ach, Stepan Trofimovitch. I have come to talk to you seriously, quite seriously.”

“Chere, chere amie!”

"Now that all these Von Lembkes and Karmazinovs ... Oh, my goodness, how you have deteriorated! ... Oh, my goodness, how you do torment me! ... I should have liked these people to feel a respect for you, for they're not worth your little finger—but the way you behave! ... What will they see? What shall I have to show them? Instead of nobly standing as an example, keeping up the tradition of the past, you surround yourself with a wretched rabble, you have picked up impossible habits, you've grown feeble, you can't do without wine and cards, you read nothing but Paul de Kock, and write nothing, while all of them write; all your time's wasted in gossip. How can you bring yourself to be friends with a wretched creature like your inseparable Liputin?"

"Why is he mine and inseparable?" Stepan Trofimovitch protested timidly.

"Where is he now?" Varvara Petrovna went on, sharply and sternly.

"He ... he has an infinite respect for you, and he's gone to S——k, to receive an inheritance left him by his mother."

"He seems to do nothing but get money. And how's Shatov? Is he just the same?"

"Irascible, mais bon,"

"I can't endure your Shatov. He's spiteful and he thinks too much of himself."

"How is Darya Pavlovna?"

"You mean Dasha? What made you think of her?" Varvara Petrovna looked at him inquisitively. "She's quite well. I left her with the Drozdovs. I heard something about your son in Switzerland. Nothing good."

"Oh, c'est un histoire bien bete! Je vous attendais, ma bonne amie, pour vous raconter ..."

"Enough, Stepan Trofimovitch. Leave me in peace. I'm worn out. We shall have time to talk to our heart's content, especially of what's unpleasant. You've begun to splutter when you laugh, it's a sign of senility! And what a strange way of laughing you've taken to! ... Good Heavens, what a lot of bad habits you've fallen into! Karmazinov won't come and see you! And people are only too glad to make the most of anything as it is... . You've betrayed yourself completely now. Well, come, that's enough, that's enough, I'm tired. You really might have mercy upon one!"

Stepan Trofimovitch "had mercy," but he withdrew in great perturbation.

5

Our friend certainly had fallen into not a few bad habits, especially of late. He had obviously and rapidly deteriorated; and it was true that he had become slovenly. He drank more and had become more tearful and nervous; and had grown too impressionable on the artistic side. His face had acquired a strange facility for changing with extraordinary quickness, from the most solemn expression, for instance, to the most absurd, and even foolish. He could not endure solitude, and was always craving for amusement. One had always to repeat to him some gossip, some local anecdote, and every day a new one. If no; one came to see him for a long time he wandered disconsolately about the rooms, walked to the window, puckering up his lips, heaved deep

sighs, and almost fell to whimpering at last. He was always full of forebodings, was afraid of something unexpected and inevitable; he had become timorous; he began to pay great attention to his dreams.

He spent all that day and evening in great depression, he sent for me, was very much agitated, talked a long while, gave me a long account of things, but all rather disconnected. Varvara Petrovna had known for a long time that he concealed nothing from me. It seemed to me at last that he was worried about something particular, and was perhaps unable to form a definite idea of it himself. As a rule when we met *tete-a-tete* and he began making long complaints to me, a bottle was almost always brought in after a little time, and things became much more comfortable. This time there was no wine, and he was evidently struggling all the while against the desire to send for it.

“And why is she always so cross?” he complained every minute, like a child. “*Tous les hommes de genie et de progres en Mussie etaient, sont, et seront toujours des gamblers et des drunkards qui boivent in outbreaks ... and I’m not such a gambler after all, and I’m not such a drunkard. She reproaches me for not writing anything. Strange idea! ... She asks why I lie down? She says I ought to stand, ‘an example and reproach.’ Mais, entre nous soit dit, what is a man to do who is destined to stand as a ‘reproach,’ if not to lie down? Does she understand that?*”

And at last it became clear to me what was the chief particular trouble which was worrying him so persistently at this time. Many times that evening he went to the looking-glass, and stood a long while before it. At last he turned from the looking-glass to me, and with a sort of strange despair, said: “*Mon cher, je suis un broken-down man.*” Yes, certainly, up to that time, up to that very day there was one thing only of which he had always felt confident in spite of the “new views,” and of the “change in Varvara Petrovna’s ideas,” that was, the conviction that still he had a fascination for her feminine heart, not simply as an exile or a celebrated man of learning, but as a handsome man. For twenty years this soothing and flattering opinion had been rooted in his mind, and perhaps of all his convictions this was the hardest to part with. Had he any presentiment that evening of the colossal ordeal which was preparing for him in the immediate future?

6

I will now enter upon the description of that almost forgotten incident with which my story properly speaking begins.

At last at the very end of August the Drozdovs returned. Their arrival made a considerable sensation in local society, and took place shortly before their relation, our new governor’s wife, made her long-expected appearance. But of all these interesting events I will speak later. For the present I will confine myself to saying that Praskovya Ivanovna brought Varvara Petrovna, who was expecting her so impatiently, a most perplexing problem: Nikolay had parted from them in July, and, meeting Count K. on

the Rhine, had set off with him and his family for Petersburg. (N.B.—The Count's three daughters were all of marriageable age.)

"Lizaveta is so proud and obstinate that I could get nothing out of her," Praskovya Ivanovna said in conclusion. "But I saw for myself that something had happened between her and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. I don't know the reasons, but I fancy, my dear Varvara Petrovna, that you will have to ask your Darya Pavlovna for them. To my thinking Liza was offended. I'm glad. I can tell you that I've brought you back your favourite at last and handed her over to you; it's a weight off my mind."

These venomous words were uttered with remarkable irritability. It was evident that the "flabby" woman had prepared them and gloated beforehand over the effect they would produce. But Varvara Petrovna was not the woman to be disconcerted by sentimental effects and enigmas. She sternly demanded the most precise and satisfactory explanations. Praskovya Ivanovna immediately lowered her tone and even ended by dissolving into tears and expressions of the warmest friendship. This irritable but sentimental lady, like Stepan Trofimovitch, was for ever yearning for true friendship, and her chief complaint against her daughter Lizaveta Mkolaevna was just that "her daughter was not a friend to her."

But from all her explanations and outpourings nothing certain could be gathered but that there actually had been some sort of quarrel between Liza and Nikolay, but of the nature of the quarrel Praskovya Ivanovna was obviously unable to form a definite idea. As for her imputations against Darya Pavlovna, she not only withdrew them completely in the end, but even particularly begged Varvara Petrovna to pay no attention to her words, because "they had been said in irritation." In fact, it had all been left very far from clear—suspicious, indeed. According to her account the quarrel had arisen from Liza's "obstinate and ironical character." "Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is proud, too, and though he was very much in love, yet he could not endure sarcasm, and began to be sarcastic himself. Soon afterwards we made the acquaintance of a young man, the nephew, I believe, of your 'Professor' and, indeed, the surname's the same."

"The son, not the nephew," Varvara Petrovna corrected her.

Even in old days Praskovya Ivanovna had been always unable to recall Stepan Trofimovitch's name, and had always called him the "Professor."

"Well, his son, then; so much the better. Of course, it's all the same to me. An ordinary young man, very lively and free in his manners, but nothing special in him. Well, then, Liza herself did wrong, she made friends with the young man with the idea of making Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch jealous. I don't see much harm in that; it's the way of girls, quite usual, even charming in them. Only instead of being jealous Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made friends with the young man himself, just as though he saw nothing and didn't care. This made Liza furious. The young man soon went away (he was in a great hurry to get somewhere) and Liza took to picking quarrels with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at every opportunity. She noticed that he used sometimes to talk to Dasha; and, well, she got in such a frantic state that even my life wasn't worth living, my dear. The doctors have forbidden my being irritated, and I was so

sick of their lake they make such a fuss about, it simply gave me toothache, I had such rheumatism. It's stated in print that the Lake of Geneva does give people the toothache. It's a feature of the place. Then Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch suddenly got a letter from the countess and he left us at once. He packed up in one day. They parted in a friendly way, and Liza became very cheerful and frivolous, and laughed a great deal seeing him off; only that was all put on. When he had gone she became very thoughtful, and she gave up speaking of him altogether and wouldn't let me mention his name. And I should advise you, dear Varvara Petrovna, not to approach the subject with Liza, you'll only do harm. But if you hold your tongue she'll begin to talk of it herself, and then you'll learn more. I believe they'll come together again, if only Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch doesn't put off coming, as he promised."

"I'll write to him at once. If that's how it was, there was nothing in the quarrel; all nonsense! And I know Darya too well. It's nonsense!"

"I'm sorry for what I said about Dashenka, I did wrong. Their conversations were quite ordinary and they talked out loud, too. But it all upset me so much at the time, my dear. And Liza, I saw, got on with her again as affectionately as before... ."

That very day Varvara Petrovna wrote to Nikolay, and begged him to come, if only one month, earlier than the date he had fixed. But yet she still felt that there was something unexplained and obscure in the matter. She pondered over it all the evening and all night. Praskovya's opinion seemed to her too innocent and sentimental. "Praskovya has always been too sentimental from the old schooldays upwards," she reflected. "Nicolas is not the man to run away from a girl's taunts. There's some other reason for it, if there really has been a breach between them. That officer's here though, they've brought him with them. As a relation he lives in their house. And, as for Darya, Praskovya was in too much haste to apologise. She must have kept something to herself, which she wouldn't tell me."

By the morning Varvara Petrovna had matured a project for putting a stop once for all to one misunderstanding at least; a project amazing in its unexpectedness. What was in her heart when she conceived it? It would be hard to decide and I will not undertake to explain beforehand all the incongruities of which it was made up. I simply confine myself as chronicler to recording events precisely as they happened, and it is not my fault if they seem incredible. Yet I must once more testify that by the morning there was not the least suspicion of Dasha left in Varvara Petrovna's mind, though in reality there never had been any—she had too much confidence in her. Besides, she could not admit the idea that "Nicolas" could be attracted by her Darya. Next morning when Darya Pavlovna was pouring out tea at the table Varvara Petrovna looked for a long while intently at her and, perhaps for the twentieth time since the previous day, repeated to herself: "It's all nonsense!"

All she noticed was that Dasha looked rather tired, and that she was even quieter and more apathetic than she used to be. After their morning tea, according to their invariable custom, they sat down to needlework. Varvara Petrovna demanded from her a full account of her impressions abroad, especially of nature, of the inhabitants, of the

towns, the customs, their arts and commerce—of everything she had time to observe. She asked no questions about the Drozdovs or how she had got on with them. Dasha, sitting beside her at the work-table helping her with the embroidery, talked for half an hour in her even, monotonous, but rather weak voice.

“Darya!” Varvara Petrovna interrupted suddenly, “is there nothing special you want to tell me?”

“No, nothing,” said Dasha, after a moment’s thought, and she glanced at Varvara Petrovna with her light-coloured eyes.

“Nothing on your soul, on your heart, or your conscience?”

“Nothing,” Dasha repeated, quietly, but with a sort of sullen firmness.

“I knew there wasn’t! Believe me, Darya, I shall never doubt you. Now sit still and listen. In front of me, on that chair. I want to see the whole of you. That’s right. Listen, do you want to be married?”

Dasha responded with a long, inquiring, but not greatly astonished look.

“Stay, hold your tongue. In the first place there is a very great difference in age, but of course you know better than anyone what nonsense that is. You’re a sensible girl, and there must be no mistakes in your life. Besides, he’s still a handsome man... In short, Stepan Trofimovitch, for whom you have always had such a respect. Well?”

Dasha looked at her still more inquiringly, and this time not simply with surprise; she blushed perceptibly.

“Stay, hold your tongue, don’t be in a hurry! Though you will have money under my will, yet when I die, what will become of you, even if you have money? You’ll be deceived and robbed of your money, you’ll be lost in fact. But married to him you’re the wife of a distinguished man. Look at him on the other hand. Though I’ve provided for him, if I die what will become of him I But I could trust him to you. Stay, I’ve not finished. He’s frivolous, shilly-shally, cruel, egoistic, he has low habits. But mind you think highly of him, in the first place because there are many worse. I don’t want to get you off my hands by marrying you to a rascal, you don’t imagine anything of that sort, do you? And, above all, because I ask you, you’ll think highly of him,”—

She broke off suddenly and irritably. “Do you hear? Why won’t you say something?”

Dasha still listened and did not speak.

“Stay, wait a little. He’s an old woman, but you know, that’s all the better for you. Besides, he’s a pathetic old woman. He doesn’t deserve to be loved by a woman at all, but he deserves to be loved for his helplessness, and you must love him for his helplessness. You understand me, don’t you? Do you understand me?”

Dasha nodded her head affirmatively.

“I knew you would. I expected as much of you. He will love you because he ought, he ought; he ought to adore you.” Varvara Petrovna almost shrieked with peculiar exasperation. “Besides, he will be in love with you without any ought about it. I know him. And another thing, I shall always be here. You may be sure I shall always be here. He will complain of you, he’ll begin to say things against you behind your back, he’ll whisper things against you to any stray person he meets, he’ll be for ever whining and

whining; he'll write you letters from one room to another, two a day, but he won't be able to get on without you all the same, and that's the chief thing. Make him obey you. If you can't make him you'll be a fool. He'll want to hang himself and threaten, to—don't you believe it. It's nothing but nonsense. Don't believe it; but still keep a sharp look-out, you never can tell, and one day he may hang himself. It does happen with people like that. It's not through strength of will but through weakness that people hang themselves, and so never drive him to an extreme, that's the first rule in married life. Remember, too, that he's a poet. Listen, Dasha, there's no greater happiness than self-sacrifice. And besides, you'll be giving me great satisfaction and that's the chief thing. Don't think I've been talking nonsense. I understand what I'm saying. I'm an egoist, you be an egoist, too. Of course I'm not forcing you. It's entirely for you to decide. As you say, so it shall be. Well, what's the good of sitting like this. Speak!"

"I don't mind, Varvara Petrovna, if I really must be married," said Dasha firmly.

"Must? What are you hinting at?" Varvara Petrovna looked sternly and intently at her.

Dasha was silent, picking at her embroidery canvas with her needle.

"Though you're a clever girl, you're talking nonsense; though it is true that I have certainly set my heart on marrying you, yet it's not because it's necessary, but simply because the idea has occurred to me, and only to Stepan Trofimovitch. If it had not been for Stepan Trofimovitch, I should not have thought of marrying you yet, though you are twenty... . Well?"

"I'll do as you wish, Varvara Petrovna."

"Then you consent! Stay, be quiet. Why are you in such a hurry? I haven't finished. In my will I've left you fifteen thousand roubles. I'll give you that at once, on your wedding-day. You will give eight thousand of it to him; that is, not to him but to me. He has a debt of eight thousand. I'll pay it, but he must know that it is done with your money. You'll have seven thousand left in your hands. Never let him touch a farthing of it. Don't pay his debts ever. If once you pay them, you'll never be free of them. Besides, I shall always be here. You shall have twelve hundred roubles a year from me, with extras, fifteen hundred, besides board and lodging, which shall be at my expense, just as he has it now. Only you must set up your own servants. Your yearly allowance shall be paid to you all at once straight into your hands. But be kind, and sometimes give him something, and let his friends come to see him once a week, but if they come more often, turn them out. But I shall be here, too. And if I die, your pension will go on till his death, do you hear, till his death, for it's his pension, not yours. And besides the seven thousand you'll have now, which you ought to keep untouched if you're not foolish, I'll leave you another eight thousand in my will. And you'll get nothing more than that from me, it's right that you should know it. Come, you consent, eh? Will you say something at last?"

"I have told you already, Varvara Petrovna."

"Remember that you're free to decide. As you like, so it shall be."

"Then, may I ask, Varvara Petrovna, has Stepan Trofimovitch said anything yet?"

“No, he hasn’t said anything, he doesn’t know ... but he will speak directly.”

She jumped up at once and threw on a black shawl. Dasha flushed a little again, and watched her with questioning eyes. Varvara Petrovna turned suddenly to her with a face flaming with anger.

“You’re a fool!” She swooped down on her like a hawk. “An ungrateful fool! What’s in your mind? Can you imagine that I’d compromise you, in any way, in the smallest degree. Why, he shall crawl on his knees to ask you, he must be dying of happiness, that’s how it shall be arranged. Why, you know that I’d never let you suffer. Or do you suppose he’ll take you for the sake of that eight thousand, and that I’m hurrying off to sell you? You’re a fool, a fool! You’re all ungrateful fools. Give me my umbrella!”

And she flew off to walk by the wet brick pavements and the wooden planks to Stepan Trofimovitch’s.

7

It was true that she would never have let Dasha suffer; on the contrary, she considered now that she was acting as her benefactress. The most generous and legitimate indignation was glowing in her soul, when, as she put on her shawl, she caught fixed upon her the embarrassed and mistrustful eyes of her protegee. She had genuinely loved the girl from her childhood upwards. Praskovya Ivanovna had with justice called Darya Pavlovna her favourite. Long ago Varvara Petrovna had made up her mind once for all that “Darya’s disposition was not like her brother’s” (not, that is, like Ivan Shatov’s), that she was quiet and gentle, and capable of great self-sacrifice; that she was distinguished by a power of devotion, unusual modesty, rare reasonableness, and, above all, by gratitude. Till that time Dasha had, to all appearances, completely justified her expectations.

“In that life there will be no mistakes,” said Varvara Petrovna when the girl was only twelve years old, and as it was characteristic of her to attach herself doggedly and passionately to any dream that fascinated her, any new design, any idea that struck her as noble, she made up her mind at once to educate Dasha as though she were her own daughter. She at once set aside a sum of money for her, and sent for a governess, Miss Criggs, who lived with them until the girl was sixteen, but she was for some reason suddenly dismissed. Teachers came for her from the High School, among them a real Frenchman, who taught Dasha French. He, too, was suddenly dismissed, almost turned out of the house. A poor lady, a widow of good family, taught her to play the piano. Yet her chief tutor was Stepan Trofimovitch.

In reality he first discovered Dasha. He began teaching the quiet child even before Varvara Petrovna had begun to think about her. I repeat again, it was wonderful how children took to him. Lizaveta Nikolaevna Tushin had been taught by him from the age of eight till eleven (Stepan Trofimovitch took no fees, of course, for his lessons, and would not on any account have taken payment from the Drozdovs). But he fell in love with the charming child and used to tell her poems of a sort about the creation of the

world, about the earth, and the history of humanity. His lectures about the primitive peoples and primitive man were more interesting than the Arabian Nights. Liza, who was ecstatic over these stories, used to mimic Stepan Trofimovitch very funnily at home. He heard of this and once peeped in on her unawares. Liza, overcome with confusion, flung herself into his arms and shed tears; Stepan Trofimovitch wept too with delight. But Liza soon after went away, and only Dasha was left. When Dasha began to have other teachers, Stepan Trofimovitch gave up his lessons with her, and by degrees left off noticing her. Things went on like this for a long time. Once when she was seventeen he was struck by her prettiness. It happened at Varvara Petrovna's table. He began to talk to the young girl, was much pleased with her answers, and ended by offering to give her a serious and comprehensive course of lessons on the history of Russian literature. Varvara Petrovna approved, and thanked him for his excellent idea, and Dasha was delighted. Stepan Trofimovitch proceeded to make special preparations for the lectures, and at last they began. They began with the most ancient period. The first lecture went off enchantingly. Varvara Petrovna was present. When Stepan Trofimovitch had finished, and as he was going informed his pupil that the next time he would deal with "The Story of the Expedition of Igor," Varvara Petrovna suddenly got up and announced that there would be no more lessons. Stepan Trofimovitch winced, but said nothing, and Dasha flushed crimson. It put a stop to the scheme, however. This had happened just three years before Varvara Petrovna's unexpected fancy.

Poor Stepan Trofimovitch was sitting alone free from all misgivings. Plunged in mournful reveries he had for some time been looking out of the window to see whether any of his friends were coining. But nobody would come. It was drizzling. It was turning cold, he would have to have the stove heated. He sighed. Suddenly a terrible apparition flashed upon his eyes:

Varvara Petrovna in such weather and at such an unexpected hour to see him! And on foot! He was so astounded that he forgot to put on his coat, and received her as he was, in his everlasting pink-wadded dressing-jacket.

"Ma bonne amie!" he cried faintly, to greet her. "You're alone; I'm glad; I can't endure your friends. How you do smoke! Heavens, what an atmosphere! You haven't finished your morning tea and it's nearly twelve o'clock. It's your idea of bliss—disorder! You take pleasure in dirt. What's that torn paper on the floor? Nastasya, Nastasya! What is your Nastasya about? Open the window, the casement, the doors, fling everything wide open. And we'll go into the drawing-room. I've come to you on a matter of importance. And you sweep up, my good woman, for once in your life."

"They make such a muck!" Nastasya whined in a voice of plaintive exasperation.

"Well, you must sweep, sweep it up fifteen times a day! You've a wretched drawing-room" (when they had gone into the drawing-room). "Shut the door properly. She'll be listening. You must have it repapered. Didn't I send a paperhanger to you with patterns? Why didn't you choose one? Sit down, and listen. Do sit down, I beg you. Where are you off to? Where are you off to I Where are you off to?"

"I'll be back directly," Stepan Trofimovitch cried from the next room. "Here, I am again."

"Ah,- you've changed your coat." She scanned him mockingly. (He had flung his coat on over the dressing-jacket.) "Well, certainly that's more suited to our subject. Do sit down, I entreat you."

She told him everything at once, abruptly and impressively. She hinted at the eight thousand of which he stood in such terrible need. She told him in detail of the dowry. Stepan Trofimovitch sat trembling, opening his eyes wider and wider. He heard it all, but he could not realise it clearly. He tried to speak, but his voice kept breaking. All he knew was that everything would be as she said, that to protest and refuse to agree would be useless, and that he was a married man irrevocably.

"Mais, ma bonne amie! ... for the third time, and at my age ... and to such a child." He brought out at last, "Mais, c'est une enfant!"

"A child who is twenty years old, thank God. Please don't roll your eyes, I entreat you, you're not on the stage. You're very clever and learned, but you know nothing at all about life. You will always want a nurse to look after you. I shall die, and what will become of you? She will be a good nurse to you; she's a modest girl, strong-willed, reasonable; besides, I shall be here too, I shan't die directly. She's fond of home, she's an angel of gentleness. This happy thought came to me in Switzerland. Do you understand if I tell you myself that she is an angel of gentleness!" she screamed with sudden fury. "Your house is dirty, she will bring in order, cleanliness. Everything will shine like a mirror. Good gracious, do you expect me to go on my knees to you with such a treasure, to enumerate all the advantages, to court you! Why, you ought to be on your knees... . Oh, you shallow, shallow, faint-hearted man!"

"But ... I'm an old man!"

"What do your fifty-three years matter! Fifty is the middle of life, not the end of it. You are a handsome man and you know it yourself. You know, too, what a respect she has for you. If I die, what will become of her? But married to you she'll be at peace, and I shall be at peace. You have renown, a name, a loving heart. You receive a pension which I look upon as an obligation. You will save her perhaps, you will save her! In any case you will be doing her an honour. You will form her for life, you will develop her heart, you will direct her ideas. How many people come to grief nowadays because their ideas are wrongly directed. By that time your book will be ready, and you will at once set people talking about you again."

"I am, in fact," he muttered, at once flattered by Varvara Petrovna's adroit insinuations. "I was just preparing to sit down to my 'Tales from Spanish History.'"

"Well, there you are. It's just come right."

"But ... she? Have you spoken to her?"

"Don't worry about her. And there's no need for you to be inquisitive. Of course, you must ask her yourself, entreat her to do you the honour, you understand? But don't be uneasy. I shall be here. Besides, you love her."

Stepan Trofimovitch felt giddy. The walls were going round. There was one terrible idea underlying this to which he could not reconcile himself.

“Excellente amie” his voice quivered suddenly. “I could never have conceived that you would make up your mind to give me in marriage to another ... woman.”

“You’re not a girl, Stepan Trofimovitch. Only girls are given in marriage. You are taking a wife,” Varvara Petrovna hissed malignantly.

“Oui, j’ai pris un mot pour un autre. Mais c’est egal.” He gazed at her with a hopeless air.

“I see that e’est egal,” she muttered contemptuously through her teeth. “Good heavens! Why he’s going to faint. Nastasya, Nastasya, water!”

But water was not needed. He came to himself. Varvara Petrovna took up her umbrella.

“I see it’s no use talking to you now... .”

“Oui, oui, je suis incapable.”

“But by to-morrow you’ll have rested and thought it over. Stay at home. If anything happens let me know, even if it’s at night. Don’t write letters, I shan’t read them. To-morrow I’ll come again at this time alone, for a final answer, and I trust it will be satisfactory. Try to have nobody here and no untidiness, for the place isn’t fit to be seen. Nastasya, Nastasya!”

The next day, of course, he consented, and, indeed, he could do nothing else. There was one circumstance ...

8

Stepan Trofimovitch’s estate, as we used to call it (which consisted of fifty souls, reckoning in the old fashion, and bordered on Skvoreshniki), was not really his at all, but his first wife’s, and so belonged now to his son Pyotr Stepanovitch Verhovensky. Stepan Trofimovitch was simply his trustee, and so, when the nestling was full-fledged, he had given his father a formal authorisation to manage the estate. This transaction was a profitable one for the young man. He received as much as a thousand roubles a year by way of revenue from the estate, though under the new regime it could not have yielded more than five hundred, and possibly not that. God knows how such an arrangement had arisen. The whole sum, however, was sent the young man by Varvara Petrovna, and Stepan Trofimovitch had nothing to do with a single rouble of it. On the other hand, the whole revenue from the land remained in his pocket, and he had, besides, completely ruined the estate, letting it to a mercenary rogue, and without the knowledge of Varvara Petrovna selling the timber which gave the estate its chief value. He had some time before he sold the woods bit by bit. It was worth at least eight thousand, yet he had only received five thousand for it. But he sometimes lost too much at the club, and was afraid to ask Varvara Petrovna for the money. She clenched her teeth when she heard at last of everything. And now, all at once, his son

announced that he was coming himself to sell his property for what he could get for it, and commissioned his father to take steps promptly to arrange the sale. It was clear that Stepan Trofimovitch, being a generous and disinterested man, felt ashamed of his treatment of *ce cher enfant* (whom he had seen for the last time nine years before as a student in Petersburg). The estate might originally have been worth thirteen Or fourteen thousand. Now it was doubtful whether anyone would give five for it. No doubt Stepan Trofimovitch was fully entitled by the terms of the trust to sell the wood, and taking into account the incredibly large yearly revenue of a thousand roubles which had been sent punctually for so many years, he could have put up a good defence of his management. But Stepan Trofimovitch was a generous man of exalted impulses. A wonderfully fine inspiration occurred to his mind: when Petrusha returned, to lay on the table before him the maximum price of fifteen thousand roubles without a hint at the sums that had been sent him hitherto, and warmly and with tears to press *ce cher fils* to his heart, and so to make an end of all accounts between them. He began cautiously and indirectly unfolding this picture before Varvara Petrovna. He hinted that this would add a peculiarly noble note to their friendship ... to their "idea." This would set the parents of the last generation—and people of the last generation generally—in such a disinterested and magnanimous light in comparison with the new frivolous and socialistic younger generation. He said a great deal more, but Varvara Petrovna was obstinately silent. At last she informed him airily that she was prepared to buy their estate, and to pay for it the maximum price, that is, six or seven thousand (though four would have been a fair price for it). Of the remaining eight thousand which had vanished with the woods she said not a word.

This conversation took place a month before the match was proposed to him. Stepan Trofimovitch was overwhelmed, and began to ponder. There might in the past have been a hope that his soft would not come, after all—an outsider, that is to say, might have hoped so. Stepan Trofimovitch as a father would; have indignantly rejected the insinuation that he could entertain such a hope. Anyway queer rumours had hitherto been reaching us about Petrusha. To begin with, on completing his studies at the university six years before, he had hung about in Petersburg without getting work. Suddenly we got the news that he had taken part in issuing some anonymous manifesto and that he was implicated in the affair. Then he suddenly turned up abroad in Switzerland at Geneva—he had escaped, very likely.

"It's surprising to me," Stepan Trofimovitch commented, greatly disconcerted. "Petrusha, *c'est une si pauvre tete!* He's good, noble-hearted, very sensitive, and I was so delighted with him in Petersburg, comparing him with the young people of to-day. But *c'est un pauvre sire, tout de meme....* And you know it all comes from that same half-bakedness, that sentimentality. They are fascinated, not by realism, but by the emotional ideal side of socialism, by the religious note in it, so to say, by the poetry of it ... second-hand, of course. And for me, for me, think what it means! I have so many enemies here and more still there, they'll put it down to the father's influence. Good God! Petrusha a revolutionist! What times we live in!"

Very soon, however, Petrusha sent his exact address from Switzerland for money to be sent him as usual; so he could not be exactly an exile. And now, after four years abroad, he was suddenly making his appearance again in his own country", and announced that he would arrive shortly, so there could be no charge against him. What was more, some one seemed to be interested in him and protecting him. He wrote now from the south of Russia, where he was busily engaged in some private but important business. All this was capital, but where was his father to get that other seven or eight thousand, to make up a suitable price for the estate? And what if there should be an outcry, and instead of that imposing picture it should come to a lawsuit? Something told Stepan Trofimovitch that the sensitive Petrusha would not relinquish anything that was to his interest. "Why is it—as I've noticed," Stepan Trofimovitch whispered to me once, "why is it that all these desperate socialists and communists are at the same time such incredible skinflints, so avaricious, so keen over property, and, in fact, the more socialistic, the more extreme they are, the keener they are over property ... why is it? Can that, too, come from sentimentalism?" I don't know whether there is any truth in this observation of Stepan Trofimovitch's. I only know that Petrusha had somehow got wind of the sale of the woods and the rest of it, and that Stepan Trofimovitch was aware of the fact. I happened, too, to read some of Petrusha's letters to his father. He wrote extremely rarely, once a year, or even less often. Only recently, to inform him of his approaching visit, he had sent two letters, one almost immediately after the other. All his letters were short, dry, consisting only of instructions, and as the father and son had, since their meeting in Petersburg, adopted the fashionable "thou" and "thee," Petrusha's letters had a striking resemblance to the missives that used to be sent by landowners of the old school from the town to their serfs whom they had left in charge of their estates. And now suddenly this eight thousand which would solve the difficulty would be wafted to him by Varvara Petrovna's proposition. And at the same time she made him distinctly feel that it never could be wafted to him from anywhere else. Of course Stepan Trofimovitch consented.

He sent for me directly she had gone and shut himself up for the whole day, admitting no one else. He cried, of course, talked well and talked a great deal, contradicted himself continually, made a casual pun, and was much pleased with it. Then he had a slight attack of his "summer cholera"—everything in fact followed the usual course. Then he brought out the portrait of his German bride, now twenty years deceased, and began plaintively appealing to her: "Will you forgive me?" In fact he seemed somehow distracted. Our grief led us to get a little drunk. He soon fell into a sweet sleep, however. Next morning he tied his cravat in masterly fashion, dressed with care, and went frequently to look at himself in the glass. He sprinkled his handkerchief with scent, only a slight dash of it, however, and as soon as he saw Varvara Petrovna out of the window he hurriedly took another handkerchief and hid the scented one under the pillow.

"Excellent!" Varvara Petrovna approved, on receiving his consent. "In the first place you show a fine decision, and secondly you've listened to the voice of reason, to which

you generally pay so little heed in your private affairs. There's no need of haste, however," she added, scanning the knot of his white tie, "for the present say nothing, and I will say nothing. It will soon be your birthday; I will come to see you with her. Give us tea in the evening, and please without wine or other refreshments, but I'll arrange it all myself. Invite your friends, but we'll make the list together. You can talk to her the day before, if necessary. And at your party we won't exactly announce it, or make an engagement of any sort, but only hint at it, and let people know without any sort of ceremony. And then the wedding a fortnight later, as far as possible without any fuss... . You two might even go away for a time after the wedding, to Moscow, for instance. I'll go with you, too, perhaps... The chief thing is, keep quiet till then.

Stepan Trofimovitch was surprised. He tried to falter that he could not do like that, that he must talk it over with his bride. But Varvara Petrovna flew at him in exasperation.

"What for? In the first place it may perhaps come to nothing."

"Come to nothing!" muttered the bridegroom, utterly dumbfounded.

"Yes. I'll see... . But everything shall be as I've told you, and don't be uneasy. I'll prepare her myself. There's really no need for you. Everything necessary shall be said and done, and there's no need for you to meddle. Why should you? In what character? Don't come and don't write letters. And not a sight or sound of you, I beg. I will be silent too."

She absolutely refused to explain herself, and went away, obviously upset. Stepan Trofimovitch's excessive readiness evidently impressed her. Alas! he was utterly unable to grasp his position, and the question had not yet presented itself to him from certain other points of view. On the contrary a new note was apparent in him, a sort of conquering and jaunty air. He swaggered.

"I do like that!" he exclaimed, standing before me, and flinging wide his arms. "Did you hear? She wants to drive me to refusing at last. Why, I may lose patience, too, and ... refuse! 'Sit still, there's no need for you to go to her.' But after all, why should I be married? Simply because she's taken an absurd fancy into her heart. But I'm a serious man, and I can refuse to submit to the idle whims of a giddy-woman! I have duties to my son and . . . , and to myself! I'm making a sacrifice. Does she realise that? I have agreed, perhaps, because I am weary of life and nothing matters to me. But she may exasperate me, and then it will matter. I shall resent it and refuse. Et enftn, le ridicule ... what will they say at the club? What will ... what will ... Laputin say? 'Perhaps nothing will come of it'—what a thing to say! That beats everything. That's really ... what is one to say to that? ... Je suis un for fat, un Badinguet, un man pushed to the wall... ."

And at the same time a sort of capricious complacency, something frivolous and playful, could be seen in the midst of all these plaintive exclamations. In the evening we drank too much again.

Chapter 3: The Sins of Others

1

ABOUT A WEEK had passed, and the position had begun to grow more complicated.

I may mention in passing that I suffered a great deal during that unhappy week, as I scarcely left the side of my affianced friend, in the capacity of his most intimate confidant. What weighed upon him most was the feeling of shame, though we saw no one all that week, and sat indoors alone. But he was even ashamed before me, and so much so that the more he confided to me the more vexed he was with me for it. He was so morbidly apprehensive that he expected that every one knew about it already, the whole town, and was afraid to show himself, not only at the club, but even in his circle of friends. He positively would not go out to take his constitutional till well after dusk, when it was quite dark.

A week passed and he still did not know whether he were betrothed or not, and could not find out for a fact, however much he tried. He had not yet seen his future bride, and did not know whether she was to be his bride or not; did not, in fact, know whether there was anything serious in it at all. Varvara Petrovna, for some reason, resolutely refused to admit him to her presence. In answer to one of his first letters to her (and he wrote a great number of them) she begged him plainly to spare her all communications with him for a time, because she was very busy, and having a great deal of the utmost importance to communicate to him she was waiting for a more free moment to do so, and that she would let him know in time when he could come to see her. She declared she would send back his letters unopened, as they were "simple self-indulgence." I read that letter myself—he showed it me.

Yet all this harshness and indefiniteness were nothing compared with his chief anxiety. That anxiety tormented him to the utmost and without ceasing. He grew thin and dispirited through it. It was something of which he was more ashamed than of anything else, and of which he would not on any account speak, even to me; on the contrary, he lied on occasion, and shuffled before me like a little boy; and at the same time he sent for me himself every day, could not stay two hours without me, needing me as much as air or water.

Such conduct rather wounded my vanity. I need hardly say that I had long ago privately guessed this great secret of his, and saw through it completely. It was my firmest conviction at the time that the revelation of this secret, this chief anxiety of Stepan Trofimovitch's would not have redounded to his credit, and, therefore, as I was still young, I was rather indignant at the coarseness of his feelings and the ugliness of some of his suspicions. In my warmth—and, I must confess, in my weariness of being his confidant—I perhaps blamed him too much. I was so cruel as to try and force him to confess it all to me himself, though I did recognise that it might be difficult to confess some things. He, too, saw through me; that is, he clearly perceived that I saw through

him, and that I was angry with him indeed, and he was angry with me too for being angry with him and seeing through him. My irritation was perhaps petty and stupid; but the unrelieved solitude of two friends together is sometimes extremely prejudicial to true friendship. From a certain point of view he had a very true understanding of some aspects of his position, and defined it, indeed, very subtly on those points about which he did not think it necessary to be secret.

“Oh, how different she was then!” he would sometimes say to me about Varvara Petrovna. “How different she was in the old days when we used to talk together... . Do you know that she could talk in those days! Can you believe that she had ideas in those days, original ideas! Now, everything has changed! She says all that’s only old-fashioned twaddle. She despises the past... . Now she’s like some shopman or cashier, she has grown hard-hearted, and she’s always cross... .”

“Why is she cross now if you are carrying out her ‘orders’?” I answered.

He looked at me subtly.

“Cher ami; if I had not agreed she would have been dreadfully angry, dread-ful-ly! But yet less than now that I have consented.”

He was pleased with this saying of his, and we emptied a bottle between us that evening. But that was only for a moment, next day he was worse and more ill-humoured than ever.

But what I was most vexed with him for was that he could not bring himself to call on the Drozdovs, as he should have done on their arrival, to renew the acquaintance of which, so we heard they were themselves desirous, since they kept asking about him. It was a source of daily distress to him. He talked of Lizaveta Nikolaevna with an ecstasy which I was at a loss to understand. No doubt he remembered in her the child whom he had once loved. But besides that, he imagined for some unknown reason that he would at once find in her company a solace for his present misery, and even the solution of his more serious doubts. He expected to meet in Lizaveta Nikolaevna an extraordinary being. And yet he did not go to see her though he meant to do so every day. The worst of it was that I was desperately anxious to be presented to her and to make her acquaintance, and I could look to no one but Stepan Trofimovitch to effect this. I was frequently meeting her, in the street of course, when she was out riding, wearing a riding-habit and mounted on a fine horse, and accompanied by her cousin, so-called, a handsome officer, the nephew of the late General Drozdov—and these meetings made an extraordinary impression on me at the time. My infatuation lasted only a moment, and I very soon afterwards recognised the impossibility of my dreams myself—but though it was a fleeting impression it was a very real one, and so it may well be imagined how indignant I was at the time with my poor friend for keeping so obstinately secluded.

All the members of our circle had been officially informed from the beginning that Stepan Trofimovitch would see nobody for a time, and begged them to leave him quite alone. He insisted on sending round a circular notice to this effect, though I tried to

dissuade him. I went round to every one at his request and told everybody that Varvara Petrovna had given “our old man” (as we all used to call Stepan Trofimovitch among ourselves) a special job, to arrange in order some correspondence lasting over many years; that he had shut himself up to do it and I was helping him. Liputin was the only one I did not have time to visit, and I kept putting it off—to tell the real truth I was afraid to go to him. I knew beforehand that he would not believe one word of my story, that he would certainly imagine that there was some secret at the bottom of it, which they were trying to hide from him alone, and as soon as I left him he would set to work to make inquiries and gossip all over the town. While I was picturing all this to myself I happened to run across him in the street. It turned out that he had heard all about it from our friends, whom I had only just informed. But, strange to say, instead of being inquisitive and asking questions about Stepan Trofimovitch, he interrupted me, when I began apologising for not having come to him before, and at once passed to other subjects. It is true that he had a great deal stored up to tell me. He was in a state of great excitement, and was delighted to have got hold of me for a listener. He began talking of the news of the town, of the arrival of the governor’s wife, “with new! topics of conversation,” of an opposition party already formed in the club, of how they were all in a hubbub over the new ideas, and how charmingly this suited him, and so on. He talked for a quarter of an hour and so amusingly that I could not tear myself away. Though I could not endure him, yet I must admit he had the gift of making one listen to him, especially when he was very angry at something. This man was, in my opinion, a regular spy from his very nature. At every moment he knew the very latest gossip and all the trifling incidents of our town, especially the unpleasant ones, and it was surprising to me how he took things to heart that were sometimes absolutely no concern of his. It always seemed to me that the leading feature of his character was envy. When I told Stepan Trofimovitch the same evening of my meeting Liputin that morning and our conversation, the latter to my amazement became greatly agitated, and asked me the wild question: “Does Liputin know or not?”

I began trying to prove that there was no possibility of his finding it out so soon, and that there was nobody from whom he could hear it. But Stepan Trofimovitch was not to be shaken. “Well, you may believe it or not,” he concluded unexpectedly at last, “but I’m convinced that he not only knows every detail of ‘our’ position, but that he knows something else besides, something neither you nor I know yet, and perhaps never shall, or shall only know when it’s too late, when there’s no turning back! ...”

I said nothing, but these words suggested a great deal. For five whole days after that we did not say one word about Liputin; it was clear to me that Stepan Trofimovitch greatly regretted having let his tongue run away with him, and having revealed such suspicions before me.

2

One morning, on the seventh or eighth day after Stepan Trofimovitch had consented to become “engaged,” about eleven o’clock, when I was hurrying as usual to my afflicted friend, I had an adventure on the way.

I met Karmazinov, “the great writer,” as Liputin called him. I had read Karmazinov from a child. His novels and tales were well known to the past and even to the present generation. I revelled in them; they were the great enjoyment of my childhood and youth. Afterwards I grew rather less enthusiastic over his work. I did not care so much for the novels with a purpose which he had been writing of late as for his first, early works, which were so full of spontaneous poetry, and his latest publications I had not . liked at all. Speaking generally, if I may venture to express my opinion on so delicate a subject, all these talented gentlemen of the middling sort who are sometimes in their lifetime accepted almost as geniuses, pass out of memory quite suddenly and without a trace when they die, and what’s more, it often happens that even during their lifetime, as soon as a new generation grows up and takes the place of the one in which they have flourished, they are forgotten and neglected by every one in an incredibly short time. This somehow happens among us quite suddenly, like the shifting of the scenes on the stage. Oh, it’s not at all the same as with Pushkin, Gogol, Moliere, Voltaire, all those great men who really had a new original word to say! It’s true, too, that these talented gentlemen of the middling sort in the decline of their venerable years usually write themselves out in the most pitiful way, though they don’t observe the fact themselves. It happens not infrequently that a writer who has been for a long time credited with extraordinary profundity and expected to exercise a great and serious influence on the progress of society, betrays in the end such poverty, such insipidity in his fundamental ideas that no one regrets that he succeeded in writing himself out so soon. But the old grey-beards don’t notice this, and are angry. Their vanity sometimes, especially towards the end of their career, reaches proportions that may well provoke wonder. God knows what they begin to take themselves for—for gods at least! People used to say about Karmazinov that his connections with aristocratic society and powerful personages were dearer to him than his own soul, people used to say that on meeting you he would be cordial, that he would fascinate and enchant you with his open-heartedness, especially if you were of use to him in some way, and if you came to him with some preliminary recommendation. But that before any stray prince, any stray countess, anyone that he was afraid of, he would regard it as his sacred duty to forget your existence with the most insulting carelessness, like a chip of wood, like a fly, before you had even time to get out of his sight; he seriously considered this the best and most aristocratic style. In spite of the best of breeding and perfect knowledge of good manners he is, they say, vain to such an hysterical pitch that he cannot conceal his irritability as an author even in those circles of society where little interest is taken in literature. If anyone were to surprise him by being indifferent, he would be morbidly chagrined, and try to revenge himself.

A year before, I had read an article of his in a review, written with an immense affectation of naive poetry, and psychology too. He described the wreck of some steamer on the English coast, of which he had been the witness, and how he had seen the drowning people saved, and the dead bodies brought ashore. All this rather long and verbose article was written solely with the object of self-display. One seemed to read between the lines: "Concentrate yourselves on me. Behold what I was like at those moments. What are the sea, the storm, the rocks, the splinters of wrecked ships to you? I have described all that sufficiently to you with my mighty pen. Why look at that drowned woman with the dead child in her dead arms? Look rather at me, see how I was unable to bear that sight and turned away from it. Here I stood with my back to it; here I was horrified and could not bring myself to look; I blinked my eyes— isn't that interesting?" When I told Stepan Trofimovitch my opinion of Karmazinov's article he quite agreed with me.

When rumours had reached us of late that Karmazinov was coming to the neighbourhood I was, of course, very eager to see him, and, if possible, to make his acquaintance. I knew that this might be done through Stepan Trofimovitch, they had once been friends. And now I suddenly met him at the cross-roads. I knew him at once. He had been pointed out to me two or three days before when he drove past with the governor's wife. He was a short, stiff-looking old man, though not over fifty-five, with a rather red little face, with thick grey locks of hair clustering under his chimney-pot hat, and curling round his clean little pink ears. His clean little face was not altogether handsome with its thin, long, crafty-looking lips, with its rather fleshy nose, and its sharp, shrewd little eyes. He was dressed somewhat shabbily in a sort of cape such as would be worn in Switzerland or North Italy at that time of year. But, at any rate, all the minor details of his costume, the little studs, and collar, the buttons, the tortoise-shell lorgnette on a narrow black ribbon, the signet-ring, were all such as are worn by persons of the most irreproachable good form. I am certain that in summer he must have worn light prunella shoes with mother-of-pearl buttons at the side. When we met he was standing still at the turning and looking about him, attentively. Noticing that I was looking at him with interest, he asked me in a sugary, though rather shrill voice:

"Allow me to ask, which is my nearest way to Bykovy Street?"

"To Bykovy Street? Oh, that's here, close by," I cried in great excitement. "Straight on along this street and the second turning to the left."

"Very much obliged to you."

A curse on that minute! I fancy I was shy, and looked cringing. He instantly noticed all that, and of course realised it all at once; that is, realised that I knew who he was, that I had read him and revered him from a child, and that I was shy and looked at him cringingly. He smiled, nodded again, and walked on as I had directed him. I don't know why I turned back to follow him; I don't know why I ran for ten paces beside him. He suddenly stood still again.

"And could you tell me where is- the nearest cab-stand?" he shouted out to me again.

It was a horrid shout! A horrid voice!

“A cab-stand? The nearest cab-stand is ... by the Cathedral; there are always cabs standing there,” and I almost turned to run for a cab for him. I almost believe that that was what he expected me to do. Of course I checked myself at once, and stood still, but he had noticed my movement and was still watching me with the same horrid smile. Then something happened which I shall never forget.

He suddenly dropped a tiny bag, which he was holding in his left hand; though indeed it was not a bag, but rather a little box, or more probably some part of a pocket-book, or to be more accurate a little reticule, rather like an old-fashioned lady’s reticule, though I really don’t know what it was. I only know that I flew to pick it up.

I am convinced that I did not really pick it up, but my first motion was unmistakable. I could not conceal it, and, like a fool, I turned crimson. The cunning fellow at once got all that could be got out of the circumstance.

“Don’t trouble, I’ll pick it up,” he pronounced charmingly; that is, when he was quite sure that I was not going to pick up the reticule, he picked it up as though forestalling me, nodded once more, and went his way, leaving me to look like a fool. It was as good as though I had picked it up myself. For five minutes I considered myself utterly disgraced for ever, but as I reached Stepan Trofimovitch’s house I suddenly burst out laughing; the meeting struck me as so amusing that I immediately resolved to entertain Stepan Trofimovitch with an account of it, and even to act the whole scene to him.

3

But this time to my surprise I found an extraordinary change in him. He pounced on me with a sort of avidity, it is true, as soon as I went in, and began listening to me, but with such a distracted air that at first he evidently did not take in my words. But as soon as I pronounced the name of Karmazinov he suddenly flew into a frenzy.

“Don’t speak of him! Don’t pronounce that name!” he exclaimed, almost in a fury. “Here, look, read it! Read it!”

He opened the drawer and threw on the table three small sheets of paper, covered with a hurried pencil scrawl, all from Varvara Petrovna. The first letter was dated the day before yesterday, the second had come yesterday, and the last that day, an hour before. Their contents were quite trivial, and all referred to Karmazinov and betrayed the vain and fussy uneasiness of Varvara Petrovna and her apprehension that Karmazinov might forget to pay her a visit. Here is the first one dating from two days before. (Probably there had been one also three days before, and possibly another four days before as well.)

“If he deigns to visit you to-day, not a word about me, I beg. Not the faintest hint. Don’t speak of me, don’t mention me.—V. S.”

The letter of the day before:

“If he decides to pay you a visit this morning, I think the most dignified thing would be not to receive him. That’s what I think about it; I don’t know what you think.—V. S.”

To-day’s, the last:

“I feel sure that you’re in a regular litter and clouds of tobacco smoke. I’m sending you Marya and Fomushka. They’ll tidy you up in half an hour. And don’t hinder them, but go and sit in the kitchen while they clear up. I’m sending you a Bokhara rug and two china vases. I’ve long been meaning to make you a present of them, and I’m sending you my Teniers, too, for a time.! You can put the vases in the window and hang the Teniers on the right under the portrait of Goethe; it will be more conspicuous there and it’s always light there in the morning. If he does turn up at last, receive him with the utmost courtesy but try and talk of trifling matters, of some intellectual subject, and behave as though you had seen each other lately. Not a word about me. Perhaps I may look in on you in the evening.—V. S.

“P.S.—If he does not come to-day he won’t come at all.”

I read and was amazed that he was in such excitement over such trifles. Looking at him inquiringly, I noticed that he had had time while I was reading to change the everlasting white tie he always wore, for a red one. His hat and stick lay on the table. He was pale, and his hands were positively trembling.

“I don’t care a hang about her anxieties,” he cried frantically, in response to my inquiring look. “Je m’en fiche! She has the face to be excited about Karmazinov, and she does not answer my letters. Here is my unopened letter which she sent me back yesterday, here on the table under the book, under L’Homme qui rit. What is it to me that she’s wearing herself out over Nikolay! Je m’en fiche, et je proclame ma liberte! Au diable le Karmazinov! Au diable la Lembke! I’ve hidden the vases in the entry, and the Teniers in the chest of drawers, and I have demanded that she is to see me at once. Do you hear. I’ve insisted! I’ve sent her just such a scrap of paper, a pencil scrawl, unsealed, by Nastasya, and I’m waiting. I want Darya Pavlovna to speak to me with her own lips, before the face of Heaven, or at least before you. Vous me seconderez, n’est-ce pas, comme ami et timoin. I don’t want to have to blush, to lie, I don’t want secrets, I won’t have secrets in this matter. Let them confess everything to me openly, frankly, honourably and then ... then perhaps I may surprise the whole generation by my magnanimity... . Am I a scoundrel or not, my dear sir?” he concluded suddenly, looking menacingly at me, as though I’d considered him a scoundrel.

I offered him a sip of water; I had never seen him like this before. All the while he was talking he kept running from one end of the room to the other, but he suddenly stood still before me in an extraordinary attitude.

“Can you suppose,” he began again with hysterical haughtiness, looking me up and down, “can you imagine that I, Stepan Verhovensky, cannot find in myself the moral strength to take my bag—my beggar’s bag—and laying it on my feeble shoulders to go out at the gate and vanish for ever, when honour and the great principle of independence demand it I It’s not the first time that Stepan Verhovensky has had to

repel despotism by moral force, even though it be the despotism of a crazy woman, that is, the most cruel and insulting despotism which can exist on earth, although you have, I fancy, forgotten yourself so much as to laugh at my phrase, my dear sir! Oh, you don't believe that I can find the moral strength in myself to end my life as a tutor in a merchant's family, or to die of hunger in a ditch! Answer me, answer at once; do you believe it, or don't you believe it?"

But I was purposely silent. I even affected to hesitate to wound him by answering in the negative, but to be unable to answer affirmatively. In all this nervous excitement of his there was something which really did offend me, and not personally, oh, no! But ... I will explain later on. He positively turned pale.

"Perhaps you are bored with me, G——v (this is my surname), and you would like ... not to come and see me at all?" he said in that tone of pale composure which usually precedes some extraordinary outburst. I jumped up in alarm. At that moment Nastasya came in, and, without a word, handed Stepan Trofimovitch a piece of paper, on which something was written in pencil. He glanced at it and flung it to me. On the paper, in Varvara Petrovna's hand three words were written: "Stay at home."

Stepan Trofimovitch snatched up his hat and stick in silence and went quickly out of the room. Mechanically I followed him. Suddenly voices and sounds of rapid footsteps were heard in the passage. He stood still, as though thunder-struck.

"It's Liputin; I am lost!" he whispered, clutching at my arm.

At the same instant Liputin walked into the room.

4

Why he should be lost owing to Liputin I did not know, and indeed I did not attach much significance to the words; I put it all down to his nerves. His terror, however, was remarkable, and I made up my mind to keep a careful watch on him.

The very appearance of Liputin as he came in assured us that he had on this occasion a special right to come in, in spite of the prohibition. He brought with him an unknown gentleman, who must have been a new arrival in the town. In reply to the senseless stare of my petrified friend, he called out immediately in a loud voice:

"I'm bringing you a visitor, a special one! I make bold to intrude on your solitude. Mr. Kirillov, a very distinguished civil engineer. And what's more he knows your son, the much esteemed Pyotr Stepanovitch, very intimately; and he has a message from him. He's only just arrived."

"The message is your own addition," the visitor observed curtly. "There's no message at all. But I certainly do know Verhovensky. I left him in the X. province, ten days ahead of us."

Stepan Trofimovitch mechanically offered his hand and motioned him to sit down. He looked at me* he looked at Liputin, and then as though suddenly recollecting

himself sat down himself, though he still kept his hat and stick in his hands without being aware of it.

“Bah, but you were going out yourself! I was told that you were quite knocked up with work.”

“Yes, I’m ill, and you see, I meant to go for a walk, I ...” Stepan Trofimovitch checked himself, quickly flung his hat and stick on the sofa and—turned crimson.

Meantime, I was hurriedly examining the visitor. He was a young man, about twenty-seven, decently dressed, well made, slender and dark, with a pale, rather muddy-coloured face and black lustreless eyes. He seemed rather thoughtful and absent-minded, spoke jerkily and ungrammatically, transposing words in rather a strange way, and getting muddled if he attempted a sentence of any length. Liputin was perfectly aware of Stepan Trofimovitch’s alarm, and was obviously pleased at it. He sat down in a wicker chair which he dragged almost into the middle of the room, so as to be at an equal distance between his host and the visitor, who had installed themselves on sofas on opposite sides of the room. His sharp eyes darted inquisitively from one corner of the room to another.

“It’s a long while since I’ve seen Petrusha... . You met abroad?” Stepan Trofimovitch managed to mutter to the visitor.

“Both here and abroad.”

“Alexey Nilitch has only just returned himself after living four years abroad,” put in Liputin. “He has been travelling to perfect himself in his speciality and has come to us because he has good reasons to expect a job on the building of our railway bridge, and he’s now waiting for an answer about it. He knows the Drozdovs and Lizaveta Nikolaevna, through Pyotr Stepanovitch.”

The engineer sat, as it were, with a ruffled air, and listened with awkward impatience. It seemed to me that he was angry about something.

“He knows Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch too.”

“Do you know Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch?” inquired Stepan Trofimovitch.

“I know him too.”

“It’s ... it’s a very long time since I’ve seen Petrusha, and ... I feel I have so little right to call myself a father ... c’est le mot; I ... how did you leave him?”

“Oh, yes, I left him ... he comes himself,” replied Mr. Kirillov, in haste to be rid of the question again. He certainly was angry.

“He’s coming! At last I ... you see, it’s very long since I’ve see Petrusha!” Stepan Trofimovitch could not get away from this phrase. “Now I expect my poor boy to whom ... to whom I have been so much to blame! That is, I mean to say, when I left him in Petersburg, I ... in short, I looked on him as a nonentity, quelque chose dans ce genre. He was a very nervous boy, you know, emotional, and ... very timid. When he said his prayers going to bed he used to bow down to the ground, and make the sign of the cross on his pillow that he might not die in the night... . Je m’en souviens. Enfin, no artistic feeling whatever, not a sign of anything higher, of anything fundamental, no

embryo of a future ideal ... c'était comma un petit idiot, but I'm afraid I am incoherent; excuse me ... you came upon me ..."

"You say seriously that he crossed his pillow?" the engineer asked suddenly with marked curiosity.

"Yes, he used to ..."

"All right. I just asked. Go on."

Stepan Trofimovitch looked interrogatively at Liputin.

"I'm very grateful to you for your visit. But I must confess I'm ... not in a condition ... just now ... But allow me to ask where you are lodging."

"At Filipov's, in Bogoyavlensky Street."

"Ach, that's where Shatov lives," I observed involuntarily.

"Just so, in the very same house," cried Liputin, "only Shatov lodges above, in the attic, while he's down below, at Captain Lebyadkin's. He knows Shatov too, and he knows Shatov's wife. He was very intimate with her, abroad."

"Comment! Do you really know anything about that unhappy marriage de ce pauvre ami and that woman," cried Stepan Trofimovitch, carried away by sudden feeling. "You are the first man I've met who has known her personally; and if only ..."

"What nonsense!" the engineer snapped out, flushing all over. "How you add to things, Liputin! I've not seen Shatov's wife; I've only once seen her in the distance and not at all close... I know Shatov. Why do you add things of all sorts?"

He turned round sharply on the sofa, clutched his hat, then laid it down again, and settling himself down once more as before, fixed his angry black eyes on Stepan Trofimovitch with a sort of defiance. I was at a loss to understand such strange irritability.

"Excuse me," Stepan Trofimovitch observed impressively. "I understand that it may be a very delicate subject. ..."—

"No sort of delicate subject in it, and indeed it's shameful, and I didn't shout at you that it's nonsense, but at Liputin, because he adds things. Excuse me if you took it to yourself. I know Shatov, but I don't know his wife at all ... I don't know her at all!"

"I understand. I understand. And if I insisted, it's only because I'm very fond of our poor friend, noire irascible ami, and have always taken an interest in him. ... In my opinion that man changed his former, possibly over-youthful but yet sound ideas, too abruptly. And now he says all sorts of things about notre Sainte Russie to such a degree that I've long explained this upheaval in his whole constitution, I can only call it that, to some violent shock in his family life, and, in fact, to his unsuccessful marriage. I, who know my poor Russia like the fingers on my hand, and have devoted my whole life to the Russian people, I can assure you that he does not know the Russian people, and what's more ..."

"I don't know the Russian people at all, either, and I haven't time to study them," the engineer snapped out again, and again he turned sharply on the sofa. Stepan Trofimovitch was pulled up in the middle of his speech.

“He is studying them, he is studying them,” interposed Liputin. “He has already begun the study of them, and is writing a very interesting article dealing with the causes of the increase of suicide in Russia, and, generally speaking, the causes that lead to the increase or decrease of suicide in society. He has reached amazing results.”

The engineer became dreadfully excited. “You have no right at all,” he muttered wrathfully. “I’m not writing an article. I’m not going to do silly things. I asked you confidentially, quite by chance. There’s no article at all. I’m not publishing, and you haven’t the right ...” Liputin was obviously enjoying himself.

“I beg your pardon, perhaps I made a mistake in calling your literary work an article. He is only collecting observations, and the essence of the question, or, so to say, its moral aspect he is not touching at all. And, indeed, he rejects morality itself altogether, and holds with the last new principle of general destruction for the sake of ultimate good. He demands already more than a hundred million heads for the establishment of common sense in Europe; many more than they demanded at the last Peace Congress. Alexey Nilitch goes further than anyone in that sense.” The engineer listened with a pale and contemptuous smile. For half a minute every one was silent.

“All this is stupid, Liputin,” Mr. Kirillov observed at last, with a certain dignity. “If I by chance had said some things to you, and you caught them up again, as you like. But you have no right, for I never speak to anyone. I scorn to talk... . If one has a conviction then it’s clear to me... . But you’re doing foolishly. I don’t argue about things when everything’s settled. I can’t bear arguing. I never want to argue... .”

“And perhaps you are very wise,” Stepan Trofimovitch could not resist saying.

“I apologise to you, but I am not angry with anyone here,” the visitor went on, speaking hotly and rapidly. “I have seen few people for four years. For four years I have talked little and have tried to see no one, for my own objects which do not concern anyone else, for four years. Liputin found this out and is laughing. I understand and don’t mind. I’m not ready to take offence, only annoyed at his liberty. And if I don’t explain my ideas to you,” he concluded unexpectedly, scanning us all with resolute eyes, “it’s not at all that I’m afraid of your giving information to the government; that’s not so; please do not imagine nonsense of that sort.”

No one made any reply to these words. We only looked at each other. Even Liputin forgot to snigger.

“Gentlemen, I’m very sorry”—Stepan Trofimovitch got up resolutely from the sofa—“but I feel ill and upset. Excuse me.”

“Ach, that’s for us to go.” Mr. Kirillov started, snatching up his cap. “It’s a good thing you told us. I’m so forgetful.”

He rose, and with a good-natured air went up to Stepan Trofimovitch, holding out his hand.

“I’m sorry you’re not well, and I came,”

“I wish you every success among us,” answered Stepan Trofimovitch, shaking hands with him heartily and without haste. “I understand that, if as you say you have lived so long abroad, cutting yourself off from people for objects of your own and forgetting

Russia, you must inevitably look with wonder on us who are Russians to the backbone, and we must feel the same about you. Mais cela passera. I'm only puzzled at one thing: you want to build our bridge and at the same time you declare that you hold with the principle of universal destruction. They won't let you build our bridge."

"What! What's that you said? Ach, I say!" Kirillov cried, much struck, and he suddenly broke into the most frank and good-humoured laughter. For a moment his face took a quite childlike expression, which I thought suited him particularly. Liputin rubbed his hand with delight at Stepan Trofimovitch's witty remark. I kept wondering to myself why Stepan Trofimovitch was so frightened of Liputin, and why he had cried out "I am lost" when he heard him coming. We were all standing in the doorway. It was the moment when hosts and guests hurriedly exchange the last and most cordial words, and then part to their mutual gratification.

"The reason he's so cross to-day," Liputin dropped all at once, as it were casually, when he was just going out of the room, "is because he had a disturbance to-day with Captain Lebyadkin over his sister. Captain Lebyadkin thrashes that precious sister of his, the mad girl, every day with a whip, a real Cossack whip, every morning and evening. So Alexey Nilibch has positively taken the lodge so as not to be present. Well, good-bye."

"A sister? An invalid? With a whip?" Stepan Trofimovitch cried out, as though he had suddenly been lashed with a whip himself. "What sister? What Lebyadkin?" All his former terror came back in an instant. "Lebyadkin! Oh, that's the retired captain; he used only to call himself a lieutenant before. ..."

"Oh, what is his rank to me? What sister? Good heavens! ... You say Lebyadkin? But there used to be a Lebyadkin here... ."

"That's the very man. 'Our' Lebyadkin, at Virginsky's, you remember?"

"But he was caught with forged papers?"

"Well, now he's come back. He's been here almost three weeks and under the most peculiar circumstances."

"Why, but he's a scoundrel?"

"As though no one could be a scoundrel among us," Liputin grinned suddenly, his knavish little eyes seeming to peer into Stepan Trofimovitch's soul.

"Good heavens! I didn't mean that at all ... though I quite agree with you about that, with you particularly. But what then, what then? What did you mean by that? You certainly meant something by that."

"Why, it's all so trivial... . This captain to all appearances went away from us at that time; not because of the forged papers, but simply to look for his sister, who was in hiding from him somewhere, it seems; well, and now he's brought her and that's the whole story. Why do you seem frightened, Stepan Trofimovitch? I only tell this from his drunken chatter though, he doesn't speak of it himself when he's sober. He's an irritable man, and, so to speak, aesthetic in a military style; only he has bad taste. And this sister is lame as well as mad. She seems to have been seduced by some one, and Mr. Lebyadkin has, it seems, for many years received a yearly grant from the seducer

by way of compensation for the wound to his honour, so it would seem at least from his chatter, though I believe it's only drunken talk. It's simply his brag. Besides, that sort of thing is done much cheaper. But that he has a sum of money is perfectly certain. Ten days ago he was walking barefoot, and now I've seen hundreds in his hands. His sister has fits of some sort every day, she shrieks and he 'keeps her in order' with the whip. You must inspire a woman with respect, he says. What I can't understand is how Shatov goes on living above him. Alexey Nilitch has only been three days with them. They were acquainted in Petersburg, and now he's taken the lodge to get away from the disturbance."

"Is this all true?" said Stepan Trofimovitch, addressing the engineer.

"You do gossip a lot, Liputin," the latter muttered wrathfully.

"Mysteries, secrets! Where have all these mysteries and secrets among us sprung from?" Stepan Trofimovitch could not refrain from exclaiming.

The engineer frowned, flushed red, shrugged his shoulders and went out of the room.

"Alexey Nilitch positively snatched the whip out of his hand, broke it and threw it out of the window, and they had a violent quarrel," added Liputin.

"Why are you chattering, Liputin; it's stupid. What for?" Alexey Nilitch turned again instantly.

"Why be so modest and conceal the generous impulses of one's soul; that is, of your soul? I'm not speaking of my own."

"How stupid it is ... and quite unnecessary. Lebyadkin's stupid and quite worthless—and no use to the cause, and ... utterly mischievous. Why do you keep babbling all sorts of things? I'm going."

"Oh, what a pity!" cried Liputin with a candid smile, "or I'd have amused you with another little story, Stepan Trofimovitch. I came, indeed, on purpose to tell you, though I dare say you've heard it already. Well, till another time, Alexey Nilitch is in such a hurry. Good-bye for the present. The story concerns Varvara Petrovna. She amused me the day before yesterday; she sent for me on purpose. It's simply killing. Good-bye."

But at this Stepan Trofimovitch absolutely would not let him go. He seized him by the shoulders, turned him sharply back into the room, and sat him down in a chair. Liputin was positively scared.

"Why, to be sure," he began, looking warily at Stepan Trofimovitch from his chair, "she suddenly sent for me and asked me 'confidentially' my private opinion, whether Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is mad or in his right mind. Isn't that astonishing?"

"You're out of your mind!" muttered Stepan Trofimovitch, and suddenly, as though he were beside himself: "Liputin, you know perfectly well that you only came here to tell me something insulting of that sort and ... something worse!"

In a flash, I recalled his conjecture that Liputin knew not only more than we did about our affair, but something else which we should never know.

"Upon my word, Stepan Trofimovitch," muttered Liputin, seeming greatly alarmed, "upon my word ..."

“Hold your tongue and begin! I beg you, Mr. Kirillov, to come back too, and be present. I earnestly beg you! Sit down, and you, Liputin, begin directly, simply and without any excuses.”

“If I had only known it would upset you so much I wouldn’t have begun at all. And of course I thought you knew all about it from Varvara Petrovna herself.”

“You didn’t think that at all. Begin, begin, I tell you.”

“Only do me the favour to sit down yourself, or how can I sit here when you are running about before me in such excitement. I can’t speak coherently.”

Stepan Trofimovitch restrained himself and sank impressively into an easy chair. The engineer stared gloomily at the floor. Liputin looked at them with intense enjoyment, “How am I to begin? ... I’m too overwhelmed... .”

5

The day before yesterday a servant was suddenly sent to me: ‘You are asked to call at twelve o’clock,’ said he. Can you fancy such a thing? I threw aside my work, and precisely at midday yesterday I was ringing at the bell. I was let into the drawing room; I waited a minute—she came in; she made me sit down and sat down herself, opposite. I sat down, and I couldn’t believe it; you know how she has always treated me. She began at once without beating about the bush, you know her way. ‘You remember,’ she said, ‘that four years ago when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was ill he did some strange things which made all the town wonder till the position was explained. One of those actions concerned you personally. When Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch recovered he went at my request to call on you. I know that he talked to you several times before, too. Tell me openly and candidly what you ... (she faltered a little at this point) what you thought of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch then ... what was your view of him altogether ... what idea you were able to form of him at that time ... and, still have?’

“Here she was completely confused, so that she paused for a whole minute, and suddenly flushed. I was alarmed. She began again—touchingly is not quite the word, it’s not applicable to her—but in a very impressive tone:

“‘I want you,’ she said, ‘to understand me clearly and without mistake. I’ve sent for you now because I look upon you as a keen-sighted and quick-witted man, qualified to make accurate observations.’ (What compliments!) ‘You’ll understand too,’ she said, ‘that I am a mother appealing to you... . Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has suffered some calamities and has passed through many changes of fortune in his life. All that,’ she said, ‘might well have affected the state of his mind. I’m not speaking of madness, of course,’ she said, ‘that’s quite out of the question!’ (This was uttered proudly and resolutely.) ‘But there might be something strange, something peculiar, some turn of thought, a tendency to some particular way of looking at things.’ (Those were her exact words, and I admired, Stepan Trofimovitch, the exactness with which Varvara Petrovna can put things. She’s a lady of superior intellect!) ‘I have noticed in him, anyway,’ she said, ‘a perpetual restlessness and a tendency to peculiar impulses. But

I am a mother and you are an impartial spectator, and therefore qualified with your intelligence to form a more impartial opinion. I implore you, in fact' (yes, that word, 'implore' was uttered!), 'to tell me the whole truth, without mincing matters. And if you will give me your word never to forget that I have spoken to you in confidence, you may reckon upon my always being ready to seize every opportunity in the future to show my gratitude.' Well, what do you say to that?"

"You have ... so amazed me ..." faltered Stepan Trofimovitch, "that I don't believe you."

"Yes, observe, observe," cried Liputin, as though he had not heard Stepan Trofimovitch, "observe what must be her agitation and uneasiness if she stoops from her grandeur to appeal to a man like me, and even condescends to beg me to keep it secret. What do you call that? Hasn't she received some news of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, something unexpected?"

"I don't know ... of news of any sort ... I haven't seen her for some days, but ... but I must say ..." lisped Stepan Trofimovitch, evidently hardly able to think clearly, "but I must say, Liputin, that if it was said to you in confidence, and here you're telling it before every one ..."

"Absolutely in confidence! But God strike me dead if I ... But as for telling it here ... what does it matter I Are we strangers, even Alexey Nilitch?"

"I don't share that attitude. No doubt we three here will keep the secret, but I'm afraid of the fourth, you, and wouldn't trust you in anything. ..."

"What do you mean by that? Why it's more to my interest than anyone's, seeing I was promised eternal gratitude! What I wanted was to point out in this connection one extremely strange incident, rather to say, psychological than simply strange. Yesterday evening, under the influence of my conversation with Varvara Petrovna—you can fancy yourself what an impression it made on me—I approached Alexey Nilitch with a discreet question: 'You knew Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch abroad,' said I, 'and used to know him before in Petersburg too. What do you think of his mind and his abilities?' said I. He answered laconically, as his way is, that he was a man of subtle intellect and sound judgment. 'And have you never noticed in the course of years,' said I, 'any turn of ideas or peculiar way of looking at things, or any, so to say, insanity?' In fact, I repeated Varvara Petrovna's own question. And would you believe it, Alexey Nilitch suddenly grew thoughtful, and scowled, just as he's doing now. 'Yes,' said he, 'I have sometimes thought there was something strange.' Take note, too, that if anything could have seemed strange even to Alexey Nilitch, it must really have been something, mustn't it?"

"Is that true?" said Stepan Trofimovitch, turning to Alexey Nilitch.

"I should prefer not to speak of it," answered Alexey Nilitch, suddenly raising his head, and looking at him with flashing eyes. "I wish to contest your right to do this, Liputin. You've no right to drag me into this. I did not give my whole opinion at all. Though I knew Nikolay Stavrogin in Petersburg that was long ago, and though I've

met him since I know him very little. I beg you to leave me out and ... All this is something like scandal.”

Liputin threw up his hands with an air of oppressed innocence.

“A scandal-monger! Why not say a spy while you’re about it? It’s all very well for you, Alexey Nilitch, to criticise when you stand aloof from everything. But you wouldn’t believe it, Stepan Trofimovitch—take Captain Lebyadkin, he is stupid enough, one may say ... in fact, one’s ashamed to say how stupid he is; there is a Russian comparison, to signify the degree of it; and do you know he considers himself injured by Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, though he is full of admiration for his wit. ‘I’m amazed,’ said he, ‘at that man. He’s a subtle serpent.’ His own words. And I said to him (still under the influence of my conversation, and after I had spoken to Alexey Nilitch), ‘What do you think, captain, is your subtle serpent mad or not?’ Would you believe it, it was just as if I’d given him a sudden lash from behind. He simply leapt up from his seat. ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘... yes, only that,’ he said, ‘cannot affect ...’ ‘Affect what?’ He didn’t finish. Yes, and then he fell to thinking so bitterly, thinking so much, that his drunkenness dropped off him. We were sitting in Filipov’s restaurant. And it wasn’t till half an hour later that he suddenly struck the table with his fist. ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘maybe he’s mad, but that can’t affect it... .’ Again he didn’t say what it couldn’t affect. Of course I’m only giving you an extract of the conversation, but one can understand the sense of it. You may ask whom you like, they all have the same idea in their heads, though it never entered anyone’s head before. ‘Yes,’ they say, ‘he’s mad; he’s very clever, but perhaps he’s mad too.’ “

Stepan Trofimovitch sat pondering, and thought intently.

“And how does Lebyadkin know?”

“Do you mind inquiring about that of Alexey Nilitch, who has just called me a spy? I’m a spy, yet I don’t know, but Alexey Nilitch knows all the ins and outs of it, and holds his tongue.”

“I know nothing about it, or hardly anything,” answered the engineer with the same irritation. “You make Lebyadkin drunk to find out. You brought me here to find out and to make me say. And so you must be a spy.”

“I haven’t made him drunk yet, and he’s not worth the money either, with all his secrets. They are not worth that to me. I don’t know what they are to you. On the contrary, he is scattering the money, though twelve days ago he begged fifteen kopecks of me, and it’s he treats me to champagne, not I him. But you’ve given me an idea, and if there should be occasion I will make him drunk, just to get to the bottom of it and maybe I shall find out ... all your little secrets,” Liputin snapped back spitefully.

Stepan Trofimovitch looked in bewilderment at the two disputants. Both were giving themselves away, and what’s more, were not standing on ceremony. The thought crossed my mind that Liputin had brought this Alexey Nilitch to us with the simple object of drawing him into a conversation through a third person for purposes of his own—his favourite manoeuvre.

“Alexey Nilitch knows Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch quite well,” he went on, irritably, “only he conceals it. And as to your question about Captain Lebyadkin, he made his acquaintance before any of us did, six years ago in Petersburg, in that obscure, if one may so express it, epoch in the life of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, before he had dreamed of rejoicing our hearts by coming here. Our prince, one must conclude, surrounded himself with . rather a queer selection of acquaintances. It was at that time, it seems, that he made acquaintance with this gentleman here.”

“Take care, Liputin. I warn you, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch meant to be here soon himself, and he knows how to defend himself.”

“Why warn me? I am the first to cry out that he is a man of the most subtle and refined intelligence, and I quite reassured Varvara Petrovna yesterday on that score. ‘It’s his character,’ I said to her, ‘that I can’t answer for.’ Lebyadkin said the same thing yesterday: ‘A lot of harm has come to me from his character,’ he said. Stepan Trofimovitch, it’s all very well for you to cry out about slander and spying, and at the very time observe that you wring it all out of me, and with such immense curiosity too. Now, Varvara Petrovna went straight to the point yesterday. ‘You have had a personal interest in the business,’ she said, ‘that’s why I appeal to you.’ I should say so! What need to look for motives when I’ve swallowed a personal insult from his excellency before the whole society of the place. I should think I have grounds to be interested, not merely for the sake of gossip. He shakes hands with you one day, and next day, for no earthly reason, he returns your hospitality by slapping you on the cheeks in the face of all decent society, if the fancy takes him, out of sheer wantonness. And what’s more, the fair sex is everything for them, these butterflies and mettlesome-cocks! Grand gentlemen with little wings like the ancient cupids, lady-killing Petchorins! It’s all very well for you, Stepan Trofimovitch, a confirmed bachelor, to talk like that, stick up for his excellency and call me a slanderer. But if you married a pretty young wife—as you’re still such a fine fellow— then I dare say you’d bolt your door against our prince, and throw up barricades in your house! Why, if only that Mademoiselle Lebyadkin, who is thrashed with a whip, were not mad and bandy-legged, by Jove, I should fancy she was the victim of the passions of our general, and that it was from him that Captain Lebyadkin had suffered ‘in his family dignity,’ as he expresses it himself. Only perhaps that is inconsistent with his refined taste, though, indeed, even that’s no hindrance to him. Every berry is worth picking if only he’s in the mood for it. You talk of slander, but I’m not crying this aloud though the whole town is ringing with it; I only listen and assent. That’s not prohibited.”

“The town’s ringing with it? What’s the town ringing with?”

“That is, Captain Lebyadkin is shouting for all the town to hear, and isn’t that just the same as the market-place ringing with it? How am I to blame? I interest myself in it only among friends, for, after all, I consider myself among friends here.” He looked at us with an innocent air. “Something’s happened, only consider: they say his excellency has sent three hundred roubles from Switzerland by a most honourable young lady, and, so to say, modest orphan, whom I have the honour of knowing, to be handed

over to Captain Lebyadkin. And Lebyadkin, a little later, was told as an absolute fact also by a very honourable and therefore trustworthy person, I won't say whom, that not three hundred but a thousand roubles had been sent! ... And so, Lebyadkin keeps crying out 'the young lady has grabbed seven hundred roubles belonging to me,' and he's almost ready to call in the police; he threatens to, anyway, and he's making an uproar all over the town."

"This is vile, vile of you!" cried the engineer, leaping up suddenly from his chair.

"But I say, you are yourself the honourable person who brought word to Lebyadkin from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch that a thousand roubles were sent, not three hundred. Why, the captain told me so himself when he was drunk."

"It's ... it's an unhappy misunderstanding. Some one's made a mistake and it's led to ... It's nonsense, and it's base of you."

"But I'm ready to believe that it's nonsense, and I'm distressed at the story, for, take it as you will, a girl of an honourable reputation is implicated first over the seven hundred roubles, and secondly in unmistakable intimacy with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. For how much does it mean to his excellency to disgrace a girl of good character, or put to shame another man's wife, like that incident with me? If he comes across a generous-hearted man he'll force him to cover the sins of others under the shelter of his honourable name. That's just what I had to put up with, I'm speaking of myself... ."

"Be careful, Liputin." Stepan Trofimovitch got up from his easy chair and turned pale.

"Don't believe it, don't believe it! Somebody has made a mistake and Lebyadkin's drunk ..." exclaimed the engineer in indescribable excitement. "It will all be explained, but I can't... . And I think it's low... . And that's enough, enough!"

He ran out of the room.

"What are you about? Why, I'm going with you!" cried Liputin, startled. He jumped up and ran after Alexey Nilitch.

6

Stepan Trofimovitch stood a moment reflecting, looked at me as though he did not see me, took up his hat and stick and walked quietly out of the room. I followed him again, as before. As we went out of the gate, noticing that I was accompanying him, he said:

"Oh yes, you may serve as a witness ... de l'accident. Vous m'accompagnerez, n'est-ce pas?"

"Stepan Trofimovitch, surely you're not going there again? Think what may come of it!"

With a pitiful and distracted smile, a smile of shame and utter despair, and at the same time of a sort of strange ecstasy, he whispered to me, standing still for an instant:

"I can't marry to cover 'another man's sins'!"

These words were just what I was expecting. At last that fatal sentence that he had kept hidden from me was uttered aloud, after a whole week of shuffling and pretence. I was positively enraged.

“And you, Stepan Verhovensky, with your luminous mind, your kind heart, can harbour such a dirty, such a low idea ... and could before Liputin came!”

He looked at me, made no answer and walked on in the same direction. I did not want to be left behind. I wanted to give Varvara Petrovna my version. I could have forgiven him if he had simply with his womanish faint-heartedness believed Liputin, but now it was clear that he had thought of it all himself long before, and that Liputin had only confirmed his suspicions and poured oil on the flames. He had not hesitated to suspect the girl from the very first day, before he had any kind of grounds, even Liputin’s words, to go upon. Varvara Petrovna’s despotic behaviour he had explained to himself as due to her haste to cover up the aristocratic misdoings of her precious “Nicolas” by marrying the girl to an honourable man! I longed for him to be punished for it.

“Oh, Dieu, qui est si grand et si ban! Oh, who will comfort me!” he exclaimed, halting suddenly again, after walking a hundred paces.

“Come straight home and I’ll make everything clear to you,” I cried, turning him by force towards home.

“It’s he! Stepan Trofimovitch, it’s you? You?” A fresh, joyous young voice rang out like music behind us.

We had seen nothing, but a lady on horseback suddenly made her appearance beside us—Lizaveta Nikolaevna with her invariable companion. She pulled up her horse.

“Come here, come here quickly!” she called to us, loudly and merrily. “It’s twelve years since I’ve seen him, and I know him, while he... . Do you really not know me?”

Stepan Trofimovitch clasped the hand held out to him and kissed it reverently. He gazed at her as though he were praying and could not utter a word.

“He knows me, and is glad! Mavriky Nikolaevitch, he’s delighted to see me! Why is it you haven’t been to see us all this fortnight? Auntie tried to persuade me you were ill and must not be disturbed; but I know Auntie tells lies. I kept stamping and swearing at you, but I had made up my mind, quite made up my mind, that you should come to me first, that was why I didn’t send to you. Heavens, why he hasn’t changed a bit!” She scrutinised him, bending down from the saddle. “He’s absurdly unchanged. Oh, yes, he has wrinkles, a lot of wrinkles, round his eyes and on his cheeks some grey hair, but his eyes are just the same. And have I changed? Have I changed? Why don’t you say something?”

I remembered at that moment the story that she had been almost ill when she was taken away to Petersburg at eleven years old, and that she had cried during her illness and asked for Stepan Trofimovitch.

“You ... I ...” he faltered now in a voice breaking with joy. “I was just crying out ‘who will comfort me?’ and I heard your voice. I look on it as a miracle et je commence à croire.”

“En Dieu! En Dieu qui est la-haut et qui est si grand et si bon? You see, I know all your lectures by heart. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, what faith he used to preach to me then, en Dieu qui est si grand et si bon! And do you remember your story of how Columbus discovered America, and they all cried out, ‘Land! land!’? My nurse Alyona Frolovna says I was light-headed at night afterwards, and kept crying out ‘land! land!’ in my sleep. And do you remember how you told me the story of Prince Hamlet? And do you remember how you described to me how the poor emigrants were transported from Europe to America? And it was all untrue; I found out afterwards how they were transited. But what beautiful fibs he used to tell me then, Mavriky Nikolaevitch! They were better than the truth. Why do you look at Mavriky Nikolaevitch like that? He is the best and “best man on the face of the globe and you must like him just you do me! Il fait tout ce que je veux. But, dear Stepan Trofimovitch, you must be unhappy again, since you cry out in the middle of the street asking who will comfort you. Unhappy, aren’t you? Aren’t you?”

“Now I’m happy... .”

“Aunt is horrid to you?” she went on, without listening. “She’s just the same as ever, cross, unjust, and always our precious aunt! And do you remember how you threw yourself into my arms in the garden and I comforted you and cried— don’t be afraid of Mavriky Nikolaevitch; he has known all about you, everything, for ever so long; you can weep on his shoulder as long as you like, and he’ll stand there as long as you like! ... Lift up your hat, take it off altogether for a minute, lift up your head, stand on tiptoe, I want to kiss you on the forehead as I kissed you for the last time when we parted. Do you see that young lady’s admiring us out of the window? Come closer, closer! Heavens! How grey he is!”

And bending over in the saddle she kissed him on the forehead.

“Come, now to your home! I know where you live. I’ll be with you directly, in a minute. I’ll make you the first visit, you stubborn man, and then I must have you for a whole day at home. You can go and make ready for me.”

And she galloped off with her cavalier. We returned. Stepan Trofimovitch sat down on the sofa and began to cry.

“Dieu, Dieu.” he exclaimed, “enftn une minute de bonheur!”

Not more than ten minutes afterwards she reappeared according to her promise, escorted by her Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

“Vous et le bonheur, vous arrivez en meme temps!” He got up to meet her.

“Here’s a nosegay for you; I rode just now to Madame Chevalier’s, she has flowers all the winter for name-days. Here’s Mavriky Nikolaevitch, please make friends. I wanted to bring you a cake instead of a nosegay, but Mavriky Nikolaevitch declares that is not in the Russian spirit.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was an artillery captain, a tall and handsome man of thirty-three, irreproachably correct in appearance, with an imposing and at first sight almost stern countenance, in spite of his wonderful and delicate kindness which no one could fail to perceive almost the first moment of making his acquaintance. He was taciturn,

however, seemed very self-possessed and made no efforts to gain friends. Many of us said later that he was by no means clever; but this was not altogether just.

I won't attempt to describe the beauty of Lizaveta Nikolaevna. The whole town was talking of it, though some of our ladies and young girls indignantly differed on the subject. There were some among them who already detested her, and principally for her pride. The Drozdovs had scarcely begun to pay calls, which mortified them, though the real reason for the delay was Praskovya Ivanovna's invalid state. They detested her in the second place because she was a relative of the governor's wife, and thirdly because she rode out every day on horseback. We had never had young ladies who rode on horseback before; it was only natural that the appearance of Lizaveta Nikolaevna on horseback and her neglect to pay calls was bound to offend local society. Yet every one knew that riding was prescribed her by the doctor's orders, and they talked sarcastically of her illness. She really was ill. What struck me at first sight in her was her abnormal, nervous, incessant restlessness. Alas, the poor girl was very unhappy, and everything was explained later. To-day, recalling the past, I should not say she was such a beauty as she seemed to me then. Perhaps she was really not pretty at all. Tall, slim, but strong and supple, she struck one by the irregularities of the lines of her face. Her eyes were set somewhat like a Kalmuck's, slanting; she was pale and thin in the face with high cheek-bones, but there was something in the face that conquered and fascinated! There was something powerful in the ardent glance of her dark eyes. She always made her appearance "like a Conquering heroine, and to spread her conquests." She seemed proud and at times even arrogant. I don't know whether she succeeded in being kind, but I know that she wanted to, and made terrible efforts to force herself to be a little kind. There were, no doubt, many fine impulses and the very best elements in her character, but everything in her seemed perpetually seeking its balance and unable to find it; everything was in chaos, in agitation, in uneasiness. Perhaps the demands she made upon herself were too severe, and she was never able to find in herself the strength to satisfy them.

She sat on the sofa and looked round the room.

"Why do I always begin to feel sad at such moments; explain that mystery, you learned person? I've been thinking all my life that I should be goodness knows how pleased at seeing you and recalling everything, and here I somehow don't feel pleased at all, although I do love you... . Ach, heavens! He has my portrait on the wall! Give it here. I remember it! I remember it!"

An exquisite miniature in water-colour of Liza at twelve years old had been sent nine years before to Stepan Trofimovitch from Petersburg by the Drozdovs. He had kept it hanging on his wall ever since.

"Was I such a pretty child? Can that really have been my face?"

She stood up, and with the portrait in her hand looked in the looking-glass.

"Make haste, take it!" she cried, giving back the portrait. "Don't hang it up now, afterwards. I don't want to look at it."

She sat down on the sofa again. "One life is over and another is begun, then that one is over—a third begins, and so on, endlessly. All the ends are snipped off as it were with scissors. See what stale things I'm telling you. Yet how much truth there is in them!"

She looked at me, smiling; she had glanced at me several times already, but in his excitement Stepan Trofimovitch forgot: that he had promised to introduce me.

"And why have you hung my portrait under those daggers? And why have you got so many daggers and sabres?"

He had as a fact hanging on the wall, I don't know why, two crossed daggers and above them a genuine Circassian sabre. As she asked this question she looked so directly at me that I wanted to answer, but hesitated to speak. Stepan Trofimovitch grasped the position at last and introduced me.

"I know, I know," she said, "I'm delighted to meet you. Mother has heard a great deal about you, too. Let me introduce you to Mavriky Nikolaevitch too, he's a splendid person. I had formed a funny notion of you already. You're Stepan Trofimovitch's confidant, aren't you?"

I turned rather red.

"Ach, forgive me, please. I used quite the wrong word: not funny at all, but only ..." She was confused and blushed. "Why be ashamed though at your being a splendid person? Well, it's time we were going, Mavriky Nikolaevitch! Stepan Trofimovitch, you must be with us in half an hour. Mercy, what a lot we shall talk! Now I'm your confidante, and about everything, everything, you understand?"

Stepan Trofimovitch was alarmed at once.

"Oh, Mavriky Nikolaevitch knows everything, don't mind him!"

"What does he know?"

"Why, what do you mean?" she cried in astonishment. "Bah, why it's true then that they're hiding it! I wouldn't believe it! And they're hiding Dasha, too. Aunt wouldn't let me go in to see Dasha to-day. She says she's got a headache."

"But ... but how did you find out?"

"My goodness, like every one else. That needs no cunning!"

"But does every one else ...?"

"Why, of course. Mother, it's true, heard it first through Alyona Frolovna, my nurse; your Nastasya ran round to tell her. You told Nastasya, didn't you? She says you told her yourself."

"I ... I did once speak," Stepan Trofimovitch faltered, crimsoning all over, "but ... I only hinted ... j'etais si nerveux et malade, et puis ..."

She laughed.

"And your confidant didn't happen to be at hand, and Nastasya turned up. Well that was enough! And the whole town's full of her cronies! Come, it doesn't matter, let them know; it's all the better. Make haste and come to us, we dine early... . Oh, I forgot," she added, sitting down again; "listen, what sort of person is Shatov?"

"Shatov? He's the brother of Darya Pavlovna."

"I know he's her brother! What a person you are, really," she interrupted impatiently. "I want to know what he's like; what sort of man he is."

"C'est un pense-creux d'ici. C'est le meilleur et le plus irascible l'homme, du monde."

"I've heard that he's rather queer. But that wasn't what I meant. I've heard that he knows three languages, one of them English, and can do literary work. In that case I've a lot of work for him. I want some one to help me and the sooner the better. Would he take the work or not? He's been recommended to me. ..."

"Oh, most certainly he will. Et vous ferez un bienfait... ."

"I'm not doing it as a bienfait. I need some one to help me."

"I know Shatov pretty well," I said, "and if you will trust me with a message to him I'll go to him this minute."

"Tell him to come to me at twelve o'clock to-morrow morning. Capital! Thank you. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, are you ready?"

They went away. I ran at once, of course, to Shatov.

"Man ami!" said Stepan Trofimovitch, overtaking me on the steps. "Be sure to be at my lodging at ten or eleven o'clock when I come back. Oh, I've acted very wrongly in my conduct to you and to every one."

7

I did not find Shatov at home. I ran round again, two hours later. He was still out. At last, at eight o'clock I went to him again, meaning to leave a note if I did not find him; again I failed to find him. His lodging was shut up, and he lived alone without a servant of any sort. I did think of knocking at Captain Lebyadkin's down below to ask about Shatov; but it was all shut up below, too, and there was no sound or light as though the place were empty. I passed by Lebyadkin's door with curiosity, remembering the stories I had heard that day. Finally, I made up my mind to come very early next morning: To tell the truth I did not put much confidence in the effect of a note. Shatov might take no notice of it; he was so obstinate and shy. Cursing my want of success, I was going out of the gate when all at once I stumbled on Mr. Kirillov. He was going into the house and he recognised me first. As he began questioning me of himself, I told him how things were, and that I had a note.

"Let us go in," said he, "I will do everything."

I remembered that Liputin had told us he had taken the wooden lodge in the yard that morning. In the lodge, which was too large for him, a deaf old woman who waited upon him was living too. The owner of the house had moved into a new house in another street, where he kept a restaurant, and this old woman, a relation of his, I believe, was left behind to look after everything in the old house. The rooms in the lodge were fairly clean, though the wall-papers were dirty. In the one we went into the furniture was of different sorts, picked up here and there, and all utterly worthless. There were two card-tables, a chest of drawers made of elder, a big deal table that must have come from some peasant hut or kitchen, chairs and a sofa with trellis-work back

and hard leather cushions. In one corner there was an old-fashioned ikon, in front of which the old woman had lighted a lamp before we came in, and on the walls hung two dingy oil-paintings, one, a portrait of the Tsar Nikolas I, painted apparently between 1820 and 1830; the other the portrait of some bishop. Mr. Kirillov lighted a candle and took out of his trunk, which stood not yet unpacked in a corner, an envelope, sealing-wax, and a glass seal.

“Seal your note and address the envelope.”

I would have objected that this was unnecessary, but he insisted. When I had addressed the envelope I took my cap.

“I was thinking you’d have tea,” he said. “I have bought tea. Will you?”

I could not refuse. The old woman soon brought in the tea, that is, a very large tea-pot of boiling water, a little tea-pot full of strong tea, two large earthenware cups, coarsely decorated, a fancy loaf, and a whole deep saucer of lump sugar.

“I love tea at night,” said he. “I walk much and drink it till daybreak. Abroad tea at night is inconvenient.”

“You go to bed at daybreak?”

“Always; for a long while. I eat little; always tea. Liputin’s sly, but impatient.”

I was surprised at his wanting to talk; I made up my mind to take advantage of the opportunity. “There were unpleasant misunderstandings this morning,” I observed.

He scowled.

“That’s foolishness; that’s great nonsense. All this is nonsense because Lebyadkin is drunk. I did not tell Liputin, but only explained the nonsense, because he got it all wrong. Liputin has a great deal of fantasy, he built up a mountain out of nonsense. I trusted Liputin yesterday.”

“And me to-day?” I said, laughing.

“But you see, you knew all about it already this morning; Liputin is weak or impatient, or malicious or ... he’s envious.”

The last word struck me.

“You’ve mentioned so many adjectives, however, that it would be strange if one didn’t describe him.”

“Or all at once.”

“Yes, and that’s what Liputin really is—he’s a chaos. He was lying this morning when he said you were writing something, wasn’t he?”

“Why should he?” he said, scowling again and staring at the floor.

I apologised, and began assuring him that I was not inquisitive. He flushed.

“He told the truth; I am writing. Only that’s no matter.”

We were silent for a minute. He suddenly smiled with the childlike smile I had noticed that morning.

“He invented that about heads himself out of a book, and told me first himself, and understands badly. But I only seek the causes why men dare not kill themselves; that’s all. And it’s all no matter.”

“How do you mean they don’t dare? Are there so few suicides?”

“Very few.”

“Do you really think so?”

He made no answer, got up, and began walking to and fro lost in thought.

“What is it restrains people from suicide, do you think?” I asked.

He looked at me absent-mindedly, as though trying to remember what we were talking about.

“I ... I don’t know much yet... . Two prejudices restrain them, two things; only two, one very little, the other very big.”

“What is the little thing?”

“Pain.”

“Pain? Can that be of importance at such a moment?”

“Of the greatest. There are two sorts: those who kill themselves either from great sorrow or from spite, or being mad, or no matter what ... they do it suddenly. They think little about the pain, but kill themselves suddenly. But some do it from reason—they think a great deal.”

“Why, are there people who do it from reason?”

“Very many. If it were not for superstition there would be more, very many, all.”

“What, all?”

He did not answer.

“But aren’t there means of dying without pain?”

“Imagine”—he stopped before me—“ imagine a stone as big as a great house; it hangs and you are under it; if it falls on you, on your head, will it hurt you?”

“A stone as big as a house? Of course it would be fearful.”

“I speak not of the fear. Will it hurt?”

“A stone as big as a mountain, weighing millions of tons? Of course it wouldn’t hurt.”

“But really stand there and while it hangs you will fear very much that it will hurt. The most learned man, the greatest doctor, all, all will be very much frightened. Every one will know that it won’t hurt, and every one will be afraid that it will hurt.”

“Well, and the second cause, the big one?”

“The other world!”

“You mean punishment?”

“That’s no matter. The other world; only the other world.”

“Are there no atheists, such as don’t believe in the other world at all?”

Again he did not answer.

“You judge from yourself, perhaps.”

“Every one cannot judge except from himself,” he said, reddening. “There will be full freedom when it will be just the same to live or not to live. That’s the goal for all.”

“The goal? But perhaps no one will care to live then?”

“No one,” he pronounced with decision.

“Man fears death because he loves life. That’s how I understand it,” I observed, “and that’s determined by nature.”

“That’s abject; and that’s where the deception comes in.” His eyes flashed. “Life is pain, life is terror, and man is unhappy. Now all is pain and terror. Now man loves life, because he loves pain and terror, and so they have done according. Life is given now for pain and terror, and that’s the deception. Now man is not yet what he will be. There will be a new man, happy and proud. For whom it will be the same to live or not to live, he will be the new man. He who will conquer pain and terror will himself be a god. And this God will not be.”

“Then this God does exist according to you?”

“He does not exist, but He is. In the stone there is no pain, but in the fear of the stone is the pain. God is the pain of the fear of death. He who will conquer pain and terror will become himself a god. Then there will be a new life, a new man; everything will be new ... then they will divide history into two parts: from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and from the annihilation of God to ...”

“To the gorilla?”

“... To the transformation of the earth, and of man physically. Man will be God, and will be transformed physically, and the world will be transformed and things will be transformed and thoughts and all feelings. What do you think: will man be changed physically then?”

“If it will be just the same living or not living, all will kill themselves, and perhaps that’s what the change will be?”

“That’s no matter. They will kill deception. Every one who wants the supreme freedom must dare to kill himself. He who dares to kill himself has found out the secret of the deception. There is no freedom beyond; that is all, and there is nothing beyond. He who dares kill himself is God. Now every one can do so that there shall be no God and shall be nothing. But no one has once done it yet.”

“There have been millions of suicides.”

“But always not for that; always with terror and not for that object. Not to kill fear. He who kills himself only to kill fear will become a god at once.”

“He won’t have time, perhaps,” I observed.

“That’s no matter,” he answered softly, with calm pride, almost disdain. “I’m sorry that you seem to be laughing,” he added half a minute later.

“It seems strange to me that you were so irritable this morning and are now so calm, though you speak with warmth.”

“This morning? It was funny this morning,” he answered with a smile. “I don’t like scolding, and I never laugh,” he added mournfully.

“Yes, you don’t spend your nights very cheerfully over your tea.”

I got up and took my cap.

“You think not?” he smiled with some surprise. “Why? No, I ... I don’t know.” He was suddenly confused. “I know not how it is with the others, and I feel that I cannot do as others. Everybody thinks and then at once thinks of something else. I can’t think of something else. I think all my life of one thing. God has tormented me all my life,” he ended up suddenly with astonishing expansiveness.

“And tell me, if I may ask, why is it you speak Russian not quite correctly? Surely you haven’t forgotten it after five years abroad?”

“Don’t I speak correctly? I don’t know. No, it’s not because of abroad. I have talked like that all my life ... it’s no matter to me.”

“Another question, a more delicate one. I quite—believe you that you’re disinclined to meet people and talk very little. Why have you talked to me now?”

“To you? This morning you sat so nicely and you ... but it’s all no matter ... you are like my brother, very much, extremely,” he added, flushing. “He has been dead seven years. He was older, very, very much.”

“I suppose he had a great influence on your way of thinking?”

“N-no. He said little; he said nothing. I’ll give your note.”

He saw me to the gate with a lantern, to lock it after me. “Of course he’s mad,” I decided. In the gateway I met with another encounter.

8

I had only just lifted my leg over the high barrier across the bottom of the gateway, when suddenly a strong hand clutched at my chest.

“Who’s this?” roared a voice, “a friend or an enemy? Own up!”

“He’s one of us; one of us!” Liputin’s voice squealed near by. “It’s Mr. G——v, a young man of classical education, in touch with the highest society.”

“I love him if he’s in society, clas-si ... that means he’s high-ly ed-u-cated. The retired Captain Ignat Lebyadkin, at the service of the world and his friends ... if they’re true ones, if they’re true ones, the scoundrels.”

Captain Lebyadkin, a stout, fleshy man over six feet in height, with curly hair and a red face, was so extremely drunk that he could scarcely stand up before me, and articulated with difficulty. I had seen him before, however, in the distance.

“And this one!” he roared again, noticing Kirillov, who was still standing with the lantern; he raised his fist, but let it fall again at once.

“I forgive you for your learning! Ignat Lebyadkin— high-ly ed-u-cated... .

‘A bomb of love with stinging smart

Exploded in Ignaty’s heart.

In anguish dire I weep again

The arm that at Sevastopol

I lost in bitter pain!’

Not that I ever was at Sevastopol, or ever lost my arm, but you know what rhyme is.” He pushed up to me with his ugly, tipsy face.

“Pie is in a hurry, he is going home!” Liputin tried to persuade him. “He’ll tell Lizaveta Nikolaevna to-morrow.”

“Lizaveta!” he yelled again. “Stay, don’t go! A variation;

‘Among the Amazons a star,

Upon her steed she flashes by,

And smiles upon me from afar,
The child of aris-to-cra-cy!
To a Starry Amazon.'

You know that's a hymn. It's a hymn, if you're not an ass! The duffers, they don't understand! Stay!"

He caught hold of my coat, though I pulled myself away with all my might.

"Tell her I'm a knight and the soul of honour, and as for that Dasha ... I'd pick her up and chuck her out... . She's only a serf, she daren't ..."

At this point he fell down, for I pulled myself violently out of his hands and ran into the street. Liputin clung on to me.

"Alexey Nilitch will pick him up. Do you know what I've just found out from him?" he babbled in desperate haste. "Did you hear his verses? He's sealed those verses to the 'Starry Amazon' in an envelope and is going to send them to-morrow to Lizaveta Nikolaevna, signed with his name in full. What a fellow!"

"I bet you suggested it to him yourself."

"You'll lose your bet," laughed Liputin. "He's in love, in love like a cat, and do you know it began with hatred. He hated Lizaveta Nikolaevna at first so much, for riding on horseback that he almost swore aloud at her in the street. Yes, he did abuse her! Only the day before yesterday he swore at her when she rode by—luckily she didn't hear. And, suddenly, to-day —poetry! Do you know he means to risk a proposal? Seriously! Seriously!"

"I wonder at you, Liputin; whenever there's anything nasty going on you're always on the spot taking a leading part in it," I said angrily.

"You're going rather far, Mr. G——v. Isn't your poor little heart quaking, perhaps, in terror of a rival?"

"Wha-at!" I cried, standing still.

"Well, now to punish you I won't say anything more, and wouldn't you like to know though? Take this alone, that that lout is not a simple captain now but a landowner of our province, and rather an important one, too, for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sold him all his estate the other day, formerly of two hundred serfs; and as God's above, I'm not lying. I've only just heard it, but it was from a most reliable source. And now you can ferret it out for yourself; I'll say nothing more; good-bye."

Stepan Trofimovitch was awaiting me with hysterical impatience. It was an hour since he had returned. I found him in a state resembling intoxication; for the first five minutes at least I thought he was drunk. Alas, the visit to the Drozdovs had been the finishing-stroke.

"Mon ami! I have completely lost the thread ... Lise ... I love and respect that angel as before; just as before; but it seems to me they both asked me simply to find out something from me, that is more simply to get something out of me, and then to get rid of me... . That's how it is."

"You ought to be ashamed!" I couldn't help exclaiming. "My friend, now I am utterly alone. Enfin, c'est ridicule. Would you believe it, the place is positively packed with

mysteries there too. They simply flew at me about those ears and noses, and some mysteries in Petersburg too. You know they hadn't heard till they came about the tricks Nicolas played here four years ago. 'You were here, you saw it, is it true that he is mad?' Where they got the idea I can't make out. Why is it that Praskovya is so anxious Nicolas should be mad? The woman will have it so, she will. Ce Maurice, or what's his name, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, brave homme tout de meme ... but can it be for his sake, and after she wrote herself from Paris to *cette pauvre amie*? ... Enfin, this Praskovya, as *cette chere amie* calls her, is a type. She's Gogol's Madame Box, of immortal memory, only she's a spiteful Madame Box, a malignant Box, and in an immensely exaggerated form."

"That's making her out a regular packing-case if it's an exaggerated form."

"Well, perhaps it's the opposite; it's all the same, only don't interrupt me, for I'm all in a whirl. They are all at loggerheads, except Lise, she keeps on with her 'Auntie, auntie!' but Lise's sly, and there's something behind it too. Secrets. She has quarrelled with the old lady. *Cette pauvre auntie* tyrannises over every one it's true, and then there's the governor's wife, and the rudeness of local society, and Karmazinov's 'rudeness'; and then this idea of madness, *ce Lipoutine*, *ce que je ne comprends pas* ... and ... and they say she's been putting vinegar on her head, and here are we with our complaints and letters... . Oh, how I have tormented her and at such a time! Je suis un ingrât! Only imagine, I come back and find a letter from her; read it, read it! Oh, how ungrateful it was of me!"

He gave me a letter he had just received from Varvara Petrovna. She seemed to have repented of her "stay at home." The letter was amiable but decided in tone, and brief. She invited Stepan Trofimovitch to come to her the day after to-morrow, which was Sunday, at twelve o'clock, and advised him to bring one of his friends with him. (My name was mentioned in parenthesis). She promised on her side to invite Shatov, as the brother of Darya Pavlovna. "You can obtain a final answer from her: will that be enough for you? Is this the formality you were so anxious for?"

"Observe that irritable phrase about formality. Poor thing, poor thing, the friend of my whole life! I confess the sudden determination of my whole future almost crushed me. ... I confess I still had hopes, but now tout est dit. I know now that all is over. C'est terrible! Oh, that that Sunday would never come and everything would go on in the old way. You would have gone on coming and I'd have gone on here... ."

"You've been upset by all those nasty things Liputin said, those slanders."

"My dear, you have touched on another sore spot with your friendly finger. Such friendly fingers are generally merciless and sometimes unreasonable; pardon, you may riot believe it, but I'd almost forgotten all that, all that nastiness, not that I forgot it, indeed, but in my foolishness I tried all the while I was with Lise to be happy and persuaded myself I was happy. But now ... Oh, now I'm thinking of that generous, humane woman, so long-suffering with my contemptible failings—not that she's been altogether long-suffering, but what have I been with my horrid, worthless character! I'm a capricious child, with all the egoism of a child and none of the innocence. For

the last twenty years she's been looking after me like a nurse, *cette pauvre auntie*, as Lise so charmingly calls her... . And now, after twenty years, the child clamours to be married, sending letter after letter, while her head's in a vinegar-compress and ... now he's got it— on Sunday I shall be a married man, that's no joke... . And why did I keep insisting myself, what did I write those letters for? Oh, I forgot. Lise idolizes Darya Pavlovna, she says so anyway; she says of her 'c'est un ange, only rather a reserved one.' They both advised me, even Praskovya... . Praskovya didn't advise me though. Oh, what venom lies concealed in that 'Box'! And Lise didn't exactly advise me: 'What do you want to get married for,' she said, 'your intellectual pleasures ought to be enough for you.' She laughed. I forgive her for laughing, for there's an ache in her own heart. You can't get on without a woman though, they said to me. The infirmities of age are coming upon you, and she will tuck you up, or whatever it is. ... *Ma foi*, I've been thinking myself all this time I've been sitting with you that Providence was sending her to me in the decline of my stormy years and that she would tuck me up, or whatever they call it ... *enfin*, she'll be handy for the housekeeping. See what a litter there is, look how everything's lying about. I said it must be cleared up this morning, and look at the book on the floor! *La pauvre amie* was always angry at the untidiness here... . Ah, now I shall no longer hear her voice! *Vingt ans*! And it seems they've had anonymous letters. Only fancy, it's said that Nicolas has sold Lebyadkin his property. *C'est un monstre*; *et enfin* what is Lebyadkin? Lise listens, and listens, ooh, how she listens! I forgave her laughing. I saw her face as she listened, and *ce Maurice* ... I shouldn't care to be in his shoes now, *brave homme tout de meme*, but rather shy; but never mind him... .”

He paused. He was tired and upset, and sat with drooping head, staring at the floor with his tired eyes. I took advantage of the interval to tell him of my visit to Filipov's house, and curtly and dryly expressed my opinion that Lebyadkin's sister (whom I had never seen) really might have been somehow victimised by Nicolas at some time during that mysterious period of his life, as Liputin had called it, and that it was very possible that Lebyadkin received sums of money from Nicolas for some reason, but that was all. As for the scandal about Darya Pavlovna, that was all nonsense, all that brute Liputin's misrepresentations, that this was anyway what Alexey Nilitch warmly maintained, and we had no grounds for disbelieving him. Stepan Trofimovitch listened to my assurances with an absent air, as though they did not concern him. I mentioned by the way my conversation with Kirillov, and added that he might be mad.

“He's not mad, but one of those shallow-minded people,” he mumbled listlessly. “*Ces gens-il supposent la nature et la societe humaine autres que Dieu ne les a faites et qu'elles ne sont reellement*. People try to make up to them, but Stepan Verhovensky does not, anyway. I saw them that time in Petersburg *avec cette chere amie* (oh, how I used to wound her then), and I wasn't afraid of their abuse or even of their praise. I'm not afraid now either. *Mais parlous d'autre chose*. ... I believe I have done dreadful things. Only fancy, I sent a letter yesterday to Darya Pavlovna and ... how I curse myself for it!”

“What did you write about?”

“Oh, my friend, believe me, it was all done in’ a noble spirit. I let her know that I had written to Nicolas five days before, also in a noble spirit.”

“I understand now!” I cried with heat. “And what right had you to couple their names like that?”

“But, mon cher, don’t crush me completely, don’t shout at me; as it is I’m utterly squashed like ... a black-beetle. And, after all, I thought it was all so honourable. Suppose that something really happened ... en Suisse ... or was beginning. I was bound to question their hearts beforehand that I . . . enfin, that I might not constrain their hearts, and be a stumbling-block in their paths. I acted simply from honourable feeling.”

“Oh, heavens! What a stupid thing you’ve done!” I cried involuntarily.

“Yes, yes,” he assented with positive eagerness. “You have never said anything more just, c’etait bete, mais que faire? Tout est dit. I shall marry her just the same even if it be to cover ‘another’s sins.’ So there was no object in writing, was there?”

“You’re at that idea again!”

“Oh, you won’t frighten me with your shouts now. You see a different Stepan Verhovensky before you now. The man I was is buried. Enfin, tout est dit. And why do you cry out? Simply because you’re not getting married, and you won’t have to wear a certain decoration on your head. Does that shock you again? My poor friend, you don’t know woman, while I have done nothing but study her. ‘If you want to conquer the world, conquer yourself—the one good thing that another romantic like you, my bride’s brother, Shatov, has succeeded in saying. I would gladly borrow from him his phrase. Well, here I am ready to conquer myself, and I’m getting married. And what am I conquering by way of the whole world? Oh, my friend, marriage is the moral death of every proud soul, of all independence. Married life will corrupt me, it will sap my energy, my courage in the service of the cause. Children will come, probably not my own either—certainly not my own: a wise man is not afraid to face the truth. Liputin proposed this morning putting up barricades to keep out Nicolas; Liputin’s a fool. A woman would deceive the all-seeing eye itself. Le bon Dieu knew what He was in for when He was creating woman, but I’m sure that she meddled in it herself and forced Him to create her such as she is ... and with such attributes: for who would have incurred so much trouble for nothing? I know Nastasya may be angry with me for free-thinking, but ... enfin, taut est dit.”

He wouldn’t have been himself if he could have dispensed with the cheap gibing free-thought which was in vogue in his day. Now, at any rate, he comforted himself with a gibe, but not for long.

“Oh, if that day after to-morrow, that Sunday, might never come!” he exclaimed suddenly, this time in utter despair. “Why could not this one week be without a Sunday—si le miracle exists? What would it be to Providence to blot out one Sunday from the calendar? If only to prove His power to the atheists et que tout soit dit! Oh, how I loved her! Twenty years, these twenty years, and she has never understood me!”

“But of whom are you talking? Even I don’t understand you!” I asked, wondering.

“Vingt ans! And she has not once understood me; oh, it’s cruel! And can she really believe that I am marrying from fear, from poverty? Oh, the shame of it! Oh, Auntie, Auntie, I do it for you! ... Oh, let her know, that Auntie, that she is the one woman I have adored for twenty years! She must learn this, it must be so, if not they will need force to drag me under ce qu’on appelle le wedding-crown.”

It was the first time I had heard this confession, and so vigorously uttered. I won’t conceal the fact that I was terribly tempted to laugh. I was wrong.

“He is the only one left me now, the only one, my one hope!” he cried suddenly, clasping his hands as though struck by a new idea. “Only he, my poor boy, can save me now, and, oh, why doesn’t he come! Oh, my son, oh, my Petrusha... . And though I do not deserve the name of father, but rather that of tiger, yet ... Laissez-moi, mon ami, I’ll lie down a little, to collect my ideas. I am so tired, so tired. And I think it’s time you were in bed. Voyez vous, it’s twelve o’clock... .”

Chapter 4: The Cripple Shatov Was Not Perverse...

1

... but acted on my note, and called at midday on Lizaveta Nikolaevna. We went in almost together; I was also going to make my first call. They were all, that is Liza, her mother, and Mavriky Nikolaevitch, sitting in the big drawing-room, arguing. The mother was asking Liza to play some waltz on the piano, and as soon as Liza began to play the piece asked for, declared it was not the right one. Mavriky Nikolaevitch in the simplicity of his heart took Liza’s part, maintaining that it was the right waltz. The elder lady was so angry that she began to cry. She was ill and walked with difficulty. Her legs were swollen, and for the last few days she had been continually fractious, quarrelling with every one, though she always stood rather in awe of Liza. They were pleased to see us. Liza flushed with pleasure, and saying “merci” to me, on Shatov’s account of course, went to meet him, looking at him with interest.

Shatov stopped awkwardly in the doorway. Thanking him for coming she led him up to her mother.

“This is Mr. Shatov, of whom I have told you, and this is Mr. G——v, a great friend of mine and of Stepan Trofimovitch’s. Mavriky Nikolaevitch made his acquaintance yesterday, too.”

“And which is the professor?”

“There’s no professor at all, maman.”

“But there is. You said yourself that there’d be a professor. It’s this one, probably.” She disdainfully indicated Shatov.

“I didn’t tell you that there’d be a professor. Mr. G——v is in the service, and Mr. Shatov is a former student.”

“A student or professor, they all come from the university just the same. You only want to argue. But the Swiss one had moustaches and a beard.”

“It’s the son of Stepan Trofimovitch that maman always calls the professor,” said Liza, and she took Shatov away to the sofa at the other end of the drawing-room.

“When her legs swell, she’s always like this, you understand she’s ill,” she whispered to Shatov, still with the same marked curiosity, scrutinising him, especially his shock of hair.

“Are you an officer?” the old lady inquired of me. Liza had mercilessly abandoned me to her.

“N-no.—I’m in the service... .”

“Mr. G——v is a great friend of Stepan Trofimovitch’s,” Liza chimed in immediately.

“Are you in Stepan Trofimovitch’s service? Yes, and he’s a professor, too, isn’t he?”

“Ah, maman, you must dream at night of professors,” cried Liza with annoyance.

“I see too many when I’m awake. But you always will contradict your mother. Were you here four years ago when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was in the neighbourhood?”

I answered that I was.

“And there was some Englishman with you?”

“No, there was not.”

Liza laughed.

“Well, you see there was no Englishman, so it must have been idle gossip. And Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovitch both tell lies. And they all tell lies.”

“Auntie and Stepan Trofimovitch yesterday thought there was a resemblance between Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Prince Harry in Shakespeare’s Henry IV, and in answer to that maman says that there was no Englishman here,” Liza explained to us.

“If Harry wasn’t here, there was no Englishman. It was no one else but Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at his tricks.”

“I assure you that maman’s doing it on purpose,” Liza thought necessary to explain to Shatov. “She’s really heard of Shakespeare. I read her the first act of Othello myself. But she’s in great pain now. Maman, listen, it’s striking twelve, it’s time you took your medicine.”

“The doctor’s come,” a maid-servant announced at the door.

The old lady got up and began calling her dog: “Zemirka, Zemirka, you come with me at least.”

Zemirka, a horrid little old dog, instead of obeying, crept under the sofa where Liza was sitting.

“Don’t you want to? Then I don’t want you. Good-bye, my good sir, I don’t know your name or your father’s,” she said, addressing me.

“Anton Lavrentyevitch ...”

“Well, it doesn’t matter, with me it goes in at one ear and out of the other. Don’t you come with me, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, it was Zemirka I called. Thank God I can still walk without help and to-morrow I shall go for a drive.”

She walked angrily out of the drawing-room.

“Anton Lavrentyevitch, will you talk meanwhile to Mavriky Nikolaevitch; I assure you you’ll both be gainers by getting to know one another better,” said Liza, and she gave a friendly smile to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who beamed all over as she looked at him. There was no help for it, I remained to talk to Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

2

Lizaveta Nikolaevna’s business with Shatov turned out, to my surprise, to be really only concerned with literature. I had imagined, I don’t know why, that she had asked him to come with some other object. We, Mavriky Nikolaevitch and I that is, seeing that they were talking aloud and not trying to hide anything from us, began to listen, and at last they asked our advice. It turned out that Lizaveta Nikolaevna was thinking of bringing out a book which she thought would be of use, but being quite inexperienced she needed some one to help her. The earnestness with which she began to explain her plan to Shatov quite surprised me.

“She must be one of the new people,” I thought. “She has not been to Switzerland for nothing.”

Shatov listened with attention, his eyes fixed on the ground, showing not the slightest surprise that a giddy young lady in society should take up work that seemed so out of keeping with her.

Her literary scheme was as follows. Numbers of papers and journals are published in the capitals and the provinces of Russia, and every day a number of events are reported in them. The year passes, the newspapers are everywhere folded up and put away in cupboards, or are torn up and become litter, or are used for making parcels or wrapping things. Numbers of these facts make an impression and are remembered by the public, but in the course of years they are forgotten. Many people would like to look them up, but it is a labour for them to embark upon this sea of paper, often knowing nothing of the day or place or even year in which the incident occurred. Yet if all the facts for a whole year were brought together into one book, on a definite plan, and with a definite object, under headings with references, arranged according to months and days, such a compilation might reflect the characteristics of Russian life for the whole year, even though the facts published are only a small fraction of the events that take place.

“Instead of a number of newspapers there would be a few fat books, that’s all,” observed Shatov.

But Lizaveta Nikolaevna clung to her idea, in spite of the difficulty of carrying it out and her inability to describe it. “It ought to be one book, and not even a very thick one,” she maintained. But even if it were thick it would be clear, for the great point would be the plan and the character of the presentation of facts. Of course not all would be collected and reprinted. . The decrees and acts of government, local regulations, laws—all such facts, however important, might be altogether omitted from the proposed publication. They could leave out a great deal and confine themselves

to a selection of events more or less characteristic of the moral life of the people, of the personal character of the Russian people at the present moment. Of course everything might be put in: strange incidents, fires, public subscriptions, anything good or bad, every speech or word, perhaps even floodings of the rivers, perhaps even some government decrees, but only such things to be selected as are characteristic of the period; everything would be put in with a certain view, a special significance and intention, with an idea which would illuminate the facts looked at in the aggregate, as a whole. And finally the book ought to be interesting even for light reading, apart from its value as a work of reference. It would be, so to say, a presentation of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia for a whole year.

“We want every one to buy it, we want it to be a book that will be found on every table,” Liza declared. “I understand that all lies in the plan, and that’s why I apply to you,” she concluded. She grew very warm over it, and although her explanation was obscure and incomplete, Shatov began to understand.

“So it would amount to something with a political tendency, a selection of facts with a special tendency,” he muttered, still not raising his head.

“Not at all, we must not select with a particular bias, and we ought not to have any political tendency in it. Nothing but impartiality—that will be the only tendency.”

“But a tendency would be no harm,” said Shatov, with a slight movement, “and one can hardly avoid it if there is any selection at all. The very selection of facts will suggest how they are to be understood. Your idea is not a bad one.”

“Then such a book is possible?” cried Liza delightedly.

“We must look into it and consider. It’s an immense undertaking. One can’t work it out on the spur of the moment. We need experience. And when we do publish the book I doubt whether we shall find out how to do it. Possibly after many trials; but the thought is alluring. It’s a useful idea.”

He raised his eyes at last, and they were positively sparkling with pleasure, he was so interested.

“Was it your own idea?” he asked Liza, in a friendly and, as it were, bashful way.

“The idea’s no trouble, you know, it’s the plan is the trouble,” Liza smiled. “I understand very little. I am not very clever, and I only pursue what is clear to me, myself... ”

“Pursue?”

“Perhaps that’s not the right word?” Liza inquired quickly.

“The word is all right; I meant nothing.”

“I thought while I was abroad that even I might be of some use. I have money of my own lying idle. Why shouldn’t I— even I—work for the common cause? Besides, the idea somehow occurred to me all at once of itself. I didn’t invent it at all, and was delighted with it. But I saw at once that I couldn’t get on without some one to help, because I am not competent to do anything of myself. My helper, of course, would be the co-editor of the book. We would go halves. You would give the plan and the work.

Mine would be the original idea and the means for publishing it. Would the book pay its expenses, do you think?"

"If we hit on a good plan the book will go."

"I warn you that I am not doing it for profit; but I am very anxious that the book should circulate and should be very proud of making a profit."

"Well, but how do I come in?"

"Why, I invite you to be my fellow-worker, to go halves. You will think out the plan."

"How do you know that I am capable of thinking out the plan?"

"People have talked about you to me, and here I've heard

... I know that you are very clever and ... are working for the cause ... and think a great deal. Pyotr Stepanovitch Verhovensky spoke about you in Switzerland," she added hurriedly. "He's a very clever man, isn't he?"

Shatov stole a fleeting, momentary glance at her, but dropped his eyes again.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch told me a great deal about you, too."

Shatov suddenly turned red.

"But here are the newspapers." Liza hurriedly picked up from a chair a bundle of newspapers that lay tied up ready. "I've tried to mark the facts here for selection, to sort them, and I have put the papers together ... you will see."

Shatov took the bundle.

"Take them home and look at them. Where do you live?"

"In Bogoyavlensky Street, Filipov's house."

"I know. I think it's there, too, I've been told, a captain lives, beside you, Mr. Lebyadkin," said Liza in the same hurried manner.

Shatov sat for a full minute with the bundle in his outstretched hand, making no answer and staring at the floor.

"You'd better find some one else for these jobs. I shouldn't suit you at all," he brought out at last, dropping his voice in an awfully strange way, almost to a whisper.

Liza flushed crimson.

"What jobs are you speaking of? Mavriky Nikolaevitch," she cried, "please bring that letter here."

I too followed Mavriky Nikolaevitch to the table,

"Look at this," she turned suddenly to me, unfolding the letter in great excitement. "Have you ever seen anything like it. Please read it aloud. I want Mr. Shatov to hear it too."

With no little astonishment I read aloud the following missive:

"To the.

Perfection, Miss Tushin.

"Gracious Lady

"Lizaveta Nikolaevna!

"Oh, she's a sweet queen, Lizaveta Tushin!

When on side-saddle she gallops by,

And in the breeze her fair tresses fly!
Or when with her mother in church she bows low
And on devout faces a red flush doth flow!
Then for the joys of lawful wedlock I aspire,
And follow her and her mother with tears of desire.
“Composed by an unlearned man in the midst of a discussion.

“Gracious Lady!

“I pity myself above all men that I did not lose my arm at Sevastopol, not having been there at all, but served all the campaign delivering paltry provisions, which I look on as a degradation. You are a goddess of antiquity, and I am nothing, but have had a glimpse of infinity. Look on it as a poem and no more, for, after all, poetry is nonsense and justifies what would be considered impudence in prose. Can the sun be angry with the infusoria if the latter composes verses to her from the drop of water, where there is a multitude of them if you look through the microscope? Even the club for promoting humanity to the larger animals in tip-top society in Petersburg, which rightly feels compassion for dogs and horses, despises the brief infusoria making no reference to it whatever, because it is not big enough. I’m not big enough either. The idea of marriage might seem droll, but soon I shall have property worth two hundred souls through a misanthropist whom you ought to despise. I can tell a lot and I can undertake to produce documents that would mean Siberia. Don’t despise my proposal. A letter from an infusoria is of course in verse.

“Captain Lebyadkin your most humble friend
And he has time no end.”

“That was written by a man in a drunken condition, a worthless fellow,” I cried indignantly. “I know him.”

“That letter I received yesterday,” Liza began to explain, flushing and speaking hurriedly. “I saw myself, at once, that it came from some foolish creature, and I haven’t yet shown it to maman, for fear of upsetting her more. But if he is going to keep on like that, I don’t know how to act. Mavriky Nikolaevitch wants to go out and forbid him to do it. As I have looked upon you as a colleague,” she turned to Shatov, “and as you live there, I wanted to question you so as to judge what more is to be expected of him.”

“He’s a drunkard and a worthless fellow,” Shatov muttered with apparent reluctance.

“Is he always so stupid?”

“No, he’s not stupid at all when he’s not drunk.”

“I used to know a general who wrote verses exactly like that,” I observed, laughing.

“One can see from the letter that he is clever enough for his own purposes,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had till then been silent, put in unexpectedly.

“He lives with some sister?” Liza queried.

“Yes, with his sister.”

“They say he tyrannises over her, is that true?”

Shatov looked at Liza again, scowled, and muttering, "What business is it of mine?" moved towards the door.

"Ah, stay!" cried Liza, in a flutter. "Where are you going? We have so much still to talk over... ."

"What is there to talk over? I'll let you know to-morrow."

"Why, the most important thing of all—the printing-press! Do believe me that I am not in jest, that I really want to work in good earnest!" Liza assured him in growing agitation. "If we decide to publish it, where is it to be printed? You know it's a most important question, for we shan't go to Moscow for it, and the printing-press here is out of the question for such a publication. I made up my mind long ago to set up a printing-press of my own, in your name perhaps—and I know maman will allow it so long as it is in your name... ."

"How do you know that I could be a printer?" Shatov asked sullenly.

"Why, Pyotr Stepanovitch told me of you in Switzerland, and referred me to you as one who knows the business and able to set up a printing-press. He even meant to give me a note to you from himself, but I forgot it."

Shatov's face changed, as I recollect now. He stood for a few seconds longer, then went out of the room.

Liza was angry.

"Does he always go out like that?" she asked, turning to me.

I was just shrugging my shoulders when Shatov suddenly came back, went straight up to the table and put down the roll of papers he had taken.

"I'm not going to be your helper, I haven't the time... ."

"Why? Why? I think you are angry!" Liza asked him in a grieved and imploring voice.

The sound of her voice seemed to strike him; for some moments he looked at her intently, as though trying to penetrate to her very soul.

"No matter," he muttered, softly, "I don't want to... ."

And he went away altogether.

Liza was completely overwhelmed, quite disproportionately in fact, so it seemed to me.

"Wonderfully queer man," Mavriky Nikolaevitch observed aloud.

3

He certainly was queer, but in all this there was a very great deal not clear to me. There was something underlying it all? I simply did not believe in this publication; then that stupid letter, in which there was an offer, only too barefaced, to give information and produce "documents," though they were all silent about that, and talked of something quite different; finally that printing-press and Shatov's sudden exit, just because they spoke of a printing-press. All this led me to imagine that something had happened before I came in of which I knew nothing; and, consequently, that it was no

business of mine and that I was in the way. And, indeed, it was time to take leave, I had stayed long enough for the first call. I went up to say good-bye to Lizaveta Nikolaevna.

She seemed to have forgotten that I was in the room, and was still standing in the same place by the table with her head bowed, plunged in thought, gazing fixedly at one spot on the carpet.

“Ah, you, too, are going, good-bye,” she murmured in an ordinary friendly tone. “Give my greetings to Stepan Trofimovitch, and persuade him to come and see me as soon as he can. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, Anton Lavrentyevitch is going. Excuse maman’s not being able to come out and say good-bye to you. ...”

I went out and had reached the bottom of the stairs when a footman suddenly overtook me at the street door.

“My lady begs you to come back... .”

“The mistress, or Lizaveta Nikolaevna?”

“The young lady.”

I found Liza not in the big room where we had been sitting, but in the reception-room next to it. The door between it and the drawing-room, where Mavriky Nikolaevitch was left alone, was closed.

Liza smiled to me but was pale. She was standing in the middle of the room in evident indecision, visibly struggling with herself; but she suddenly took me by the hand, and led me quickly to the window.

“I want to see her at once,” she whispered, bending upon me a burning, passionate, impatient glance, which would not admit a hint of opposition. “I must see her with my own eyes, and I beg you to help me.”

She was in a perfect frenzy, and—in despair.

“Who is it you want to see, Lizaveta Nikolaevna?” I inquired in dismay.

“That Lebyadkin’s sister, that lame girl. ... Is it true that she’s lame?”

I was astounded.

“I have never seen her, but I’ve heard that she’s lame. I heard it yesterday,” I said with hurried readiness, and also in a whisper.

“I must see her, absolutely. Could you arrange it to-day?”

I felt dreadfully sorry for her.

“That’s utterly impossible, and, besides, I should not know at all how to set about it,” I began persuading her. “I’ll go to Shatov... .”

“If you don’t arrange it by to-morrow I’ll go to her by myself, alone, for Mavriky Nikolaevitch has refused. I rest all my hopes on you and I’ve no one else; I spoke stupidly to Shatov... . I’m sure that you are perfectly honest and perhaps ready to do anything for me, only arrange it.”

I felt a passionate desire to help her in every way.

“This is what I’ll do,” I said, after a moment’s thought. “I’ll go myself to-day and will see her for sure, for sure. I will manage so as to see her. I give you my word of honour. Only let me confide in Shatov.”

“Tell him that I do desire it, and that I can’t wait any longer, but that I wasn’t deceiving him just now. He went away perhaps because he’s very honest and he didn’t like my seeming to deceive him. I wasn’t deceiving him, I really do want to edit books and found a printing-press... .”

“He is honest, very honest,” I assented warmly.

“If it’s not arranged by to-morrow, though, I shall go myself whatever happens, and even if every one were to know.”

“I can’t be with you before three o’clock to-morrow,” I observed, after a moment’s deliberation.

“At three o’clock then. Then it was true what I imagined yesterday at Stepan Trofimovitch’s, that you—are rather devoted to me?” she said with a smile, hurriedly pressing my hand to say good-bye, and hurrying back to the forsaken Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

I went out weighed down by my promise, and unable to understand what had happened. I had seen a woman in real despair, not hesitating to compromise herself by confiding in a man she hardly knew. Her womanly smile at a moment so terrible for her and her hint that she had noticed my feelings the day before sent a pang to my heart; but I felt sorry for her, very sorry—that was all! Her secrets became at once something sacred for me, and if anyone had begun to reveal them to me now, I think I should have covered my ears, and should have refused to hear anything more. I only had a presentiment of something ... yet I was utterly at a loss to see how I could do anything. What’s more I did not even yet understand exactly what I had to arrange; an interview, but what sort of an interview? And how could I bring them together? My only hope was Shatov, though I could be sure that he wouldn’t help me in any way. But all the same, I hurried to him.

4

I did not find him at home till past seven o’clock that evening. To my surprise he had visitors with him—Alexey Nilitch, and another gentleman I hardly knew, one Shigalov, the brother of Virginsky’s wife.

This gentleman must, I think, have been staying about two months in the town; I don’t know where he came from. I had only heard that he had written some sort of article in a progressive Petersburg magazine. Virginsky had introduced me casually to him in the street. I had never in my life seen in a man’s face so much despondency, gloom, and moroseness. He looked as though he were expecting the destruction of the world, and not at some indefinite time in accordance with prophecies, which might never be fulfilled, but quite definitely, as though it were to be the day after to-morrow at twenty-five minutes past ten. We hardly said a word to one another on that occasion, but had simply shaken hands like two conspirators. I was most struck by his ears, which were of unnatural size, long, broad, and thick, sticking out in a peculiar way. His gestures were slow and awkward.

If Liputin had imagined that a phalanstery might be established in our province, this gentleman certainly knew the day and the hour when it would be founded. He made a sinister impression on me. I was the more surprised at finding him here, as Shatov was not fond of visitors.

I could hear from the stairs that they were talking very loud, all three at once, and I fancy they were disputing; but as soon as I went in, they all ceased speaking. They were arguing, standing up, but now they all suddenly sat down, so that I had to sit down too. There was a stupid silence that was not broken for fully three minutes. Though Shigalov knew me, he affected not to know me, probably not from hostile feelings, but for no particular reason. Alexey Nilitch and I bowed to one another in silence, and for some reason did not shake hands. Shigalov began at last looking at me sternly and frowningly, with the most naive assurance that I should immediately get up and go away. At last Shatov got up from his chair and the others jumped up at once. They went out without saying good-bye. Shigalov only said in the doorway to Shatov, who was seeing him out:

“Remember that you are bound to give an explanation.”

“Hang your explanation, and who the devil am I bound to?” said Shatov. He showed them out and fastened the door with the latch.

“Snipes!” he said, looking at me, with a sort of wry smile.

His face looked angry, and it seemed strange to me that he spoke first. When I had been to see him before (which was not often) it had usually happened that he sat scowling in a corner, answered ill-humouredly and only completely thawed and began to talk with pleasure after a considerable time. Even so, when he was saying good-bye he always scowled, and let one out as though he were getting rid of a personal enemy.

“I had tea yesterday with that Alexey Nilitch,” I observed. “I think he’s mad on atheism.”

“Russian atheism has never gone further than making a joke,” growled Shatov, putting up a new candle in place of an end that had burnt out.

“No, this one doesn’t seem to me a joker, I think he doesn’t know how to talk, let alone trying to make jokes.”

“Men made of paper! It all comes from flunkeyism of thought,” Shatov observed calmly, sitting down on a chair in the corner, and pressing the palms of both hands on his knees.

“There’s hatred in it, too,” he went on, after a minute’s pause. “They’d be the first to be terribly unhappy if Russia could be suddenly reformed, even to suit their own ideas, and became extraordinarily prosperous and happy. They’d have no one to hate then, no one to curse, nothing to find fault with. There is nothing in it but an immense animal hatred for Russia which has eaten into their organism... . And it isn’t a case of tears unseen by the world under cover of a smile! There has never been a falser word said in Russia than about those unseen tears,” he cried, almost with fury.

“Goodness only knows what you’re saying,” I laughed.

“Oh, you’re a ‘moderate liberal,’” said Shatov, smiling too. “Do you know,” he went on suddenly, “I may have been talking nonsense about the ‘flunkeyism of thought.’ You will say to me no doubt directly, ‘it’s you who are the son of a flunkey, but I’m not a flunkey.’”

“I wasn’t dreaming of such a thing... . What are you saying!”

“You need not apologise. I’m not afraid of you. Once I was only the son of a flunkey, but now I’ve become a flunkey myself, like you. Our Russian liberal is a flunkey before everything, and is only looking for some one whose boots he can clean.”

“What boots? What allegory is this?”

“Allegory, indeed! You are laughing, I see... . Stepan Trofimovitch said truly that I lie under a stone, crushed but not killed, and do nothing but wriggle. It was a good comparison of his.”

“Stepan Trofimovitch declares that you are mad over the Germans,” I laughed. “We’ve borrowed something from them anyway.”

“We took twenty kopecks, but we gave up a hundred roubles of our own.”

We were silent a minute.

“He got that sore lying in America.”

“Who? What sore?”

“I mean Kirillov. I spent four months with him lying on the floor of a hut.”

“Why, have you been in America?” I asked, surprised. “You never told me about it.”

“What is there to tell? The year before last we spent our last farthing, three of us, going to America in an emigrant steamer, to test the life of the American workman on ourselves, and to verify by personal experiment the state of a man in the hardest social conditions. That was our object in going there.”

“Good Lord!” I laughed. “You’d much better have gone somewhere in our province at harvest-time if you wanted to ‘make a personal experiment’ instead of bolting to America.”

“We hired ourselves out as workmen to an exploiter; there were six of us Russians working for him—students, even landowners coming from their estates, some officers, too, and all with the same grand object. Well, so we worked, sweated, wore ourselves out; Kirillov and I were exhausted at last; fell ill— went away—we couldn’t stand it. Our employer cheated us when he paid us off; instead of thirty dollars, as he had agreed, he paid me eight and Kirillov fifteen; he beat us, too, more than once. So then we were left without work, Kirillov and I, and we spent four months lying on the floor in that little town. He thought of one thing and I thought of another.”

“You don’t mean to say your employer beat you? In America? How you must have sworn at him!”

“Not a bit of it. On the contrary, Kirillov and I made up our minds from the first that we Russians were like little children beside the Americans, and that one must be born in America, or at least live for many years with Americans to be on a level with them. And do you know, if we were asked a dollar for a thing worth a farthing, we used to pay it with pleasure, in fact with enthusiasm. We approved of everything: spiritualism,

lynch-law, revolvers, tramps. Once when we were travelling a fellow slipped his hand into my pocket, took my brush, and began brushing his hair with it. Kirillov and I only looked at one another, and made up our minds that that was the right thing and that we liked it very much... .”

“The strange thing is that with us all this is not only in the brain but is carried out in practice,” I observed.

“Men made of paper,” Shatov repeated.

“But to cross the ocean in an emigrant steamer, though, to go .to an unknown country, even to make a personal experiment and all that—by Jove ... there really is a large-hearted staunchness about it. ... But how did you get out of it?”

“I wrote to a man in Europe and he sent me a hundred roubles.”

As Shatov talked he looked doggedly at the ground as he always did, even when he was excited. At this point he suddenly raised his head.

“Do you want to know the man’s name?”

“Who was it?”

“Nikolay Stavrogin.”

He got up suddenly, turned to his limewood writing-table and began searching for something on it. There was a vague, though well-authenticated rumour among us that Shatov’s wife had at one time had a liaison with Nikolay Stavrogin, in Paris, and just about two years ago, that is when Shatov was in America. It is true that this was long after his wife had left him in Geneva.

“If so, what possesses him now to bring his name forward and to lay stress on it?” I thought.

“I haven’t paid him back yet,” he said, turning suddenly to me again, and looking at me intently he sat down in the same place as before in the corner, and asked abruptly, in quite a different voice:

“You have come no doubt with some object. What do you want?”

I told him everything immediately, in its exact historical order, and added that though I had time to think it over coolly after the first excitement was over, I was more puzzled than ever. I saw that it meant something very important to Lizaveta Nikolaevna. I was extremely anxious to help her, but the trouble was that I didn’t know how to keep the promise I had made her, and didn’t even quite understand now what I had promised her. Then I assured him impressively once more that she had not meant to deceive him, and had had no thought of doing so; that there had been some misunderstanding, and that she had been very much hurt by the extraordinary way in which he had gone off that morning.

He listened very attentively.

“Perhaps I was stupid this morning, as I usually am... . Well, if she didn’t understand why I went away like that ... so much the better for her.”

He got up, went to the door, opened it, and began listening on the stairs.

“Do you want to see that person yourself?”

“That’s just what I wanted, but how is it to be done?” I cried, delighted.

“Let’s simply go down while she’s alone. When he comes in he’ll beat her horribly if he finds out we’ve been there. I often go in on the sly. I went for him this morning when he began beating her again.”

“What do you mean?”

“I dragged him off her by the hair. He tried to beat me, but I frightened him, and so it ended. I’m afraid he’ll come back drunk, and won’t forget it—he’ll give her a bad beating because of it.”

We went downstairs at once.

The Lebyadkins’ door was shut but not locked, and we were able to go in. Their lodging consisted of two nasty little rooms, with smoke-begrimed walls on which the filthy wall-paper literally hung in tatters. It had been used for some years as an eating-house, until Filipov, the tavern-keeper, moved to another house. The other rooms below what had been the eating-house were now shut up, and these two were all the Lebyadkins had. The furniture consisted of plain benches and deal tables, except for an old arm-chair that had lost its arms. In the second room there was the bedstead that belonged to Mile. Lebyadkin standing in the corner, covered with a chintz quilt; the captain himself went to bed anywhere on the floor, often without undressing. Everything was in disorder, wet and filthy; a huge soaking rag lay in the middle of the floor in the first room, and a battered old shoe lay beside it in the wet. It was evident that no one looked after anything here. The stove was not heated, food was not cooked; they had not even a samovar as Shatov told me. The captain had come to the town with his sister utterly destitute, and had, as Liputin said, at first actually gone from house to house begging. But having unexpectedly received some money, he had taken to drinking at once, and had become so besotted that he was incapable of looking after things.

Mile. Lebyadkin, whom I was so anxious to see, was sitting quietly at a deal kitchen table on a bench in the corner of the inner room, not making a sound. When we opened the door she did not call out to us or even move from her place. Shatov said that the door into the passage would not lock and it had once stood wide open all night. By the dim light of a thin candle in an iron candlestick, I made out a woman of about thirty, perhaps, sickly and emaciated, wearing an old dress of dark cotton material, with her long neck uncovered, her scanty dark hair twisted into a knot on the nape of her neck, no larger than the fist of a two-year-old child. She looked at us rather cheerfully. Besides the candlestick, she had on the table in front of her a little peasant looking-glass, an old pack of cards, a tattered book of songs, and a white roll of German bread from which one or two bites had been taken. It was noticeable that Mile. Lebyadkin used powder and rouge, and painted her lips. She also blackened her eyebrows, which were fine, long, and black enough without that. Three long wrinkles stood sharply conspicuous across her high, narrow forehead in spite of the powder on it. I already knew that she was lame, but on this occasion she did not attempt to get up or walk. At some time, perhaps in early youth, that wasted face may have been pretty; but her soft, gentle grey eyes were remarkable even now. There was something dreamy

and sincere in her gentle, almost joyful, expression. This gentle serene joy, which was reflected also in her smile, astonished me after all I had heard of the Cossack whip and her brother's violence. Strange to say, instead of the oppressive repulsion and almost dread one usually feels in the presence of these creatures afflicted by God, I felt it almost pleasant to look at her from the first moment, and my heart was filled afterwards with pity in which there was no trace of aversion.

"This is how she sits literally for days together, utterly alone, without moving; she tries her fortune with the cards, or looks in the looking-glass," said Shatov, pointing her out to me from the doorway. "He doesn't feed her, you know. The old woman in the lodge brings her something sometimes out of charity; how can they leave her all alone like this with a candle!"

To my surprise Shatov spoke aloud, just as though she were not in the room.

"Good day, Shatushka!" Mile. Lebyadkin said genially.

"I've brought you a visitor, Marya Timofyevna," said Shatov.

"The visitor is very welcome. I don't know who it is you've brought, I don't seem to remember him." She scrutinised me intently from behind the candle, and turned again at once to Shatov (and she took no more notice of me for the rest of the conversation, as though I had not been near her).

"Are you tired of walking up and down alone in your garret?" she laughed, displaying two rows of magnificent teeth.

"I was tired of it, and I wanted to come and see you."

Shatov moved a bench up to the table, sat down on it and made me sit beside him.

"I'm always glad to have a talk, though you're a funny person, Shatushka, just like a monk. When did you comb your hair last I let me do it for you." And she pulled a little comb out of her pocket. "I don't believe you've touched it since I combed it last."

"Well, I haven't got a comb," said Shatov, laughing too.

"Really? Then I'll give you mine; only remind me, not this one but another."

With a most serious expression she set to work to comb his hair. She even parted it on one side; drew back a little, looked to see whether it was right and put the comb back in her pocket.

"Do you know what, Shatushka?" She shook her head. "You may be a very sensible man but you're dull. It's strange for me to look at all of you. I don't understand how it is people are dull. Sadness is not dullness. I'm happy."

"And are you happy when your brother's here?"

"You mean Lebyadkin? He's my footman. And I don't care whether he's here or not. I call to him: 'Lebyadkin, bring the water! 'or' Lebyadkin, bring my shoes!' and he runs. Sometimes one does wrong and can't help laughing at him.

"That's just how it is," said Shatov, addressing me aloud without ceremony. "She treats him just like a footman. I've heard her myself calling to him, 'Lebyadkin, give me some water!' And she laughed as she said it. The only difference is that he doesn't fetch the water but beats her for it; but she isn't a bit afraid of him. She has some sort of nervous fits, almost every day, and they are destroying her memory so that afterwards

she forgets everything that's just happened, and is always in a muddle over time. You imagine she remembers how you came in; perhaps she does remember, but no doubt she has changed everything to please herself, and she takes us now for different people from what we are, though she knows I'm 'Shatushka.' It doesn't matter my speaking aloud, she soon leaves off listening to people who talk to her, and plunges into dreams. Yes, plunges. She's an extraordinary person for dreaming; she'll sit for eight hours, for whole days together in the same place. You see there's a roll lying there, perhaps she's only taken one bite at it since the morning, and she'll finish it to-morrow. Now she's begun trying her fortune on cards. .". ."

"I keep trying my fortune, Shatushka, but it doesn't come out right," Marya Timofyevna put in suddenly, catching the last word, and without looking at it she put out her left hand for the roll (she had heard something about the roll too very likely). She got hold of the roll at last and after keeping it for some time in her left hand, while her attention was distracted by the conversation which sprang up again, she put it back again on the table unconsciously without having taken a bite of it.

"It always comes out the same, a journey, a wicked man, somebody's treachery, a death-bed, a letter, unexpected news. I think it's all nonsense. Shatushka, what do you think? If people can tell lies why shouldn't a card?" She suddenly threw the cards together again. "I said the same thing to Mother Praskovya, she's a very venerable woman, she used to run to my cell to tell her fortune on the cards, without letting the Mother Superior know. Yes, and she wasn't the only one who came to me. They sigh, and shake their heads at me, they talk it over while I laugh. 'Where are you going to get a letter from, Mother Praskovya,' I say, 'when you haven't had one for twelve years?' Her daughter had been taken away to Turkey by her husband, and for twelve years there had been no sight nor sound of her. Only I was sitting the next evening at tea with the Mother Superior (she was a princess by birth), there was some lady there too, a visitor, a great dreamer, and a little monk from Athos was sitting there too, a rather absurd man to my thinking. What do you think, Shatushka, that monk from Athos had brought Mother Praskovya a letter from her daughter in Turkey, that morning—so much for the knave of diamonds— unexpected news! We were drinking our tea, and the monk from Athos said to the Mother Superior, 'Blessed Mother Superior, God has blessed your convent above all things in that you preserve so great a treasure in its precincts,' said he. 'What treasure is that?' asked the Mother Superior. 'The Mother Lizaveta, the Blessed.' This Lizaveta the Blessed was enshrined in the nunnery wall, in a cage seven feet long and five feet high, and she had been sitting there for seventeen years in nothing but a hempen shift, summer and winter, and she always kept pecking at the hempen cloth with a straw or a twig of some sort, and she never said a word, and never combed her hair, or washed, for seventeen years. In the winter they used to put a sheepskin in for her, and every day a piece of bread and a jug of water. The pilgrims gaze at her, sigh and exclaim, and make offerings of money. 'A treasure you've pitched on,' answered the Mother Superior—(she was angry, she disliked Lizaveta dreadfully)—' Lizaveta only sits there out of spite, out of pure

obstinacy, it is nothing but hypocrisy.' I didn't like this; I was thinking at the time of shutting myself up too. 'I think,' said I, 'that God and nature are just the same thing.' They all cried out with one voice at me, 'Well, now!' The Mother Superior laughed, whispered something to the lady and called me up, petted me, and the lady gave me a pink ribbon. Would you like me to show it to you? And the monk began to admonish me. But he talked so kindly, so humbly, and so wisely, I suppose. I sat and listened. 'Do you understand?' he asked. 'No,' I said, 'I don't understand a word, but leave me quite alone.' Ever since then they've left me in peace, Shatushka. And at that time an old woman who was living in the convent doing penance for prophesying the future, whispered to me as she was coming out of church, 'What is the mother of God? What do you think?' 'The great mother,' I answer, 'the hope of the human race.' 'Yes,' she answered, 'the mother of God is the great mother—the damp earth, and therein lies great joy for men. And every earthly woe and every earthly tear is a joy for us; and when you water the earth with your tears a foot deep, you will rejoice at everything at once, and your sorrow will be no more, such is the prophecy.' That word sank into my heart at the time. Since then when I bow down to the ground at my prayers, I've taken to kissing the earth. I kiss it and weep. And let me tell you, Shatushka, there's no harm in those tears; and even if one has no grief, one's tears flow from joy. The tears flow of themselves, that's the truth. I used to go out to the shores of the lake; on one side was our convent and on the other the pointed mountain, they called it the Peak. I used to go up that mountain, facing the east, fall down to the ground, and weep and weep, and I don't know how long I wept, and I don't remember or know anything about it. I would get up, and turn back when the sun was setting, it was so big, and splendid and glorious—do you like looking at the sun, Shatushka? It's beautiful but sad. I would turn to the east again, and the shadow, the shadow of our mountain was flying like an arrow over our lake, long, long and narrow, stretching a mile beyond, right up to the island on the lake and cutting that rocky island right in two, and as it cut it in two, the sun would set altogether and suddenly all would be darkness. And then I used to be quite miserable, suddenly I used to remember, I'm afraid of the dark, Shatushka. And what I wept for most was my baby. ..."

"Why, had you one?" And Shatov, who had been listening attentively all the time, nudged me with his elbow.

"Why, of course. A little rosy baby with tiny little nails, and my only grief is I can't remember whether it was a boy or a girl. Sometimes I remember it was a boy, and sometimes it was a girl. And when he was born, I wrapped him in cambric and lace, and put pink ribbons on him, strewed him with flowers, got him ready, said prayers over him. I took him away un-christened and carried him through the forest, and I was afraid of the forest, and I was frightened, and what I weep for most is that I had a baby and I never had a husband."

"Perhaps you had one?" Shatov queried cautiously."

“You’re absurd, Shatushka, with your reflections. I had, perhaps I had, but what’s the use of my having had one, if it’s just the same as though I hadn’t. There’s an easy riddle for you. Guess it!” she laughed.

“Where did you take your baby?”

“I took it to the pond,” she said with a sigh.

Shatov nudged me again.

“And what if you never had a baby and all this is only a wild dream?”

“You ask me a hard question, Shatushka,” she answered dreamily, without a trace of surprise at such a question. “I can’t tell you anything about that, perhaps I hadn’t; I think that’s only your curiosity. I shan’t leave off crying for him anyway, I couldn’t have dreamt it.” And big tears glittered in her eyes. “Shatushka, Shatushka, is it true that your wife ran away from you?”

She suddenly put both hands on his shoulders, and looked at him pityingly. “Don’t be angry, I feel sick myself. Do you know, Shatushka, I’ve had a dream: he came to me again, he beckoned me, called me. ‘My little puss,’ he cried to me, ‘little puss, come to me!’ And I was more delighted at that ‘little puss’ than anything; he loves me, I thought.”

“Perhaps he will come in reality,” Shatov muttered in an undertone.

“No, Shatushka, that’s a dream... . He can’t come in reality. You know the song:

‘A new fine house I do not crave,
This tiny cell’s enough for me;
There will I dwell my soul to save
And ever pray to God for thee.’

Ach, Shatushka, Shatushka, my dear, why do you never ask me about anything?”

“Why, you won’t tell. That’s why I don’t ask.”

“I won’t tell, I won’t tell,” she answered quickly. “You may kill me, I won’t tell. You may burn me, I won’t tell.

And whatever I had to bear I’d never tell, people won’t find out!”

“There, you see. Every one has something of their own,” Shatov said, still more softly, his head drooping lower and lower.

“But if you were to ask perhaps I should tell, perhaps I should!” she repeated ecstatically. “Why don’t you ask I Ask, ask me nicely, Shatushka, perhaps I shall tell you. Entreat me, Shatushka, so that I shall consent of myself. Shatushka, Shatushka!”

But Shatushka was silent. There was complete silence lasting a minute. Tears slowly trickled down her painted cheeks. She sat forgetting her two hands on Shatov’s shoulders, but no longer looking at him.

“Ach, what is it to do with me, and it’s a sin.” Shatov suddenly got up from the bench.

“Get up!” He angrily pulled the bench from under me and put it back where it stood before.

“He’ll be coming, so we must mind he doesn’t guess. It’s time we were off.”

“Ach, you’re talking of my footman,” Marya Timofyevna laughed suddenly. “You’re afraid of him. Well, good-bye, dear visitors, but listen for one minute, I’ve something to tell you. That Nilitch came here with Filipov, the landlord, a red beard, and my fellow had flown at me just then, so the landlord caught hold of him and pulled him about the room while he shouted ‘It’s not my fault, I’m suffering for another man’s sin!’ So would you believe it, we all burst out laughing... .”

“Ach, Timofyevna, why it was I, not the red beard, it was I pulled him away from you by his hair, this morning; the landlord came the day before yesterday to make a row; you’ve mixed it up.”

“Stay, I really have mixed it up. Perhaps it was you. Why dispute about trifles? What does it matter to him who it is gives him a beating?” She laughed.

“Come along!” Shatov pulled me. “The gate’s creaking, he’ll find us and beat her.”

And before we had time to run out on to the stairs we heard a drunken shout and a shower of oaths at the gate.

Shatov let me into his room and locked the door.

“You’ll have to stay a minute if you don’t want a scene. He’s squealing like a little pig, he must have stumbled over the gate again. He falls flat every time.”

We didn’t get off without a scene, however.

5

Shatov stood at the closed door of his room and listened; suddenly he sprang back.

“He’s coming here, I knew he would,” he whispered furiously. “Now there’ll be no getting rid of him till midnight.”

Several violent thumps of a fist on the door followed.

“Shatov, Shatov, friend... ! open!” yelled the captain. “Shatov,

I have come, to thee to tell thee

That the sun doth r-r-rise apace,

That the forest glows and tr-r-rembles

In ... the fire of ... his ... embrace.

Tell thee I have waked, God damn thee,

Wakened under the birch-twigs... .’

(“As it might be under the birch-rods, ha ha!”)

‘Silvery little bird ... is ... thirsty,

Says I’m going

t o ... have a drink, But I don’t ... know what to drink... .’

Damn his stupid curiosity! Shatov, do you understand how good it is to be alive!”

“Don’t answer!” Shatov whispered to me again.

“Open the door! Do you understand that there’s something higher than brawling ... in mankind; there are moments of an hon-hon-honourable man... . Shatov, I’m good; I’ll forgive you... . Shatov, damn the manifestoes, eh?”

Silence.

“Do you understand, you ass, that I’m in love, that I’ve bought a dress-coat, look, the garb of love, fifteen roubles; a captain’s love calls for the niceties of style... . Open the door!” he roared savagely all of a sudden, and he began furiously banging with his fists again.

“Go to hell!” Shatov roared suddenly. .

“S-s-slave! Bond-slave, and your sister’s a slave, a bondswoman ... a th ... th ... ief!”

“And you sold your sister.”

“That’s a lie! I put up with the libel though. I could with one word ... do you understand what she is?”

“What?” Shatov at once drew near the door inquisitively.

“But will you understand?”

“Yes, I shall understand, tell me what?”

“I’m not afraid to say! I’m never afraid to say anything in public! ...”

“You not afraid? A likely story,” said Shatov, taunting him, and nodding to me to listen.

“Me afraid?”

“Yes, I think you are.”

“Me afraid?”

“Well then, tell away if you’re not afraid of your master’s whip... . You’re a coward, though you are a captain!”

“I ... I ... she’s ... she’s ...” faltered Lebyadkin in a voice shaking with excitement.

“Well?” Shatov put his ear to the door.

A silence followed, lasting at least half a minute.

“Sc-ou-oundrel!” came from the other side of the door at last, and the captain hurriedly beat a retreat downstairs, puffing like a samovar, stumbling on every step.

“Yes, he’s a sly one, and won’t give himself away even when he’s drunk.”

Shatov moved away from the door.

“What’s it all about?” I asked.

Shatov waved aside the question, opened the door and began listening on the stairs again. He listened a long while, and even stealthily descended a few steps. At last he came back.

“There’s nothing to be heard; he isn’t beating her; he must have flopped down at once to go to sleep. It’s time for you to go.”

“Listen, Shatov, what am I to gather from all this?”

“Oh, gather what you like!” he answered in a weary and disgusted voice, and he sat down to his writing-table.

I went away. An improbable idea was growing stronger and stronger in my mind. I thought of the next day with distress... .

6

This “next day,” the very Sunday which was to decide Stepan Trofimovitch’s fate irrevocably, was one of the most memorable days in my chronicle. It was a day of surprises, a day that solved past riddles and suggested new ones, a day of startling revelations, and still more hopeless perplexity. In the morning, as the reader is already aware, I had by Varvara, Petrovna’s particular request to accompany my friend on his visit to her, and at three o’clock in the afternoon I had to be with Lizaveta Nikolaevna in order to tell her—I did not know what—and to assist her—I did not know how. And meanwhile it all ended as no one could have expected. In a word, it was a day of wonderful coincidences.

To begin with, when Stepan Trofimovitch and I arrived at Varvara Petrovna’s at twelve o’clock punctually, the time she had fixed, we did not find her at home; she had not yet come back from church. My poor friend was so disposed, or, more accurately speaking, so indisposed that this circumstance crushed him at once; he sank almost helpless into an arm-chair in the drawing-room. I suggested a glass of water; but in spite of his pallor and the trembling of his hands, he refused it with dignity. His get-up for the occasion was, by the way, extremely recherche: a shirt of batiste and embroidered, almost fit for a ball, a white tie, a new hat in his hand, new straw-coloured gloves, and even a suspicion of scent. We had hardly sat down when Shatov was shown in by the butler, obviously also by official invitation. Stepan Trofimovitch was rising to shake hands with him, but Shatov, after looking attentively at us both, turned away into a corner, and sat down there without even nodding to us. Stepan Trofimovitch looked at me in dismay again.

We sat like this for some minutes longer in complete silence. Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly began whispering something to me very quickly, but I could not catch it; and indeed, he was so agitated himself that he broke off without finishing. The butler came in once more, ostensibly to set something straight on the table, more probably to take a look at us.

Shatov suddenly addressed him with a loud question:

“Alexey Yegorytch, do you know whether Darya Pavlovna has gone with her?”

“Varvara Petrovna was pleased to drive to the cathedral alone, and Darya Pavlovna was pleased to remain in her room upstairs, being indisposed,” Alexey Yegorytch announced formally and reprovingly.

My poor friend again stole a hurried and agitated glance at me, so that at last I turned away from him. Suddenly a carriage rumbled at the entrance, and some commotion at a distance in the house made us aware of the lady’s return. We all leapt up from our easy chairs, but again a surprise awaited us; we heard the noise of many footsteps, so our hostess must have returned not alone, and this certainly was rather strange, since she had fixed that time herself. Finally, we heard some one come in with strange rapidity as though running, in a way that Varvara Petrovna could not have come in. And, all at once she almost flew into the room, panting and extremely

agitated. After her a little later and much more quickly Lizaveta Nikolaevna came in, and with her, hand in hand, Marya Timofyevna Lebyadkin! If I had seen this in my dreams, even then I should not have believed it.

To explain their utterly unexpected appearance, I must go back an hour and describe more in detail an extraordinary adventure which had befallen Varvara Petrovna in church.

In the first place almost the whole town, that is, of course, all of the upper stratum of society, were assembled in the cathedral. It was known that the governor's wife was to make her appearance there for the first time since her arrival amongst us. I must mention that there were already rumours that she was a free-thinker, and a follower of "the new principles." All the ladies were also aware that she would be dressed with magnificence and extraordinary elegance. And so the costumes of our ladies were elaborate and gorgeous for the occasion.

Only Varvara Petrovna was modestly dressed in black as she always was, and had been for the last four years. She had taken her usual place in church in the first row on the left, and a footman in livery had put down a velvet cushion for her to kneel on; everything in fact, had been as usual. But it was noticed, too, that all through the service she prayed with extreme fervour. It was even asserted afterwards when people recalled it, that she had had tears in her eyes. The service was over at last, and our chief priest, Father Pavel, came out to deliver a solemn sermon. We liked his sermons and thought very highly of them. We used even to try to persuade him to print them, but he never could make up his mind to. On this occasion the sermon was a particularly long one.

And behold, during the sermon a lady drove up to the church in an old fashioned hired droshky, that is, one in which the lady could only sit sideways, holding on to the driver's sash, shaking at every jolt like a blade of grass in the breeze. Such droshkys are still to be seen in our town. Stopping at the corner of the cathedral—for there were a number of carriages, and mounted police too, at the gates—the lady sprang out of the droshky and handed the driver four kopecks in silver.

"Isn't it enough, Vanya?" she cried, seeing his grimace. "It's all I've got," she added plaintively.

"Well, there, bless you. I took you without fixing the price," said the driver with a hopeless gesture, and looking at her he added as though reflecting:

"And it would be a sin to take advantage of you too."

Then, thrusting his leather purse into his bosom, he touched up his horse and drove off, followed by the jeers of the drivers standing near. Jeers, and wonder too, followed the lady as she made her way to the cathedral gates, between the carriages and the footmen waiting for their masters to come out. And indeed, there certainly was something extraordinary and surprising to every one in such a person's suddenly appearing in the street among people. She was painfully thin and she limped, she was heavily powdered and rouged; her long neck was quite bare, she had neither kerchief nor pelisse; she had nothing on but an old dark dress in spite of the cold and windy,

though bright, September day. She was bareheaded, and her hair was twisted up into a tiny knot, and on the right side of it was stuck an artificial rose, such as are used to dedicate cherubs sold in Palm week. I had noticed just such a one with a wreath of paper roses in a corner under the ikons when I was at Mary Timofyevna's the day before. To put a finishing-touch to it, though the lady walked with modestly downcast eyes there was a sly and merry smile on her face. If she had lingered a moment longer, she would perhaps not have been allowed to enter the cathedral. But she succeeded in slipping by, and entering the building, gradually pressed forward.

Though it was half-way through the sermon, and the dense crowd that filled the cathedral was listening to it with absorbed and silent attention, yet several pairs of eyes glanced with curiosity and amazement at the new-comer. She sank on to the floor, bowed her painted face down to it, lay there a long time, unmistakably weeping; but raising her head again and getting up from her knees, she soon recovered, and was diverted. Gaily and with evident and intense enjoyment she let her eyes rove over the faces, and over the walls of the cathedral. She looked with particular curiosity at some of the ladies, even standing on tip-toe to look at them, and even laughed once or twice, giggling strangely. But the sermon was over, and they brought out the cross. The governor's wife was the first to go up to the cross, but she stopped short two steps from it, evidently wishing to make way for Varvara . Petrovna, who, on her side, moved towards it quite directly as though she noticed no one in front of her. There was an obvious and, in its way, clever malice implied in this extraordinary act of deference on the part of the governor's wife; every one felt this; Varvara Petrovna must have felt it too; but she went on as before, apparently noticing no one, and with the same unfaltering air of dignity kissed the cross, and at once turned to leave the cathedral. A footman in livery cleared the way for her, though every one stepped back spontaneously to let her pass. But just as she was going out, in the porch the closely packed mass of people blocked the way for a moment. Varvara Petrovna stood still, and suddenly a strange, extraordinary creature, the woman with the paper rose on her head, squeezed through the people, and fell on her knees before her. Varvara Petrovna, who was not easily disconcerted, especially in public, looked at her sternly and with dignity.

I hasten to observe here, as briefly as possible, that though Varvara Petrovna had become, it was said, excessively careful and even stingy, yet sometimes she was not sparing of money, especially for benevolent objects. She was a member of a charitable society in the capital. In the last famine year she had sent five hundred roubles to the chief committee for the relief of the sufferers, and people talked of it in the town. Moreover, just before the appointment of the new governor, she had been on the very point of founding a local committee of ladies to assist the poorest mothers in the town and in the province. She was severely censured among us for ambition; but Varvara Petrovna's well-known strenuousness and, at the same time, her persistence nearly triumphed over all obstacles. The society was almost formed, and the original idea embraced a wider and wider scope in the enthusiastic mind of the foundress. She was already dreaming of founding a similar society in Moscow, and the gradual expansion

of its influence over all the provinces of Russia. And now, with the sudden change of governor, everything was at a standstill; and the new governor's wife had, it was said, already uttered in society some biting, and, what was worse, apt and sensible remarks about the impracticability of the fundamental idea of such a committee, which was, with additions of course, repeated to Varvara Petrovna. God alone knows the secrets of men's hearts; but I imagine that Varvara Petrovna stood still now at the very cathedral gates positively with a certain pleasure, knowing that the governor's wife and, after her, all the congregation, would have to pass by immediately, and "let her see for herself how little I care what she thinks, and what pointed things she says about the vanity of my benevolence. So much for all of you!"

"What is it my dear? What are you asking?" said Varvara Petrovna, looking more attentively at the kneeling woman before her, who gazed at her with a fearfully panic-stricken, shame-faced, but almost reverent expression, and suddenly broke into the same strange giggle.

"What does she want? Who is she?"

Varvara Petrovna bent an imperious and inquiring gaze on all around her. Every one was silent.

"You are unhappy? You are in need of help?"

"I am in need. ... I have come ..." faltered the "unhappy" creature, in a voice broken with emotion. "I have come only to kiss your hand. ..."

Again she giggled. With the childish look with which little children caress some one, begging for a favour, she stretched forward to seize Varvara Petrovna's hand, but, as though panic-stricken, drew her hands back.

"Is that all you have come for?" said Varvara Petrovna, with a compassionate smile; but at once she drew her mother-of-pearl purse out of her pocket, took out a ten-rouble note and gave it to the unknown. The latter took it. Varvara Petrovna was much interested and evidently did not look upon her as an ordinary low-class beggar.

"I say, she gave her ten roubles!" some one said in the crowd.

"Let me kiss your hand," faltered the unknown, holding tight in the fingers of her left hand the corner of the ten-rouble note, which fluttered in the draught. Varvara Petrovna frowned slightly, and with a serious, almost severe, face held out her hand. The cripple kissed it with reverence. Her grateful eyes shone with positive ecstasy. At that moment the governor's wife came up, and a whole crowd of ladies and high officials flocked after her. The governor's wife was forced to stand still for a moment in the crush; many people stopped.

"You are trembling. Are you cold?" Varvara Petrovna observed suddenly, and flinging off her pelisse which a footman caught in mid-air, she took from her own shoulders a very expensive black shawl, and with her own hands wrapped it round the bare neck of the still kneeling woman.

"But get up, get up from your knees I beg you!"

The woman got up.

“Where do you live? Is it possible no one knows where she lives?” Varvara Petrovna glanced round impatiently again. But the crowd was different now: she saw only the faces of acquaintances, people in society, surveying the scene, some with severe astonishment, others with sly curiosity and at the same time guileless eagerness for a sensation, while others positively laughed.

“I believe her name’s Lebyadkin,” a good-natured person volunteered at last in answer to Varvara Petrovna. It was our respectable and respected merchant Andreev, a man in spectacles with a grey beard, wearing Russian dress and holding a high round hat in his hands. “They live in the Filipovs’ house in Bogoyavlensky Street.”

“Lebyadkin? Filipovs’ house? I have heard something... . Thank you, Nikon Semyonitch. But who is this Lebyadkin?”

“He calls himself a captain, a man, it must be said, not over careful in his behaviour. And no doubt this is his sister. She must have escaped from under control,” Nikon Semyonitch went on, dropping his voice, and glancing significantly at Varvara Petrovna.

“I understand. Thank you, Nikon Semyonitch. Your name is Mile. Lebyadkin?”

“No, my name’s not Lebyadkin.”

“Then perhaps your brother’s name is Lebyadkin?”

“My brother’s name is Lebyadkin.”

“This is what I’ll do, I’ll take you with me now, my dear, and you shall be driven from me to your family. Would you like to go with me?”

“Ach, I should!” cried Mile. Lebyadkin, clasping her hands.

“Auntie, auntie, take me with you too!” the voice of Lizaveta Nikolaevna cried suddenly.

I must observe that Lizaveta Nikolaevna had come to the cathedral with the governor’s wife, while Praskovya Ivanovna had by the doctor’s orders gone for a drive in her carriage, taking Mavriky Nikolaevitch to entertain her. Liza suddenly left the governor’s wife and ran up to Varvara Petrovna.

“My dear, you know I’m always glad to have you, but what will your mother say?” Varvara Petrovna began majestically, but she became suddenly confused, noticing Liza’s extraordinary agitation.

“Auntie, auntie, I must come with you!” Liza implored, kissing Varvara Petrovna.

“Mais qu’avez vous done, Lise?” the governor’s wife asked with expressive wonder.

“Ah, forgive me, darling, chere cousine, I’m going to auntie’s.”

Liza turned in passing to her unpleasantly surprised chere cousine, and kissed her twice.

“And tell maman to follow me to auntie’s directly; maman meant, fully meant to come and see you, she said so this morning herself, I forgot to tell you,” Liza pattered on. “I beg your pardon, don’t be angry, Julie, chere ... cousine... . Auntie, I’m ready!”

“If you don’t take me with you, auntie, I’ll run after your carriage, screaming,” she whispered rapidly and despairingly in Varvara Petrovna’s ear; it was lucky that no one heard. Varvara Petrovna positively staggered back, and bent her penetrating gaze on

the mad girl. That gaze settled everything. She made up her mind to take Liza with her.

“We must put an end to this!” broke from her lips. “Very well, I’ll take you with pleasure, Liza,” she added aloud, “if Yulia Mihailovna is willing to let you come, of course.” With a candid air and straightforward dignity she addressed the governor’s wife directly.

“Oh, certainly, I don’t want to deprive her of such a pleasure especially as I am myself ...” Yulia Mihailovna lisped with amazing affability—“ I myself ... know well what a fantastic, wilful little head it is!” Yulia Mihailovna gave a charming smile.

“I thank you extremely,” said Varvara Petrovna, with a courteous and dignified bow.

“And I am the more gratified,” Yulia Mihailovna went on, lisping almost rapturously, flushing all over with agreeable excitement, “that, apart from the pleasure of being with you Liza should be carried away by such an excellent, I may say lofty, feeling ... of compassion ...” (she glanced at the “unhappy creature”) “and ... and at the very portal of the temple... .”

“Such a feeling does you honour,” Varvara Petrovna approved magnificently. Yulia Mihailovna impulsively held out her hand and Varvara Petrovna with perfect readiness touched it with her fingers. The general effect was excellent, the faces of some of those present beamed with pleasure, some bland and insinuating smiles were to be seen.

In short it was made manifest to every one in the town that it was not Yulia Mihailovna who had up till now neglected Varvara Petrovna in not calling upon her, but on the contrary that Varvara Petrovna had “kept Yulia Mihailovna within bounds at a distance, while the latter would have hastened to pay her a visit, going on foot perhaps if necessary, had she been fully assured that Varvara Petrovna would not turn her away.” And Varvara Petrovna’s prestige was enormously increased.

“Get in, my dear.” Varvara Petrovna motioned Mile. Lebyadkin towards the carriage which had driven up.

The “unhappy creature” hurried gleefully to the carriage door, and there the footman lifted her in.

“What! You’re lame!” cried Varvara Petrovna, seeming quite alarmed, and she turned pale. (Every one noticed it at the time, but did not understand it.)

The carriage rolled away. Varvara Petrovna’s house was very near the cathedral. Liza told me afterwards that Miss Lebyadkin laughed hysterically for the three minutes that the drive lasted, while Varvara Petrovna sat “as though in a mesmeric sleep.” Liza’s own expression.

Chapter 5: The Subtle Serpent Varvara Petrovna Rang the Bell and Threw Herself Into an Easy Chair by the Window

1

“Sit here, my dear.” She motioned Marya Timofyevna to a seat in the middle of the room, by a large round table. “Stepan Trofimovitch, what is the meaning of this? See, see, look at this woman, what is the meaning of it?”

“I ... I ...” faltered Stepan Trofimovitch.

But a footman came in.

“A cup of coffee at once, we must have it as quickly as possible! Keep the horses!”

“Mais, chere et excellente amie, dans quelle inquietude ...” Stepan Trofimovitch exclaimed in a dying voice.

“Ach! French! French! I can see at once that it’s the highest society,” cried Marya Timofyevna, clapping her hands, ecstatically preparing herself to listen to a conversation in French. Varvara Petrovna stared at her almost in dismay.

We all sat in silence, waiting to see how it would end. Shatov did not lift up his head, and Stepan Trofimovitch was overwhelmed with confusion as though it were all his fault; the perspiration stood out on his temples. I glanced at Liza (she was sitting in the corner almost beside Shatov). Her eyes darted keenly from Varvara Petrovna to the cripple and back again; her lips were drawn into a smile, but not a pleasant one. Varvara Petrovna saw that smile. Meanwhile Marya Timofyevna was absolutely transported. With evident enjoyment and without a trace of embarrassment she stared at Varvara Petrovna’s beautiful drawing-room—the furniture, the carpets, the pictures on the walls, the old-fashioned painted ceiling, the great bronze crucifix in the corner, the china lamp, the albums, the objects on the table.

“And you’re here, too, Shatushka!” she cried suddenly. “Only fancy, I saw you a long time ago, but I thought it couldn’t be you! How could you come here!” And she laughed gaily.

“You know this woman?” said Varvara Petrovna, turning to him at once.

“I know her,” muttered Shatov. He seemed about to move from his chair, but remained sitting.

“What do you know of her? Make haste, please!”

“Oh, well ...” he stammered with an incongruous smile. “You see for yourself. ...”

“What do I see? Come now, say something!”

“She lives in the same house as I do ... with her brother ... an officer.”

“Well?”

Shatov stammered again.

“It’s not worth talking about ...” he muttered, and relapsed into determined silence. He positively flushed with determination.

“Of course one can expect nothing else from you,” said Varvara Petrovna indignantly. It was clear to her now that they all knew something and, at the same time, that they were all scared, that they were evading her questions, and anxious to keep something from her.

The footman came in and brought her, on a little silver tray, the cup of coffee she had so specially ordered, but at a sign from her moved with it at once towards Marya Timofyevna.

“You were very cold just now, my dear; make haste and drink it and get warm.”

“Herd.”

Marya Timofyevna took the cup and at once went off into a giggle at having said merci to the footman. But meeting Varvara Petrovna’s reproving eyes, she was overcome with shyness and put the cup on the table.

“Auntie, surely you’re not angry?” she faltered with a sort of flippant playfulness.

“Wh-a-a-t?” Varvara Petrovna started, and drew herself up in her chair. “I’m not your aunt. What are you thinking of?”

Marya Timofyevna, not expecting such an angry outburst, began trembling all over in little convulsive shudders, as though she were in a fit, and sank back in her chair.

“I ... I ... thought that was the proper way,” she faltered, gazing open-eyed at Varvara Petrovna. “Liza called you that.”

“What Liza?”

“Why, this young lady here,” said Marya Timofyevna, pointing with her finger.

“So she’s Liza already?”

“You called her that yourself just now,” said Marya Timofyevna growing a little holder. “And I dreamed of a beauty like that,” she added, laughing, as it were accidentally.

Varvara Petrovna reflected, and grew calmer, she even smiled faintly at Marya Timofyevna’s last words; the latter, catching her smile, got up from her chair, and limping, went timidly towards her.

“Take it. I forgot to give it back. Don’t be angry with my rudeness.”

She took from her shoulders the black shawl that Varvara Petrovna had wrapped round her.

“Put it on again at once, and you can keep it always. Go and sit down, drink your coffee, and please don’t be afraid of me, my dear, don’t worry yourself. I am beginning to understand you.”

“Chere amie ...” Stepan Trofimovitch ventured again.

“Ach, Stepan Trofimovitch, it’s bewildering enough without you. You might at least spare me... . Please ring that bell there, near you, to the maid’s room.”

A silence followed. Her eyes strayed irritably and suspiciously over all our faces. Agasha, her favourite maid, came in.

“Bring me my check shawl, the one I bought in Geneva. What’s Darya Pavlovna doing?”

“She’s not very well, madam.”

“Go and ask her to come here. Say that I want her particularly, even if she’s not well.”

At that instant there was again, as before, an unusual noise of steps and voices in the next room, and suddenly Praskovya Ivanovna, panting and “distracted,” appeared in the doorway. She was leaning on the arm of Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

“Ach, heavens, I could scarcely drag myself here. Liza, you mad girl, how you treat your mother!” she squeaked, concentrating in that squeak, as weak and irritable people are wont to do, all her accumulated irritability. “Varvara Petrovna, I’ve come for my daughter!”

Varvara Petrovna looked at her from under her brows, half rose to meet her, and scarcely concealing her vexation brought out: “Good morning, Praskovya Ivanovna, please be seated, knew you would come!”

2

There could be nothing surprising to Praskovya Ivanovna in such a reception. Varvara Petrovna had from childhood upwards treated her old school friend tyrannically, and under a show of friendship almost contemptuously. And this was an exceptional occasion too. During the last few days there had almost been a complete rupture between the two households, as I have mentioned incidentally already. The reason of this rupture was still a mystery to Varvara Petrovna, which made it all the more offensive; but the chief cause of offence was that Praskovya Ivanovna had succeeded in taking up an extraordinarily supercilious attitude towards Varvara Petrovna. Varvara Petrovna was wounded of course, and meanwhile some strange rumours had reached her which also irritated her extremely, especially by their vagueness. Varvara Petrovna was of a direct and proudly frank character, somewhat slap-dash in her methods, indeed, if the expression is permissible. There was nothing she detested so much as secret and mysterious insinuations, she always preferred war in the open. Anyway, the two ladies had not met for five days. The last visit had been paid by Varvara Petrovna, who had come back from “that Drozdov woman” offended and perplexed. I can say with certainty that Praskovya Ivanovna had come on this occasion with the naive conviction that Varvara Petrovna would, for some reason, be sure to stand in awe of her. This was evident from the very expression of her face. Evidently too, Varvara Petrovna was always possessed by a demon of haughty pride whenever she had the least ground for suspecting that she was for some reason supposed to be humiliated. Like many weak people, who for a long time ‘allow themselves to be insulted without resenting it, Praskovya Ivanovna showed an extraordinary violence in her attack at the first favourable opportunity. It is true that she was not well, and always became more irritable in illness. I must add finally, that our presence in the drawing-room could hardly be much check to the two ladies who had been friends from childhood, if a quarrel had broken out between them. We were looked upon as friends of the family, and almost as their subjects. I made that reflection with some alarm at the time. Stepan Trofimovitch, who had not sat down

since the entrance of Varvara Petrovna, sank helplessly into an arm-chair on hearing Praskovya Ivanovna's squeal, and tried to catch my eye with a look of despair. Shatov turned sharply in his chair, and growled something to himself. I believe he meant to get up and go away. Liza rose from her chair but sank back again at once without even paying befitting attention to her mother's squeal—not from “waywardness,” but obviously because she was entirely absorbed by some other overwhelming impression. She was looking absent-mindedly into the air, no longer noticing even Marya Timofyevna.

3

“Ach, here!” Praskovya Ivanovna indicated an easy chair near the table and sank heavily into it with the assistance of Mavriky Nikolaevitch. “I wouldn't have sat down in your house, my lady, if it weren't for my legs,” she added in a breaking voice.

Varvara Petrovna raised her head a little, and with an expression of suffering pressed the fingers of her right hand to her right temple, evidently in acute pain (tic douloureux).

“Why so, Praskovya Ivanovna; why wouldn't you sit down in my house? I possessed your late husband's sincere friendship all his life; and you and I used to play with our dolls at school together as girls.”

Praskovya Ivanovna waved her hands.

“I knew that was coming! You always begin about the school when you want to reproach me—that's your way. But to my thinking that's only fine talk. I can't stand the school you're always talking about.”

You've come in rather a bad temper, I'm afraid; how are your legs? Here they're bringing you some coffee, please have some, drink it and don't be cross.”

“Varvara Petrovna, you treat me as though I were a child. I won't have any coffee, so there!”

And she pettishly waved away the footman who was bringing her coffee. (All the others refused coffee too except Mavriky Nikolaevitch and me. Stepan Trofimovitch took it, but put it aside on the table. Though Marya Timofyevna was very eager to have another cup and even put out her hand to take it, on second thoughts she refused it ceremoniously, and was obviously pleased with herself for doing so.)

Varvara Petrovna gave a wry smile.

“I'll tell you what it is, Praskovya Ivanovna, my friend, you must have taken some fancy into your head again, and that's why you've come. You've simply lived on fancies all your life. You flew into a fury at the mere mention of our school; but do you remember how you came and persuaded all the class that a hussar called Shablykin had proposed to you, and how Mme. Lefebure proved on the spot you were lying. Yet you weren't lying, you were simply imagining it all to amuse yourself. Come, tell me, what is it now? What are you fancying now; what is it vexes you?”

“And you fell in love with the priest who used to teach us scripture at school—so much for you, since you've such a spiteful memory. Ha ha ha!”

She laughed viciously and went off into a fit of coughing.

“Ah, you’ve not forgotten the priest then ...” said Varvara Petrovna, looking at her vindictively.

Her face turned green. Praskovya Ivanovna suddenly assumed a dignified air.

“I’m in no laughing mood now, madam. Why have you drawn my daughter into your scandals in the face of the whole town? That’s what I’ve come about.”

“My scandals?” Varvara Petrovna drew herself up menacingly.

“Maman, I entreat you too, to restrain yourself,” Lizaveta Nikolaevna brought out suddenly.

“What’s that you say?” The maman was on the point of breaking into a squeal again, but catching her daughter’s flashing eye, she subsided suddenly.

“How could you talk about scandal, maman?” cried Liza, flushing red. “I came of my own accord with Yulia Mihailovna’s permission, because I wanted to learn this unhappy woman’s story and to be of use to her.”

“This unhappy woman’s story!” Praskovya Ivanovna drawled with a spiteful laugh. “Is it your place to mix yourself up with such ‘stories.’ Ach, enough of your tyrannising!” She turned furiously to Varvara Petrovna. “I don’t know whether it’s true or not, they say you keep the whole town in order, but it seems your turn has come at last.”

Varvara Petrovna sat straight as an arrow ready to fly from the bow. For ten seconds she looked sternly and immovably at Praskovya Ivanovna.

“Well, Praskovya, you must thank God that all here present are our friends,” she said at last with ominous composure. “You’ve said a great deal better unsaid.”

“But I’m not so much afraid of what the world will say, my lady, as some people. It’s you who, under a show of pride, are trembling at what people will say. And as for all here being your friends, it’s better for you than if strangers had been listening.”

“Have you grown wiser during this last week?”

“It’s not that I’ve grown wiser, but simply that the truth has come out this week.”

“What truth has come out this week? Listen, Praskovya Ivanovna, don’t irritate me. Explain to me this minute, I beg you as a favour, what truth has come out and what do you mean by that?”

“Why there it is, sitting before you!” and Praskovya Ivanovna suddenly pointed at Marya Timofyevna with that desperate determination which takes no heed of consequences, if only it can make an impression at the moment. Marya Timofyevna, who had watched her all the time with light-hearted curiosity, laughed exultingly at the sight of the wrathful guest’s finger pointed impetuously at her, and wriggled gleefully in her easy chair.

“God Almighty have mercy on us, they’ve all gone crazy!” exclaimed Varvara Petrovna, and turning pale she sank back in her chair.

She turned so pale that it caused some commotion. Stepan Trofimovitch was the first to rush up to her. I drew near also; even Liza got up from her seat, though she did not come forward. But the most alarmed of all was Praskovya Ivanovna herself;

She uttered a scream, got up as far as she could and almost wailed in a lachrymose voice:

“Varvara Petrovna, dear, forgive me for my wicked foolishness! Give her some water, somebody.”

“Don’t whimper, please, Praskovya Ivanovna, and leave me alone, gentlemen, please, I don’t want any water!” Varvara Petrovna pronounced in a firm though low voice, with blanched lips.

“Varvara Petrovna, my dear,” Praskovya Ivanovna went on, a little reassured, “though I am to blame for my reckless words, what’s upset me more than anything are these anonymous letters that some low creatures keep bombarding me with; they might write to you, since it concerns you, but I’ve a daughter!”

Varvara Petrovna looked at her in silence, with wide-open eyes, listening with wonder. At that moment a side-door in the corner opened noiselessly, and Darya Pavlovna made her appearance. She stood still and looked round. She was struck by our perturbation. Probably she did not at first distinguish Marya Timofyevna, of whose presence she had not been informed. Stepan Trofimovitch was the first to notice her; he made a rapid movement, turned red, and for some reason proclaimed in a loud voice: “Darya Pavlovna!” so that all eyes turned on the new-comer.

“Oh, is this your Darya Pavlovna!” cried Marya Timofyevna. “Well, Shatushka, your sister’s not like you. How can my fellow call such a charmer the serf-wench Dasha?”

Meanwhile Darya Pavlovna had gone up to Varvara Petrovna, but struck by Marya Timofyevna’s exclamation she turned quickly and stopped just before her chair, looking at the imbecile with a long fixed gaze.

“Sit down, Dasha,” Varvara Petrovna brought out with terrifying composure. “Nearer, that’s right. You can see this woman, sitting down. Do you know her?”

“I have never seen her,” Dasha answered quietly, and after a pause she added at once:

“She must be the invalid sister of Captain Lebyadkin.”

“And it’s the first time I’ve set eyes on you, my love, though I’ve been interested and wanted to know you a long time, for I see how well-bred you are in every movement you make,” Marya Timofyevna cried enthusiastically. “And though my footman swears at you, can such a well-educated charming person as you really have stolen money from him? For you are sweet, sweet, sweet, I tell you that from myself!” she concluded, enthusiastically waving her hand.

“Can you make anything of it?” Varvara Petrovna asked with proud dignity.

“I understand it... .”

“Have you heard about the money?”

“No doubt it’s the money that I undertook at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s request to hand over to her brother, Captain Lebyadkin.”

A silence followed.

“Did Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch himself ask you to do so?”

“He was very anxious to send that money, three hundred roubles, to Mr. Lebyadkin. And as he didn’t know his address, but only knew that he was to be in our town, he charged me to give it to Mr. Lebyadkin if he came.”

“What is the money ... lost? What was this woman speaking about just now?”

“That I don’t know. I’ve heard before that Mr. Lebyadkin says I didn’t give him all the money, but I don’t understand his words. There were three hundred roubles and I sent him three hundred roubles.”

Darya Pavlovna had almost completely regained her composure. And it was difficult, I may mention, as a rule, to astonish the girl or ruffle her calm for long—whatever she might be feeling. She brought out all her answers now without haste, replied immediately to every question with accuracy, quietly, smoothly, and without a trace of the sudden emotion she had shown at first, or the slightest embarrassment which might have suggested a consciousness of guilt. Varvara Petrovna’s eyes were fastened upon her all the time she was speaking. Varvara Petrovna thought for a minute:

“If,” she pronounced at last firmly, evidently addressing all present, though she only looked at Dasha, “if Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch did not appeal even to me but asked you to do this for him, he must have had his reasons for doing so. I don’t consider I have any right to inquire into them, if they are kept secret from me. But the very fact of your having taken part in the matter reassures me on that score, be sure of that, Darya, in any case. But you see, my dear, you may, through ignorance of the world, have quite innocently done something imprudent; and you did so when you undertook to have dealings with a low character. The rumours spread by this rascal show what a mistake you made. But I will find out about him, and as it is my task to protect you, I shall know how to defend you. But now all this must be put a stop to.”

“The best thing to do,” said Marya Timofyevna, popping up from her chair, “is to send him to the footmen’s room when he comes. Let him sit on the benches there and play cards with them while we sit here and drink coffee. We might send him a cup of coffee too, but I have a great contempt for him.”

And she wagged her head expressively.

“We must put a stop to this,” Varvara Petrovna repeated, listening attentively to Marya Timofyevna. “Ring, Stepan Trofimovitch, I beg you.”

Stepan Trofimovitch rang, and suddenly stepped forward, all excitement.

“If ... if ...” he faltered feverishly, flushing, breaking off and stuttering, “if I too have heard the most revolting story, or rather slander, it was with utter indignation ... enfin c’est un homme perdu, et quelque chose comme un format evade... .”

He broke down and could not go on. Varvara Petrovna, screwing up her eyes, looked him up and down.

The ceremonious butler Alexey Yegorytch came in.

“The carriage,” Varvara Petrovna ordered. “And you, Alexey Yegorytch, get ready to escort Miss Lebyadkin home; she will give you the address herself.”

“Mr. Lebyadkin has been waiting for her for some time downstairs, and has been begging me to announce him.”

“That’s impossible, Varvara Petrovna!” and Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had sat all the time in unbroken silence, suddenly came forward in alarm. “If I may speak, he is not a man who can be admitted into society. He ... he ... he’s an impossible person, Varvara Petrovna!”

“Wait a moment,” said Varvara Petrovna to Alexey Yegorytch, and he disappeared at once.

“C’est un homme malhonnete et je crois meme que c’est un format evade ou quelque chose dans ce genre,” Stepan Trofimovitch muttered again, and again he flushed red and broke off.

“Liza, it’s time we were going,” announced Praskovya Ivanovna disdainfully, getting up from her seat. She seemed sorry that in her alarm she had called herself a fool. While Darya Pavlovna was speaking, she listened, pressing her lips superciliously. But what struck me most was the expression of Lizaveta Nikolaevna from the moment Darya Pavlovna had come in. There was a gleam of hatred and hardly disguised contempt in her eyes.

“Wait one minute, Praskovya Ivanovna, I beg you.” Varvara Petrovna detained her, still with the same exaggerated composure. “Kindly sit down. I intend to speak out, and your legs are bad. That’s right, thank you. I lost my temper just now and uttered some impatient words. Be so good as to forgive me. I behaved foolishly and I’m the first to regret it, because I like fairness in everything. Losing your temper too, of course, you spoke of certain anonymous letters. Every anonymous communication is deserving of contempt, just because it’s not signed. If you think differently I’m sorry for you. In any case, if I were in your place, I would not pry into such dirty corners, I would not soil my hands with it. But you have soiled yours. However, since you have begun on the subject yourself, I must tell you that six days ago I too received a clownish anonymous letter. In it some rascal informs me that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has gone out of his mind, and that I have reason to fear some lame woman, who ‘is destined to play a great part in my life.’ I remember the expression. Reflecting and being aware that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has very numerous enemies, I promptly sent for a man living here, one of his secret enemies, and the most vindictive and contemptible of them, and from my conversation with him I gathered what was the despicable source of the anonymous letter. If you too, my poor Praskovya Ivanovna, have been worried by similar letters on my account, and as you say ‘bombarded’ with them, I am, of course, the first to regret having been the innocent cause of it. That’s all I wanted to tell you by way of explanation. I’m very sorry to see that you are so tired and so upset. Besides, I have quite made up my mind to see that suspicious personage of whom Mavriky Nikolaevitch said just now, a little inappropriately, that it was impossible to receive him. Liza in particular need have nothing to do with it. Come to me, Liza, my dear, let me kiss you again.”

Liza crossed the room and stood in silence before Varvara Petrovna. The latter kissed her, took her hands, and, holding her at arm’s-length, looked at her with feeling, then made the sign of the cross over her and kissed her again.

“Well, good-bye, Liza” (there was almost the sound of tears in Varvara Petrovna’s voice), “believe that I shall never cease to love you whatever fate has in store for you. God be with you. I have always blessed His holy Will... .”

She would have added something more, but restrained herself and broke off. Liza was walking back to her place, still in the same silence, as it were plunged in thought, but she suddenly stopped before her mother.

“I am not going yet, mother. I’ll stay a little longer at auntie’s,” she brought out in a low voice, but there was a note of iron determination in those quiet words.

“My goodness! What now?” wailed Praskovya Ivanovna, clasping her hands helplessly. But Liza did not answer, and seemed indeed not to hear her; she sat down in the same corner and fell to gazing into space again as before.

There was a look of pride and triumph in Varvara Petrovna’s face.

“Mavriky Nikolaevitch, I have a great favour to ask of you. Be so kind as to go and take a look at that person downstairs, and if there is any possibility of admitting him, bring him up here.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch bowed and went out. A moment later he brought in Mr. Lebyadkin.

4

I have said something of this gentleman’s outward appearance. He was a tall, curly-haired, thick-set fellow about forty with a purplish, rather bloated and flabby face, with cheeks that quivered at every movement of his head, with little bloodshot eyes that were sometimes rather crafty, with moustaches and sidewhiskers, and with an incipient double chin, fleshy and rather unpleasant-looking. But what was most striking about him was the fact that he appeared now wearing a dress-coat and clean linen.

“There are people on whom clean linen is almost unseemly,” as Liputin had once said when Stepan Trofimovitch reproached him in jest for being untidy. The captain had perfectly new black gloves too, of which he held the right one in his hand, while the left, tightly stretched and unbuttoned, covered part of the huge fleshy fist in which he held a bran-new, glossy round hat, probably worn for the first time that day. It appeared therefore that “the garb of love,” of which he had shouted to Shatov the day before, really did exist. All this, that is, the dress-coat and clean linen, had been procured by Liputin’s advice with some mysterious object in view (as I found out later). There was no doubt that his coming now (in a hired carriage) was at the instigation and with the assistance of some one else; it would never have dawned on him, nor could he by himself have succeeded in dressing, getting ready and making up his mind in three-quarters of an hour, even if the scene in the porch of the cathedral had reached his ears at once. He was not drunk, but was in the dull, heavy, dazed condition of a man suddenly awakened after many days of drinking. It seemed as though he would be drunk again if one were to put one’s hands on his shoulders and rock him to and fro once or twice. He was hurrying into the drawing-room but stumbled over a rug near

the doorway. Marya Timofyevna was helpless with laughter. He looked savagely at her and suddenly took a few rapid steps towards Varvara Petrovna.

“I have come, madam ...” he blared out like a trumpet-blast.

“Be so good, sir, as to take a seat there, on that chair,” said Varvara Petrovna, drawing herself up. “I shall hear you as well from there, and it will be more convenient for me to look at you from here.”

The captain stopped short, looking blankly before him. He turned, however, and sat down on the seat indicated close to the door. An extreme lack of self-confidence and at the same time insolence, and a sort of incessant irritability, were apparent in the expression of his face. He was horribly scared, that was evident, but his self-conceit was wounded, and it might be surmised that his mortified vanity might on occasion lead him to any effrontery, in spite of his cowardice. He was evidently uneasy at every movement of his clumsy person. We all know that when such gentlemen are brought by some marvellous chance into society, they find their worst ordeal in their own hands, and the impossibility of disposing them becomingly, of which they are conscious at every moment. The captain sat rigid in his chair, with his hat and gloves in his hands and his eyes fixed with a senseless stare on the stern face of Varvara Petrovna. He would have liked, perhaps, to have looked about more freely, but he could not bring himself to do so yet. Marya Timofyevna, apparently thinking his appearance very funny, laughed again, but he did not stir. Varvara Petrovna ruthlessly kept him in this position for a long time, a whole minute, staring at him without mercy.

“In the first place allow me to learn your name from yourself,” Varvara Petrovna pronounced in measured and impressive tones.

“Captain Lebyadkin,” thundered the captain. “I have come, madam ...” He made a movement again.

“Allow me!” Varvara Petrovna checked him again. “Is this unfortunate person who interests me so much really your sister?”

“My sister, madam, who has escaped from control, for she is in a certain condition... .”

He suddenly faltered and turned crimson. “Don’t misunderstand me, madam,” he said, terribly confused. “Her own brother’s not going to throw mud at her ... in a certain condition doesn’t mean in such a condition ... in the sense of an injured reputation ... in the last stage ...” he suddenly broke off.

“Sir!” said Varvara Petrovna, raising her head.

“In this condition!” he concluded suddenly, tapping the middle of his forehead with his finger.

A pause followed.

“And has she suffered in this way for long?” asked Varvara Petrovna, with a slight drawl.

“Madam, I have come to thank you for the generosity you showed in the porch, in a Russian, brotherly way.”

“Brotherly? “

“I mean, not brotherly, but simply in the sense that I am my sister’s brother; and believe me, madam,” he went on more hurriedly, turning crimson again, “I am not so uneducated as I may appear at first sight in your drawing-room. My sister and I are nothing, madam, compared with the luxury we observe here. Having enemies who slander us, besides. But on the question of reputation Lebyadkin is proud, madam ... and ... and ... and I’ve come to repay with thanks... . Here is money, madam!”

At this point he pulled out a pocket-book, drew out of it a bundle of notes, and began turning them over with trembling fingers in a perfect fury of impatience. It was evident that he was in haste to explain something, and indeed it was quite necessary to do so. But probably feeling himself that his fluster with the money made him look even more foolish, he lost the last traces of self-possession. The money refused to be counted. His fingers fumbled helplessly, and to complete his shame a green note escaped from the pocket-book, and fluttered in zigzags on to the carpet.

“Twenty roubles, madam.” He leapt up suddenly with the roll of notes in his hand, his face perspiring with discomfort. Noticing the note which had dropped on the floor, he was bending down to pick it up, but for some reason overcome by shame, he dismissed it with a wave.

“For your servants, madam; for the footman who picks it up. Let them remember my sister!”

“I cannot allow that,” Varvara Petrovna brought out hurriedly, even with some alarm.

“In that case ...”

He bent down, picked it up, flushing crimson, and suddenly going up to Varvara Petrovna held out the notes he had counted.

“What’s this?” she cried, really alarmed at last, and positively shrinking back in her chair.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch, Stepan Trofimovitch, and I all stepped forward.

“Don’t be alarmed, don’t be alarmed; I’m not mad, by God, I’m not mad,” the captain kept asseverating excitedly. “Yes, sir, you’re out of your senses.”

“Madam, she’s not at all as you suppose. I am an insignificant link. Oh, madam, wealthy are your mansions, but poor is the dwelling of Marya Anonyma, my sister, whose maiden name was Lebyadkin, but whom we’ll call Anonyma for the time, only for the time, madam, for God Himself will not suffer it for ever. Madam, you gave her ten roubles and she took it, because it was from you, madam! Do you hear, madam? From no one else in the world would this Marya Anonyma take it, or her grandfather, the officer killed in the Caucasus before the very eyes of Yermolov, would turn in his grave. But from you, madam, from you she will take anything. But with one hand she takes it, and with the other she holds out to you twenty roubles by way of subscription to one of the benevolent committees in Petersburg and Moscow, of which you are a member ... for you published yourself, madam, in the Moscow News, that you are ready to receive subscriptions in our town, and that any one may subscribe... .”

The captain suddenly broke off; he breathed hard as though after some difficult achievement. All he said about the benevolent society had probably been prepared beforehand, perhaps under Liputin's supervision. He perspired more than ever; drops literally trickled down his temples. Varvara Petrovna looked searchingly at him.

"The subscription list," she said severely, "is always downstairs in charge of my porter. There you can enter your subscriptions if you wish to. And so I beg you to put your notes away and not to wave them in the air. That's right. I beg you also to go back to your seat. That's right. I am very sorry, sir, that I made a mistake about your sister, and gave her something as though she were poor when she is so rich. There's only one thing I don't understand, why she can only take from me, and no one else. You so insisted upon that that I should like a full explanation."

"Madam, that is a secret that may be buried only in the grave!" answered the captain.

"Why?" Varvara Petrovna asked, not quite so firmly.

"Madam, madam ..."

He relapsed into gloomy silence, looking on the floor, laying his right hand on his heart. Varvara Petrovna waited, not taking her eyes off him.

"Madam!" he roared suddenly. "Will you allow me to ask you one question? Only one, but frankly, directly, like a Russian, from the heart?"

"Kindly do so."

"Have you ever suffered madam, in your life?"

"You simply mean to say that you have been or are being ill-treated by some one."

"Madam, madam!" He jumped up again, probably unconscious of doing so, and struck himself on the breast. "Here in this bosom so much has accumulated, so much that God Himself will be amazed when it is revealed at the Day of Judgment."

"H'm! A strong expression!"

"Madam, I speak perhaps irritably... ."

"Don't be uneasy. I know myself when to stop you."

"May I ask you another question, madam?"

"Ask another question."

"Can one die simply from the generosity of one's feelings?"

"I don't know, as I've never asked myself such a question."

"You don't know! You've never asked yourself such a question," he said with pathetic irony. "Well, if that's it, if that's it ..."

"Be still, despairing heart!"

And he struck himself furiously on the chest. He was by now walking about the room again.

It is typical of such people to be utterly incapable of keeping their desires to themselves; they have, on the contrary, an irresistible impulse to display them in all their unseemliness as soon as they arise. When such a gentleman gets into a circle in which he is not at home he usually begins timidly, -but you have only to give him an inch and he will at once rush into impertinence. The captain was already excited. He walked

about waving his arms and not listening to questions, talked about himself very, very quickly, so that sometimes his tongue would not obey him, and without finishing one phrase he passed to another. It is true he was probably not quite sober. Moreover, Lizaveta Nikolaevna was sitting there too, and though he did not once glance at her, her presence seemed to over-excite him terribly; that, however, is only my supposition. There must have been some reason which led Varvara Petrovna to resolve to listen to such a man in spite of her repugnance, Praskovya Ivanovna was simply shaking with terror, though, I believe she really did not quite understand what it was about.” Stepan Trofimovitch was trembling too, but that was, on the contrary, because he was disposed to understand everything, and exaggerate it. Mavriky Nikolaevitch stood in the attitude of one ready to defend all present; Liza was pale, and she gazed fixedly with wide-open eyes at the wild captain. Shatov sat in the same position as before, but, what was strangest of all, Marya Timofyevna had not only ceased laughing, but had become terribly sad. She leaned her right elbow on the table, and with a prolonged, mournful gaze watched her brother declaiming. Darya Pavlovna alone seemed to me calm.

“All that is nonsensical allegory,” said Varvara Petrovna, getting angry at last. “You haven’t answered my question, why? I insist on an answer.”

“I haven’t answered, why? You insist on an answer, why?” repeated the captain, winking. “That little word ‘why’ has run through all the universe from the first day of creation, and all nature cries every minute to it’s Creator, ‘why?’ And for seven thousand years it has had no answer, and must Captain Lebyadkin alone answer? And is that justice, madam?”

“That’s all nonsense and not to the point!” cried Varvara Petrovna, getting angry and losing patience. “That’s allegory; besides, you express yourself too sensationally, sir, which I consider impertinence.”

“Madam,” the captain went on, not hearing, “I should have liked perhaps to be called Ernest, yet I am forced to bear the vulgar name Ignat—why is that do you suppose? I should have liked to be called Prince de Monbart, yet I am only Lebyadkin, derived from a swan.* Why is that? I am a poet, madam, a poet in soul, and might be getting a thousand roubles at a time from a publisher, yet I am forced to live in a pig pail. Why? Why, madam? To my mind Russia is a freak of nature and nothing else.”

“Can you really say nothing more definite?”

“I can read you the poem, ‘The Cockroach,’ madam.”

“Wha-a-t?”

“Madam, I’m not mad yet! I shall be mad, no doubt I shall be, but I’m not so yet. Madam, a friend of mine—a most honourable man—has written a Krylov’s fable, called ‘The Cockroach.’ May I read it?”

“You want to read some fable of Krylov’s?”

“No, it’s not a fable of Krylov’s I want to read. It’s my fable, my own composition. Believe me, madam, without offence I’m not so uneducated and depraved as not to understand that Russia can boast of a great fable-writer, Krylov, to whom the Minister

of Education has raised a monument in the Summer Gardens for the diversion of the young. Here, madam, you ask me why? The answer is at the end of this fable, in letters of fire.”

“Read your fable.”

“Lived a cockroach in the world
Such was his condition,
In a glass he chanced to fall
Full of fly-perdition.”

“Heavens! What does it mean?” cried Varvara Petrovna. “That’s when flies get into a glass in the summer-time,” the captain explained hurriedly with the irritable impatience of an author interrupted in reading. “Then it is perdition to the flies, any fool can understand. Don’t interrupt, don’t interrupt. You’ll see, you’ll see... .” He kept waving his arms.

“But he squeezed against the flies,
They woke up and cursed him,
Raised to Jove their angry cries;
‘The glass is full to bursting!’
In the middle of the din
Came along Nikifor,
Fine old man, and looking in ...

* From Lebyed, a Swan.

I haven’t quite finished it. But no matter, I’ll tell it in words,” the captain rattled on. “Nikifor takes the glass, and in spite of their outcry empties away the whole stew, flies, and beetles and all, into the pig pail, which ought to have been done long ago. But observe, madam, observe, the cockroach doesn’t complain. That’s the answer to your question, why?” he cried triumphantly. “‘The cockroach does not complain.’ As for Nikifor he typifies nature,” he added, speaking rapidly and walking complacently about the room.

Varvara Petrovna was terribly angry.

“And allow me to ask you about that money said to have been received from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, and not to have been given to you, about which you dared to accuse a person belonging to my household.”

“It’s a slander!” roared Lebyadkin, flinging up his right hand tragically.

“No, it’s not a slander.”

“Madam, there are circumstances that force one to endure family disgrace rather than proclaim the truth aloud. Lebyadkin will not blab, madam!”

He seemed dazed; he was carried away; he felt his importance; he certainly had some fancy in his mind. By now he wanted to insult some one, to do something nasty to show his power.

“Ring, please, Stepan Trofimovitch,” Varvara Petrovna asked him.

“Lebyadkin’s cunning, madam,” he said, winking with his evil smile; “he’s cunning, but he too has a weak spot, he too at times is in the portals of passions, and these

portals are the old military hussars' bottle, celebrated by Denis Davydov. So when he is in those portals, madam, he may happen to send a letter in verse, a most magnificent letter—but which afterwards he would have wished to take back, with the tears of all his life; for the feeling of the beautiful is destroyed. But the bird has flown, you won't catch it by the tail. In those portals now, madam, Lebyadkin may have spoken about an honourable young lady, in the honourable indignation of a soul revolted by wrongs, and his slanderers have taken advantage of it. But Lebyadkin is cunning, madam! And in vain a malignant wolf sits over him every minute, filling his glass and waiting for the end. Lebyadkin won't blab. And at the bottom of the bottle he always finds instead Lebyadkin's cunning. But enough, oh, enough, madam! Your splendid halls might belong to the noblest in the land, but the cockroach will not complain. Observe that, observe that he does not complain, and recognise his noble spirit!"

At that instant a bell rang downstairs from the porter's room, and almost at the same moment Alexey Yegorytch appeared in response to Stepan Trofimovitch's ring, which he had somewhat delayed answering. The correct old servant was unusually excited.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has graciously arrived this moment and is coming here," he pronounced, in reply to Varvara Petrovna's questioning glance. I particularly remember her at that moment; at first she turned pale, but suddenly her eyes flashed. She drew herself up in her chair with an air of extraordinary determination. Every one was astounded indeed. The utterly unexpected arrival of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who was not expected for another month, was not only strange from its unexpectedness but from its fateful coincidence with the present moment. Even the captain remained standing like a post in the middle of the room with his mouth wide open, staring at the door with a fearfully stupid expression.

And, behold, from the next room—a very large and long apartment—came the sound of swiftly approaching footsteps, little, exceedingly rapid steps; some one seemed to be running, and that some one suddenly flew into the drawing-room, not Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but a young man who was a complete stranger to all.

5

I will permit myself to halt here to sketch in a few hurried strokes this person who had so suddenly arrived on the scene.

He was a young man of twenty-seven or thereabouts, a little above the medium height, with rather long, lank, flaxen hair, and with faintly defined, irregular moustache and beard. He was dressed neatly, and in the fashion, though not like a dandy. At the first glance he looked round-shouldered and awkward, but yet he was not round-shouldered, and his manner was easy. He seemed a queer fish, and yet later on we all thought his manners good, and his conversation always to the point.

No one would have said that he was ugly, and yet no one would have liked his face—His head was elongated at the back, and looked flattened at the sides, so that his face

seemed pointed, his forehead was high and narrow, but his features were small; his eyes were keen, his nose was small and sharp, his lips were long and thin. The expression of his face suggested ill-health, but this was misleading. He had a wrinkle on each cheek which gave him the look of a man who had just recovered from a serious illness. Yet he was perfectly well and strong, and had never been ill.

He walked and moved very hurriedly, yet never seemed in a hurry to be off. It seemed as though nothing could disconcert him; in every circumstance and in every sort of society he remained the same. He had a great deal of conceit, but was utterly unaware of it himself.

He talked quickly, hurriedly, but at the same time with assurance, and was never at a loss for a word. In spite of his hurried manner his ideas were in perfect order, distinct and definite—and this was particularly striking. His articulation was wonderfully clear. His words pattered out like smooth, long grains, always well chosen, and at your service. At first this attracted one, but afterwards it became repulsive, just because of this over-distinct articulation, this string of ever-ready words, one somehow began to imagine that he must have a tongue of special shape, somehow exceptionally long and thin, extremely red with a very sharp everlastingly active little tip.

Well, this was the young man who darted now into the drawing-room, and really, I believe to this day, that he began to talk in the next room, and came in speaking. He was standing before Varvara Petrovna in a trice.

“... Only fancy, Varvara Petrovna,” he pattered on, “I came in expecting to find he’d been here for the last quarter of an hour; he arrived an hour and a half ago; we met at Kirillov’s: he set off half an hour ago meaning to come straight here, and told me to come here too, a quarter of an hour later. ...”

“But who? Who told you to come here?” Varvara Petrovna inquired.

“Why, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch! Surely this isn’t the first you’ve heard of it! But his luggage must have been here a long while, anyway. How is it you weren’t told? Then I’m the first to bring the news. One might send out to look for him; he’s sure to be here himself directly though. And I fancy, at the moment that just fits in with some of his expectations, and is far as I can judge, at least, some of his calculations.”

At this point he turned his eyes about the room and fixed them with special attention on the captain.

“Ach, Lizaveta Nikolaevna, how glad I am to meet you at the very first step, delighted to shake hands with you.” He flew up to Liza, who was smiling gaily, to take her proffered hand, “and I observe that my honoured friend Praskovya Ivanovna has not forgotten her ‘professor,’ and actually isn’t cross with him, as she always used to be in Switzerland. But how are your legs, here, Praskovya Ivanovna, and were the Swiss doctors right when at the consultation they prescribed your native air? What? Fomentations? That ought to do good. But how sorry I was, Varvara Petrovna “(he turned rapidly to her) ”that I didn’t arrive in time to meet you abroad, and offer my respects to you in person; I had so much to tell you too. I did send word to my old man here, but I fancy that he did as-he always does . . .”

“Petrusha!” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, instantly roused from his stupefaction. He clasped his hands and flew to his son. “Pierre, mon enfant! Why, I didn’t know you!” He pressed him in his arms and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Come, be quiet, be quiet, no flourishes, that’s enough, that’s enough, please,” Petrusha muttered hurriedly, trying to extricate himself from his embrace.

“I’ve always sinned against you, always!”

“Well, that’s enough. We can talk of that later. I knew you’d carry on. Come, be a little more sober, please.”

“But it’s ten years since I’ve seen you.”

“The less reason for demonstrations.”

“Mon enfant! ...”

“Come, I believe in your affection, I believe in it, take your arms away. You see, you’re disturbing other people... . Ah, here’s Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch; keep quiet, please.”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was already in the room; he came in very quietly and stood still for an instant in the doorway, quietly scrutinising the company.

I was struck by the first sight of him just as I had been four years before, when I saw him for the first time. I had not forgotten him in the least. But I think there are some countenances which always seem to exhibit something new which one has not noticed before, every time one meets them, though one may have seen them a hundred times already. Apparently he was exactly the same as he had been four years before. He was as elegant, as dignified, he moved with the same air of consequence as before, indeed he looked almost as young. His faint smile had just the same official graciousness and complacency. His eyes had the same stern, thoughtful and, as it were, preoccupied look. In fact, it seemed as though we had only parted the day before. But one thing struck me. In old days, though he had been considered handsome, his face was “like a mask,” as some of our sharp-tongued ladies had expressed it. Now—now, I don’t know why he impressed me at once as absolutely, incontestably beautiful, so that no one could have said that his face was like a mask. Wasn’t it perhaps that he was a little paler and seemed rather thinner than before? Or was there, perhaps, the light of some new idea in his eyes?

“Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch!” cried Varvara Petrovna, drawing herself up but not rising from her chair. “Stop a minute!” She checked his advance with a peremptory gesture.

But to explain the awful question which immediately followed that gesture and” exclamation—a question which I should have imagined to be impossible even in Varvara Petrovna, I must ask the reader to remember what that lady’s temperament had always been, and the extraordinary impulsiveness she showed at some critical moments. I beg him to consider also, that in spite of the exceptional strength of her spirit and the very considerable amount of common sense and practical, so to say business, tact she possessed, there were moments in her life in which she abandoned herself altogether, entirely and, if it’s permissible to say so, absolutely without restraint. I beg him to take into consideration also that the present moment might really be for her one of those in which all the essence of life, of all the past and all the present, perhaps, too, all the

future, is concentrated, as it were, focused. I must briefly recall, too, the anonymous letter of which she had spoken to Praskovya Ivanovna with so much irritation, though I think she said nothing of the latter part of it. Yet it perhaps contained the explanation of the possibility of the terrible question with which she suddenly addressed her son.

“Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch,” she repeated, rapping out her words in a resolute voice in which there was a ring of menacing challenge, “I beg you to tell me at once, without moving from that place; is it true that this unhappy cripple—here she is, here, look at her—is it true that she is ... your lawful wife?”

I remember that moment only too well; he did not wink an eyelash but looked intently at his mother. Not the faintest change in his face followed. At last he smiled, a sort of indulgent smile, and without answering a word went quietly up to his mother, took her hand, raised it respectfully to his lips and kissed it. And so great was his invariable and irresistible ascendancy over his mother that even now she could not bring herself to pull away her hand. She only gazed at him, her whole figure one concentrated question, seeming to betray that she could not bear the suspense another moment.

But he was still silent. When he had kissed her hand, he scanned the whole room once more, and moving, as before, without haste went towards Marya Timofyevna. It is very difficult to describe people’s countenances at certain moments. I remember, for instance, that Marya Timofyevna, breathless with fear, rose to her feet to meet him and clasped her hands before her, as though beseeching him. And at the same time I remember the frantic ecstasy which almost distorted her face— an ecstasy almost too great for any human being to bear. Perhaps both were there, both the terror and the ecstasy. But I remember moving quickly towards her (I was standing not far off), for I fancied she was going to faint.

“You should not be here,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch said to her in a caressing and melodious voice; and there was the light of an extraordinary tenderness in his eyes. He stood before her in the most respectful attitude, and every gesture showed sincere respect for her. The poor girl faltered impulsively in a half-whisper.

“But may I ... kneel down ... to you now?”

“No, you can’t do that.”

He smiled at her magnificently, so that she too laughed joyfully at once. In the same melodious voice, coaxing her tenderly as though she were a child, he went on gravely.

“Only think that you are a girl, and that though I’m your devoted friend I’m an outsider, not your husband, nor your father, nor your betrothed. Give me your arm and let us go; I will take you to the carriage, and if you will let me I will see you all the way home.”

She listened, and bent her head as though meditating.

“Let’s go,” she said with a sigh, giving him her hand.

But at that point a slight mischance befell her. She must have turned carelessly, resting on her lame leg, which was shorter than the other. She fell sideways into the chair, and if the chair had not been there would have fallen on to the floor. He

instantly seized and supported her, and holding her arm firmly in his, led her carefully and sympathetically to the door. She was evidently mortified at having fallen; she was overwhelmed, blushed, and was terribly abashed. Looking dumbly on the ground, limping painfully, she hobbled after him, almost hanging on his arm. So they went out. Liza, I saw, suddenly jumped up from her chair for some reason as they were going out, and she followed them with intent eyes till they reached the door. Then she sat down again in silence, but there was a nervous twitching in her face, as though she had touched a viper.

While this scene was taking place between Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Marya Timofyevna every one was speechless with amazement; one could have heard a fly; but as soon as they had gone out, every one began suddenly talking.

6

It was very little of it talk, however; it was mostly exclamation. I've forgotten a little the order in which things happened, for a scene of confusion followed. Stepan Trofimovitch uttered some exclamation in French, clasping his hands, but Varvara Petrovna had no thought for him. Even Mavriky Nikolaevitch muttered some rapid, jerky comment. But Pyotr Stepanovitch was the most excited of all. He was trying desperately with bold gesticulations to persuade Varvara Petrovna of something, but it was a long time before I could make out what it was. He appealed to Praskovya Ivanovna, and Lizaveta Nikolaevna too, even, in his excitement, addressed a passing shout to his father—in fact he seemed all over the room at once. Varvara Petrovna, flushing all over, sprang up from her seat and cried to Praskovya Ivanovna:

“Did you hear what he said to her here just now, did you hear it?”

But the latter was incapable of replying. She could only mutter something and wave her hand. The poor woman had troubles of her own to think about. She kept turning her head towards Liza and was watching her with unaccountable terror, but she didn't even dare to think of getting up and going away until her daughter should get up. In the meantime the captain wanted to slip away. That I noticed. There was no doubt that he had been in a great panic from the instant that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had made his appearance; but Pyotr Stepanovitch took him by the arm and would not let him go.

“It is necessary, quite necessary,” he pattered on to Varvara Petrovna, still trying to persuade her. He stood facing her, as she was sitting down again in her easy chair, and, I remember, was listening to him eagerly; he had succeeded in securing her attention.

“It is necessary. You can see for yourself, Varvara Petrovna, that there is a misunderstanding here, and much that is strange on the surface, and yet the thing's as clear as daylight, and as simple as my finger. I quite understand that no one has authorised me to tell the story, and I dare say I look ridiculous putting myself forward. But in the first place, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch attaches no sort of significance to the matter himself, and, besides, there are incidents of which it is difficult for a man to make up

his mind to give an explanation himself. And so it's absolutely necessary that it should be undertaken by a third person, for whom it's easier to put some delicate points into words. Believe me, Varvara Petrovna, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is not at all to blame for not immediately answering your question just now with a full explanation, it's all a trivial affair. I've known him since his Petersburg days. Besides, the whole story only does honour to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, if one must make use of that vague word 'honour.' "

"You mean to say that you were a witness of some incident which gave rise ... to this misunderstanding?" asked Varvara Petrovna.

"I witnessed it, and took part in it," Pyotr Stepanovitch hastened to declare.

"If you'll give me your word that this will not wound Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's delicacy in regard to his feeling for me, from whom he ne-e-ver conceals anything ... and if you are convinced also that your doing this will be agreeable to him ..."

"Certainly it will be agreeable, and for that reason I consider it a particularly agreeable duty. I am convinced that he would beg me to do it himself."

The intrusive desire of this gentleman, who seemed to have dropped on us from heaven to tell stories about other people's affairs, was rather strange and inconsistent with ordinary usage.

But he had caught Varvara Petrovna by touching on too painful a spot. I did not know the man's character at that time, and still less his designs.

"I am listening," Varvara Petrovna announced with a reserved and cautious manner. She was rather painfully aware of her condescension.

"It's a short story; in fact if you like it's not a story at all," he rattled on, "though a novelist might work it up into a novel in an idle hour. It's rather an interesting little incident, Praskovya Ivanovna, and I am sure that Lizaveta Nikolaevna will be interested to hear it, because there are a great many things in it that are odd if not wonderful. Five years ago, in Petersburg, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made the acquaintance of this gentleman, this very Mr. Lebyadkin who's standing here with his mouth open, anxious, I think, to slip away at once. Excuse me, Varvara Petrovna. I don't advise you to make your escape though, you discharged clerk in the former commissariat department you see; I remember you very well. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and I know very well what you've been up to here, and, don't forget, you'll have to answer for it. I ask your pardon once more, Varvara Petrovna. In those days Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch used to call this gentleman his Falstaff; that must be," he explained suddenly, "some old burlesque character, at whom every one laughs, and who is willing to let every one laugh at him, if only they'll pay him for it. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was leading at that time in Petersburg a life, so to say, of mockery. I can't find another word to describe it, because he is not a man who falls into disillusionment, and he disdained to be occupied with work at that time. I'm only speaking of that period, Varvara Petrovna. Lebyadkin had a sister, the woman who was sitting here just now. The brother and sister hadn't a corner * of their own, but were always quartering themselves on different people. He used to hang about the arcades in the Gostiny Dvor, always wearing his old uniform,

and would stop the more respectable-looking passers-by, and everything he got from them he'd spend in drink. His sister lived like the birds of heaven. She'd help people in their 'corners,' and do jobs for them on occasion. It was a regular Bedlam. I'll pass over the description of this life in 'corners,' a life to which Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had taken,"

* In the poorer quarters of Russian towns a single room is often let out to several families, each of which occupies a "corner."

"at that time, from eccentricity. I'm only talking of that period, Varvara Petrovna; as for 'eccentricity,' that's his own expression. He does not conceal much from me. Mile. Lebyadkin, who was thrown in the way of meeting Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch very often, at one time, was fascinated by his appearance. He was, so to say, a diamond set in the dirty background of her life. I am a poor hand at describing feelings, so I'll pass them over; but some of that dirty lot took to jeering at her once, and it made her sad. They always had laughed at her, but she did not seem to notice it before. She wasn't quite right in her head even then, but very different from what she is now. There's reason to believe that in her childhood she received something like an education through the kindness of a benevolent lady. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had never taken the slightest notice of her. He used to spend his time chiefly in playing preference with a greasy old pack of cards for stakes of a quarter-farthing with clerks. But once, when she was being ill-treated, he went up (without inquiring into the cause) and seized one of the clerks by the collar and flung him out of a second-floor window. It was not a case of chivalrous indignation at the sight of injured innocence; the whole operation took place in the midst of roars of laughter, and the one who laughed loudest was Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch himself. As it all ended without harm, they were reconciled and began drinking punch. But the injured innocent herself did not forget it. Of course it ended in her becoming completely crazy. I repeat I'm a poor hand at describing feelings. But a delusion was the chief feature in this case. And Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch aggravated that delusion as though he did it on purpose. Instead of laughing at her he began all at once treating Mile. Lebyadkin with sudden respect. Kirillov, who was there (a very original man, Varvara Petrovna, and very abrupt, you'll see him perhaps one day, for he's here now), well, this Kirillov who, as a rule, is perfectly silent, suddenly got hot, and said to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I remember, that he treated the girl as though she were a marquise, and that that was doing for her altogether. I must add that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had rather a respect for this Kirillov. What do you suppose was the answer he gave him: 'You imagine, Mr. Kirillov, that I am laughing at her. Get rid of that idea, I really do respect her, for she's better than any of us.' And, do you know, he said it in such a serious tone. Meanwhile, he hadn't really said a word to her for two or three months, except 'good morning' and 'good-bye.' I remember, for I was there, that she came at last to the point of looking on him almost as her betrothed who dared not 'elope with her,' simply because he had many enemies and family difficulties, or something of the sort. There was a great deal of laughter about it. It ended in Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's making provision for her when he had to come

here, and I believe he arranged to pay a considerable sum, three hundred roubles a year, if not more, as a pension for her. In short it was “all a caprice, a fancy of a man prematurely weary on his side, perhaps— it may even have been, as Kirillov says, a new experiment of a blase man, with the object of finding out what you can bring a crazy cripple to.” (You picked out on purpose, he said, the lowest creature, a cripple, for ever covered with disgrace and blows, knowing, too, that this creature was dying of comic love for you, and set to work to mystify her completely on purpose, simply to see what would come of it.) “Though, how is a man so particularly to blame for the fancies of a crazy woman, to whom he had hardly uttered two sentences the whole time. There are things, Varvara Petrovna, of which it is not only impossible to speak sensibly, but it’s even nonsensical to begin speaking of them at all. Well, eccentricity then, let it stand at that. Anyway, there’s nothing worse to be said than that; and yet now they’ve made this scandal out of it. ... I am to some extent aware, Varvara Petrovna, of what is happening here.”

The speaker suddenly broke off and was turning to Lebyadkin. But Varvara Petrovna checked him. She was in a state of extreme exaltation.

“Have you finished?” she asked.

“Not yet; to complete my story I should have to ask this gentleman one or two questions if you’ll allow me ... you’ll see the point in a minute, Varvara Petrovna.”

“Enough, afterwards, leave it for the moment I beg you. Oh, I was quite right to let you speak!”

“And note this, Varvara Petrovna,” Pyotr Stepanovitch said hastily. “Could Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch have explained all this just now in answer to your question, which was perhaps too peremptory?”

“Oh, yes, it was.”

“And wasn’t I right in saying that in some cases it’s much easier for a third person to explain things than for the person interested?”

“Yes, yes ... but in one thing you were mistaken, and, I see with regret, are still mistaken.”

“Really, what’s that?”

“You see... . But won’t you sit down, Pyotr Stepanovitch?”

“Oh, as you please. I am tired indeed. Thank you.” He instantly moved up an easy chair and turned it so that he had Varvara Petrovna on one side and Praskovya Ivanovna at the table on the other, while he faced Lebyadkin, from whom he did not take his eyes for one minute.

“You are mistaken in calling this eccentricity... .”

“Oh, if it’s only that... .”

“No, no, no, wait a little,” said Varvara Petrovna, who was obviously about to say a good deal and to speak with enthusiasm. As soon as Pyotr Stepanovitch noticed it, he was all attention.

“No, it was something higher than eccentricity, and I assure you, something sacred even! A proud man who has suffered humiliation early in life and reached the stage of

‘mockery’ as you so subtly called it—Prince Harry, in fact, to use the capital nickname Stepan Trofimovitch gave him then, which would have been perfectly correct if it were not that he is more like Hamlet, to my thinking at least.”

“Et vous avez raison,” Stepan Trofimovitch pronounced, impressively and with feeling.

“Thank you, Stepan Trofimovitch. I thank you particularly too for your unvarying faith in Nicolas, in the loftiness of his soul and of his destiny. That faith you have even strengthened in me when I was losing heart.”

“Chere, chere.” Stepan Trofimovitch was stepping forward, when he checked himself, reflecting that it was dangerous to interrupt.

“And if Nicolas had always had at his side” (Varvara Petrovna almost shouted) “a gentle Horatio, great in his humility—another excellent expression of yours, Stepan Trofimovitch—he might long ago have been saved from the sad and ‘sudden demon of irony,’ which has tormented him all his life. (‘The demon of irony’ was a wonderful expression of yours again, Stepan Trofimovitch.) But Nicolas has never had an Horatio or an Ophelia. He had no one but his mother, and what can a mother do alone, and in such circumstances? Do you know, Pyotr Stepanovitch, it’s perfectly comprehensible to me now that a being like Nicolas could be found even in such filthy haunts as you have described. I can so clearly picture now that ‘mockery’ of life. (A wonderfully subtle expression of yours!) That insatiable thirst of contrast, that gloomy background against which he stands out like a diamond, to use your comparison again, Pyotr Stepanovitch. And then he meets there a creature ill-treated by every one, crippled, half insane, and at the same time perhaps filled with noble feelings.”

“H’m... . Yes, perhaps.”

“And after that you don’t understand that he’s not laughing at her like every one. Oh, you people! You can’t understand his defending her from insult, treating her with respect ‘like a marquise’ (this Kirillov must have an exceptionally deep understanding of men, though he didn’t understand Nicolas). It was just this contrast, if you like, that led to the trouble. If the unhappy creature had been in different surroundings, perhaps she would never have been brought to entertain such a frantic delusion. Only a woman can understand it, Pyotr Stepanovitch, only a woman. How sorry I am that you ... not that you’re not a woman, but that you can’t be one just for the moment so as to understand.”

“You mean in the sense that the worse things are the better it is. I understand, I understand, Varvara Petrovna. It’s rather as it is in religion; the harder life is for a man or the more crushed and poor the people are, the more obstinately they dream of compensation in heaven; and if a hundred thousand priests are at work at it too, inflaming their delusion, and speculating on it, then ... I understand you, Varvara Petrovna, I assure you.”

“That’s not quite it; but tell me, ought Nicolas to have laughed at her and have treated her as the other clerks, in order to extinguish the delusion in this unhappy organism.” (Why Varvara Petrovna used the word organism I couldn’t understand.)

“Can you really refuse to recognise the lofty compassion, the noble tremor of the whole organism with which Nicolas answered Kirillov: ‘I do not laugh at her.’ A noble, sacred answer!”

“Sublime,” muttered Stepan Trofimovitch.

“And observe, too, that he is by no means so rich as you suppose. The money is mine and not his, and he would take next to nothing from me then.”

“I understand, I understand all that, Varvara Petrovna,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, with a movement of some impatience.

“Oh, it’s my character! I recognise myself in Nicolas. I recognise that youthfulness, that liability to violent, tempestuous impulses. And if we ever come to be friends, Pyotr Stepanovitch, and, for my part, I sincerely hope we may, especially as I am so deeply indebted to you, then, perhaps you’ll understand... .”

“Oh, I assure you, I hope for it too,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered jerkily.

“You’ll understand then the impulse which leads one in the blindness of generous feeling to take up a man who is unworthy of one in every respect, a man who utterly fails to understand one, who is ready to torture one at every opportunity and, in contradiction to everything, to exalt such a man into a sort of ideal, into a dream. To concentrate in him all one’s hopes, to bow down before him; to love him all one’s life, absolutely without knowing why—perhaps just because he was unworthy of it. ... Oh, how I’ve suffered all my life, Pyotr Stepanovitch!”

Stepan Trofimovitch, with a look of suffering on his face, began trying to catch my eye, but I turned away in time.

“... And only lately, only lately—oh, how unjust I’ve been to Nicolas! ... You would not believe how they have been worrying me on all sides, all, all, enemies, and rascals, and friends, friends perhaps more than enemies. When the first contemptible anonymous letter was sent to me, Pyotr Stepanovitch, you’ll hardly believe it, but I had not strength enough to treat all this wickedness with contempt. ... I shall never, never forgive myself for my weakness.”

“I had heard something of anonymous letters here already,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, growing suddenly more lively, “and I’ll find out the writers of them, you may be sure.”

“But you can’t imagine the intrigues that have been got up here. They have even been pestering our poor Praskovya Ivanovna, and what reason can they have for worrying her? I was quite unfair to you to-day perhaps, my dear Praskovya Ivanovna,” she added in a generous impulse of kindness, though not without a certain triumphant irony.

“Don’t say any more, my dear,” the other lady muttered reluctantly. “To my thinking we’d better make an end of all this; too much has been said.”

And again she looked timidly towards Liza, but the latter was looking at Pyotr Sterjanovitch.

“And I intend now to adopt this poor unhappy creature, this insane woman who has lost everything and kept only her heart,” Varvara Petrovna exclaimed suddenly. “It’s a sacred duty I intend to carry out. I take her under my protection from this day.”

“And that will be a very good thing in one way,” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried, growing quite eager again. “Excuse me, I did not finish just now. It’s just the care of her I want to speak of. Would you believe it, that as soon as Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had gone (I’m beginning from where I left off, Varvara Petrovna), this gentleman here, this Mr. Lebyadkin, instantly imagined he had the right to dispose of the whole pension that was provided for his sister. And he did dispose of it. I don’t know exactly how it had been arranged by Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at that time. But a year later, when he learned from abroad what had happened, he was obliged to make other arrangements. Again, I don’t know the details; he’ll tell you them himself. I only know that the interesting young person was placed somewhere in a remote nunnery, in very comfortable surroundings, but under friendly superintendence—you understand? But what do you think Mr. Lebyadkin made up his mind to do? He exerted himself to the utmost, to begin with, to find where his source of income, that is his sister, was hidden. Only lately he attained his object, took her from the nunnery, asserting some claim to her, and brought her straight here. Here he doesn’t feed her properly, beats her, and bullies her. As soon as by some means he gets a considerable sum from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, he does nothing but get drunk, and instead of gratitude ends by impudently defying Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, making senseless demands, threatening him with proceedings if the pension is not paid straight into his hands. So he takes what is a voluntary gift from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch as a tax—can you imagine it? Mr. Lebyadkin, is that all true that I have said just now?”

The captain, who had till that moment stood in silence looking down, took two rapid steps forward and turned crimson.

“Pyotr Stepanovitch, you’ve treated me cruelly,” he brought out abruptly.

“Why cruelly? How? But allow us to discuss the question of cruelty or gentleness later on. Now answer my first question; is it true all that I have said or not? If you consider it’s false you are at liberty to give your own version at once.”

“I ... you know yourself, Pyotr Stepanovitch,” the captain muttered, but he could not go on and relapsed into silence. It must be observed that Pyotr Stepanovitch was sitting in an easy chair with one leg crossed over the other, while the captain stood before him in the most respectful attitude.

Lebyadkin’s hesitation seemed to annoy Pyotr Stepanovitch; a spasm of anger distorted his face.

“Then you have a statement you want to make?” he said, looking subtly at the captain. “Kindly speak. We’re waiting for you.”

“You know yourself Pyotr Stepanovitch, that I can’t say anything.”

“No, I don’t know it. It’s the first time I’ve heard it. Why can’t you speak?”

The captain was silent, with his eyes on the ground.

“Allow me to go, Pyotr Stepanovitch,” he brought out resolutely.

“No, not till you answer my question: is it all true that I’ve said?”

“It is true,” Lebyadkin brought out in a hollow voice, looking at his tormentor. Drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

“Is it all true?”

“It’s all true.”

“Have you nothing to add or to observe? If you think that we’ve been unjust, say so; protest, state your grievance aloud.”

“No, I think nothing.”

“Did you threaten Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch lately?”

“It was ... it was more drink than anything, Pyotr Stepanovitch.” He suddenly raised his head. “If family honour and undeserved disgrace cry out among men then—then is a man to blame?” he roared suddenly, forgetting himself as before.

“Are you sober now, Mr. Lebyadkin?”

Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at him penetratingly.

“I am ... sober.”

“What do you mean by family honour and undeserved disgrace?”

“I didn’t mean anybody, anybody at all. I meant myself,” the captain said, collapsing again.

“You seem to be very much offended by what I’ve said about you and your conduct? You are very irritable, Mr. Lebyadkin. But let me tell you I’ve hardly begun yet what I’ve got to say about your conduct, in its real sense. I’ll begin to discuss your conduct in its real sense. I shall begin, that may very well happen, but so far I’ve not begun, in a real sense.”

Lebyadkin started and stared wildly at Pyotr Stepanovitch.

“Pyotr Stepanovitch, I am just beginning to wake up.”

“H’m! And it’s I who have waked you up?”

“Yes, it’s you who have waked me, Pyotr Stepanovitch; and I’ve been asleep for the last four years with a storm-cloud hanging over me. May I withdraw at last, Pyotr Stepanovitch?”

“Now you may, unless Varvara Petrovna thinks it necessary ...”

But the latter dismissed him with a wave of her hand.

The captain bowed, took two steps towards the door, stopped suddenly, laid his hand on his heart, tried to say something, did not say it, and was moving quickly away. But in the doorway he came face to face with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch; the latter stood aside. The captain shrank into himself, as it were, before him, and stood as though frozen to the spot, his eyes fixed upon him like a rabbit before a boa-constrictor. After a little pause Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch waved him aside with a slight motion of his hand, and walked into the drawing-room.

7

He was cheerful and serene. Perhaps something very pleasant had happened to him, of which we knew nothing as yet; but he seemed particularly contented.

“Do you forgive me, Nicolas?” Varvara Petrovna hastened to say, and got up suddenly to meet him.

But Nicolas positively laughed.

“Just as I thought,” he said, good-humouredly and jestingly. “I see you know all about it already. When I had gone from here I reflected in the carriage that I ought at least to have told you the story instead of going off like that. But when I remembered that Pyotr Stepanovitch was still here, I thought no more of it.”

As he spoke he took a cursory look round.

“Pyotr Stepanovitch told us an old Petersburg episode in the life of a queer fellow,” Varvara Petrovna rejoined enthusiastically—“ a mad and capricious fellow, though always lofty in his feelings, always chivalrous and noble. ...”

“Chivalrous? You don’t mean to say it’s come to that,” laughed Nicolas. “However, I’m very grateful to Pyotr Stepanovitch for being in such a hurry this time.” He exchanged a rapid glance with the latter. “You must know, maman, that Pyotr Stepanovitch is the universal peacemaker; that’s his part in life, his weakness, his hobby, and I particularly recommend him to you from that point of view. I can guess what a yarn he’s been spinning. He’s a great hand at spinning them; he has a perfect record-office in his head. He’s such a realist, you know, that he can’t tell a lie, and prefers truthfulness to effect ... except, of course, in special cases when effect is more important than truth.” (As he said this he was still looking about him.) “So, you see clearly, maman, that it’s not for you to ask my forgiveness, and if there’s any craziness about this affair it’s my fault, and it proves that, when all’s said and done, I really am mad. ... I must keep up my character here... .”

Then he tenderly embraced his mother.

“In any case the subject has been fully discussed and is done with,” he added, and there was a rather dry and resolute note in his voice. Varvara Petrovna understood that note, but her exaltation was not damped, quite the contrary.

“I didn’t expect you for another month, Nicolas!”

“I will explain everything to you, maman, of course, but now ...”

And he went towards Praskovya Ivanovna.

But she scarcely turned her head towards him, though she had been completely overwhelmed by his first appearance. Now she had fresh anxieties to think of; at the moment the captain had stumbled upon Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch as he was going out, Liza had suddenly begun laughing—at first quietly and intermittently, but her laughter grew more and more violent, louder and more conspicuous. She flushed crimson, in striking contrast with her gloomy expression just before.

While Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was talking to Varvara Petrovna, she had twice beckoned to Mavriky Nikolaevitch as though she wanted to whisper something to him; but as soon as the young man bent down to her, she instantly burst into laughter; so that it seemed as though it was at poor Mavriky Nikolaevitch that she was laughing. She evidently tried to control herself, however, and put her handkerchief to her lips. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch turned to greet her with a most innocent and open-hearted air.

"Please excuse me," she responded, speaking quickly. "You ... you've seen Mavriky Nikolaevitch of course... . My goodness, how inexcusably tall you are, Mavriky Nikolaevitch!"

And laughter again, Mavriky Nikolaevitch was tall, but by no means inexcusably so.

"Have ... you been here long?" she muttered, restraining herself again, genuinely embarrassed though her eyes were shining.

"More than two hours," answered Nicolas, looking at her intently. I may remark that he was exceptionally reserved and courteous, but that apart from his courtesy his expression was utterly indifferent, even listless.

"And where are you going to stay?"

"Here."

Varvara Petrovna, too, was watching Liza, but she was suddenly struck by an idea.

"Where have you been all this time, Nicolas, more than two hours?" she said, going up to him. "The train comes in at ten o'clock."

"I first took Pyotr Stepanovitch to Kirillov's. I came across Pyotr Stepanovitch at Matveyev (three stations away), and we travelled together."

"I had been waiting at Matveyev since sunrise," put in Pyotr Stepanovitch. "The last carriages of our train ran off the rails in the night, and we nearly had our legs broken."

"Your legs broken!" cried Liza. "Maman, maman, you and I meant to go to Matveyev last week, we should have broken our legs too!"

"Heaven have mercy on us!" cried Praskovya Ivanovna, crossing herself.

"Maman, maman, dear maman, you mustn't be frightened if I break both my legs'. It may so easily happen to me; you say yourself that I ride so recklessly every day. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, will you go about with me when I'm lame?" She began giggling again. "If it does happen I won't let anyone take me about but you, you can reckon on that... . Well, suppose I break only one leg. Come, be polite, say you'll think it a pleasure."

"A pleasure to be crippled?" said Mavriky Nikolaevitch, frowning gravely.

"But then you'll lead me about, only you and no one else."

"Even then it'll be you leading me about, Lizaveta

Nikolaevna," murmured Mavriky Nikolaevitch, even more gravely.

"Why, he's trying to make a joke!" cried Liza, almost in dismay. "Mavriky Nikolaevitch, don't you ever dare take to that! But what an egoist you are! I am certain that, to your credit, you're slandering yourself. It will be quite the contrary; from morning till night you'll assure me that I have become more charming for having lost my leg. There's one insurmountable difficulty—you're so fearfully tall, and when I've lost my leg I shall be so very tiny.. How will you be able to take me on your arm; we shall look a strange couple!"

And she laughed hysterically. Her jests and insinuations were feeble, but she was not capable of considering the effect she was producing.

“Hysterics!” Pyotr Stepanovitch whispered to me. “A glass of water, make haste!”

He was right. A minute later every one was fussing about, water was brought. Liza embraced her mother, kissed her warmly, wept on her shoulder, then drawing back and looking her in the face she fell to laughing again. The mother too began whimpering. Varvara Petrovna made haste to carry them both off to her own rooms, going out by the same door by which Darya Pavlovna had come to us. But they were not away long, not more than four minutes.

I am trying to remember now every detail of these last moments of that memorable morning. I remember that when we were left without the ladies (except Darya Pavlovna, who had not moved from her seat), Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made the round, greeting us all except Shatov, who still sat in his corner, his head more bowed than ever. Stepan Trofimovitch was beginning something very witty to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but the latter turned away hurriedly to Darya Pavlovna. But before he reached her, Pyotr Stepanovitch caught him and drew him away, almost violently, towards the window, where he whispered something quickly to him, apparently something very important to judge by the expression of his face and the gestures that accompanied the whisper. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch listened inattentively and listlessly with his official smile, and at last even impatiently, and seemed all the time on the point of breaking away. He moved away from the window just as the ladies came back. Varvara Petrovna made Liza sit down in the same seat as before, declaring that she must wait and rest another ten minutes; and that the fresh air would perhaps be too much for her nerves at once. She was looking after Liza with great devotion, and sat down beside her. Pyotr Stepanovitch, now disengaged, skipped up to them at once, and broke into a rapid and lively flow of conversation. At that point Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at last went up to Darya Pavlovna with his leisurely step. Dasha began stirring uneasily at his approach, and jumped up quickly in evident embarrassment, flushing all over her face.

“I believe one may congratulate you ... or is it too soon?” he brought out with a peculiar line in his face.

Dasha made him some answer, but it was difficult to catch it.

“Forgive my indiscretion,” he added, raising his voice, “but you know I was expressly informed. Did you know about it?”

“Yes, I know that you were expressly informed.”

“But I hope I have not done any harm by my congratulations,” he laughed. “And if Stepan Trofimovitch ...”

“What, what’s the congratulation about?” Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly skipped up to them. “What are you being congratulated about, Darya Pavlovna? Bah! Surely that’s not it? Your blush proves I’ve guessed right. And indeed, what else does one congratulate our charming and virtuous young ladies on? And what congratulations make them blush most readily? Well, accept mine too, then, if I’ve guessed right! And pay up. Do you remember when we were in Switzerland you bet you’d never be married... . Oh, yes, apropos of Switzerland—what am I thinking about? Only fancy,

that's half what I came about, and I was almost forgetting it. Tell me," he turned quickly to Stepan Trofimovitch, "when are you going to Switzerland?"

"I ... to Switzerland?" Stepan Trofimovitch replied, wondering and confused.

"What? Aren't you going? Why you're getting married, too, you wrote?"

"Pierre!" cried Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Well, why Pierre? ... You see, if that'll please you, I've flown here to announce that I'm not at all against it, since you were set on having my opinion as quickly as possible; and if, indeed," he pattered on, "you want to 'be saved,' as you wrote, beseeching my help in the same letter, I am at your service again. Is it true that he is going to be married, Varvara Petrovna?" He turned quickly to her. "I hope I'm not being indiscreet; he writes himself that the whole town knows it and every one's congratulating him, so that, to avoid it he only goes out at night. I've got his letters in my pocket. But would you believe it, Varvara Petrovna, I can't make head or tail of it? Just tell me one thing, Stepan Trofimovitch, are you to be congratulated or are you to be 'saved' I You wouldn't believe it; in one line he's despairing and in the next he's most joyful. To begin with he begs my forgiveness; well, of course, that's their way ... though it must be said; fancy, the man's only seen me twice in his life and then by accident. And suddenly now, when he's going to be married for the third time, he imagines that this is a breach of some sort of parental duty to me, and entreats me a thousand miles away not to be angry and to allow him to. Please don't be hurt, Stepan Trofimovitch. It's characteristic of your generation, I take a broad view of it, and don't blame you. And let's admit it does you honour and all the rest. But the point is again that I don't see the point of it. There's something about some sort of 'sins in Switzerland.' 'I'm getting married,' he says, for my sins or on account of the 'sins' of another,' or whatever it is—'sins' anyway. 'The girl,' says he, 'is a pearl and a diamond,' and, well, of course, he's 'unworthy of her'; it's their way of talking; but on account of some sins or circumstances 'he is obliged to lead her to the altar, and go to Switzerland, and therefore abandon everything and fly to save me.' Do you understand anything of all that? However ... however, I notice from the expression of your faces"—(he turned about with the letter in his hand looking with an innocent smile into the faces of the company)—"that, as usual, I seem to have put my foot in it through my stupid way of being open, or, as Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch says, 'being in a hurry.' I thought, of course, that we were all friends here, that is, your friends, Stepan Trofimovitch, your friends. I am really a stranger, and I see ... and I see that you all know something, and that just that something I don't know." He still went on looking about him.

"So Stepan Trofimovitch wrote to you that he was getting married for the 'sins of another committed in Switzerland,' and that you were to fly here 'to save him,' in those very words?" said Varvara Petrovna, addressing him suddenly. Her face was yellow and distorted, and her lips were twitching.

"Well, you see, if there's anything I've not understood," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, as though in alarm, talking more quickly than ever, "it's his fault, of course, for writing like that. Here's the letter. You know, Varvara Petrovna, his letters are endless

and incessant, and, you know, for the last two or three months there has been letter upon letter, till, I must own, at last I sometimes didn't read them through. Forgive me, Stepan Trofimovitch, for my foolish confession, but you must admit, please, that, though you addressed them to me, you wrote them more for posterity, so that you really can't mind... . Come, come, don't be offended; we're friends, anyway. But this letter, Varvara Petrovna, this letter, I did read through. These 'sins'—these 'sins of another'—are probably some little sins of our own, and I don't mind betting very innocent ones, though they have suddenly made us take a fancy to work up a terrible story, with a glamour of the heroic about it; and it's just for the sake of that glamour we've got it up. You see there's something a little lame about our accounts—it must be confessed, in the end. We've a great weakness for cards, you know... . But this is unnecessary, quite unnecessary, I'm sorry, I chatter too much. But upon my word, Varvara Petrovna, he gave me a fright, and I really was half prepared to save him. He really made me feel ashamed. Did he expect me to hold a knife to his throat, or what? Am I such a merciless creditor? He writes something here of a dowry... . But are you really going to get married, Stepan Trofimovitch? That would be just like you, to say a lot for the sake of talking. Ach, Varvara Petrovna, I'm sure you must be blaming me now, and just for my way of talking too. ..."

"On the contrary, on the contrary, I see that you are driven out of all patience, and, no doubt you have had good reason," Varvara Petrovna answered spitefully. She had listened with spiteful enjoyment to all the "candid outbursts" of Pyotr Stepanovitch, who was obviously playing a part (what part I did not know then, but it was unmistakable, and over-acted indeed).

"On the contrary," she went on, "I'm only too grateful to you for speaking; but for you I might not have known of it. My eyes are opened for the first time for twenty years. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, you said just now that you had been expressly informed; surely Stepan Trofimovitch hasn't written to you in the same style?"

"I did get a very harmless and ... and ... very generous letter from him... ."

"You hesitate, you pick out your words. That's enough! Stepan Trofimovitch, I request a great favour from you." She suddenly turned to him with flashing eyes. "Kindly leave us at once, and never set foot in my house again."

I must beg the reader to remember her recent "exaltation," which had not yet passed. It's true that Stepan Trofimovitch was terribly to blame! But what was a complete surprise to me then was the wonderful dignity of his bearing under his son's "accusation," which he had never thought of interrupting, and before Varvara Petrovna's "denunciation." How did he come by such spirit? I only found out one thing, that he had certainly been deeply wounded at his first meeting with Petrusha, by the way he had embraced him. It was a deep and genuine grief; at least in his eyes and to his heart. He had another grief at the same time, that is the poignant consciousness of having acted contemptibly. He admitted this to me afterwards with perfect openness. And you know real genuine sorrow will sometimes make even a phenomenally frivolous, unstable man solid and stoical; for a short time at any rate; what's more, even fools

are by genuine sorrow turned into wise men, also only for a short time of course; it is characteristic of sorrow. And if so, what might not happen with a man like Stepan Trofimovitch? It worked a complete transformation—though also only for a time, of course.

He bowed with dignity to Varvara Petrovna without uttering a word (there was nothing else left for him to do, indeed). He was on the point of going out without a word, but could not refrain from approaching Darya Pavlovna. She seemed to foresee that he would do so, for she began speaking of her own accord herself, in utter dismay, as though in haste to anticipate him.

“Please, Stepan Trofimovitch, for God’s sake, don’t say anything,” she began, speaking with haste and excitement, with a look of pain in her face, hurriedly stretching out her hands to him. “Be sure that I still respect you as much ... and think just as highly of you, and ... think well of me too, Stepan Trofimovitch, that will mean a great deal to me, a great deal. ...”

Stepan Trofimovitch made her a very, very low bow.

“It’s for you to decide, Darya Pavlovna; you know that you are perfectly free in the whole matter! You have been, and you are now, and you always will be,” Varvara Petrovna concluded impressively.

“Bah! Now I understand it all!” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, slapping himself on the forehead. “But ... but what a position I am put in by all this! Darya Pavlovna, please forgive me! ... What do you call your treatment of me, eh?” he said, addressing his father.

“Pierre, you might speak to me differently, mightn’t you, my boy,” Stepan Trofimovitch observed quite quietly.

“Don’t cry out, please,” said Pierre, with a wave of his hand. “Believe me, it’s all your sick old nerves, and crying out will do no good at all. You’d better tell me instead, why didn’t you warn me since you might have supposed I should speak out at the first chance?”

Stepan Trofimovitch looked searchingly at him.

“Pierre, you who know so much of what goes on here, can you really have known nothing of this business and have heard nothing about it?”

“What? What a set! So it’s not enough to be a child in your old age, you must be a spiteful child too! Varvara Petrovna, did you hear what he said?”

There was a general outcry; but then suddenly an incident took place which no one could have anticipated.

8

First of all I must mention that, for the last two or three minutes Lizaveta Nikolaevna had seemed to be possessed by a new impulse; she was whispering something hurriedly to her mother, and to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who bent down to listen. Her face was agitated, but at the same time it had a look of resolution. At last she got

up from her seat in evident haste to go away, and hurried her: mother whom Mavriky Nikolaevitch began helping up from her low chair. But it seemed they were not destined to get away without seeing everything to the end.

Shatov, who had been forgotten by every one in his corner (not far from Lizaveta Nikolaevna), and who did not seem to know himself why he went on sitting there, got up from his chair, and walked, without haste, with resolute steps right across the room to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, looking him straight in the face. The latter noticed him approaching at some distance, and faintly smiled, but when Shatov was close to him he left off smiling.

When Shatov stood still facing him with his eyes fixed on him, and without uttering a word, every one suddenly noticed it and there was a general hush; Pyotr Stepanovitch was the last to cease speaking. Liza and her mother were standing in the middle of the room. So passed five seconds; the look of haughty astonishment was followed by one of anger on Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's face; he scowled... .

And suddenly Shatov swung his long, heavy arm, and with all his might struck him a blow in the face. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch staggered violently.

Shatov struck the blow in a peculiar way, not at all after the conventional fashion (if one may use such an expression). It was not a slap with the palm of his hand, but a blow with the whole fist, and it was a big, heavy, bony fist covered with red hairs and freckles. If the blow had struck the nose, it would have broken it. But it hit him on the cheek, and struck the left corner of the lip and the upper teeth, from which blood streamed at once.

I believe there was a sudden scream, perhaps Varvara Petrovna screamed—that I don't remember, because there was a dead hush again; the whole scene did not last more than ten seconds, however.

Yet a very great deal happened in those seconds.

I must remind the reader again that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's was one of those natures that know nothing of fear. At a duel he could face the pistol of his opponent with indifference, and could take aim and kill with brutal coolness. If anyone had slapped him in the face, I should have expected him not to challenge his assailant to a duel, but to murder him on the spot. He was just one of those characters, and would have killed the man, knowing very well what he was doing, and without losing his self-control. I fancy, indeed, that he never was liable to those fits of blind rage which deprive a man of all power of reflection. Even when overcome with intense anger, as he sometimes was, he was always able to retain complete self-control, and therefore to realise that he would certainly be sent to penal servitude for murdering a man not in a duel; nevertheless, he'd have killed any one who insulted him, and without the faintest hesitation.

I have been studying Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch of late, and through special circumstances I know a great many facts about him now, at the time I write. I should compare him, perhaps, with some gentlemen of the past of whom legendary traditions are still perceived among us. We are told, for instance, about the Decabrist L—n, that he was

always seeking for danger, that he revelled in the sensation, and that it had become a craving of his nature; that in his youth he had rushed into duels for nothing; that in Siberia he used to go to kill bears with nothing but a knife; that in the Siberian forests he liked to meet with runaway convicts, who are, I may observe in passing, more formidable than bears. There is no doubt that these legendary gentlemen were capable of a feeling of fear, and even to an extreme degree, perhaps, or they would have been a great deal quieter, and a sense of danger would never have become a physical craving with them. But the conquest of fear was what fascinated them. The continual ecstasy of vanquishing and the consciousness that no one could vanquish them was what attracted them. The same L—n struggled with hunger for some time before he was sent into exile, and toiled to earn his daily bread simply because he did not care to comply with the requests of his rich father, which he considered unjust. So his conception of struggle was many-sided, and he did not prize stoicism and strength of character only in duels and bear-fights.

But many years have passed since those times, and the nervous, exhausted, complex character of the men of to-day is incompatible with the craving for those direct and unmixed sensations which were so sought after by some restlessly active gentlemen of the good old days. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch would, perhaps, have looked down on L—n, and have called him a boastful cock-a-hoop coward; it's true he wouldn't have expressed himself aloud. Stavrogin would have shot his opponent in a duel, and would have faced a bear if necessary, and would have defended himself from a brigand in the forest as successfully and as fearlessly as L—n, but it would be without the slightest thrill of enjoyment, languidly, listlessly, even with ennui and entirely from unpleasant necessity. In anger, of course, there has been a progress compared with L—n, even compared with Lermontov. There was perhaps more malignant anger in Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch than in both put together, but it was a calm, cold, if one may so say, reasonable anger, and therefore the most revolting and most terrible possible. I repeat again, I considered him then, and I still consider him (now that everything is over), a man who, if he received a slap in the face, or any equivalent insult, would be certain to kill his assailant at once, on the spot, without challenging him.

Yet, in the present case, what happened was something different and amazing.

He had scarcely regained his balance after being almost knocked over in this humiliating way, and the horrible, as it were, sodden, thud of the blow in the face had scarcely died away in the room when he seized Shatov by the shoulders with both hands, but at once, almost at the same instant, pulled both hands away and clasped them behind his back. He did not speak, but looked at Shatov, and turned as white as his shirt. But, strange to say, the light in his eyes seemed to die out. Ten seconds later his eyes looked cold, and I'm sure I'm not lying—calm. Only he was terribly pale. Of course I don't know what was passing within the man, I saw only his exterior. It seems to me that if a man should snatch up a bar of red-hot iron and hold it tight in his hand to test his fortitude, and after struggling for ten seconds with insufferable

pain end by overcoming it, such a man would, I fancy, go through something like what Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was enduring during those ten seconds.

Shatov was the first to drop his eyes, and evidently because he was unable to go on facing him; then he turned slowly and walked out of the room, but with a very different step. He withdrew quietly, with peculiar awkwardness, with his shoulders hunched, his head hanging as though he were inwardly pondering something. I believe he was whispering something. He made his way to the door carefully, without stumbling against anything or knocking anything over; he opened the door a very little way, and squeezed through almost sideways. As he went out his shock of hair standing on end at the back of his head was particularly noticeable.

Then first of all one fearful scream was heard. I saw Lizaveta Nikolaevna seize her mother by the shoulder and Mavriky Nikolaevitch by the arm and make two or three violent efforts to draw them out of the room. But she suddenly uttered a shriek, and fell full length on the floor, fainting. I can hear the thud of her head on the carpet to this day.

Part 2

Chapter 1: Night Eight Days Had Passed

Now that it is all over and I am writing a record of it, we know all about it; but at the time we knew nothing, and it was natural that many things should seem strange to us: Stepan Trofimovitch and I, anyway, shut ourselves up for the first part of the time, and looked on with dismay from a distance. I did, indeed, go about here and there, and, as before, brought him various items of news, without which he could not exist.

I need hardly say that there were rumours of the most varied kind going about the town in regard to the blow that Stavrogin had received, Lizaveta Nikolaevna's fainting fit, and all that happened on that Sunday. But what we wondered was, through whom the story had got about so quickly and so accurately. Not one of the persons present had any need to give away the secret of what had happened, or interest to serve by doing so.

The servants had not been present. Lebyadkin was the only one who might have chattered, not so much from spite, for he had gone out in great alarm (and fear of an enemy destroys spite against him), but simply from incontinence of speech—But Lebyadkin and his sister had disappeared next day, and nothing could be heard of them. There was no trace of them at Filipov's house, they had moved, no one knew where, and seemed to have vanished. Shatov, of whom I wanted to inquire about Marya Timofyevna, would not open his door, and I believe sat locked up in his room for the whole of those eight days, even discontinuing his work in the town. He would not see me. I went to see him on Tuesday and knocked at his door. I got no answer, but being convinced by unmistakable evidence that he was at home, I knocked a second time. Then, jumping up, apparently from his bed, he strode to the door and shouted at the top of his voice:

“Shatov is not at home!”

With that I went away.

Stepan Trofimovitch and I, not without dismay at the boldness of the supposition, though we tried to encourage one another, reached at last a conclusion: we made up our mind that the only person who could be responsible for spreading these rumours was Pyotr Stepanovitch, though he himself not long after assured his father that he had found the story on every one's lips, especially at the club, and that the governor and his wife were familiar with every detail of it. What is even more remarkable is that the next

day, Monday evening, I met Liputin, and he knew every word that had been passed, so that he must have heard it first-hand. Many of the ladies (and some of the leading ones) were very inquisitive about the “mysterious cripple,” as they called Marya Timdfyevna. There were some, indeed, who were anxious to see her and make her acquaintance, so the intervention of the persons who had been in such haste to conceal the Lebyadkins was timely. But Lizaveta Nikolaevna’s fainting certainly took the foremost place in the story, and “all society” was interested, if only because it directly concerned Yulia Mihailovna, as the kinswoman and patroness of the young lady. And what was there they didn’t say! What increased the gossip was the mysterious position of affairs; both houses were obstinately closed; Lizaveta Nikolaevna, so they said, was in bed with brain fever. The same thing was asserted of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, with the revolting addition of a tooth knocked out and a swollen face. It was even whispered in corners that there would soon be murder among us, that Stavrogin was not the man to put up with such an insult, and that he would kill Shatov, but with the secrecy of a Corsican vendetta. People liked this idea, but the majority of our young people listened with contempt, and with an air of the most nonchalant indifference, which was, of course, assumed. The old hostility to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch in the town was in general strikingly manifest. Even sober-minded people were eager to throw blame on him though they could not have said for what. It was whispered that he had ruined Lizaveta Nikolaevna’s reputation, and that there had been an intrigue between them in Switzerland. Cautious people, of course, restrained themselves, but all listened with relish. There were other things said, though not in public, but in private, on rare occasions and almost in secret, extremely strange things, to which I only refer to warn my readers of them with a view to the later events of my story. Some people, with knitted brows, said, God knows on what foundation, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had some special business in our province, that he had, through Count K., been brought into touch with exalted circles in Petersburg, that he was even, perhaps, in government service, and might almost be said to have been furnished with some sort of commission from some one. When very sober-minded and sensible people smiled at this rumour, observing very reasonably that a man always, mixed up with scandals, and who was beginning his career among us, with a swollen face did not look like a government official, they were told in a whisper that he was employed not in the official, but, so to say, the confidential service, and that in such cases it was essential to be as little like an official as possible. This remark produced a sensation; we knew that the Zemstvo of our province was the object of marked attention in the capital. I repeat, these were only flitting rumours that disappeared for a time when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch first came among us. But I may observe that many of the rumours were partly due to a few brief but malicious words, vaguely and disconnectedly dropped at the club by a gentleman who had lately returned from Petersburg. This was a retired captain in the guards, Artemy Pavlovitch Gaganov. He was a Very large landowner in our province and district, a man used to the society of Petersburg, and a son of the late Pavel Pavlovitch Gaganov, the venerable old man with whom Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had,

over four years before, had the extraordinarily coarse and sudden encounter which I have described already in the beginning of my story.

It immediately became known to every one that Yulia Mihailovna had made a special call on Varvara Petrovna and had been informed at the entrance: "Her honour was too unwell to see visitors." It was known, too, that Yulia Mihailovna sent I a message two days later to inquire after Varvara Petrovna's health. At last she began "defending" Varvara Petrovna everywhere, of course only in the loftiest sense, that is, in the vaguest possible way. She listened coldly and sternly to the hurried remarks made at first about the scene on Sunday, so that during the later days they were not renewed in her presence. So that the belief gained ground everywhere that Yulia Mihailovna knew not only the whole of the mysterious story but all its secret significance to the smallest detail, and not as an outsider, but as one taking part in it. I may observe, by the way, that she was already gradually beginning to gain that exalted influence among us for which she was so eager and which she was certainly struggling to win, and was already beginning to see herself "surrounded by a circle." A section of society recognised her practical sense and tact ... but of that later. Her patronage partly explained Pyotr Stepanovitch's rapid success in our society—a success with which Stepan Trofimovitch was particularly impressed at the time.

We possibly exaggerated it. To begin with, Pyotr Stepanovitch seemed to make acquaintance almost instantly with the whole town within the first four days of his arrival. He only arrived on Sunday; and on Tuesday I saw him in a carriage with Artemy Pavlovitch Gaganov, a man who was proud, irritable, and supercilious, in spite of his good breeding, and who was not easy to get on with. At the governor's, too, Pyotr Stepanovitch met with a warm welcome, so much so that he was at once on an intimate footing, like a young friend, treated, so to say, affectionately. He dined with Yulia Mihailovna almost every day. He had made her acquaintance in Switzerland, but there was certainly something curious about the rapidity of his success in the governor's house. In any case he was reputed, whether truly or not, to have been at one time a revolutionist abroad, he had had something to do with some publications and some congresses abroad, "which one can prove from the newspapers," to quote the malicious remark of Alyosha Telyatnikov, who had also been once a young friend affectionately treated in the house of the late governor, but was now, alas, a clerk on the retired list. But the fact was unmistakable: the former revolutionist, far from being hindered from returning to his beloved Fatherland, seemed almost to have been encouraged to do so, so perhaps there was nothing in it. Liputin whispered to me once that there were rumours that Pyotr Stepanovitch had once professed himself penitent, and on his return had been pardoned on mentioning certain names and so, perhaps, had succeeded in expiating his offence, by promising to be of use to the government in the future. I repeated these malignant phrases to Stepan Trofimovitch, and although the latter was in such a state that he was hardly capable of reflection, he pondered profoundly. It turned out later that Pyotr Stepanovitch had come to us with a very influential letter of recommendation, that he had, at any rate, brought one to the governor's wife

from a very important old lady in Petersburg, whose husband was one of the most distinguished old dignitaries in the capital. This old lady, who was Yulia Mihailovna's godmother, mentioned in her letter that Count K. knew Pyotr Stepanovitch very well through Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, made much of him, and thought him "a very excellent young man in spite of his former errors." Yulia Mihailovna set the greatest value on her relations with the "higher spheres," which were few and maintained with difficulty, and was, no doubt, pleased to get the old lady's letter, but still there was something peculiar about it. She even forced her husband upon a familiar footing with Pyotr Stepanovitch, so much so that Mr. von Lembke complained of it ... but of that, too, later. I may mention, too, that the great author was also favourably disposed to Pyotr Stepanovitch, and at once invited him to go and see him. Such alacrity on the part of a man so puffed up with conceit stung Stepan Trofimovitch more painfully than anything; but I put a different interpretation on it. In inviting a nihilist to see him, Mr. Karmazinov, no doubt, had in view his relations with the progressives of the younger generation in both capitals. The great author trembled nervously before the revolutionary youth of Russia, and imagining, in his ignorance, that the future lay in their hands, fawned upon them in a despicable way, chiefly because they paid no attention to him whatever.

Chapter 2

1

Pyotr Stepanovitch ran round to see his father twice, but unfortunately I was absent on both occasions. He visited him for the first time only on Wednesday, that is, not till the fourth day after their first meeting, and then only on business. Their difficulties over the property were settled, by the way, without fuss or publicity. Varvara Petrovna took it all on herself, and paid all that was owing, taking over the land, of course, and only informed Stepan Trofimovitch that it was all settled and her butler, Alexey Yegorytch, was, by her authorisation, bringing him something to sign. This Stepan Trofimovitch did, in silence, with extreme dignity. Apropos of his dignity, I may mention that I hardly recognised my old friend during those days. He behaved as he had never done before; became amazingly taciturn and had not even written one letter to Varvara Petrovna since Sunday, which seemed to me almost a miracle. What's more, he had become quite calm. He had fastened upon a final and decisive idea which gave him tranquillity. That was evident. He had hit upon this idea, and sat still, expecting something. At first, however, he was ill, especially on Monday. He had an attack of his summer cholera. He could not remain all that time without news either; but as soon as I departed from the statement of facts, and began discussing the case in itself, and formulated any theory, he at once gesticulated to me to stop. But both his interviews with his son had a distressing effect on him, though they did not shake his determination. After

each interview he spent the whole day lying on the sofa with a handkerchief soaked in vinegar on his head. But he continued to remain calm in the deepest sense.

Sometimes, however, he did not hinder my speaking. Sometimes, too, it seemed to me that the mysterious determination he had taken seemed to be failing him and he appeared to be struggling with a new, seductive stream of ideas. That was only at moments, but I made a note of it. I suspected that he was longing to assert himself again, to come forth from his seclusion, to show fight, to struggle to the last.

“Cher, I could crush them!” broke from him on Thursday evening after his second interview with Pyotr Stepanovitch, when he lay stretched on the sofa with his head wrapped in a towel.

Till that moment he had not uttered one word all day.

“Fils, fils, cher,” and so on, “I agree all those expressions are nonsense, kitchen talk, and so be it. I see it for myself. I never gave him food or drink, I sent him a tiny baby from Berlin to X province by post, and all that, I admit it... . ‘You gave me neither food nor drink, and sent me by post,’ he says, ‘and what’s more you’ve robbed me here.’ “

“‘But you unhappy boy,’ I cried to him, ‘my heart has been aching for you all my life; though I did send you by post.’ Il rit.”

“But I admit it. I admit it, granted it was by post,” he concluded, almost in delirium.

“Passons,” he began again, five minutes later. “I don’t understand Turgenev. That Bazarov of his is a fictitious figure, it does not exist anywhere. The fellows themselves were the first to disown him as unlike anyone. That Bazarov is a sort of indistinct mixture of Nozdryov and Byron, c’est le mot. Look at them attentively: they caper about and squeal with joy like puppies in the sun. They are happy, they are victorious! What is there of Byron in them! ... and with that, such ordinariness! What a low-bred, irritable vanity? What an abject craving to faire du bruit autour de son nom, without noticing that son nom... . Oh, it’s a caricature! ‘Surely,’ I cried to him, ‘you don’t want to offer yourself just as you are as a substitute for Christ?’ Il rit. Il rit beaucoup. Il rit trap. He has a strange smile. His mother had not a smile like that. Il rit toujours.”

Silence followed again.

“They are cunning; they were acting in collusion on Sunday,” he blurted out suddenly... .

“Oh, not a doubt of it,” I cried, pricking up my ears. “It was a got-up thing and it was too transparent, and so badly acted.”

“I don’t mean that. Do you know that it was all too transparent on purpose, that those ... who had to, might understand it. Do you understand that?”

“I don’t understand.”

“Tant mieux; passons. I am very irritable to-day.”

“But why have you been arguing with him, Stepan Trofimovitch?” I asked him reproachfully.

“Je voulais convertir—you’ll laugh of course—cette pauvre auntie, elle entendra de belles choses! Oh, my dear boy, would you believe it. I felt like a patriot. I always

recognised that I was a Russian, however ... a genuine Russian must be like you and me. Il y aïd, dedans quelque chose d'aveugle et de louche.”

“Not a doubt of it,” I assented.

“My dear, the real truth always sounds improbable, do you know that? To make truth sound probable you must always mix in some falsehood with it. Men have always done so. Perhaps there’s something in it that passes our understanding. What do you think: is there something we don’t understand in that triumphant squeal? I should like to think there was. I should like to think so.”

I did not speak. He, too, was silent for a long time. “They say that French cleverness ... “he babbled suddenly, as though in a fever ...” that’s false, it always has been. Why libel French cleverness? It’s simply Russian indolence, our degrading impotence to produce ideas, our revolting parasitism in the rank of nations. Ils sont tout simplement des paresseux, and not French cleverness. Oh, the Russians ought to be extirpated for the good of humanity, like noxious parasites! We’ve been striving for something utterly, utterly different. I can make nothing of it. I have given up understanding. ‘Do you understand,’ I cried to him, ‘that if you have the guillotine in the foreground of your programme and are so enthusiastic about it too, it’s simply because nothing’s easier than cutting off heads, and nothing’s harder than to have an idea. Vous etes des paresseux! Votre drapeau est un guenille, une impuissance. It’s those carts, or, what was it? ... “the rumble of the carts carrying bread to humanity “being more important than the Sistine Madonna, or, what’s the saying? ... une betise dans ce genre. Don’t you understand, don’t you understand,’ I said to him, ‘that unhappiness is just as necessary to man as happiness.’ Il rit. ‘All you do is to make a bon mot,’ he said, ‘with your limbs snug on a velvet sofa.’ ... (He used a coarser expression.) And this habit of addressing a father so familiarly is very nice when father and son are on good terms, but what do you think of it when they are abusing one another?”

We were silent again for a minute.

“Cher,” he concluded at last, getting up quickly, “do you know this is bound to end in something?”

“Of course,” said I.

“Vous ne comprenez pas. Passons. But ... usually in our world things come to nothing, but this will end in something; it’s bound to, it’s bound to!”

He got up, and walked across the room in violent emotion, and coming back to the sofa sank on to it exhausted.

On Friday morning, Pyotr Stepanovitch went off somewhere in the neighbourhood, and remained away till Monday. I heard of his departure from Liputin, and in the course of conversation I learned that the Lebyadkins, brother and sister, had moved to the riverside quarter. “I moved them,” he added, and, dropping the Lebyadkins, he suddenly announced to me that Lizaveta Nikolaevna was going to marry Mavriky Nikolaevitch, that, although it had not been announced, the engagement was a settled thing. Next day I met Lizaveta Nikolaevna out riding with Mavriky Nikolaevitch; she was out for the first time after her illness. She beamed at me from the distance, laughed,

and nodded in a very friendly way. I told all this to Stepan Trofimovitch; he paid no attention, except to the news about the Lebyadkins.

And now, having described our enigmatic position throughout those eight days during which we knew nothing, I will pass on to the description of the succeeding incidents of my chronicle, writing, so to say, with full knowledge, and describing things as they became known afterwards, and are clearly seen to-day. I will begin with the eighth day after that Sunday, that is, the Monday evening—for in reality a “new scandal” began with that evening.

2

It was seven o'clock in the evening. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was sitting alone in his study—the room he had been fond of in old days. It was lofty, carpeted with rugs, and contained somewhat heavy old-fashioned furniture. He was sitting on the sofa in the corner, dressed as though to go out, though he did not seem to be intending to do so. On the table before him stood a lamp with a shade. The sides and corners of the big room were left in shadow. His eyes looked dreamy and concentrated, not altogether tranquil; his face looked tired and had grown a little thinner. He really was ill with a swollen face; but the story of a tooth having been knocked out was an exaggeration. One had been loosened, but it had grown into its place again: he had had a cut on the inner side of the upper lip, but that, too, had healed. The swelling on his face had lasted all the week simply because the invalid would not have a doctor, and instead of having the swelling lanced had waited for it to go down. He would not hear of a doctor, and would scarcely allow even his mother to come near him, and then only for a moment, once a day, and only at dusk, after it was dark and before lights had been brought in. He did not receive Pyotr Stepanovitch either, though the latter ran round to Varvara Petrovna's two or three times a day so long as he remained in the town. And now, at last, returning on the Monday morning after his three days' absence, Pyotr Stepanovitch made a circuit of the town, and, after dining at Yulia Mihailovna's, came at last in the evening to Varvara Petrovna, who was impatiently expecting him. The interdict had been removed, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was “at home.” Varvara Petrovna herself led the visitor to the door of the study; she had long looked forward to their meeting, and Pyotr Stepanovitch had promised to run to her and repeat what passed. She knocked timidly at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's door, and getting no answer ventured to open the door a couple of inches.

“Nicolas, may I bring Pyotr Stepanovitch in to see you?” she asked, in a soft and restrained voice, trying to make out her son's face behind the lamp.

“You can—you can, of course you can,” Pyotr Stepanovitch himself cried out, loudly and gaily. He opened the door with his hand and went in.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had not heard the knock at the door, and only caught his mother's timid question, and had not had time to answer it. Before him, at that moment, there lay a letter he had just read over, which he was pondering deeply. He

started, hearing Pyotr Stepanovitch's sudden outburst, and hurriedly put the letter under a paper-weight, but did not quite succeed; a corner of the letter and almost the whole envelope showed.

"I called out on purpose that you might be prepared," Pyotr Stepanovitch said hurriedly, with surprising naivete, running up to the table, and instantly staring at the corner of the letter, which peeped out from beneath the paper-weight.

"And no doubt you had time to see how I hid the letter I had just received, under the paper-weight," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch calmly, without moving from his place.

"A letter? Bless you and your letters, what are they to do with me?" cried the visitor. "But ... what does matter ..." he whispered again, turning to the door, which was by now closed, and nodding his head in that direction.

"She never listens," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch observed coldly.

"What if she did overhear?" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, raising his voice cheerfully, and settling down in an arm-chair. "I've nothing against that, only I've come here now to speak to you alone. Well, at last I've succeeded in getting at you. First of all, how are you? I see you're getting on splendidly. To-morrow you'll show yourself again—eh?"

"Perhaps."

"Set their minds at rest. Set mine at rest at last." He gesticulated violently with a jocose and amiable air. "If only you knew what nonsense I've had to talk to them. You know, though." He laughed.

"I don't know everything. I only heard from my mother that you've been ... very active."

"Oh, well, I've said nothing definite," Pyotr Stepanovitch flared up at once, as though defending himself from an awful attack. "I simply trotted out Shatov's wife; you know, that is, the rumours of your liaison in Paris, which accounted, of course, for what happened on Sunday. You're not angry?"

"I'm sure you've done your best."

"Oh, that's just what I was afraid of. Though what does that mean, 'done your best'? That's a reproach, isn't it? You always go straight for things, though... . What I was most afraid of, as I came here, was that you wouldn't go straight for the point."

"I don't want to go straight for anything," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch with some irritation- But he laughed at once.

"I didn't mean that, I didn't mean that, don't make a mistake," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, waving his hands, rattling his words out like peas, and at once relieved at his companion's irritability. "I'm not going to worry you with our business, especially in your present position. I've only come about Sunday's affair, and only to arrange the most necessary steps, because, you see, it's impossible. I've come with the frankest explanations which I stand in more need of than you—so much for your vanity, but at the same time it's true. I've come to be open with you from this time forward."

"Then you have not been open with me before?"

“You know that yourself. I’ve been cunning with you many times ... you smile; I’m very glad of that smile as a prelude to our explanation. I provoked that smile on purpose by using the word ‘cunning,’ so that you might get cross directly at my daring to think I could be cunning, so that I might have a chance of explaining myself at once. You see, you see how open I have become now! Well, do you care to listen?”

In the expression of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s face, which was contemptuously composed, and even ironical, in spite of his visitor’s obvious desire to irritate him by the insolence of his premeditated and intentionally coarse naivetes, there was, at last, a look of rather uneasy curiosity.

“Listen,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, wriggling more than ever, “when I set off to come here, I mean here in the large sense, to this town, ten days ago, I made up my mind, of course, to assume a character. It would have been best to have done without anything, to have kept one’s own character, wouldn’t it? There is no better dodge than one’s own character, because no one believes in it. I meant, I must own, to assume the part of a fool, because it is easier to be a fool than to act one’s own character; but as a fool is after all something extreme, and anything extreme excites curiosity, I ended by sticking to my own character. And what is my own character? The golden mean: neither wise nor foolish, rather stupid, and dropped from the moon, as sensible people say here, isn’t that it?”

“Perhaps it is,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, with a faint smile.

“Ah, you agree—I’m very glad; I knew beforehand that it was your own opinion... . You needn’t trouble, I am not annoyed, and I didn’t describe myself in that way to get a flattering contradiction from you—no, you’re not stupid, you’re clever. ... Ah! you’re smiling again! ... I’ve blundered once more. You would not have said ‘you’re clever,’ granted; I’ll let it pass anyway. Passons, as papa says, and, in parenthesis, don’t be vexed with my verbosity. By the way, I always say a lot, that is, use a great many words and talk very fast, and I never speak well. And why do I use so many words, and why do I never speak well? Because I don’t know how to speak. People who can speak well, speak briefly. So that I am stupid, am I not? But as this gift of stupidity is natural to me, why shouldn’t I make skilful use of it? And I do make use of it. It’s true that as I came here, I did think, at first, of being silent. But you know silence is a great talent, and therefore incongruous for me, and secondly silence would be risky, anyway. So I made up my mind finally that it would be best to talk, but to talk stupidly—that is, to talk and talk and talk—to be in a tremendous hurry to explain things, and in the end to get muddled in my own explanations, so that my listener would walk away without hearing the end, with a shrug, or, better still, with a curse. You succeed straight off in persuading them of your simplicity, in boring them and in being incomprehensible—three advantages all at once! Do you suppose anybody will suspect you of mysterious designs after that? Why, every one of them would take it as a personal affront if anyone were to say I had secret designs. And I sometimes amuse them too, and that’s priceless. Why, they’re ready to forgive me everything now, just

because the clever fellow who used to publish manifestoes out there turns out to be stupider than themselves—that's so, isn't it? From your smile I see you approve."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was not smiling at all, however.

On the contrary, he was listening with a frown and some impatience.

"Eh? What? I believe you said 'no matter.' "

Pyotr Stepanovitch rattled on. (Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had said nothing at all.) "Of course, of course. I assure you I'm not here to compromise you by my company, by claiming you as my comrade. But do you know you're horribly captious to-day; I ran in to you with a light and open heart, and you seem to be laying up every word I say against me. I assure you I'm not going to begin about anything shocking to-day, I give you my word, and I agree beforehand to all your conditions."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was obstinately silent.

"Eh? What? Did you say something? I see, I see that I've made a blunder again, it seems; you've not suggested conditions and you're not going to; I believe you, I believe you; well, you can set your mind at rest; I know, of course, that it's not worth while for me to suggest them, is it? I'll answer for you beforehand, and—just from stupidity, of course; stupidity again... . You're laughing? Eh? What?"

"Nothing," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch laughed at last. "I just remembered that I really did call you stupid, but you weren't there then, so they must have repeated it. ... I would ask you to make haste and come to the point."

"Why, but I am at the point! I am talking about Sunday," babbled Pyotr Stepanovitch. "Why, what was I on Sunday? What would you call it? Just fussy, mediocre stupidity, and in the stupidest way I took possession of the conversation by force. But they forgave me everything, first because I dropped from the moon, that seems to be settled here, now, by every one; and, secondly, because I told them a pretty little story, and got you all out of a scrape, didn't they, didn't they?"

"That is, you told your story so as to leave them in doubt and suggest some compact and collusion between us, when there was no collusion and I'd not asked you to do anything."

"Just so, just so!" Pyotr Stepanovitch caught him up, apparently delighted. "That's just what I did do, for I wanted you to see that I implied it; I exerted myself chiefly for your sake, for I caught you and wanted to compromise you, above all I wanted to find out how far you're afraid."

"It would be interesting to know why you are so open now?"

"Don't be angry, don't be angry, don't glare at me... . You're not, though. You wonder why I am so open? Why, just because it's all changed now; of course, it's over, buried Under the sand. I've suddenly changed my ideas about you. The old way is closed; now I shall never compromise you in the old way, it will be in a new way now."

"You've changed your tactics?"

"There are no tactics. Now it's for you to decide in everything, that is, if you want to, say yes, and if you want to, say no. There you have my new tactics. And I won't say a word about our cause till you bid me yourself. You laugh? Laugh away. I'm laughing

myself. But I'm in earnest now, in earnest, in earnest, though a man who is in such a hurry is stupid, isn't he? Never mind, I may be stupid, but I'm in earnest, in earnest."

He really was speaking in earnest in quite a different tone, and with a peculiar excitement, so that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at him with curiosity.

"You say you've changed your ideas about me?" he asked.

"I changed my ideas about you at the moment when you drew your hands back after Shatov's attack, and, that's enough, that's enough, no questions, please, I'll say nothing more now."

He jumped up, waving his hands as though waving off questions. But as there were no questions, and he had no reason to go away, he sank into an arm-chair again, somewhat reassured.

"By the way, in parenthesis," he rattled on at once, "some people here are babbling that you'll kill him, and taking bets about it, so that Lembke positively thought of setting the police on, but Yulia Mihailovna forbade it. ... But enough about that, quite enough, I only spoke of it to let you know. By the way, I moved the Lebyadkins the same day, you know; did you get my note with their address?"

"I received it at the time."

"I didn't do that by way of 'stupidity.' I did it genuinely, to serve you. If it was stupid, anyway, it was done in good faith."

"Oh, all right, perhaps it was necessary... ." said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch dreamily, "only don't write any more letters to me, I beg you."

"Impossible to avoid it. It was only one."

"So Liputin knows?"

"Impossible to help it: but Liputin, you know yourself, dare not ... By the way, you ought to meet our fellows, that is, the fellows not our fellows, or you'll be finding fault again. Don't disturb yourself, not just now, but sometime. Just now it's raining. I'll let them know, they'll meet together, and we'll go in the evening. They're waiting, with their mouths open like young crows in a nest, to see what present we've brought them. They're a hot-headed lot. They've brought out leaflets, they're on the point of quarrelling. Virginsky is a universal humanity man, Liputin is a Fourierist with a marked inclination for police work; a man, I assure you, who is precious from one point of view, though he requires strict supervision in all others; and, last of all, that fellow with the long ears, he'll read an account of his own system. And do you know, they're offended at my treating them casually, and throwing cold water over them, but we certainly must meet."

"You've made me out some sort of chief?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch dropped as carelessly as possible.

Pyotr Stepanovitch looked quickly at him.

"By the way," he interposed, in haste to change the subject, as though he had not heard. "I've been here two or three times, you know, to see her excellency, Varvara Petrovna, and I have been obliged to say a great deal too."

"So I imagine."

“No, don’t imagine, I’ve simply told her that you won’t kill him, well, and other sweet things. And only fancy; the very next day she knew I’d moved Marya Timofyevna beyond the river. Was it you told her?”

“I never dreamed of it!”

“I knew it wasn’t you. Who else could it be? It’s interesting.”

“Liputin, of course.”

“N-no, not Liputin,” muttered Pyotr Stepanovitch, frowning; “I’ll find out who. It’s more like Shatov... . That’s nonsense though. Let’s leave that! Though it’s awfully important... . By the way, I kept expecting that your mother would suddenly burst out with the great question... . Ach! yes, she was horribly glum at first, but suddenly, when I came to-day, she was beaming all over, what does that mean?”

“It’s because I promised her to-day that within five days I’ll be engaged to Lizaveta Nikolaevna,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch said with surprising openness.

“Oh! ... Yes, of course,” faltered Pyotr Stepanovitch, seeming disconcerted. “There are rumours of her engagement, you know. It’s true, too. But you’re right, she’d run from under the wedding crown, you’ve only to call to her. You’re not angry at my saying so?”

“No, I’m not angry.”

“I notice it’s awfully hard to make you angry to-day, and I begin to be afraid of you. I’m awfully curious to know how you’ll appear to-morrow. I expect you’ve got a lot of things ready. You’re not angry at my saying so?”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made no answer at all, which completed Pyotr Stepanovitch’s irritation.

“By the way, did you say that in earnest to your mother, about Lizaveta Nikolaevna?” he asked.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked coldly at him.

“Oh, I understand, it was only to soothe her, of course.”

“And if it were in earnest?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch asked firmly.

“Oh, God bless you then, as they say in such cases. It won’t hinder the cause (you see, I don’t say ‘our,’ you don’t like the word ‘our’) and I ... well, I ... am at your service, as you know.”

“You think so?”

“I think nothing—nothing,” Pyotr Stepanovitch hurriedly declared, laughing, “because I know you consider what you’re about beforehand for yourself, and everything with you has been thought out. I only mean that I am seriously at your service, always and everywhere, and in every sort of circumstance, every sort really, do you understand that?”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch yawned.

“I’ve bored you,” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried, jumping up suddenly, and snatching his perfectly new round hat as though he were going away. He remained and went on talking, however, though he stood up, sometimes pacing about the room and tapping himself on the knee with his hat at exciting parts of the conversation.

"I meant to amuse you with stories of the Lembkes, too," he cried gaily.

"Afterwards, perhaps, not now. But how is Yulia Mihailovna?"

"What conventional manners all of you have! Her health is no more to you than the health of the grey cat, yet you ask after it. I approve of that. She's quite well, and her respect for you amounts to a superstition, her immense anticipations of you amount to a superstition. She does not say a word about what happened on Sunday, and is convinced that you will overcome everything yourself by merely making your appearance. Upon my word! She fancies you can do anything. You're an enigmatic and romantic figure now, more than ever you were—extremely advantageous position. It is incredible how eager every one is to see you. They were pretty hot when I went away, but now it is more so than ever. Thanks again for your letter. They are all afraid of Count K. Do you know they look upon you as a spy? I keep that up, you're not angry?"

"It does not matter."

"It does not matter; it's essential in the long run. They have their ways of doing things here. I encourage it, of course; Yulia Mihailovna, in the first place, Gaganov too... . You laugh? But you know I have my policy; I babble away and suddenly I say something clever just as they are on the look-out for it. They crowd round me and I humbug away again. They've all given me up in despair by now: 'he's got brains but he's dropped from the moon.' Lembke invites me to enter the service so that I may be reformed. You know I treat him mockingly, that is, I compromise him and he simply stares, Yulia Mihailovna encourages it. Oh, by the way, Gaganov is in an awful rage with you. He said the nastiest things about you yesterday at Duhovo. I told him the whole truth on the spot, that is, of course, not the whole truth. I spent the whole day at Duhovo. It's a splendid estate, a fine house."

"Then is he at Duhovo now?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch broke in suddenly, making a sudden start forward and almost leaping up from his seat.

"No, he drove me here this morning, we returned together," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, appearing not to notice Stavrogin's momentary excitement. "What's this? I dropped a book." He bent down to pick up the "keepsake" he had knocked down. "The Women of Balzac,' with illustrations." He opened it suddenly. "I haven't read it. Lembke writes novels too."

"Yes?" queried Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, as though beginning to be interested.

"In Russian, on the sly, of course, Yulia Mihailovna knows and allows it. He's henpecked, but with good manners; it's their system. Such strict form—such self-restraint! Something of the sort would be the thing for us."

"You approve of government methods?"

"I should rather think so! It's the one thing that's natural and practicable in Russia. ... I won't ... I won't," he cried out suddenly, "I'm not referring to that — not a word on delicate subjects. Good-bye, though, you look rather green."

"I'm feverish."

"I can well believe it; you should go to bed. By the way, there are Skoptsi here in the neighbourhood — they're curious people ... of that later, though. Ah, here's

another anecdote. There's an infantry regiment here in the district. I was drinking last Friday evening with the officers. We've three friends among them, *vous comprenez*? They were discussing atheism and I need hardly say they made short work of God. They were squealing with delight. By the way, Shatov declares that if there's to be a rising in Russia we must begin with atheism. Maybe it's true. One grizzled old stager of a captain sat mum, not saying a word. All at once he stands up in the middle of the room and says aloud, as though speaking to himself: 'If there's no God, how can I be a captain then?' He took up His cap and went out, flinging up his hands."

"He expressed a rather sensible idea," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, yawning for the third time.

"Yes? I didn't understand it; I meant to ask you about it. Well what else have I to tell you? The Shpigulin factory's interesting; as you know, there are five hundred workmen in it, it's a hotbed of cholera, it's not been cleaned for fifteen years and the factory hands are swindled. The owners are millionaires. I assure you that some among the hands have an idea of the Internationale,. What, you smile? You'll see— only give me ever so little time! I've asked you to fix the time already and now I ask you again and then... . But I beg your pardon, I won't, I won't speak of that, don't frown. There!" He turned back suddenly. "I quite forgot the chief thing. I was told just now that our box had come from Petersburg."

"You mean ..." Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at him, not understanding.

"Your box, your things, coats, trousers, and linen have come. Is it true?"

"Yes ... they said something about it this morning."

"Ach, then can't I open it at once! ..."

"Ask Alexey."

"Well, to-morrow, then, will to-morrow do? You see my new jacket, dress-coat and three pair's of trousers are with your things, from Sharmer's, by your recommendation, do you remember?"

"I hear you're going in for being a gentleman here," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch with a smile. "Is it true you're going to take lessons at the riding school?"

Pyotr Stepanovitch smiled a wry smile. "I say," he said suddenly, with excessive haste in a voice that quivered and faltered, "I say, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, let's drop personalities once for all. Of course, you can despise me as much as you like if it amuses you—but we'd better dispense with personalities for a time, hadn't we?"

"All right," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch assented.

Pyotr Stepanovitch grinned, tapped his knee with his hat, shifted from one leg to the other, and recovered his former expression.

"Some people here positively look upon me as your rival with Lizaveta Nikolaevna, so I must think of my appearance, mustn't I," he laughed. "Who was it told you that though? H'm. It's just eight o'clock; well I must be off. I promised to look in on Varvara Petrovna, but I shall make my escape. And you go to bed and you'll be stronger to-morrow. It's raining and dark, but I've a cab, it's not over safe in the streets here at night... . Ach, by the way, there's a run-away convict from Siberia, Fedka, wandering

about the town and the neighbourhood. Only fancy, he used to be a serf of mine, and my papa sent him for a soldier fifteen years ago and took the money for him. He's a very remarkable person."

"You have been talking to him?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch scanned him.

"I have. He lets me know where he is. He's ready for anything, anything, for money of course, but he has convictions, too, of a sort, of course. Oh yes, by the way, again, if you meant anything of that plan, you remember, about Lizaveta Nikolaevna, I tell you once again, I too am a fellow ready for anything of any kind you like, and absolutely at your service. ... Hullo! are you reaching for your stick. Oh no ... only fancy ... I thought you were looking for your stick."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was looking for nothing and said nothing.

But he had risen to his feet very suddenly with a strange look in his face.

"If you want any help about Mr. Gaganov either," Pyotr Stepanovitch blurted out suddenly, this time looking straight at the paper-weight, "of course I can arrange it all, and I'm certain you won't be able to manage without me."

He went out suddenly without waiting for an answer, but thrust his head in at the door once more. "I mention that," he gabbled hurriedly, "because Shatov had no right either, you know, to risk his life last Sunday when he attacked you, had he? I should be glad if you would make a note of that." He disappeared again without waiting for an answer.

3

Perhaps he imagined, as he made his exit, that as soon as he was left alone, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch would begin beating on the wall with his fists, and no doubt he would have been glad to see this, if that had been possible. But, if so, he was greatly mistaken. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was still calm. He remained standing for two minutes in the same position by the table, apparently plunged in thought, but soon a cold and listless smile came on to his lips. He slowly sat down again in the same place in the corner of the sofa, and shut his eyes as though from weariness. The corner of the letter was still peeping from under the paperweight, but he didn't even move to cover it.

He soon sank into complete forgetfulness.

When Pyotr Stepanovitch went out without coming to see her, as he had promised, Varvara Petrovna, who had been worn out by anxiety during these days, could not control herself, and ventured to visit her son herself, though it was not her regular time. She was still haunted by the idea that he would tell her something conclusive. She knocked at the door gently as before, and again receiving no answer, she opened the door. Seeing that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was sitting strangely motionless, she cautiously advanced to the sofa with a throbbing heart. She seemed struck by the fact that he could fall asleep so quickly and that he could sleep sitting like that, so erect and motionless, so that his breathing even was scarcely perceptible. His face was pale and forbidding, but it looked, as it were, numb and rigid. His brows were somewhat

contracted and frowning. He positively had the look of a lifeless wax figure. She stood over him for about three minutes, almost holding her breath, and suddenly she was seized with terror. She withdrew on tiptoe, stopped at the door, hurriedly made the sign of the cross over him, and retreated unobserved, with a new oppression and a new anguish at her heart.

He slept a long while, more than an hour, and still in the same rigid pose: not a muscle of his face twitched, there was not the faintest movement in his whole body, and his brows were still contracted in the same forbidding frown. If Varvara Petrovna had remained another three minutes she could not have endured the stifling sensation that this motionless lethargy roused in her, and would have waked him. But he suddenly opened his eyes, and sat for ten minutes as immovable as before, staring persistently and curiously, as though at some object in the corner which had struck him, although there was nothing new or striking in the room.

Suddenly there rang out the low deep note of the clock on the wall.

With some uneasiness he turned to look at it, but almost at the same moment the other door opened, and the butler, Alexey Yegorytch came in. He had in one hand a greatcoat, a scarf, and a hat, and in the other a silver tray with a note on it.

“Half-past nine,” he announced softly, and laying the other things on a chair, he held out the tray with the note—a scrap of paper unsealed and scribbled in pencil. Glancing through it, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch took a pencil from the table, added a few words, and put the note back on the tray.

“Take it back as soon as I have gone out, and now dress me,” he said, getting up from the sofa.

Noticing that he had on a light velvet jacket, he thought a minute, and told the man to bring him a cloth coat, which he wore on more ceremonious occasions. At last, when he was dressed and had put on his hat, he locked the door by which his mother had come into the room, took the letter from under the paperweight, and without saying a word went out into the corridor, followed by Alexey Yegorytch. From the corridor they went down the narrow stone steps of the back stairs to a passage which opened straight into the garden. In the corner stood a lantern and a big umbrella.

“Owing to the excessive rain the mud in the streets is beyond anything,” Alexey Yegorytch announced, making a final effort to deter his master from the expedition. But opening his umbrella the latter went without a word into the damp and sodden garden, which was dark as a cellar. The wind was roaring and tossing the bare tree-tops. The little sandy paths were wet and slippery. Alexey Yegoryvitch walked along as he was, bareheaded, in his swallow-tail coat, lighting up the path for about three steps before them with the lantern.

“Won’t it be noticed?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch asked suddenly.

“Not from the windows. Besides I have seen to all that already,” the old servant answered in quiet and measured tones.

“Has my mother retired?”

“Her excellency locked herself in at nine o’clock as she has done the last few days, and there is no possibility of her knowing anything. At what hour am I to expect your honour?”

“At one or half-past, not later than two.”

“Yes, sir.”

Crossing the garden by the winding paths that they both knew by heart, they reached the stone wall, and there in the farthest corner found a little door, which led out into a narrow and deserted lane, and was always kept locked. It appeared that Alexey Yegorytch had the key in his hand.

“Won’t the door creak?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch inquired again.

But Alexey Yegorytch informed him that it had been oiled yesterday “as well as to-day.” He was by now wet through. Unlocking the door he gave the key to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.

“If it should be your pleasure to be taking a distant walk, I would warn your honour that I am not confident of the folk here, especially in the back lanes, and especially beyond the river,” he could not resist warning him again. He was an old servant, who had been like a nurse to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, and at one time used to dandle him in his arms; he was a grave and severe man who was fond of listening to religious discourse and reading books of devotion.

“Don’t be uneasy, Alexey Yegorytch.”

“May God’s blessing rest on you, sir, but only in your righteous undertakings.”

“What?” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, stopping short in the lane.

Alexey Yegorytch resolutely repeated his words. He had never before ventured to express himself in such language in his master’s presence.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and crossed the lane, sinking five or six inches into the mud at every step. He came out at last into a long deserted street. He knew the town like the five fingers of his hand, but Bogoyavlensky Street was a long way off. It was past ten when he stopped at last before the locked gates of the dark old house that belonged to Filipov. The ground floor had stood empty since the Lebyadkins had left it, and the windows were boarded up, but there was a light burning in Shatov’s room on the second floor. As there was no bell he began banging on the gate with his hand. A window was opened and Shatov peeped out into the street. It was terribly dark, and difficult to make out anything. Shatov was peering out for some time, about a minute.

“Is that you?” he asked suddenly.

“Yes,” replied the uninvited guest.

Shatov slammed the window, went downstairs and opened the gate. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch stepped over the high sill, and without a word passed by him straight into Kjrillov’s lodge.

There everything was unlocked and all the doors stood open.

The passage and the first two rooms were dark, but there was a light shining in the last, in which Kirillov lived and drank tea, and laughter and strange cries came

from it. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went towards the light, but stood still in the doorway without going in. There was tea on the table. In the middle of the room stood the old woman who was a relation of the landlord. She was bareheaded and was dressed in a petticoat and a hare-skin jacket, and her stockingless feet were thrust into slippers. In her arms she had an eighteen-months-old baby, with nothing on but its little shirt; with bare legs, flushed cheeks, and ruffled white hair. It had only just been taken out of the cradle. It seemed to have just been crying; there were still tears in its eyes. But at that instant it was stretching out its little arms, clapping its hands, and laughing with a sob as little children do. Kirillov was bouncing a big red india-rubber ball on the floor before it. The ball bounced up to the ceiling, and .jack to the floor, the baby shrieked "Baw! baw!" Kirillov caught the "baw ." and gave it to it. The baby threw it itself with its awkward little hand's, and Kirillov ran to pick it up again.

At last the "baw" rolled under the cupboard. "Baw! baw!" cried the child. Kirillov lay down on the floor, trying to reach the ball with his hand under the cupboard. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went into the room. The baby caught sight of him, nestled against the old woman, and went off into a prolonged infantile wail. The woman immediately carried it out of the room.

"Stavrogin?" said Kirillov, beginning to get up from the floor with the ball in his hand, and showing no surprise at the unexpected visit. "Will you have tea?"

He rose to his feet.

"I should be very glad of it, if it's hot," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch; "I'm wet through."

"It's hot, nearly boiling in fact," Kirillov declared delighted. "Sit down. You're muddy, but that's nothing; I'll mop up the floor later."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sat down and emptied the cup he handed him almost at a gulp.

"Some more?" asked Kirillov.

"No, thank you."

Kirillov, who had not sat down till then, seated himself facing him, and inquired:

"Why have you come?"

"On business. Here, read this letter from Gaganov; do you remember, I talked to you about him in Petersburg."

Kirillov took the letter, read it, laid it on the table and looked at him expectantly.

"As you know, I met this Gaganov for the first time in my life a month ago, in Petersburg," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch began to explain. "We came across each other two or three times in company with other people. Without making my acquaintance and without addressing me, he managed to be very insolent to me. I told you so at the time; but now for something you don't know. As he was leaving Petersburg before I did, he sent me a letter, not like this one, yet impertinent in the highest degree, and what was queer about it was that it contained no sort of explanation of why it was written. I answered him at once, also by letter, and said, quite frankly, that he was probably angry with me on account of the incident with his father four years ago in the club

here, and that I for my part was prepared to make him every possible apology, seeing that my action was unintentional and was the result of illness. I begged him to consider and accept my apologies. He went away without answering, and now here I find him in a regular fury. Several things he has said about me in public have been repeated to me, absolutely abusive, and making astounding charges against me. Finally, to-day, I get this letter, a letter such as no one has ever had before, I should think, containing such expressions as 'the punch you got in your ugly face.' I came in the hope that you would not refuse to be my second."

"You said no one has ever had such a letter," observed Kirillov, "they may be sent in a rage. Such letters have been written more than once. Pushkin wrote to Hekern. All right, I'll come. Tell me how."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch explained that he wanted it to be to-morrow, and that he must begin by renewing his offers of apology, and even with the promise of another letter of apology, but on condition that Gaganov, on his side, should promise to send no more letters. The letter he had received he would regard as unwritten.

"Too much concession; he won't agree," said Kirillov.

"I've come first of all to find out whether you would consent to be the bearer of such terms."

"I'll take them. It's your affair. But he won't agree."

"I know he won't agree."

"He wants to fight. Say how you'll fight."

"The point is that I want the thing settled to-morrow. By nine o'clock in the morning you must be at his house. He'll listen, and won't agree, but will put you in communication with his second—let us say about eleven. You will arrange things with him, and let us all be on the spot by one or two o'clock. Please try to arrange that. The weapons, of course, will be pistols. And I particularly beg you to arrange to fix the barriers at ten paces apart; then you put each of us ten paces from the barrier, and at a given signal we approach. Each must go right up to his barrier, but you may fire before, on the way. I believe that's all."

"Ten paces between the barriers is very near," observed Kirillov.

"Well, twelve then, but not more. You understand that he wants to fight in earnest. Do you know how to load a pistol?"

"I do. I've got pistols. I'll give my word that you've never fired them. His second will give his word about his. There'll be two pairs of pistols, and we'll toss up, his or ours?"

"Excellent."

"Would you like to look at the pistols?"

"Very well."

Kirillov squatted on his heels before the trunk in the corner, which he had never yet unpacked, though things had been pulled out of it as required. He pulled out from the bottom a palm-wood box lined with red velvet, and from it took out a pair of smart and very expensive pistols.

"I've got everything, powder, bullets, cartridges. I've a revolver besides, wait."

He stooped down to the trunk again and took out a six-chambered American revolver.

"You've got weapons enough, and very good ones."

"Very, extremely."

Kirillov, who was poor, almost destitute, though he never noticed his poverty, was evidently proud of showing precious weapons, which he had certainly obtained with great sacrifice.

"You still have the same intentions?" Stavrogin asked after a moment's silence, and with a certain wariness.

"Yes," answered Kirillov shortly, guessing at once from his voice what he was asking about, and he began taking the weapons from the table.

"When?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch inquired still more cautiously, after a pause.

In the meantime Kirillov had put both the boxes back in his trunk, and sat down in his place again.

"That doesn't depend on me, as you know—when they tell me," he muttered, as though disliking the question; but at the same time with evident readiness to answer any other question. He kept his black, lustreless eyes fixed continually on Stavrogin with a calm but warm and kindly expression in them.

"I understand shooting oneself, of course," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch began suddenly, frowning a little, after a dreamy silence that lasted three minutes. "I sometimes have thought of it myself, and then there always came a new idea: if one did something wicked, or, worse still, something shameful, that is, disgraceful, only very shameful and ... ridiculous, such as people would remember for a thousand years and hold in scorn for a thousand years, and suddenly the thought comes: 'one blow in the temple and there would be nothing more.' One wouldn't care then for men and that they would hold one in scorn for a thousand years, would one?"

"You call that a new idea?" said Kirillov, after a moment's thought.

"I ... didn't call it so, but when I thought it I felt it as a new idea."

"You 'felt the idea'?" observed Kirillov. "That's good. There are lots of ideas that are always there and yet suddenly become new. That's true. I see a great deal now as though it were for the first time."

"Suppose you had lived in the moon," Stavrogin interrupted, not listening, but pursuing his own thought, "and suppose there you had done all these nasty and ridiculous things... . You know from here for certain that they will laugh at you and hold you in scorn for a thousand years as long as the moon lasts. But now you are here, and looking at the moon from here. You don't care here for anything you've done there, and that the people there will hold you in scorn for a thousand years, do you?"

"I don't know," answered Kirillov. "I've not been in the moon," he added, without any irony, simply to state the fact.

"Whose baby was that just now?"

"The old woman's mother-in-law was here—no, daughter-in-law, it's all the same. Three days. She's lying ill with the baby, it cries a lot at night, it's the stomach. The mother sleeps, but the old woman picks it up; I play ball with it. The ball's from Hamburg. I bought it in Hamburg to throw it and catch it, it strengthens the spine. It's a girl."

"Are you fond of children?"

"I am," answered Kirillov, though rather indifferently.

"Then you're fond of life?"

"Yes, I'm fond of life! What of it?"

"Though you've made up your mind to shoot yourself."

"What of it? Why connect it? Life's one thing and that's another. Life exists, but death doesn't at all."

"You've begun to believe in a future eternal life?"

"No, not in a future eternal life, but in eternal life here. There are moments, you reach moments, and time suddenly stands still, and it will become eternal."

"You hope to reach such a moment?"

"Yes."

"That'll scarcely be possible in our time," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch responded slowly and, as it were, dreamily; the two spoke without the slightest irony. "In the Apocalypse the angel swears that there will be no more time."

"I know. That's very true; distinct and exact. When all mankind attains happiness then there will be no more time, for there'll be no need of it, a very true thought."

"Where will they put it?"

"Nowhere. Time's not an object but an idea. It will be extinguished in the mind."

"The old commonplaces of philosophy, the same from the beginning of time," Stavrogin muttered with a kind of disdainful compassion.

"Always the same, always the same, from the beginning of time and never any other," Kirillov said with sparkling eyes, as though there were almost a triumph in that idea.

"You seem to be very happy, Kirillov."

"Yes, very happy," he answered, as though making the most ordinary reply.

"But you were distressed so lately, angry with Liputin."

"H'm ... I'm not scolding now. I didn't know then that I was happy. Have you seen a leaf, a leaf from a tree?"

"Yes."

"I saw a yellow one lately, a little green. It was decayed at the edges. It was blown by the wind. When I was ten years old I used to shut my eyes in the winter on purpose and fancy a green leaf, bright, with veins on it, and the sun shining. I used to open my eyes and not believe them, because it was very nice, and I used to shut them again."

"What's that? An allegory?"

"N-no ... why? I'm not speaking of an allegory, but of a leaf, only a leaf. The leaf is good. Everything's good."

"Everything?"

“Everything. Man is unhappy because he doesn’t know he’s happy. It’s only that. That’s all, that’s all! If anyone finds out he’ll become happy at once, that minute. That mother-in-law will die; but the baby will remain. It’s all good. I discovered it all of a sudden.”

“And if anyone dies of hunger, and if anyone insults and outrages the little girl, is that good?”

“Yes! And if anyone blows his brains out for the baby, that’s good too. And if anyone doesn’t, that’s good too. It’s all good, all. It’s good for all those who know that it’s all good. If they knew that it was good for them, it would be good for them, but as long as they don’t know it’s good for them, it will be bad for them. That’s the whole idea, the whole of it.”

“When did you find out you were so happy?”

“Last week, on Tuesday, no, Wednesday, for it was Wednesday by that time, in the night.”

“By what reasoning?”

“I don’t remember; I was walking about the room; never mind. I stopped my clock. It was thirty-seven minutes past two.”

“As an emblem of the fact that there will be no more time!”

Kirillov was silent.

“They’re bad because they don’t know they’re good. When they find out, they won’t outrage a little girl. They’ll find out that they’re good and they’ll all become good, every one of them.”

“Here you’ve found it out, so have you become good then?”

“I am good.”

“That I agree with, though,” Stavrogin muttered, frowning.

“He who teaches that all are good will end the world.”

“He who taught it was crucified.”

“He will come, and his name will be the man-god.”

“The god-man?”

“The man-god. That’s the difference.”

“Surely it wasn’t you lighted the lamp under the ikon?”

“Yes, it was I lighted it.”

“Did you do it believing?”

“The old woman likes to have the lamp and she hadn’t time to do it to-day,” muttered Kirillov.

“You don’t say prayers yourself?”

“I pray to everything. You see the spider crawling on the wall, I look at it and thank it for crawling.”

His eyes glowed again. He kept looking straight at Stavrogin with firm and unflinching expression. Stavrogin frowned and watched him disdainfully, but there was no mockery in his eyes.

“I’ll bet that when I come next time you’ll be believing in

God too," he said, getting up and taking his hat.

"Why?" said Kirillov, getting up too.

"If you were to find out that you believe in God, then you'd believe in Him; but since you don't know that you believe in Him, then you don't believe in Him," laughed Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.

"That's not right," Kirillov pondered, "you've distorted the idea. It's a flippant joke. Remember what you have meant in my life, Stavrogin."

"Good-bye, Kirillov."

"Come at night; when will you?"

"Why, haven't you forgotten about to-morrow?"

"Ach, I'd forgotten. Don't be uneasy. I won't oversleep. At nine o'clock. I know how to wake up when I want to. I go to bed saying 'seven o'clock,' and I wake up at seven o'clock, 'ten o'clock,' and I wake up at ten o'clock."

"You have remarkable powers," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, looking at his pale face.

"I'll come and open the gate."

"Don't trouble, Shatov will open it for me."

"Ah, Shatov. Very well, good-bye."

4

The door of the empty house in which Shatov was lodging was not closed; but, making his way into the passage, Stavrogin found himself in utter darkness, and began feeling with his hand for the stairs to the upper story. Suddenly a door opened upstairs and a light appeared. Shatov did not come out himself, but simply opened his door. When Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was standing in the doorway of the room, he saw Shatov standing at the table in the corner, waiting expectantly.

"Will you receive me on business?" he queried from the doorway.

"Come in and sit down," answered Shatov. "Shut the door; stay, I'll shut it."

He locked the door, returned to the table, and sat down, facing Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. He had grown thinner during that week, and now he seemed in a fever.

"You've been worrying me to death," he said, looking down, in a soft half-whisper. "Why didn't you come?"

"You were so sure I should come then?"

"Yes, stay, I have been delirious ... perhaps I'm delirious now... . Stay a moment."

He got up and seized something that was lying on the uppermost of his three bookshelves. It was a revolver.

"One night, in delirium, I fancied that you were coming to kill me, and early next morning I spent my last farthing on buying a revolver from that good-for-nothing fellow Lyamshin; I did not mean to let you do it. Then I came to myself again ... I've

neither powder nor shot; it has been lying there on the shelf till now; wait a minute. ...”

He got up and was opening the casement.

“Don’t throw it away, why should you?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch checked him. “It’s worth something. Besides, tomorrow people will begin saying that there are revolvers lying about under Shatov’s window. Put it back, that’s right; sit down. Tell me, why do you seem to be penitent for having thought I should come to kill you? I have not come now to be reconciled, but to talk of something necessary. Enlighten me to begin with. You didn’t give me that blow because of my connection with your wife?”

“You know I didn’t, yourself,” said Shatov, looking down again.

“And not because you believed the stupid gossip about Darya Pavlovna?”

“No, no, of course not! It’s nonsense! My sister told me from the very first ...” Shatov said, harshly and impatiently, and even with a slight stamp of his foot.

“Then I guessed right and you too guessed right,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went on in a tranquil voice. “You are right. Marya Timofyevna Lebyadkin is my lawful wife, married to me four and a half years ago in Petersburg. I suppose the blow was on her account?”

Shatov, utterly astounded, listened in silence.

“I guessed, but did not believe it,” he muttered at last, looking strangely at Stavrogin.

“And you struck me?”

Shatov flushed and muttered almost incoherently:

“Because of your fall ... your lie. I didn’t go up to you to punish you ... I didn’t know when I went up to you that I should strike you ... I did it because you meant so much to me in my life ... I ...”

“I understand, I understand, spare your words. I am sorry you are feverish. I’ve come about a most urgent matter.”

“I have been expecting you too long.” Shatov seemed to be quivering all over, and he got up from his seat. “Say what you have to say ... I’ll speak too ... later.”

He sat down.

“What I have come about is nothing of that kind,” began Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, scrutinising him with curiosity. “Owing to certain circumstances I was forced this very day to choose such an hour to come and tell you that they may murder you.”

Shatov looked wildly at him.

“I know that I may be in some danger,” he said in measured tones, “but how can you have come to know of it?”

“Because I belong to them as you do, and am a member of their society, just as you are.”

“You ... you are a member of the society?”

“I see from your eyes that you were prepared for anything from me rather than that,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, with a faint smile. “But, excuse me, you knew then that there would be an attempt on your life?”

“Nothing of the sort. And I don’t think so now, in spite of your words, though ... though there’s no being sure of anything with these fools!” he cried suddenly in a fury, striking the table with his fist. “I’m not afraid of them! I’ve broken with them. That fellow’s run here four times to tell me it was possible ... but”—he looked at Stavrogin—“what do you know about it, exactly?”

“Don’t be uneasy; I am not deceiving you,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went on, rather coldly, with the air of a man who is only fulfilling a duty. “You question me as to what I know. I know that you entered that society abroad, two years ago, at the time of the old organisation, just before you went to America, and I believe, just after our last conversation, about which you wrote so much to me in your letter from America. By the way, I must apologise for not having answered you by letter, but confined myself to ...”

“To sending the money; wait a bit,” Shatov interrupted, hurriedly pulling out a drawer in the table and taking from under some papers a rainbow-coloured note. “Here, take it, the hundred roubles you sent me; but for you I should have perished out there. I should have been a long time paying it back if it had not been for your mother. She made me a present of that note nine months ago, because I was so badly off after my illness. But, go on, please... .”

He was breathless.

“In America you changed your views, and when you came back you wanted to resign. They gave you no answer, but charged you to take over a printing press here in Russia from some one, and to keep it till you handed it over to some one who would come from them for it. I don’t know the details exactly, but I fancy that’s the position in outline. You undertook it in the hope, or on the condition, that it would be the last task they would require of you, and that then they would release you altogether. Whether that is so or not, I learnt it, not from them, but quite by chance. But now for what I fancy you don’t know; these gentry have no intention of parting with you.”

“That’s absurd!” cried Shatov. “I’ve told them honestly that I’ve cut myself off from them in everything. That is my right, the right to freedom of conscience and of thought. ... I won’t put up with it! There’s no power which could ...”

“I say, don’t shout,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch said earnestly, checking him. “That Verhovensky is such a fellow that he may be listening to us now in your passage, perhaps, with his own ears or some one else’s. Even that drunkard, Lebyadkin, was probably bound to keep an eye on you, and you on him, too, I dare say? You’d better tell me, has Verhovensky accepted your arguments now, or not?”

“He has. He has said that it can be done and that I have the right... .”

“Well then, he’s deceiving you. I know that even Kirillov, who scarcely belongs to them at all, has given them information about you. And they have lots of agents, even people who don’t know that they’re serving the society. They’ve always kept a watch on you. One of the things Pyotr Verhovensky came here for was to settle your business once for all, and he is fully authorised to do so, that is at the first good opportunity, to get rid of you, as a man who knows too much and might give them away. I repeat that

this is certain, and allow me to add that they are, for some reason, convinced that you are a spy, and that if you haven't informed against them yet, you will. Is that true?"

Shatov made a wry face at hearing such a question asked in such a matter-of fact tone.

"If I were a spy, whom could I inform?" he said angrily, not giving a direct answer. "No, leave me alone, let me go to the devil!" he cried suddenly, catching again at his original idea, which agitated him violently. Apparently it affected him more deeply than the news of his own danger. "You, you, Stavrogin, how could you mix yourself up with such shameful, stupid, second-hand absurdity? You a member of the society? What an exploit for Stavrogin!" he cried suddenly, in despair.

He clasped his hands, as though nothing could be a bitterer and more inconsolable grief to him than such a discovery.

"Excuse me," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, extremely surprised, "but you seem to look upon me as a sort of sun, and on yourself as an insect in comparison. I noticed that even from your letter in America."

"You ... you know... . Oh, let us drop me altogether," Shatov broke off suddenly, "and if you can explain anything about yourself explain it. ... Answer my question!" he repeated feverishly.

"With pleasure. You ask how I could get into such a den? After what I have told you, I'm bound to be frank with you to some extent on the subject. You see, strictly speaking, I don't belong to the society at all, and I never have belonged to it, and I've much more right than you to leave them, because I never joined them. In fact, from the very beginning I told them that I was not one of them, and that if I've happened to help them it has simply been by accident as a man of leisure. I took some part in reorganising the society, on the new plan, but that was all. But now they've changed their views, and have made up their minds that it would be dangerous to let me go, and I believe I'm sentenced to death too."

"Oh, they do nothing but sentence to death, and all by means of sealed documents, signed by three men and a half. And you think they've any power!"

"You're partly right there and partly not," Stavrogin answered with the same indifference, almost listlessness. "There's no doubt that there's a great deal that's fanciful about it, as there always is in such cases: a handful magnifies its size and significance. To my thinking, if you will have it, the only one is Pyotr Verhovensky, and it's simply good-nature on his part to consider himself only an agent of the society. But the fundamental idea is no stupider than others of the sort. They are connected with the Internationale. They have succeeded in establishing agents in Russia, they have even hit on a rather original method, though it's only theoretical, of course. As for their intentions here, the movements of our Russian organisation are something so obscure and almost always unexpected that really they might try anything among us. Note that Verhovensky is an obstinate man."

"He's a bug, an ignoramus, a buffoon, who understands nothing in Russia!" cried Shatov spitefully.

“You know him very little. It’s quite true that none of them understand much about Russia, but not much less than you and I do. Besides, Verhovensky is an enthusiast.”

“Verhovensky an enthusiast?”

“Oh, yes. There is a point when he ceases to be a buffoon and becomes a madman. I beg you to remember your own expression: ‘Do you know how powerful a single man may be?’ Please don’t laugh about it, he’s quite capable of pulling a trigger. They are convinced that I am a spy too. As they don’t know how to do things themselves, they’re awfully fond of accusing people of being spies.”

“But you’re not afraid, are you?”

“N—no. I’m not very much afraid... . But your case is quite different. I warned you that you might anyway keep it in mind. To my thinking there’s no reason to be offended in being threatened with danger by fools; their brains don’t affect the question. They’ve raised their hand against better men than you or me. It’s a quarter past eleven, though.” He looked at his watch and got up from his chair. “I wanted to ask you one quite irrelevant question.”

“For God’s sake!” cried Shatov, rising impulsively from his seat.

“I beg your pardon?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at him inquiringly.

“Ask it, ask your question for God’s sake,” Shatov repeated in indescribable excitement, “but on condition that I ask you a question too. I beseech you to allow me ... I can’t ... ask your question!”

Stavrogin waited a moment and then began. “I’ve heard that you have some influence on Marya Timofyevna, and that she was fond of seeing you and hearing you talk. Is that so?”

“Yes ... she used to listen ...” said Shatov, confused. “Within a day or two I intend to make a public announcement of our marriage here in the town.”

“Is that possible?” Shatov whispered, almost with horror.

“I don’t quite understand you. There’s no sort of difficulty about it, witnesses to the marriage are here. Everything took place in Petersburg, perfectly legally and smoothly, and if it has not been made known till now, it is simply because the witnesses, Kirillov, Pyotr Verhovensky, and Lebyadkin (whom I now have the pleasure of claiming as a brother-in-law) promised to hold their tongues.”

“I don’t mean that ... You speak so calmly ... but good! Listen! You weren’t forced into that marriage, were you?”

“No, no one forced me into it.” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled at Shatov’s impetuous haste.

“And what’s that talk she keeps up about her baby?” Shatov interposed disconnectedly, with feverish haste.

“She talks about her baby? Bah! I didn’t know. It’s the first time I’ve heard of it. She never had a baby and couldn’t have had: Marya Timofyevna is a virgin.”

“Ah! That’s just what I thought! Listen!”

“What’s the matter with you, Shatov?”

Shatov hid his face in his hands, turned away, but suddenly clutched Stavrogin by the shoulders.

“Do you know why, do you know why, anyway,” he shouted, “why you did all this, and why you are resolved on such a punishment now!”

“Your question is clever and malignant, but I mean to surprise you too; I fancy I do know why I got married then, and why I am resolved on such a punishment now, as you express it.”

“Let’s leave that ... of that later. Put it off. Let’s talk of the chief thing, the chief thing. I’ve been waiting two years for you.”

“Yes?”

“I’ve waited too long for you. I’ve been thinking of you incessantly. You are the only man who could move ... I wrote to you about it from America.”

“I remember your long letter very well.”

“Too long to be read? No doubt; six sheets of notepaper. Don’t speak! Don’t speak! Tell me, can you spare me another ten minutes? ... But now, this minute ... I have waited for you too long.”

“Certainly, half an hour if you like, but not more, if that will suit you.”

“And on condition, too,” Shatov put in wrathfully, “that you take a different tone. Do you hear? I demand when I ought to entreat. Do you understand what it means to demand when one ought to entreat?”

“I understand that in that way you lift yourself above all ordinary considerations for the sake of loftier aims,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch with a faint smile. “I see with regret, too, that you’re feverish.”

“I beg you to treat me with respect, I insist on it!” shouted Shatov, “not my personality—I don’t care a hang for that, but something else, just for this once. While I am talking ... we are two beings, and have come together in infinity ... for the last time in the world. Drop your tone, and speak like a human being! Speak, if only for once in your life with the voice of a man. I say it not for my sake but for yours. Do you understand that you ought to forgive me that blow in the face if only because I gave you the opportunity of realising your immense power... . Again you smile your disdainful, worldly smile! Oh, when will you understand me! Have done with being a snob! Understand that I insist on that. I insist on it, else I won’t speak, I’m not going to for anything!”

His excitement was approaching frenzy. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch frowned and seemed to become more on his guard.

“Since I have remained another half-hour with you when time is so precious,” he pronounced earnestly and impressively, “you may rest assured that I mean to listen to you at least with interest ... and I am convinced that I shall hear from you much that is new.”

He sat down on a chair.

“Sit down!” cried Shatov, and he sat down himself.

“Please remember,” Stavrogin interposed once more, “that I was about to ask a real favour of you concerning Marya Timofyevna, of great importance for her, anyway... .”

“What?” Shatov frowned suddenly with the air of a man who has just been interrupted at the most important moment, and who gazes at you unable to grasp the question.

“And you did not let me finish,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went on with a smile.

“Oh, nonsense, afterwards!” Shatov waved his hand disdainfully, grasping, at last, what he wanted, and passed at once to his principal theme.

5

“Do you know,” he began, with flashing eyes, almost menacingly, bending right forward in his chair, raising the forefinger of his right hand above him (obviously unaware that he was doing so), “do you know who are the only ‘god-bearing’ people on earth, destined to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new God, and to whom are given the keys of life and of the new world ... Do you know which is that people and what is its name?”

“From your manner I am forced to conclude, and I think I may as well do so at once, that it is the Russian people.”

“And you can laugh, oh, what a race!” Shatov burst out.

“Calm yourself, I beg of you; on the contrary, I was expecting something of the sort from you.”

“You expected something of the sort? And don’t you know those words yourself?”

“I know them very well. I see only too well what you’re driving at. All your phrases, even the expression ‘god-bearing people’ is only a sequel to our talk two years ago, abroad, not long before you went to America. ... At least, as far as I can recall it now.”

“It’s your phrase altogether, not mine. Your own, not simply the sequel of our conversation. ‘Our’ conversation it was not at all. It was a teacher uttering weighty words, and a pupil who was raised from the dead. I was that pupil and you were the teacher.”

“But, if you remember, it was just after my words you joined their society, and only afterwards went away to America.”

“Yes, and I wrote to you from America about that. I wrote to you about everything. Yes, I could not at once tear my bleeding heart from what I had grown into from childhood, on which had been lavished all the raptures of my hopes and all the tears of my hatred. ... It is difficult to change gods. I did not believe you then, because I did not want to believe, I plunged for the last time into that sewer... . But the seed remained and grew up. Seriously, tell me seriously, didn’t you read all my letter from America, perhaps you didn’t read it at all?”

“I read three pages of it. The two first and the last. And I glanced through the middle as well. But I was always meaning ...”

“Ah, never mind, drop it! Damn it!” cried Shatov, waving his hand. “If you’ve renounced those words about the people now, how could you have uttered them then? ... That’s what crushes me now.”

“I wasn’t joking with you then; in persuading you I was perhaps more concerned with myself than with you,” Stavrogin pronounced enigmatically.

“You weren’t joking! In America I was lying for three months on straw beside a hapless creature, and I learnt from him that at the very time when you were sowing the seed of God and the Fatherland in my heart, at that very time, perhaps during those very days, you were infecting the heart of that hapless creature, that maniac Kirillov, with poison ... you confirmed false malignant ideas in him, and brought him to the verge of insanity... . Go, look at him now, he is your creation ... you’ve seen him though.”

“In the first place, I must observe that Kirillov himself told me that he is happy and that he’s good. Your supposition that all this was going on at the same time is almost correct. But what of it? I repeat, I was not deceiving either of you.”

“Are you an atheist? An atheist now?”

“Yes.”

“And then?”

“Just as I was then.”

“I wasn’t asking you to treat me with respect when I began the conversation. With your intellect you might have understood that,” Shatov muttered indignantly.

“I didn’t get up at your first word, I didn’t close the conversation, I didn’t go away from you, but have been sitting here ever since submissively answering your questions and ... cries, so it seems I have not been lacking in respect to you yet.” Shatov interrupted, waving his hand.

“Do you remember your expression that ‘an atheist can’t be a Russian,’ that ‘an atheist at once ceases to be a Russian’? Do you remember saying that?”

“Did I?” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch questioned him back. “You ask? You’ve forgotten? And yet that was one of the truest statements of the leading peculiarity of the Russian soul, which you divined. You can’t have forgotten it! I will remind you of something else: you said then that ‘a man who was not orthodox could not be Russian.’”

“I imagine that’s a Slavophil idea.”

“The Slavophiles of to-day disown it. Nowadays, people have grown cleverer. But you went further: you believed that Roman Catholicism was not Christianity; you asserted that Rome proclaimed Christ subject to the third temptation of the devil. Announcing to all the world that Christ without an earthly kingdom cannot hold his ground upon earth, Catholicism by so doing proclaimed Antichrist and ruined the whole Western world. You pointed out that if France is in agonies now it’s simply the fault of Catholicism, for she has rejected the iniquitous God of Rome and has not found a new one. That’s what you could say then! I remember our conversations.”

“If I believed, no doubt I should repeat it even now. I wasn’t lying when I spoke as though I had faith,” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch pronounced very earnestly. “But I must

tell you, this repetition of my ideas in the past makes a very disagreeable impression on me. Can't you leave off?"

"If you believe it?" repeated Shatov, paying not the slightest attention to this request. "But didn't you tell me that if it were mathematically proved to you that the truth excludes Christ, you'd prefer to stick to Christ rather than to the truth? Did you say that? Did you? "

"But allow me too at last to ask a question," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, raising his voice. "What is the object of this irritable and ... malicious cross-examination?"

"This examination will be over for all eternity, and you will never hear it mentioned again."

"You keep insisting that we are outside the limits of time and space."

"Hold your tongue!" Shatov cried suddenly. "I am stupid and awkward, but let my name perish in ignominy! Let me repeat your leading idea... . Oh, only a dozen lines, only the conclusion."

"Repeat it, if it's only the conclusion... ." Stavrogin made a movement to look at his watch, but restrained himself and did not look.

Shatov bent forward in his chair again and again held up his finger for a moment.

"Not a single nation," he went on, as though reading it line by line, still gazing menacingly at Stavrogin, "not a single nation has ever been founded on principles of science or reason. There has never been an example of it, except for a brief moment, through folly. Socialism is from its very nature bound to be atheism, seeing that it has from the very first proclaimed that it is an atheistic organisation of society, and that it intends to establish itself exclusively on the elements of science and reason. Science and reason have, from the beginning of time, played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations; so it will be till the end of time. Nations are built up and moved by another force which sways and dominates them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable: that force is the force of an insatiable desire to go on to the end, though at the same time it denies that end. It is the force of the persistent assertion of one's own existence, and a denial of death. It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it, 'the river of living water,' the drying up of which is threatened in the Apocalypse. It's the aesthetic principle, as the philosophers call it, the ethical principle with which they identify it, 'the seeking for God,' as I call it more simply. The object of every national movement, in every people and at every period of its existence is only the seeking for its god, who must be its own god, and the faith in Him as the only true one. God is the synthetic personality of the whole people, taken from its beginning to its end. It has never happened that all, or even many, peoples have had one common, god, but each has always had its own. It's a sign of the decay of nations when they begin to have gods in common. When gods begin to be common to several nations the gods are dying and the faith in them, together with the nations themselves. The stronger a people the more individual their God. There never has been a nation without a religion, that is, without an idea of good and evil. Every people has its own conception of good and evil, and its own good and evil. When the same conceptions of good and evil become

prevalent in several nations, then these nations are dying, and then the very distinction between good and evil is beginning to disappear. Reason has never had the power to define good and evil, or even to distinguish between good and evil, even approximately; on the contrary, it has always mixed them up in a disgraceful and pitiful way; science has even given the solution by the fist. This is particularly characteristic of the half-truths of science, the most terrible scourge of humanity, unknown till this century, and worse than plague, famine, or war. A half-truth is a despot .. such as has never been in the world before. A despot that has its priests and its slaves, a despot to whom all do homage with love and superstition hitherto inconceivable, before which science itself trembles and cringes in a shameful way. These are your own words, Stavrogin, all except that about the half-truth; that's my own because I am myself a case of half-knowledge, and that's why I hate it particularly. I haven't altered anything of your ideas or even of your words, not a syllable."

"I don't agree that you've not altered anything," Stavrogin observed cautiously. "You accepted them with ardour, and in your ardour have transformed them unconsciously. The very fact that you reduce God to a simple attribute of nationality ..."

He suddenly began watching Shatov with intense and peculiar attention, not so much his words as himself.

"I reduce God to the attribute of nationality?" cried Shatov. "On the contrary, I raise the people to God. And has it ever been otherwise? The people is the body of God. Every people is only a people so long as it has its own god and excludes all other gods on earth irreconcilably; so long as it believes that by its god it will conquer and drive out of the world all other gods. Such, from the beginning of time, has been the belief of all great nations, all, anyway, who have been specially remarkable, all who have been leaders of humanity. There is no going against facts. The Jews lived only to await the coming of the true God and left the world the true God. The Greeks deified nature and bequeathed the world their religion, that is, philosophy and art. Rome deified the people in the State, and bequeathed the idea of the State to the nations. France throughout her long history was only the incarnation and development of the Roman god, and if they have at last flung their Roman god into the abyss and plunged into atheism, which, for the time being, they call socialism, it is solely because socialism is, anyway, healthier than Roman Catholicism. If a great people does not believe that the truth is only to be found in itself alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively); if it does not believe that it alone is fit and destined to raise up and save all the rest by its truth, it would at once sink into being ethnographical material, and not a great people. A really great people can never accept a secondary part in the history of Humanity, nor even one of the first, but will have the first part. A nation which loses this belief ceases to be a nation. But there is only one truth, and therefore only a single one out of the nations can have the true God, even though other nations may have great gods of their own. Only one nation is 'god-bearing,' that's the Russian people, and ... and ... and can you think me such a fool, Stavrogin," he yelled frantically all at once, "that I can't distinguish whether my words at this moment are the rotten old commonplaces

that have been ground out in all the Slavophil mills in Moscow, or a perfectly new saying, the last word, the sole word of renewal and resurrection, and ... and what do I care for your laughter at this minute! What do I care that you utterly, utterly fail to understand me, not a word, not a sound! Oh, how I despise your haughty laughter and your look at this minute!"

He jumped up from his seat; there was positively foam on his lips.

"On the contrary Shatov, on the contrary," Stavrogin began with extraordinary earnestness and self-control, still keeping his seat, "on the contrary, your fervent words have revived many extremely powerful recollections in me. In your words I recognise my own mood two years ago, and now I will not tell you, as I did just now, that you have exaggerated my ideas. I believe, indeed, that they were even more exceptional, even more independent, and I assure you for the third time that I should be very glad to confirm all that you've said just now, every syllable of it, but ..."

"But you want a hare!"

"Wh-a-t?"

"Your own nasty expression," Shatov laughed spitefully, sitting down again. "To cook your hare you must first catch it, to believe in God you must first have a god. You used to say that in Petersburg, I'm told, like Nozdryov, who tried to catch a hare by his hind legs."

"No, what he did was to boast he'd caught him. By the way, allow me to trouble you with a question though, for indeed I think I have the right to one now. Tell me, have you caught your hare?"

"Don't dare to ask me in such words! Ask differently, quite differently." Shatov suddenly began trembling all over.

"Certainly I'll ask differently." Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked coldly at him. "I only wanted to know, do you believe in God, yourself?"

"I believe in Russia. ... I believe in her orthodoxy. ... I believe in the body of Christ. ... I believe that the new advent will take place in Russia... . I believe ..." Shatov muttered frantically.

"And in God? In God?"

"I ... I will believe in God."

Not one muscle moved in Stavrogin's face. Shatov looked passionately and defiantly at him, as though he would have scorched him with his eyes.

"I haven't told you that I don't believe," he cried at last. "I will only have you know that I am a luckless, tedious book, and nothing more so far, so far... . But confound me! We're discussing you not me... . I'm a man of no talent, and can only give my blood, nothing more, like every man without talent; never mind my blood either! I'm talking about you. I've been waiting here two years for you... . Here I've been dancing about in my nakedness before you for the last half-hour. You, only you can raise that flag! ..."

He broke off, and sat as though in despair, with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands.

"I merely mention it as something queer," Stavrogin interrupted suddenly. "Every one for some inexplicable reason keeps foisting a flag upon me. Pyotr Verhovensky, too, is convinced that I might 'raise his flag,' that's how his words were repeated to me, anyway. He has taken it into his head that I'm capable of playing the part of Stenka Razin for them, 'from my extraordinary aptitude for crime,' his saying too."

"What?" cried Shatov, "'from your extraordinary aptitude for crime'?"

"Just so."

"H'm! And is it true?" he asked, with an angry smile. "Is it true that when you were in Petersburg you belonged to a secret society for practising beastly sensuality? Is it true that you could give lessons to the Marquis de Sade? Is it true that you decoyed and corrupted children? Speak, don't dare to lie," he cried, beside himself. "Nikolay Stavrogin cannot lie to Shatov, who struck him in the face. Tell me everything, and if it's true I'll kill you, here, on the spot!"

"I did talk like that, but it was not I who outraged children," Stavrogin brought out, after a silence that lasted too long. He turned pale and his eyes gleamed.

"But you talked like that," Shatov went on imperiously, keeping his flashing eyes fastened upon him. "Is it true that you declared that you saw no distinction in beauty between some brutal obscene action and any great exploit, even the sacrifice of life for the good of humanity? Is it true that you have found identical beauty, equal enjoyment, in both extremes?"

"It's impossible to answer like this. ... I won't answer," muttered Stavrogin, who might well have got up and gone away, but who did not get up and go away.

"I don't know either why evil is hateful and good is beautiful, but I know why the sense of that distinction is effaced and lost in people like the Stavrogins," Shatov persisted, trembling all over. "Do you know why you made that base and shameful marriage? Simply because the shame and senselessness of it reached the pitch of genius! Oh, you are not one of those who linger on the brink. You fly head foremost. You married from a passion for martyrdom, from a craving for remorse, through moral sensuality. It was a laceration of the nerves... Defiance of common sense was too tempting. Stavrogin and a wretched, half-witted, crippled beggar! When you bit the governor's ear did you feel sensual pleasure? Did you? You idle, loafing, little snob. Did you!"

"You're a psychologist," said Stavrogin, turning paler and paler, "though you're partly mistaken as to the reasons of my marriage. But who can have given you all this information?" he asked, smiling, with an effort. "Was it Kirillov? But he had nothing to do with it."

"You turn pale."

"But what is it you want?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch asked, raising his voice at last. "I've been sitting under your lash for the last half-hour, and you might at least let me go civilly. Unless you really have some reasonable object in treating me like this."

"Reasonable object?"

“Of course, you’re in duty bound, anyway, to let me know your object. I’ve been expecting you to do so all the time, but you’ve shown me nothing so far but frenzied spite. I beg you to open the gate for me.”

He got up from the chair. Shatov rushed frantically after him. “Kiss the earth, water it with your tears, pray for forgiveness,” he cried, clutching him by the shoulder.

“I didn’t kill you ... that morning, though ... I drew back my hands ...” Stavrogin brought out almost with anguish, keeping his eyes on the ground.

“Speak out! Speak out! You came to warn me of danger. You have let me speak. You mean to-morrow to announce your marriage publicly... . Do you suppose I don’t see from your face that some new menacing idea is dominating you? ... Stavrogin, why am I condemned to believe in you through all eternity? Could I speak like this to anyone else? I have modesty, but I am not ashamed of my nakedness because it’s Stavrogin I am speaking to. I was not afraid of caricaturing a grand idea by handling it because Stavrogin was listening to me... . Shan’t I kiss your footprints when you’ve gone? I can’t tear you out of my heart, Nikolay Stavrogin!”

“I’m sorry I can’t feel affection for you, Shatov,” Stavrogin replied coldly.

“I know you can’t, and I know you are not lying. Listen. I can set it all right. I can ‘catch your hare’ for you.”

Stavrogin did not speak.

“You’re an atheist because you’re a snob, a snob of the snobs. You’ve lost the distinction between good and evil because you’ve lost touch with your own people. A new generation is coming, straight from the heart of the people, and you will know nothing of it, neither you nor the Verhovenskys, father or son; nor I, for I’m a snob too—I, the son of your serf and lackey, Pashka... . Listen. Attain to God by work; it all lies in that; or disappear like rotten mildew. Attain to Him by work.”

“God by work? What sort of work?”

“Peasants’ work. Go, give up all your wealth... . Ah! you laugh, you’re afraid of some trick?”

But Stavrogin was not laughing.

“You suppose that one may attain to God by work, and by peasants’ work,” he repeated, reflecting as though he had really come across something new and serious which was worth considering. “By the way,” he passed suddenly to a new idea, “you reminded me just now. Do you know that I’m not rich at all, that I’ve nothing to give up? I’m scarcely in a position even to provide for Marya Timofyevna’s future... . Another thing: I came to ask you if it would be possible for you to remain near Marya Timofyevna in the fixture, as you are the only person who has some influence over her poor brain. I say this so as to be prepared for anything.”

“All right, all right. You’re speaking of Marya Timofyevna,” said Shatov, waving one hand, while he held a candle in the other. “All right. Afterwards, of course... . Listen. Go to Tihon.”

“To whom?”

“To Tihon, who used to be a bishop. He lives retired now, on account of illness, here in the town, in the Bogorodsky monastery.”

“What do you mean?”

“Nothing. People go and see him. You go. What is it to you? What is it to you?”

“It’s the first time I’ve heard of him, and ... I’ve never seen anything of that sort of people. Thank you, I’ll go.”

“This way.”

Shatov lighted him down the stairs. “Go along.” He flung open the gate into the street.

“I shan’t come to you any more, Shatov,” said Stavrogin quietly as he stepped through the gateway.

The darkness and the rain continued as before.

HE WALKED THE LENGTH of Bogoyavlensky Street. At last the road began to go downhill; his feet slipped in the mud and suddenly there lay open before him a wide, misty, as it were empty expanse—the river. The houses were replaced by hovels; the street was lost in a multitude of irregular little alleys.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was a long while making his way between the fences, keeping close to the river bank, but finding his way confidently, and scarcely giving it a thought indeed. He was absorbed in something quite different, and looked round with surprise when suddenly, waking up from a profound reverie, he found himself almost in the middle of one long, wet, floating bridge.

There was not a soul to be seen, so that it seemed strange to him when suddenly, almost at his elbow, he heard a deferentially familiar, but rather pleasant, voice, with a suave intonation, such as is affected by our over-refined tradespeople or befrizzled young shop assistants.

“Will you kindly allow me, sir, to share your umbrella?”

There actually was a figure that crept under his umbrella, or tried to appear to do so. The tramp was walking beside him, almost “feeling his elbow,” as the soldiers say. Slackening his pace, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch bent down to look more closely, as far as he could, in the darkness. It was a short man, and seemed like an artisan who had been drinking; he was shabbily and scantily dressed; a cloth cap, soaked by the rain and with the brim half torn off, perched on his shaggy, curly head. He looked a thin, vigorous, swarthy man with dark hair; his eyes were large and must have been black, with a hard glitter and a yellow tinge in them, like a gipsy’s; that could be divined even in the darkness. He was about forty, and was not drunk.

“Do you know me?” asked Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. “Mr. Stavrogin, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. You were pointed out to me at the station, when the train stopped last Sunday, though I had heard enough of you beforehand.”

“Prom Pyotr Stepanovitch? Are you ... Fedka the convict?”

“I was christened Fyodor Fyodorovitch. My mother is living to this day in these parts; she’s an old woman, and grows more and more bent every day. She prays to God for me, day and night, so that she doesn’t waste her old age lying on the stove.”

“You escaped from prison?”

“I’ve had a change of luck. I gave up books and bells and church-going because I’d a life sentence, so that I had a very long time to finish my term.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Well, I do what I can. My uncle, too, died last week in prison here. He was there for false coin, so I threw two dozen stones at the dogs by way of memorial. That’s all I’ve been doing so far. Moreover Pyotr Stepanovitch gives me hopes of a passport, and a merchant’s one, too, to go all over Russia, so I’m waiting on his kindness. ‘Because,’ says he, ‘my papa lost you at cards at the English club, and I,’ says he, ‘find that inhumanity unjust.’ You might have the kindness to give me three roubles, sir, for a glass to warm myself.”

“So you’ve been spying on me. I don’t like that. By whose orders?”

“As to orders, it’s nothing of the sort; it’s simply that I knew of your benevolence, which is known to all the world. All we get, as you know, is an armful of hay, or a prod with a fork. Last Friday I filled myself as full of pie as Martin did of soap; since then I didn’t eat one day, and the day after I fasted, and on the third I’d nothing again. I’ve had my fill of water from the river. I’m breeding fish in my belly. ... So won’t your honour give me something? I’ve a sweetheart expecting me not far from here, but I daren’t show myself to her without money.”

“What did Pyotr Stepanovitch promise you from me?”

“He didn’t exactly promise anything, but only said that I might be of use to your honour if my luck turns out good, but how exactly he didn’t explain; for Pyotr Stepanovitch wants to see if I have the patience of a Cossack, and feels no sort of confidence in me.”

“Why?”

“Pyotr Stepanovitch is an astronomer, and has learnt all God’s planets, but even he may be criticised. I stand before you, sir, as before God, because I have heard so much about you. Pyotr Stepanovitch is one thing, but you, sir, maybe, are something else. When he’s said of a man he’s a scoundrel, he knows nothing more about him except that he’s a scoundrel. Or if he’s said he’s a fool, then that man has no calling with him except that of fool. But I may be a fool Tuesday and Wednesday, and on Thursday wiser than he. Here now he knows about me that I’m awfully sick to get a passport, for there’s no getting on in Russia without papers—so he thinks that he’s snared my soul. I tell you, sir, life’s a very easy business for Pyotr Stepanovitch, for he fancies a man to be this and that, and goes on as though he really was. And, what’s more, he’s beastly stingy. It’s his notion that, apart from him, I daren’t trouble you, but I stand before you, sir, as before God. This is the fourth night I’ve been waiting for your honour on this bridge, to show that I can find my own way on the quiet, without him. I’d better bow to a boot, thinks I, than to a peasant’s shoe.”

“And who told you that I was going to cross the bridge at night?”

“Well, that, I’ll own, came out by chance, most through Captain Lebyadkin’s foolishness, because he can’t keep anything to himself. ... So that three roubles from your

honour would pay me for the weary time I've had these three days and nights. And the clothes I've had soaked, I feel that too much to speak of it."

"I'm going to the left; you'll go to the right. Here's the end of the bridge. Listen, Fyodor; I like people to understand what I say, once for all. I won't give you a farthing. Don't meet me in future on the bridge or anywhere. I've no need of you, and never shall have, and if you don't obey, I'll tie you and take you to the police. March!"

"Eh-heh! Fling me something for my company, anyhow. I've cheered you on your way."

"Be off!"

"But do you know the way here? There are all sorts of turnings. ... I could guide you; for this town is for all the world as though the devil carried it in his basket and dropped it in bits here and there."

"I'll tie you up!" said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, turning upon him menacingly.

"Perhaps you'll change your mind, sir; it's easy to ill-treat the helpless."

"Well, I see you can rely on yourself!"

"I rely upon you, sir, and not very much on myself... ."

"I've no need of you at all. I've told you so already."

"But I have need, that's how it is! I shall wait for you on the way back. There's nothing for it."

"I give you my word of honour if I meet you I'll tie you up."

"Well, I'll get a belt ready for you to tie me with. A lucky journey to you, sir. You kept the helpless snug under your Umbrella. For that alone I'll be grateful to you to my dying day." He fell behind. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch walked on to his destination, feeling disturbed. This man who had dropped from the sky was absolutely convinced that he was indispensable to him, Stavrogin, and was in insolent haste to tell him so. He was being treated unceremoniously all round. But it was possible, too, that the tramp had not been altogether lying, and had tried to force his services upon him on his own initiative, without Pyotr Stepanovitch's knowledge, and that would be more curious still.

6

The house which Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had reached stood alone in a deserted lane between fences, beyond which market gardens stretched, at the very end of the town. It was a very solitary little wooden house, which was only just built and not yet weather-boarded. In one of the little windows the shutters were not yet closed, and there was a candle standing on the window-ledge, evidently as a signal to the late guest who was expected that night. Thirty paces away Stavrogin made out on the doorstep the figure of a tall man, evidently the master of the house, who had come out to stare impatiently up the road. He heard his voice, too, impatient and, as it were, timid.

"Is that you? You?"

“Yes,” responded Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but not till he had mounted the steps and was folding up his umbrella.

“At last, sir.” Captain Lebyadkin, for it was he, ran fussily to and fro. “Let me take your umbrella, please. It’s very wet; I’ll open it on the floor here, in the corner. Please walk in. Please walk in.”

The door was open from the passage into a room that was lighted by two candles.

“If it had not been for your promise that you would certainly come, I should have given up expecting you.”

“A quarter to one,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, looking at his watch, as he went into the room.

“And in this rain; and such an interesting distance. I’ve no clock ... and there are nothing but market-gardens round me ... so that you fall behind the times. Not that I murmur exactly; for I dare not, I dare not, but only because I’ve been devoured with impatience all the week ... to have things settled at last.”

“How so?”

“To hear my fate, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. Please sit down.”

He bowed, pointing to a seat by the table, before the sofa.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked round. The room was tiny and low-pitched. The furniture consisted only of the most essential articles, plain wooden chairs and a sofa, also newly made without covering or cushions. There were two tables of limewood; one by the sofa, and the other in the corner was covered with a table-cloth, laid with things over which a clean table-napkin had been thrown. And, indeed, the whole room was obviously kept extremely clean.

Captain Lebyadkin had not been drunk for eight days. His face looked bloated and yellow. His eyes looked uneasy, inquisitive, and obviously bewildered. It was only too evident that he did not know what tone he could adopt, and what line it would be most advantageous for him to take.

“Here,” he indicated his surroundings, “I live like Zossima. Sobriety, solitude, and poverty—the vow of the knights of old.”

“You imagine that the knights of old took such vows?”

“Perhaps I’m mistaken. Alas! I have no culture. I’ve ruined all. Believe me, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, here first I have recovered from shameful propensities—not a glass nor a drop! I have a home, and for six days past I have experienced a conscience at ease. Even the walls smell of resin and remind me of nature. And what have I been; what was I?

‘ At night without a bed

I wander And my tongue put out by day

...’ to use the words of a poet of genius. But you’re wet through... . Wouldn’t you like some tea?”

“Don’t trouble.”

“The samovar has been boiling since eight o’clock, but it went out at last like everything in this world. The sun, too, they say, will go out in its turn. But if you like I’ll get up the samovar. Agafya is not asleep.”

“Tell me, Marya Timofyevna ...”

“She’s here, here,” Lebyadkin replied at once, in a whisper. “Would you like to have a look at her?” He pointed to the closed door to the next room. “She’s not asleep?”

“Oh, no, no. How could she be? On the contrary, she’s been expecting you all the evening, and as soon as she heard you were coming she began making her toilet.”

He was just twisting his mouth into a jocose smile, but he instantly checked himself.

“How is she, on the whole?” asked Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, frowning.

“On the whole? You know that yourself, sir.” He shrugged his shoulders commiseratingly. “But just now ... just now she’s telling her fortune with cards... .”

“Very good. Later on. First of all I must finish with you.”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch settled himself in a chair. The captain did not venture to sit down on the sofa, but at once moved up another chair for himself, and bent forward to listen, in a tremor of expectation.

“What have you got there under the table-cloth?” asked Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, suddenly noticing it.

“That?” said Lebyadkin, turning towards it also. “That’s from your generosity, by way of house-warming, so to say; considering also the length of the walk, and your natural fatigue,” he sniggered ingratiatingly. Then he got up on tiptoe, and respectfully and carefully lifted the table-cloth from the table in the corner. Under it was seen a slight meal: ham, veal, sardines, cheese, a little green decanter, and a long bottle of Bordeaux. Everything had been laid neatly, expertly, and almost daintily.

“Was that your effort?”

“Yes, sir. Ever since yesterday I’ve done my best, and all to do you honour... . Marya Timofyevna doesn’t trouble herself, as you know, on that score. And what’s more its all from your liberality, your own providing, as you’re the master of the house and not I, and I’m only, so to say, your agent. All the same, all the same, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, all the same, in spirit, I’m independent! Don’t take away from me this last possession!” he finished up pathetically.

“H’m! You might sit down again.”

“Gra-a-teful, grateful, and independent.” He sat down. “Ah, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, so much has been fermenting in this heart that I have not known how to wait for your coming. Now you will decide my fate, and ... that unhappy creature’s, and then ... shall I pour out all I feel to you as I used to in old days, four years ago? You deigned to listen to me then, you read my verses... . They might call me your Falstaff from Shakespeare in those days, but you meant so much in my life! I have great terrors now, and its only to you I look for counsel and light. Pyotr Stepanovitch is treating me abominably!”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch listened with interest, and looked at him attentively. It was evident that though Captain Lebyadkin had left off drinking he was far from being in

a harmonious state of mind. Drunkards of many years' standing, like Lebyadkin, often show traces of incoherence, of mental cloudiness, of something, as it were, damaged, and crazy, though they may deceive, cheat, and swindle, almost as well as anybody if occasion arises.

"I see that you haven't changed a bit in these four years and more, captain," said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, somewhat more amiably. "It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is usually made up of nothing but the habits he has accumulated during the first half."

"Grand words! You solve the riddle of life!" said the captain, half cunningly, half in genuine and unfeigned admiration, for he was a great lover of words. "Of all your sayings, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I remember one thing above all; you were in Petersburg when you said it: 'One must really be a great man to be able to make a stand even against common sense.' That was it."

"Yes, and a fool as well."

"A fool as well, maybe. But you've been scattering clever sayings all your life, while they ... Imagine Liputin, imagine Pyotr Stepanovitch saying anything like that! Oh, how cruelly Pyotr Stepanovitch has treated me!"

"But how about yourself, captain? What can you say of your behaviour?"

"Drunkenness, and the multitude of my enemies. But now that's all over, all over, and I have a new skin, like a snake. Do you know, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I am making my will; in fact, I've made it already?"

"That's interesting. What are you leaving, and to whom?"

"To my fatherland, to humanity, and to the students. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I read in the paper the biography of an American. He left all his vast fortune to factories and to the exact sciences, and his skeleton to the students of the academy there, and his skin to be made into a drum, so that the American national hymn might be beaten upon it day and night. Alas! we are pigmies in mind compared with the soaring thought of the States of North America. Russia is the play of nature but not of mind. If I were to try leaving my skin for a drum, for instance, to the Akmolinsky infantry regiment, in which I had the honour of beginning my service, on condition of beating the Russian national hymn upon it every day, in face of the regiment, they'd take it for liberalism and prohibit my skin ... and so I confine myself to the students. I want to leave my skeleton to the academy, but on the condition though, on the condition that a label should be stuck on the forehead for ever and ever, with the words: 'A repentant free-thinker.' There now!"

The captain spoke excitedly, and genuinely believed, of course, that there was something fine in the American will, but he was cunning too, and very anxious to entertain Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, with whom he had played the part of a buffoon for a long time in the past. But the latter did not even smile, on the contrary, he asked, as it were, suspiciously:

"So you intend to publish your will in your lifetime and get rewarded for it?"

“And what if I do, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch? What if I do?” said Lebyadkin, watching him carefully. “What sort of luck have I had? I’ve given up writing poetry, and at one time even you were amused by my verses, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. Do you remember our reading them over a bottle? But it’s all over with my pen. I’ve written only one poem, like Gogol’s ‘The Last Story.’ Do you remember he proclaimed to Russia that it broke spontaneously from his bosom? It’s the same with me; I’ve sung my last and it’s over.”

“What sort of poem?”

“‘In case she were to break her leg.’ “

“Wha-a-t?”

That was all the captain was waiting for. He had an unbounded admiration for his own poems, but, through a certain cunning duplicity, he was pleased, too, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch always made merry over his poems, and sometimes laughed at them immoderately. In this way he killed two birds with one stone, satisfying at once his poetical aspirations and his desire to be of service; but now he had a third special and very ticklish object in view. Bringing his verses on the scene, the captain thought to exculpate himself on one point about which, for some reason, he always felt himself most apprehensive, and most guilty.

“‘In case of her breaking her leg.’ That is, of her riding on horseback. It’s a fantasy, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, a wild fancy, but the fancy of a poet. One day I was struck by meeting a lady on horseback, and asked myself the vital question, ‘What would happen then?’ That is, in case of accident. All her followers turn away, all her suitors are gone. A pretty kettle of fish. Only the poet remains faithful, with his heart shattered in his breast, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. Even a louse may be in love, and is not forbidden by law. And yet the lady was offended by the letter and the verses. I’m told that even you were angry. Were you? I wouldn’t believe in anything so grievous. Whom could I harm simply by imagination? Besides, I swear on my honour, Liputin kept saying, ‘Send it, send it,’ every man, however humble, has a right to send a letter! And so I sent it.”

“You offered yourself as a suitor, I understand.”

“Enemies, enemies, enemies?”

“Repeat the verses,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sternly.

“Ravings, ravings, more than anything.”

However, he drew himself up, stretched out his hand, and began:

“With broken limbs my beauteous queen

Is twice as charming as before,

And, deep in love as I have been,

To-day I love her even more.”

“Come, that’s enough,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, a wave of his hand.

“I dream of Petersburg,” cried Lebyadkin, passing quickly to another subject, as though there had been no mention of verses.

“I dream of regeneration... . Benefactor! May I reckon that you won’t refuse the means for the journey? I’ve been waiting for you all the week as my sunshine.”

“I’ll do nothing of the sort. I’ve scarcely any money left. And why should I give you money?”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch seemed suddenly angry. Dryly and briefly he recapitulated all the captain’s misdeeds; his drunkenness, his lying, his squandering of the money meant for Marya Timofyevna, his having taken her from the nunnery, his insolent letters threatening to publish the secret, the way he had behaved about Darya Pavlovna, and so on, and so on. The captain heaved, gesticulated, began to reply, but every time Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch stopped him. peremptorily.

“And listen,” he observed at last, “you keep writing about ‘family disgrace.’ What disgrace is it to you that your sister is the lawful wife of a Stavrogin?”

“But marriage in secret, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch—a fatal secret. I receive money from you, and I’m suddenly asked the question, ‘What’s that money for?’ My hands are tied; I cannot answer to the detriment of my sister, to the detriment of the family honour.”

The captain raised his voice. He liked that subject and reckoned boldly upon it. Alas! he did not realise what a blow was in store for him.

Calmly and exactly, as though he were speaking of the most everyday arrangement, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch informed him that in a few days, perhaps even to-morrow or the day after, he intended to make his marriage known everywhere, “to the police as well as to local society.” And so the question of family honour would be settled once for all, and with it the question of subsidy. The captain’s eyes were ready to drop out of his head; he positively could not take it in. It had to be explained to him.

“But she is ... crazy.”

“I shall make suitable arrangements.”

“But ... how about your mother?”

“Well, she must do as she likes.”

“But will you take your wife to your house?”

“Perhaps so. But that is absolutely nothing to do with you and no concern of yours.”

“No concern of mine!” cried the captain. “What about me then?”

“Well, certainly you won’t come into my house.”

“But, you know, I’m a relation.”

“One does one’s best to escape from such relations. Why should I go on giving you money then? Judge for yourself.”

“Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, this is impossible. You will think better of it, perhaps? You don’t want to lay hands upon... . What will people think? What will the world say?”

“Much I care for your world. I married your sister when the fancy took me, after a drunken dinner, for a bet, and now I’ll make it public ... since that amuses me now.”

He said this with a peculiar irritability, so that Lebyadkin began with horror to believe him.

“But me, me? What about me? I’m what matters most! ... Perhaps you’re joking, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch?”

"No, I'm not joking."

"As you will, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but I don't believe you... . Then I'll take proceedings."

"You're fearfully stupid, captain."

"Maybe, but this is all that's left me," said the captain, losing his head completely. "In old days we used to get free quarters, anyway, for the work she did in the 'corners.' But what will happen now if you throw me over altogether?"

"But you want to go to Petersburg to try a new career. By the way, is it true what I hear, that you mean to go and give information, in the hope of obtaining a pardon, by betraying all the others?"

The captain stood gaping with wide-open eyes, and made no answer.

"Listen, captain," Stavrogin began suddenly, with great earnestness, bending down to the table. Until then he had been talking, as it were, ambiguously, so that Lebyadkin, who had wide experience in playing the part of buffoon, was up to the last moment a trifle uncertain whether his patron were really angry or simply putting it on; whether he really had the wild intention of making his marriage public, or whether he were only playing. Now Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's stern expression was so convincing that a shiver ran down the captain's back.

"Listen, and tell the truth, Lebyadkin. Have you betrayed anything yet, or not? Have you succeeded in doing anything really? Have you sent a letter to somebody in your foolishness?"

"No, I haven't ... and I haven't thought of doing it," said the captain, looking fixedly at him.

"That's a lie, that you haven't thought of doing it. That's what you're asking to go to Petersburg for. If you haven't written, have you blabbed to anybody here? Speak the truth. I've heard something."

"When I was drunk, to Liputin. Liputin's a traitor. I opened my heart to him," whispered the poor captain.

"That's all very well, but there's no need to be an ass. If you had an idea you should have kept it to yourself. Sensible people hold their tongues nowadays; they don't go chattering."

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch!" said the captain, quaking. "You've had nothing to do with it yourself; it's not you I've ..."

"Yes. You wouldn't have ventured to kill the goose that laid your golden eggs."

"Judge for yourself, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, judge for yourself," and, in despair, with tears, the captain began hurriedly relating the story of his life for the last four years. It was the most stupid story of a fool, drawn into matters that did not concern him, and in his drunkenness and debauchery unable, till the last minute, to grasp their importance. He said that before he left Petersburg 'he had been drawn in, at first simply through friendship, like a regular student, although he wasn't a student,' and knowing nothing about it, 'without being guilty of anything,' he had scattered various papers on staircases, left them by dozens at doors, on bell-handles, had thrust them

in as though they were newspapers, taken them to the theatre, put them in people's hats, and slipped them into pockets. Afterwards he had taken money from them, 'for what means had I? 'He had distributed all sorts of rubbish through the districts of two provinces. "Oh, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch!" he exclaimed, "what revolted me most was that this was utterly opposed to civic, and still more to patriotic laws. They suddenly printed that men were to go out with pitchforks, and to remember that those who went out poor in the morning might go home rich at night. Only think of it! It made me shudder, and yet I distributed it. Or suddenly five or six lines addressed to the whole of Russia, apropos of nothing, 'Make haste and lock up the churches, abolish God, do away with marriage, destroy the right of inheritance, take up your knives,' that's all, and God knows what it means. tell you, I almost got caught with this five-line leaflet. The officers in the regiment gave me a thrashing, but, bless them for it, let me go. And last year I was almost caught when I passed off French counterfeit notes for fifty roubles on Korovayev, but, thank God, Korovayev fell into the pond when he was drunk, and was drowned in the nick of time, and they didn't succeed in tracking me. Here, at Virginsky's, I proclaimed the freedom of the communistic wife. In June I was distributing manifestoes again in X district. They say they will make me do it again... . Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly gave me to understand that I must obey; he's been threatening me a long time. How he treated me that Sunday! Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I am a slave, I am a worm, but not a God, which is where I differ from Derzhavin.* But I've no income, no income!"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch heard it all with curiosity.

"A great deal of that I had heard nothing of," he said. "Of course, anything may have happened to you... , Listen," he said, after a minute's thought. "If you like, you can tell them, you know whom, that Liputin was lying, and that you were only pretending to give information to frighten me, supposing that I, too, was compromised, and that you might get more money out of me that way... . Do you understand?"

"Dear Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, is it possible that there's such a danger hanging over me I I've been longing for you to come, to ask you."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch laughed.

"They certainly wouldn't let you go to Petersburg, even if I were to give you money for the journey.*... But it's time for me to see Marya Timofyevna." And he got up from his chair.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but how about Marya Timofyevna?"

"Why, as I told you."

"Can it be true?"

"You still don't believe it?"

"Will you really cast me off like an old worn-out shoe?"

"I'll see," laughed Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. "Come, let me go."

"Wouldn't you like me to stand on the steps ... for fear I might by chance overhear something ... for the rooms are small?"

"That's as well. Stand on the steps. Take my umbrella."

“Your umbrella... . Am I worth it?” said the captain over-sweetly.

* The reference is to a poem of Derzhavin’s.

” Anyone is worthy of an umbrella.”

“At one stroke you define the minimum of human rights... .”

But he was by now muttering mechanically. He was too much crushed by what he had learned, and was completely thrown out of his reckoning. And yet almost as soon as he had gone out on to the steps and had put up the umbrella, there his shallow and cunning brain caught again the ever-present, comforting idea that he was being cheated and deceived, and if so they were afraid of him, and there was no need for him to be afraid.

“If they’re lying and deceiving me, what’s at the bottom of it?” was the thought that gnawed at his mind. The public announcement of the marriage seemed to him absurd. “It’s true that with such a wonder-worker anything may come to pass; he lives to do harm. But what if he’s afraid himself, since the insult of Sunday, and afraid as he’s never been before? And so he’s in a hurry to declare that he’ll announce it himself, from fear that I should announce it. Eh, don’t blunder, Lebyadkin! And why does he come on the sly, at night, if he means to make it public himself? And if he’s afraid, it means that he’s afraid now, at this moment, for these few days... . Eh, don’t make a mistake, Lebyadkin!

“He scares me with Pyotr Stepanovitch. Oy, I’m frightened, I’m frightened! Yes, this is what’s so frightening! And what induced me to blab to Liputin. Goodness knows what these devils are up to. I never can make head or tail of it. Now they are all astir again as they were five years ago. To whom could I give information, indeed? ‘Haven’t I written to anyone in my foolishness?’ H’m! So then I might write as though through foolishness? Isn’t he giving me a hint? ‘You’re going to Petersburg on purpose.’ The sly rogue. I’ve scarcely dreamed of it, and he guesses my dreams. As though he were putting me up to going himself. It’s one or the other of two games he’s up to. Either he’s afraid because he’s been up to some pranks himself ... or he’s not afraid for himself, but is simply egging me on to give them all away! Ach, it’s terrible, Lebyadkin! Ach, you must not make a blunder!”

He was so absorbed in thought that he forgot to listen. It was not easy to hear either. The door was a solid one, and they were talking in a very low voice. Nothing reached the captain but indistinct sounds. He positively spat in disgust, and went out again, lost in thought, to whistle on the steps.

7

Marya Timofyevna’s room was twice as large as the one occupied by the captain, and furnished in the same rough style; but the table in front of the sofa was covered with a gay-coloured table-cloth, and on it a lamp was burning. There was a handsome carpet on the floor. The bed was screened off by a green curtain, which ran the length of the room, and besides the sofa there stood by the table a large, soft easy chair,

in which Marya Timofyevna never sat, however. In the corner there was an ikon as there had been in her old room, and a little lamp was burning before it, and on the table were all her indispensable properties. The pack of cards, the little looking-glass, the song-book, even a milk loaf. Besides these there were two books with coloured pictures—one, extracts from a popular book of travels, published for juvenile reading, the other a collection of very light, edifying tales, for the most part about the days of chivalry, intended for Christmas presents or school reading. She had, too, an album of photographs of various sorts.

Marya Timofyevna was, of course, expecting the visitor, as the captain had announced. But when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went in, she was asleep, half reclining on the sofa, propped on a woolwork cushion. Her visitor closed the door after him noiselessly, and, standing still, scrutinised the sleeping figure.

The captain had been romancing when he told Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch she had been dressing herself up. She was wearing the same dark dress as on Sunday at Varvara Petrovna's. Her hair was done up in the same little close knot at the back of her head; her long thin neck was exposed in the same way. The black shawl Varvara Petrovna had given her lay carefully folded on the sofa. She was coarsely rouged and powdered as before. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch did not stand there more than a minute. She suddenly waked up, as though she were conscious of his eyes fixed upon her; she opened her eyes, and quickly drew herself up. But something strange must have happened to her visitor: he remained standing at the same place by the door. With a fixed and searching glance he looked mutely and persistently into her face. Perhaps that look was too grim, perhaps there was an expression of aversion in it, even a malignant enjoyment of her fright—if it were not a fancy left by her dreams; but suddenly, after almost a moment of expectation, the poor woman's face wore a look of absolute terror; it twitched convulsively; she lifted her trembling hands and suddenly burst into tears, exactly like a frightened child; in another moment she would have screamed. But Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch pulled himself together; his face changed in one instant, and he went up to the table with the most cordial and amiable smile.

"I'm sorry, Marya Timofyevna, I frightened you coming in suddenly when you were asleep," he said, holding out his hand to her.

The sound of his caressing words produced their effect. Her fear vanished, although she still looked at him with dismay, evidently trying to understand something. She held out her hands timorously also. At last a shy smile rose to her lips.

"How do you do, prince?" she whispered, looking at him strangely.

"You must have had a bad dream," he went on, with a still more friendly and cordial smile.

"But how do you know that I was dreaming about that?" And again she began trembling, and started back, putting up her hand as though to protect herself, on the point of crying again. "Calm yourself. That's enough. What are you afraid of? Surely you know me?" said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, trying to soothe her; but it was long before he could succeed. She gazed at him dumbly with the same look of agonising

perplexity, with a painful idea in her poor brain, and she still seemed to be trying to reach some conclusion. At one moment she dropped her eyes, then suddenly scrutinised him in a rapid comprehensive glance. At last, though not reassured, she seemed to come to a conclusion.

“Sit down beside me, please, that I may look at you thoroughly later on,” she brought out with more firmness, evidently with a new object. “But don’t be uneasy, I won’t look at you now. I’ll look down. Don’t you look at me either till I ask you to. Sit down,” she added, with positive impatience.

A new sensation was obviously growing stronger and stronger in her.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sat down and waited. Rather a long silence followed.

“H’m! It all seems so strange to me,” she suddenly muttered almost disdainfully. “Of course I was depressed by bad dreams, but why have I dreamt of you looking like that?”

“Come, let’s have done with dreams,” he said impatiently, turning to her in spite of her prohibition, and perhaps the same expression gleamed for a moment in his eyes again. He saw that she several times wanted, very much in fact, to look at him again, but that she obstinately controlled herself and kept her eyes cast down.

“Listen, prince,” she raised her voice suddenly, “listen prince. ...”

“Why do you turn away? Why don’t you look at me? What’s the object of this farce?” he cried, losing patience.

But she seemed not to hear him.

“Listen, prince,” she repeated for the third time in a resolute voice, with a disagreeable, fussy expression. “When you told me in the carriage that our marriage was going to be made public, I was alarmed at there being an end to the mystery. Now I don’t know. I’ve been thinking it all over, and I see clearly that I’m not fit for it at all. I know how to dress, and I could receive guests, perhaps. There’s nothing much in asking people to have a cup of tea, especially when there are footmen. But what will people say though? I saw a great deal that Sunday morning in that house. That pretty young lady looked at me all the time, especially after you came in. It was you came in, wasn’t it? Her mother’s simply an absurd worldly old woman. My Lebyadkin distinguished himself too. I kept looking at the ceiling to keep from laughing; the ceiling there is finely painted. His mother ought to be an abbess. I’m afraid of her, though she did give me a black shawl. Of course, they must all have come to strange conclusions about me. I wasn’t vexed, but I sat there, thinking what relation am I to them? Of course, from a countess one doesn’t expect any but spiritual qualities; for the domestic ones she’s got plenty of footmen; and also a little worldly coquetry, so as to be able to entertain foreign travellers. But yet that Sunday they did look upon me as hopeless. Only Dasha’s an angel. I’m awfully afraid they may wound him by some careless allusion to me.”

“Don’t be afraid, and don’t be uneasy,” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, making a wry face.

“However, that doesn’t matter to me, if he is a little ashamed of me, for there will always be more pity than shame, though it differs with people, of course. He knows, to be sure, that I ought rather to pity them than they me.”

“You seem to be very much offended with them, Marya Timofyevna?”

“I? Oh, no,” she smiled with simple-hearted mirth. “Not at all. I looked at you all, then. You were all angry, you were all quarrelling. They meet together, and they don’t know how to laugh from their hearts. So much wealth and so little gaiety. It all disgusts me. Though I feel for no one now except myself.”

“I’ve heard that you’ve had a hard life with your brother without me?”

“Who told you that? It’s nonsense. It’s much worse now. Now my dreams are not good, and my dreams are bad, because you’ve come. What have you come for, I’d like to know. Tell me please?”

“Wouldn’t you like to go back into the nunnery?”

“I knew they’d suggest the nunnery again. Your nunnery is a fine marvel for me! And why should I go to it? What should I go for now? I’m all alone in the world now. It’s too late for me to begin a third life.”

“You seem very angry about something. Surely you’re not afraid that I’ve left off loving you?”

“I’m not troubling about you at all. I’m afraid that I may leave off loving somebody.”

She laughed contemptuously.

“I must have done him some great wrong,” she added suddenly, as it were to herself, “only I don’t know what I’ve done wrong; that’s always what troubles me. Always, always, for the last five years. I’ve been afraid day and night that I’ve done him some wrong. I’ve prayed and prayed and always thought of the great wrong I’d done him. And now it turns out it was true.”

“What’s turned out?”

“I’m only afraid whether there’s something on his side,” she went on, not answering his question, not hearing it in fact. “And then, again, he couldn’t get on with such horrid people. The countess would have liked to eat me, though she did make me sit in the carriage beside her. They’re all in the plot. Surely he’s not betrayed me?” (Her chin and lips were twitching.) “Tell me, have you read about Grishka Otrepyev, how he was cursed in seven cathedrals?”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch did not speak.

“But I’ll turn round now and look at you.” She seemed to decide suddenly. “You turn to me, too, and look at me, but more attentively. I want to make sure for the last time.”

“I’ve been looking at you for a long time.”

“H’m!” said Marya Timofyevna, looking at him intently. “You’ve grown much fatter.”

She wanted to say something more, but suddenly, for the third time, the same terror instantly distorted her face, and again she drew back, putting her hand up before her.

“What’s the matter with you?” cried Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, almost enraged.

But her panic lasted only one instant, her face worked with a sort of strange smile, suspicious and unpleasant.

“I beg you, prince, get up and come in,” she brought out suddenly, in a firm, emphatic voice.

“Come in? Where am I to come in?”

“I’ve been fancying for five years how he would come in. Get up and go out of the door into the other room. I’ll sit as though I weren’t expecting anything, and I’ll take up a book, and suddenly you’ll come in after five years’ travelling. I want to see what it will be like.”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch ground his teeth, and muttered something to himself.

“Enough,” he said, striking the table with his open hand. “I beg you to listen to me, Marya Timofyevna. Do me the favour to concentrate all your attention if you can. You’re not altogether mad, you know!” he broke out impatiently. “Tomorrow I shall make our marriage public. You never will live in a palace, get that out of your head. Do you want to live with me for the rest of your life, only very far away from here? In the mountains in Switzerland, there’s a place there... . Don’t be afraid. I’ll never abandon you or put you in a madhouse. I shall have money enough to live without asking anyone’s help. You shall have a servant, you shall do no work at all. Everything you want that’s possible shall be got for you. You shall pray, go where you like, and do what you like. I won’t touch you. I won’t go away from the place myself at all. If you like, I won’t speak to you all my life, or if you like, you can tell me your stories every evening as you used to do in Petersburg in the corners. I’ll read aloud to you if you like. But it must be all your life in the same place, and that place is a gloomy one. Will you? Are you ready? You won’t regret it, torment me with tears and curses, will you?”

She listened with extreme curiosity, and for a long time she was silent, thinking.

“It all seems incredible to me,” she said at last, ironically and disdainfully. “I might live for forty years in those mountains,” she laughed.

“What of it? Let’s live forty years then ...” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, scowling.

“H’m! I won’t come for anything.”

“Not even with me?”

“And what are you that I should go with you? I’m to sit on a mountain beside him for forty years on end—a pretty story! And upon my word, how long-suffering people have become nowadays! No, it cannot be that a falcon has become an owl. My prince is not like that!” she said, raising her head proudly and triumphantly.

Light seemed to dawn upon him.

“What makes you call me a prince, and ... for whom do you take me?” he asked quickly.

“Why, aren’t you the prince?”

“I never have been one.”

“So yourself, yourself, you tell me straight to my face that you’re not the prince?”

“I tell you I never have been.”

“Good Lord!” she cried, clasping her hands. “I was ready to expect anything from his enemies, but such insolence, never! Is he alive?” she shrieked in a frenzy, turning upon Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. “Have you killed him? Confess!”

“Whom do you take me for?” he cried, jumping up from his chair with a distorted face; but it was not easy now to frighten her. She was triumphant.

“Who can tell who you are and where you’ve sprung from? Only my heart, my heart had misgivings all these five years, of all the intrigues. And I’ve been sitting here wondering what blind owl was making up to me? No, my dear, you’re a poor actor, worse than Lebyadkin even. Give my humble greetings to the countess and tell her to send some one better than you. Has she hired you, tell me? Have they given you a place in her kitchen out of charity? I see through your deception. I understand you all, every one of you.”

He seized her firmly above the elbow; she laughed in his face.

“You’re like him, very like, perhaps you’re a relation—you’re a sly lot! Only mine is a bright falcon and a prince, and you’re an owl, and a shopman! Mine will bow down to God if it pleases him, and won’t if it doesn’t. And Shatushka (he’s my dear, my darling!) slapped you on the cheeks, my Lebyadkin told me. And what were you afraid of then, when you came in? Who had frightened you then? When I saw your mean face after I’d fallen down and you picked me up—it was like a worm crawling into my heart. It’s not he, I thought, not he! My falcon would never have been ashamed of me before a fashionable young lady. Oh heavens! That alone kept me happy for those five years that my falcon was living somewhere beyond the mountains, soaring, gazing at the sun... . Tell me, you impostor, have you got much by it I Did you need a big bribe to consent? I wouldn’t have given you a farthing. Ha ha ha! Ha ha! ...”

“Ugh, idiot!” snarled Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, still holding her tight by the arm.

“Go away, impostor!” she shouted peremptorily. “I’m the wife of my prince; I’m not afraid of your knife!”

“Knife!”

“Yes, knife, you’ve a knife in your pocket. You thought I was asleep but I saw it. When you came in just now you took out your knife!”

“What are you saying, unhappy creature? What dreams you have!” he exclaimed, pushing her away from him with all his might, so that her head and shoulders fell painfully against the sofa. He was rushing away; but she at once flew to overtake him, limping and hopping, and though Lebyadkin, panic-stricken, held her back with all his might, she succeeded in shouting after him into the darkness, shrieking and laughing:

“A curse on you, Grishka Otrepyev!”

8

“A knife, a knife,” he repeated with uncontrollable anger, striding along through the mud and puddles, without picking his way. It is true that at moments he had a terrible desire to laugh aloud frantically; but for some reason he controlled himself and

restrained his laughter. He recovered himself only on the bridge, on the spot where Fedka had met him that evening. He found the man lying in wait for him again. Seeing Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch he took off his cap, grinned gaily, and began babbling briskly and merrily about-something. At first Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch walked on without stopping, and for some time did not even listen to the tramp who was pestering him again. He was suddenly struck by the thought that he had entirely forgotten him, and had forgotten him at the very moment when he himself was repeating, "A knife, a knife." He seized the tramp by the collar and gave vent to his pent-up rage by flinging him violently against the bridge. For one instant the man thought of fighting, but almost at once realising that compared with his adversary, who had fallen upon him unawares, he was no better than a wisp of straw, he subsided and was silent, without offering any resistance. Crouching on the ground with his elbows crooked behind his back, the wily tramp calmly waited for what would happen next, apparently quite incredulous of danger. He was right in his reckoning. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had already with his left hand taken off his thick scarf to tie his prisoner's arms, but suddenly, for some reason, he abandoned him, and shoved him away. The man instantly sprang on to his feet, turned round, and a short, broad boot-knife suddenly gleamed in his hand.

"Away with that knife; put it away, at once!" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch commanded with an impatient gesture, and the knife vanished as instantaneously as it had appeared.

Without speaking again or turning round, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went on his way. But the persistent vagabond did not leave him even now, though now, it is true, he did not chatter, and even respectfully kept his distance, a full step behind.

They crossed the bridge like this and came out on to the river bank, turning this time to the left, again into a long deserted back street, which led to the centre of the town by a shorter way than going through Bogoyavlensky Street.

"Is it true, as they say, that you robbed a church in the district the other day?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch asked suddenly.

"I went in to say my prayers in the first place," the tramp answered, sedately and respectfully as though nothing had happened; more than sedately, in fact, almost with dignity. There was no trace of his former "friendly" familiarity. All that was to be seen was a serious, business-like man, who had indeed been gratuitously insulted, but who was capable of overlooking an insult.

"But when the Lord led me there," he went on, "ech, I thought what a heavenly abundance! It was all owing to my helpless state, as in our way of life there's no doing without assistance. And, now, God be my witness, sir, it was my own loss. The Lord punished me for my sins, and what with the censer and the deacon's halter, I only got twelve roubles altogether. The chin setting of St. Nikolay of pure silver went for next to nothing. They said it was plated."

"You killed the watchman?"

“That is, I cleared the place out together with that watchman, but afterwards, next morning, by the river, we fell to quarrelling which should carry the sack. I sinned, I did lighten his load for him.”

“Well, you can rob and murder again.”

“That’s the very advice Pyotr Stepanovitch gives me, in the very same words, for he’s uncommonly mean and hard-hearted about helping a fellow-creature. And what’s more, he hasn’t a ha’porth of belief in the Heavenly Creator, who made us out of earthly clay; but he says it’s all the work of nature even to the last beast. He doesn’t understand either that with our way of life it’s impossible for us to get along without friendly assistance. If you begin to talk to him he looks like a sheep at the water; it makes one wonder. Would you believe, at Captain Lebyadkin’s, out yonder, whom your honour’s just been visiting, when he was living at Filipov’s, before you came, the door stood open all night long.—He’d be drunk and sleeping like the dead, and his money dropping out of his pockets all over the floor. I’ve chanced to see it with my own eyes, for in our way of life it’s impossible to live without assistance. ...”

“How do you mean with your own eyes? Did you go in at night then?”

“Maybe I did go in, but no one knows of it.”

“Why didn’t you kill him?”

“Reckoning it out, I steadied myself. For once having learned for sure that I can always get one hundred and fifty roubles, why should I go so far when I can get fifteen hundred roubles, if I only bide my time. For Captain Lebyadkin (I’ve heard him with my own ears) had great hopes of you when he was drunk; and there isn’t a tavern here—not the lowest pot-house—where he hasn’t talked about it when he was in that state. So that hearing it from many lips, I began, too, to rest all my hopes on your excellency. I speak to you, sir, as to my father, or my own brother; for Pyotr Stepanovitch will never learn that from me, and not a soul in the world. So won’t your excellency spare me three roubles in your kindness? You might set my mind at rest, so that I might know the real truth; for we can’t get on without assistance.”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch laughed aloud, and taking out his purse, in which he had as much as fifty roubles, in small notes, threw him one note out of the bundle, then a second, a third, a fourth. Fedka flew to catch them in the air. The notes dropped into the mud, and he snatched them up crying, “Ech! ech!” Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch finished by flinging the whole bundle at him, and, still laughing, went on down the street, this time alone. The tramp remained crawling on his knees in the mud, looking for the notes which were blown about by the wind and soaking in the puddles, and for an < hour after his spasmodic cries of “Ech! ech!” were still to be heard in the darkness.

Chapter 3: The Duel the Next Day

1

At two o'clock in the afternoon, the duel took place as arranged. Things were hastened forward by Gaganov's obstinate desire to fight at all costs. He did not understand his adversary's conduct, and was in a fury. For a whole month he had been insulting him with impunity, and had so far been unable to make him lose patience. What he wanted was a challenge on the part of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, as he had not himself any direct pretext for challenging him. His secret motive for it, that is, his almost morbid hatred of Stavrogin for the insult to his family four years before, he was for some reason ashamed to confess. And indeed he regarded this himself as an impossible pretext for a challenge, especially in view of the humble apology offered by Nikolay Stavrogin twice already. He privately made up his mind that Stavrogin was a shameless coward; and could not understand how he could have accepted Shatov's blow. So he made up his mind at last to send him the extraordinarily rude letter that had finally roused Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch himself to propose a meeting. Having dispatched this letter the day before, he awaited a challenge with feverish impatience, and while morbidly reckoning the chances at one moment with hope and at the next with despair, he got ready for any emergency by securing a second, to wit, Mavriky Nikolaevitch Drozdov, who was a friend of his, an old schoolfellow, a man for whom he had a great respect. So when Kirillov came next morning at nine o'clock with his message he found things in readiness. All the apologies and unheard-of condescension of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch were at once, at the first word, rejected with extraordinary exasperation. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had only been made acquainted with the position of affairs the evening before, opened his mouth with surprise at such incredible concessions, and would have urged a reconciliation, but seeing that Gaganov, guessing his intention, was almost trembling in his chair, refrained, and said nothing. If it had not been for the promise given to his old schoolfellow he would have retired immediately; he only remained in the hope of being some help on the scene of action. Kirillov repeated the challenge. All the conditions of the encounter made by Stavrogin were accepted on the spot, without the faintest objection. Only one addition was made, and that a ferocious one. If the first shots had no decisive effect, they were to fire again, and if the second encounter were inconclusive, it was to be followed by a third. Kirillov frowned, objected to the third encounter, but gaining nothing by his efforts agreed on the condition, however, that three should be the limit, and that "a fourth encounter was out of the question." This was conceded. Accordingly at two o'clock in the afternoon the meeting took place at Brykov, that is, in a little copse in the outskirts of the town, lying between Skvoreshniki and the Shpigulin factory. The rain of the previous night was over, but it was damp, grey, and windy. Low, ragged, dingy clouds moved rapidly across the cold sky. The tree-tops roared with a deep droning sound, and creaked on their roots; it was a melancholy morning.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch and Gaganov arrived on the spot in a smart char-a-banc with a pair of horses driven by the latter. They were accompanied by a groom. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Kirillov arrived almost at the same instant. They were not driving, they were on horseback, and were also followed by a mounted servant. Kirillov, who had never mounted a horse before, sat up boldly, erect in the saddle, grasping in his right hand the heavy box of pistols which he would not entrust to the servant. In his inexperience he was continually with his left hand tugging at the reins, which made the horse toss his head and show an inclination to rear. This, however, seemed to cause his rider no uneasiness. Gaganov, who was morbidly suspicious and always ready to be deeply offended, considered their coming on horseback as a fresh insult to himself, inasmuch as it showed that his opponents were too confident of success, since they had not even thought it necessary to have a carriage in case of being wounded and disabled. He got out of his char-a-banc, yellow with anger, and felt that his hands were trembling, as he told Mavriky Nikolaevitch. He made no response at all to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's bow, and turned away. The seconds cast lots. The lot fell on Kirillov's pistols. They measured out the barrier and placed the combatants. The servants with the carriage and horses were moved back three hundred paces. The weapons were loaded and handed to the combatants.

I'm sorry that I have to tell my story more quickly and have no time for descriptions. But I can't refrain from some comments. Mavriky Nikolaevitch was melancholy and preoccupied. Kirillov, on the other hand, was perfectly calm and unconcerned, very exact over the details of the duties he had undertaken, but without the slightest fussiness or even curiosity as to the issue of the fateful contest that was so near at hand. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was paler than usual. He was rather lightly dressed in an overcoat and a white beaver hat. He seemed very tired, he frowned from time to time, and seemed to feel it superfluous to conceal his ill-humour. But Gaganov was at this moment more worthy of mention than anyone, so that it is quite impossible not to say a few words about him in particular.

2

I have hitherto not had occasion to describe his appearance. He was a tall man of thirty-three, and well fed, as the common folk express it, almost fat, with lank flaxen hair, and with features which might be called handsome. He had retired from the service with the rank of colonel, and if he had served till he reached the rank of general he would have been even more impressive in that position, and would very likely have become an excellent fighting general.

I must add, as characteristic of the man, that the chief cause of his leaving the army was the thought of the family disgrace which had haunted him so painfully since the insult paid to his father by Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch four years before at the club. He conscientiously considered it dishonourable to remain in the service, and was inwardly persuaded that he was contaminating the regiment and his companions, although they

knew nothing of the incident. It's true that he had once before been disposed to leave the army long before the insult to his father, and on quite other grounds, but he had hesitated. Strange as it is to write, the original design, or rather desire, to leave the army was due to the proclamation of the 19th of February of the emancipation of the serfs. Gaganov, who was one of the richest landowners in the province, and who had not lost very much by the emancipation, and was, moreover, quite capable of understanding the humanity of the reform and its economic advantages, suddenly felt himself personally insulted by the proclamation. It was something unconscious, a feeling; but was all the stronger for being unrecognised. He could not bring himself, however, to take any decisive step till his father's death. But he began to be well known for his "gentlemanly" ideas to many persons of high position in Petersburg, with whom he strenuously kept up connections. He was secretive and self-contained. Another characteristic: he belonged to that strange section of the nobility, still surviving in Russia, who set an extreme value on their pure and ancient lineage, and take it too seriously. At the same time he could not endure Russian history, and, indeed, looked upon Russian customs in general as more or less piggish. Even in his childhood, in the special military school for the sons of particularly wealthy and distinguished families in which he had the privilege of being educated, from first to last certain poetic notions were deeply rooted in his mind. He loved castles, chivalry; all the theatrical part of it. He was ready to cry with shame that in the days of the Moscow Tsars the sovereign had the right to inflict corporal punishment on the Russian boyars, and blushed at the contrast. This stiff and extremely severe man, who had a remarkable knowledge of military science and performed his duties admirably, was at heart a dreamer. It was said that he could speak at meetings and had the gift of language, but at no time during the thirty-three years of his life had he spoken. Even in the distinguished circles in Petersburg, in which he had moved of late, he behaved with extraordinary haughtiness. His meeting in Petersburg with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who had just returned from abroad, almost sent him out of his mind. At the present moment, standing at the barrier, he was terribly uneasy. He kept imagining that the duel would somehow not come off; the least delay threw him into a tremor. There was an expression of anguish in his face when Kirillov, instead of giving the signal for them to fire, began suddenly speaking, only for form, indeed, as he himself explained aloud.

"Simply as a formality, now that you have the pistols in your hands, and I must give the signal, I ask you for the last time, will you not be reconciled? It's the duty of a second."

As though to spite him, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had till then kept silence, although he had been reproaching himself all day for his compliance and acquiescence, suddenly caught up Kirillov's thought and began to speak:

"I entirely agree with Mr. Kirillov's words... . This idea that reconciliation is impossible at the barrier is a prejudice, only suitable for Frenchmen. Besides, with your leave, I don't understand what the offence is. I've been wanting to say so for a long time ... because every apology is offered, isn't it?"

He flushed all over. He had rarely spoken so much, and with such excitement.

"I repeat again my offer to make every possible apology," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch interposed hurriedly.

"This is impossible," shouted Gaganov furiously, addressing Mavriky Nikolaevitch, and stamping with rage. "Explain to this man," he pointed with his pistol at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, "if you're my second and not my enemy, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, that such overtures only aggravate the insult. He feels it impossible to be insulted by me! ... He feels it no disgrace to walk away from me at the barrier! What does he take me for, after that, do you think? ... And you, you, my second, too! You're simply irritating me that I may miss."

He stamped again. There were flecks of foam on his lips.

"Negotiations are over. I beg you to listen to the signal!" Kirillov shouted at the top of his voice. "One! Two! Three!"

At the word "Three" the combatants took aim at one another. Gaganov at once raised his pistol, and at the fifth or sixth step he fired. For a second he stood still, and, making sure that he had missed, advanced to the barrier. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch advanced too, raising his pistol, but somehow holding it very high, and fired, almost without taking aim. Then he took out his handkerchief and bound it round the little finger of his right hand. Only then they saw that Gaganov had not missed him completely, but the bullet had only grazed the fleshy part of his finger without touching the bone; it was only a slight scratch. Kirillov at once announced that the duel would go on, unless the combatants were satisfied.

"I declare," said Gaganov hoarsely (his throat felt parched), again addressing Mavriky Nikolaevitch, "that this man," again he pointed in Stavrogin's direction, "fired in the air on purpose ... intentionally... . This is an insult again... . He wants to make the duel impossible!"

"I have the right to fire as I like so long as I keep the rules," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch asserted resolutely.

"No, he hasn't! Explain it to him! Explain it!" cried Gaganov.

"I'm in complete agreement with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch," proclaimed Kirillov.

"Why does he spare me?" Gaganov raged, not hearing him. "I despise his mercy. ... I spit on it. ... I..."

"I give you my word that I did not intend to insult you," cried Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch impatiently. "I shot high because I don't want to kill anyone else, either you or anyone else. It's nothing to do with you personally. It's true that I don't consider myself insulted, and I'm sorry that angers you. But I don't allow any one to interfere with my rights."

"If he's so afraid of bloodshed, ask him why he challenged me," yelled Gaganov, still addressing Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

"How could he help challenging you?" said Kirillov, intervening. "You wouldn't listen to anything. How was one to get rid of you?"

“I’ll only mention one thing,” observed Mavriky Nikolaevitch, pondering the matter with painful effort. “If a combatant declares beforehand that he will fire in the air the duel certainly cannot go on ... for obvious and ... delicate reasons.”

“I haven’t declared that I’ll fire in the air every time,” cried Stavrogin, losing all patience. “You don’t know what’s in my mind or how I intend to fire again... . I’m not restricting the duel at all.”

“In that case the encounter can go on,” said Mavriky Nikolaevitch to Gaganov.

“Gentlemen, take your places,” Kirillov commanded. Again they advanced, again Gaganov missed and Stavrogin fired into the air. There might have been a dispute as to his firing into the air. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch might have flatly declared that he’d fired properly, if he had not admitted that he had missed intentionally. He did not aim straight at the sky or at the trees, but seemed to aim at his adversary, though as he pointed the pistol the bullet flew a yard above his hat. The second time the shot was even lower, even less like an intentional miss. Nothing would have convinced Gaganov now.

“Again!” he muttered, grinding his teeth. “No matter! I’ve been challenged and I’ll make use of my rights. I’ll fire a third time ... whatever happens.”

“You have full right to do so,” Kirillov rapped out. Mavriky Nikolaevitch said nothing. The opponents were placed a third time, the signal was given. This time Gaganov went right up to the barrier, and began from there taking aim, at a distance of twelve paces. His hand was trembling too much to take good aim. Stavrogin stood with his pistol lowered and awaited his shot without moving.

“Too long; you’ve been aiming too long!” Kirillov shouted impetuously. “Fire! Fire!”

But the shot rang out, and this time Stavrogin’s white beaver hat flew off. The aim had been fairly correct. The crown of the hat was pierced very low down; a quarter of an inch lower and all would have been over. Kirillov picked up the hat and handed it to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.

“Fire; don’t detain your adversary!” cried Mavriky Nikolaevitch in extreme agitation, seeing that Stavrogin seemed to have forgotten to fire, and was examining the hat with Kirillov. Stavrogin started, looked at Gaganov, turned round and this time, without the slightest regard for punctilio, fired to one side, into the copse. The duel was over. Gaganov stood as though overwhelmed. Mavriky Nikolaevitch went up and began saying something to him, but he did not seem to understand. Kirillov took off his hat as he went away, and nodded to Mavriky Nikolaevitch. But Stavrogin forgot his former politeness. When he had shot into the copse he did not even turn towards the barrier. He handed his pistol to Kirillov and hastened towards the horses. His face looked angry; he did not speak. Kirillov, too, was silent. They got on their horses and set off at a gallop.

3

“Why don’t you speak?” he called impatiently to Kirillov, when they were not far from home.

“What do you want?” replied the latter, almost slipping off his horse, which was rearing.

Stavrogin restrained himself.

“I didn’t mean to insult that ... fool, and I’ve insulted him again,” he said quietly.

“Yes, you’ve insulted him again,” Kirillov jerked out, “and besides, he’s not a fool.”

“I’ve done all I can, anyway.”

“No.”

“What ought I to have done?”

“Not have challenged him.”

“Accept another blow in the face?”

“Yes, accept another.”

“I can’t understand anything now,” said Stavrogin wrath-fully. “Why does every one expect of me something not expected from anyone else? Why am I to put up with what no one else puts up with, and undertake burdens no one else can bear?”

“I thought you were seeking a burden yourself.”

“I seek a bur den?”

“Yes.”

“You’ve ... seen that?”

“Yes.”

“Is it so noticeable?”

“Yes.”

There was silence for a moment. Stavrogin had a very preoccupied face. He was almost impressed.

“I didn’t aim because I didn’t want to kill anyone. There was nothing more in it, I assure you,” he said hurriedly, and with agitation, as though justifying himself.

“You ought not to have offended him.”

“What ought I to have done then?”

“You ought to have killed him.”

“Are you sorry I didn’t kill him?”

“I’m not sorry for anything. I thought you really meant to kill him. You don’t know what you’re seeking.”

“I seek a burden,” laughed Stavrogin.

“If you didn’t want blood yourself, why did you give him a chance to kill you?”

“If I hadn’t challenged him, he’d have killed me simply, without a duel.”

“That’s not your affair. Perhaps he wouldn’t have killed you.”

“Only have beaten me?”

“That’s not your business. Bear your burden. Or else there’s no merit.”

“Hang your merit. I don’t seek anyone’s approbation.”

"I thought you were seeking it," Kirillov commented with terrible unconcern.

They rode into the courtyard of the house.

"Do you care to come in?" said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.

"No; I'm going home. Good-bye."

He got off the horse and took his box of pistols under his arm.

"Anyway, you're not angry with me?" said Stavrogin, holding out his hand to him.

"Not in the least," said Kirillov, turning round to shake hands with him. "If my burden's light it's because it's from nature; perhaps your burden's heavier because that's your nature. There's no need to be much ashamed; only a little."

"I know I'm a worthless character, and I don't pretend to be a strong one."

"You'd better not; you're not a strong person. Come and have tea."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch went into the house, greatly perturbed.

4

He learned at once from Alexey Yegorytch that Varvara Petrovna had been very glad to hear that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had gone out for a ride—the first time he had left the house after eight days' illness. She had ordered the carriage, and had driven out alone for a breath of fresh air "according to the habit of the past, as she had forgotten for the last eight days what it meant to breathe fresh air."

"Alone, or with Darya Pavlovna?" Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch interrupted the old man with a rapid question, and he scowled when he heard that Darya Pavlovna "had declined to go abroad on account of indisposition and was in her rooms."

"Listen, old man," he said, as though suddenly making up his mind. "Keep watch over her all to-day, and if you notice her coming to me, stop her at once, and tell her that I can't see her for a few days at least ... that I ask her not to come myself... I'll let her know myself, when the time comes. Do you hear?"

"I'll tell her, sir," said Alexey Yegorytch, with distress in his voice, dropping his eyes.

"Not till you see clearly she's meaning to come and see me of herself, though."

"Don't be afraid, sir, there shall be no mistake. Your interviews have all passed through me, hitherto. You've always turned to me for help."

"I know. Not till she comes of herself, anyway. Bring me some tea, if you can, at once."

The old man had hardly gone out, when almost at the same instant the door reopened, and Darya Pavlovna appeared in the doorway. Her eyes were tranquil, though her face was pale.

"Where have you come from?" exclaimed Stavrogin.

"I was standing there, and waiting for him to go out, to come in to you. I heard the order you gave him, and when he came out just now I hid round the corner, on the right, and he didn't notice me."

"I've long meant to break off with you, Dasha ... for a while ... for the present. I couldn't see you last night, in spite of your note. I meant to write to you myself, but I don't know how to write," he added with vexation, almost as though with disgust.

"I thought myself that we must break it off. Varvara Petrovna is too suspicious of our relations."

"Well, let her be."

"She mustn't be worried. So now we part till the end comes."

"You still insist on expecting the end?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it."

"But nothing in the world ever has an end."

"This will have an end. Then call me. I'll come. Now, good-bye."

"And what sort of end will it be?" smiled Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.

"You're not wounded, and ... have not shed blood?" she asked, not answering his question.

"It was stupid. I didn't kill anyone. Don't be uneasy. However, you'll hear all about it to-day from every one. I'm not quite well."

"I'm going. The announcement of the marriage won't be to-day?" she added irresolutely.

"It won't be to-day, and it won't be to-morrow. I can't say about the day after to-morrow. Perhaps we shall all be dead, and so much the better. Leave me alone, leave me alone, do."

"You won't ruin that other ... mad girl?"

"I won't ruin either of the mad creatures. It seems to be the sane I'm ruining. I'm so vile and loathsome, Dasha, that I might really send for you, 'at the latter end,' as you say. And in spite of your sanity you'll come. Why will you be your own ruin?"

"I know that at the end I shall be the only one left you, and ... I'm waiting for that."

"And what if I don't send for you after all, but run away from you?"

"That can't be. You will send for me."

"There's a great deal of contempt for me in that."

"You know that there's not only contempt."

"Then there is contempt, anyway?"

"I used the wrong word. God is my witness, it's my greatest wish that you may never have need of me."

"One phrase is as good as another. I should also have wished not to have ruined you."

"You can never, anyhow, be my ruin; and you know that yourself, better than anyone," Darya Pavlovna said, rapidly and resolutely. "If I don't come to you I shall be a sister of mercy, a nurse, shall wait upon the sick, or go selling the gospel. I've made up my mind to that. I cannot be anyone's wife. I can't live in a house like this, either. That's not what I want... . You know all that."

"No, I never could tell what you want. It seems to me that you're interested in me, as some veteran nurses get specially interested in some particular invalid in comparison

with the others, or still more, like some pious old women who frequent funerals and find one corpse more attractive than another. Why do you look at me so strangely?"

"Are you very ill?" she asked sympathetically, looking at him in a peculiar way. "Good heavens! And this man wants to do without me!"

"Listen, Dasha, now I'm always seeing phantoms. One devil offered me yesterday, on the bridge, to murder Lebyadkin and Marya Timofyevna, to settle the marriage difficulty, and to cover up all traces. He asked me to give him three roubles on account, but gave me to understand that the whole operation wouldn't cost less than fifteen hundred. Wasn't he a calculating devil! A regular shopkeeper. Ha ha!"

"But you're fully convinced that it was an hallucination?"

"Oh, no; not a bit an hallucination! It was simply Fedka the convict, the robber who escaped from prison. But that's not the point. What do you suppose I did! I gave him all I had, everything in my purse, and now he's sure I've given him that on account!"

"You met him at night, and he made such a suggestion? Surely you must see that you're being caught in their nets on every side!"

"Well, let them be. But you've got some question at the tip of your tongue, you know. I see it by your eyes," he added with a resentful and irritable smile.

Dasha was frightened.

"I've no question at all, and no doubt whatever; you'd better be quiet!" she cried in dismay, as though waving off his question.

"Then you're convinced that I won't go to Fedka's little shop?"

"Oh, God!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Why do you torture me like this?"

"Oh, forgive me my stupid joke. I must be picking up bad manners from them. Do you know, ever since last night I feel awfully inclined to laugh, to go on laughing continually for ever so long. It's as though I must explode with laughter. It's like an illness... . Oh! my mother's coming in. I always know by the rumble when her carriage has stopped at the entrance."

Dasha seized his hand.

"God save you from your demon, and ... call me, call me quickly!"

"Oh! a fine demon! It's simply a little nasty, scrofulous imp, with a cold in his head, one of the unsuccessful ones. But you have something you don't dare to say again, Dasha?"

She looked at him with pain and reproach, and turned towards the door.

"Listen," he called after her, with a malignant and distorted smile. "If ... Yes, if, in one word, if ... you understand, even if I did go to that little shop, and if I called you after that— would you come then?"

She went out, hiding her face in her hands, and neither turning nor answering.

"She will come even after the shop," he whispered, thinking a moment, and an expression of scornful disdain came into his face. "A nurse! H'm! ... but perhaps that's what I want."

Chapter 4: All in Expectation

1

The impression made on the whole neighbourhood by the story of the duel, which was rapidly noised abroad, was particularly remarkable from the unanimity with which every one hastened to take up the cudgels for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. Many of his former enemies declared themselves his friends. The chief reason for this change of front in public opinion was chiefly due to one person, who had hitherto not expressed her opinion, but who now very distinctly uttered a few words, which at once gave the event a significance exceedingly interesting to the vast majority. This was how it happened. On the day after the duel, all the town was assembled at the Marshal of Nobility's in honour of his wife's nameday. Yulia Mihailovna was present, or, rather, presided, accompanied by Lizaveta Nikolaevna, radiant with beauty and peculiar gaiety, which struck many of our ladies at once as particularly suspicious at this time. And I may mention, by the way, her engagement to Mavriky Nikolaevitch was by now an established fact. To a playful question from a retired general of much consequence, of whom we shall have more to say later, Lizaveta Nikolaevna frankly replied that evening that she was engaged. And only imagine, not one of our ladies would believe in her engagement. They all persisted in assuming a romance of some sort, some fatal family secret, something that had happened in Switzerland, and for some reason imagined that Yulia Mihailovna must have had some hand in it. It was difficult to understand why these rumours, or rather fancies, persisted so obstinately, and why Yulia Mihailovna was so positively connected with it. As soon as she came in, all turned to her with strange looks, brimful of expectation. It must be observed that owing to the freshness of the event, and certain circumstances accompanying it, at the party people talked of it with some circumspection, in undertones. Besides, nothing yet was known of the line taken by the authorities. As far as was known, neither of the combatants had been troubled by the police. Every one knew, for instance, that Gaganov had set off home early in the morning to Duhovo, without being hindered. Meanwhile, of course, all were eager for some one to be the first to speak of it aloud, and so to open the door to the general impatience. They rested their hopes on the general above-mentioned, and they were not disappointed.

This general, a landowner, though not a wealthy one, was one of the most imposing members of our club, and a man of an absolutely unique turn of mind. He flirted in the old-fashioned way with the young ladies, and was particularly fond, in large assemblies, of speaking aloud with all the weightiness of a general, on subjects to which others were alluding in discreet whispers. This was, so to say, his 'special role in local society. He drawled, too, and spoke with peculiar suavity, probably having picked up the habit from Russians travelling abroad, or from those wealthy landowners of former days who had suffered most from the emancipation. Stepan Trofimovitch had observed that the

more completely a landowner was ruined, the more suavely he lisped and drawled his words. He did, as a fact, lisp and drawl himself, but was not aware of it in himself.

The general spoke like a person of authority. He was, besides, a distant relation of Gaganov's, though he was on bad terms with him, and even engaged in litigation with him. He had, moreover, in the past, fought two duels himself, and had even been degraded to the ranks and sent to the Caucasus on account of one of them. Some mention was made of Varvara Petrovna's having driven out that day and the day before, after being kept indoors "by illness," though the allusion was not to her, but to the marvellous matching of her four grey horses of the Stavrogins' own breeding. The general suddenly observed that he had met "young Stavrogin" that day, on horseback... . Every one was instantly silent. The general munched his lips, and suddenly proclaimed, twisting in his fingers his presentation gold snuff-box.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here some years ago ... I mean when I was at Carlsbad ... H'm! I'm very much interested in that young man about whom I heard so many rumours at that time. H'm! And, I say, is it true that he's mad? Some one told me so then. Suddenly I'm told that he has been insulted by some student here, in the presence of his cousins, and he slipped under the table to get away from him. And yesterday I heard from Stepan Vysotsky that Stavrogin had been fighting with Gaganov. And simply with the gallant object of offering himself as a target to an infuriated man, just to get rid of him. H'm! Quite in the style of the guards of the twenties. Is there any house where he visits here?"

The general paused as though expecting an answer. A way had been opened for the public impatience to express itself.

"What could be simpler?" cried Yulia Mihailovna, raising her voice, irritated that all present had turned their eyes upon her, as though at a word of command. "Can one wonder that Stavrogin fought Gaganov and took no notice of the student? He couldn't challenge a man who used to be his serf!"

A noteworthy saying! A clear and simple notion, yet it had entered nobody's head till that moment. It was a saying that had extraordinary consequences. All scandal and gossip, all the petty tittle-tattle was thrown into the background, another significance had been detected. A new character was revealed whom all had misjudged; a character, almost ideally severe in his standards. Mortally insulted by a student, that is, an educated man, no longer a serf, he despised the affront because his assailant had once been his serf. Society had gossiped and slandered him; shallow-minded people had looked with contempt on a man who had been struck in the face. He had despised a public opinion, which had not risen to the level of the highest standards, though it discussed them.

"And, meantime, you and I, Ivan Alexandrovitch, sit and discuss the correct standards," one old club member observed to another, with a warm and generous glow of self-reproach.

"Yes, Pyotr Mihailovitch, yes," the other chimed in with zest, "talk of the younger generation!"

“It’s not a question of the younger generation,” observed a third, putting in his spoke, “it’s nothing to do with the younger generation; he’s a star, not one of the younger generation; that’s the way to look at it.”

“And it’s just that sort we need; they’re rare people.” The chief point in all this was that the “new man,” besides showing himself an unmistakable nobleman, was the wealthiest landowner in the province, and was, therefore, bound to be a leading man who could be of assistance. I’ve already alluded in passing to the attitude of the landowners of our province. People were enthusiastic:

“He didn’t merely refrain from challenging the student. He put his hands behind him, note that particularly, your excellency,” somebody pointed out.

“And he didn’t haul him up before the new law-courts, either,” added another.

“In spite of the fact that for a personal insult to a nobleman he’d have got fifteen roubles damages! He he he!”

“No, I’ll tell you a secret about the new courts,” cried a third, in a frenzy of excitement, “if anyone’s caught robbing or swindling and convicted, he’d better run home while there’s yet time, and murder his mother. He’ll be acquitted of everything at once, and ladies will wave their batiste handkerchiefs from the platform. It’s the absolute truth!”

“It’s the truth. It’s the truth!”

The inevitable anecdotes followed: Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s friendly relations with Count K. were recalled. Count K.’s stern and independent attitude to recent reforms was well known, as well as his remarkable public activity, though that had somewhat fallen off of late. And now, suddenly, every one was positive that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was betrothed to one of the count’s daughters, though nothing had given grounds for such a supposition. And as for some wonderful adventures in Switzerland with Lizaveta Nikolaevna, even the ladies quite dropped all reference to it. I must mention, by the way, that the Drozdovs had by this time succeeded in paying all the visits they had omitted at first. Every one now confidently considered Lizaveta Nikolaevna a most ordinary girl, who paraded her delicate nerves. Her fainting on the day of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s arrival was explained now as due to her terror at the student’s outrageous behaviour. They even increased the prosaicness of that to which before they had striven to give such a fantastic colour. As for a lame woman who had been talked of, she was forgotten completely. They were ashamed to remember her.

“And if there had been a hundred lame girls—we’ve all been young once!”

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s respectfulness to his mother was enlarged upon. Various virtues were discovered in him. People talked with approbation of the learning he had acquired in the four years he had spent in German universities. Gaganov’s conduct was declared utterly tactless: “not knowing friend from foe.” Yulia Mihailovna’s keen insight was unhesitatingly admitted.

So by the time Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made his appearance among them he was received by every one with naive solemnity. In all eyes fastened upon him could be read eager anticipation. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at once wrapped himself in the most

austere silence, which, of course, gratified every one much more than if he had talked till doomsday. In a word, he was a success, he was the fashion. If once one has figured in provincial society, there's no retreating into the background. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch began to fulfil all his social duties in the province punctiliously as before. He was not found cheerful company: "a man who has seen suffering; a man not like other people; he has something to be melancholy about." Even the pride and disdainful aloofness for which he had been so detested four years before was now liked and respected.

Varvara Petrovna was triumphant. I don't know whether she grieved much over the shattering of her dreams concerning Lizaveta Nikolaevna. Family pride, of course, helped her to get over it. One thing was strange: Varvara Petrovna was suddenly convinced that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch really had "made his choice "at Count K.'s. And what was strangest of all, she was led to believe it by rumours which reached her on no better authority than other people. She was afraid to ask Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch a direct question. Two or three times, however, she could not refrain from slyly and good-humouredly reproaching him for not being open with her. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled and remained silent. The silence was taken as a sign of assent. And yet, all the time she never forgot the cripple. The thought of her lay like a stone on her heart, a nightmare, she was tortured by strange misgivings and surmises, and all this at the same time as she dreamed of Count K.'s daughters. But of this we shall speak later. Varvara Petrovna began again, of course, to be treated with extreme deference and respect in society, but she took little advantage of it and went out rarely.

She did, however, pay a visit of ceremony to the governor's wife. Of course, no one had been more charmed and delighted by Yulia Mihailovna's words spoken at the marshal's soiree than she. They lifted a load of care off her heart, and had at once relieved much of the distress she had been suffering since that

luckless Sunday.

"I misunderstood that woman," she declared, and with her characteristic impulsiveness she frankly told Yulia Mihailovna that she had come to thank her. Yulia Mihailovna was flattered, but she behaved with dignity. She was beginning about this time to be very conscious of her own importance, too much so, in fact. She announced, for example, in the course of conversation, that she had never heard of Stepan Trofimovitch as a leading man or a savant.

"I know young Verhovensky, of course, and make much of him. He's imprudent, but then he's young; he's thoroughly well-informed, though. He's not an out-of-date, old-fashioned critic, anyway." Varvara Petrovna hastened to observe that Stepan Trofimovitch had never been a critic, but had, on the contrary, spent all his life in her house. He was renowned through circumstances of his early career, "only too well known to the whole world," and of late for his researches in Spanish history. Now he intended to write also on the position of modern German universities, and, she believed, something about the Dresden Madonna too. In short, Varvara Petrovna refused to surrender Stepan Trofimovitch to the tender mercies of Yulia Mihailovna.

“The Dresden Madonna? You mean the Sistine Madonna? Come Varvara Petrovna, I spent two hours sitting before that picture and came away utterly disillusioned. I could make nothing of it and was in complete amazement. Karmazinov, too, says it’s hard to understand it. They all see nothing in it now, Russians and English alike. All its fame is just the talk of the last generation.”

“Fashions are changed then?”

“What I think is that one mustn’t despise our younger generation either. They cry out that they’re communists, but what I say is that we must appreciate them and mustn’t be hard on them. I read everything now—the papers, communism the natural sciences—I get everything because, after all, one must know where one’s living and with whom one has to do. One mustn’t spend one’s whole life on the heights of one’s own fancy. I’ve come to the conclusion, and adopted it as a principle, that one must be kind to the young people and so keep them from the brink. Believe me, Varvara Petrovna, that none but we who make up good society can by our kindness and good influence keep them from the abyss towards which they are brought by the intolerance of all these old men. I am glad though to learn from you about Stepan Trofimovitch. You suggest an idea to me: he may be useful at our literary matinee, you know I’m arranging for a whole day of festivities, a subscription entertainment for the benefit of the poor governesses of our province. They are scattered about Russia; in our district alone we can reckon up six of them. Besides that, there are two girls in the telegraph office, two are being trained in the academy, the rest would like to be but have not the means. The Russian woman’s fate is a terrible one, Varvara Petrovna! It’s out of that they’re making the university question now, and there’s even been a meeting of the Imperial Council about it. In this strange Russia of ours one can do anything one likes; and that, again, is why it’s only by the kindness and the direct warm sympathy of all the better classes that we can direct this great common cause in the true path. Oh, heavens, have we many noble personalities among us! There are some, of course, but they are scattered far and wide. Let us unite and we shall be stronger. In one word, I shall first have a literary matinee, then a light luncheon, then an interval, and in the evening a ball. We meant to begin the evening by living pictures, but it would involve a great deal of expense, and so, to please the public, there will be one or two quadrilles in masks and fancy dresses, representing well-known literary schools. This humorous idea was suggested by Karmazinov. He has been a great help to me. Do you know he’s going to read us the last thing he’s written, which no one has seen yet. He is laying down the pen, and will write no more. This last essay is his farewell to the public. It’s a charming little thing called ‘Merci.’ The title is French; he thinks that more amusing and even subtler. I do, too. In fact I advised it. I think Stepan Trofimovitch might read us something too, if it were quite short and ... not so very learned. I believe Pyotr Stepanovitch and some one else too will read something. Pyotr Stepanovitch shall run round to you and tell you the programme. Better still, let me bring it to you myself.”

“Allow me to put my name down in your subscription list too. I’ll tell Stepan Trofimovitch and will beg him to consent.”

Varvara Petrovna returned home completely fascinated. She was ready to stand up for Yulia Mihailovna through thick and thin, and for some reason was already quite put out with Stepan Trofimovitch, while he, poor man, sat at home, all unconscious.

"I'm in love with her. I can't understand how I could be so mistaken in that woman," she said to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Pyotr Stepanovitch, who dropped in that evening.

"But you must make peace with the old man all the same," Pyotr Stepanovitch submitted. "He's in despair. You've quite sent him to Coventry. Yesterday he met your carriage and bowed, and you turned away. We'll trot him out, you know; I'm reckoning on him for something, and he may still be useful."

"Oh, he'll read something."

"I don't mean only that. And I was meaning to drop in on him to-day. So shall I tell him?"

"If you like. I don't know, though, how you'll arrange it," she said irresolutely. "I was meaning to have a talk with him myself, and wanted to fix the time and place."

She frowned.

"Oh, it's not worth while fixing a time. I'll simply give hint; the message."

"Very well, do. Add that I certainly will fix a time to see him though. Be sure to say that too."

Pyotr Stepanovitch ran off, grinning. He was, in fact, to the best of my recollection, particularly spiteful all this time, and ventured upon extremely impatient sallies with almost every one. Strange to say, every one, somehow, forgave him. It was generally accepted that he was not to be looked at from the ordinary standpoint. I may remark that he took up an extremely resentful attitude about Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's duel. It took him unawares. He turned positively green when he was told of it. Perhaps his vanity was wounded: he only heard of it next day when every one knew of it.

"You had no right to fight, you know," he whispered to Stavrogin, five days later, when he chanced to meet him at the club. It was remarkable that they had not once met during those five days, though Pyotr Stepanovitch had dropped in at Varvara Petrovna's almost every day.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at him in silence with an absent-minded air, as though not understanding what was the matter, and he went on without stopping. He was crossing the big hall of the club on his way to the refreshment room.

"You've been to see Shatov too... . You mean to make it known about Marya Timofyevna," Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered, running after him, and, as though not thinking of what he was doing he clutched at his shoulder.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch shook his hand off and turned round quickly to him with a menacing scowl. Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at him with a strange, prolonged smile. It all lasted only one moment. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch walked on.

2

He went to the “old man” straight from Varvara Petrovna’s, and he was in such haste simply from spite, that he might revenge himself for an insult of which I had no idea at that time. The fact is that at their last interview on the Thursday of the previous week, Stepan Trofimovitch, though the dispute was one of his own beginning, had ended by turning Pyotr Stepanovitch out with his stick. He concealed the incident from me at the time. But now, as soon as Pyotr Stepanovitch ran in with his everlasting grin, which was so naively condescending, and his unpleasantly inquisitive eyes peering into every corner, Stepan Trofimovitch at once made a signal aside to me, not to leave the room. This was how their real relations came to be exposed before me, for on this occasion I heard their whole conversation.

Stepan Trofimovitch was sitting stretched out on a lounge. He had grown thin and sallow since that Thursday. Pyotr Stepanovitch seated himself beside him with a most familiar air, unceremoniously tucking his legs up under him, and taking up more room on the lounge than deference to his father should have allowed. Stepan Trofimovitch moved aside, in silence, and with dignity.

On the table lay an open book. It was the novel, “What’s to be done?” Alas, I must confess one strange weakness in my friend; the fantasy that he ought to come forth from his solitude and fight a last battle was getting more and more hold upon his deluded imagination. I guessed that he had got the novel and was studying it solely in order that when the inevitable conflict with the “shriekers” came about he might know their methods and arguments beforehand, from their very “catechism,” and in that way be prepared to confute them all triumphantly, before her eyes. Oh, how that book tortured him! He sometimes flung it aside in despair, and leaping up, paced about the room almost in a frenzy.

“I agree that the author’s fundamental idea is a true one,” he said to me feverishly, “but that only makes it more awful. It’s just our idea, exactly ours; we first sowed the seed, nurtured it, prepared the way, and, indeed, what could they say new, after us? But, heavens! How it’s all expressed, distorted, mutilated!” he exclaimed, tapping the book with his fingers. “Were these the conclusions we were striving for. Who can understand the original idea in this?”

“Improving your mind?” sniggered Pyotr Stepanovitch, taking the book from the table and reading the title. “It’s high time. I’ll bring you better, if you like.”

Stepan Trofimovitch again preserved a dignified silence. I was sitting on a sofa in the corner.

Pyotr Stepanovitch quickly explained the reason of his coming. Of course, Stepan Trofimovitch was absolutely staggered, and he listened in alarm, which was mixed with extreme indignation.

“And that Yulia Mihailovna counts on my coming to read for her!”

“Well, they’re by no means in such need of you. On the contrary, it’s by way of an attention to you, so as to make up to Varvara Petrovna. But, of course, you won’t dare

to refuse, and I expect you want to yourself," he added with a grin. "You old fogies are all so devilishly ambitious. But, I say though, you must look out that it's not too boring. What have you got? Spanish history, or what is it? You'd better let me look at it three days beforehand, or else you'll put us to sleep perhaps."

The hurried and too barefaced coarseness of these thrusts was obviously premeditated. He affected to behave as though it were impossible to talk to Stepan Trofimovitch in different and more delicate language. Stepan Trofimovitch resolutely persisted in ignoring his insults, but what his son told him made a more and more overwhelming impression upon him.

"And she, she herself sent me this message through you? " he asked, turning pale.

"Well, you see, she means to fix a time and place for a mutual explanation, the relics of your sentimentalising. You've been coquetting with her for twenty years and have trained her to the most ridiculous habits. But don't trouble yourself, it's quite different now. She keeps saying herself that she's only beginning now to 'have her eyes opened.' I told her in so many words that all this friendship of yours is nothing but a mutual pouring forth of sloppiness. She told me lots, my boy. Foo! what a flunkey's place you've been filling all this time. I positively blushed for you."

"I filling a flunkey's place?" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, unable to restrain himself.

"Worse, you've been a parasite, that is, a voluntary flunkey too lazy to work, while you've an appetite for money. She, too, understands all that now. It's awful the things she's been telling me about you, anyway. I did laugh, my boy, over your letters to her; shameful and disgusting. But you're all so depraved, so depraved! There's always something depraving in charity— you're a good example of it!"

"She showed you my letters!"

"All; though, of course, one couldn't read them all. Foo, what a lot of paper you've covered! I believe there are more than two thousand letters there. And do you know, old chap, I believe there was one moment when she'd have been ready to marry you. You let slip your chance in the silliest way. Of course, I'm speaking from your point of view, though, anyway, it would have been better than now when you've almost been married to 'cover another man's sins,' like a buffoon, for a jest, for money."

"For money! She, she says it was for money!" Stepan Trofimovitch wailed in anguish.

"What else, then? But, of course, I stood up for you. That's your only line of defence, you know. She sees for herself that you needed money like every one else, and that from that point of view maybe you were right. I proved to her as clear as twice two makes four that it was a mutual bargain. She was a capitalist and you were a sentimental buffoon in her service. She's not angry about the money, though you have milked her like a goat. She's only in a rage at having believed in you for twenty years, at your having so taken her in over these noble sentiments, and made her tell lies for so long. She never will admit that she told lies of herself, but you'll catch it the more for that. I can't make out how it was you didn't see that you'd have to have a day of reckoning. For after all you had some sense. I advised her yesterday to put you in an almshouse,

a genteel one, don't disturb yourself; there'll be nothing humiliating; I believe that's what she'll do. Do you remember your last letter to me, three weeks ago?"

"Can you have shown her that?" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, leaping up in horror.

"Rather! First thing. The one in which you told me she was exploiting you, envious of your talent; oh, yes, and that about 'other men's sins.' You have got a conceit though, my boy! How I did laugh. As a rule your letters are very tedious.

You write a horrible style. I often don't read them at all, and I've one lying about to this day, unopened. I'll send it to you to-morrow. But that one, that last letter of yours was the tiptop of perfection! How I did laugh! Oh, how I laughed!"

"Monster, monster!" wailed Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Foo, damn it all, there's no talking to you. I say, you're getting huffy again as you were last Thursday."

Stepan Trofimovitch drew himself up, menacingly.

"How dare you speak to me in such language?"

"What language? It's simple and clear."

"Tell me, you monster, are you my son or not?"

"You know that best. To be sure all fathers are disposed to be blind in such cases."

"Silence! Silence!" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, shaking all over.

"You see you're screaming and swearing at me as you did last Thursday. You tried to lift your stick against me, but you know, I found that document. I was rummaging all the evening in my trunk from curiosity. It's true there's nothing definite, you can take that comfort. It's only a letter of my mother's to that Pole. But to judge from her character ..."

"Another word and I'll box your ears."

"What a set of people!" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, suddenly addressing himself to me. "You see, this is how we've been ever since last Thursday. I'm glad you're here this time, anyway, and can judge between us. To begin with, a fact: he reproaches me for speaking like this of my mother, but didn't he egg me on to it? In Petersburg before I left the High School, didn't he wake me twice in the night, to embrace me, and cry like a woman, and what do you suppose he talked to me about at night? Why, the same modest anecdotes about my mother! It was from him I first heard them."

"Oh, I meant that in a higher sense! Oh, you didn't understand me! You understood nothing, nothing."

"But, anyway, it was meaner in you than in me, meaner, acknowledge that. You see, it's nothing to me if you like. I'm speaking from your point of view. Don't worry about my point of view. I don't blame my mother; if it's you, then it's you, if it's a Pole, then it's a Pole, it's all the same to me. I'm not to blame because you and she managed so stupidly in Berlin. As though you could have managed things better. Aren't you an absurd set, after that? And does it matter to you whether I'm your son or not? Listen," he went on, turning to me again, "he's never spent a penny on me all his life; till I was sixteen he didn't know me at all; afterwards he robbed me here, and now he

cries out that his heart has been aching over me all his life, and carries on before me like an actor. I'm not Varvara Petrovna, mind you."

He got up and took his hat.

"I curse you henceforth!"

Stepan Trofimovitch, as pale as death, stretched out his hand above him.

"Ach, what folly a man will descend to!" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, actually surprised. "Well, good-bye, old fellow, I shall never come and see you again. Send me the article beforehand, don't forget, and try and let it be free from nonsense. Facts, facts, facts. And above all, let it be short. Good-bye."

3

Outside influences, too, had come into play in the matter, however. Pyotr Stepanovitch certainly had some designs on his parent. In my opinion he calculated upon reducing the old man to despair, and so to driving him to some open scandal of a certain sort. This was to serve some remote and quite other object of his own, of which I shall speak hereafter. All sorts of plans and calculations of this kind were swarming in masses in his mind at that time, and almost all, of course, of a fantastic character. He had designs on another victim beside Stepan Trofimovitch. In fact, as appeared afterwards, his victims were not few in number, but this one he reckoned upon particularly, and it was Mr. von Lembke himself.

Andrey Antonovitch von Lembke belonged to that race, so favoured by nature, which is reckoned by hundreds of thousands at the Russian census, and is perhaps unconscious that it forms throughout its whole mass a strictly organised union. And this union, of course, is not planned and premeditated, but exists spontaneously in the whole race, without words or agreements as a moral obligation consisting in mutual support given by all members of the race to one another, at all times and places, and 'Under all circumstances. Andrey Antonovitch had the honour of being educated in one of those more exalted Russian educational institutions which are filled with the youth from families well provided with wealth or connections. Almost immediately on finishing their studies the pupils were appointed to rather important posts in one of the government departments. Andrey Antonovitch had one uncle a colonel of engineers, and another a baker. But he managed to get into this aristocratic school, and met many of his fellow-countrymen in a similar position. He was a good-humoured companion, was rather stupid at his studies, but always popular. And when many of his companions in the upper forms—chiefly Russians—had already learnt to discuss the loftiest modern questions, and looked as though they were only waiting to leave school to settle the affairs of the universe, Andrey Antonovitch was still absorbed in the most innocent schoolboy interests. He amused them all, it is true, by his pranks, which were of a very simple character, at the most a little coarse, but he made it his object to be funny. At one time he would blow his nose in a wonderful way when the professor addressed a question to him, thereby making his schoolfellows and the professor laugh.

Another time, in the dormitory, he would act some indecent living picture, to the general applause, or he would play the overture to "Fra Diavolo" with his nose rather skilfully. He was distinguished, too, by intentional untidiness, thinking this, for some reason, witty. In his very last year at school he began writing Russian poetry.

Of his native language he had only an ungrammatical knowledge, like many of his race in Russia. This turn for versifying drew him to a gloomy and depressed schoolfellow, the son of a poor Russian general, who was considered in the school to be a great future light in literature. The latter patronised him. But it happened that three years after leaving school this melancholy schoolfellow, who had flung up his official career for the sake of Russian literature, and was consequently going about in torn boots, with his teeth chattering with cold, wearing a light summer overcoat in the late autumn, met, one day on the Anitchin bridge, his former protege, "Lembka," as he always used to be called at school. And, what do you suppose? He did not at first recognise him, and stood still in surprise. Before him stood an irreproachably dressed young man with wonderfully well-kept whiskers of a reddish hue, with pince-nez, with patent-leather boots, and the freshest of gloves, in a full overcoat from Sharmer's, and with a portfolio under his arm. Lembke was cordial to his old schoolfellow, gave him his address, and begged him to come and see him some evening. It appeared, too, that he was by now not "Lembka" but "Von Lembke." The schoolfellow came to see him, however, simply from malice perhaps. On the staircase, which was covered with red felt and was rather ugly and by no means smart, he was met and questioned by the house-porter. A bell rang loudly upstairs. But instead of the wealth which the visitor expected, he found Lembke in a very little side-room, which had a dark and dilapidated appearance, partitioned into two by a large dark green curtain, and furnished with very old though comfortable furniture, with dark green blinds on high narrow windows. Von Lembke lodged in the house of a very distant relation, a general who was his patron. He met his visitor cordially, was serious and exquisitely polite. They talked of literature, too, but kept within the bounds of decorum. A manservant in a white tie brought them some weak tea and little dry, round biscuits. The schoolfellow, from spite, asked for some seltzer water. It was given him, but after some delays, and Lembke was somewhat embarrassed at having to summon the footman a second time and give him orders. But of himself he asked his visitor whether he would like some supper, and was obviously relieved when he refused and went away. In short, Lembke was making his career, and was living in dependence on his fellow-countryman, the influential general.

He was at that time sighing for the general's fifth daughter, and it seemed to him that his feeling was reciprocated. But Amalia was none the less married in due time to an elderly factory-owner, a German, and an old comrade of the general's. Andrey Antonovitch did not shed many tears, but made a paper theatre. The curtain drew up, the actors came in, and gesticulated with their arms. There were spectators in the boxes, the orchestra moved their bows across their fiddles by machinery, the conductor waved his baton, and in the stalls officers and dandies clapped their hands. It was all

made of cardboard, it was all thought out and executed by Lembke himself. He spent six months over this theatre. The general arranged a friendly party on purpose. The theatre was exhibited, all the general's five daughters, including the newly married Amalia with her factory-owner, numerous fraus and frauleins with their men folk, attentively examined and admired the theatre, after which they danced. Lembke was much gratified and was quickly consoled.

The years passed by and his career was secured. He always obtained good posts and always under chiefs of his own race; and he worked his way up at last to a very fine position for a man of his age. He had, for a long time, been wishing to marry and looking about him carefully. Without the knowledge of his superiors he had sent a novel to the editor of a magazine, but it had not been accepted. On the other hand, he cut out a complete toy railway, and again his creation was most successful. Passengers came on to the platform with bags and portmanteaux, with dogs and children, and got into the carriages. The guards and porters moved away, the bell was rung, the signal was given, and the train started off. He was a whole year busy over this clever contrivance. But he had to get married all the same. The circle of his acquaintance was fairly wide, chiefly in the world of his compatriots, but his duties brought him into Russian spheres also, of course. Finally, when he was in his thirty-ninth year, he came in for a legacy. His uncle the baker died, and left him thirteen thousand roubles in his will. The one thing needful was a suitable post. In spite of the rather elevated style of his surroundings in the service, Mr. von Lembke was a very modest man. He would have been perfectly satisfied with some independent little government post, with the right to as much government timber as he liked, or something snug of that sort, and he would have been content all his life long. But now, instead of the Minna or Ernestine he had expected, Yulia Mihailovna suddenly appeared on the scene. His career was instantly raised to a more elevated plane. The modest and precise man felt that he too was capable of ambition.

Yulia Mihailovna had a fortune of two hundred serfs, to reckon in the old style, and she had besides powerful friends. On the other hand Lembke was handsome, and she was already over forty. It is remarkable that he fell genuinely in love with her by degrees as he became more used to being betrothed to her. On the morning of his wedding day he sent her a poem. She liked all this very much, even the poem; it's no joke to be forty. He was very quickly raised to a certain grade and received a certain order of distinction, and then was appointed governor of our province.

Before coming to us Yulia Mihailovna worked hard at moulding her husband. In her opinion he was not without abilities, he knew how to make an entrance and to appear to advantage, he understood how to listen and be silent with profundity, had acquired a quite distinguished deportment, could make a speech, indeed had even some odds and ends of thought, and had caught the necessary gloss of modern liberalism. What worried her, however, was that he was not very open to new ideas, and after the long, everlasting plodding for a career, was unmistakably beginning to feel the need of repose. She tried to infect him with her own ambition, and he suddenly began making

a toy church: the pastor came out to preach the sermon, the congregation listened with their hands before them, one lady was drying her tears with her handkerchief, one old gentleman was blowing his nose; finally the organ pealed forth. It had been ordered from Switzerland, and made expressly in spite of all expense. Yulia Mihailovna, in positive alarm, carried off the whole structure as soon as she knew about it, and locked it up in a box in her own room. To make up for it she allowed him to write a novel on condition of its being kept secret. From that time she began to reckon only upon herself. Unhappily there was a good deal of shallowness and lack of judgment in her attitude. Destiny had kept her too long an old maid. Now one idea after another fluttered through her ambitious and rather over-excited brain. She cherished designs, she positively desired to rule the province, dreamed of becoming at once the centre of a circle, adopted political sympathies. Von Lembke was actually a little alarmed, though, with his official tact, he quickly divined that he had no need at all to be uneasy about the government of the province itself. The first two or three months passed indeed very satisfactorily. But now Pyotr Stepanovitch had turned up, and something queer began to happen.

The fact was that young Verhovensky, from the first step, had displayed a flagrant lack of respect for Andrey Antonovitch, and had assumed a strange right to dictate to him; while Yulia Mihailovna, who had always till then been so jealous of her husband's dignity, absolutely refused to notice it; or, at any rate, attached no consequence to it. The young man became a favourite, ate, drank, and almost slept in the house. Von Lembke tried to defend himself, called him "young man" before other people, and slapped him patronisingly on the shoulder, but made no impression. Pyotr Stepanovitch always seemed to be laughing in his face even when he appeared on the surface to be talking seriously to him, and he would say the most startling things to him before company. Returning home one day he found the young man had installed himself in his study and was asleep on the sofa there, uninvited. He explained that he had come in, and finding no one at home had "had a good sleep."

Von Lembke was offended and again complained to his wife. Laughing at his irritability she observed tartly that he evidently did not know how to keep up his own dignity; and that with her, anyway, "the boy" had never permitted himself any undue familiarity, "he was naive and fresh indeed, though not regardful of the conventions of society." Von Lembke sulked. This time she made peace between them. Pyotr Stepanovitch did not go so far as to apologise, but got out of it with a coarse jest, which might at another time have been taken for a fresh offence, but was accepted on this occasion as a token of repentance. The weak spot in Andrey Antonovitch's position was that he had blundered in the first instance by divulging the secret of his novel to him. Imagining him to be an ardent young man of poetic feeling and having long dreamed of securing a listener, he had, during the early days of their acquaintance, on one occasion read aloud two chapters to him. The young man had listened without disguising his boredom, had rudely yawned, had vouchsafed no word of praise; but on leaving had asked for the manuscript that he might form an opinion of it at his leisure, and Andrey

Antonovitch had given it him. He had not returned the manuscript since, though he dropped in every day, and had turned off all inquiries with a laugh. Afterwards he declared that he had lost it in the street. At the time Yulia Mihailovna was terribly angry with her husband when she heard of it.

“Perhaps you told him about the church too?” she burst out almost in dismay.

Von Lembke unmistakably began to brood, and brooding was bad for him, and had been forbidden by the doctors. Apart from the fact that there were signs of trouble in the province, of which we will speak later, he had private reasons for brooding, his heart was wounded, not merely his official dignity. When Andrey Antonovitch had entered upon married life, he had never conceived the possibility of conjugal strife, or dissension in the future. It was inconsistent with the dreams he had cherished all his life of his Minna or Ernestine. He felt that he was unequal to enduring domestic storms. Yulia Mihailovna had an open explanation with him at last.

“You can’t be angry at this,” she said, “if only because you’ve still as much sense as he has, and are immeasurably higher in the social scale. The boy still preserves many traces of his old free-thinking habits; I believe it’s simply mischief; but one can do nothing suddenly, in a hurry; you must do things by degrees. We must make much of our young people; I treat them with affection and hold them back from the brink.”

“But he says such dreadful things,” Von Lembke objected. “I can’t behave tolerantly when he maintains in my presence and before other people that the government purposely drenches the people with vodka in order to brutalise them, and so keep them from revolution. Fancy my position when I’m forced to listen to that before every one.”

As he said this, Von Lembke recalled a conversation he had recently had with Pyotr Stepanovitch. With the innocent object of displaying his Liberal tendencies he had shown him his own private collection of every possible kind of manifesto, Russian and foreign, which he had carefully collected since the year 1859, not simply from a love of collecting but from a laudable interest in them. Pyotr Stepanovitch, seeing his object, expressed the opinion that there was more sense in one line of some manifestoes than in a whole government department, “not even excluding yours, maybe.”

Lembke winced.

“But this is premature among us, premature,” he pronounced almost imploringly, pointing to the manifestoes.

“No, it’s not premature; you see you’re afraid, so it’s not premature.”

“But here, for instance, is an incitement to destroy churches.”

“And why not? You’re a sensible man, and of course you don’t believe in it yourself, but you know perfectly well that you need religion to brutalise the people. Truth is honester than falsehood... .”

“I agree, I agree, I quite agree with you, but it is premature, premature in this country ...” said Von Lembke, frowning.

“And how can you be an official of the government after that, when you agree to demolishing churches, and marching on Petersburg armed with staves, and make it all simply a question of date?”

Lembke was greatly put out at being so crudely caught.

“It’s not so, not so at all,” he cried, carried away and more and more mortified in his amour-propre. “You’re young, and know nothing of our aims, and that’s why you’re mistaken. You see, my dear Pyotr Stepanovitch, you call us officials of the government, don’t you? Independent officials, don’t you? But let me ask you, how are we acting? Ours is the responsibility, but in the long run we serve the cause of progress just as you do. We only hold together what you are unsettling, and what, but for us, would go to pieces in all directions. We are not your enemies, not a bit of it. We say to you, go forward, progress, you may even unsettle things, that is, things that are antiquated and in need of reform. But we will keep you, when need be, within necessary limits, and so save you from yourselves, for without us you would set Russia tottering, robbing her of all external decency, while our task is to preserve external decency. Understand that we are mutually essential to one another. In England the Whigs and Tories are in the same way mutually essential to one another. Well, you’re Whigs and we’re Tories. That’s how I look at it.”

Andrey Antonovitch rose to positive eloquence. He had been fond of talking in a Liberal and intellectual style even in Petersburg, and the great thing here was that there was no one to play the spy on him.

Pyotr Stepanovitch was silent, and maintained an unusually grave air. This excited the orator more than ever.

“Do you know that I, the ‘person responsible for the province,’” he went on, walking about the study, “do you know I have so many duties I can’t perform one of them, and, on the other hand, I can say just as truly that there’s nothing for me to do here. The whole secret of it is, that everything depends upon the views of the government. Suppose the government were ever to found a republic, from policy, or to pacify public excitement, and at the same time to increase the power of the governors, then we governors would swallow up the republic; and not the republic only. Anything you like we’ll swallow up. I, at least, feel that I am ready. In one word, if the government dictates to me by telegram, *activite devorante*, I’ll supply *activite devorante*. I’ve told them here straight in their faces: ‘Dear sirs, to maintain the equilibrium and to develop all the provincial institutions one thing is essential; the increase of the power of the governor.’ You see it’s necessary that all these institutions, the *zemstvos*, the law-courts, should have a two-fold existence, that is, on the one hand, it’s necessary they should exist (I agree that it is necessary), on the other hand, it’s necessary that they shouldn’t. It’s all according to the views of the government. If the mood takes them so that institutions seem suddenly necessary, I shall have them at once in readiness. The necessity passes and no one will find them under my rule. That’s what I understand by *activite devorante*, and you can’t have it without an increase of the governor’s power. We’re talking *tete-a-tete*. You know I’ve already laid before the government in Petersburg the necessity of a special sentinel before the governor’s house. I’m awaiting an answer.”

“You ought to have two,” Pyotr Stepanovitch commented.

“Why two?” said Von Lembke, stopping short before him.

“One’s not enough to create respect for you. You certainly ought to have two.”

Andrey Antonovitch made a wry face.

“You ... there’s no limit to the liberties you take, Pyotr Stepanovitch. You take advantage of my good-nature, you say cutting things, and play the part of a *bourru bienfaisant*... .”

“Well, that’s as you please,” muttered Pyotr Stepanovitch; “anyway you pave the way for us and prepare for our success.”

“Now, who are ‘we,’ and what success?” said Von Lembke, staring at him in surprise. But he got no answer.

Yulia Mihailovna, receiving a report of the conversation, was greatly displeased.

“But I can’t exercise my official authority upon your favourite,” Andrey Antonovitch protested in self-defence, “especially when we’re *tete-a-tete*... . I may say too much ... in the goodness of my heart.”

“From too much goodness of heart. I didn’t know you’d got a collection of manifestoes. Be so good as to show them to me.”

“But ... he asked to have them for one day.”

“And you’ve let him have them, again!” cried Yulia Mihailovna getting angry. “How tactless!”

“I’ll send some one to him at once to get them.”

“He won’t give them up.”

“I’ll insist on it,” cried Von Lembke, boiling over, and he jumped up from his seat. “Who’s he that we should be so afraid of him, and who am I that I shouldn’t dare to do any thing?”

“Sit down and calm yourself,” said Yulia Mihailovna, checking him. “I will answer your first question. He came to me with the highest recommendations. He’s talented, and sometimes says extremely clever things. Karmazinov tells me that he has connections almost everywhere, and extraordinary influence over the younger generation in Petersburg and Moscow. And if through him I can attract them all and group them round myself, I shall be saving them from perdition by guiding them into a new outlet for their ambitions. He’s devoted to me with his whole heart and is guided by me in everything.”

“But while they’re being petted ... the devil knows what they may not do. Of course, it’s an idea ...” said Von Lembke, vaguely defending himself, “but ... but here I’ve heard that manifestoes of some sort have been found in X district.”

“But there was a rumour of that in the summer—manifestoes, false bank-notes, and all the rest of it, but they haven’t found one of them so far. Who told you?”

“I heard it from Von Blum.”

“Ah, don’t talk to me of your Blum. Don’t ever dare mention him again!”

Yulia Mihailovna flew into a rage, and for a moment could not speak. Von Blum was a clerk in the governor’s office whom she particularly hated. Of that later.

“Please don’t worry yourself about Verhovensky,” she said in conclusion. “If he had taken part in any mischief he wouldn’t talk as he does to you, and every one else here. Talkers are not dangerous, and I will even go so far as to say that if anything were to happen I should be the first to hear of it through him. He’s quite fanatically devoted to me.”

I will observe, anticipating events that, had it not been for Tulia Mihailovna’s obstinacy and self-conceit, probably nothing of all the mischief these wretched people succeeded in bringing about amongst us would have happened. She was responsible for a great deal

Chapter 5: On the Eve Op the Fete

1

The date of the fete which Yulia Mihailovna was getting up for the benefit of the governesses of our province had been several times fixed and put off. She had invariably bustling round her Pyotr Stepanovitch and a little clerk, Lyamshin, who used at one time to visit Stepan Trofimovitch, and had suddenly found favour in the governor’s house for the way he played the piano and now was of use running errands. Liputin was there a good deal too, and Yulia Mihailovna destined him to be the editor of a new independent provincial paper. There were also several ladies, married and single, and lastly, even Karmazinov who, though he could not be said to bustle, announced aloud with a complacent air that he would agreeably astonish every one when the literary quadrille began. An extraordinary multitude of donors and subscribers had turned up, all the select society of the town; but even the unselect were admitted, if only they produced the cash. Yulia Mihailovna observed that sometimes it was a positive duty to allow the mixing of classes, “for otherwise who is to enlighten them?”

A private drawing-room committee was formed, at which it was decided that the fete was to be of a democratic character. The enormous list of subscriptions tempted them to lavish expenditure. They wanted to do something on a marvellous scale—that’s why it was put off. They were still undecided where the ball was to take place, whether in the immense house belonging to the marshal’s wife, which she was willing to give up to them for the day, or at Varvara Petrovna’s mansion at Skvoreshniki. It was rather a distance to Skvoreshniki, but many of the committee were of opinion that it would be “freer” there. Varvara Petrovna would dearly have liked it to have been in her house. It’s difficult to understand why this proud woman seemed almost making up to Yulia Mihailovna. Probably what pleased her was that the latter in her turn seemed almost fawning upon Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and was more gracious to him than to anyone. I repeat again that Pyotr Stepanovitch was always, in continual whispers, strengthening in the governor’s household an idea he had insinuated there already, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was a man who had very mysterious connections with very

mysterious circles, and that he had certainly come here with some commission from them.

People here seemed in a strange state of mind at the time. Among the ladies especially a sort of frivolity was conspicuous, and it could not be said to be a gradual growth. Certain very free-and-easy notions seemed to be in the air. There was a sort of dissipated gaiety and levity, and I can't say it was always quite pleasant. A lax way of thinking was the fashion. Afterwards when it was all over, people blamed Yulia Mihailovna, her circle, her attitude. But it can hardly have been altogether due to Yulia Mihailovna. On the contrary; at first many people vied with one another in praising the new governor's wife for her success in bringing local society together, and for making things more lively. Several scandalous incidents took place, for which Yulia Mihailovna was in no way responsible, but at the time people were amused and did nothing but laugh, and there was no one to check them. A rather large group of people, it is true, held themselves aloof, and had views of their own on the course of events. But even these made no complaint at the time; they smiled, in fact.

I remember that a fairly large circle came into existence, as it were, spontaneously, the centre of which perhaps was really to be found in Yulia Mihailovna's drawing-room. In this intimate circle which surrounded her, among the younger members of it, of course, it was considered admissible to play all sorts of pranks, sometimes rather free-and-easy ones, and, in fact, such conduct became a principle among them. In this circle there were even some very charming ladies. The young people arranged picnics, and even parties, and sometimes went about the town in a regular cavalcade, in carriages and on horseback. They sought out adventures, even got them up themselves, simply for the sake of having an amusing story to tell. They treated our town as though it were a sort of Glupov. People called them the jeerers or sneerers, because they did not stick at anything. It happened, for instance, that the wife of a local lieutenant, a little brunette, very young though she looked worn out from her husband's ill-treatment, at an evening party thoughtlessly sat down to play whist for high stakes in the fervent hope of winning enough to buy herself a mantle, and instead of winning, lost fifteen roubles. Being afraid of her husband, and having no means of paying, she plucked up the courage of former days and ventured on the sly to ask for a loan, on the spot, at the party, from the son of our mayor, a very nasty youth, precociously vicious. The latter not only refused it, but went laughing aloud to tell her husband. The lieutenant, who certainly was poor, with nothing but his salary, took his wife home and avenged himself upon her to his heart's content in spite of her shrieks, wails, and entreaties on her knees for forgiveness. This revolting story excited nothing but mirth all over the town, and though the poor wife did not belong to Yulia Mihailovna's circle, one of the ladies of the "cavalcade," an eccentric and adventurous character who happened to know her, drove round, and simply carried her off to her own house. Here she was at once taken up by our madcaps, made much of, loaded with presents, and kept for four days without being sent back to her husband. She stayed at the adventurous lady's all day long, drove about with her and all the sportive company in expeditions about

the town, and took part in dances and merry-making. They kept egging her on to haul her husband before the court and to make a scandal. They declared that they would all support her and would come and bear witness. The husband kept quiet, not daring to oppose them. The poor thing realised at last that she had got into a hopeless position and, more dead than alive with fright, on the fourth day she ran off in the dusk from her protectors to her lieutenant. It's not definitely known what took place between husband and wife, but two shutters of the low-pitched little house in which the lieutenant lodged were not opened for a fortnight. Yulia Mihailovna was angry with the mischief-makers when she heard about it all, and was greatly displeased with the conduct of the adventurous lady, though the latter had presented the lieutenant's wife to her on the day she carried her off. However, this was soon forgotten.

Another time a petty clerk, a respectable head of a family, married his daughter, a beautiful girl of seventeen, known to every one in the town, to another petty clerk, a young man who came from a different district. But suddenly it was learned that the young husband had treated the beauty very roughly on the wedding night, chastising her for what he regarded as a stain on his honour. Lyamshin, who was almost a witness of the affair, because he got drunk at the wedding and so stayed the night, as soon as day dawned, ran round with the diverting intelligence.

Instantly a party of a dozen was made up, all of them on horseback, some on hired Cossack horses, Pyotr Stepanovitch, for instance, and Liputin, who, in spite of his grey hairs, took part in almost every scandalous adventure of our reckless youngsters. When the young couple appeared in the street in a droshky with a pair of horses to make the calls which are obligatory in our town on the day after a wedding, in spite of anything that may happen, the whole cavalcade, with merry laughter, surrounded the droshky and followed them about the town all the morning. They did not, it's true, go into the house, but waited for them outside, on horseback. They refrained from marked insult to the bride or bridegroom, but still they caused a scandal. The whole town began talking of it. Every one laughed, of course. But at this Von Lembke was angry, and again had a lively scene with Yulia Mihailovna. She, too, was extremely angry, and formed the intention of turning the scapegraces out of her house. But next day she forgave them all after persuasions from Pyotr Stepanovitch and some words from Karmazinov, who considered the affair rather amusing.

"It's in harmony with the traditions of the place," he said. "Anyway it's characteristic and ... bold; and look, every one's laughing, you're the only person indignant."

But there were pranks of a certain character that were absolutely past endurance.

A respectable woman of the artisan class, who went about selling gospels, came into the town. People talked about her, because some interesting references to these gospel women had just appeared in the Petersburg Capers. Again the same buffoon, Lyamshin, with the help of a divinity student, who was taking a holiday while waiting for a post in the school, succeeded, on the pretence of buying books from the gospel woman, in thrusting into her bag a whole bundle of indecent and obscene photographs from abroad, sacrificed expressly for the purpose, as we learned afterwards, by a highly

respectable old gentleman (I will omit his name) with an order on his breast, who, to use his own words, loved “a healthy laugh and a merry jest.” When the poor woman went to take out the holy books in the bazaar, the photographs were scattered about the place. There were roars of laughter and murmurs of indignation. A crowd collected, began abusing her, and would have come to blows if the police had not arrived in the nick of time. The gospel woman was taken to the lock-up, and only in the evening, thanks to the efforts of Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had learned with indignation the secret details of this loathsome affair, she was released and escorted out of the town. At this point Yulia Mihailovna would certainly have forbidden Lyamshin her house, but that very evening the whole circle brought him to her with the intelligence that he had just composed a new piece for the piano, and persuaded her at least to hear it. The piece turned out to be really amusing, and bore the comic title of “The Franco-Prussian War.” It began with the menacing strains of the “Marseillaise “:

“Qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.”

There is heard the pompous challenge, the intoxication of future victories. But suddenly mingling with the masterly variations on the national hymn, somewhere from some corner quite close, on one side come the vulgar strains of “Mein lieber Augustin.” The “Marseillaise” goes on unconscious of them. The “Marseillaise” is at the climax of its intoxication with its own grandeur; but Augustin gains strength; Augustin grows more and more insolent, and suddenly the melody of Augustin begins to blend with the melody of the “Marseillaise.” The latter begins, as it were, to get angry; becoming aware of Augustin at last she tries to fling him off, to brush him aside like a tiresome insignificant fly. But “Mein lieber Augustin” holds his ground firmly, he is cheerful and self-confident, he is gleeful and impudent, and the “Marseillaise” seems suddenly to become terribly” stupid. She can no longer conceal her anger and mortification; it is a wail of indignation, tears, and curses, with hands outstretched to Providence.

“Pas un police de noire, terrain; pas une de nos forteresses.”

But she is forced to sing in time with “Mein lieber Augustin.” Her melody passes in a sort of foolish way into Augustin; she yields and dies away. And only by snatches there is heard again:

“Qu’un sang impur ...”

But at once it passes very offensively into the vulgar waltz. She submits altogether. It is Jules Favre sobbing on Bismarck’s bosom and surrendering every thing... . But at this point Augustin too grows fierce; hoarse sounds are heard; there is a suggestion of countless gallons of beer, of a frenzy of self-glorification, demands for millions, for fine cigars, champagne, and hostages. Augustin passes into a wild yell... . “The Franco-Prussian War” is over. Our circle applauded, Yulia Mihailovna smiled, and said, “Now, how is one to turn him out?” Peace was made. The rascal really had talent. Stepan Trofimovitch assured me on one occasion that the very highest artistic talents may exist in the most abominable blackguards, and that the one thing does not interfere with the other. There was a rumour afterwards that Lyamshin had stolen this burlesque from a talented and modest young man of his acquaintance, whose name remained

unknown. But this is beside the mark. This worthless fellow who had hung about Stepan Trofimovitch for years, who used at his evening parties, when invited, to mimic Jews of various types, a deaf peasant woman making her confession, or the birth of a child, now at Yulia Mihailovna's caricatured Stepan Trofimovitch himself in a killing way, under the title of "A Liberal of the Forties." Everybody shook with laughter, so that in the end it was quite impossible to turn him out: he had become too necessary a person. Besides he fawned upon Pyotr Stepanovitch in a slavish way, and he, in his turn, had obtained by this time a strange and unaccountable influence over Yulia Mihailovna.

I wouldn't have talked about this scoundrel, and, indeed, he would not be worth dwelling upon, but there was another revolting story, so people declare, in which he had a hand, and this story I cannot omit from my record.

One morning the news of a hideous and revolting sacrilege was all over the town. At the entrance to our immense marketplace there stands the ancient church of Our Lady's Nativity, which was a remarkable antiquity in our ancient town. At the gates of the precincts there is a large ikon of the Mother of God fixed behind a grating in the wall. And behold, one night the ikon had been robbed, the glass of the case was broken, the grating was smashed and several stones and pearls (I don't know whether they were very precious ones) had been removed from the crown and the setting. But what was worse, besides the theft a senseless, scoffing sacrilege had been perpetrated. Behind the broken glass of the ikon they found in the morning, so it was said, a live mouse. Now, four months since, it has been established beyond doubt that the crime was committed by the convict Fedka, but for some reason it is added that Lyamshin took part in it. At the time no one spoke of Lyamshin or had any suspicion of him. But now every one says it was he who put the mouse there. I remember all our responsible officials were rather staggered. A crowd thronged round the scene of the crime from early morning. There was a crowd continually before it, not a very huge one, but always about a hundred people, some coming and some going. As they approached they crossed themselves and bowed down to the ikon. They began to give offerings, and a church dish made its appearance, and with the dish a monk. But it was only about three o'clock in the afternoon it occurred to the authorities that it was possible to prohibit the crowds standing about, and to command them when they had prayed, bowed down and left their offerings, to pass on. Upon Von Lembke this unfortunate incident made the gloomiest impression. As I was told, Yulia Mihailovna said afterwards it was from this ill-omened morning that she first noticed in her husband that strange depression which persisted in him until he left our province on account of illness two months ago, and, I believe, haunts him still in Switzerland, where he has gone for a rest after his brief career amongst us.

I remember at one o'clock in the afternoon I crossed the marketplace; the crowd was silent and their faces solemn and gloomy. A merchant, fat and sallow, drove up, got out of his carriage, made a bow to the ground, kissed the ikon, offered a rouble, sighing, got back into his carriage and drove off. Another carriage drove up with two

ladies accompanied by two of our scapegraces. The young people (one of whom was not quite young) got out of their carriage too, and squeezed their way up to the ikon, pushing people aside rather carelessly. Neither of the young men took off his hat, and one of them put a pince-nez on his nose. In the crowd there was a murmur, vague but unfriendly. The dandy with the pince-nez took out of his purse, which was stuffed full of bank-notes, a copper farthing and flung it into the dish. Both laughed, and, talking loudly, went back to their carriage. At that moment Lizaveta Nikolaevna galloped up, escorted by Mavriky Nikolaevitch. She jumped off her horse, flung the reins to her companion, who, at her bidding, remained on his horse, and approached the ikon at the very moment when the farthing had been flung down. A flush of indignation suffused her cheeks; she took off her round hat and her gloves, fell straight on her knees before the ikon on the muddy pavement, and reverently bowed down three times to the earth. Then she took out her purse, but as it appeared she had only a few small coins in it she instantly took off her diamond ear-rings and put them in the dish.

“May I? May I? For the adornment of the setting?” she asked the monk.

“It is permitted,” replied the latter, “every gift is good.” The crowd was silent, expressing neither dissent nor approval.

Liza got on her horse again, in her muddy riding-habit, and galloped away.

2

Two days after the incident I have described I met her in a numerous company, who were driving out on some expedition in three coaches, surrounded by others on horseback. She beckoned to me, stopped her carriage, and pressingly urged me to join their party. A place was found for me in the carriage, and she laughingly introduced me to her companions, gorgeously attired ladies, and explained to me that they were all going on a very interesting expedition. She was laughing, and seemed somewhat excessively happy. Just lately she had been very lively, even playful, in fact.

The expedition was certainly an eccentric one. They were all going to a house the other side of the river, to the merchant Sevastyanov's. In the lodge of this merchant's house our saint and prophet, Semyon Yakovlevitch, who was famous not only amongst us but in the surrounding provinces and even in Petersburg and Moscow, had been living for the last ten years, in retirement, ease, and Comfort. Every one went to see him, especially visitors to the neighbourhood, extracting from him some crazy utterance, bowing down to him, and leaving an offering. These offerings were sometimes considerable, and if Semyon Yakovlevitch did not himself assign them to some other purpose were piously sent to some church or more often to the monastery of Our Lady. A monk from the monastery was always in waiting upon Semyon Yakovlevitch with this object.

All were in expectation of great amusement. No one of the party had seen Semyon Yakovlevitch before, except Lyamshin, who declared that the saint had given orders that he should be driven out with a broom, and had with his own hand flung two big

baked potatoes after him. Among the party I noticed Pyotr Stepanovitch, again riding a hired Cossack horse, on which he sat extremely badly, and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, also on horseback. The latter did not always hold aloof from social diversions, and on such occasions always wore an air of gaiety, although, as always, he spoke little and seldom. When our party had crossed the bridge and reached the hotel of the town, some one suddenly announced that in one of the rooms of the hotel they had just found a traveller who had shot himself, and were expecting the police. At once the suggestion was made that they should go and look at the suicide. The idea met with approval: our ladies had never seen a suicide. I remember one of them said aloud on the occasion, "Everything's so boring, one can't be squeamish over one's amusements, as long as they're interesting." Only a few of them remained outside. The others went in a body into the dirty corridor, and amongst the others I saw, to my amazement, Lizaveta Nikolaevna. The door of the room was open, and they did not, of course, dare to prevent our going in to look at the suicide. He was quite a young lad, not more than nineteen. He must have been very good-looking, with thick fair hair, with a regular oval face, and a fine, pure forehead. The body was already stiff, and his white young face looked like marble. On the table lay a note, in his handwriting, to the effect that no one was to blame for his death, that he had killed himself because he had "squandered" four hundred roubles. The word "squandered" was used in the letter; in the four lines of his letter there were three mistakes in spelling. A stout country gentleman, evidently a neighbour, who had been staying in the hotel on some business of his own, was particularly distressed about it. From his words it appeared that the boy had been sent by his family, that is, a widowed mother, sisters, and aunts, from the country to the town in order that, under the supervision of a female relation in the town, he might purchase and take home with him various articles for the trousseau of his eldest sister, who was going to be married. The family had, with sighs of apprehension, entrusted him with the four hundred roubles, the savings of ten years, and had sent him on his way with exhortations, prayers, and signs of the cross. The boy had till then been well-behaved and trustworthy. Arriving three days before at the town, he had not gone to his relations, had put up at the hotel, and gone straight to the club in the hope of finding in some back room a "travelling banker," or at least some game of cards for money. But that evening there was no "banker" there or gambling going on. Going back to the hotel about midnight he asked for champagne, Havana cigars, and ordered a supper of six or seven dishes. But the champagne made him drunk, and the cigar made him sick, so that he did not touch the food when it was brought to him, and went to bed almost unconscious. Waking next morning as fresh as an apple, he went at once to the gipsies' camp, which was in a suburb beyond the river, and of which he had heard the day before at the club. He did not reappear at the hotel for two days. At last, at five o'clock in the afternoon of the previous day, he had returned drunk, had at once gone to bed, and had slept till ten o'clock in the evening. On waking up he had asked for a cutlet, a bottle of Chateau d'Yquem, and some grapes, paper, and ink, and his bill. No one noticed anything special about him; he was quiet, gentle, and friendly.

He must have shot himself at about midnight, though it was strange that no one had heard the shot, and they only raised the alarm at midday, when, after knocking in vain, they had broken in the door. The bottle of Chateau d'Yquem was half empty, there was half a plateful of grapes left too. The shot had been fired from a little three-chambered revolver, straight into the heart. Very little blood had flowed. The revolver had dropped from his hand on to the carpet. The boy himself was half lying in a corner of the sofa. Death must have been instantaneous. There was no trace of the anguish of death in the face; the expression was serene, almost happy, as though there were no cares in his life. All our party stared at him with greedy curiosity. In every misfortune of one's neighbour there is always something cheering for an onlooker—whoever he may be. Our ladies gazed in silence, their companions distinguished themselves by their wit and their superb equanimity. One observed that his was the best way out of it, and that the boy could not have hit upon anything more sensible; another observed that he had had a good time if only for a moment. A third suddenly blurted out the inquiry why people had begun hanging and shooting themselves among us of late, as though they had suddenly lost their roots, as though the ground were giving way under every one's feet. People looked coldly at this raisonneur. Then Lyamshin, who prided himself on playing the fool, took a bunch of grapes from the plate; another, laughing, followed his example, and a third stretched out his hand for the Chateau d'Yquem. But the head of police arriving checked him, and even ordered that the room should be cleared. As every one had seen all they wanted they went out without disputing, though Lyamshin began pestering the police captain about something. The general merrymaking, laughter, and playful talk were twice as lively on the latter half of the way.

We arrived at Semyon Yakovlevitch's just at one o'clock. The gate of the rather large house stood unfastened, and the approach to the lodge was open. We learnt at once that Semyon Yakovlevitch was dining, but was receiving guests. The whole crowd of us went in. The room in which the saint dined and received visitors had three windows, and was fairly large. It was divided into two equal parts by a wooden lattice-work partition, which ran from wall to wall, and was three or four feet high. Ordinary visitors remained on the outside of this partition, but lucky ones were by the saint's invitation admitted through the partition doors into his half of the room. And if so disposed he made them sit down on the sofa or on his old leather chairs. He himself invariably sat in an old-fashioned shabby Voltaire arm-chair. He was a rather big, bloated-looking, yellow-faced man of five and fifty, with a bald head and scanty flaxen hair. He wore no beard; his right cheek was swollen, and his mouth seemed somehow twisted awry. He had a large wart on the left side of his nose; narrow eyes, and a calm, stolid, sleepy expression. He was dressed in European style, in a black coat, but had no waistcoat or tie. A rather coarse, but white shirt, peeped out below his coat. There was something the matter with his feet, I believe, and he kept them in slippers. I've heard that he had at one time been a clerk, and received a rank in the service. He had just finished some fish soup, and was beginning his second dish

of potatoes in their skins, eaten with salt. He never ate anything else, but he drank a great deal of tea, of which he was very fond. Three servants provided by the merchant were running to and fro about him. One of them was in a swallow-tail, the second looked like a workman, and the third like a verger. There was also a very lively boy of sixteen. Besides the servants there was present, holding a jug, a reverend, grey-headed monk, who was a little too fat. On one of the tables a huge samovar was boiling, and a tray with almost two dozen glasses was standing near it. On another table opposite offerings had been placed: some loaves and also some pounds of sugar, two pounds of tea, a pair of embroidered slippers, a foulard handkerchief, a length of cloth, a piece of linen, and so on. Money offerings almost all went into the monk's jug. The room was full of people, at least a dozen visitors, of whom two were sitting with Semyon Yakovlevitch on the other side of the partition. One was a grey-headed old pilgrim of the peasant class, and the other a little, dried-up monk, who sat demurely, with his eyes cast down. The other visitors were all standing on the near side of the partition, and were mostly, too, of the peasant class, except one elderly and poverty-stricken lady, one landowner, and a stout merchant, who had come from the district town, a man with a big beard, dressed in the Russian style, though he was known to be worth a hundred thousand.

All were waiting for their chance, not daring to speak of themselves. Four were on their knees, but the one who attracted most attention was the landowner, a stout man of forty-five, kneeling right at the partition, more conspicuous than any one, waiting reverently for a propitious word or look from Semyon Yakovlevitch. He had been there for about an hour already, but the saint still did not notice him.

Our ladies crowded right up to the partition, whispering gaily and laughingly together. They pushed aside or got in front of all the other visitors, even those on their knees, except the landowner, who remained obstinately in his prominent position even holding on to the partition. Merry and greedily inquisitive eyes were turned upon Semyon Yakovlevitch, as well as lorgnettes, pince-nez, and even opera-glasses. Lyamshin, at any rate, looked through an opera-glass. Semyon Yakovlevitch calmly and lazily scanned all with his little eyes.

"Milovzors! Milovzors!" he deigned to pronounce, in a hoarse bass, and slightly staccato.

All our party laughed: "What's the meaning of 'Milovzors'?" But Semyon Yakovlevitch relapsed into silence, and finished his potatoes. Presently he wiped his lips with his napkin, and they handed him tea.

As a rule, he did not take tea alone, but poured out some for his visitors, but by no means for all, usually pointing himself to those he wished to honour. And his choice always surprised people by its unexpectedness. Passing by the wealthy and the high-placed, he sometimes pitched upon a peasant or some decrepit old woman. Another time he would pass over the beggars to honour some fat wealthy merchant. Tea was served differently, too, to different people, sugar was put into some of the glasses and handed separately with others, while some got it without any sugar at all. This time

the favoured one was the monk sitting by him, who had sugar put in; and the old pilgrim, to whom it was given without any sugar. The fat monk with the jug, from the monastery, for some reason had none handed to him at all, though up till then he had had his glass every day.

“Semyon Yakovlevitch, do say something to me. I’ve been longing to make your acquaintance for ever so long,” carolled the gorgeously dressed lady from our carriage, screwing up her eyes and smiling. She was the lady who had observed that one must not be squeamish about one’s amusements, so long as they were interesting. Semyon Yakovlevitch did not even look at her. The kneeling landowner uttered a deep, sonorous sigh, like the sound of a big pair of bellows.

“With sugar in it!” said Semyon Yakovlevitch suddenly, pointing to the wealthy merchant. The latter moved forward and stood beside the kneeling gentleman.

“Some more sugar for him!” ordered Semyon Yakovlevitch, after the glass had already been poured out. They put some more in. “More, more, for him!” More was put in a third time, and again a fourth. The merchant began submissively drinking his syrup.

“Heavens!” whispered the people, crossing themselves. The kneeling gentleman again heaved a deep, sonorous sigh.

“Father! Semyon Yakovlevitch!” The voice of the poor lady rang out all at once plaintively, though so sharply that it was startling. Our party had shoved her back to the wall. “A whole hour, dear father, I’ve been waiting for grace. Speak to me. Consider my case in my helplessness.”

“Ask her,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch to the verger, who went to the partition.

“Have you done what Semyon Yakovlevitch bade you last time?” he asked the widow in a soft and measured voice.

“Done it! Father Semyon Yakovlevitch. How can one do it with them?” wailed the widow. “They’re cannibals; they’re lodging a complaint against me, in the court; they threaten to take it to the senate. That’s how they treat their own mother!”

“Give her!” Semyon Yakovlevitch pointed to a sugar-loaf. The boy skipped up, seized the sugar-loaf and dragged it to the widow.

“Ach, father; great is your merciful kindness. What am I to do with so much?” wailed the widow.

“More, more,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch lavishly.

They dragged her another sugar-loaf. “More, more!” the saint commanded. They took her a third, and finally a fourth. The widow was surrounded with sugar on all sides. The monk from the monastery sighed; all this might have gone to the monastery that day as it had done on former occasions.

“What am I to do with so much,” the widow sighed obsequiously. “It’s enough to make one person sick! ... Is it some sort of a prophecy, father?”

“Be sure it’s by way of a prophecy,” said some one in the crowd.

“Another pound for her, another!” Semyon Yakovlevitch persisted.

There was a whole sugar-loaf still on the table, but the saint ordered a pound to be given, and they gave her a pound.

“Lord have mercy on us!” gasped the people, crossing themselves. “It’s surely a prophecy.”

“Sweeten your heart for the future with mercy and loving kindness, and then come to make complaints against your own children; bone of your bone. That’s what we must take this emblem to mean,” the stout monk from the monastery, who had had no tea given to him, said softly but self-complacently, taking upon himself the role of interpreter in an access of wounded vanity.

“What are you saying, father?” cried the widow, suddenly infuriated. “Why, they dragged me into the fire with a rope round me when the Verhishins’ house was burnt, and they locked up a dead cat in my chest. They are ready to do any villainy... .”

“Away with her! Away with her!” Semyon Yakovlevitch said suddenly, waving his hands.

The verger and the boy dashed through the partition. The verger took the widow by the arm, and without resisting she trailed to the door, keeping her eyes fixed _ on the loaves of sugar that had been bestowed on her, which the boy dragged after her.

“One to be taken away. Take it away,” Semyon Yakovlevitch commanded to the servant like a workman, who remained with him. The latter rushed after the retreating woman, and the three servants returned somewhat later bringing back one loaf of sugar which had been presented to the widow and now taken away from her. She carried off three, however.

“Semyon Yakovlevitch,” said a voice at the door. “I dreamt of a bird, a jackdaw; it flew out of the water and flew into the fire. What does the dream mean?”

“Frost,” Semyon Yakovlevitch pronounced.

“Semyon Yakovlevitch, why don’t you answer me all this time? I’ve been interested in you ever so long,” the lady of our party began again.

“Ask him!” said Semyon Yakovlevitch, not heeding her, but pointing to the kneeling gentleman.

The monk from the monastery to whom the order was given moved sedately to the kneeling figure.

“How have you sinned? And was not some command laid upon you?”

“Not to fight; not to give the rein to my hands,” answered the kneeling gentleman hoarsely.

“Have you obeyed?” asked the monk.

“I cannot obey. My own strength gets the better of me.”

“Away with him, away with him! With a broom, with a broom!” cried Semyon Yakovlevitch, waving his hands. The gentleman rushed out of the room without waiting for this penalty.

“He’s left a gold piece where he knelt,” observed the monk, picking up a half-imperial.

“For him!” said the saint, pointing to the rich merchant. The latter dared not refuse it, and took it.

“Gold to gold,” the monk from the monastery could not refrain from saying.

“And give him some with sugar in it,” said the saint, pointing to Mavriky Nikolaevitch. The servant poured out the tea and took it by mistake to the dandy with the pince-nez.

“The long one, the long one!” Semyon Yakovlevitch corrected him.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch took the glass, made a military half-bow, and began drinking it. I don’t know why, but all our party burst into peals of laughter.

“Mavriky Nikolaevitch,” cried Liza, addressing him suddenly. “That kneeling gentleman has gone away. You kneel down in his place.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch looked at her in amazement.

“I beg you to. You’ll do me the greatest favour. Listen, Mavriky Nikolaevitch,” she went on, speaking in an emphatic, obstinate, excited, and rapid voice. “You must kneel down; I must see you kneel down. If you won’t, don’t come near me. I insist, I insist!”

I don’t know what she meant by it; but she insisted upon it relentlessly, as though she were in a fit. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, as we shall see later, set down these capricious impulses, which had been particularly frequent of late, to outbreaks of blind hatred for him, not due to spite, for, on the contrary, she esteemed him, loved him, and respected him, and he knew that himself— but from a peculiar unconscious hatred which at times she could not control.

In silence he gave his cup to an old woman standing behind him, opened the door of the partition, and, without being invited, stepped into Semyon Yakovlevitch’s private apartment, and knelt down in the middle of the room in sight of all. I imagine that he was deeply shocked in his candid and delicate heart by Liza’s coarse and mocking freak before the whole company. Perhaps he imagined that she would feel ashamed of herself, seeing his humiliation, on which she had so insisted. Of course no one but he would have dreamt of bringing a woman to reason by so naive and risky a proceeding. He remained kneeling with his imperturbable gravity—long, tall, awkward, and ridiculous. But our party did not laugh. The unexpectedness of the action produced a painful shock. Every one looked at Liza.

“Anoint, anoint!” muttered Semyon Yakovlevitch.

Liza suddenly turned white, cried out, and rushed through the partition. Then a rapid and hysterical scene followed. She began pulling Mavriky Nikolaevitch up with all her might, tugging at his elbows with both hands.

“Get up! Get up!” she screamed, as though she were crazy. “Get up at once, at once. How dare you?”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch got up from his knees. She clutched his arms above the elbow and looked intently into his face. There was terror in her expression.

“Milovzors! Milovzors!” Semyon Yakovlevitch repeated again.

She dragged Mavriky Nikolaevitch back to the other part of the room at last. There was some commotion in all our company. The lady from our carriage, probably intending to relieve the situation, loudly and shrilly asked the saint for the third time, with an affected smile:

“Well, Semyon Yakovlevitch, won’t you utter some saying for me I I’ve been reckoning so much on you.”

“Out with the——, out with the——,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch, suddenly addressing her, with an extremely indecent word. The words were uttered savagely, and with horrifying distinctness. Our ladies shrieked, and rushed headlong away, while the gentlemen escorting them burst into Homeric laughter. So ended our visit to Semyon Yakovlevitch.

At this point, however, there took place, I am told, an extremely enigmatic incident, and, I must own, it was chiefly on account of it that I have described this expedition so minutely.

I am told that when all knocked out, Liza, supported by Mavriky Nikolaevitch, was jostled against Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch in the crush in the doorway. I must mention that since that Sunday morning when she fainted they had not approached each other, nor exchanged a word, though they had met more than once. I saw them brought together in the doorway. I fancied they both stood still for an instant, and looked, as it were, strangely at one another, but I may not have seen rightly in the crowd. It is asserted, on the contrary, and quite seriously, that Liza, glancing at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, quickly raised her hand to the level of his face, and would certainly have struck him if he had not drawn back in time. Perhaps she was displeased with the expression of his face, or the way he smiled, particularly just after such an episode with Mavriky Nikolaevitch. I must admit I saw nothing myself, but all the others declared they had, though they certainly could not all have seen it in such a crush, though perhaps some may have. But I did not believe it at the time. I remember, however, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was rather pale all the way home.

3

Almost at the same time, and certainly on the same day, the interview at last took place between Stepan Trofimovitch and Varvara Petrovna. She had long had this meeting in her mind, and had sent word about it to her former friend, but for some reason she had kept putting it off till then. It took place at Skvoreshniki: Varvara Petrovna arrived at her country house all in a bustle: it had been definitely decided the evening before that the fete was to take place at the marshal’s, but Varvara Petrovna’s rapid brain at once grasped that no one could prevent her from afterwards giving her own special entertainment at Skvoreshniki, and again assembling the whole town. Then every one could see for themselves whose house was best, and in which more taste was displayed in receiving guests and giving a ball. Altogether she was hardly to be recognised. She seemed completely transformed, and instead of the unapproachable “noble lady” (Stepan Trofimovitch’s expression) seemed changed into the most commonplace, whimsical society woman. But perhaps this may only have been on the surface.

When she reached the empty house she had gone through all the rooms, accompanied by her faithful old butler, Alexey Yegorytch, and by Fomushka, a man who

had seen much of life and was a specialist in decoration. They began to consult and deliberate: what furniture was to be brought from the town house, what things, what pictures, where they were to be put, how the conservatories and flowers could be put to the best use, where to put new curtains, where to have the refreshment rooms, whether one or two, and so on and so on. And, behold, in the midst of this exciting bustle she suddenly took it into her head to send for Stepan Trofimovitch.

The latter had long before received notice of this interview and was prepared for it, and he had every day been expecting just such a sudden summons. As he got into the carriage he crossed himself: his fate was being decided. He found his friend in the big drawing-room on the little sofa in the recess, before a little marble table with a pencil and paper in her hands. Fomushka, with a yard measure, was measuring the height of the galleries and the windows, while Varvara Petrovna herself was writing down the numbers and making notes on the margin. She nodded in Stepan Trofimovitch's direction without breaking off from what she was doing, and when the latter muttered some sort of greeting, she hurriedly gave him her hand, and without looking at him motioned him to a seat beside her.

"I sat waiting for five minutes, 'mastering my heart,'" he told me afterwards. "I saw before me not the woman whom I had known for twenty years. An absolute conviction that all was over gave me a strength which astounded even her. I swear that she was surprised at my stoicism in that last hour."

Varvara Petrovna suddenly put down her pencil on the table and turned quickly to Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Stepan Trofimovitch, we have to talk of business. I'm sure you have prepared all your fervent words and various phrases, but we'd better go straight to the point, hadn't we?"

She had been in too great a hurry to show the tone she meant to take. And what might not come next?

"Wait, be quiet; let me speak. Afterwards you shall, though really I don't know what you can answer me," she said in a rapid patter. "The twelve hundred roubles of your pension I consider a sacred obligation to pay you as long as you live. Though why a sacred obligation, simply a contract; that would be a great deal more real, wouldn't it? If you like, we'll write it out. Special arrangements have been made in case of my death. But you are receiving from me at present lodging, servants, and your maintenance in addition. Reckoning that in money it would amount to fifteen hundred roubles, wouldn't it? I will add another three hundred roubles, making three thousand roubles in all. Will that be enough a year for you? I think that's not too little? In any extreme emergency I would add something more. And so, take your money, send me back my servants, and live by yourself where you like in Petersburg, in Moscow, abroad, or here, only not with me. Do you hear?"

"Only lately those lips dictated to me as imperatively and as suddenly very different demands," said Stepan Trofimovitch slowly and with sorrowful distinctness. "I submitted ... and danced the Cossack dance to please you. Oui, la comparaison peut

etre permise. C'etait comme un petit Cosaque du Don qui sautait sur sa propre tombe. Now ...”

“Stop, Stepan Trofimovitch, you are horribly long-winded. You didn’t dance, but came to see me in a new tie, new linen, gloves, scented and pomatumed. I assure you that you were very anxious to get married yourself; it was written on your face, and I assure you a most unseemly expression it was. If I did not mention it to you at the time, it was simply out of delicacy. But you wished it, you wanted to be married, in spite of the abominable things you wrote about me and your betrothed. Now it’s very different. And what has the Cosaque du Don to do with it, and what tomb do you mean? I don’t understand the comparison. On the contrary, you have only to live. Live as long as you can. I shall be delighted.”

“In an almshouse?”

“In an almshouse? People don’t go into almshouses with three thousand roubles a year. Ah, I remember,” she laughed. “Pyotr Stepanovitch did joke about an almshouse once. Bah, there certainly is a special almshouse, which is worth considering. It’s for persons who are highly respectable; there are colonels there, and there’s positively one general who wants to get into it. If you went into it with all your money, you would find peace, comfort, servants to wait on you. There you could occupy yourself with study, and could always make up a party for cards.”

“Passons”

“Passons?” Varvara Petrovna winced. “But, if so, that’s all. You’ve been informed that we shall live henceforward entirely apart.”

“And that’s all?” he said. “All that’s left of twenty years? Our last farewell?”

“You’re awfully fond of these exclamations, Stepan Trofimovitch. It’s not at all the fashion. Nowadays people talk roughly but simply. You keep harping on our twenty years! Twenty years of mutual vanity, and nothing more. Every letter you’ve written me was written not for me but for posterity. You’re a stylist, and not a friend, and friendship is only a splendid word. In reality—a mutual exchange of sloppiness... .”

“Good heavens! How many sayings not your own! Lessons learned by heart! They’ve already put their uniform on you too. You, too, are rejoicing; you, too, are basking in the sunshine. Chere. chere, for what a mess of pottage you have sold them your freedom!”

“I’m not a parrot, to repeat other people’s phrases!” cried Varvara Petrovna, boiling over. “You may be sure I have stored up many sayings of my own. What have you been doing for me all these twenty years? You refused me even the books I ordered for you, though, except for the binder, they would have remained uncut. What did you give me to read when I asked you during those first years to be my guide? Always Kapfig, and nothing but Kapfig. You were jealous of my culture even, and took measures. And all the while every one’s laughing at you. I must confess I always considered you only as a critic. You are a literary critic and nothing more. When on the way to Petersburg I told you that I meant to found a journal and to devote my whole life to it, you looked at me ironically at once, and suddenly became horribly supercilious.”

“That was not that, not that. ... we were afraid then of persecution. ...”

“It was just that. And you couldn’t have been afraid of persecution in Petersburg at that time. Do you remember that in February, too, when the news of the emancipation came, you ran to me in a panic, and demanded that I should at once give you a written statement that the proposed magazine had nothing to do with you; that the young people had been coming to see me and not you; that you were only a tutor who lived in the house, only because he had not yet received his salary. Isn’t that so? Do remember that? You have distinguished yourself all your life, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“That was only a moment of weakness, a moment when we were alone,” he exclaimed mournfully. “But is it possible, is it possible, to break off everything for the sake of such petty impressions? Can it be that nothing more has been left between us after those long years?”

“You are horribly calculating; you keep trying to leave me in your debt. When you came back from abroad you looked down upon me and wouldn’t let me utter a word, but when I came back myself and talked to you afterwards of my impressions of the Madonna, you wouldn’t hear me, you began smiling condescendingly into your cravat, as though I were incapable of the same feelings as you.”

“It was not so. It was probably not so. J’ai oublié!”

“No; it was so,” she answered, “and, what’s more, you’ve nothing to pride yourself on. That’s all nonsense, and one of your fancies. Now, there’s no one, absolutely no one, in ecstasies over the Madonna; no one wastes time over it except old men who are hopelessly out of date. That’s established.”

“Established, is it?”

“It’s of no use whatever. This jug’s of use because one can pour water into it. This pencil’s of use because you can write anything with it. But that woman’s face is inferior to any face in nature. Try drawing an apple, and put a real apple beside it. Which would you take? You wouldn’t make a mistake, I’m sure. This is what all our theories amount to, now that the first light of free investigation has dawned upon them.”

“Indeed, indeed.”

” You laugh ironically. And what used you to say to me about charity? Yet the enjoyment derived from charity is a haughty and immoral enjoyment. The rich man’s enjoyment in his wealth, his power, and in the comparison of his importance with the poor. Charity corrupts giver and taker alike; and, what’s more, does not attain its object, as it only increases poverty. Fathers who don’t want to work crowd round the charitable like gamblers round the gambling-table, hoping for gain, while the pitiful farthings that are flung them are a hundred times too little. Have you given away much in your life? Less than a rouble, if you try and think. Try to remember when last you gave away anything; it’ll be two years ago, maybe four. You make an outcry and only hinder things. Charity ought to be forbidden by law, even in the present state of society. In the new regime there will be no poor at all.”

“Oh, what an eruption of borrowed phrases! So it’s come to the new regime already? Unhappy woman, God help you!”

“Yes; it has, Stepan Trofimovitch. You carefully concealed all these new ideas from me, though every one’s familiar with them nowadays. And you did it simply out of jealousy, so as to have power over me. So that now even that Yulia is a hundred miles ahead of me. But now my eyes have been opened. I have defended you, Stepan Trofimovitch, all I could, but there is no one who does not blame you.”

“Enough!” said he, getting up from his seat. “Enough! And what can I wish you now, unless it’s repentance?”

“Sit still a minute, Stepan Trofimovitch. I have another question to ask you. You’ve been told of the invitation to read at the literary matinee. It was arranged through me. Tell me what you’re going to read?”

“Why, about that very Queen of Queens, that ideal of humanity, the Sistine Madonna, who to your thinking is inferior to a glass or a pencil.”

“So you’re not taking something historical?” said Varvara Petrovna in mournful surprise. “But they won’t listen to you. You’ve got that Madonna on your brain. You seem bent on putting every one to sleep! Let me assure you, Stepan Trofimovitch, I am speaking entirely in your own interest. It would be a different matter if you would take some short but interesting story of mediaeval court life from Spanish history, or, better still, some anecdote, and pad it out with other anecdotes and witty phrases of your own. There were magnificent courts then; ladies, you know, poisonings. Karmazinov says it would be strange if you couldn’t read something interesting from Spanish history.”

“Karmazinov—that fool who has written himself out—looking for a subject for me!”

“Karmazinov, that almost imperial intellect. You are too free in your language, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“Your Karmazinov is a spiteful old woman whose day is over. Chere, chere, how long have you been so enslaved by them? Oh God!”

“I can’t endure him even now for the airs he gives himself. But I do justice to his intellect. I repeat, I have done my best to defend you as far as I could. And why do you insist on being absurd and tedious? On the contrary, come on to the platform with a dignified smile as the representative of the last generation, and tell them two or three anecdotes in your witty way, as only you can tell things sometimes. Though you may be an old man now, though you may belong to a past age, though you may have dropped behind them, in fact, yet you’ll recognise it yourself, with a smile, in your preface, and all will see that you’re an amiable, good-natured, witty relic ... in brief, a man of the old savour, and so far advanced as to be capable of appreciating at their value all the absurdities of certain ideas which you have hitherto followed. Come, as a favour to me, I beg you.”

“Chere, enough. Don’t ask me. I can’t. I shall speak of the Madonna, but I shall raise a storm that will either crush them all or shatter me alone.”

“It will certainly be you alone, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“Such is my fate. I will speak of the contemptible slave, of the stinking, depraved flunkey who will first climb a ladder with scissors in his hands, and slash to pieces the

divine image of the great ideal, in the name of equality, envy, and ... digestion. Let my curse thunder out upon them, and then—then ...”

“The madhouse?”

“Perhaps. But in any case, whether I shall be left vanquished or victorious, that very evening I shall take my bag, my beggar’s bag. I shall leave all my goods and chattels, all your presents, all your pensions and promises of future benefits, and go forth on foot to end my life a tutor in a merchant’s family or to die somewhere of hunger in a ditch. I have said it. *Alea jacta eat.*” He got up again.

“I’ve been convinced for years,” said Varvara Petrovna, getting up with flashing eyes, “that your only object in life is to put me and my house to shame by your calumnies! What do you mean by being a tutor in a merchant’s family or dying in a ditch? It’s spite, calumny, and nothing more.”

“You have always despised me. But I will end like a knight, faithful to my lady. Your good opinion has always been dearer to me than anything. From this moment I will take nothing, but will worship you disinterestedly.”

” How stupid that is!”

“You have never respected me. I may have had a mass of weaknesses. Yes, I have sponged on you. I speak the language of nihilism, but sponging has never been the guiding motive of my action. It has happened so of itself. I don’t know how. ... I always imagined there was something higher than meat and drink between us, and—I’ve never, never been a scoundrel! And so, to take the open road, to set things right. I set off late, late autumn out of doors, the mist lies over the fields, the hoarfrost of old age covers the road before me, and the wind howls about the approaching grave... . But so forward, forward, on my new way

‘ Filled with purest love and fervour,
Faith which my sweet dream did yield.’

Oh, my dreams. Farewell. Twenty years. *Alea jacta est!*”

His face was wet with a sudden gush of tears. He took his hat.

“I don’t understand Latin,” said Varvara Petrovna, doing her best to control herself.

Who knows, perhaps, she too felt like crying. But caprice and indignation once more got the upper hand.

“I know only one thing, that all this is childish nonsense. You will never be capable of carrying out your threats, which are a mass of egoism. You will set off nowhere, to no merchant; you’ll end very peaceably on my hands, taking your pension, and receiving your utterly impossible friends on Tuesdays. Good-bye, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“*Alea—jacta est!*” He made her a deep bow, and returned home, almost dead with emotion.

Chapter 6: Pyotr Stepanovitch is Busy

1

The date of the fete was definitely fixed, and Von Lembke became more and more depressed. He was full of strange and sinister forebodings, and this made Yulia Mihailovna seriously uneasy. Indeed, things were not altogether satisfactory. Our mild governor had left the affairs of the province a little out of gear; at the moment we were threatened with cholera; serious outbreaks of cattle plague had appeared in several places; fires were prevalent that summer in towns and villages; whilst among the peasantry foolish rumours of incendiarism grew stronger and stronger. Cases of robbery were twice as numerous as usual. But all this, of course, would have been perfectly ordinary had there been no other and more weighty reasons to disturb the equanimity of Audrey Antonovitch, who had till then been in good spirits.

What struck Yulia Mihailovna most of all was that he became more silent and, strange to say, more secretive every day. Yet it was hard to imagine what he had to hide. It is true that he rarely opposed her and as a rule followed her lead without question. At her instigation, for instance, two or three regulations of a risky and hardly legal character were introduced with the object of strengthening the authority of the governor. There were several ominous instances of transgressions being condoned with the same end in view; persons who deserved to be sent to prison and Siberia were, solely because she insisted, recommended for promotion. Certain complaints and inquiries were deliberately and systematically ignored. All this came out later on. Not only did Lembke sign everything, but he did not even go into the question of the share taken by his wife in the execution of his duties. On the other hand, he began at times to be restive about "the most trifling matters," to the surprise of Yulia Mihailovna. No doubt he felt the need to make up for the days of suppression by brief moments of mutiny. Unluckily, Yulia Mihailovna was unable, for all her insight, to understand this honourable punctiliousness in an honourable character. Alas, she had no thought to spare for that, and that was the source of many misunderstandings.

There are some things of which it is not suitable for me to write, and indeed I am not in a position to do so. It is not my business to discuss the blunders of administration either, and I prefer to leave out this administrative aspect of the subject altogether. In the chronicle I have begun I've set before myself a different task. Moreover a great deal will be brought to light by the Commission of Inquiry which has just been appointed for our province; it's only a matter of waiting a little. Certain explanations, however, cannot be omitted.

But to return to Yulia Mihailovna. The poor lady (I feel very sorry for her) might have attained all that attracted and allured her (renown and so on) without any such violent and eccentric actions as she resolved upon at the very first step. But either from an exaggerated passion for the romantic or from the frequently blighted hopes of her youth, she felt suddenly, at the change of her fortunes, that she had become

one of the specially elect, almost God's anointed, "over whom there gleamed a burning tongue of fire," and this tongue of flame was the root of the mischief, for, after all, it is not like a chignon, which will fit any woman's head. But there is nothing of which it is more difficult to convince a woman than of this; on the contrary, anyone who cares to encourage the delusion in her will always be sure to meet with success. And people vied with one another in encouraging the delusion in Yulia Mihailovna. The poor woman became at once the sport of conflicting influences, while fully persuaded of her own originality. Many clever people feathered their nests and took advantage of her simplicity during the brief period of her rule in the province. And what a jumble there was under this assumption of independence! She was fascinated at the same time by the aristocratic element and the system of big landed properties and the increase of the governor's power, and the democratic element, and the new reforms and discipline, and free-thinking and stray Socialistic notions, and the correct tone of the aristocratic salon and the free-and-easy, almost pot-house, manners of the young people that surrounded her. She dreamed of "giving happiness" and reconciling the irreconcilable, or, rather, of uniting all and everything in the adoration of her own person. She had favourites too; she was particularly fond of Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had recourse at times to the grossest flattery in dealing with her. But she was attracted by him for another reason, an amazing one, and most characteristic of the poor lady: she was always hoping that he would reveal to her a regular conspiracy against the government. Difficult as it is to imagine such a thing, it really was the case. She fancied for some reason that there must be a nihilist plot concealed in the province. By his silence at one time and his hints at another Pyotr Stepanovitch did much to strengthen this strange idea in her. She imagined that he was in communication with every revolutionary element in Russia but at the same time passionately devoted to her. To discover the plot, to receive the gratitude of the government, to enter on a brilliant career, to influence the young "by kindness," and to restrain them from extremes—all these dreams existed side by side in her fantastic brain. She had saved Pyotr Stepanovitch, she had conquered him (of this she was for some reason firmly convinced); she would save others. None, none of them should perish, she should save them all; she would pick them out; she would send in the right report of them; she would act in the interests of the loftiest justice, and perhaps posterity and Russian liberalism would bless her name; yet the conspiracy would be discovered. Every advantage at once.

Still it was essential that .Andrey Antonovitch should be in rather better spirits before the festival. He must be cheered up and reassured. For this purpose she sent Pyotr Stepanovitch to him in the hope that he would relieve his depression by some means of consolation best known to himself, perhaps by giving him some information, so to speak, first hand. She put implicit faith in his dexterity.

It was some time since Pyotr Stepanovitch had been in Mr. von Lembke's study. He popped in on him just when the sufferer was in a most stubborn mood.

2

A combination of circumstances had arisen which Mr. von Lembke was quite unable to deal with. In the very district where Pyotr Stepanovitch had been having a festive time a sublieutenant had been called up to be censured by his immediate superior, and the reproof was given in the presence of the whole company. The sub-lieutenant was a young man fresh from Petersburg, always silent and morose, of dignified appearance though small, stout, and rosy-cheeked. He resented the reprimand and suddenly, with a startling shriek that astonished the whole company, he charged at his superior officer with his head bent down like a wild beast's, struck him, and bit him on the shoulder with all his might; they had difficulty in getting him off. There was no doubt that he had gone out of his mind; anyway, it became known that of late he had been observed performing incredibly strange actions. He had, for instance, flung two ikons belonging to his landlady out of his lodgings and smashed up one of them with an axe; in his own room he had, on three stands resembling lecterns, laid out the works of Vogt, Moleschott, and Buchner, and before each lectern he used to burn a church wax-candle. From the number of books found in his rooms it could be gathered that he was a well-read man. If he had had fifty thousand francs he would perhaps have sailed to the island of Marquisas like the "cadet" to whom Herzen alludes with such sprightly humour in one of his writings. When he was seized, whole bundles of the most desperate manifestoes were found in his pockets and his lodgings.

Manifestoes are a trivial matter too, and to my thinking not worth troubling about. We have seen plenty of them. Besides, they were not new manifestoes; they were, it was said later, just the same as had been circulated in the X province, and Liputin, who had travelled in that district and the neighbouring province six weeks previously, declared that he had seen exactly the same leaflets there then. But what struck Andrey Antonovitch most was that the overseer of Shpigulin's factory had brought the police just at the same time two or three packets of exactly the same leaflets as had been found on the lieutenant. The bundles, which had been dropped in the factory in the night, had not been opened, and none of the factory-hands had had time to read one of them. The incident was a trivial one, but it set Andrey Antonovitch pondering deeply. The position presented itself to him in an unpleasantly complicated light.

In this factory the famous "Shpigulin scandal" was just then brewing, which made so much talk among us and got into the Petersburg and Moscow papers with all sorts of variations. Three weeks previously one of the hands had fallen ill and died of Asiatic cholera; then several others were stricken down. The whole town was in a panic, for the cholera was coming nearer and nearer and had reached the neighbouring province. I may observe that satisfactory sanitary measures had been, so far as possible, taken to meet the unexpected guest. But the factory belonging to the Shpigulins, who were millionaires and well-connected people, had somehow been overlooked. And there was a sudden outcry from every one that this factory was the hot-bed of infection, that the factory itself, and especially the quarters inhabited by the workpeople, were so

inveterately filthy that even if cholera had not been in the neighbourhood there might well have been an outbreak there. Steps were immediately taken, of course, and Andrey Antonovitch vigorously insisted on their being carried out without delay within three weeks. The factory was cleansed, but the Shpigulins, for some unknown reason, closed it. One of the Shpigulin brothers always lived in Petersburg and the other went away to Moscow when the order was given for cleansing the factory. The overseer proceeded to pay off the workpeople and, as it appeared, cheated them shamelessly. The hands began to complain among themselves, asking to be paid fairly, and foolishly went to the police, though without much disturbance, for they were not so very much excited. It was just at this moment that the manifestoes were brought to Andrey Antonovitch by the overseer.

Pyotr Stepanovitch popped into the study unannounced, like an intimate friend and one of the family; besides, he had a message from Yulia Mihailovna. Seeing him, Lembke frowned grimly and stood still at the table without welcoming him. Till that moment he had been pacing up and down the study and had been discussing something *tete-a-tete* with his clerk Blum, a very clumsy and surly German whom he had brought with him from Petersburg, in spite of the violent opposition of Yulia Mihailovna. On Pyotr Stepanovitch's entrance the clerk had moved to the door, but had not gone out. Pyotr Stepanovitch even fancied that he exchanged significant glances with his chief.

"Aha, I've caught you at last, you secretive monarch of the town!" Pyotr Stepanovitch cried out laughing, and laid his hand over the manifesto on the table. "This increases your collection, eh?"

Andrey Antonovitch flushed crimson; his face seemed to twitch.

"Leave off, leave off at once!" he cried, trembling with rage. "And don't you dare ... sir ..."

"What's the matter with you? You seem to be angry!"

"Allow me to inform you, sir, that I've no intention of putting up with your *sans faison* henceforward, and I beg you to remember ..."

"Why, damn it all, he is in earnest!"

"Hold your tongue, hold your tongue"—Von Lembke stamped on the carpet—"and don't dare ..."

God knows what it might have come to. Alas, there was one circumstance involved in the matter of which neither Pyotr Stepanovitch nor even Yulia Mihailovna herself had any idea. The luckless Andrey Antonovitch had been so greatly upset during the last few days that he had begun to be secretly jealous of his wife and Pyotr Stepanovitch. In solitude, especially at night, he spent some very disagreeable moments.

"Well, I imagined that if a man reads you his novel two days running till after midnight and wants to hear your opinion of it, he has of his own act discarded official relations, anyway... . Yulia Mihailovna treats me as a friend; there's no making you out," Pyotr Stepanovitch brought out, with a certain dignity indeed. "Here is your novel, by the way." He laid on the table a large heavy manuscript rolled up in blue paper.

Lembke turned red and looked embarrassed.

“Where did you find it?” he asked discreetly, with a rush of joy which he was unable to suppress, though he did his utmost to conceal it.

“Only fancy, done up like this, it rolled under the chest of drawers. I must have thrown it down carelessly on the chest when I went out. It was only found the day before yesterday, when the floor was scrubbed. You did set me a task, though!”

Lembke dropped his eyes sternly.

“I haven’t slept for the last two nights, thanks to you. It was found the day before yesterday, but I kept it, and have been reading it ever since. I’ve no time in the day, so I’ve read it at night. Well, I don’t like it; it’s not my way of looking at things. But that’s no matter; I’ve never set up for being a critic, but I couldn’t tear myself away from it, my dear man, though I didn’t like it! The fourth and fifth chapters are ... they really are ... damn it all, they are beyond words! And what a lot of humour you’ve packed into it; it made me laugh! How you can make fun of things sans que cela paraisse! As for the ninth and tenth chapters, it’s all about love; that’s not my line, but it’s effective though. I was nearly blubbing over Egrenév’s letter, though you’ve shown him up so cleverly... . You know, it’s touching, though at the same time you want to show the false side of him, as it were, don’t you? Have I guessed right? But I could simply beat you for the ending. For what are you setting up I Why, the same old idol of domestic happiness, begetting children and making money; ‘they were married and lived happy ever afterwards’—come, it’s too much! You will enchant your readers, for even I couldn’t put the book down; but that makes it all the worse! The reading public is as stupid as ever, but it’s the duty of sensible people to wake them up, while you ... But that’s enough. Good-bye. Don’t be cross another time; I came in to you because I had a couple of words to say to you, but you are so unaccountable ...”

Andrey Antonovitch meantime took his novel and locked it up in an oak bookcase, seizing the opportunity to wink to Blum to disappear. The latter withdrew with a long, mournful face.

“I am not unaccountable, I am simply ... nothing but annoyances,” he muttered, frowning but without anger, and sitting down to the table. “Sit down and say what you have to say. It’s a long time since I’ve seen you, Pyotr Stepanovitch, only don’t burst upon me in the future with such manners ... sometimes, when one has business, it’s ... “

“My manners are always the same... .”

“I know, and I believe that you mean nothing by it, but sometimes one is worried... . Sit down.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch immediately lolled back on the sofa and drew his legs under him.

3

“What sort of worries? Surely not these trifles?” He nodded towards the manifesto. “I can bring you as many of them as you like; I made their acquaintance in X province.”

“You mean at the time you were staying there?”

“Of course, it was not in my absence. I remember there was a hatchet printed at the top of it. Allow me.” (He took up the manifesto.) “Yes, there’s the hatchet here too; that’s it, the very same.”

“Yes, here’s a hatchet. You see, a hatchet.”

“Well, is it the hatchet that scares you?”

“No, it’s not ... and I am not scared; but this business ... it is a business; there are circumstances.”

“What sort? That it’s come from the factory? He he! But do you know, at that factory the workpeople will soon be writing manifestoes for themselves.”

“What do you mean?” Von Lembke stared at him severely.

“What I say. You’ve only to look at them. You are too soft, Andrey Antonovitch; you write novels. But this has to be handled in the good old way.”

“What do you mean by the good old way? What do you mean by advising me? The factory has been cleaned; I gave the order and they’ve cleaned it.”

“And the workmen are in rebellion. They ought to be flogged, every one of them; that would be the end of it.”

“In rebellion? That’s nonsense; I gave the order and they’ve cleaned it.”

“Ech, you are soft, Andrey Antonovitch!”

“In the first place, I am not so soft as you think, and in the second place ...” Von Lembke was piqued again. He had exerted himself to keep up the conversation with the young man from curiosity, wondering if he would tell him anything new.

“Ha ha, an old acquaintance again,” Pyotr Stepanovitch interrupted, pouncing on another document that lay under a paper-weight, something like a manifesto, obviously printed abroad and in verse. “Oh, come, I know this one by heart, ‘A Noble Personality.’ Let me have a look at it—yes, ‘A Noble Personality’ it is. I made acquaintance with that personality abroad. Where did you unearth it?”

“You say you’ve seen it abroad?” Von Lembke said eagerly.

“I should think so, four months ago, or may be five.”

“You seem to have seen a great deal abroad.” Von Lembke looked at him subtly.

Pyotr Stepanovitch, not heeding him, unfolded the document and read the poem aloud:

“A NOBLE PERSONALITY

“He was not of rank exalted,

He was not of noble birth,

He was bred among the people

In the breast of Mother Earth.

But the malice of the nobles

And the Tsar's revengeful wrath
Drove him forth to grief and torture
On the martyr's chosen path.
He set out to teach the people
Freedom, love, equality,
To exhort them to resistance;
But to flee the penalty
Of the prison, whip and gallows,
To a foreign land he went.
While the people waited hoping
From Smolensk to far Tashkent,
Waited eager for his coming
To rebel against their fate,
To arise and crush the Tsardom
And the nobles' vicious hate,
To share all the wealth in common,
And the antiquated thrall
Of the church, the home and marriage
To abolish once for all."

"You got it from that officer, I suppose, eh?" asked Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"Why, do you know that officer, then, too?"

"I should think so. I had a gay time with him there for two days; he was bound to go out of his mind."

"Perhaps he did not go out of his mind."

"You think he didn't because he began to bite?"

"But, excuse me, if you saw those verses abroad and then, it appears, at that officer's ..."

"What, puzzling, is it? You are putting me through an examination, Andrey Antonovitch, I see. You see," he began suddenly with extraordinary dignity, "as to what I saw abroad I have already given explanations, and my explanations were found satisfactory, otherwise I should not have been gratifying this town with my presence. I consider that the question as regards me has been settled, and I am not obliged to give any further account of myself, not because I am an informer, but because I could not help acting as I did. The people who wrote to Yulia Mihailovna about me knew what they were talking about, and they said I was an honest man... . But that's neither here nor there; I've come to see you about a serious matter, and it's as well you've sent your chimney-sweep away. It's a matter of importance to me, Andrey Antonovitch. I shall have a very great favour to ask of you."

"A favour? H'm ... by all means; I am waiting and, I confess, with curiosity. And I must add, Pyotr Stepanovitch, that you surprise me not a little."

Von Lembke was in some agitation. Pyotr Stepanovitch crossed his legs.

"In Petersburg," he began, "I talked freely of most things, but there were things—this, for instance" (he tapped the "Noble Personality" with his finger) "about which I held my tongue—in the first place, because it wasn't worth talking about, and secondly, because I only answered questions. I don't care to put myself forward in such matters; in that I see the distinction between a rogue and an honest man forced by circumstances. Well, in short, we'll dismiss that. But now ... now that these fools ... now that this has come to the surface and is in your hands, and I see that you'll find out all about it—for you are a man with eyes and one can't tell beforehand what you'll do—and these fools are still going on, I ... I ... well, the fact is, I've come to ask you to save one man, a fool too, most likely mad, for the sake of his youth, his misfortunes, in the name of your humanity... . You can't be so humane only in the novels you manufacture!" he said, breaking off with coarse sarcasm and impatience.

In fact, he was seen to be a straightforward man, awkward and impolitic from excess of humane feeling and perhaps from excessive sensitiveness—above all, a man of limited intelligence, as Von Lembke saw at once with extraordinary subtlety. He had indeed long suspected it, especially when during the previous week he had, sitting alone in his study at night, secretly cursed him with all his heart for the inexplicable way in which he had gained Yulia Mihailovna's good graces.

"For whom are you interceding, and what does all this mean?" he inquired majestically, trying to conceal his curiosity.

"It ... it's ... damn it! It's not my fault that I trust you! Is it my fault that I look upon you as a most honourable and, above all, a sensible man ... capable, that is, of understanding ... damn ..."

The poor fellow evidently could not master his emotion.

"You must understand at last," he went on, "you must understand that in pronouncing his name I am betraying him to you—I am betraying him, am I not? I am, am I not?"

"But how am I to guess if you don't make up your mind to speak out?"

"That's just it; you always cut the ground from under one's feet with your logic, damn it. ... Well, here goes ... this 'noble personality,' this 'student'... is Shatov ... that's all."

"Shatov? How do you mean it's Shatov?"

"Shatov is the 'student' who is mentioned in this. He lives here, he was once a serf, the man who gave that slap. ..."

"I know, I know." Lembke screwed up his eyes. "But excuse me, what is he accused of? Precisely and, above all, what is your petition?"

"I beg you to save him, do you understand? I used to know him eight years ago, I might almost say I was his friend," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, completely carried away. "But I am not bound to give you an account of my past life," he added, with a gesture of dismissal. "All this is of no consequence; it's the case of three men and a half, and with those that are abroad you can't make up a dozen. But what I am building upon is your humanity and your intelligence. You will understand and you will put the matter

in its true light, as the foolish dream of a man driven crazy ... by misfortunes, by continued misfortunes, and not as some impossible political plot or God knows what!"

He was almost gasping for breath.

"H'm. I see that he is responsible for the manifestoes with the axe," Lembke concluded almost majestically. "Excuse me, though, if he were the only person concerned, how could he have distributed it both here and in other districts and in the X province ... and, above all, where did he get them?"

"But I tell you that at the utmost there are not more than five people in it—a dozen perhaps. How can I tell?"

"You don't know?"

"How should I know?—damn it all."

"Why, you knew that Shatov was one of the conspirators."

"Ech!" Pyotr Stepanovitch waved his hand as though to keep off the overwhelming penetration of the inquirer. "Well, listen. I'll tell you the whole truth: of the manifestoes I know nothing—that is, absolutely nothing. Damn it all, don't you know what nothing means? ... That sub-lieutenant, to be sure, and somebody else and some one else here ... and Shatov perhaps and some one else too—well, that's the lot of them ... a wretched lot... . But I've come to intercede for Shatov. He must be saved, for this poem is his, his own composition, and it was through him it was published abroad; that I know or a fact, but of the manifestoes I really know nothing."

"If the poem is his work, no doubt the manifestoes are too. But what data have you for suspecting Mr. Shatov?"

Pyotr Stepanovitch, with the air of a man driven out of all patience, pulled a pocket-book out of his pocket and took a note out of it.

"Here are the facts," he cried, flinging it on the table.

Lembke unfolded it; it turned out to be a note written six months before from here to some address abroad. It was a brief note, only two lines:

"I can't print 'A Noble Personality' here, and in fact I can do nothing; print it abroad.

Lembke looked intently at Pyotr Stepanovitch. Varvara Petrovna had been right in saying that he had at times the expression of a sheep.

"You see, it's like this," Pyotr Stepanovitch burst out. "He wrote this poem here six months ago, but he couldn't get it printed here, in a secret printing press, and so he asks to have it printed abroad... . That seems clear."

"Yes, that's clear, but to whom did he write? That's not clear yet," Lembke observed with the most subtle irony.

"Why, Kirillov, of course; the letter was written to Kirillov abroad... . Surely you knew that? What's so annoying is that perhaps you are only putting it on before me, and most likely you knew all about this poem and everything long ago! How did it come to be on your table? It found its way there somehow! Why are you torturing me, if so?"

He feverishly mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"I know something, perhaps." Lembke parried dexterously. "But who is this Kirillov?"

"An engineer who has lately come to the town. He was Stavrogin's second, a maniac, a madman; your sub-lieutenant may really only be suffering from temporary delirium, but Kirillov is a thoroughgoing madman—thoroughgoing, that I guarantee. Ah, Audrey Antonovitch, if the government only knew what sort of people these conspirators all are, they wouldn't have the heart to lay a finger on them. Every single one of them ought to be in an asylum; I had a good look at them in Switzerland and at the congresses."

"From which they direct the movement here?"

"Why, who directs it? Three men and a half. It makes one sick to think of them. And what sort of movement is there here? Manifestoes! And what recruits have they made? Sub-lieutenants in brain fever and two or three students! You are a sensible man: answer this question. Why don't people of consequence join their ranks? Why are they all students and half-baked boys of twenty-two? And not many of those. I dare say there are thousands of bloodhounds on their track, but have they tracked out many of them I Seven! I tell you it makes one sick."

Lembke listened with attention but with an expression that seemed to say, "You don't feed nightingales on fairy-tales."

"Excuse me, though. You asserted that the letter was sent abroad, but there's no address on it; how do you come to know that it was addressed to Mr. Kirillov and abroad too and ... and ... that it really was written by Mr. Shatov?"

"Why, fetch some specimen of Shatov's writing and compare it. You must have some signature of his in your office. As for its being addressed to Kirillov, it was Kirillov himself showed it me at the time."

"Then you were yourself ..."

"Of course I was, myself. They showed me lots of things out there. And as for this poem, they say it was written by Herzen to Shatov when he was still wandering abroad, in memory of their meeting, so they say, by way of praise and recommendation—damn it all ... and Shatov circulates it among the young people as much as to say, 'This was Herzen's opinion of me.'

"Ha ha!" cried Lembke, feeling he had got to the bottom of it at last. "That's just what I was wondering: one can understand the manifesto, but what's the object of the poem?"

"Of course you'd see it. Goodness knows why I've been babbling to you. Listen. Spare Shatov for me and the rest may go to the devil—even Kirillov, who is in hiding now, shut up in Filipov's house, where Shatov lodges too. They don't like me because I've turned round ... but promise me Shator and I'll dish them all up for you. I shall be of use, Audrey Antonovitch! I reckon nine or ten men make up the whole wretched lot. I am keeping an eye on them myself, on my own account. We know of three already: Shatov, Kirillov, and that sub-lieutenant. The others I am only watching carefully ... though I am pretty sharp-sighted too. It's the same over again as it was in the X province: two students, a schoolboy, two noblemen of twenty, a teacher, and a half-pay major of sixty, crazy with drink, have been caught with manifestoes; that was all—you

can take my word for it, that was all; it was quite a surprise that that was all. But I must have six days. I have reckoned it out—six days, not less. If you want to arrive at any result, don't disturb them for six days and I can kill all the birds with one stone for you; but if you flutter them before, the birds will fly away. But spare me Shatov. I speak for Shatov... . The best plan would be to fetch him here secretly, in a friendly way, to your study and question him without disguising the facts. ... I have no doubt he'll throw himself at your feet and burst into tears! He is a highly strung and unfortunate fellow; his wife is carrying on with Stavrogin. Be kind to him and he will tell you everything, but I must have six days... . And, above all, above all, not a word to Yulia Mihailovna. It's a secret. May it be a secret?"

"What?" cried Lembke, opening wide his eyes. "Do you mean to say you said nothing of this to Yulia Mihailovna?"

"To her? Heaven forbid! Ech, Andrey Antonovitch! You see, I value her friendship and I have the highest respect for her ... and all the rest of it ... but I couldn't make such a blunder. I don't contradict her, for, as you know yourself, it's dangerous to contradict her. I may have dropped a word to her, for I know she likes that, but to suppose that I mentioned names to her as I have to you or anything of that sort! My good sir! Why am I appealing to you? Because you are a man, anyway, a serious person with old-fashioned firmness and experience in the service. You've seen life. You must know by heart every detail of such affairs, I expect, from what you've seen in Petersburg. But if I were to mention those two names, for instance, to her, she'd stir up such a hubbub... . You know, she would like to astonish Petersburg. No, she's too hot-headed, she really is."

"Yes, she has something of that owgrwe," Andrey Antonovitch muttered with some satisfaction, though at the same time he resented this unmannerly fellow's daring to express himself rather freely about Yulia Mihailovna. But Pyotr Stepanovitch probably imagined that he had not gone far enough and that he must exert himself further to flatter Lembke and make a complete conquest of him.

"Fougue is just it," he assented. "She may be a woman of genius, a literary woman, but she would scare our sparrows. She wouldn't be able to keep quiet for six hours, let alone six days. Ech, Andrey Antonovitch, don't attempt to tie a woman down for six days! You do admit that I have some experience— in this sort of thing, I mean; I know something about it, and you know that I may very well know something about it. I am not asking for six days for fun but with an object."

"I have heard ..." (Lembke hesitated to utter his thought) "I have heard that on your return from abroad you made some expression ... as it were of repentance, in the proper quarter?"

"Well, that's as it may be."

"And, of course, I don't want to go into it. ... But it has seemed to me all along that you've talked in quite a different style—about the Christian faith, for instance, about social institutions, about the government even... ,"

"I've said lots of things, no doubt, I am saying them still; but such ideas mustn't be applied as those fools do it, that's the point. What's the good of biting his superior's shoulder! You agreed with me yourself, only you said it was premature."

"I didn't mean that when I agreed and said it was premature."

"You weigh every word you utter, though. He he! You are a careful man!" Pyotr Stepanovitch observed gaily all of a sudden. "Listen, old friend. I had to get to know you; that's why I talked in my own style. You are not the only one I get to know like that. Maybe I needed to find out your character."

"What's my character to you?"

"How can I tell what it may be to me?" He laughed again. "You see, my dear and highly respected Andrey Antonovitch, you are cunning, but it's not come to that yet and it certainly never will come to it, you understand? Perhaps you do understand. Though I did make an explanation in the proper quarter when I came back from abroad, and I really don't know why a man of certain convictions should not be able to work for the advancement of his sincere convictions ... but nobody there. has yet instructed me to investigate your character and I've not undertaken any such job from them. Consider: I need not have given those two names to you. I might have gone straight there; that is where I made my first explanations. And if I'd been acting with a view to financial profit or my own interest in any way, it would have been a bad speculation on my part, for now they'll be grateful to you and not to me at headquarters. I've done it solely for Shatov's sake," Pyotr Stepanovitch added generously, "for Shatov's sake, because of our old friendship.... But when you take up your pen to write to headquarters, you may put in a word for me, if you like... . I'll make no objection, he he! Adieu, though; I've stayed too long and there was no need to gossip so much!" he added with some amiability, and he got up from the sofa.

"On the contrary, I am very glad that the position has been defined, so to speak." Von Lembke too got up and he too looked pleasant, obviously affected by the last words. "I accept your services and acknowledge my obligation, and you may be sure that anything I can do by way of reporting your zeal ..."

"Six days—the great thing is to put it off for six days, and that you shouldn't stir for those six days, that's what I want."

"So be it."

"Of course, I don't tie your hands and shouldn't venture to. You are bound to keep watch, only don't nutter the nest too soon; I rely on your sense and experience for that. But I should think you've plenty of bloodhounds and trackers of your own in reserve, ha ha!" Pyotr Stepanovitch blurted out with the gaiety and irresponsibility of youth.

"Not quite so." Lembke parried amiably. "Young people are apt to suppose that there is a great deal in the background... . But, by the way, allow me one little word: if this Kirillor was Stavrogin's second, then Mr. Stavrogin too ..."

"What about Stavrogin?"

"I mean, if they are such friends?"

“Oh, no, no, no! There you are quite out of it, though you are cunning. You really surprise me. I thought that you had some information about it. ... H’m ... Stavrogin—it’s quite the opposite, quite... . Avis au lecteur.”

“Do you mean it? And can it be so?” Lembke articulated mistrustfully. “Yulia Mihailovna told me that from what she heard from Petersburg he is a man acting on some sort of instructions, so to speak. ...”

“I know nothing about it; I know nothing, absolutely nothing. Adieu. Avis au lecteur!” Abruptly and obviously Pyotr Stepanovitch declined to discuss it.

He hurried to the door.

“Stay, Pyotr Stepanovitch, stay,” cried Lembke. “One other tiny matter and I won’t detain you.”

He drew an envelope out of a table drawer.

“Here is a little specimen of the same kind of thing, and I let you see it to show how completely I trust you. Here, and tell me your opinion.”

In the envelope was a letter, a strange anonymous letter addressed to Lembke and only received by him the day before. With intense vexation Pyotr Stepanovitch read as follows:

“your excellency,—For such you are by rank. Herewith I make known that there is an attempt to be made on the life of personages of general’s rank and on the Fatherland. For it’s working up straight for that. I myself have been disseminating unceasingly for a number of years. There’s infidelity too. There’s a rebellion being got up and there are some thousands of manifestoes, and for every one of them there will be a hundred running with their tongues out, unless they’ve been taken away beforehand by the police. For they’ve been promised a mighty lot of benefits, and the simple people are foolish, and there’s vodka too. The people will attack one after another, taking them to be guilty, and, fearing both sides, I repent of what I had no share in, my circumstances being what they are. If you want information to save the Fatherland, and also the Church and the ikons, I am the only one that can do it. But only on condition that I get a pardon from the Secret Police by telegram at once, me alone, but the rest may answer for it. Put a candle every evening at seven o’clock in the porter’s window for a signal. Seeing it, I shall believe and come to kiss the merciful hand from Petersburg. But on condition there’s a pension for me, for else how am I to live? You won’t regret it for it will mean a star for you. You must go secretly or they’ll wring your neck. Your excellency’s desperate servant falls at your feet.

“repentant free-thinker incognito.”

Von Lembke explained that the letter had made its appearance in the porter’s room when it was left empty the day before.

“So what do you think?” Pyotr Stepanovitch asked almost rudely.

“I think it’s an anonymous skit by way of a hoax.”

“Most likely it is. There’s no taking you in.”

“What makes me think that is that it’s so stupid.”

“Have you received such documents here before?”

"Once or twice, anonymous letters."

"Oh, of course they wouldn't be signed. In a different style? In different handwritings?"

"Yes."

"And were they buffoonery like this one?"

"Yes, and you know ... very disgusting."

"Well, if you had them before, it must be the same thing now."

"Especially because it's so stupid. Because these people are educated and wouldn't write so stupidly."

"Of course, of course."

"But what if this is some one who really wants to turn informer?"

"It's not very likely," Pyotr Stepanovitch rapped out dryly. "What does he mean by a telegram from the Secret Police and; a pension? It's obviously a hoax."

"Yes, yes," Lembke admitted, abashed.

"I tell you what: you leave this with me. I can certainly; find out for you before I track out the others."

"Take it," Lembke assented, though with some hesitation.

"Have you shown it to anyone?"

"Is it likely! No."

"Not to Yulia Mihailovna?"

"Oh, Heaven forbid! And for God's sake don't you show it her!" Lembke cried in alarm. "She'll be so upset ... and will be dreadfully angry with me."

"Yes, you'll be the first to catch it; she'd say you brought it on yourself if people write like that to you. I know what women's logic is. Well, good-bye. I dare say I shall bring you the writer in a couple of days or so. Above all, our compact!"

4

Though Pyotr Stepanovitch was perhaps far from being a stupid man, Fedka the convict had said of him truly "that he would make up a man himself and go on living with him too." He came away from Lembke fully persuaded that for the next six days, anyway, he had put his mind at rest, and this interval was absolutely necessary for his own purposes. But it was a false idea and founded entirely on the fact that he had made up for himself once for all an Andrey Antonovitch who was a perfect simpleton.

Like every morbidly suspicious man, Andrey Antonovitch was always exceedingly and joyfully trustful the moment he got on to sure ground. The new turn of affairs struck him at first in a rather favourable light in spite of some fresh and troublesome complications. Anyway, his former doubts fell to the ground. Besides, he had been so tired for the last few days, so exhausted and helpless, that his soul involuntarily yearned for rest. But alas! he was again uneasy. The long time he had spent in Petersburg had left ineradicable traces in his heart. The official and even the secret history of the "younger generation" was fairly familiar to him—he was a curious man and used to

collect manifestoes—but he could never understand a word of it. Now he felt like a man lost in a forest. Every instinct told him that there was something in Pyotr Stepanovitch's words utterly incongruous, anomalous, and grotesque, "though there's no telling what may not happen with this 'younger generation,' and the devil only knows what's going on among them," he mused, lost in perplexity.

And at this moment, to make matters worse, Blum poked his head in. He had been waiting not far off through the whole of Pyotr Stepanovitch's visit. This Blum was actually a distant relation of Andrey Antonovitch, though the relationship had always been carefully and timorously concealed. I must apologise to the reader for devoting a few words here to this insignificant person. Blum was one of that strange class of "unfortunate" Germans who are unfortunate not through lack of ability but through some inexplicable ill luck. "Unfortunate" Germans are not a myth, but really do exist even in Russia, and are of a special type. Andrey Antonovitch had always had a quite touching sympathy for him, and wherever he could, as he rose himself in the service, had promoted him to subordinate positions under him; but Blum had never been successful. Either the post was abolished after he had been appointed to it, or a new chief took charge of the department; once he was almost arrested by mistake with other people. He was precise, but he was gloomy to excess and to his own detriment. He was tall and had red hair; he stooped and was depressed and even sentimental; and in spite of his being humbled by his life, he was obstinate and persistent as an ox, though always at the wrong moment. For Andrey Antonovitch he, as well as his wife and numerous family, had cherished for many years a reverent devotion. Except Andrey Antonovitch no one had ever liked him. Yulia Mihailovna would have discarded him from the first, but could not overcome her husband's obstinacy. It was the cause of their first conjugal quarrel. It had happened soon after their marriage, in the early days of their honeymoon, when she was confronted with Blum, who, together with the humiliating secret of his relationship, had been until then carefully concealed from her. Andrey Antonovitch besought her with clasped hands, told her pathetically all the story of Blum and their friendship from childhood, but Yulia Mihailovna considered herself disgraced for ever, and even had recourse to fainting. Von Lembke would not budge an inch, and declared that he would not give up Blum or part from him for anything in the world, so that she was surprised at last and was obliged to put up with Blum. It was settled, however, that the relationship should be concealed even more carefully than before if possible, and that even Blum's Christian name and patronymic should be changed, because he too was for some reason called Andrey Antonovitch. Blum knew no one in the town except the German chemist, had not called on anyone, and led, as he always did, a lonely and niggardly existence. He had long been aware of Andrey Antonovitch's literary peccadilloes. He was generally summoned to listen to secret *tete-a-tete* readings of his novel; he would sit like a post for six hours at a stretch, perspiring and straining his utmost to keep awake and smile. On reaching home he would groan with his long-legged and lanky wife over their benefactor's unhappy weakness for Russian literature.

Andrey Antonovitch looked with anguish at Blum.

"I beg you to leave me alone, Blum," he began with agitated haste, obviously anxious to avoid any renewal of the previous conversation which had been interrupted by Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"And yet this may be arranged in the most delicate way and with no publicity; you have full power." Blum respectfully but obstinately insisted on some point, stooping forward and coming nearer and nearer by small steps to Andrey Antonovitch.

"Blum, you are so devoted to me and so anxious to serve me that I am always in a panic when I look at you."

"You always say witty things, and sleep in peace satisfied with what you've said, but that's how you damage yourself."

"Blum, I have just convinced myself that it's quite a mistake, quite a mistake."

"Not from the words of that false, vicious young man whom you suspect yourself? He has won you by his flattering praise of your talent for literature."

"Blum, you understand nothing about it; your project is absurd, I tell you. We shall find nothing and there will be a fearful upset and laughter too, and then Yulia Mihailovna ..."

"We shall certainly find everything we are looking for." Blum advanced firmly towards him, laying his right hand on his heart. "We will make a search suddenly early in the morning, carefully showing every consideration for the person himself and strictly observing all the prescribed forms of the law. The young men, Lyamshin and Telyatnikov, assert positively that we shall find all we want. They were constant visitors there. Nobody is favourably disposed to Mr. Verhovensky. Madame Stavrogin has openly refused him her graces, and every honest man, if only there is such a one in this coarse town, is persuaded that a hotbed of infidelity and social doctrines has always been concealed there. He keeps all the forbidden books, Ryliev's. 'Reflections,' all. Herzen's works. ... I have an approximate catalogue, in case of need."

"Oh heavens! Every one has these books; how simple you are, my poor Blum."

"And many manifestoes," Blum went on without heeding the observation. "We shall end by certainly coming upon traces of the real manifestoes here. That young Verhovensky I feel very suspicious of."

"But you are mixing up the father and the son. They are not on good terms. The son openly laughs at his father."

"That's only a mask."

"Blum, you've sworn to torment me! Think! he is a conspicuous figure here, after all. He's been a professor, he is a well-known man. He'll make such an uproar and there will be such gibes all over the town, and we shall make a mess of it all... . And only think how Yulia Mihailovna will take it." Blum pressed forward and did not listen. "He was only a lecturer, only a lecturer, and of a low rank when he retired." He smote himself on the chest. "He has no marks of distinction. He was discharged from the service on suspicion of plots against the government. He has been under secret supervision, and undoubtedly still is so. And in view of the disorders that have come to light now, you

are undoubtedly bound in duty. You are losing your chance of distinction by letting slip the real criminal.”

“Yulia Mihailovna! Get away, Blum,” Von Lembke cried suddenly, hearing the voice of his spouse in the next room. Blum started but did not give in.

“Allow me, allow me,” he persisted, pressing both hands still more tightly on his chest.

“Get away!” hissed Andrey Antonovitch. “Do what you like ... afterwards. Oh, my God!”

The curtain was raised and Yulia Mihailovna made her appearance. She stood still majestically at the sight of Blum, casting a haughty and offended glance at him, as though the very presence of this man was an affront to her. Blum respectfully made her a deep bow without speaking and, doubled up with veneration, moved towards the door on tiptoe with his arms held a little away from him.

Either because he really took Andrey Antonovitch’s last hysterical outbreak as a direct permission to act as he was asking, or whether he strained a point in this case for the direct advantage of his benefactor, because he was too confident that success would crown his efforts; anyway, as we shall see later on, this conversation of the governor with his subordinate led to a very surprising event which amused many people, became public property, moved Yulia Mihailovna to fierce anger, utterly disconcerting Andrey Antonovitch and reducing him at the crucial moment to a state of deplorable indecision.

It was a busy day for Pyotr Stepanovitch. From Von Lembke he hastened to Bogoyavlensky Street, but as he went along Bykovy Street, past the house where Karmazinov was staying,” he suddenly stopped, grinned, and went into the house. The servant told him that he was expected, which interested him, as he had said nothing beforehand of his coming.

But the great writer really had been expecting him, not only that day but the day before and the day before that. Three days before he had handed him his manuscript *Merci* (which . he had meant to read at the literary matinee at Yulia Mihailovna’s fete). He had done this out of amiability, fully convinced that he was agreeably nattering the young man’s vanity by letting him read the great work beforehand. Pyotr Stepanovitch had noticed long before that this vainglorious, spoiled gentleman, who was so offensively unapproachable for all but the elect, this writer “with the intellect of a statesman,” was simply trying to curry favour with him, even with avidity. I believe the young man guessed at last that Karmazinov considered him, if not the leader of the whole secret revolutionary movement in Russia, at least one of those most deeply initiated into the secrets of the Russian revolution who had an incontestable influence on the younger generation. The state of mind of “the cleverest man in Russia” interested Pyotr Stepanovitch, but hitherto he had, for certain reasons, avoided explaining himself.

The great writer was staying in the house belonging to his sister, who was the wife of a kammerherr and had an estate in the neighbourhood. Both she and her husband had the deepest reverence for their illustrious relation, but to their profound regret

both of them happened to be in Moscow at the time of his visit, so that the honour of receiving him fell to the lot of an old lady, a poor relation of the kammerherr's, who had for years lived in the family and looked after the housekeeping. All the household had moved about on tiptoe since Karmazinov's arrival. The old lady sent news to Moscow almost every day, how he had slept, what he had deigned to eat, and had once sent a telegram to announce that after a dinner-party at the mayor's he was obliged to take a spoonful of a well-known medicine. She rarely plucked up courage to enter his room, though he behaved courteously to her, but dryly, and only talked to her of what was necessary.

When Pyotr Stepanovitch came in, he was eating his morning cutlet with half a glass of red wine. Pyotr Stepanovitch had been to see him before and always found him eating this cutlet, which he finished in his presence without ever offering him anything. After the cutlet a little cup of coffee was served. The footman who brought in the dishes wore a swallow-tail coat, noiseless boots, and gloves.

"Ha ha!" Karmazinov got up from the sofa, wiping his mouth with a table-napkin, and came forward to kiss him with an air of unmixed delight—after the characteristic fashion of Russians if they are very illustrious. But Pyotr Stepanovitch knew by experience that, though Karmazinov made a show of kissing him, he really only proffered his cheek, and so this time he did the same: the cheeks met. Karmazinov did not show that he noticed it, sat down on the sofa, and affably offered Pyotr Stepanovitch an easy chair facing him, in which the latter stretched himself at once.

"You don't ... wouldn't like some lunch?" inquired Karmazinov, abandoning his usual habit but with an air, of course, which would prompt a polite refusal. Pyotr Stepanovitch at once expressed a desire for lunch. A shade of offended surprise darkened the face of his host, but only for an instant; he nervously rang for the servant and, in spite of all his breeding, raised his voice scornfully as he gave orders for a second lunch to be served.

"What will you have, cutlet or coffee?" he asked once more,

"A cutlet and coffee, and tell him to bring some more wine, I am hungry," answered Pyotr Stepanovitch, calmly scrutinising his host's attire. Mr. Karmazinov was wearing a sort of indoor wadded jacket with pearl buttons, but it was too short, which was far from becoming to his rather comfortable stomach and the solid curves of his hips. But tastes differ. Over his knees he had a checkered woollen plaid reaching to the floor, though it was warm in the room.

"Are you unwell?" commented Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"No, not unwell, but I am afraid of being so in this climate," answered the writer in his squeaky voice, though he uttered each word with a soft cadence and agreeable gentlemanly lisp. "I've been expecting you since yesterday."

"Why? I didn't say I'd come."

"No, but you have my manuscript. Have you ... read it?"

"Manuscript? Which one?"

Karmazinov was terribly surprised.

“But you’ve brought it with you, haven’t you?” He was so disturbed that he even left off eating and looked at Pyotr Stepanovitch with a face of dismay.

“Ah, that *Bon jour* you mean. ...”

“*Merci*.”

“Oh, all right. I’d quite forgotten it and hadn’t read it; I haven’t had time. I really don’t know, it’s not in my pockets ... it must be on my table. Don’t be uneasy, it will be found.”

“No, I’d better send to your rooms at once. It might be lost; besides, it might be stolen.”

“Oh, who’d want it! But why are you so alarmed? Why, Yulia Mihailovna told me you always have several copies made— one kept at a notary’s abroad, another in Petersburg, a third in Moscow, and then you send some to a bank, I believe.”

“But Moscow might be burnt again and my manuscript with it. No, I’d better send at once.”

“Stay, here it is!” Pyotr Stepanovitch pulled a roll of note-paper out of a pocket at the back of his coat. “It’s a little crumpled. Only fancy, it’s been lying there with my pocket-handkerchief ever since I took it from you; I forgot it.”

Karmazinov greedily snatched the manuscript, carefully examined it, counted the pages, and laid it respectfully beside him on a special table, for the time, in such a way that he would not lose sight of it for an instant.

“You don’t read very much, it seems?” he hissed, unable to restrain himself.

“No, not very much.”

“And nothing in the way of Russian literature?”

“In the way of Russian literature? Let me see, I have read something. ... ‘On the Way’ or ‘Away!’ or ‘At the Parting of the Ways’—something of the sort; I don’t remember. It’s a long time since I read it, five years ago. I’ve no time.”

A silence followed.

“When I came I assured every one that you were a very intelligent man, and now I believe every one here is wild over you.”

“Thank you,” Pyotr Stepanovitch answered calmly.

Lunch was brought in. Pyotr Stepanovitch pounced on the cutlet with extraordinary appetite, had eaten it in a trice, tossed off the wine and swallowed his coffee.

“This boor,” thought Karmazinov, looking at him askance as he munched the last morsel and drained the last drops— “this boor probably understood the biting taunt in my words ... and no doubt he has read the manuscript with eagerness; he is simply lying with some object. But possibly he is not lying and is only genuinely stupid. I like a genius to be rather stupid. Mayn’t he be a sort of genius among them? Devil take the fellow!”

He got up from the sofa and began pacing from one end of the room to the other for the sake of exercise, as he always did after lunch.

“Leaving here soon?” asked Pyotr Stepanovitch from his easy chair, lighting a cigarette.

"I really came to sell an estate and I am in the hands of my bailiff."

"You left, I believe, because they expected an epidemic out there after the war?"

"N-no, not entirely for that reason," Mr. Karmazinov went on, uttering his phrases with an affable intonation, and each time he turned round in pacing the corner there was a faint but jaunty quiver of his right leg. "I certainly intend to live as long as I can." He laughed, not without venom. "There is something in our Russian nobility that makes them wear out very quickly, from every point of view. But I wish to wear out as late as possible, and now I am going abroad for good; there the climate is better, the houses are of stone, and everything stronger. Europe will last my time, I think. What do you think?"

"How can I tell?"

"H'm. If the Babylon out there really does fall, and great will be the fall thereof (about which I quite agree with you, yet I think it will last my time), there's nothing to fall here in Russia, comparatively speaking. There won't be stones to fall, everything will crumble into dirt. Holy Russia has less power of resistance than anything in the world. The Russian peasantry is still held together somehow by the Russian God; but according to the latest accounts the Russian God is not to be relied upon, and scarcely survived the emancipation; it certainly gave Him a severe shock. And now, what with railways, what with you ... I've no faith in the Russian God."

"And how about the European one?"

"I don't believe in any. I've been slandered to the youth of Russia. I've always sympathised with every movement among them. I was shown the manifestoes here. Every one looks at them with perplexity because they are frightened at the way things are put in them, but every one is convinced of their power even if they don't admit it to themselves. Everybody has been rolling downhill, and every one has known for ages that they have nothing to clutch at. I am persuaded of the success of this mysterious propaganda, if only because Russia is now pre-eminently the place in all the world where anything you like may happen without any opposition. I understand only too well why wealthy Russians all flock abroad, and more and more so every year. It's simply instinct. If the ship is sinking, the rats are the first to leave it. Holy Russia is a country of wood, of poverty ... and of danger, the country of ambitious beggars in its upper classes, while the immense majority live in poky little huts. She will be glad of any way of escape; you have only to present it to her. It's only the government that still means to resist, but it brandishes its cudgel in the dark and hits its own men. Everything here is doomed and awaiting the end. Russia as she is has no future. I have become a German and I am proud of it."

"But you began about the manifestoes. Tell me everything: how do you look at them?"

"Every one is afraid of them, so they must be influential. They openly unmask what is false and prove that there is nothing to lay hold of among us, and nothing to lean upon. They speak aloud while all is silent. What is most effective about them (in spite of their style) is the incredible boldness with which they look the truth straight in the

face. To look facts straight in the face is only possible to Russians of this generation. No, in Europe they are not yet so bold; it is a realm of stone, there there is still something to lean upon. So far as I see and am able to judge, the whole essence of the Russian revolutionary idea lies in the negation of honour. I like its being so boldly and fearlessly expressed. No, in Europe they wouldn't understand it yet, but that's just what we shall clutch at. For a Russian a sense of honour is only a superfluous burden, and it always has been a burden through all his history. The open 'right to dishonour' will attract him more than anything. I belong to the older generation and, I must confess, still cling to honour, but only from habit. It is only that I prefer the old forms, granted it's from timidity; you see one must live somehow what's left of one's life."

He suddenly stopped.

"I am talking," he thought, "while he holds his tongue and watches me. He has come to make me ask him a direct question. And I shall ask him."

"Yulia Mihailovna asked me by some stratagem to find out from you what the surprise is that you are preparing for the ball to-morrow," Pyotr Stepanovitch asked suddenly.

"Yes, there really will be a surprise and I certainly shall astonish ..." said Karmazinov with increased dignity. "But I won't tell you what the secret is."

Pyotr Stepanovitch did not insist.

"There is a young man here called Shatov," observed the great writer. "Would you believe it, I haven't seen him."

"A very nice person. What about him?"

"Oh, nothing. He talks about something. Isn't he the person who gave Stavrogin that slap in the face?"

"Yes."

"And what's your opinion of Stavrogin?"

"I don't know; he is such a flirt."

Karmazinov detested Stavrogin because it was the latter's habit not to take any notice of him.

"That flirt," he said, chuckling, "if what is advocated in your manifestoes ever comes to pass, will be the first to be hanged."

"Perhaps before," Pyotr Stepanovitch said suddenly.

"Quite right too," Karmazinov assented, not laughing, and with pronounced gravity.

"You have said so once before, and, do you know, I repeated it to him."

"What, you surely didn't repeat it?" Karmazinov laughed again.

"He said that if he were to be hanged it would be enough for you to be flogged, not simply as a compliment but to hurt, as they flog the peasants."

Pyotr Stepanovitch took his hat and got up from his seat. Karmazinov held out both hands to him at parting.

"And what if all that you are ... plotting for is destined to come to pass ..." he piped suddenly, in a honeyed voice with a peculiar intonation, still holding his hands in his. "How soon could it come about?"

“How could I tell?” Pyotr Stepanovitch answered rather roughly. They looked intently into each other’s eyes.

“At a guess? Approximately?” Karmazinov piped still more sweetly.

“You’ll have time to sell your estate and time to clear out too,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered still more roughly. They looked at one another even more intently.

There was a minute of silence.

“It will begin early next May and will be over by October,” Pyotr Stepanovitch said suddenly.

“I thank you sincerely,” Karmazinov pronounced in a voice saturated with feeling, pressing his hands.

“You will have time to get out of the ship, you rat,” Pyotr Stepanovitch was thinking as he went out into the street. “Well, if that ‘imperial intellect’ inquires so confidently of the day and the hour and thanks me so respectfully for the information I have given, we mustn’t doubt of ourselves. [He grinned.] H’m! But he really isn’t stupid ... and he is simply a rat escaping; men like that don’t tell tales!”

He ran to Filipov’s house in Bogoyavlensky Street.

5

Pyotr Stepanovitch went first to Kirillov’s. He found him, as usual, alone, and at the moment practising gymnastics, that is, standing with his legs apart, brandishing his arms above his head in a peculiar way. On the floor lay a ball. The tea stood cold on the table, not cleared since breakfast. Pyotr Stepanovitch stood for a minute on the threshold.

“You are very anxious about your health, it seems,” he said in a loud and cheerful tone, going into the room. “What a jolly ball, though; foo, how it bounces! Is that for gymnastics too?”

Kirillov put on his coat.

“Yes, that’s for the good of my health too,” he muttered dryly. “Sit down.”

“I’m only here for a minute. Still, I’ll sit down. Health is all very well, but I’ve come to remind you of our agreement. The appointed time is approaching ... in a certain sense,” he concluded awkwardly.

“What agreement?”

“How can you ask?” Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled and even dismayed.

“It’s not an agreement and not an obligation. I have not bound myself in any way; it’s a mistake on your part.”

“I say, what’s this you’re doing?” Pyotr Stepanovitch jumped up.

“What I choose.”

“What do you choose?”

“The same as before.”

“How am I to understand that? Does that mean that you are in the same mind?”

“Yes. Only there’s no agreement and never has been, and I have not bound myself in any way. I could do as I like and I can still do as I like.”

Kirillov explained himself curtly and contemptuously.

“I agree, I agree; be as free as you like if you don’t change your mind.” Pyotr Stepanovitch sat down again with a satisfied air. “You are angry over a word. You’ve become very irritable of late; that’s why I’ve avoided coming to see you, I was quite sure, though, you would be loyal.”

“I dislike you very much, but you can be perfectly sure— though I don’t regard it as loyalty and disloyalty.”

“But do you know” (Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled again) “we must talk things over thoroughly again so as not to get in a muddle. The business needs accuracy, and you keep giving me such shocks. Will you let me speak?”

“Speak,” snapped Kirillov, looking away.

“You made up your mind long ago to take your life ... I mean, you had the idea in your mind. Is that the right expression? Is there any mistake about that?”

“I have the same idea still.”

“Excellent. Take note that no one has forced it on you.”

“Rather not; what nonsense you talk.”

“I dare say I express it very stupidly. Of course, it would be very stupid to force anybody to it. I’ll go on. You were a member of the society before its organisation was changed, and confessed it to one of the members.”

“I didn’t confess it, I simply said so.”

“Quite so. And it would be absurd to confess such a thing. What a confession! You simply said so. Excellent.”

“No, it’s not excellent, for you are being tedious. I am not obliged to give you any account of myself and you can’t understand my ideas. I want to put an end to my life, because that’s my idea, because I don’t want to be afraid of death, because ... because there’s no need for you to know. What do you want? Would you like tea? It’s cold. Let me get you another glass.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch actually had taken up the teapot and was looking for an empty glass. Kirillov went to the cupboard and brought a clean glass.

“I’ve just had lunch at Karmazinov’s,” observed his visitor, “then I listened to him talking, and perspired and got into a sweat again running here. I am fearfully thirsty.”

“Drink. Cold tea is good.”

Kirillov sat down on his chair again and again fixed his eyes on the farthest corner.

“The idea had arisen in the society,” he went on in the same voice, “that I might be of use if I killed myself, and that when you get up some bit of mischief here, and they are looking for the guilty, I might suddenly shoot myself and leave a letter saying I did it all, so that you might escape suspicion for another year.”

“For a few days, anyway; one day is precious.”

“Good. So for that reason they asked me, if I would, to wait. I said I’d wait till the society fixed the day, because it makes no difference to me.”

“Yes, but remember that you bound yourself not to make up your last letter without me and that in Russia you would be at my ... well, at my disposition, that is for that purpose only. I need hardly say, in everything else, of course, you are free,” Pyotr Stepanovitch added almost amiably.

“I didn’t bind myself, I agreed, because it makes no difference to me.”

“Good, good. I have no intention of wounding your vanity, but ...”

“It’s not a question of vanity.”

“But remember that a hundred and twenty thalers were collected for your journey, so you’ve taken money.”

“Not at all.” Kirillov fired up. “The money was not on that condition. One doesn’t take money for that.”

“People sometimes do.”

“That’s a lie. I sent a letter from Petersburg, and in Petersburg I paid you a hundred and twenty thalers; I put it in your hand ... and it has been sent off there, unless you’ve kept it for yourself.”

“All right, all right, I don’t dispute anything; it has been sent off. All that matters is that you are still in the same mind.”

“Exactly the same. When you come and tell me it’s time, I’ll carry it all out. Will it be very soon?”

“Not very many days... . But remember, we’ll make up the letter together, the same night.”

“The same day if you like. You say I must take the responsibility for the manifestoes on myself?”

“And something else too.”

“I am not going to make myself out responsible for everything.”

“What won’t you be responsible for?” said Pyotr Stepanovitch again.

“What I don’t choose; that’s enough. I don’t want to talk about it any more.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch controlled himself and changed the subject.

“To speak of something else,” he began, “will you be with us this evening? It’s Virginsky’s name-day; that’s the pretext for our meeting.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Do me a favour. Do come. You must. We must impress them by our number and our looks. You have a face ... well, in one word, you have a fateful face.”

“You think so?” laughed Kirillov. “Very well, I’ll come, but not for the sake of my face. What time is it?”

“Oh, quite early, half-past six. And, you know, you can go in, sit down, and not speak to any one, however many there may be there. Only, I say, don’t forget to bring pencil and paper with you.”

“What’s that for?”

“Why, it makes no difference to you, and it’s my special request. You’ll only have to sit still, speaking to no one, listen, and sometimes seem to make a note. You can draw something, if you like.”

“What nonsense! What for?”

“Why, since it makes no difference to you! You keep saying that it’s just the same to you.”

“No, what for?”

“Why, because that member of the society, the inspector, has stopped at Moscow and I told some of them here that possibly the inspector may turn up to-night; and they’ll think that you are the inspector. And as you’ve been here three weeks already, they’ll be still more surprised.”

“Stage tricks. You haven’t got an inspector in Moscow.”

“Well, suppose I haven’t—damn him!—what business is that of yours and what bother will it be to you? You are a member of the society yourself.”

“Tell them I am the inspector; I’ll sit still and hold my tongue, but I won’t have the pencil and paper.”

“But why?”

“I don’t want to.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch was really angry; he turned positively green, but again he controlled himself. He got up and took his hat.

“Is that fellow with you?” he brought out suddenly, in a low voice.

“Yes.”

“That’s good. I’ll soon get him away. Don’t be uneasy.”

“I am not uneasy. He is only here at night. The old woman is in the hospital, her daughter-in-law is dead. I’ve been alone for the last two days. I’ve shown him the place in the paling where you can take a board out; he gets through, no one sees.”

“I’ll take him away soon.”

“He says he has got plenty of places to stay the night in.”

“That’s rot; they are looking for him, but here he wouldn’t be noticed. Do you ever get into talk with him?”

“Yes, at night. He abuses you tremendously. I’ve been reading the ‘Apocalypse’ to him at night, and we have tea. He listened eagerly, very eagerly, the whole night.”

“Hang it all, you’ll convert him to Christianity!”

“He is a Christian as it is. Don’t be uneasy, he’ll do the murder. Whom do you want to murder?”

“No, I don’t want him for that, I want him for something different... . And does Shatov know about Pedka?”

“I don’t talk to Shatov, and I don’t see him.”

“Is he angry?”

“No, we are not angry, only we shun one another. We lay too long side by side in America.”

“I am going to him directly.”

“As you like.”

“Stavrogin and I may come and see you from there, about ten o’clock.”

“Do.”

"I want to talk to him about something important... . I say, make me a present of your ball; what do you want with it now? I want it for gymnastics too. I'll pay you for it if you like."

"You can take it without."

Pyotr Stepanovitch put the ball in the back pocket of his coat.

"But I'll give you nothing against Stavrogin," Kirillov muttered after his guest, as he saw him out. The latter looked at him in amazement but did not answer.

Kirillov's last words perplexed Pyotr Stepanovitch extremely; he had not time yet to discover their meaning, but even while he was on the stairs of Shatov's lodging he tried to remove all trace of annoyance and to assume an amiable expression. Shatov was at home and rather unwell. He was lying on his bed, though dressed.

"What bad luck!" Pyotr Stepanovitch cried out in the doorway. "Are you really ill?"

The amiable expression of his face suddenly vanished; there was a gleam of spite in his eyes.

"Not at all." Shatov jumped up nervously. "I am not ill at all ... a little headache ..."

He was disconcerted; the sudden appearance of such a visitor positively alarmed him.

"You mustn't be ill for the job I've come about," Pyotr Stepanovitch began quickly and, as it were, peremptorily. "Allow me to sit down." (He sat down.) "And you sit down again on your bedstead; that's right. There will be a party of our fellows at Virginsky's to-night on the pretext of his birthday; it will have no political character, however—we've seen to that. I am coming with Nikolay Stavrogin. I would not, of course, have dragged you there, knowing your way of thinking at present ... simply to save your being worried, not because we think you would betray us. But as things have turned out, you will have to go. You'll meet there the very people with whom we shall finally settle how you are to leave the society and to whom you are to hand over what is in your keeping. We'll do it without being noticed; I'll take you aside into a corner; there'll be a lot of people and there's no need for every one to know. I must confess I've had to keep my tongue wagging on your behalf; but now I believe they've agreed, on condition you hand over the printing press and all the papers, of course. Then you can go where you please."

Shatov listened, frowning and resentful. The nervous alarm of a moment before had entirely left him.

"I don't acknowledge any sort of obligation to give an account to the devil knows whom," he declared definitely. "No one has the authority to set me free."

"Not quite so. A great deal has been entrusted to you. You hadn't the right to break off simply. Besides, you made no clear statement about it, so that you put them in an ambiguous position."

"I stated my position clearly by letter as soon as I arrived here."

"No, it wasn't clear," Pyotr Stepanovitch retorted calmly. "I sent you 'A Noble Personality' to be printed here, and meaning the copies to be kept here till they were

wanted; and the two manifestoes as well. You returned them with an ambiguous letter which explained nothing.”

“I refused definitely to print them.”

“Well, not definitely. You wrote that you couldn’t, but you didn’t explain for what reason. ‘I can’t’ doesn’t mean ‘I don’t want to.’ It might be supposed that you were simply unable through circumstances. That was how they took it, and considered that you still meant to keep up your connection with the society, so that they might have entrusted something to you again and so have compromised themselves. They say here that you simply meant to deceive them, so that you might betray them when you got hold of something important. I have defended you to the best of my powers, and have shown your brief note as evidence in your favour. But I had to admit on rereading those two lines that they were misleading and not conclusive.”

“You kept that note so carefully then?”

“My keeping it means nothing; I’ve got it still.”

“Well, I don’t care, damn it!” Shatov cried furiously. “Your fools may consider that I’ve betrayed them if they like—what is it to me? I should like to see what you can do to me?”

“Your name would be noted, and at the first success of the revolution you would be hanged.”

“That’s when you get the upper hand and dominate Russia?”

“You needn’t laugh. I tell you again, I stood up for you. Anyway, I advise you to turn up to-day. Why waste words through false pride? Isn’t it better to part friends? In any case you’ll have to give up the printing press and the old type and papers—that’s what we must talk about.”

“I’ll come,” Shatov muttered, looking down thoughtfully.

Pyotr Stepanovitch glanced askance at him from his place.

“Will Stavrogin be there?” Shatov asked suddenly, raising his head.

“He is certain to be.”

“Ha ha!”

Again they were silent for a minute. Shatov grinned disdainfully and irritably.

“And that contemptible ‘Noble Personality’ of yours, that I wouldn’t print here. Has it been printed?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“To make the schoolboys believe that Herzen himself had written it in your album?”

“Yes, Herzen himself.”

Again they were silent for three minutes. At last Shatov got up from the bed.

“Go out of my room; I don’t care to sit with you.”

“I’m going,” Pyotr Stepanovitch brought out with positive alacrity, getting up at once. “Only one word: Kirillov is quite alone in the lodge now, isn’t he, without a servant?”

“Quite alone. Get along; I can’t stand being in the same room with you.”

“Well, you are a pleasant customer now!” Pyotr Stepanovitch reflected gaily as he went out into the street, “and you will be pleasant this evening too, and that just suits me; nothing better could be wished, nothing better could be wished! The Russian God Himself seems helping me.”

6

He had probably been very busy that day on all sorts of errands and probably with success, which was reflected in the self-satisfied expression of his face when at six o'clock that evening he turned 'up at Stavrogin's. But he was not at once admitted: Stavrogin had just locked himself in the study with Mavriky Nikolaevitch. This news instantly made Pyotr Stepanovitch anxious. He seated himself close to the study door to wait for the visitor to go away. He could hear conversation but could not catch the words. The visit did not last long; soon he heard a noise, the sound of an extremely loud and abrupt voice, then the door opened and Mavriky Nikolaevitch came out with a very pale face. He did not notice Pyotr Stepanovitch, and quickly passed by. Pyotr Stepanovitch instantly ran into the study.

I cannot omit a detailed account of the very brief interview that had taken place between the two “rivals”—an interview which might well have seemed impossible under the circumstances, but which had yet taken place..

This is how it had come about. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had been enjoying an after-dinner nap on the couch in his study when Alexey Yegorytch had announced the unexpected visitor. Hearing the name, he had positively leapt up, unwilling to believe it. But soon a smile gleamed on his lips—a smile of haughty triumph and at the same time of a blank, incredulous wonder. The visitor, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, seemed struck by the expression of that smile as he came in; anyway, he stood still in the middle of the room as though uncertain whether to come further in or to turn back. Stavrogin succeeded at once in transforming the expression of his face, and with an air of grave surprise took a step towards him. The visitor did not take his outstretched hand, but awkwardly moved a chair and, not uttering a word, sat down without waiting for his host to do so. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sat down on the sofa facing him obliquely and, looking at Mavriky Nikolaevitch, waited in silence.

“If you can, marry Lizaveta Nikolaevna,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch brought out suddenly at last, and what was most curious, it was impossible to tell from his tone whether it was an entreaty, a recommendation, a surrender, or a command.

Stavrogin still remained silent, but the visitor had evidently said all he had come to say and gazed at him persistently, waiting for an answer.

“If I am not mistaken (but it's quite certain), Lizaveta Nikolaevna is already betrothed to you,” Stavrogin said at last.

“Promised and betrothed,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch assented firmly and clearly.

“You have ... quarrelled? Excuse me, Mavriky Nikolaevitch.”

“No, she ‘loves and respects me’; those are her words. Her words are more precious than anything.”

“Of that there can be no doubt.”

“But let me tell you, if she were standing in the church at her wedding and you were to call her, she’d give up me and every one and go to you.”

“From the wedding?”

“Yes, and after the wedding.”

“Aren’t you making a mistake?”

“No. Under her persistent, sincere, and intense hatred for you love is flashing out at every moment ... and madness ... the sincerest infinite love and ... madness! On the contrary, behind the love she feels for me, which is sincere too, every moment there are flashes of hatred ... the most intense hatred! I could never have fancied all these transitions ... before.”

“But I wonder, though, how could you come here and dispose of the hand of Lizaveta Nikolaevna? Have you the right to do so? Has she authorised you?”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch frowned and for a minute he looked down.

“That’s all words on your part,” he brought out suddenly, “words of revenge and triumph; I am sure you can read between the lines, and is this the time for petty vanity? Haven’t you satisfaction enough? Must I really dot my i’s and go into it all? Very well, I will dot my i’s, if you are so anxious for my humiliation. I have no right, it’s impossible for me to be authorised; Lizaveta Nikolaevna knows nothing about it and her betrothed has finally lost his senses and is only fit for a madhouse, and, to crown everything, has come to tell you so himself. You are the only man in the world who can make her happy, and I am the one to make her unhappy. You are trying to get her, you are pursuing her, but—I don’t know why—you won’t marry her. If it’s because of a lovers’ quarrel abroad and I must be sacrificed to end it, sacrifice me. She is too unhappy and I can’t endure it. My words are not a sanction, not a prescription, and so it’s no slur on your pride. If you care to take my place at the altar, you can do it without any sanction from me, and there is no ground for me to come to you with a mad proposal, especially as our marriage is utterly impossible after the step I am taking now. I cannot lead her to the altar feeling myself an abject wretch. What I am doing here and my handing her over to you, perhaps her bitterest foe, is to my mind something so abject that I shall never get over it.”

“Will you shoot yourself on our wedding day?”

“No, much later. Why stain her bridal dress with my blood? Perhaps I shall not shoot myself at all, either now or later.”

“I suppose you want to comfort me by saying that?”

“You? What would the blood of one more mean to you?” He turned pale and his eyes gleamed. A minute of silence followed.

“Excuse me for the questions I’ve asked you,” Stavrogin began again; “some of them I had no business to ask you, but one of them I think I have every right to put to you. Tell me, what facts have led you to form a conclusion as to my feelings for Lizaveta

Nikolaevna? I mean to a conviction of a degree of feeling on my part as would justify your coming here ... and risking such a proposal.”

“What?” Mavriky Nikolaevitch positively started. “Haven’t you been trying to win her? Aren’t you trying to win her, and don’t you want to win her?”

“Generally speaking, I can’t speak of my feeling for this woman or that to a third person or to anyone except the woman herself. You must excuse it, it’s a constitutional peculiarity. But to make up for it, I’ll tell you the truth about everything else; I am married, and it’s impossible for me either to marry or to try ‘to win’ anyone.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was so astounded that he started back in his chair and for some time stared fixedly into Stavrogin’s face.

“Only fancy, I never thought of that,” he muttered. “You said then, that morning, that you were not married ... and so I believed you were not married.”

He turned terribly pale; suddenly he brought his fist down on the table with all his might.

“If after that confession you don’t leave Lizaveta Nikolaevna alone, if you make her unhappy, I’ll kill you with my stick like a dog in a ditch!”

He jumped up and walked quickly out of the room. Pyotr Stepanovitch, running in, found his host in a most unexpected frame of mind.

“Ah, that’s you!” Stavrogin laughed loudly; his laughter seemed to be provoked simply by the appearance of Pyotr Stepanovitch as he ran in with such impulsive curiosity.

“Were you listening at the door? Wait a bit. What have you come about? I promised you something, didn’t I? Ah, bah! I remember, to meet ‘our fellows.’ Let us go. I am delighted. You couldn’t have thought of anything more appropriate.” He snatched up his hat and they both went at once out of the house.

“Are you laughing beforehand at the prospect of seeing ‘our fellows’?” chirped gaily Pyotr Stepanovitch, dodging round him with obsequious alacrity, at one moment trying to walk beside his companion on the narrow brick pavement and at the next running right into the mud of the road; for Stavrogin walked in the middle of the pavement without observing that he left no room for anyone else.

“I am not laughing at all,” he answered loudly and gaily; “on the contrary, I am sure that you have the most serious set of people there.”

“‘Surly dullards,’ as you once deigned to express it.”

“Nothing is more amusing sometimes than a surly dullard.”

“Ah, you mean Mavriky Nikolaevitch ‘? I am convinced he came to give up his betrothed to you, eh? I egged him on to do it, indirectly, would you believe it? And if he doesn’t give her up, we’ll take her, anyway, won’t we—eh?”

Pyotr Stepanovitch knew no doubt that he was running some risk in venturing on such sallies, but when he was excited he preferred to risk anything rather than to remain in uncertainty. Stavrogin only laughed.

“You still reckon you’ll help me?” he asked. “If you call me. But you know there’s one way, and the best one.”

“Do I know your way?”

“Oh no, that’s a secret for the time. Only remember, a secret has its price.”

“I know what it costs,” Stavrogin muttered to himself, but he restrained himself and was silent.

“What it costs? What did you say?” Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled.

“I said, ‘Damn you and your secret!’ You’d better be telling me who will be there. I know that we are going to a name-day party, but who will be there?”

“Oh, all sorts! Even Kirillov.”

“All members of circles?”

“Hang it all, you are in a hurry! There’s not one circle formed yet.”

“How did you manage to distribute so many manifestoes then?”

“Where we are going only four are members of the circle. The others on probation are spying on one another with jealous eagerness, and bring reports to me. They are a trustworthy set. It’s all material which we must organise, and then we must clear out. But you wrote the rules yourself, there’s no need to explain.”

“Are things going badly then? Is there a hitch?”

“Going? Couldn’t be better. It will amuse you: the first thing which has a tremendous effect is giving them titles. Nothing has more influence than a title. I invent ranks and duties on purpose; I have secretaries, secret spies, treasurers, presidents, registrars, their assistants—they like it awfully, it’s taken capitally. Then, the next force is sentimentalism, of course. You know, amongst us socialism spreads principally through sentimentalism. But the trouble is these lieutenants who bite; sometimes you put your foot in it. Then come the out-and-out rogues; well, they are a good sort, if you like, and sometimes very useful; but they waste a lot of one’s time, they want incessant looking after. And the most important force of all—the cement that holds everything together—is their being ashamed of having an opinion of their own. That is a force! And whose work is it, whose precious achievement is it, that not one idea of their own is left in their heads! They think originality a disgrace.”

“If so, why do you take so much trouble?”

“Why, if people lie simply gaping at every one, how can you resist annexing them? Can you seriously refuse to believe in the possibility of success? Yes, you have the faith, but one wants will. It’s just with people like this that success is possible. I tell you I could make them go through fire; one has only to din it into them that they are not advanced enough. The fools reproach me that I have taken in every one here over the central committee and ‘the innumerable branches.’ You once blamed me for it yourself, but where’s the deception? You and I are the central committee and there will be as many branches as we like.”

“And always the same sort of rabble!”

“Raw material. Even they will be of use.”

“And you are still reckoning on me?”

“You are the chief, you are the head; I shall only be a subordinate, your secretary. We shall take to our barque, you know; the oars are of maple, the sails are of silk,

at the helm sits a fair maiden, Lizaveta Nikolaevna ... hang it, how does it go in the ballad?"

"He is stuck," laughed Stavrogin. "No, I'd better give you my version. There you reckon on your fingers the forces that make up the circles. All that business of titles and sentimentalism is a very good cement, but there is something better; persuade four members of the circle to do for a fifth on the pretence that he is a traitor, and you'll tie them all together with the blood they've shed as though it were a knot. They'll be your slaves, they won't dare to rebel or call you to account. Ha ha ha!"

"But you ... you shall pay for those words," Pyotr Stepanovitch thought to himself, "and this very evening, in fact. You go too far."

This or something like this must have been Pyotr Stepanovitch's reflection. They were approaching Virginsky's house.

"You've represented me, no doubt, as a member from abroad, an inspector in connection with the Internationale?" Stavrogin asked suddenly.

"No, not an inspector; you won't be an inspector; but you are one of the original members from abroad, who knows the most important secrets—that's your role. You are going to speak, of course?"

"What's put that idea into your head?"

"Now you are bound to speak."

Stavrogin positively stood still in the middle of the street in surprise, not far from a street lamp. Pyotr Stepanovitch faced his scrutiny calmly and defiantly. Stavrogin cursed and went on.

"And are you going to speak?" he suddenly asked Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"No, I am going to listen to you."

"Damn you, you really are giving me an idea?"

"What idea?" Pyotr Stepanovitch asked quickly.

"Perhaps I will speak there, but afterwards I will give you a hiding—and a sound one too, you know."

"By the way, I told Karmazinov this morning that you said he ought to be thrashed, and not simply as a form but to hurt, as they flog peasants."

"But I never said such a thing; ha ha!"

"No matter. *Se non e vero ...*"

"Well, thanks. I am truly obliged."

"And another thing. Do you know, Karmazinov says that the essence of our creed is the negation of honour, and that by the open advocacy of a right to be dishonourable a Russian can be won over more easily than by anything."

"An excellent saying! Golden words!" cried Stavrogin. "He's hit the mark there! The right to dishonour—why, they'd all flock to us for that, not one would stay behind! And listen, Verhovensky, you are not one of the higher police, are you?"

"Anyone who has a question like that in his mind doesn't utter it,"

"I understand, but we are by ourselves."

“No, so far I am not one of the higher police. Enough, here we are. Compose your features, Stavrogin; I always do mine when I go in. A gloomy expression, that’s all, nothing more is wanted; it’s a very simple business.”

Chapter 7: A Meeting

1

VIRGINSKY LIVED IN HIS OWN house, or rather his wife’s, in Muravyin Street. It was a wooden house of one story, and there were no lodgers in it: On the pretext of Virginsky’s-name-day party, about fifteen guests were assembled; but the entertainment was not in the least like an ordinary provincial name-day party. From the very beginning of their married life the husband and wife had agreed once for all that it was utterly stupid to invite friends to celebrate name-days, and that “there is nothing to rejoice about in fact.” In a few years they had succeeded in completely cutting themselves off from all society. Though he was a man of some ability, and by no means very poor, he somehow seemed to every one an eccentric fellow who was fond of solitude, and, what’s more, “stuck up in conversation.” Madame Virginsky was a midwife by profession—and by that very fact was on the lowest rung of the social ladder, lower even than the priest’s wife in spite of her husband’s rank as an officer. But she was conspicuously lacking in the humility befitting her position. And after her very stupid and unpardonably open liaison on principle with Captain Lebyadkin, a notorious rogue, even the most indulgent of our ladies turned away from her with marked contempt. But Madame Virginsky accepted all this as though it were what she wanted. It is remarkable that those very ladies applied to Arina Prohorovna (that is, Madame Virginsky) when they were in an interesting condition, rather than to any one of the other three accoucheuses of the town. She was sent for even by country families living in the neighbourhood, so great was the belief in her knowledge, luck, and skill in critical cases. It ended in her practising only among the wealthiest ladies; she was greedy of money. Feeling her power to the full, she ended by not putting herself out for anyone. Possibly on purpose, indeed, in her practice in the best houses she used to scare nervous patients by the most incredible and nihilistic disregard of good manners, or by jeering at “everything holy,” at the very time when “everything holy” might have come in most useful. Our town doctor, Rozanov—he too was an accoucheur—asserted most positively that on one occasion when a patient in labour was crying out and calling on the name of the Almighty, a free-thinking sally from Arina Prohorovna, fired off like a pistol-shot, had so terrifying an effect on the patient that it greatly accelerated her delivery.

But though she was a nihilist, Madame Virginsky did not, when occasion arose, disdain social or even old-fashioned superstitions and customs if they could be of any advantage to herself. She would never, for instance, have stayed away from a baby’s

christening, and always put on a green silk dress with a train and adorned her chignon with curls and ringlets for such events, though at other times she positively revelled in slovenliness. And though during the ceremony she always maintained "the most insolent air," so that she put the clergy to confusion, yet when it was over she invariably handed champagne to the guests (it was for that that she came and dressed up), and it was no use trying to take the glass without a contribution to her "porridge bowl."

The guests who assembled that evening at Virginsky's (mostly men) had a casual and exceptional air. There was no supper nor cards. In the middle of the large drawing-room, which was papered with extremely old blue paper, two tables had been put together and covered with a large though not quite clean table-cloth, and on them two samovars were boiling. The end of the table was taken up by a huge tray with twenty-five glasses on it and a basket with ordinary French bread cut into a number of slices, as one sees it in genteel boarding-schools for boys or girls. The tea was poured out by a maiden lady of thirty, Arina Prohorovna's sister, a silent and malevolent creature, with flaxen hair and no eyebrows, who shared her sister's progressive ideas and was an object of terror to Virginsky himself in domestic life. There were only three ladies in the room: the lady of the house, her eyebrowless sister, and Virginsky's sister, a girl who had just arrived from Petersburg. Arina Prohorovna, a good-looking and buxom woman of seven-and-twenty, rather dishevelled, in an everyday greenish woollen dress, was sitting scanning the guests with her bold eyes, and her look seemed in haste to say, "You see I am not in the least afraid of anything." Miss Virginsky, a rosy-cheeked student and a nihilist, who was also good-looking, short, plump and round as a little ball, had settled herself beside Arina Prohorovna, almost in her travelling clothes. She held a roll of paper in her hand, and scrutinised the guests with impatient and roving eyes. Virginsky himself was rather unwell that evening, but he came in and sat in an easy chair by the tea-table. All the guests were sitting down too, and the orderly way in which they were ranged on chairs suggested a meeting. Evidently all were expecting something and were filling up the interval with loud but irrelevant conversation. When Stavrogin and Verhovensky appeared there was a sudden hush.

But I must be allowed to give a few explanations to make things clear.

I believe that all these people had come together in the agreeable expectation of hearing something particularly interesting, and had notice of it beforehand. They were the flower of the reddest Radicalism of our ancient town, and had been carefully picked out by Virginsky for this "meeting." I may remark, too, that some of them (though not very many) had never visited him before. Of course most of the guests had no clear idea why they had been summoned. It was true that at that time all took Pyotr Stepanovitch for a fully authorised emissary from abroad; this idea had somehow taken root among them at once and naturally flattered them. And yet among the citizens assembled ostensibly to keep a name-day, there were some who had been approached with definite proposals. Pyotr Verhovensky had succeeded in getting together a "quintet" amongst us like the one he had already formed in Moscow and, as appeared later, in our province among the officers. It was said that he had another in X province. This

quintet of the elect were sitting now at the general table, and very skilfully succeeded in giving themselves the air of being quite ordinary people, so that no one could have known them. They were—since it is no longer a secret—first Liputin, then Virginsky himself, then Shigalov (a gentleman with long ears, the brother of Madame Virginsky), Lyamshin, and lastly a strange person called Tolkatchenko, a man of forty, who was famed for his vast knowledge of the people, especially of thieves and robbers. He used to frequent the taverns on purpose (though not only with the object of studying the people), and plumed himself on his shabby clothes, tarred boots, and crafty wink and a flourish of peasant phrases. Lyamshin had once or twice brought him to Stepan Trofimovitch's gatherings, where, however, he did not make a great sensation. He used to make his appearance in the town from time to time, chiefly when he was out of a job; he was employed on the railway.

Every one of these fine champions had formed this first group in the fervent conviction that their quintet was only one of hundreds and thousands of similar groups scattered all over Russia, and that they all depended on some immense central but secret power, which in its turn was intimately connected with the revolutionary movement all over Europe. But I regret to say that even at that time there was beginning to be dissension among them. Though they had ever since the spring been expecting Pyotr Verhovensky, whose coming had been heralded first by Tolkatchenko and then by the arrival of Shigalov, though they had expected extraordinary miracles from him, and though they had responded to his first summons without the slightest criticism, yet they had no sooner formed the quintet than they all somehow seemed to feel insulted; and I really believe it was owing to the promptitude with which they consented to join. They had joined, of course, from a not ignoble feeling of shame, for fear people might say afterwards that they had not dared to join; still they felt Pyotr Verhovensky ought to have appreciated their heroism and have rewarded it by telling them some really important bits of news at least. But Verhovensky was not at all inclined to satisfy their legitimate curiosity, and told them nothing but what was necessary; he treated them in general with great sternness and even rather casually. This was positively irritating, and Comrade Shigalov was already egging the others on to insist on his "explaining himself," though, of course, not at Virginsky's, where so many outsiders were present.

I have an idea that the above-mentioned members of the first quintet were disposed to suspect that among the guests of Virginsky's that evening some were members of other groups, unknown to them, belonging to the same secret organisation and founded in the town by the same Verhovensky; so that in fact all present were suspecting one another, and posed in various ways to one another, which gave the whole party a very perplexing and even romantic air. Yet there were persons present who were beyond all suspicion. For instance, a major in the service, a near relation of Virginsky, a perfectly innocent person who had not been invited but had come of himself for the name-day celebration, so that it was impossible not to receive him. But Virginsky was quite unperturbed, as the major was "incapable of betraying them"; for in spite of his stupidity he had all his life been fond of dropping in wherever extreme Radicals met;

he did not sympathise with their ideas himself, but was very fond of listening to them. What's more, he had even been compromised indeed. It had happened in his youth that whole bundles of manifestoes and of numbers of *The Fella* had passed through his hands, and although he had been afraid even to open them, yet he would have considered it absolutely contemptible to refuse to distribute them—and there are such people in Russia even to this day.

The rest of the guests were either types of honourable amour-propre crushed and embittered, or types of the generous impulsiveness of ardent youth. There were two or three teachers, of whom one, a lame man of forty-five, a master in the high school, was a very malicious and strikingly vain person; and two or three officers. Of the latter, one very young artillery officer who had only just come from a military training school, a silent lad who had not yet made friends with anyone, turned up now at Virginsky's with a pencil in his hand, and, scarcely taking any part in the conversation, continually made notes in his notebook. Everybody saw this, but every one pretended not to. There was, too, an idle divinity student who had helped Lyamshin to put indecent photographs into the gospel-woman's pack. He was a solid youth with a free-and-easy though mistrustful manner, with an unchangeably satirical smile, together with a calm air of triumphant faith in his own perfection. There was also present, I don't know why, the mayor's son, that unpleasant and prematurely exhausted youth to whom I have referred already in telling the story of the lieutenant's little wife. He was silent the whole evening. Finally there was a very enthusiastic and tousle-headed schoolboy of eighteen, who sat with the gloomy air of a young man whose dignity has been wounded, evidently distressed by his eighteen years. This infant was already the head of an independent group of conspirators which had been formed in the highest class of the gymnasium, as it came out afterwards to the surprise of every one.

I haven't mentioned Shatov. He was there at the farthest corner of the table, his chair pushed back a little out of the row. He gazed at the ground, was gloomily silent, refused tea and bread, and did not for one instant let his cap go out of his hand, as though to show that he was not a visitor, but had come on business, and when he liked would get up and go away. Kirillov was not far from him. He, too, was very silent, but he did not look at the ground; on the contrary, he scrutinised intently every speaker with his fixed, lustreless eyes, and listened to everything without the slightest emotion or surprise. Some of the visitors who had never seen him before stole thoughtful glances at him. I can't say whether Madame Virginsky knew anything about the existence of the quintet. I imagine she knew everything and from her husband. The girl-student, of course, took no part in anything; but she had an anxiety of her own: she intended to stay only a day or two and then to go on farther and farther from one university town to another "to show active sympathy with the sufferings of poor students and to rouse them to protest." She was taking with her some hundreds of copies of a lithographed appeal, I believe of her own composition. It is remarkable that the schoolboy conceived an almost murderous hatred for her from the first moment, though he saw her for the first time in his life; and she felt the same for him. The major was her uncle, and met

her to-day for the first time after ten years. When Stavrogin and Verhovensky came in, her cheeks were as red as cranberries: she had just quarrelled with her uncle over his views on the woman question.

2

With conspicuous nonchalance Verhovensky lounged in the chair at the upper end of the table, almost without greeting anyone. His expression was disdainful and even haughty. Stavrogin bowed politely, but in spite of the fact that they were all only waiting for them, everybody, as though acting on instruction, appeared scarcely to notice them. The lady of the house turned severely to Stavrogin as soon as he was seated.

“Stavrogin, will you have tea?”

“Please,” he answered.

“Tea for Stavrogin,” she commanded her sister at the samovar. “And you, will you?” (This was to Verhovensky.)

“Of course. What a question to ask a visitor! And give me cream too; you always give one such filthy stuff by way of tea, and with a name-day party in the house!”

“What, you believe in keeping name-days too!” the girl-student laughed suddenly. “We were just talking of that.”

“That’s stale,” muttered the schoolboy at the other end of the table.

“What’s stale? To disregard conventions, even the most innocent is not stale; on the contrary, to the disgrace of every one, so far it’s a novelty,” the girl-student answered instantly, darting forward on her chair. “Besides, there are no innocent conventions,” she added with intensity.

“I only meant,” cried the schoolboy with tremendous excitement, “to say that though conventions of course are stale and must be eradicated, yet about name-days everybody knows that they are stupid and very stale to waste precious time upon, which has been wasted already all over the world, so that it would be as well to sharpen one’s wits on something more useful... .”

“You drag it out so, one can’t understand what you mean,” shouted the girl.

“I think that every one has a right to express an opinion as well as every one else, and if I want to express my opinion like anybody else ...”

“No one is attacking your right to give an opinion,” the lady of the house herself cut in sharply. “You were only asked not to ramble because no one can make out what you mean.”

“But allow me to remark that you are not treating me with respect. If I couldn’t fully express my thought, it’s not from want of thought but from too much thought,” the schoolboy muttered, almost in despair, losing his thread completely.

“If you don’t know how to talk, you’d better keep quiet,” blurted out the girl.

The schoolboy positively jumped from his chair.

"I only wanted to state," he shouted, crimson with shame and afraid to look about him, "that you only wanted to show off your cleverness because Mr. Stavrogin came in—so there!"

"That's a nasty and immoral idea and shows the worthlessness of your development. I beg you not to address me again," the girl rattled off.

"Stavrogin," began the lady of the house, "they've been discussing the rights of the family before you came—this officer here"—she nodded towards her relation, the major—"and, of course, I am not going to worry you with such stale nonsense, which has been dealt with long ago. But how have the rights and duties of the family come about in the superstitious form in which they exist at present? That's the question. What's your opinion?"

"What do you mean by 'come about'?" Stavrogin asked in his turn.

"We know, for instance, that the superstition about God came from thunder and lightning." The girl-student rushed into the fray again, staring at Stavrogin with her eyes almost jumping out of her head. "It's well known that primitive man, scared by thunder and lightning, made a god of the unseen enemy, feeling their weakness before it. But how did the superstition of the family arise? How did the family itself arise?"

"That's not quite the same thing... ." Madame Virginsky tried to check her.

"I think the answer to this question wouldn't be quite discreet," answered Stavrogin.

"How so?" said the girl-student, craning forward suddenly. But there was an audible titter in the group of teachers, which was at once caught up at the other end by Lyamshin and the schoolboy and followed by a hoarse chuckle from the major.

"You ought to write vaudevilles," Madame Virginsky observed to Stavrogin.

"It does you no credit, I don't know what your name is," the girl rapped out with positive indignation.

"And don't you be too forward," boomed the major. "You are a young lady and you ought to behave modestly, and you keep jumping about as though you were sitting on a needle."

"Kindly hold your tongue and don't address me familiarly with your nasty comparisons. I've never seen you before and I don't recognise the relationship."

"But I am your uncle; I used to carry you about when you were a baby!"

"I don't care what babies you used to carry about. I didn't ask you to carry me. It must have been a pleasure to you to do so, you rude officer. And allow me to observe, don't dare to address me so familiarly, unless it's as a fellow-citizen. I forbid you to do it, once for all."

"There, they are all like that!" cried the major, banging the table with his fist and addressing Stavrogin, who was sitting opposite. "But, allow me, I am fond of Liberalism and modern ideas, and I am fond of listening to clever conversation; masculine conversation, though, I warn you. But to listen to these women, these nightly windmills—no, that makes me ache all over! Don't wriggle about!" he shouted to the girl, who was leaping up from her chair. "No, it's my turn to speak, I've been insulted."

"You can't say anything yourself, and only hinder other people talking," the lady of the house grumbled indignantly.

"No, I will have my say," said the major hotly, addressing Stavrogin. "I reckon on you, Mr. Stavrogin, as a fresh person who has only just come on the scene, though I haven't the honour of knowing you. Without men they'll perish like flies—that's what I think. All their woman question is only lack of originality. I assure you that all this woman question has been invented for them by men in foolishness and to their own hurt. I only thank God I am not married. There's not the slightest variety in them, they can't even invent a simple pattern; they have to get men to invent them for them! Here I used to carry her in my arms, used to dance the mazurka with her when she was ten years old; to-day she's come, naturally I fly to embrace her, and at the second word she tells me there's no God. She might have waited a little, she was in too great a hurry! Clever people don't believe, I dare say; but that's from their cleverness. But you, chicken, what do you know about God, I said to her. 'Some student taught you, and if he'd taught you to light the lamp before the ikons you would have lighted it.' "

"You keep telling lies, you are a very spiteful person. I proved to you just now the untenability of your position," the girl answered contemptuously, as though disdainful of further explanations with such a man. "I told you just now that we've all been taught in the Catechism if you honour your father and your parents you will live long and have wealth. That's in the Ten Commandments. If God thought it necessary to offer rewards for love, your God must be immoral. That's how I proved it to you. It wasn't the second word, and it was because you asserted your rights. It's not my fault if you are stupid and don't understand even now. You are offended and you are spiteful—and that's what explains all your generation."

"You're a goose!" said the major.

"And you are a fool!"

"You can call me names!"

"Excuse me, Kapiton Maximitch, you told me yourself you don't believe in God," Liputin piped from the other end of the table.

"What if I did say so—that's a different matter. I believe, perhaps, only not altogether. Even if I don't believe altogether, still I don't say God ought to be shot. I used to think about God before I left the hussars. From all the poems you would think that hussars do nothing but carouse and drink. Yes, I did drink, maybe, but would you believe it, I used to jump out of bed at night and stood crossing myself before the images with nothing but my socks on, praying to God to give me faith; for even then I couldn't be at peace as to whether there was a God or not. It used to fret me so! In the morning, of course, one would amuse oneself and one's faith would seem to be lost again; and in fact I've noticed that faith always seems to be less in the daytime."

"Haven't you any cards?" asked Verhovensky, with a mighty yawn, addressing Madame Virginsky.

"I sympathise with your question, I sympathise entirely," the girl-student broke in hotly, flushed with indignation at the major's words.

"We are wasting precious time listening to silly talk," snapped out the lady of the house, and she looked reprovingly at her husband.

The girl pulled herself together.

"I wanted to make a statement to the meeting concerning the sufferings of the students and their protest, but as time is being wasted in immoral conversation ..."

"There's no such thing as moral or immoral," the schoolboy brought out, unable to restrain himself as soon as the girl began.

"I knew that, Mr. Schoolboy, long before you were taught it."

"And I maintain," he answered savagely, "that you are a child come from Petersburg to enlighten us all, though we know for ourselves the commandment 'honour thy father and thy mother,' which you could not repeat correctly; and the fact that it's immoral every one in Russia knows from Byelinsky."

"Are we ever to have an end of this?" Madame Virginsky said resolutely to her husband. As the hostess, she blushed for the ineptitude of the conversation, especially as she noticed smiles and even astonishment among the guests who had been invited for the first time.

"Gentlemen," said Virginsky, suddenly lifting up his voice, "if anyone wishes to say anything more nearly connected with our business, or has any statement to make, I call upon him to do so without wasting time."

"I'll venture to ask one question," said the lame teacher suavely. He had been sitting particularly decorously and had not spoken till then. "I should like to know, are we some sort of meeting, or are we simply a gathering of ordinary mortals paying a visit? I ask simply for the sake of order and so as not to remain in ignorance."

This "sly" question made an impression. People looked at each other, every one expecting some one else to answer, and suddenly all, as though at a word of command, turned their eyes to Verhovensky and Stavrogin.

"I suggest our voting on the answer to the question whether we are a meeting or not," said Madame Virginsky.

"I entirely agree with the suggestion," Liputin chimed in, "though the question is rather vague."

"I agree too."

"And so do I," cried voices. "I too think it would make our proceedings more in order," confirmed Virginsky.

"To the vote then," said his wife. "Lyamshin, please sit down to the piano; you can give your vote from there when the voting begins."

"Again!" cried Lyamshin. "I've strummed enough for you."

"I beg you most particularly, sit down and play. Don't you care to do anything for the cause?"

"But I assure you, Arina Prohorovna, nobody is eavesdropping. It's only your fancy. Besides, the windows are high, and people would not understand if they did hear."

“We don’t understand ourselves,” some one muttered. “But I tell you one must always be on one’s guard. I mean in case there should be spies,” she explained to Verhovensky. “Let them hear from the street that we have music and a name-day party.”

“Hang it all!” Lyamshin swore, and sitting down to the piano, began strumming a valse, banging on the keys almost with his fists, at random.

“I propose that those who want it to be a meeting should put up their right hands,” Madame Virginsky proposed.

Some put them up, others did not. Some held them up and then put them down again and then held them up again. “Poo! I don’t understand it at all,” one officer shouted. “I don’t either,” cried the other.

“Oh, I understand,” cried a third. “If it’s yes, you hold your hand up.”

“But what does ‘yes’ mean?”

“Means a meeting.”

“No, it means not a meeting.”

“I voted for a meeting,” cried the schoolboy to Madame Virginsky.

“Then why didn’t you hold up your hand?”

“I was looking at you. You didn’t hold up yours, so I didn’t hold up mine.”

“How stupid! I didn’t hold up my hand because I proposed it. Gentlemen, now I propose the contrary. Those who want a meeting, sit still and do nothing; those who don’t, hold up their right hands.”

“Those who don’t want it?” inquired the schoolboy. “Are you doing it on purpose?” cried Madame Virginsky wrathfully.

“No. Excuse me, those who want it, or those who don’t want it? For one must know that definitely,” cried two or three voices.

“Those who don’t want it—those who don’t want it.”

“Yes, tat what is one to do, hold up one’s hand or not hold it up if one doesn’t want it?” cried an officer.

“Ech, we are not accustomed to constitutional methods yet!” remarked the major.

“Mr. Lyamshin, excuse me, but you are thumping so that no one can hear anything,” observed the lame teacher.

“But, upon my word, Arina Prohorovna, nobody is listening, really!” cried Lyamshin, jumping up. “I won’t play! I’ve come to you as a visitor, not as a drummer!”

“Gentlemen,” Virginsky went on, “answer verbally, are we a meeting or not?”

“We are! We are!” was heard on all sides. “If so, there’s no need to vote, that’s enough. Are you satisfied, gentlemen? Is there any need to put it to the vote?”

“No need—no need, we understand.”

“Perhaps some one doesn’t want it to be a meeting?”

“No, no; we all want it.”

“But what does ‘meeting’ mean?” cried a voice. No one answered.

“We must choose a chairman,” people cried from different parts of the room.

“Our host, of course, our host!”

"Gentlemen, if so," Virginsky, the chosen chairman, began, "I propose my original motion. If anyone wants to say anything more relevant to the subject, or has some statement to make, let him bring it forward without loss of time."

There was a general silence. The eyes of all were turned again on Verhovensky and Stavrogin.

"Verhovensky, have you no statement to make?" Madame Virginsky asked him directly.

"Nothing whatever," he answered, yawning and stretching on his chair. "But I should like a glass of brandy."

"Stavrogin, don't you want to?"

"Thank you, I don't drink."

"I mean don't you want to speak, not don't you want brandy?"

"To speak, what about? No, I don't want to."

"They'll bring you some brandy," she answered Verhovensky, The girl-student got up. She had darted up several times already.

"I have come to make a statement about the sufferings of poor students and the means of rousing them to protest."

But she broke off. At the other end of the table a rival had risen, and all eyes turned to him. Shigalov, the man with the long ears, slowly rose from his seat with a gloomy and sullen air and mournfully laid on the table a thick notebook filled with extremely small handwriting. He remained standing in silence. Many people looked at the notebook in consternation, but Liputin, Virginsky, and the lame teacher seemed pleased.

"I ask leave to address the meeting," Shigalov pronounced sullenly but resolutely.

"You have leave." Virginsky gave his sanction.

The orator sat down, was silent for half a minute, and pronounced in a solemn voice, "Gentlemen!"

"Here's the brandy," the sister who had been pouring out tea and had gone to fetch brandy rapped out, contemptuously and disdainfully putting the bottle before Verhovensky, together with the wineglass which she brought in her fingers without a tray or a plate.

The interrupted orator made a dignified pause.

"Never mind, go on, I am not listening," cried Verhovensky, pouring himself out a glass.

"Gentlemen, asking your attention and, as you will see later, soliciting your aid in a matter of the first importance," Shigalov began again, "I must make some prefatory remarks."

"Arina Prohorovna, haven't you some scissors?" Pyotr Stepanovitch asked suddenly.

"What do you want scissors for?" she asked, with wide-open eyes.

"I've forgotten to cut my nails; I've been meaning to for the last three days," he observed, scrutinising his long and dirty nails with unruffled composure.

Arina Prohorovna crimsoned, but Miss Virginsky seemed pleased.

"I believe I saw them just now on the window." She got up from the table, went and found the scissors, and at once brought them. Pyotr Stepanovitch did not even look at her, took the scissors, and set to work with them. Arina Prohorovna grasped that these were realistic manners, and was ashamed of her sensitiveness. People looked at one another in silence. The lame teacher looked vindictively and enviously at Verhovensky. Shigalov went on.

"Dedicating my energies to the study of the social organisation which is in the future to replace the present condition of things, I've come to the conviction that all makers of social systems from ancient times up to the present year, 187-, have been dreamers, tellers of fairy-tales, fools who contradicted themselves, who understood nothing of natural science and the strange animal called man. Plato, Rousseau, Fourier, columns of aluminium, are only fit for sparrows and not for human society. But, now that we are all at last preparing to act, a new form of social organisation is essential. In order to avoid further uncertainty, I propose my own system of world-organisation. Here it is." He tapped the notebook. "I wanted to expound my views to the meeting in the most concise form possible, but I see that I should need to add a great many verbal explanations, and so the whole exposition would occupy at least ten evenings, one for each of my chapters." (There was the sound of laughter.) "I must add, besides, that my system is not yet complete." (Laughter again.) "I am perplexed by my own data and my conclusion is a direct contradiction of the original idea with which I start. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrive at unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no solution of the social problem but mine."

The laughter grew louder and louder, but it came chiefly from the younger and less initiated visitors. There was an expression of some annoyance on the faces of Madame Virginsky, Liputin, and the lame teacher.

"If you've been unsuccessful in making your system consistent, and have been reduced to despair yourself, what could we do with it?" one officer observed warily.

"You are right, Mr. Officer"—Shigalov turned sharply to him—"especially in using the word despair. Yes, I am reduced to despair. Nevertheless, nothing can take the place of the system set forth in my book, and there is no other way out of it; no one can invent anything else. And so I hasten without loss of time to invite the whole society to listen for ten evenings to my book and then give their opinions of it. If the members are unwilling to listen to me, let us break up from the start—the men to take up service under government, the women to their cooking; for if you reject my solution you'll find no other, none whatever! If they let the opportunity slip, it will simply be their loss, for they will be bound to come back to it again."

There was a stir in the company. "Is he mad, or what?" voices asked.

"So the whole point lies in Shigalov's despair," Lyamshin commented, "and the essential question is whether he must despair or not?"

"Shigalov's being on the brink of despair is a personal question," declared the school-boy.

"I propose we put it to the vote how far Shigalov's despair affects the common cause, and at the same time whether it's worth while listening to him or not," an officer suggested gaily.

"That's not right." The lame teacher put in his spoke at last. As a rule he spoke with a rather mocking smile, so that it was difficult to make out whether he was in earnest or joking. "That's not right, gentlemen. Mr. Shigalov is too much devoted to his task and is also too modest. I know his book. He suggests as a final solution of the question the division of mankind into two unequal parts. One-tenth enjoys absolute liberty and unbounded power over the other nine-tenths. The others have to give up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd, and, through boundless submission, will by a series of regenerations attain primaevial innocence, something like the Garden of Eden. They'll have to work, however. The measures proposed by the author for depriving nine-tenths of mankind of their freedom and transforming them into a herd through the education of whole generations are very remarkable, founded on the facts of nature and highly logical. One may not agree with some of the deductions, but it would be difficult to doubt the intelligence and knowledge of the author. It's a pity that the time required—ten evenings—is impossible to arrange for, or we might hear a great deal that's interesting."

"Can you be in earnest?" Madame Virginsky addressed the lame gentleman with a shade of positive uneasiness in her voice, "when that man doesn't know what to do with people and so turns nine-tenths of them into slaves? I've suspected him for a long time."

"You say that of your own brother?" asked the lame man.

"Relationship? Are you laughing at me?"

"And besides, to work for aristocrats and to obey them as though they were gods is contemptible!" observed the girl-student fiercely.

"What I propose is not contemptible; it's paradise, an earthly paradise, and there can be no other on earth," Shigalov pronounced authoritatively.

"For my part," said Lyamshin, "if I didn't know what to do with nine-tenths of mankind, I'd take them and blow them up into the air instead of putting them in paradise. I'd only leave a handful of educated people, who would live happily ever afterwards on scientific principles."

"No one but a buffoon can talk like that!" cried the girl, flaring up.

"He is a buffoon, but he is of use," Madame Virginsky whispered to her.

"And possibly that would be the best solution of the problem," said Shigalov, turning hotly to Lyamshin. "You certainly don't know what a profound thing you've succeeded in saying, my merry friend. But as it's hardly possible to carry out your idea, we must confine ourselves to an earthly paradise, since that's what they call it."

"This is pretty thorough rot," broke, as though involuntarily, from Verhovensky. Without even raising his eyes, however, he went on cutting his nails with perfect nonchalance.

“Why is it rot?” The lame man took it up instantly, as though he had been lying in wait for his first words to catch at them. “Why is it rot? Mr. Shigalov is somewhat fanatical in his love for humanity, but remember that Fourier, still more Cabet and even Proudhon himself, advocated a number of the most despotic and even fantastic measures. Mr. Shigalov is perhaps far more sober in his suggestions than they are. I assure you that when one reads his book it’s almost impossible not to agree with some things. He is perhaps less far from realism than anyone and his earthly paradise is almost the real one—if it ever existed—for the loss of which man is always sighing.”

“I knew I was in for something,” Verhovensky muttered again.

“Allow me,” said the lame man, getting more and more excited. “Conversations and arguments about the future organisation of society are almost an actual necessity for all thinking people nowadays. Herzen was occupied with nothing else all his life. Byelinsky, as I know on very good authority, used to spend whole evenings with his friends debating and settling beforehand even the minutest, so to speak, domestic, details of the social organisation of the future.”

“Some people go crazy over it,” the major observed suddenly.

“We are more likely to arrive at something by talking, anyway, than by sitting silent and posing as dictators,” Liputin hissed, as though at last venturing to begin the attack.

“I didn’t mean Shigalov when I said it was rot,” Verhovensky mumbled. “You see, gentlemen,”—he raised his eyes a trifle—“to my mind all these books, Fourier, Cabet, all this talk about the right to work, and Shigalov’s theories—are all like novels of which one can write a hundred thousand—an aesthetic entertainment. I can understand that in this little town you are bored, so you rush to ink and paper.”

“Excuse me,” said the lame man, wriggling on his chair, “though we are provincials and of course objects of commiseration on that ground, yet we know that so far nothing has happened in the world new enough to be worth our weeping at having missed it. It is suggested to us in various pamphlets made abroad and secretly distributed that we should unite and form groups with the sole object of bringing about universal destruction. It’s urged that, however much you tinker with the world, you can’t make a good job of it, but that by cutting off a hundred million heads and so lightening one’s burden, one can jump over the ditch more safely. A fine idea, no doubt, but quite as impracticable as Shigalov’s theories, which you referred to just now so contemptuously.”

“Well, but I haven’t come here for discussion.” Verhovensky let drop this significant phrase, and, as though quite unaware of his blunder, drew the candle nearer to him that he might see better.

“It’s a pity, a great pity, that you haven’t come for discussion, and it’s a great pity that you are so taken up just now with your toilet.”

“What’s my toilet to you?”

“To remove a hundred million heads is as difficult as to transform the world by propaganda. Possibly more difficult, especially in Russia,” Liputin ventured again.

“It’s Russia they rest their hopes on now,” said an officer.

“We’ve heard they are resting their hopes on it,” interposed the lame man. “We know that a mysterious finger is pointing to our delightful country as the land most fitted to accomplish the great task. But there’s this: by the gradual solution of the problem by propaganda I shall gain something, anyway—I shall have some pleasant talk, at least, and shall even get some recognition from government for my services to the cause of society. But in the second way, by the rapid method of cutting off a hundred million heads, what benefit shall I get personally? If you began advocating that, your tongue might be cut out.”

“Yours certainly would be,” observed Verhovensky.

“You see. And as under the most favourable circumstances you would not get through such a massacre in less than fifty or at the best thirty years—for they are not sheep, you know, and perhaps they would not let themselves be slaughtered—wouldn’t it be better to pack one’s bundle and migrate to some quiet island beyond calm seas and there close one’s eyes tranquilly? Believe me”—he tapped the table significantly with his finger— “you will only promote emigration by such propaganda and nothing else!”

He finished evidently triumphant. He was one of the intellects of the province. Liputin smiled slyly, Virginsky listened rather dejectedly, the others followed the discussion with great attention, especially the ladies and officers. They all realised that the advocate of the hundred million heads theory had been driven into a corner, and waited to see what would come of it.

“That was a good saying of yours, though,” Verhovensky mumbled more carelessly than ever, in fact with an air of positive boredom. “Emigration is a good idea. But all the same, if in spite of all the obvious disadvantages you foresee, more and more come forward every day ready to fight for the common cause, it will be able to do without you. It’s a new Religion, my good friend, coming to take the place of the old one. That’s why so many fighters come forward, and it’s a big movement. You’d better emigrate! And, you know, I should advise Dresden, not ‘the calm islands.’ To begin with, it’s a town that has never been visited by an epidemic, and as you are a man of culture, no doubt you are afraid of death. Another thing, it’s near the Russian frontier, so you can more easily receive your income from your beloved Fatherland. Thirdly, it contains what are called treasures of art, and you are a man of aesthetic tastes, formerly a teacher of literature, I believe. And, finally, it has a miniature Switzerland of its own—to provide you with poetic inspiration, for no doubt you write verse. In fact it’s a treasure in a nutshell!” There was a general movement, especially among the officers. In another instant they would have all begun talking at once. But the lame man rose irritably to the bait.

“No, perhaps I am not going to give up the common cause. You must understand that ...”

“What, would you join the quintet if I proposed it to you?” Verhovensky boomed suddenly, and he laid down the scissors.

Every one seemed startled. The mysterious man had revealed himself too freely. He had even spoken openly of the “quintet.”

“Every one feels himself to be an honest man and will not shirk his part in the common cause”—the lame man tried to wriggle out of it—“but ...”

“No, this is not a question which allows of a but,” Verhovensky interrupted harshly and peremptorily. “I tell you, gentlemen, I must have a direct answer. I quite understand that, having come here and having called you together myself, I am bound to give you explanations” (again an unexpected revelation), “but I can give you none till I know what is your attitude to the subject. To cut the matter short—for we can’t go on talking for another thirty years as people have done for the last thirty—I ask you which you prefer: the slow way, which consists in the composition of socialistic romances and the academic ordering of the destinies of humanity a thousand years hence, while despotism will swallow the savoury morsels which would almost fly into your mouths of themselves if you’d take a little trouble; or do you, whatever it may imply, prefer a quicker way which will at last untie your hands, and will let humanity make its own social organisation in freedom and in action, not on paper? They shout ‘a hundred million heads’; that may be only a metaphor; but why be afraid of it if, with the slow day-dream on paper, despotism in the course of some hundred years will devour not a hundred but five hundred million heads? Take note too that an incurable invalid will not be cured whatever prescriptions are written for him on paper. On the contrary, if there is delay, he will grow so corrupt that he will infect us too and contaminate all the fresh forces which one might still reckon upon now, so that we shall all at last come to grief together. I thoroughly agree that it’s extremely agreeable to chatter liberally and eloquently, but action is a little trying... . However, I am no hand at talking; I came here with communications, and so I beg all the honourable company not to vote, but simply and directly to state which you prefer: walking at a snail’s pace in the marsh, or putting on full steam to get across it?”

“I am certainly for crossing at full steam!” cried the schoolboy in an ecstasy.

“So am I,” Lyamshin chimed in.

“There can be no doubt about the choice,” muttered an officer, followed by another, then by some one else. What struck them all most was that Verhovensky had come “with communications” and had himself just promised to speak.

“Gentlemen, I see that almost all decide for the policy of the manifestoes,” he said, looking round at the company.

“All, all!” cried the majority of voices.

“I confess I am rather in favour of a more humane policy,” said the major, “but as all are on the other side, I go with all the rest.”

“It appears, then, that even you are not opposed to it,” said Verhovensky, addressing the lame man.

“I am not exactly ...” said the latter, turning rather red, “but if I do agree with the rest now, it’s simply not to break up—“

“You are all like that! Ready to argue for six months to practise your Liberal eloquence and in the end you vote the same as the rest! Gentlemen, consider though, is it true that you are all ready?”

(Ready for what? The question was vague, but very alluring.)

“All are, of course!” voices were heard. But all were looking at one another.

“But afterwards perhaps you will resent having agreed so quickly? That’s almost always the way with you.”

The company was excited in various ways, greatly excited. The lame man flew at him.

“Allow me to observe, however, that answers to such questions are conditional. Even if we have given our decision, you must note that questions put in such a strange way ...”

“In what strange way?”

“In a way such questions are not asked.”

“Teach me how, please. But do you know, I felt sure you’d be the first to take offence.”

“You’ve extracted from us an answer as to our readiness for immediate action; but what right had you to do so? By what authority do you ask such questions?”

“You should have thought of asking that question sooner! Why did you answer? You agree and then you go back on it!”

“But to my mind the irresponsibility of your principal question suggests to me that you have no authority, no right, and only asked from personal curiosity.”

“What do you mean? What do you mean?” cried Verhovensky, apparently beginning to be much alarmed.

“Why, that the initiation of new members into anything you like is done, anyway, *tete-a-tete* and not in the company of twenty people one doesn’t know!” blurted out the lame man. He had said all that was in his mind because he was too irritated to restrain himself. Verhovensky turned to the general company with a capitally simulated look of alarm.

“Gentlemen, I deem it my duty to declare that all this is folly, and that our conversation has gone too far. I have so far initiated no one, and no one has the right to say of me that I initiate members. We were simply discussing our opinions. That’s so, isn’t it? But whether that’s so or not, you alarm me very much.” He turned to the lame man again. “I had no idea that it was unsafe here to speak of such practically innocent matters except *tete-a-tete*. Are you afraid of informers? Can there possibly be an informer among us here?”

The excitement became tremendous; all began talking.

“Gentlemen, if that is so,” Verhovensky went on, “I have compromised myself more than anyone, and so I will ask you to answer one question, if you care to, of course. You are all perfectly free.”

“What question? What question?” every one clamoured.

“A question that will make it clear whether we are to remain together, or take up our hats and go our several ways without speaking.”

“The question! The question!”

“If any one of us knew of a proposed political murder, would he, in view of all the consequences, go to give information, or would he stay at home and await events? Opinions may differ on this point. The answer to the question will tell us clearly whether we are to separate, or to remain together and for far longer than this one evening. Let me appeal to you first.” He turned to the lame man.

“Why to me first?”

“Because you began it all. Be so good as not to prevaricate; it won’t help you to be cunning. But please yourself, it’s for you to decide.”

“Excuse me, but such a question is positively insulting.”

“No, can’t you be more exact than that?”

“I’ve never been an agent of the Secret Police,” replied the latter, wriggling more than ever.

“Be so good as to be more definite, don’t keep us waiting.”

The lame man was so furious that he left off answering. Without a word he glared wrathfully from under his spectacles at his tormentor.

“Yes or no? Would you inform or not?” cried Verhovensky.

“Of course I wouldn’t,” the lame man shouted twice as loudly.

“And no one would, of course not!” cried many voices.

“Allow me to appeal to you, Mr. Major. Would you inform or not?” Verhovensky went on. “And note that I appeal to you on purpose.”

“I won’t inform.”

“But if you knew that some one meant to rob and murder some one else, an ordinary mortal, then you would inform and give warning?”

“Yes, of course; but that’s a private affair, while the other would be a political treachery. I’ve never been an agent of the Secret Police.”

“And no one here has,” voices cried again. “It’s an unnecessary question. Every one will make the same answer. There are no informers here.”

“What is that gentleman getting up for?” cried the girl-student.

“That’s Shatov. What are you getting up for?” cried the lady of the house.

Shatov did, in fact, stand up. He was holding his cap in his hand and looking at Verhovensky. Apparently he wanted to say something to him, but was hesitating. His face was pale and wrathful, but he controlled himself. He did not say one word, but in silence walked towards the door.

“Shatov, this won’t make things better for you!” Verhovensky called after him enigmatically.

“But it will for you, since you are a spy and a scoundrel!” Shatov shouted to him from the door, and he went out.

Shouts and exclamations again.

“That’s what comes of a test,” cried a voice.

"It's been of use," cried another.

"Hasn't it been of use too late?" observed a third.

"Who invited him? Who let him in? Who is he? Who is Shatov? Will he inform, or won't he?" There was a shower of questions.

"If he were an informer he would have kept up appearances instead of cursing it all and going away," observed some one.

"See, Stavrogin is getting up too. Stavrogin has not answered the question either," cried the girl-student.

Stavrogin did actually stand up, and at the other end of the table Kirillov rose at the same time.

"Excuse me, Mr. Stavrogin," Madame Virginsky addressed him sharply, "we all answered the question, while you are going away without a word."

"I see no necessity to answer the question which interests you," muttered Stavrogin.

"But we've compromised ourselves and you won't," shouted several voices.

"What business is it of mine if you have compromised yourselves?" laughed Stavrogin, but his eyes flashed.

"What business? What business?" voices exclaimed.

Many people got up from their chairs.

"Allow me, gentlemen, allow me," cried the lame man. "Mr. Verhovensky hasn't answered the question either; he has only asked it."

The remark produced a striking effect. All looked at one another. Stavrogin laughed aloud in the lame man's face and went out; Kirillov followed him; Verhovensky ran after them into the passage.

"What are you doing?" he faltered, seizing Stavrogin's hand and gripping it with all his might in his. Stavrogin pulled away his hand without a word.

"Be at Kirillov's directly, I'll come... . It's absolutely necessary for me to see you! ..."

"It isn't necessary for me," Stavrogin cut him short.

"Stavrogin will be there," Kirillov said finally. "Stavrogin, it is necessary for you. I will show you that there."

They went out.

Chapter 8: Ivan the Tsarevitch

They had gone. Pyotr Stepanovitch was about to rush back to the meeting to bring order into chaos, but probably reflecting that it wasn't worth bothering about, left everything, and two minutes later was flying after the other two. On the way he remembered a short cut to Filipov's house. He rushed along it, up to his knees in mud, and did in fact arrive at the very moment when Stavrogin and Kirillov were coming in at the gate.

"You here already?" observed Kirillov. "That's good. Come in."

"How is it you told us you lived alone," asked Stavrogin, passing a boiling samovar in the passage.

"You will see directly who it is I live with," muttered Kirillov. "Go in."

They had hardly entered when Verhovensky at once took out of his pocket the anonymous letter he had taken from Lembke, and laid it before Stavrogin. They all then sat down. Stavrogin read the letter in silence.

"Well?" he asked.

"That scoundrel will do as he writes," Verhovensky explained. "So, as he is under your control, tell me how to act. I assure you he may go to Lembke to-morrow."

"Well, let him go."

"Let him go! And when we can prevent him, too!"

"You are mistaken. He is not dependent on me. Besides, I don't care; he doesn't threaten me in any way; he only threatens you."

"You too."

"I don't think so."

"But there are other people who may not spare you. Surely you understand that? Listen, Stavrogin. This is only playing with words. Surely you don't grudge the money?"

"Why, would it cost money?"

"It certainly would; two thousand or at least fifteen hundred. Give it to me to-morrow or even to-day, and to-morrow evening I'll send him to Petersburg for you. That's just what he wants. If you like, he can take Marya Timofyevna. Note that."

There was something distracted about him. He spoke, as it were, without caution, and he did not reflect on his words. Stavrogin watched him, wondering.

"I've no reason to send Marya Timofyevna away."

"Perhaps you don't even want to," Pyotr Stepanovitch smiled ironically.

"Perhaps I don't."

"In short, will there be the money or not?" he cried with angry impatience, and as it were peremptorily, to Stavrogin. The latter scrutinised him gravely. "There won't be the money."

"Look here, Stavrogin! You know something, or have done something already! You are going it!"

His face worked, the corners of his mouth twitched, and he suddenly laughed an unprovoked and irrelevant laugh.

"But you've had money from your father for the estate," Stavrogin observed calmly. "Maman sent you six or eight thousand for Stepan Trofimovitch. So you can pay the fifteen hundred out of your own money. I don't care to pay for other people. I've given a lot as it is. It annoys me... ." He smiled himself at his own words. "Ah, you are beginning to joke!"

Stavrogin got up from his chair. Verhovensky instantly jumped up too, and mechanically stood with his back to the door as though barring the way to him. Stavrogin had already made a motion to push him aside and go out, when he stopped short.

"I won't give up Shatov to you," he said. Pyotr Stepanovitch started. They looked at one another.

"I told you this evening why you needed Shatov's blood," said Stavrogin, with flashing eyes. "It's the cement you want to bind your groups together with. You drove Shatov away cleverly just now. You knew very well that he wouldn't promise not to inform and he would have thought it mean to lie to you. But what do you want with me? What do you want with me? Ever since we met abroad you won't let me alone. The explanation you've given me so far was simply raving. Meanwhile you are driving at my giving Lebyadkin fifteen hundred roubles, so as to give Fedka an opportunity to murder him. I know that you think I want my wife murdered too. You think to tie my hands by this crime, and have me in your power. That's it, isn't it? What good will that be to you? What the devil do you want with me? Look at me. Once for all, am I the man for you? And let me alone."

"Has Fedka been to you himself?" Verhovensky asked breathlessly.

"Yes, he came. His price is fifteen hundred too... . But here; he'll repeat it himself. There he stands." Stavrogin stretched out his hand.

Pyotr Stepanovitch turned round quickly. A new figure, Fedka, wearing a sheep-skin coat, but without a cap, as though he were at home, stepped out of the darkness in the doorway. He stood there laughing and showing his even white teeth. His black eyes, with yellow whites, darted cautiously about the room watching the gentlemen. There was something he did not understand. He had evidently been just brought in by Kirillov, and his inquiring eyes turned to the latter. He stood in the doorway, but was unwilling to come into the room.

"I suppose you got him ready here to listen to our bargaining, or that he may actually see the money in our hands. Is that it?" asked Stavrogin; and without waiting for an answer he walked out of the house. Verhovensky, almost frantic, overtook him at the gate.

"Stop! Not another step!" he cried, seizing him by the arm. Stavrogin tried to pull away his arm, but did not succeed. He was overcome with fury. Seizing Verhovensky by the hair with his left hand he flung him with all his might on the ground and went out at the gate. But he had not gone thirty paces before Verhovensky overtook him again.

"Let us make it up; let us make it up!" he murmured in a spasmodic whisper.

Stavrogin shrugged his shoulders, but neither answered nor turned round.

"Listen. I will bring you Lizaveta Nikolaevna to-morrow; shall I? No? Why don't you answer? Tell me what you want. I'll do it. Listen. I'll let you have Shatov. Shall I?"

"Then it's true that you meant to kill him?" cried Stavrogin.

"What do you want with Shatov? What is he to you?" Pyotr Stepanovitch went on, gasping, speaking rapidly. He was in a frenzy, and kept running forward and seizing Stavrogin by the elbow, probably unaware of what he was doing. "Listen. I'll let you have him. Let's make it up. Your price is a very great one, but ... Let's make it up!"

Stavrogin glanced at him at last, and was amazed. The eyes, the voice, were not the same as always, or as they had been in the room just now. What he saw was almost another face. The intonation of the voice was different. Verhovensky besought, implored. He was a man from whom what was most precious was being taken or had been taken, and who was still stunned by the shock.

“But what’s the matter with you?” cried Stavrogin. The other did not answer, but ran after him and gazed at him with the same imploring but yet inflexible expression.

“Let’s make it up!” he whispered once more. “Listen. Like Fedka, I have a knife in my boot, but I’ll make it up with you!”

“But what do you want with me, damn you?” Stavrogin cried, with intense anger and amazement. “Is there some mystery about it? Am I a sort of talisman for you?”

“Listen. We are going to make a revolution,” the other muttered rapidly, and almost in delirium. “You don’t believe we shall make a revolution? We are going to make such an upheaval that everything will be uprooted from its foundation. Karmazinov is right that there is nothing to lay hold of. Karmazinov is very intelligent. Another ten such groups in different parts of Russia—and I am safe.”

“Groups of fools like that?” broke reluctantly from Stavrogin.

“Oh, don’t be so clever, Stavrogin; don’t be so clever yourself. And you know you are by no means so intelligent that you need wish others to be. You are afraid, you have no faith. You are frightened at our doing things on such a scale. And why are they fools? They are not such fools. No one has a mind of his own nowadays. There are terribly few original minds nowadays. Virginsky is a pure-hearted man, ten times as pure as you or I; but never mind about him. Liputin is a rogue, but I know one point about him. Every rogue has some point in him... . Lyamshin is the only one who hasn’t, but he is in my hands. A few more groups, and I should have money and passports everywhere; so much at least. Suppose it were only that? And safe places, so that they can search as they like. They might uproot one group but they’d stick at the next. We’ll set things in a ferment... . Surely you don’t think that we two are not enough?”

“Take Shigalov, and let me alone. ...”

“Shigalov is a man of genius! Do you know he is a genius like Fourier, but bolder than Fourier; stronger. I’ll look after him. He’s discovered ‘equality ‘!”

“He is in a fever; he is raving; something very queer has happened to him,” thought Stavrogin, looking at him once more. Both walked on without stopping.

“He’s written a good thing in that manuscript,” Verhovensky went on. “He suggests a system of spying. Every member of the society spies on the others, and it’s his duty to inform against them. Every one belongs to all and all to every one. All are slaves and equal in their slavery. In extreme cases he advocates slander and murder, but the great thing about it is equality. To begin with, the level of education, science, and talents is lowered. A high level of education and science is only possible for great intellects, and they are not wanted. The great intellects have always seized the power and been despots. Great intellects cannot help being despots and they’ve always done more harm

than good. They will be banished or put to death. Cicero will have his tongue cut out, Copernicus will have his eyes put out, Shakespeare will be stoned—that's Shigalovism. Slaves are bound to be equal. There has never been either freedom or equality without despotism, but in the herd there is bound to be equality, and that's Shigalovism! Ha ha ha! Do you think it strange? I am for Shigalovism."

Stavrogin tried to quicken his pace, and to reach home as soon as possible. "If this fellow is drunk, where did he manage to get drunk?" crossed his mind. "Can it be the brandy?"

"Listen, Stavrogin. To level the mountains is a fine idea, not an absurd one. I am for Shigalov. Down with culture. We've had enough science! Without science we have material enough to go on for a thousand years, but one must have discipline. The one thing wanting in the world is discipline. The thirst for culture is an aristocratic thirst. The moment you have family ties or love you get the desire for property. We will destroy that desire; we'll make use of drunkenness, slander, spying; we'll make use of incredible corruption; we'll stifle every genius in its infancy. We'll reduce all to a common denominator! Complete equality! 'We've learned a trade, and we are honest men; we need nothing more,' that was an answer given by English working-men recently. Only the necessary is necessary, that's the motto of the whole world henceforward. But it needs a shock. That's for us, the directors, to look after. Slaves must have directors. Absolute submission, absolute loss of individuality, but once in thirty years Shigalov would let them have a shock and they would all suddenly begin eating one another up, to a certain point, simply as a precaution against boredom. Boredom is an aristocratic sensation. The Shigalovians will have no desires. Desire and suffering are our lot, but Shigalovism is for the slaves."

"You exclude yourself?" Stavrogin broke in again.

"You, too. Do you know, I have thought of giving up the world to the Pope. Let him come forth, on foot, and barefoot, and show himself to the rabble, saying, 'See what they have brought me to!' and they will all rush after him, even the troops. The Pope at the head, with us round him, and below us—Shigalovism. All that's needed is that the Internationale should come to an agreement with the Pope; so it will. And the old chap will agree at once. There's nothing else he can do. Remember my words! Ha ha! Is it stupid? Tell me, is it stupid or not?"

"That's enough!" Stavrogin muttered with vexation.

"Enough! Listen. I've given up the Pope! Damn Shigalovism! Damn the Pope! We must have something more everyday. Not Shigalovism, for Shigalovism is a rare specimen of the jeweller's art. It's an ideal; it's in the future. Shigalov is an artist and a fool like every philanthropist. We need coarse work, and Shigalov despises coarse work. Listen. The Pope shall be for the west, and you shall be for us, you shall be for us!"

"Let me alone, you drunken fellow!" muttered Stavrogin, and he quickened his pace.

"Stavrogin, you are beautiful," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, almost ecstatically. "Do you know that you are beautiful! What's the most precious thing about you is that you sometimes don't know it. Oh, I've studied you! I often watch you on the sly! There's a

lot of simpleheartedness and naivete about you still. Do you know that? There still is, there is! You must be suffering and suffering genuinely from that simple-heartedness. I love beauty. I am a nihilist, but I love beauty. Are nihilists incapable of loving beauty? It's only idols they dislike, but I love an idol. You are my idol! You injure no one, and every one hates you. You treat every one as an equal, and yet every one is afraid of you—that's good. Nobody would slap you on the shoulder. You are an awful aristocrat. An aristocrat is irresistible when he goes in for democracy! To sacrifice life, your own or another's is nothing to you. You are just the man that's needed. It's just such a man as you that I need. I know no one but you. You are the leader, you are the sun and I am your worm."

He suddenly kissed his hand. A shiver ran down Stavrogin's spine, and he pulled away his hand in dismay. They stood still.

"Madman!" whispered Stavrogin.

"Perhaps I am raving; perhaps I am raving," Pyotr Stepanovitch assented, speaking rapidly. "But I've thought of the first step! Shigalov would never have thought of it. There are lots of Shigalovs, but only one man, one man in Russia has hit on the first step and knows how to take it. And I am that man! Why do you look at me? I need you, you; without you I am nothing. Without you I am a fly, a bottled idea; Columbus without America."

Stavrogin stood still and looked intently into his wild eyes.

"Listen. First of all we'll make an upheaval," Verhovensky went on in desperate haste, continually clutching at Stavrogin's left sleeve. "I've already told you. We shall penetrate to the peasantry. Do you know that we are tremendously powerful already? Our party does not consist only of those who commit murder and arson, fire off pistols in the traditional fashion, or bite colonels. They are only a hindrance. I don't accept anything without discipline. I am a scoundrel, of course, and not a socialist. Ha ha! Listen. I've reckoned them all up: a teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle; is on our side. The lawyer who defends an educated murderer because he is more cultured than his victims and could not help murdering them to get money is one of us. The schoolboys who murder a peasant for the sake of sensation are ours. The juries who acquit every criminal are ours. The prosecutor who trembles at a trial for fear he should not seem advanced enough is ours, ours. Among officials and literary men we have lots, lots, and they don't know it themselves. On the other hand, the docility of schoolboys and fools has reached an extreme pitch; the schoolmasters are bitter and bilious. On all sides we see vanity puffed up out of all proportion; brutal, monstrous appetites... . Do you know how many we shall catch by little, ready-made ideas? When I left Russia, Littre's dictum that crime is insanity was all the rage; I come back and I find that crime is no longer insanity, but simply common sense, almost a duty; anyway, a gallant protest. 'How can we expect a cultured man not to commit a murder, if he is in need of money.' But these are only the first fruits. The Russian God has already been vanquished by cheap vodka. The peasants are drunk, the mothers are drunk, the children are drunk, the churches are empty, and in the peasant courts

one hears, 'Two hundred lashes or stand us a bucket of vodka.' Oh, this generation has only to grow up. It's only a pity we can't afford to wait, or we might have let them get a .bit more tipsy! Ah, what a pity there's no proletariat! But there will be, there will be; we are going that way... ."

"It's a pity, too, that we've grown greater fools," muttered Stavrogin, moving forward as before.

"Listen. I've seen a child of six years old leading home his drunken mother, whilst she swore at him with foul words. Do you suppose I am glad of that? When it's in our hands, maybe we'll mend things ... if need be, we'll drive them for forty years into the wilderness... . But one or two generations of vice are essential now; monstrous, abject vice by which a man is transformed into a loathsome, cruel, egoistic reptile. That's what we need! And what's more, a little 'fresh blood' that we may get accustomed to it. Why are you laughing? I am not contradicting myself. I am only contradicting the philanthropists and Shigalovism, not myself! I am a scoundrel, not a socialist. Ha ha ha! I'm only sorry there's no time. I promised Karmazinov to begin in May, and to make an end by October. Is that too soon? Ha ha! Do you know what, Stavrogin? Though the Russian people use foul language, there's nothing cynical about them so far. Do you know the serfs had more self-respect than Karmazinov? Though they were beaten they always preserved their gods, which is more than Karmazinov's done."

"Well, Verhovensky, this is the first time I've heard you talk, and I listen with amazement," observed Stavrogin. "So you are really not a socialist, then, but some sort of ... ambitious politician?"

"A scoundrel, a scoundrel! You are wondering what I am. I'll tell you what I am directly, that's what I am leading up to. It was not for nothing that I kissed your hand. But the people-must believe that we know what we are after, while the other side do nothing but 'brandish their cudgels and beat their own followers.' Ah, if we only had more time! That's the only trouble, we have no time. We will proclaim destruction... .. Why is it, why is it that idea has such a fascination. But we must have a little exercise; we must. We'll set fires going... . We'll set legends going. Every scurvy 'group' will be of use. Out of those very groups I'll pick you out fellows so keen they'll not shrink from shooting, and be grateful for the honour of a job, too. Well, and there will be an upheaval! There's going to be such an upset as the world has never seen before... . Russia will be overwhelmed with darkness, the earth will weep for its old gods.... . Well, then we shall bring forward ... whom?"

"Whom."

"Ivan the Tsarevitch."

"Who-m?"

"Ivan the Tsarevitch. You! You!"

Stavrogin thought a minute.

"A pretender?" he asked suddenly, looking with intense-surprise at his frantic companion. "Ah! so that's your plan at last!"

“We shall say that he is ‘in hiding,’” Verhovensky said softly, in a sort of tender whisper, as though he really were drunk indeed. “Do you know the magic of that phrase, ‘he is in hiding’? But he will appear, he will appear. We’ll set a legend going better than the Skoptsis’. He exists, but no one has seen him. Oh, what a legend one can set going! And the great thing is it will be a new force at work! And we need that; that’s what they are crying for. What can Socialism do: it’s destroyed the old forces but hasn’t brought in any new.. But in this we have a force, and what a force! Incredible. We only need one lever to lift up the earth. Everything will rise up!”

“Then have you been seriously reckoning on me?” Stavrogin said with a malicious smile.

“Why do you laugh, and so spitefully? Don’t frighten me. I am like a little child now. I can be frightened to death by one-smile like that. Listen. I’ll let no one see you, no one. So it-must be. He exists, but no one has seen him; he is in hiding. And do you know, one might show you, to one out of a hundred-thousand, for instance. And the rumour will spread over all the land, ‘We’ve seen him, we’ve seen him.’

“Ivan Filipovitch the God of Sabaoth, has been seen, too, when he ascended into heaven in his chariot in the sight of men. They saw him with their own eyes. And you are not an Ivan Filipovitch. You are beautiful and proud as a God; you are seeking nothing for yourself, with the halo of a victim round you, ‘in hiding.’ The great thing is the legend. You’ll conquer them, you’ll have only to look, and you will conquer them. He is ‘in hiding,’ and will come forth bringing a new truth. And, meanwhile, we’ll pass two or three judgments as wise as Solomon’s. The groups, you know, the quintets—we’ve no need of newspapers. If out of ten thousand petitions only one is granted, all would come with petitions. In every parish, every peasant will know that there is somewhere a hollow tree where petitions are to be put. And the whole land will resound with the cry, ‘A new just law is to come,’ and the sea will be troubled and the whole gimcrack show will fall to the ground, and then we shall consider how to build up an edifice of stone. For the first time! We are going to build it, we, and only we!”

“Madness,” said Stavrogin.

“Why, why don’t you want it? Are you afraid? That’s why I caught at you, because you are afraid of nothing. Is it unreasonable? But you see, so far I am Columbus without America. Would Columbus without America seem reasonable?”

Stavrogin did not speak. Meanwhile they had reached the house and stopped at the entrance.

“Listen,” Verhovensky bent down to his ear. “I’ll do it for you without the money. I’ll settle Marya Timofyevna to-morrow! ... Without the money, and to-morrow I’ll bring you Liza. Will you have Liza to-morrow?”

“Is he really mad?” Stavrogin wondered smiling. The front door was opened.

“Stavrogin—is America ours?” said Verhovensky, seizing his hand for the last time.

“What for?” said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, gravely and sternly.

“You don’t care, I knew that!” cried Verhovensky in an access of furious anger. “You are lying, you miserable, profligate, perverted, little aristocrat! I don’t believe you, you’ve the

* The reference is to the legend current in the sect of Flagellants.—Translator’s note.

appetite of a wolf! ... Understand that you’ve cost me such a price, I can’t give you up now! There’s no one on earth but you! I invented you abroad; I invented it all, looking at you. If I hadn’t watched you from my corner, nothing of all this would have entered my head!”

Stavrogin went up the steps without answering.

“Stavrogin!” Verhovensky called after him, “I give you a day ... two, then ... three, then; more than three I can’t— and then you’re to answer!”

Chapter 9: A Raid at Stefan Trofimovitch’s

Meanwhile an incident had occurred which astounded me and shattered Stepan Trofimovitch. At eight o’clock in the morning Nastasya ran round to me from him with the news that her master was “raided.” At first I could not make out what she meant; I could only gather that the “raid” was carried out by officials, that they had come and taken his papers, and that a soldier had tied them up in a bundle and “wheeled them away in a barrow.” It was a fantastic story. I hurried at once to Stepan Trofimovitch.

I found him in a surprising condition: upset and in great agitation, but at the same time unmistakably triumphant. On the table in the middle of the room the samovar was boiling, and there was a glass of tea poured out but untouched and forgotten. Stepan Trofimovitch was wandering round the table and peeping into every corner of the room, unconscious of what he was doing. He was wearing his usual red knitted jacket, but seeing me, he hurriedly put on his coat and waistcoat—a thing he had never done before when any of his intimate friends found him in his jacket. He took me warmly by the hand at once.

“Enfin un ami!” (He heaved a deep sigh.) “Cher, I’ve sent to you only, and no one knows anything. We must give Nastasya orders to lock the doors and not admit anyone, except, of course them... . Vous comprenez?”

He looked at me uneasily, as though expecting a reply. I made haste, of course, to question him, and from his disconnected and broken sentences, full of unnecessary parentheses, I succeeded in learning that at seven o’clock that morning an official of the province had ‘all of a sudden’ called on him.

“Pardon, j’ai oublié son nom, Il n’est pas du pays, but I think he came to the town with Lembke, quelque chose de bete et d’Allemand dans la physionomie. Il s’appelle Bosenthal.”

“Wasn’t it Blum?”

“Yes, that was his name. Vous le connaissez? Quelque chose d’Maite et de tres content dans la figure, pomtant tres severe, roide et serieux. A type of the police, of the submissive subordinates, je m’y connais. I was still asleep, and, would you believe it, he asked to have a look at my books and manuscripts! Oui, je m’en souviens, il a employe ce mot. He did not arrest me, but only the books. Il se tenait a distance, and when he began to explain his visit he looked as though I ... enfin il avait Vair de croire que je tomberai sur lui immediatement et que je commen-cerai a le battre comme platre. Tous ces gens du bas etage sont comme ca when they have to do with a gentleman. I need hardly say I understood it all at once. Voild vingt ans que je m’y prepare. I opened all the drawers and handed him all the keys; I gave them myself, I gave him all. J’etais digne et calme. From the books he took the foreign edition of Herzen, the bound volume of The Sell, four copies of my poem, et enfin tout fa. Then he took my letters and my papers et quelques-unes de mes ebauches historiques, critiques et politiques. All that they carried off. Nastasya says that a soldier wheeled them away in a barrow and covered them with an apron; oui, c’est cela, with an apron.” It sounded like delirium. Who could make head or tail of it? I pelted him with questions again. Had Blum come alone, or with others? On whose authority? By what right? How had he dared? How did he explain it?

“Il etait seul, bien seul, but there was some one else dans l’antichambre, oui, je m’en souviens, et puis ... Though I believe there was some one else besides, and there was a guard standing in the entry. You must ask Nastasya; she knows all about it better than I do. J’etais surexcite, voyez-vous. Il parlait, il parlait ... un tas de chases; he said very little though, it was I said all that. ... I told him the story of my life, simply from that point of view, of course. J’etais surexcite, mais digne, je vous assure. ... I am afraid, though, I may have shed tears. They got the barrow from the shop next door.”

“Oh, heavens! how could all this have happened? But for mercy’s sake, speak more exactly, Stepan Trofimovitch. What you tell me sounds like a dream.”

“Cher, I feel as though I were in a dream myself... Savez-vous! Il a prononce le nom de Telyatnikof, and I believe that that man was concealed in the entry. Yes, I remember, he suggested: calling the prosecutor and Dmitri Dmitritch, I believe ...; qui me doit encore quinze roubles I won at cards, soit Ait en passant. Enfin, je n’ai pas trop compris. But I got the better of them, and what do I care for Dmitri Dmitritch? I believe I begged him very earnestly to keep it quiet; I begged him particularly, most particularly. I am afraid I demeaned myself, in fact, comment croyez-vous? Enfin il a consenti. Yes, I remember, he suggested that himself—that it would be better to keep it quiet, for he had only come ‘to have a look round’ et rien de plus, and nothing more, nothing more ... and that if they find nothing, nothing will happen. So that we ended it all en amis, je suis tout a fait content.”

“Why, then he suggested the usual course of proceedings in such cases and regular guarantees, and you rejected them yourself,” I cried with friendly indignation.

“Yes, it’s better without the guarantees. And why make a scandal? Let’s keep it en amis so long as we can. You know, in our town, if they get to know it ... mes ennemis,

et puis, a quoi bon, le procureur, ce cochon de notre procureur, qui deux fois m'a manque de politesse et qu'on a rosse a plaisir Vautre annee chez cette charmante et belle Natalya Pavlovna quand il se cacha dans son boudoir. Et puis, mon ami, don't make objections and don't depress me, I beg you, for nothing is more unbearable when a man is in trouble than for a hundred friends to point out to him what a fool he has made of himself. Sit down though and have some tea. I must admit I am awfully tired... . Hadn't I better lie down and put vinegar on my head? What do you think?"

"Certainly," I cried, "ice even. You are very much upset. You are pale and your hands are trembling. Lie down, rest, and put off telling me. I'll sit by you and wait."

He hesitated, but I insisted on his lying down. Nastasya brought a cup of vinegar. I wetted a towel and laid it on his head. Then Nastasya stood on a chair and began lighting a lamp before the ikon in the corner. I noticed this with surprise; there had never been a lamp there before and now suddenly it had made its appearance.

"I arranged for that as soon as they had gone away," muttered Stepan Trofimovitch, looking at me slyly. "Quand on a de ces choses-la dans sa chambre et qu'on vient vous arreter it makes an impression and they are sure to report that they have seen it... ."

When she had done the lamp, Nastasya stood in the doorway, leaned her cheek in her right hand, and began gazing at him with a lachrymose air.

"Eloignez-la on some excuse," he nodded to me from the sofa. "I can't endure this Russian sympathy, et puis ca m'embete."

But she went away of herself. I noticed that he kept looking towards the door and listening for sounds in the passage.

"Il faut etre prit, voyez-vous," he said, looking at me significantly, "chaque moment ... they may come and take one and, phew!—a man disappears."

"Heavens! who'll come? Who will take you?"

"Voyez-vous, mon cher, I asked straight out when he was going away, what would they do to me now."

"You'd better have asked them where you'd be exiled!" I cried out in the same indignation.

"That's just what I meant when I asked, but he went away without answering. Voyez-vous: as for linen, clothes, warm things especially, that must be as they decide; if they tell me to take them—all right, or they might send me in a soldier's overcoat. But I thrust thirty-five roubles" (he suddenly dropped his voice, looking towards the door by which Nastasya had gone out) "in a slit in my waistcoat pocket, here, feel... . I believe they won't take the waistcoat off, and left seven roubles in my purse to keep up appearances, as though that were all I have. You see, it's in small change and the coppers are on the table, so they won't guess that I've hidden the money, but will suppose that that's all. For God knows where I may have to sleep to-night!"

I bowed my head before such madness. It was obvious that a man could not be arrested and searched in the way he was describing, and he must have mixed things up. It's true it all happened in the days before our present, more recent regulations. It is true, too, that according to his own account they had offered to follow the more

regular procedure, but he “got the better of them” and refused. ... Of course not long ago a governor might, in extreme cases... . But how could this be an extreme case? That’s what baffled me.

“No doubt they had a telegram from Petersburg,” Stepan Trofimovitch said suddenly.

“A telegram? About you? Because of the works of Herzen and your poem? Have you taken leave of your senses? What is there in that to arrest you for?”

I was positively angry. He made a grimace and was evidently mortified—not at my exclamation, but at the idea that there was no ground for arrest.

“Who can tell in our day what he may not be arrested for?” he muttered enigmatically.

A wild and nonsensical idea crossed my mind.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, tell me as a friend,” I cried, “as a real friend, I will not betray you: do you belong to some secret society or not?”

And on this, to my amazement, he was not quite certain whether he was or was not a member of some secret society.

“That depends, voyez-vous.”

“How do you mean ‘it depends’?”

“When with one’s whole heart one is an adherent of progress and ... who can answer it? You may suppose you don’t belong, and suddenly it turns out that you do belong to some thing.”

“Now is that possible? It’s a case of yes or no.”

“Cela date de Petersburg when she and I were meaning to found a magazine there. That’s what’s at the root of it. She gave them the slip then, and they forgot us, but now they’ve remembered. Cher, cher, don’t you know me?” he cried hysterically. “And they’ll take us, put us in a cart, and march us off to Siberia for ever, or forget us in prison.”

And he suddenly broke into bitter weeping. His tears positively streamed. He covered his face with his red silk handkerchief and sobbed, sobbed convulsively for five minutes. It wrung my heart. This was the man who had been a prophet among us for twenty years, a leader, a patriarch, the Kukolnik who had borne himself so loftily and majestically before all of us, before whom we bowed down with genuine reverence, feeling proud of doing so—and all of a sudden here he was sobbing, sobbing like a naughty child waiting for the rod which the teacher is fetching for him. I felt fearfully sorry for him. He believed in the reality of that “cart” as he believed that I was sitting by his side, and he expected it that morning, at once, that very minute, and all this on account of his Herzen and some poem! Such complete, absolute ignorance of everyday reality was touching and somehow repulsive.

At last he left off crying, got up from the sofa and began walking about the room again, continuing to talk to me, though he looked out of the window every minute and listened to every sound in the passage. Our conversation was still disconnected. All my assurances and attempts to console him rebounded from him like peas from a wall. He scarcely listened, but yet what he needed was that I should console him and keep on

talking with that object. I saw that he could not do without me now, and would not let me go for anything. I remained, and we spent more than two hours together. In conversation he recalled that Blum had taken with him two manifestoes he had found.

“Manifestoes!” I said, foolishly frightened. “Do you mean to say you ...”

“Oh, ten were left here,” he answered with vexation (he talked to me at one moment in a vexed and haughty tone and at the next with dreadful plaintiveness and humiliation), “but I had disposed of eight already, and Blum only found two.” And he suddenly flushed with indignation. “Vous me mettez avec ces gens-la! Do you suppose I could be working with those scoundrels, those anonymous libellers, with my son Pyotr Stepanovitch, avec ces esprits forts de la achete? Oh, heavens!”

“Bah! haven’t they mixed you up perhaps? ... But it’s nonsense, it can’t be so,” I observed.

“Savez-vous,” broke from him suddenly, “I feel at moments que je ferai id-bas quelque esclandre. Oh, don’t go away, don’t leave me alone! Ma carriere est finie aujourd’hui, je le sens. Do you know, I might fall on somebody there and bite him, like that lieutenant.”

He looked at me with a strange expression—alarmed, and at the same time anxious to alarm me. He certainly was getting more and more exasperated with somebody and about something as time went on and the police-cart did not appear; he was positively wrathful. Suddenly Nastasya, who had come from the kitchen into the passage for some reason, upset a clothes-horse there. Stepan Trofimovitch trembled and turned numb with terror as he sat; but when the noise was explained, he almost shrieked at Nastasya and, stamping, drove her back to the kitchen. A minute later he said, looking at me in despair: “I am ruined! Cher”—he sat down suddenly beside me and looked piteously into my face—“cher, it’s not Siberia I am afraid of, I swear. Oh, je vous jure!” (Tears positively stood in his eyes.) “It’s something else I fear.”

I saw from his expression that he wanted at last to tell me something of great importance which he had till now refrained from telling.

“I am afraid of disgrace,” he whispered mysteriously. “What disgrace? On the contrary! Believe me, Stepan Trofimovitch, that all this will be explained to-day and will end to your advantage... .”

“Are you so sure that they will pardon me?”

“Pardon you? What! What a word! What have you done? I assure you you’ve done nothing.”

“Qu’en savez-vous; all my life has been ... cher ... They’ll remember everything ... and if they find nothing, it will be worse still,” he added all of a sudden, unexpectedly. “How do you mean it will be worse?”

“It will be worse.”

“I don’t understand.”

“My friend, let it be Siberia, Archangel, loss of rights—if I must perish, let me perish! But ... I am afraid of something else.” (Again whispering, a scared face, mystery.) “But of what? Of what?”

“They’ll flog me,” he pronounced, looking at me with a face of despair.

“Who’ll flog you? What for? Where?” I cried, feeling alarmed that he was going out of his mind.

“Where? Why there ... where ‘that’s’ done.”

“But where is it done?”

“Eh, cher,” he whispered almost in my ear. “The floor suddenly gives way under you, you drop half through... . Every one knows that.”

“Legends!” I cried, guessing what he meant. “Old tales. Can you have believed them till now?” I laughed.

“Tales! But there must be foundation for them; flogged men tell no tales. I’ve imagined it ten thousand times.”

“But you, why you? You’ve done nothing, you know.”

“That makes it worse. They’ll find out I’ve done nothing and flog me for it.”

“And you are sure that you’ll be taken to Petersburg for that.”

“My friend, I’ve told you already that I regret nothing, *ma carriere est finie*. From that hour when she said good-bye to me at Skvoreshniki my life has had no value for me ... but disgrace, disgrace, *que dira-t-elle* if she finds out?”

He looked at me in despair. And the poor fellow flushed all over. I dropped my eyes too.

“She’ll find out nothing, for nothing will happen to you. I feel as if I were speaking to you for the first time in my life, Stepan Trofimovitch, you’ve astonished me so this morning.”

“But, my friend, this isn’t fear. For even if I am pardoned, even if I am brought here and nothing is done to me—then I am undone. *Elle me soupfonnera toute sa vie*—me, me, the poet, the thinker, the man whom she has worshipped for twenty-two years!”

“It will never enter her head.”

“It will,” he whispered with profound conviction. “We’ve talked of it several times in Petersburg, in Lent, before we came away, when we were both afraid... . *Elle me soupfonnera toute sa vie* ... and how can I disabuse her? It won’t sound likely. And in this wretched town who’d believe it, *c’est invraisemblable*... . *Et puis les femmes*, she will be pleased. She will be genuinely grieved like a true friend, but secretly she will be pleased. ... I shall give her a weapon against me for the rest of my life. Oh, it’s all over with me! Twenty years of such perfect happiness with her ... and now!” He hid his face in his hands.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, oughtn’t you to let Varvara Petrovna know at once of what has happened?” I suggested.

“God preserve me!” he cried, shuddering and leaping up from his place. “On no account, never, after what was said at parting at Skvoreshniki—never!” His eyes flashed.

We went on sitting together another hour or more, I believe, expecting something all the time—the idea had taken such hold of us. He lay down again, even closed his eyes, and lay for twenty minutes without uttering a word, so that I thought he was asleep or unconscious. Suddenly he got up impulsively, pulled the towel off his head, jumped up from the sofa, rushed to the looking-glass, with trembling hands tied his

cravat, and in a voice of thunder called to Nastasya, telling her to give him his overcoat, his new hat and his stick.

“I can bear no more,” he said in a breaking voice. “I can’t, I can’t! I am going myself.”

“Where?” I cried, jumping up too.

“To Lembke. Cher, I ought, I am obliged. It’s my duty. I am a citizen and a man, not a worthless chip. I have rights; I want my rights... . For twenty years I’ve not insisted on my rights. All my life I’ve neglected them criminally ... but now I’ll demand them. He must tell me everything—everything. He received a telegram. He dare not torture me; if so, let him arrest me, let him arrest me!”

He stamped and vociferated almost with shrieks. “I approve of what you say,” I said, speaking as calmly as possible, on purpose, though I was very much afraid for him.

“Certainly it is better than sitting here in such misery, but I can’t approve of your state of mind. Just see what you look like and in what a state you are going there! Il faut etre digne et calme avec Lembke. You really might rush at some one there and bite him.”

“I am giving myself up. I am walking straight into the jaws of the Hon... .”

“I’ll go with you.”

“I expected no less of you, I accept your sacrifice, the sacrifice of a true friend; but only as far as the house, only as far as the house. You ought not, you have no right to compromise yourself further by being my confederate. Oh, croyez-moi, je serai calme. I feel that I am at this moment d la hauteur de tout ce que il y a de plus sacre.” ...

“I may perhaps go into the house with you,” I interrupted him. “I had a message from their stupid committee yesterday through Vysotsky that they reckon on me and invite me to the file to-morrow as one of the stewards or whatever it is ... one of the six young men whose duty it is to look after the trays, wait on the ladies, take the guests to their places, and wear a rosette of crimson and white ribbon on the left shoulder. I meant to refuse, but now why shouldn’t I go into the house on the excuse of seeing Yulia Mihailovna herself about it? ... So we will go in together.”

He listened, nodding, but I think he understood nothing. We stood on the threshold.

“Cher”—he stretched out his arm to the lamp before the ikon—“cher, I have never believed in this, but ... so be it, so be it!” He crossed himself.” Allans!”

“Well, that’s better so,” I thought as I went out on to the steps with him. “The fresh air will do him good on the way, and we shall calm down, turn back, and go home to bed. ...”

But I reckoned without my host. On the way an adventure occurred which agitated Stepan Trofimovitch even more, and finally determined him to go on ... so that I should never have expected of our friend so much spirit as he suddenly displayed that morning. Poor friend, kind-hearted friend!

Chapter 10: Filibusters. A Fatal Morning.

1

The adventure that befell us on the way was also a surprising one. But I must tell the story in due order. An hour before Stepan Trofimovitch and I came out into the street, a crowd of people, the hands from Shpigulins' factory, seventy or more in number, had been marching through the town, and had been an object of curiosity to many spectators. They walked intentionally in good order and almost in silence. Afterwards it was asserted that these seventy had been elected out of the whole number of factory hands, amounting to about nine hundred, to go to the governor and to try and get from him, in the absence of their employer, a just settlement of their grievances against the manager, who, in closing the factory and dismissing the workmen, had cheated them all in an impudent way—a fact which has since been proved conclusively. Some people still deny that there was any election of delegates, maintaining that seventy was too large a number to elect, and that the crowd simply consisted of those who had been most unfairly treated, and that they only came to ask for help in their own case, so that the general "mutiny" of the factory workers, about which there was such an uproar later on, had never existed at all. Others fiercely maintained that these seventy men were not simple strikers but revolutionists, that is, not merely that they were the most turbulent, but that they must have been worked upon by seditious manifestoes. The fact is, it is still uncertain whether there had been any outside influence or incitement at work or not. My private opinion is that the workmen had not read the seditious manifestoes at all, and if they had read them, would not have understood one word, for one reason because the authors of such literature write very obscurely in spite of the boldness of their style. But as the workmen really were in a difficult plight and the police to whom they appealed would not enter into their grievances, what could be more natural than their idea of going in a body to "the general himself" if possible, with the petition at their head, forming up in an orderly way before his door, and as soon as he showed himself, all falling on their knees and crying out to him as to providence itself? To my mind there is no need to see in this a mutiny or even a deputation, for it's a traditional, historical mode of action; the Russian people have always loved to parley with "the general himself" for the mere satisfaction of doing so, regardless of how the conversation may end.

And so I am quite convinced that, even though Pyotr Stepanovitch, Liputin, and perhaps some others—perhaps even Fedka too—had been flitting about among the workpeople talking to them (and there is fairly good evidence of this), they had only approached two, three, five at the most, trying to sound them, and nothing had come of their conversation. As for the mutiny they advocated, if the factory-workers did understand anything of their propaganda, they would have left off listening to it at once as to something stupid that had nothing to do with them. Fedka was a different matter: he had more success, I believe, than Pyotr Stepanovitch. Two workmen are

now known for a fact to have assisted Fedka in causing the fire in the town which occurred three days afterwards, and a month later three men who had worked in the factory were arrested for robbery and arson in the province. But if in these cases Fedka did lure them to direct and immediate action, he could only have succeeded with these five, for we heard of nothing of the sort being done by others.

Be that as it may, the whole crowd of workpeople had at last reached the open space in front of the governor's house and were drawn up there in silence and good order. Then, gaping open-mouthed at the front door, they waited. I am told that as soon as they halted they took off their caps, that is, a good half-hour before the appearance of the governor, who, as ill-luck would have it, was not at home at the moment. The police made their appearance at once, at first individual policemen and then as large a contingent of them as could be gathered together; they began, of course, by being menacing, ordering them to break up. But the workmen remained obstinately, like a flock of sheep at a fence, and replied laconically that they had come to see "the general himself"; it was evident that they were firmly determined. The unnatural shouting of the police ceased, and was quickly succeeded by deliberations, mysterious whispered instructions, and stern, fussy perplexity, which wrinkled the brows of the police officers. The head of the police preferred to await the arrival of the "governor himself." It was not true that he galloped to the spot with three horses at full speed, and began hitting out right and left before he alighted from his carriage. It's true that he used to dash about and was fond of dashing about at full speed in a carriage with a yellow back, and while his trace-horses, who were so trained to carry their heads that they looked "positively perverted," galloped more and more frantically, rousing the enthusiasm of all the shopkeepers in the bazaar, he would rise up in the carriage, stand erect, holding on by a strap which had been fixed on purpose at the side, and with his right arm extended into space like a figure on a monument, survey the town majestically. But in the present case he did not use his fists, and though as he got out of the carriage he could not refrain from a forcible expression, this was simply done to keep up his popularity. There is a still more absurd story that soldiers were brought up with bayonets, and that a telegram was sent for artillery and Cossacks; those are legends which are not believed now even by those who invented them. It's an absurd story, too, that barrels of water were brought from the fire brigade, and that people were drenched with water from them. The simple fact is that Ilya Ilyitch shouted in his heat that he wouldn't let one of them come dry out of the water; probably this was the foundation of the barrel legend which got into the columns of the Petersburg and Moscow newspapers. Probably the most accurate version was that at first all the available police formed a cordon round the crowd, and a messenger was sent for Lembke, a police superintendent, who dashed off in the carriage belonging to the head of the police on the way to Skvoreshniki, knowing that Lembke had gone there in his carriage half an hour before.

But I must confess that I am still unable to answer the question how they could at first sight, from the first moment, have transformed an insignificant, that is to say an ordinary, crowd of petitioners, even though there were several of them, into a rebellion

which threatened to shake the foundations of the state. Why did Lembke himself rush at that idea when he arrived twenty minutes after the messenger? I imagine (but again it's only my private opinion) that it was to the interest of Ilya Ilyitch, who was a crony of the factory manager's, to represent the crowd in this light to Lembke, in order to prevent him from going into the case; and Lembke himself had put the idea into his head. In the course of the last two days, he had had two unusual and mysterious conversations with Mm. It is true they were exceedingly obscure, but Ilya Ilyitch was able to gather from them that the governor had thoroughly made up his mind that there were political manifestoes, and that Shpigulins' factory hands were being incited to a Socialist rising, and that he was so persuaded of it that he would perhaps have regretted it if the story had turned out to be nonsense. "He wants to get distinction in Petersburg," our wily Ilya Ilyitch thought to himself as he left Von Lembke; "well, that just suits me."

But I am convinced that poor Andrey Antonovitch would not have desired a rebellion even for the sake of distinguishing himself. He was a most conscientious official, who had lived in a state of innocence up to the time of his marriage. And was it his fault that, instead of an innocent allowance of wood from the government and an equally innocent Minnchen, a princess of forty summers had raised him to her level? I know almost for certain that the unmistakable symptoms of the mental condition which brought poor Andrey Antonovitch to a well-known establishment in Switzerland, where, I am told, he is now regaining his energies, were first apparent on that fatal morning. But once we admit that unmistakable signs of something were visible that morning, it may well be allowed that similar symptoms may have been evident the day before, though not so clearly. I happen to know from the most private sources (well, you may assume that Yulia Mihailovna later on, not in triumph but almost in remorse—for a woman is incapable of complete remorse—revealed part of it to me herself) that Andrey Antonovitch had gone into his wife's room in the middle of the previous night, past two o'clock in the morning, had waked her up, and had insisted on her listening to his "ultimatum." He demanded it so insistently that she was obliged to get up from her bed in indignation and curl-papers, and, sitting down on a couch, she had to listen, though with sarcastic disdain. Only then she grasped for the first time how far gone her Andrey Antonovitch was, and was secretly horrified. She ought to have thought what she was about and have been softened, but she concealed her horror and was more obstinate than ever. Like every wife she had her own method of treating Andrey Antonovitch, which she had tried more than once already and with it driven him to frenzy. Yulia Mihailovna's method was that of contemptuous silence, for one hour, two, a whole day. and almost for three days and nights—silence whatever happened, whatever he said, whatever he did, even if he had clambered up to throw himself out of a three-story window—a method unendurable for a sensitive man! Whether Yulia Mihailovna meant to punish her husband for his blunders of the last few days and the jealous envy he, as the chief authority in the town, felt for her administrative abilities; whether she was indignant at his criticism of her behaviour

with the young people and local society generally, and lack of comprehension of her subtle and far-sighted political aims; or was angry with his stupid and senseless jealousy of Pyotr Stepanovitch—however that may have been, she made up her mind not to be softened even now, in spite of its being three o'clock at night, and though Andrey Antonovitch was in a state of emotion such as she had never seen him in before.

Pacing up and down in all directions over the rugs of her boudoir, beside himself, he poured out everything, everything, quite disconnectedly, it's true, but everything that had been rankling in his heart, for—"it was outrageous." He began by saying that he was a laughing-stock to every one and "was being led by the nose."

"Curse the expression," he squealed, at once catching her smile, "let it stand, it's true... . No, madam, the time has come; let me tell you it's not a time for laughter and feminine arts now. We are not in the boudoir of a mincing lady, but like two abstract creatures in a balloon who have met to speak the truth." (He was no doubt confused and could not find the right words for his ideas, however just they were.) "It is you, madam, you who have destroyed my happy past. I took up this post simply for your sake, for the sake of your ambition... . You smile sarcastically? Don't triumph, don't be in a hurry. Let me tell you, madam, let me tell you that I should have been equal to this position, and not only this position but a dozen positions like it, for I have abilities; but with you, madam, with you—it's impossible, for with you here I have no abilities. There cannot be two centres, and you have created two—one of mine and one in your boudoir—two centres of power, madam, but I won't allow it, I won't allow it! In the service, as in marriage, there must be one centre, two are impossible.... How have you repaid me?" he went on. "Our marriage has been nothing but your proving to me all the time, every hour, that I am a nonentity, a fool, and even a rascal, and I have been all the time, every hour, forced in a degrading way to prove to you that I am not a nonentity, not a fool at all, and that I impress every one with my honourable character. Isn't that degrading for both sides?"

At this point he began rapidly stamping with both feet on the carpet, so that Yulia Mihailovna was obliged to get up with stern dignity. He subsided quickly, but passed to being pathetic and began sobbing (yes, sobbing!), beating himself on the breast almost for five minutes, getting more and more frantic at Yulia Mihailovna's profound silence. At last he made a fatal blunder, and let slip that he was jealous of Pyotr Stepanovitch. Realising that he had made an utter fool of himself, he became savagely furious, and shouted that he "would not allow them to deny God "and that he would" send her salon of irresponsible infidels packing," that the governor of a province was bound to believe in God "and so his wife was too," that he wouldn't put up with these young men; that "you, madam, for the sake of your own dignity, ought to have thought of your husband and to have stood up for his intelligence even if he were a man of poor abilities (and I'm by no means a man of poor abilities!), and yet it's your doing that every one here despises me, it was you put them all up to it!" He shouted that he would annihilate the woman question, that he would eradicate every trace of it, that to-morrow he would forbid and break up their silly fete for the benefit of the

governesses (damn them!), that the first governess he came across to-morrow morning he would drive out of the province “with a Cossack! I’ll make a point of it!” he shrieked. “Do you know,” he screamed, “do you know that your rascals are inciting men at the factory, and that I know it? Let me tell you, I know the names of four of these rascals and that I am going out of my mind, hopelessly, hopelessly! ...”

But at this point Yulia Mihailovna suddenly broke her silence and sternly announced that she had long been aware of these criminal designs, and that it was all foolishness, and that he had taken it too seriously, and that as for these mischievous fellows, she knew not only those four but all of them (it was a lie); but that she had not the faintest intention of going out of her mind on account of it, but, on the contrary, had all the more confidence in her intelligence and hoped to bring it all to a harmonious conclusion: to encourage the young people, to bring them to reason, to show them suddenly and unexpectedly that their designs were known, and then to point out to them new aims for rational and more noble activity.

Oh, how can I describe the effect of this on Andrey Antonovitch! Hearing that Pyotr Stepanovitch had duped him again and had made a fool of him so coarsely, that he had told her much more than he had told him, and sooner than him, and that perhaps Pyotr Stepanovitch was the chief instigator of all these criminal designs—he flew into a frenzy. “Senseless but malignant woman,” he cried, snapping his bonds at one blow, “let me tell you, I shall arrest your worthless lover at once, I shall put him in fetters and send him to the fortress, or—I shall jump out of window before your eyes this minute!”

Yulia Mihailovna, turning green with anger, greeted this tirade at once with a burst of prolonged, ringing laughter, going off into peals such as one hears at the French theatre when a Parisian actress, imported for a fee of a hundred thousand to play a coquette, laughs in her husband’s face for daring to be jealous of her.

Von Lembke rushed to the window, but suddenly stopped as though rooted to the spot, folded his arms across his chest, and, white as a corpse, looked with a sinister gaze at the laughing lady. “Do you know, Yulia, do you know,” he said in a gasping and suppliant voice, “do you know that even I can do something?” But at the renewed and even louder laughter that followed his last words he clenched his teeth, groaned, and suddenly rushed, not towards the window, but at his spouse, with his fist raised! He did not bring it down—no, I repeat again and again, no; but it was the last straw. He ran to his own room, not knowing what he was doing, flung himself, dressed as he was, face downwards on his bed, wrapped himself convulsively, head and all, in the sheet, and lay so for two hours—incapable of sleep, incapable of thought, with a load on his heart and blank, immovable despair in his soul. Now and then he shivered all over with an agonising, feverish tremor. Disconnected and irrelevant things kept coming into his mind: at one minute he thought of the old clock which used to hang on his wall fifteen years ago in Petersburg and had lost the minute-hand; at another of the cheerful clerk, Millebois, and how they had once caught a sparrow together in Alexandrovsky Park and had laughed so that they could be heard all over the park, remembering that one

of them was already a college assessor. I imagine that about seven in the morning he must have fallen asleep without being aware of it himself, and must have slept with enjoyment, with agreeable dreams.

Waking about ten o'clock, he jumped wildly out of bed remembered everything at once, and slapped himself on the head; he refused his breakfast, and would see neither Blum nor the chief of the police nor the clerk who came to remind him that he was expected to preside over a meeting that morning; he would listen to nothing, and did not want to understand. He ran like one possessed to Yulia Mihailovna's part of the house. There Sofya Antropovna, an old lady of good family who had lived for years with Yulia Mihailovna, explained to him that his wife had set off at ten o'clock that morning with a large company in three carriages to Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin's, to Skvoreshniki, to look over the place with a view to the second fete which was planned for a fortnight later, and that the visit to-day had been arranged with Varvara Petrovna three days before. Overwhelmed with this news, Andrey Antonovitch returned to his study and impulsively ordered the horses. He could hardly wait for them to be got ready. His soul was hungering for Yulia Mihailovna—to look at her, to be near her for five minutes; perhaps she would glance at him, notice him, would smile as before, forgive him ... 0-oh!" Aren't the horses ready?" Mechanically he opened a thick book lying on the table. (He sometimes used to try his fortune in this way with a book, opening it at random and reading the three lines at the top of the right-hand page.) What turned up was: "Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles."—Voltaire, *Candide*. He uttered an ejaculation of contempt and ran to get into the carriage. "Skvoreshniki!"

The coachman said afterwards that his master urged him on all the way, but as soon as they were getting near the mansion he suddenly told him to turn and drive back to the town, bidding him "Drive fast; please drive fast!" Before they reached the town wall "master told me to stop again, got out of the carriage, and went across the road into the field; I thought he felt ill but he stopped and began looking at the flowers, and so he stood for a time. It was strange, really; I began to feel quite uneasy." This was the coachman's testimony. I remember the weather that morning: it was a cold, clear, but windy September day; before Andrey Antonovitch stretched a forbidding landscape of bare fields from which the crop had long been harvested; there were a few dying yellow flowers, pitiful relics blown about by the howling wind. Did he want to compare himself and his fate with those wretched flowers battered by the autumn and the frost? I don't think so; in fact I feel sure it was not so, and that he realised nothing about the flowers in spite of the evidence of the coachman and of the police superintendent, who drove up at that moment and asserted afterwards that he found the governor with a bunch of yellow flowers in his hand. This police superintendent, Flibustero by name, was an ardent champion of authority who had only recently come to our town but had already distinguished himself and become famous by his inordinate zeal, by a certain vehemence in the execution of his duties, and his inveterate inebriety. Jumping out of the carriage, and not the least disconcerted at the sight of what the governor was

doing, he blurted out all in one breath, with a frantic expression, yet with an air of conviction, that "There's an upset in the town."

"Eh? What?" said Andrey Antonovitch, turning to him with a stern face, but without a trace of surprise or any recollection of his carriage and his coachman, as though he had been in his own study.

"Police-superintendent Flibustero, your Excellency. There's a riot in the town."

"Filibusters?" Andrey Antonovitch said thoughtfully.

"Just so, your Excellency. The Shpigulin men are making a riot."

"The Shpigulin men! ..."

The name "Shpigulin" seemed to remind him of something. He started and put his finger to his forehead: "The Shpigulin men!" In silence, and still plunged in thought, he walked without haste to the carriage, took his seat, and told the coachman to drive to the town. The police-superintendent followed in the droshky.

I imagine that he had vague impressions of many interesting things of all sorts on the way, but I doubt whether he had any definite idea or any settled intention as he drove into the open space in front of his house. But no sooner did he see the resolute and orderly ranks of "the rioters," the cordon of police, the helpless (and perhaps purposely helpless) chief of police, and the general expectation of which he was the object, than all the blood rushed to his heart. With a pale face he stepped out of his carriage.

"Caps off!" he said breathlessly and hardly audibly. "On your knees!" he squealed, to the surprise of every one, to his own surprise too, and perhaps the very unexpectedness of the position was the explanation of what followed. Can a sledge on a switchback at carnival stop short as it flies down the hill? What made it worse, Andrey Antonovitch had been all his life serene in character, and never shouted or stamped at anyone; and such people are always the most dangerous if it once happens that something sets their sledge sliding downhill. Everything was whirling before his eyes.

"Filibusters!" he yelled still more shrilly and absurdly, and his voice broke. He stood, not knowing what he was going to do, but knowing and feeling in his whole being that he certainly would do something directly.

"Lord!" was heard from the crowd. A lad began crossing himself; three or four men actually did try to kneel down, but the whole mass moved three steps forward, and suddenly all began talking at once: "Your Excellency ... we were hired for a term ... the manager ... you mustn't say," and so on and so on. It was impossible to distinguish anything.

Alas! Andrey Antonovitch could distinguish nothing: the flowers were still in his hands. The riot was as real to him as the prison carts were to Stepan Trofimovitch. And flitting to and fro in the crowd of "rioters" who gazed open-eyed at him, he seemed to see Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had egged them on— Pyotr Stepanovitch, whom he hated and whose image had never left him since yesterday.

"Rods!" he cried even more unexpectedly. A dead silence followed.

From the facts I have learnt and those I have conjectured, this must have been what happened at the beginning; but I have no such exact information for what followed, nor can I conjecture it so easily. There are some facts, however.

In the first place, rods were brought on the scene with strange rapidity; they had evidently been got ready beforehand in expectation by the intelligent chief of the police. Not more than two, or at most three, were actually flogged, however; that fact I wish to lay stress on. It's an absolute fabrication to say that the whole crowd of rioters, or at least half of them, were punished. It is a nonsensical story, too, that a poor but respectable lady was caught as she passed by and promptly thrashed; yet I read myself an account of this incident afterwards among the provincial items of a Petersburg newspaper. Many people in the town talked of an old woman called Avdotya Petrovna Tarapygin who lived in the almshouse by the cemetery. She, was said, on her way home from visiting a friend, to have forced her way into the crowd of spectators through natural curiosity. Seeing what was going on, she cried out, "What a shame!" and spat on the ground. For this it was said she had been seized and flogged too. This story not only appeared in print, but in our excitement we positively got up a subscription for her benefit. I subscribed twenty kopecks myself. And would you believe it? It appears now that there was no old woman called Tarapygin living in the almshouse at all! I went to inquire at the almshouse by the cemetery myself; they had never heard of anyone called Tarapygin there, and, what's more, they were quite offended when I told them the story that was going round. I mention this fabulous Avdotya Petrovna because what happened to her (if she really had existed) very nearly happened to Stepan Trofimovitch. Possibly, indeed, his adventure may have been at the bottom of the ridiculous tale about the old woman, that is, as the gossip went on growing he was transformed into this old dame.

What I find most difficult to understand is how he came to slip away from me as soon as he got into the square. As I had a misgiving of something very unpleasant, I wanted to take him round the square straight to the entrance to the governor's, but my own curiosity was roused, and I stopped only for one minute to question the first person I came across, and suddenly I looked round and found Stepan Trofimovitch no longer at my side. Instinctively I darted off to look for him in the most dangerous place; something made me feel that his sledge, too, was flying downhill. And I did, as a fact, find him in the very centre of things. I remember I seized him by the arm; but he looked quietly and proudly at me with an air of immense authority.

"Cher," he pronounced in a voice which quivered on a breaking note, "if they are dealing with people so unceremoniously before us, in an open square, what is to be expected from that man, for instance ... if he happens to act on his own authority?"

And shaking with indignation and with an intense desire to defy them, he pointed a menacing, accusing finger at Flibusterov, who was gazing at us open-eyed two paces away.

"That man!" cried the latter, blind with rage. "What man? And who are you?" He stepped up to him, clenching his fist. "Who are you?" he roared ferociously, hysterically,

and desperately. (I must mention that he knew Stepan Trofimovitch perfectly well by sight.) Another moment and he would have certainly seized him by the collar; but luckily, hearing him shout, Lembke turned his head. He gazed intensely but with perplexity at Stepan Trofimovitch, seeming to consider something, and suddenly he shook his hand impatiently. Flibusterov was checked. I drew Stepan Trofimovitch out of the crowd, though perhaps he may have wished to retreat himself.

“Home, home,” I insisted; “it was certainly thanks to Lembke that we were not beaten.”

“Go, my friend; I am to blame for exposing you to this. You have a future and a career of a sort before you, while I—*man heure est sonnee*.”

He resolutely mounted the governor’s steps. The hall-porter knew me; I said that we both wanted to see Yulia Mihailovna.

We sat down in the waiting-room and waited. I was unwilling to leave my friend, but I thought it unnecessary to say anything more to him. He had the air of a man who had consecrated himself to certain death for the sake of his country. We sat down, not side by side, but in different corners—I nearer to the entrance, he at some distance facing me, with his head bent in thought, leaning lightly on his stick. He held his wide-brimmed hat in his left hand. We sat like that for ten minutes.

2

Lembke suddenly came in with rapid steps, accompanied by the chief of police, looked absent-mindedly at us and, taking no notice of us, was about to pass into his study on the right, but Stepan Trofimovitch stood before him blocking his way. The tall figure of Stepan Trofimovitch, so unlike other people, made an impression. Lembke stopped.

“Who is this?” he muttered, puzzled, as if he were questioning the chief of police, though he did not turn his head towards him, and was all the time gazing at Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Retired college assessor, Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky, your Excellency,” answered Stepan Trofimovitch, bowing majestically. His Excellency went on staring at him with a very blank expression, however.

“What is it?” And with the curtness of a great official he turned his ear to Stepan Trofimovitch with disdainful impatience, taking him for an ordinary person with a written petition of some sort.

“I was visited and my house was searched to-day by an official acting in your Excellency’s name; therefore I am desirous ...”

“Name? Name?” Lembke asked impatiently, seeming suddenly to have an inkling of something. Stepan Trofimovitch repeated his name still more majestically.

“A-a-ah! It’s ... that hotbed ... You have shown yourself, sir, in such a light... . Are you a professor? a professor?”

“I once had the honour of giving some lectures to the young men of the X university.”

"The young men!" Lembke seemed to start, though I am ready to bet that he grasped very little of what was going on or even, perhaps, did not know with whom he was talking.

"That, sir, I won't allow," he cried, suddenly getting terribly angry. "I won't allow young men! It's all these manifestoes? It's an assault on society, sir, a piratical attack, filibustering... . What is your request?"

"On the contrary, your wife requested me to read something to-morrow at her fete. I've not come to make a request but to ask for my rights... ."

"At the fete? There'll be no fete. I won't allow your fete. A lecture? A lecture?" he screamed furiously.

"I should be very glad if you would speak to me rather more politely, your Excellency, without stamping or shouting at me' as though I were a boy."

"Perhaps you understand whom you are speaking to?" said Lembke, turning crimson.

"Perfectly, your Excellency."

"I am protecting society while you are destroying it! ... You ... I remember about you, though: you used to be a tutor in the house of Madame Stavrogin?"

"Yes, I was in the position ... of tutor ... in the house of Madame Stavrogin."

"And have been for twenty years the hotbed of all that has now accumulated ... all the fruits. ... I believe I saw you just now in the square. You'd better look out, sir, you'd better look out; your way of thinking is well known. You may be sure that I keep my eye on you. I cannot allow your lectures, sir, I cannot. Don't come with such requests to me."

He would have passed on again.

"I repeat that your Excellency is mistaken; it was your wife who asked me to give, not a lecture, but a literary reading at the fete to-morrow. But I decline to do so in any case now. I humbly request that you will explain to me if possible how, why, and for what reason I was subjected to an official search to-day? Some of my books and papers, private letters to me, were taken from me and wheeled through the town in a barrow."

"Who searched you?" said Lembke, starting and returning to full consciousness of the position. He suddenly flushed all over. He turned quickly to the chief of police. At that moment the long, stooping, and awkward figure of Blum appeared in the doorway.

"Why, this official here," said Stepan Trofimovitch, indicating Mm. Blum came forward with a face that admitted his responsibility but showed no contrition.

"Vous ne faites que des beatises," Lembke threw at him in a tone of vexation and anger, and suddenly he was transformed and completely himself again.

"Excuse me," he muttered, utterly disconcerted and turning absolutely crimson, "all this ... all this was probably a mere blunder, a misunderstanding ... nothing but a misunderstanding."

"Your Excellency," observed Stepan Trofimovitch, "once when I was young I saw a characteristic incident. In the corridor of a theatre a man ran up to another and gave him a sounding smack in the face before the whole public. Perceiving at once

that his victim was not the person whom he had intended to chastise but some one quite different who only slightly resembled him, he pronounced angrily, with the haste of one whose moments are precious—as your Excellency did just now—“I’ve made a mistake ... excuse me, it was a misunderstanding, nothing but a misunderstanding.” And when the offended man remained resentful and cried out, he observed to him, with extreme annoyance: “Why, I tell you it was a misunderstanding. What are you crying out about?”

“That’s ... that’s very amusing, of course”—Lembke gave a wry smile—“but ... but can’t you see how unhappy I am myself?”

He almost screamed, and seemed about to hide his face in his hands.

This unexpected and piteous exclamation, almost a sob, was almost more than one could bear. It was probably the first moment since the previous day that he had full, vivid consciousness of all that had happened—and it was followed by complete, humiliating despair that could not be disguised—who knows, in another minute he might have sobbed aloud. For the first moment Stepan Trofimovitch looked wildly at him; then he suddenly bowed his head and in a voice pregnant with feeling pronounced:

“Your Excellency, don’t trouble yourself with my petulant complaint, and only give orders for my books and letters to be restored to me. ...”

He was interrupted. At that very instant Yulia Mihailovna returned and entered noisily with all the party which had accompanied her. But at this point I should like to tell my story in as much detail as possible.

3

In the first place, the whole company who had filled three carriages crowded into the waiting-room. There was a special entrance to Yulia Mihailovna’s apartments on the left as one entered the house; but on this occasion they all went through the waiting-room—and I imagine just because Stepan Trofimovitch was there, and because all that had happened to him as well as the Shpigulin affair had reached Yulia Mihailovna’s ears as she drove into the town. Lyamshin, who for some misdemeanour had not been invited to join the party and so knew all that had been happening in the town before anyone else, brought her the news. With spiteful glee he hired a wretched Cossack nag and hastened on the way to Skvoreshniki to meet the returning cavalcade with the diverting intelligence. I fancy that, in spite of her lofty determination, Yulia Mihailovna was a little disconcerted on hearing such surprising news, but probably only for an instant. The political aspect of the affair, for instance, could not cause her uneasiness; Pyotr Stepanovitch had impressed upon her three or four times that the Shpigulin ruffians ought to be flogged, and Pyotr Stepanovitch certainly had for some time past been a great authority in her eyes. “But ... anyway, I shall make him pay for it,” she doubtless reflected, the “he,” of course, referring to her spouse. I must observe in passing that on this occasion, as though purposely, Pyotr Stepanovitch had taken no part in the expedition, and no one had seen him all day. I must mention too, by the way, that

Varvara Petrovna had come back to the town with her guests (hi the same carriage with Yulia Mihailovna) in order to be present at the last meeting of the committee which was arranging the fete for the next day. She too must have been interested, and perhaps even agitated, by the news about Stepan Trofimovitch communicated by Lyamshin.

The hour of reckoning for Andrey Antonovitch followed at once. Alas! he felt that from the first glance at his admirable wife. With an open air and an enchanting smile she went quickly up to Stepan Trofimovitch, held out her exquisitely gloved hand, and greeted him with a perfect shower of nattering phrases— as though the only thing she cared about that morning was to make haste to be charming to Stepan Trofimovitch because at last she saw him in her house. There was not one hint of the search that morning; it was as though she knew nothing of it. There was not one word to her husband, not one glance in his direction—as though he had not been in the room. What's more, she promptly confiscated Stepan Trofimovitch and carried him off to the drawing-room—as though he had had no interview with Lembke, or as though it was not worth prolonging if he had. I repeat again, I think that in this, Yulia Mihailovna, in spite of her aristocratic tone, made another great mistake. And Karmazinov particularly did much to aggravate this. (He had taken part in the expedition at Yulia Mihailovna's special request, and in that way had, incidentally, paid his visit to Varvara Petrovna, and she was so poor-spirited as to be perfectly delighted at it.) On seeing Stepan Trofimovitch, he called out from the doorway (he came in behind the rest) and pressed forward to embrace him, even interrupting Yulia Mihailovna.

“What years, what ages! At last ... excellent ami.”

He made as though to kiss him, offering his cheek, of course, and Stepan Trofimovitch was so fluttered that he could not avoid saluting it.

“Cher,” he said to me that evening, recalling all the events of that day, “I wondered at that moment which of us was the most contemptible: he, embracing me only to humiliate me, or I, despising him and his face and kissing it on the spot, though I might have turned away... . Poo!”

“Come, tell me about yourself, tell me everything,” Karmazinov drawled and lisped, as though it were possible for him on the spur of the moment to give an account of twenty-five years of his life. But this foolish trifling was the height of “chic.”

“Remember that the last time we met was at the Granovsky dinner in Moscow, and that twenty-four years have passed since then ...” Stepan Trofimovitch began very reasonably (and consequently not at all in the same “chic” style).

“Ce cher homme,” Karmazinov interrupted with shrill familiarity, squeezing his shoulder with exaggerated friendliness. “Make haste and take us to your room, Yulia Mihailovna; there he'll sit down and tell us everything.”

“And yet I was never at all intimate with that peevish old woman,” Stepan Trofimovitch went on complaining to me that same evening, shaking with anger; “we were almost boys, and I'd begun to detest him even then ... just as he had me, of course.”

Yulia Mihailovna's drawing-room filled up quickly. Varvara Petrovna was particularly excited, though she tried to appear indifferent, but I caught her once or twice glancing with hatred at Karmazinov and with wrath at Stepan Trofimovitch—the wrath of anticipation, the wrath of jealousy and love: if Stepan Trofimovitch had blundered this time and had let Karmazinov make him look small before every one, I believe she would have leapt up and beaten him. I have forgotten to say that Liza too was there, and I had never seen her more radiant, carelessly light-hearted, and happy. Mavriky Nikolaevitch was there too, of course. In the crowd of young ladies and rather vulgar young men who made up Yulia Mihailovna's usual retinue, and among whom this vulgarity was taken for sprightliness, and cheap cynicism for wit, I noticed two or three new faces: a very obsequious Pole who was on a visit in the town; a German doctor, a sturdy old fellow who kept loudly laughing with great zest at his own wit; and lastly, a very young princeling from Petersburg like an automaton figure, with the deportment of a state dignitary and a fearfully high collar. But it was evident that Yulia Mihailovna had a very high opinion of this visitor, and was even a little anxious of the impression her salon was making on him.

“Cher M. Karmazinov,” said Stepan Trofimovitch, sitting in a picturesque pose on the sofa and suddenly beginning to lisp as daintily as Karmazinov himself, “cher M. Karmazinov, the life of a man of our time and of certain convictions, even after an interval of twenty-five years, is bound to seem monotonous ...”

The German went off into a loud abrupt guffaw like a neigh, evidently imagining that Stepan Trofimovitch had said something exceedingly funny. The latter gazed at him with studied amazement but produced no effect on him whatever. The prince, too, looked at the German, turning head, collar and all, towards him and putting up his pince-nez, though without the slightest curiosity.

“... Is bound to seem monotonous,” Stepan Trofimovitch intentionally repeated, drawing each word as deliberately and nonchalantly as possible. “And so my life has been throughout this quarter of a century, *et comme on trouve partout plus de moines que de raison*, and as I am entirely of this opinion, it has come to pass that throughout this quarter of a century I ...”

“C'est charmant, les moines,” whispered Yulia Mihailovna, turning to Varvara Petrovna, who was sitting beside her.

Varvara Petrovna responded with a look of pride. But Karmazinov could not stomach the success of the French phrase, and quickly and shrilly interrupted Stepan Trofimovitch.

“As for me, I am quite at rest on that score, and for the past seven years I've been settled at Karlsruhe. And last year, when it was proposed by the town council to lay down a new water-pipe, I felt in my heart that this question of water-pipes in Karlsruhe was dearer and closer to my heart than all the questions of my precious Fatherland ... in this period of so-called reform.”

“I can't help sympathising, though it goes against the grain,” sighed Stepan Trofimovitch, bowing his head significantly.

Yulia Mihailovna was triumphant: the conversation was becoming profound and taking a political turn.

“A drain-pipe?” the doctor inquired in a loud voice.

“A water-pipe, doctor, a water-pipe, and I positively assisted them in drawing up the plan.”

The doctor went off into a deafening guffaw. Many people followed his example, laughing in the face of the doctor, who remained unconscious of it and was highly delighted that every one was laughing.

“You must allow me to differ from you, Karmazinov,” Yulia Mihailovna hastened to interpose. “Karlsruhe is all very well, but you are fond of mystifying people, and this time we don’t believe you. What Russian writer has presented so many modern types, has brought forward so many contemporary problems, has put his finger on the most vital modern points which make up the type of the modern man of action? You, only you, and no one else. It’s no use your assuring us of your coldness towards your own country and your ardent interest in the water-pipes of Karlsruhe. Ha ha!”

“Yes, no doubt,” lisped Karmazinov. “I have portrayed in the character of Pogozhev all the failings of the Slavophiles and in the character of Nikodimov all the failings of the Westerners. ...”

“I say, hardly all!” Lyamshin whispered slyly. “But I do this by the way, simply to while away the tedious hours and to satisfy the persistent demands of my fellow-countrymen.”

“You are probably aware, Stepan Trofimovitch,” Yulia Mihailovna went on enthusiastically, “that to-morrow we shall have the delight of hearing the charming lines ... one of the last of Semyon Yakovlevitch’s exquisite literary inspirations— it’s called *Merci*. He announces in this piece that he will write no more, that nothing in the world will induce him to, if angels from Heaven or, what’s more, all the best society were to implore him to change his mind. In fact he is laying down the pen for good, and this graceful *Merci* is addressed to the public in grateful acknowledgment of the constant enthusiasm with which it has for so many years greeted his unswerving loyalty to true Russian thought.”

Yulia Mihailovna was at the acme of bliss. “Yes, I shall make my farewell; I shall say my *Merci* and depart and there ... in Karlsruhe ... I shall close my eyes.” Karmazinov was gradually becoming maudlin.

like many of our great writers (and there are numbers of them amongst us), he could not resist praise, and began to be limp at once, in spite of his penetrating wit. But I consider this is pardonable. They say that one of our Shakespeares positively blurted out in private conversation that “we great men can’t do otherwise,” and so on, and, what’s more, was unaware of it.

“There in Karlsruhe I shall close my eyes. When we have done our duty, all that’s left for us great men is to make haste to close our eyes without seeking a reward. I shall do so too.”

“Give me the address and I shall come to Karlsruhe to visit your tomb,” said the German, laughing immoderately.

“They send corpses by rail nowadays,” one of the less important young men said unexpectedly.

Lyamshin positively shrieked with delight. Yulia Mihailovna frowned. Nikolay Stavrogin walked in.

“Why, I was told that you were locked up?” he said aloud, addressing Stepan Trofimovitch before every one else.

“No, it was a case of unlocking,” jested Stepan Trofimovitch.

“But I hope that what’s happened will have no influence on what I asked you to do,” Yulia Mihailovna put in again. “I trust that you will not let this unfortunate annoyance, of which I had no idea, lead you to disappoint our eager expectations and deprive us of the enjoyment of hearing your reading at our literary matinee.”

“I don’t know, I ... now ...”

“Really, I am so unlucky, Varvara Petrovna ... and only fancy, just when I was so longing to make the personal acquaintance of one of the most remarkable and independent intellects of Russia—and here Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly talks of deserting us.”

“Your compliment is uttered so audibly that I ought to pretend not to hear it,” Stepan Trofimovitch said neatly, “but I cannot believe that my insignificant presence is so indispensable at your fete to-morrow. However, I ...”

“Why, you’ll spoil him!” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, bursting into the room. “I’ve only just got him in hand—and in one morning he has been searched, arrested, taken by the collar by a policeman, and here ladies are cooing to him in the governor’s drawing-room. Every bone in his body is aching with rapture; in his wildest dreams he had never hoped for such good fortune. Now he’ll begin informing against the Socialists after this!”

“Impossible, Pyotr Stepanovitch! Socialism is too grand an idea to be unrecognised by Stepan Trofimovitch.” Yulia Mihailovna took up the gauntlet with energy.

“It’s a great idea but its exponents are not always great men, *et brisons-id, mon cher*,” Stepan Trofimovitch ended, addressing his son and rising gracefully from his seat.

But at this point an utterly unexpected circumstance occurred. Von Lembke had been in the room for some time but seemed unnoticed by anyone, though every one had seen him come in. In accordance with her former plan, Yulia Mihailovna went on ignoring him. He took up his position near the door and with a stern face listened gloomily to the conversation. Hearing an allusion to the events of the morning, he began fidgeting uneasily, stared at the prince, obviously struck by his stiffly starched, prominent collar; then suddenly he seemed to start on hearing the voice of Pyotr Stepanovitch and seeing him burst in; and no sooner had Stepan Trofimovitch uttered his phrase about Socialists than Lembke went up to him, pushing against Lyamshin,

who at once skipped out of the way with an affected gesture of surprise, rubbing his shoulder and pretending that he had been terribly bruised.

“Enough!” said Von Lembke to Stepan Trofimovitch, vigorously gripping the hand of the dismayed gentleman and squeezing it with all his might in both of his. “Enough! The filibusters of our day are unmasked. Not another word. Measures have been taken...”

He spoke loudly enough to be heard by all the room, and concluded with energy. The impression he produced was poignant. Everybody felt that something was wrong. I saw Yulia Mihailovna turn pale. The effect was heightened by a trivial accident. After announcing that measures had been taken, Lembke turned sharply and walked quickly towards the door, but he had hardly taken two steps when he stumbled over a rug, swerved forward, and almost fell. For a moment he stood still, looked at the rug at which he had stumbled, and, uttering aloud “Change it!” went out of the room. Yulia Mihailovna ran after him. Her exit was followed by an uproar, in which it was difficult to distinguish anything. Some said he was “deranged,” others that he was “liable to attacks”; others put their fingers to their forehead; Lyamshin, in the corner, put his two fingers above his forehead. People hinted at some domestic difficulties—in a whisper, of course. No one took up his hat; all were waiting. I don’t know what Yulia Mihailovna managed to do, but five minutes later she came back, doing her utmost to appear composed. She replied evasively that Andrey Antonovitch was rather excited, but that it meant nothing, that he had been like that from a child, that she knew “much better,” and that the fete next day would certainly cheer him up. Then followed a few flattering words to Stepan Trofimovitch simply from civility, and a loud invitation to the members of the committee to open the meeting now, at once. Only then, all who were not members of the committee prepared to go home; but the painful incidents of this fatal day were not yet over.

I noticed at the moment when Nikolay Stavrogin came in that Liza looked quickly and intently at him and was for a long time unable to take her eyes off him—so much so that at last it attracted attention. I saw Mavriky Nikolaevitch bend over her from behind; he seemed to mean to whisper something to her, but evidently changed his intention and drew himself up quickly, looking round at every one with a guilty air. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch too excited curiosity; his face was paler than usual and there was a strangely absent-minded look in his eyes. After flinging his question at Stepan Trofimovitch he seemed to forget about him altogether, and I really believe he even forgot to speak to his hostess. He did not once look at Liza—not because he did not want to, but I am certain because he did not notice her either. And suddenly, after the brief silence that followed Yulia Mihailovna’s invitation to open the meeting without loss of time, Liza’s musical voice, intentionally loud, was heard. She called to Stavrogin.

“Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, a captain who calls himself a relation of yours, the brother of your wife, and whose name is Lebyadkin, keeps writing impertinent letters to me, complaining of you and offering to tell me some secrets about you. If he really is a

connection of yours, please tell him not to annoy me, and save me from this unpleasantness.”

There was a note of desperate challenge in these words—every one realised it. The accusation was unmistakable, though perhaps it was a surprise to herself. She was like a man who shuts his eyes and throws himself from the roof.

But Nikolay Stavrogin’s answer was even more astounding.

To begin with, it was strange that he was not in the least surprised and listened to Liza with unruffled attention. There was no trace of either confusion or anger in his face. Simply, firmly, even with an air of perfect readiness, he answered the fatal question:

“Yes, I have the misfortune to be connected with that man. I have been the husband of his sister for nearly five years. You may be sure I will give him your message as soon as possible, and I’ll answer for it that he shan’t annoy you again.”

I shall never forget the horror that was reflected on the face of Varvara Petrovna. With a distracted air she got up from her seat, lifting up her right hand as though to ward off a blow. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at her, looked at Liza, at the spectators, and suddenly smiled with infinite disdain; he walked deliberately out of the room. Every one saw how Liza leapt up from the sofa as soon as he turned to go and unmistakably made a movement to run after him. But she controlled herself and did not run after him; she went quietly out of the room without saying a word or even looking at anyone, accompanied, of course, by Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who rushed after her.

The uproar and the gossip that night in the town I will not attempt to describe. Varvara Petrovna shut herself up in her town house and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, it was said, went straight to Skvoreshniki without seeing his mother. Stepan Trofimovitch sent me that evening to *cette chere amie* to implore her to allow him to come to her, but she would not see me. He was terribly overwhelmed; he shed tears. “Such a marriage! Such a marriage! Such an awful thing in the family!” he kept repeating. He remembered Karmazinov, however, and abused him terribly. He set to work vigorously to prepare for the reading too and—the artistic temperament!—rehearsed before the looking-glass and went over all the jokes and witticisms uttered in the course of his life which he had written down in a separate notebook, to insert into his reading next day.

“My dear, I do this for the sake of a great idea,” he said to me, obviously justifying himself. “Cher ami, I have been stationary for twenty-five years and suddenly I’ve begun to move—whither, I know not—but I’ve begun to move... .”

Part 3

Chapter 1: The Fete—first Part

1

The fete took place in spite of all the perplexities of the preceding “Shpigulin” day. I believe that even if Lembke had died the previous night, the fete would still have taken place next morning—so peculiar was the significance Yulia Mihailovna attached to it. Alas! up to the last moment she was blind and had no inkling of the state of public feeling. No one believed at last that the festive day would pass without some tremendous scandal, some “catastrophe” as some people expressed it, rubbing their hands in anticipation. Many people, it is true, tried to assume a frowning and diplomatic countenance; but, speaking generally, every Russian is inordinately delighted at any public scandal and disorder. It is true that we did feel something much more serious than the mere craving for a scandal: there was a general feeling of irritation, a feeling of implacable resentment; every one seemed thoroughly disgusted with everything. A kind of bewildered cynicism, a forced, as it were, strained cynicism was predominant in every one. The only people who were free from bewilderment were the ladies, and they were clear on only one point: their remorseless detestation of Yulia Mihailovna. Ladies of all shades of opinion were agreed in this. And she, poor dear, had no suspicion; up to the last hour she was persuaded that she was “surrounded by followers,” and that they were still “fanatically devoted to her.”

I have already hinted that some low fellows of different sorts had made their appearance amongst us. In turbulent times of upheaval or transition low characters always come to the front everywhere. I am not speaking now of the so-called “advanced” people who are always in a hurry to be in advance of every one else (their absorbing anxiety) and who always have some more or less definite, though often very stupid, aim. No, I am speaking only of the riff-raff. In every period of transition this riff-raff, which exists in every society, rises to the surface, and is not only without any aim but has not even a symptom of an idea, and merely does its utmost to give expression to uneasiness and impatience. Moreover, this riff-raff almost always falls unconsciously under the control of the little group of “advanced people” who do act with a definite aim, and this little group can direct all this rabble as it pleases, if only it does not itself consist of absolute idiots, which, however, is sometimes the case. It is said among us now that it is all over, that Pyotr Stepanovitch was directed by the Internationale,

and Yulia Mihailovna by Pyotr Stepanovitch, while she controlled, under his rule, a rabble of all sorts. The more sober minds amongst us wonder at themselves now, and can't understand how they came to be so foolish at the time.

What constituted the turbulence of our time and what transition it was we were passing through I don't know, nor I think does anyone, unless it were some of those visitors of ours. Yet the most worthless fellows suddenly gained predominant influence, began loudly criticising everything sacred, though till then they had not dared to open their mouths, while the leading people, who had till then so satisfactorily kept the upper hand, began listening to them and holding their peace, some even simpered approval in a most shameless way. People like Lyamshin and Telyatnikov, like Gogol's Tentyotnikov, drivelling home-bred editions of Radishtchev, wretched little Jews with a mournful but haughty smile, guffawing foreigners, poets of advanced tendencies from the capital, poets who made up with peasant coats and tarred boots for the lack of tendencies or talents, majors and colonels who ridiculed the senselessness of the service, and who would have been ready for an extra rouble to unbuckle their swords, and take jobs as railway clerks; generals who had abandoned their duties to become lawyers; advanced mediators, advancing merchants, innumerable divinity students, women who were the embodiment of the woman question—all these suddenly gained complete sway among us and over whom? Over the club, the venerable officials, over generals with wooden legs, over the very strict and inaccessible ladies of our local society. Since even Varvara Petrovna was almost at the beck and call of this rabble, right up to the time of the catastrophe with her son, our other local Minervas may well be pardoned for their temporary aberration. Now all this is attributed, as I have mentioned already, to the Internationale. This idea has taken such root that it is given as the explanation to visitors from other parts. Only lately councillor Kubrikov, a man of sixty-two, with the Stanislav Order on his breast, came forward uninvited and confessed in a voice full of feeling that he had beyond a shadow of doubt been for fully three months under the influence of the Internationale. When with every deference for his years 'and services he was invited to be more definite, he stuck firmly to his original statement, though he could produce no evidence except that "he had felt it in all his feelings," so that they cross-examined him no further.

I repeat again, there was still even among us a small group who held themselves aloof from the beginning, and even locked themselves up. But what lock can stand against a law of nature? Daughters will grow up even in the most careful families, and it is essential for grown-up daughters to dance.

And so all these people, too, ended by subscribing to the governesses' fund.

The ball was assumed to be an entertainment so brilliant, so unprecedented; marvels were told about it; there were rumours of princes from a distance with lorgnettes; of ten stewards, all young dandies, with rosettes on their left shoulder; of some Petersburg people who were setting the thing going; there was a rumour that Karmazinov had consented to increase the subscriptions to the fund by reading his *Merci* in the costume of the governesses of the district; that there would be a literary quadrille all in

costume, and every costume would symbolise some special line of thought; and finally that “honest Russian thought” would dance in costume—which would certainly be a complete novelty in itself. Who could resist subscribing? Every one subscribed.

2

The programme of the fete was divided into two parts: the literary matinee from midday till four o'clock, and afterwards a ball from ten o'clock onwards through the night. But in this very programme there lay concealed germs of disorder. In the first place, from the very beginning a rumour had gained ground among the public concerning a luncheon immediately after the literary matinee, or even while it was going on, during an interval arranged expressly for it—a free luncheon, of course, which would form part of the programme and be accompanied by champagne. The immense price of the tickets (three roubles) tended to confirm this rumour. “As though one would subscribe for nothing? The fete is arranged for twenty-four hours, so food must be provided. People will get hungry.” This was how people reasoned in the town. I must admit that Yulia Mihailovna did much to confirm this disastrous rumour by her own heedlessness. A month earlier, under the first spell of the great project, she would babble about it to anyone she met; and even sent a paragraph to one of the Petersburg papers about the toasts and speeches arranged for her fete. What fascinated her most at that time was the idea of these toasts; she wanted to propose them herself and was continually composing them in anticipation. They were to make clear what was their banner (what was it? I don't mind betting that the poor dear composed nothing after all), they were to get into the Petersburg and Moscow papers, to touch and fascinate the higher powers and then to spread the idea over all the provinces of Russia, rousing people to wonder and imitation.

But for toasts, champagne was essential, and as champagne can't be drunk on an empty stomach, it followed that a lunch was essential too. Afterwards, when by her efforts a committee had been formed and had attacked the subject more seriously, it was proved clearly to her at once that if they were going to dream of banquets there would be very little left for the governesses, however well people subscribed. There were two ways out of the difficulty: either Belshazzar's feast with toasts and speeches, and ninety roubles for the governesses, or a considerable sum of money with the fete only as a matter of form to raise it. The committee, however, only wanted to scare her, and had of course worked out a third course of action, which was reasonable and combined the advantages of both, that is, a very decent fete in every respect only without champagne, and so yielding a very respectable sum, much more than ninety roubles. But Yulia Mihailovna would not agree to it: her proud spirit revolted from paltry compromise. She decided at once that if the original idea could not be carried out they should rush to the opposite extreme, that is, raise an enormous subscription that would be the envy of other provinces. “The public must understand,” she said at the end of her flaming speech to the committee, “that the attainment of an object

of universal human interest is infinitely loftier than the corporeal enjoyments of the passing moment, that the fete in its essence is only the proclamation of a great idea, and so we ought to be content with the most frugal German ball simply as a symbol, that is, if we can't dispense with this detestable ball altogether," so great was the aversion she suddenly conceived for it. But she was pacified at last. It was then that "the literary quadrille" and the other aesthetic items were invented and proposed as substitutes for the corporeal enjoyments. It was then that Karmazinov finally consented to read Herd (until then he had only tantalised them by his hesitation) and so eradicate the very idea of victuals from the minds of our incontinent public. So the ball was once more to be a magnificent function, though in a different style. And not to be too ethereal it was decided that tea with lemon and round biscuits should be served at the beginning of the ball, and later on "orchade" and lemonade and at the end even ices— but nothing else. For those who always and everywhere are hungry and, still more, thirsty, they might open a buffet in the farthest of the suite of rooms and put it in charge of Prohorovitch, the head cook of the club, who would, subject to the strict supervision of the committee, serve whatever was wanted, at a fixed charge, and a notice should be put up on the door of the hall that refreshments were extra. But on the morning they decided not to open the buffet at all for fear of disturbing the reading, though the buffet would have been five rooms off the White Hall in which Karmazinov had consented to read *Merci*.

It is remarkable that the committee, and even the most practical people in it, attached enormous consequence to this reading. As for people of poetical tendencies, the marshal's wife, for instance, informed Karmazinov that after the reading she would immediately order a marble slab to be put up in the wall of the White Hall with an inscription in gold letters, that on such a day and year, here, in this place, the great writer of Russia and of Europe had read *Merci* on laying aside his pen, and so had for the first time taken leave of the Russian public represented by the leading citizens of our town, and that this inscription would be read by all at the ball, that is, only five hours after *Merci* had been read. I know for a fact that Karmazinov it was who insisted that there should be no buffet in the morning on any account, while he was reading, in spite of some protests from members of the committee that this was rather opposed to our way of doing things.

This was the position of affairs, while in the town people were still reckoning on a Belshazzar feast, that is, on refreshments provided by the committee; they believed in this to the last hour. Even the young ladies were dreaming of masses of sweets and preserves, and something more beyond their imagination. Every one knew that the subscriptions had reached a huge sum, that all the town was struggling to go, that people were driving in from the surrounding districts, and that there were not tickets enough. It was known, too, that there had been some large subscriptions apart from the price paid for tickets: Varvara Petrovna, for instance, had paid three hundred roubles for her ticket and had given almost all the flowers from her conservatory to decorate the room. The marshal's wife, who was a member of the committee, provided

the house and the lighting; the club furnished the music, the attendants, and gave up Prohorovitch for the whole day. There were other contributions as well, though lesser ones, so much so indeed that the idea was mooted of cutting down the price of tickets from three roubles to two. Indeed, the committee were afraid at first that three roubles would be too much for young ladies to pay, and suggested that they might have family tickets, so that every family should pay for one daughter only, while the other young ladies of the family, even if there were a dozen specimens, should be admitted free. But all their apprehensions turned out to be groundless: it was just the young ladies who did come. Even the poorest clerks brought their girls, and it was quite evident that if they had had no girls it would never have occurred to them to subscribe for tickets. One insignificant little secretary brought all his seven daughters, to say nothing of his wife and a niece into the bargain, and every one of these persons held in her hand an entrance ticket that cost three roubles.

It may be imagined what an upheaval it made in the town! One has only to remember that as the fete was divided into two parts every lady needed two costumes for the occasion—a morning one for the matinee and a ball dress for the evening. Many middle-class people, as it appeared afterwards, had pawned everything they had for that day, even the family linen, even the sheets, and possibly the mattresses, to the Jews, who had been settling in our town in great numbers during the previous two years and who became more and more numerous as time went on. Almost all the officials had asked for their salary in advance, and some of the landowners sold beasts they could ill spare, and all simply to bring their ladies got up as marchionesses, and to be as good as anybody. The magnificence of dresses on this occasion was something unheard of in our neighbourhood. For a fortnight beforehand the town was overflowing with funny stories which were all brought by our wits to Yulia Mihailovna's court. Caricatures were passed from hand to hand. I have seen some drawings of the sort myself, in Yulia Mihailovna's album. All this reached the ears of the families who were the source of the jokes; I believe this was the cause of the general hatred of Yulia Mihailovna which had grown so strong in the town. People swear and gnash their teeth when they think of it now. But it was evident, even at the time, that if the committee were to displease them in anything, or if anything went wrong at the ball, the outburst of indignation would be something surprising. That's why every one was secretly expecting a scandal; and if it was so confidently expected, how could it fail to come to pass? The orchestra struck up punctually at midday. Being one of the stewards, that is, one of the twelve "young men with a rosette," I saw with my own eyes how this day of ignominious memory began. It began with an enormous crush at the doors. How was it that everything, including the police, went wrong that day? I don't blame the genuine public: the fathers of families did not crowd, nor did they push against anyone, in spite of their position. On the contrary, I am told that they were disconcerted even in the street, at the sight of the crowd shoving in a way unheard of in our town, besieging the entry and taking it by assault, instead of simply going in. Meanwhile the carriages kept driving up, and at last blocked the street. Now, at the time I write, I have good grounds for affirming that

some of the lowest rabble of our town were brought in without tickets by Lyamshin and Liputin, possibly, too, by other people who were stewards like me. Anyway, some complete strangers, who had come from the surrounding districts and elsewhere, were present. As soon as these savages entered the hall they began asking where the buffet was, as though they had been put up to it beforehand, and learning that there was no buffet they began swearing with brutal directness, and an unprecedented insolence; some of them, it is true, were drunk when they came. Some of them were dazed like savages at the splendour of the hall, as they had never seen anything like it, and subsided for a minute gazing at it open-mouthed. This great White Hall really was magnificent, though the building was falling into decay: it was of immense size, with two rows of windows, with an old-fashioned ceiling covered with gilt carving, with a gallery with mirrors on the walls, red and white draperies, marble statues (nondescript but still statues) with heavy old furniture of the Napoleonic period, white and gold, upholstered in red velvet. At the moment I am describing, a high platform had been put up for the literary gentlemen who were to read, and the whole hall was filled with chairs like the parterre of a theatre with wide aisles for the audience.

But after the first moments of surprise the most senseless questions and protests followed. "Perhaps we don't care for a reading... . We've paid our money... . The audience has been impudently swindled... . This is our entertainment, not the Lembkes'! They seemed, in fact, to have been let in for this purpose. I remember specially an encounter in which the princeling with the stand-up collar and the face of a Dutch doll, whom I had met the morning before at Yulia Mihailovna's, distinguished himself. He had, at her urgent request, consented to pin a rosette on his left shoulder and to become one of our stewards. It turned out that this dumb wax figure could act after a fashion of his own, if he could not talk. When a colossal pockmarked captain, supported by a herd of rabble following at his heels, pestered him by asking "which way to the buffet?" he made a sign to a police sergeant. His hint was promptly acted upon, and in spite of the drunken captain's abuse he was dragged out of the hall. Meantime the genuine public began to make its appearance, and stretched in three long files between the chairs. The disorderly elements began to subside, but the public, even the most "respectable" among them, had a dissatisfied and perplexed air; some of the ladies looked positively scared.

At last all were seated; the music ceased. People began blowing their noses and looking about them. They waited with too solemn an air—which is always a bad sign. But nothing was to be seen yet of the Lembkes. Silks, velvets, diamonds glowed and sparkled on every side; whiffs of fragrance filled the air. The men were wearing all their decorations, and the old men were even in uniform. At last the marshal's wife came in with Liza. Liza had never been so dazzlingly charming or so splendidly dressed as that morning. Her hair was done up in curls, her eyes sparkled, a smile beamed on her face. She made an unmistakable sensation: people scrutinised her and whispered about her. They said that she was looking for Stavrogin, but neither Stavrogin nor Varvara Petrovna were there. At the time I did not understand the expression of her

face: why was there so much happiness, such joy, such energy and strength in that face? I remembered what had happened the day before and could not make it out.

But still the Lembkes did not come. This was distinctly a blunder. I learned that Yulia Mihailovna waited till the last minute for Pyotr Stepanovitch, without whom she could not stir a step, though she never admitted it to herself. I must mention, in parenthesis, that on the previous day Pyotr Stepanovitch had at the last meeting of the committee declined to wear the rosette of a steward, which had disappointed her dreadfully, even to the point of tears. To her surprise and, later on, her extreme discomfiture (to anticipate things) he vanished for the whole morning and did not make his appearance at the literary matinee at all, so that no one met him till evening. At last the audience began to manifest unmistakable signs of impatience. No one appeared on the platform either. The back rows began applauding, as in a theatre. The elderly gentlemen and the ladies frowned. "The Lembkes are really giving themselves unbearable airs." Even among the better part of the audience an absurd whisper began to gain ground that perhaps there would not be a fete at all, that Lembke perhaps was really unwell, and so on and so on. But, thank God, the Lembkes at last appeared, she was leaning on his arm; I must confess I was in great apprehension myself about their appearance. But the legends were disproved, and the truth was triumphant. The audience seemed relieved. Lembke himself seemed perfectly well. Every one, I remember, was of that opinion, for it can be imagined how many eyes were turned on him. I may mention, as characteristic of our society, that there were very few of the better-class people who saw reason to suppose that there was anything wrong with him; his conduct seemed to them perfectly normal, and so much so that the action he had taken in the square the morning before was accepted and approved.

"That's how it should have been from the first," the higher officials declared. "If a man begins as a philanthropist he has to come to the same thing in the end, though he does not see that it was necessary from the point of view of philanthropy itself"—that, at least, was the opinion at the club. They only blamed him for having lost his temper. "It ought to have been done more coolly, but there, he is a new man," said the authorities.

All eyes turned with equal eagerness to Yulia Mihailovna. Of course no one has the right to expect from me an exact account in regard to one point: that is a mysterious, a feminine question. But I only know one thing: on the evening of the previous day she had gone into Andrey Antonovitch's study and was there with him till long after midnight. Andrey Antonovitch was comforted and forgiven. The husband and wife came to a complete understanding, everything was forgotten, and when at the end of the interview Lembke went down on his knees, recalling with horror the final incident of the previous night, the exquisite hand, and after it the lips of his wife, checked the fervent flow of penitent phrases of the chivalrously delicate gentleman who was limp with emotion. Every one could see the happiness in her face. She walked in with an open-hearted air, wearing a magnificent dress. She seemed to be at the very pinnacle of her heart's desires, the fete—the goal and crown of her diplomacy—was an

accomplished fact. As they walked to their seats in front of the platform, the Lembkes bowed in all directions and responded to greetings. They were at once surrounded. The marshal's wife got up to meet them.

But at that point a horrid misunderstanding occurred; the orchestra, apropos of nothing, struck up a flourish, not a triumphal march of any kind, but a simple flourish such as was played at the club when some one's health was drunk at an official dinner. I know now that Lyamshin, in his capacity of steward, had arranged this, as though in honour of the Lembkes' entrance. Of course he could always excuse it as a blunder or excessive zeal... . Alas! I did not know at the time that they no longer cared even to find excuses, and that all such considerations were from that day a thing of the past. But the flourish was not the end of it: in the midst of the vexatious astonishment and the smiles of the audience there was a sudden "hurrah" from the end of the hall and from the gallery also, apparently in Lembke's honour. The hurrahs were few, but I must confess they lasted for some time. Yulia Mihailovna flushed, her eyes flashed. Lembke stood still at his chair, and turning towards the voices sternly and majestically scanned the audience... . They hastened to make him sit down. I noticed with dismay the same dangerous smile on his face as he had worn the morning before, in his wife's drawing-room, when he stared at Stepan Trofimovitch before going up to him. It seemed to me that now, too, there was an ominous, and, worst of all, a rather comic expression on his countenance, the expression of a man resigned to sacrifice himself to satisfy his wife's lofty aims... . Yulia Mihailovna beckoned to me hurriedly, and whispered to me to run to Karmazinov and entreat him to begin. And no sooner had I turned away than another disgraceful incident, much more unpleasant than the first, took place.

On the platform, the empty platform, on which till that moment all eyes and all expectations were fastened, and where nothing was to be seen but a small table, a chair in front of it, and on the table a glass of water on a silver salver—on the empty platform there suddenly appeared the colossal figure of Captain Lebyadkin wearing a dress-coat and a white tie. I was so astounded I could not believe my eyes. The captain seemed confused and remained standing at the back of the platform. Suddenly there was a shout in the audience, "Lebyadkin! You?" The captain's stupid red face (he was hopelessly drunk) expanded in a broad vacant grin at this greeting. He raised his hand, rubbed his forehead with it, shook his shaggy head and, as though making up his mind to go through with it, took two steps forward and suddenly went off into a series of prolonged, blissful, gurgling, but not loud guffaws, which made him screw up his eyes and set all his bulky person heaving. This spectacle set almost half the audience laughing, twenty people applauded. The serious part of the audience looked at one another gloomily; it all lasted only half a minute, however. Liputin, wearing his steward's rosette, ran on to the platform with two servants; they carefully took the captain by both arms, while Liputin whispered something to him. The captain scowled, muttered "Ah, well, if that's it!" waved his hand, turned his huge back to the public and vanished with his escort. But a minute later Liputin skipped on to the platform again. He was wearing the sweetest of his invariable smiles, which usually suggested

vinegar and sugar, and carried in his hands a sheet of note-paper. With tiny but rapid steps he came forward to the edge of the platform.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, addressing the public, “through our inadvertency there has arisen a comical misunderstanding which has been removed; but I’ve hopefully undertaken to do something at the earnest and most respectful request of one of our local poets. Deeply touched by the humane and lofty object ... in ‘spite of his appearance ... the object which has brought us all together ... to wipe away the tears of the poor but well-educated girls of our province ... this gentleman, I mean this local poet ... although desirous of preserving his incognito, would gladly have heard his poem read at the beginning of the ball ... that is, I mean, of the matinee. Though this poem is not in the programme ... for it has only been received half an hour ago ... yet it has seemed to us”—(Us? Whom did he mean by us? I report his confused and incoherent speech word for word)—“that through its remarkable naivete of feeling, together with its equally remarkable gaiety, the poem might well be read, that is, not as something serious, but as something appropriate to the occasion, that is to the idea ... especially as some lines ... And I wanted to ask the kind permission of the audience.”

“Read it!” boomed a voice at the back of the hall.

“Then I am to read it?”

“Read it, read it!” cried many voices.

“With the permission of the audience I will read it,” Liputin minced again, still with the same sugary smile. He still seemed to hesitate, and I even thought that he was rather excited. These people are sometimes nervous in spite of their impudence. A divinity student would have carried it through without winking, but Liputin did, after all, belong to the last generation.

“I must say, that is, I have the honour to say by way of preface, that it is not precisely an ode such as used to be written for fetes, but is rather, so to say, a jest, but full of undoubted feeling, together with playful humour, and, so to say, the most realistic truthfulness.”

“Read it, read it!”

He unfolded the paper. No one of course was in time to stop him. Besides, he was wearing his steward’s badge. In a ringing voice he declaimed:

“To the local governesses of the Fatherland from the poet at the fete:

“Governesses all, good morrow,

Triumph on this festive day.

Retrograde or vowed George-Sander— Never mind, just frisk away!”

“But that’s Lebyadkin’s! Lebyadkin’s!” cried several voices. There was laughter and even applause, though not from very many.

“Teaching French to wet-nosed children, You are glad enough to think

You can catch a worn-out sexton—

Even he is worth a wink!”

“Hurrah! hurrah!”

“But in these great days of progress, Ladies, to your sorrow know,

You can't even catch a sexton,
If you have not got a 'dot'."

"To be sure, to be sure, that's realism. You can't hook a husband without a 'dot'!"

"But, henceforth, since through our feasting Capital has flowed from all,
And we send you forth to conquest

Dancing, downed from this hall— Retrograde or vowed George-Sander, Never mind,
rejoice you may,

You're a governess with a dowry,
Spit on all and frisk away!"

I must confess I could not believe my ears. The insolence of it was so unmistakable that there was no possibility of excusing Liputin on the ground of stupidity. Besides, Liputin was by no means stupid. The intention was obvious, to me, anyway; they seemed in a hurry to create disorder. Some lines in these idiotic verses, for instance the last, were such that no stupidity could have let them pass. Liputin himself seemed to feel that he had undertaken too much; when he had achieved his exploit he was so overcome by his own impudence that he did not even leave the platform but remained standing, as though there were something more he wanted to say. He had probably imagined that it would somehow produce a different effect; but even the group of ruffians who had applauded during the reading suddenly sank into silence, as though they, too, were overcome. What was silliest of all, many of them took the whole episode seriously, that is, did not regard the verses as a lampoon but actually thought it realistic and true as regards the governesses—a poem with a tendency, in fact. But the excessive freedom of the verses struck even them at last; as for the general public they were not only scandalised but obviously offended. I am sure I am not mistaken as to the impression. Yulia Mihailovna said afterwards that in another moment she would have fallen into a-swoon. One of the most respectable old gentlemen helped his old wife on to her feet, and they walked out of the hall accompanied by the agitated glances of the audience. Who knows, the example might have infected others if Karmazinov himself, wearing a dress-coat and a white tie and carrying a manuscript, in his hand, had not appeared on the platform at that moment. Yulia Mihailovna turned an ecstatic gaze at him as on her deliverer... . But I was by that time behind the scenes. I was in quest of Liputin.

"You did that on purpose!" I said, seizing him indignantly by the arm.

"I assure you I never thought ..." he began, cringing and lying at once, pretending to be unhappy. "The verses had only just been brought and I thought that as an amusing pleasantry. ..."

"You did not think anything of the sort. You can't really think that stupid rubbish an amusing pleasantry?"

"Yes, I do."

"You are simply lying, and it wasn't brought to you just now. You helped Lebyadkin to compose it yourself, yesterday very likely, to create a scandal. The last verse must

have been yours, the part about the sexton too. Why did he come on in a dress-coat? You must have meant him to read it, too, if he had not been drunk?"

Liputin looked at me coldly and ironically. "What business is it of yours?" he asked suddenly with strange calm.

"What business is it of mine I You are wearing the steward's badge, too... . Where is Pyotr Stepanovitch?"

"I don't know, somewhere here; why do you ask?"

"Because now I see through it. It's simply a plot against Yulia Mihailovna so as to ruin the day by a scandal... ." Liputin looked at me askance again.

"But what is it to you?" he said, grinning. He shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

It came over me with a rush. All my suspicions were confirmed. Till then, I had been hoping I was mistaken! What was I to do? I was on the point of asking the advice of Stepan Trofimovitch, but he was standing before the looking-glass, trying on different smiles, and continually consulting a piece of paper on which he had notes. He had to go on immediately after Karmazinov, and was not in a fit state for conversation. Should I run to Yulia Mihailovna? But it was too soon to go to her: she needed a much sterner lesson to cure her of her conviction that she had "a following," and that every one was "fanatically devoted" to her. She would not have believed me, and would have thought I was dreaming. Besides, what help could she be?" Eh," I thought, "after all, what business is it of mine? I'll take off my badge and go home when it begins." That was my mental phrase, "when it begins"; I remember it.

But I had to go and listen to Karmazinov. Taking a last look round behind the scenes, I noticed that a good number of outsiders, even women among them, were flitting about, going in and out. "Behind the scenes" was rather a narrow space completely screened from the audience by a curtain and communicating with other rooms by means of a passage. Here our readers were awaiting their turns. But I was struck at that moment by the reader who was to follow Stepan Trofimovitch. He, too, was some sort of professor (I don't know to this day exactly what he was) who had voluntarily left some educational institution after a disturbance among the students, and had arrived in the town only a few days before. He, too, had been recommended to Yulia Mihailovna, and she had received him with reverence. I know now that he had only spent one evening in her company before the reading; he had not spoken all that evening, had listened with an equivocal smile to the jests and the general tone of the company surrounding Yulia Mihailovna, and had made an unpleasant impression on every one by his air of haughtiness, and at the same time almost timorous readiness to take offence. It was Yulia Mihailovna herself who had enlisted his services. Now he was walking from corner to corner, and, like Stepan Trofimovitch, was muttering to himself, though he looked on the ground instead of in the looking-glass. He was not trying on smiles, though he often smiled rapaciously. It was obvious that it was useless to speak to him either. He looked about forty, was short and bald, had a greyish beard, and was decently dressed. But what was most interesting about him was that at every

turn he took he threw up his right fist, brandished it above his head and suddenly brought it down again as though crushing an antagonist to atoms. He went—through this by-play every moment. It made me uncomfortable. I hastened away to listen to Karmazinov.

3

There was a feeling in the hall that something was wrong again. Let me state to begin with that I have the deepest reverence for genius, but why do our geniuses in the decline of their illustrious years behave sometimes exactly like little boys? What though he was Karmazinov, and came forward with as much dignity as five Kammerherrns rolled into one? How could he expect to keep an audience like ours listening for a whole hour to a single paper? I have observed, in fact, that however big a genius a man may be, he can't monopolise the attention of an audience at a frivolous literary matinee for more than twenty minutes with impunity. The entrance of the great writer was received, indeed, with the utmost respect: even the severest elderly men showed signs of approval and interest, and the ladies even displayed some enthusiasm. The applause was brief, however, and somehow uncertain and not unanimous. Yet there was no unseemly behaviour in the back rows, till Karmazinov began to speak, not that anything very bad followed then, but only a sort of misunderstanding. I have mentioned already that he had rather a shrill voice, almost feminine in fact, and at the same time a genuinely aristocratic lisp. He had hardly articulated a few words when some one had the effrontery to laugh aloud—probably some ignorant simpleton who knew nothing of the world, and was congenitally disposed to laughter. But there was nothing like a hostile demonstration; on the contrary people said “sh-h!” and the offender was crushed. But Mr. Karmazinov, with an affected air and intonation, announced that “at first he had declined absolutely to read.” (Much need there was to mention it!) “There are some lines which come so deeply from the heart that it is impossible to utter them aloud, so that these holy things cannot be laid before the public”—(Why lay them then?)—“but as he had been begged to do so, he was doing so, and as he was, moreover, laying down his pen for ever, and had sworn to write no more, he had written this last farewell; and as he had sworn never, on any inducement, to read anything in public,” and so on, and so on, all in that style.

But all that would not have mattered; every one knows what authors' prefaces are like, though, I may observe, that considering the lack of culture of our audience and the irritability of the back rows, all this may have had an influence. Surely it would have been better to have read a little story, a short tale such as he had ‘written in the past—over-elaborate, that is, and affected, but sometimes witty. It would have saved the situation. No, this was quite another story! It was a regular oration! Good heavens, what wasn't there in it! I am positive that it would have reduced to rigidity even a Petersburg audience, let alone ours. Imagine an article that would have filled some thirty pages of print of the most affected, aimless prattle; and to make matters

worse, the gentleman read it with a sort of melancholy condescension as though it were a favour, so that it was almost insulting to the audience. The subject... . Who could make it out? It was a sort of description of certain impressions and reminiscences. But of what? And about what? Though the leading intellects of the province did their utmost during the first half of the reading, they could make nothing of it, and they listened to the second part simply out of politeness. A great deal was said about love, indeed, of the love of the genius for some person, but I must admit it made rather an awkward impression. For the great writer to tell us about his first kiss seemed to my mind a little incongruous with his short and fat-little figure ... Another thing that was offensive; these kisses did not occur as they do with the rest of mankind. There had to be a framework of gorse (it had to be gorse or some such plant that one must look up in a flora) and there had to be a tint of purple in the sky, such as no mortal had ever observed before, or if some people had seen it, they had never noticed it, but he seemed to say, "I have seen it and am describing it to you, fools, as if it were a most ordinary thing." The tree under which the interesting couple sat had of course to be of an orange colour. They were sitting somewhere in Germany. Suddenly they see Pompey or Cassius on the eve of a battle, and both are penetrated by a hill of ecstasy. Some wood-nymph squeaked in the bushes. Gluck played the violin among the reeds. The title of the piece he was playing was given in full, but no one knew it, so that one would have had to look it up in a musical dictionary. Meanwhile a fog came on, such a fog, such a fog, that it was more like a million pillows than a fog. And suddenly everything disappears and the great genius is crossing the frozen Volga in a thaw. Two and a half pages are filled with the crossing, and yet he falls through the ice. The genius is drowning—you imagine he was drowned? Not a bit of it; this was simply in order that when he was drowning and at his last gasp, he might catch sight of a bit of ice, the size of a pea, but pure and crystal "as a frozen tear," and in that tear was reflected Germany, or more accurately the sky of Germany, and its iridescent sparkle recalled to his mind the very tear which "dost thou remember, fell from thine eyes when we were sitting under that emerald tree, and thou didst cry out joyfully: 'There is no crime!' 'No,' I said through my tears, 'but if that is so, there are no righteous either.' We sobbed and parted for ever." She went off somewhere to the sea coast, while he went to visit some caves, and then he descends and descends and descends for three years under Suharev Tower in Moscow, and suddenly in the very bowels of the earth, he finds in a cave a lamp, and before the lamp a hermit. The hermit is praying. The genius leans against a little barred window, and suddenly hears a sigh. Do you suppose it was the hermit sighing? Much he cares about the hermit! Not a bit of it, this sigh simply reminds him of her first sigh, thirty-seven years before, "in Germany, when, dost thou remember, we sat under an agate tree and thou didst say to me, 'Why love? See ochra is growing all around and I love thee; but the ochra will cease to grow, and I shall cease to love.'" Then the fog comes on again, Hoffman appears on the scene, the wood-nymph whistles a tune from Chopin, and suddenly out

of the fog appears Ancus Marcius over the roofs of Rome, wearing a laurel wreath. "A chill of ecstasy ran down our backs and we parted for ever"—and so on and so on.

Perhaps I am not reporting it quite right and don't know how to report it, but the drift of the babble was something of that sort. And after all, how disgraceful this passion of our great intellects for jesting in a superior way really is! The great European philosopher, the great man of science, the inventor, the martyr—all these who labour and are heavy laden, are to the great Russian genius no more than so many cooks in his kitchen. He is the master and they come to him, cap in hand, awaiting orders. It is true he jeers superciliously at Russia too, and there is nothing he likes better than exhibiting the bankruptcy of Russia in every relation before the great minds of Europe, but as regards himself, no, he is at a higher level than all the great minds of Europe; they are only material for his jests. He takes another man's idea, tacks on to it its antithesis, and the epigram is made. There is such a thing as crime, there is no such thing as crime; there is no such thing as justice, there are no just men; atheism, Darwinism, the Moscow bells... . But alas, he no longer believes in the Moscow bells; Rome, laurels... . But he has no belief in laurels even... . We have a conventional attack of Byronic spleen, a grimace from Heine, something of Petchorin—and the machine goes on rolling, whistling, at full speed. "But you may praise me, you may praise me, that I like extremely; it's only in a manner of speaking that I lay down the pen; I shall bore you three hundred times more, you'll grow weary of reading me... ."

Of course it did not end without trouble; but the worst of it was that it was his own doing. People had for some time begun shuffling their feet, blowing their noses, coughing, and doing everything that people do when a lecturer, whoever he may be, keeps an audience for longer than twenty minutes at a literary matinee. But the genius noticed nothing of all this. He went on lisping and mumbling, without giving a thought to the audience, so that every one began to wonder. Suddenly in a back row a solitary but loud voice was heard:

"Good Lord, what nonsense!"

The exclamation escaped involuntarily, and I am sure was not intended as a demonstration. The man was simply worn out. But Mr. Karmazinov stopped, looked sarcastically at the audience, and suddenly lisped with the deportment of an aggrieved kammerherr.

"I'm afraid I've been boring you dreadfully, gentlemen?"

That was his blunder, that he was the first to speak; for provoking an answer in this way he gave an opening for the rabble to speak, too, and even legitimately, so to say, while if he had restrained himself, people would have gone on blowing their noses and it would have passed off somehow. Perhaps he expected applause in response to his question, but there was no sound of applause; on the contrary, every one seemed to subside and shrink back in dismay.

"You never did see Ancus Marcius, that's all brag," cried a voice that sounded full of irritation and even nervous exhaustion.

“Just so,” another voice agreed at once. “There are no such things as ghosts nowadays, nothing but natural science. Look it up in a scientific book.”

“Gentlemen, there was nothing I expected less than such objections,” said Karmazinov, extremely surprised. The great genius had completely lost touch with his Fatherland in Karlsruhe.

“Nowadays it’s outrageous to say that the world stands on three fishes,” a young lady snapped out suddenly. “You can’t have gone down to the hermit’s cave, Karmazinov. And who talks about hermits nowadays?”

“Gentlemen, what surprises me most of all is that you take it all so seriously. However ... however, you are perfectly right. No one has greater respect for truth and realism than I have... .”

Though he smiled ironically he was tremendously overcome. His face seemed to express: “I am not the sort of man you think, I am on your side, only praise me, praise me more, as much as possible, I like it extremely. ...”

“Gentlemen,” he cried, completely mortified at last, “I see that my poor poem is quite out of place here. And, indeed, I am out of place here myself, I think.”

“You threw at the crow and you hit the cow,” some fool, probably drunk, shouted at the top of his voice, and of course no notice ought to have been taken of him. It is true there was a sound of disrespectful laughter.

“A cow, you say?” Karmazinov caught it up at once, his voice grew shriller and shriller. “As for crows and cows, gentlemen, I will refrain. I’ve too much respect for any audience to permit myself comparisons, however harmless; but I did think ...”

“You’d better be careful, sir,” some one shouted from a back row.

“But I had supposed that laying aside my pen and saying farewell to my readers, I should be heard ...”

“No, no, we want to hear you, we want to,” a few voices from the front row plucked up spirit to exclaim at last.

“Read, read!” several enthusiastic ladies’ voices chimed in, and at last there was an outburst of applause, sparse and feeble, it is true.

“Believe me, Karmazinov, every one looks on it as an honour ...” the marshal’s wife herself could not resist saying.

“Mr. Karmazinov!” cried a fresh young voice in the back of the hall suddenly. It was the voice of a very young teacher from the district school who had only lately come among us, an excellent young man, quiet and gentlemanly. He stood up in his place. “Mr. Karmazinov, if I had the happiness to fall in love as you have described to us, I really shouldn’t refer to my love in an article intended for public reading... .” He flushed red all over.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” cried Karmazinov, “I have finished. I will omit the end and withdraw. Only allow me to read the six last lines:

“Yes, dear reader, farewell!” he began at once from the manuscript without sitting down again in his chair. “Farewell, reader; I do not greatly insist on our parting friends; what need to trouble you, indeed. You may abuse me, abuse me as you will if it affords

you any satisfaction. But best of all if we forget one another for ever. And if you all, readers, were suddenly so kind as to fall on your knees and begin begging me with tears, 'Write, oh, write for us, Karmazinov—for the sake of Russia, for the sake of posterity, to win laurels,' even then I would answer you, thanking you, of course, with every courtesy, 'No, we've had enough of one another, dear fellow-countrymen, merci! It's time we took our separate ways!' 'Herd, mem, merci!'

Karmazinov bowed ceremoniously, and, as red as though he had been cooked, retired behind the scenes.

"Nobody would go down on their knees; a wild idea!"

"What conceit!"

"That's only humour," some one more reasonable suggested. "Spare me your humour."

"I call it impudence, gentlemen!"

"Well, he's finished now, anyway!"

"Ech, what a dull show!"

But all these ignorant exclamations in the back rows (though they were confined to the back rows) were drowned in applause from the other half of the audience. They called for Karmazinov. Several ladies with Yulia Mihailovna and the marshal's wife crowded round the platform. In Yulia Mihailovna's hands was a gorgeous laurel wreath resting on another wreath of living roses on a white velvet cushion.

"Laurels!" Karmazinov pronounced with a subtle and rather sarcastic smile. "I am touched, of course, and accept with real emotion this wreath prepared beforehand, but still fresh and unwithered, but I assure you, mesdames, that I have suddenly become so realistic that I feel laurels would in this age be far more appropriate in the hands of a skilful cook than in mine... ."

"Well, a cook is more useful," cried the divinity student, who had been at the "meeting" at Virgirisky's.

There was some disorder. In many rows people jumped up to get a better view of the presentation of the laurel wreath.

"I'd give another three roubles for a, cook this minute," another voice assented loudly, too loudly; insistently, in fact.

"So would I."

"And I."

"Is it possible there's no buffet? ..."

"Gentlemen, it's simply a swindle... ."

It must be admitted, however, that all these unbridled gentlemen still stood in awe of our higher officials and of the police superintendent, who was present in the hall. Ten minutes later all had somehow got back into their places, but there was not the same good order as before. And it was into this incipient chaos that poor Stepan Trofimovitch was thrust.

4

I ran out to him behind the scenes once more, and had time to warn him excitedly that in my opinion the game was up, that he had better not appear at all, but had better go home at once on the excuse of his usual ailment, for instance, and I would take off my badge and come with him. At that instant he was on his way to the platform; he stopped suddenly, and haughtily looking me up and down he pronounced solemnly:

“What grounds have you, sir, for thinking me capable of such baseness?”

5

He drew back. I was as sure as twice two make four that he would not get off without a catastrophe. Meanwhile, as I stood utterly dejected, I saw moving before me again the figure of the professor, whose turn it was to appear after Stepan Trofimovitch, and who kept lifting up his fist and bringing it down again with a swing. He kept walking up and down, absorbed in himself and muttering something to himself with a diabolical but triumphant smile. I somehow almost unintentionally went up to him. I don't know what induced me to meddle again. “Do you know,” I said, “judging from many examples, if a lecturer keeps an audience for more than twenty minutes it won't go on listening. No celebrity is able to hold his own for half an hour.”

He stopped short and seemed almost quivering with resentment. Infinite disdain was expressed in his countenance.

“Don't trouble yourself,” he muttered contemptuously and walked on. At that moment Stepan Trofimovitch's voice rang out in the hall.

“Oh, hang you all,” I thought, and ran to the hall.

Stepan Trofimovitch took his seat in the lecturer's chair in the midst of the still persisting disorder. He was greeted by the first rows with looks which were evidently not over-friendly. (Of late, at the club, people almost seemed not to like him, and treated him with much less respect than formerly.) But it was something to the good that he was not hissed. I had had a strange idea in my head ever since the previous day: I kept fancying that he would be received with hisses as soon as he appeared. They scarcely noticed him, however, in the disorder. What could that man hope for if Karmazinov was treated like this? He was pale; it was ten years since he had appeared before an audience. From his excitement and from all that I knew so well in him, it was clear to me that he, too, regarded his present appearance on the platform as a turning-point of his fate, or something of the kind. That was just what I was afraid of. The man was dear to me. And what were my feelings when he opened his lips and I heard his first phrase?

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he pronounced suddenly, as though resolved to venture everything, though in an almost breaking voice. “Ladies and gentlemen! Only this

morning there lay before me one of the illegal leaflets that have been distributed here lately, and I asked myself for the hundredth time, 'Wherein lies its secret?'

The whole hall became instantly still, all looks were turned to him, some with positive alarm. There was no denying, he knew how to secure their interest from the first word. Heads were thrust out from behind the scenes; Liputin and Lyamshin listened greedily. Yulia Mihailovna waved to me again.

"Stop him, whatever happens, stop him," she whispered in agitation. I could only shrug my shoulders: how could one stop a man resolved to venture everything? Alas, I understood what was in Stepan Trofimovitch's mind.

"Ha ha, the manifestoes!" was whispered in the audience; the whole hall was stirred.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've solved the whole mystery. The whole secret of their effect lies in their stupidity." (His eyes flashed.) "Yes, gentlemen, if this stupidity were intentional, pretended and calculated, oh, that would be a stroke of genius! But we must do them justice: they don't pretend anything. It's the barest, most simple-hearted, most shallow stupidity. *C'est la betise dans son essence la plus pure, quelque chose comme un simple chimique.* If it were expressed ever so little more cleverly, every one would see at once the poverty of this shallow stupidity. But as it is, every one is left wondering: no one can believe that it is such elementary stupidity. 'It's impossible that there's nothing more in it,' every one says to himself and tries to find the secret of it, sees a mystery in it, tries to read between the lines—the effect is attained! Oh, never has stupidity been so solemnly rewarded, though it has so often deserved it. ... For, en parenthese, stupidity is of as much service to humanity as the loftiest genius... "

"Epigram of 1840" was commented, in a very modest voice, however, but it was followed by a general outbreak of noise and uproar.

"Ladies and gentlemen, hurrah! I propose a toast to stupidity!" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, defying the audience in a perfect frenzy.

I ran up on the pretext of pouring out some water for him.

"Stepan Trofimovitch, leave off, Yulia Mihailovna entreats you to."

"No, you leave me alone, idle young man," he cried out at me at the top of his voice. I ran away. "Messieurs," he went on, "why this excitement, why the outcries of indignation I hear? I have come forward with an olive branch. I bring you the last word, for in this business I have the last word—and we shall be reconciled."

"Down with him!" shouted some.

"Hush, let him speak, let him have his say!" yelled another section. The young teacher was particularly excited; having once brought himself to speak he seemed now unable to be silent.

"Messieurs, the last word in this business—is forgiveness. I, an old man at the end of my life, I solemnly declare that the spirit of life breathes in us still, and there is still a living strength in the young generation. The enthusiasm of the youth of today is as pure and bright as in our age. All that has happened is a change of aim, the replacing of one beauty by another! The whole difficulty lies in the question which is more beautiful, Shakespeare or boots, Raphael or petroleum?"

“It’s treachery!” growled some.

“Compromising questions!”

“Agent provocateur!”

“But I maintain,” Stepan Trofimovitch shrilled at the utmost pitch of excitement, “I maintain that Shakespeare and Raphael are more precious than the emancipation of the serfs, more precious than Nationalism, more precious than Socialism, more precious than the young generation, more precious than chemistry, more precious than almost all humanity because they are the fruit, the real fruit of all humanity and perhaps the highest fruit that can be. A form of beauty already attained, but for the attaining of which I would not perhaps consent to live... . Oh, heavens!” he cried, clasping his hands, “ten years ago I said the same thing from the platform in Petersburg, exactly the same thing, in the same words, and in just the same way they did not understand it, they laughed and hissed as now; shallow people, what is lacking in you that you cannot understand? But let me tell you, let me tell you, without the English, life is still possible for humanity, without Germany, life is possible, without the Russians it is only too possible, without science, without bread, life is possible—only without beauty it is impossible, for there will be nothing left in the world. That’s the secret at the bottom of everything, that’s what history teaches! Even science would not exist a moment without beauty—do you know that, you who laugh—it will sink into bondage, you won’t invent a nail even! . . . I won’t yield an inch!” he shouted absurdly in confusion, and with all his might banged his fist on the table.

But all the while that he was shrieking senselessly and incoherently, the disorder in the hall increased. Many people jumped up from their seats, some dashed forward, nearer to the platform. It all happened much more quickly than I describe it, and there was no time to take steps, perhaps no wish to, either.

“It’s all right for you, with everything found for you, you pampered creatures!” the same divinity student bellowed at the foot of the platform, grinning with relish at Stepan Trofimovitch, who noticed it and darted to the very edge of the platform.

“Haven’t I, haven’t I just declared that the enthusiasm of the young generation is as pure and bright as it was, and that it is coming to grief through being deceived only in the forms of beauty! Isn’t that enough for you? And if you consider that he who proclaims this is a father crushed and insulted, can one—oh, shallow hearts—can one rise to greater heights of impartiality and fairness? ... Ungrateful ... unjust... . Why, why can’t you be reconciled!”

And he burst into hysterical sobs. He wiped away his dropping tears with his fingers. His shoulders and breast were heaving with sobs. He was lost to everything in the world.

A perfect panic came over the audience, almost all got up from their seats. Yulia Mihailovna, too, jumped up quickly, seizing her husband by the arm and pulling him up too... . The scene was beyond all belief.

“Stepan Trofimovitch!” the divinity student roared gleefully. “There’s Fedka the convict wandering about the town and the neighbourhood, escaped from prison. He is a robber and has recently committed another murder. Allow me to ask you: if you had

not sold him as a recruit fifteen years ago to pay a gambling debt, that is, more simply, lost him at cards, tell me, would he have got into prison? Would he have cut men's throats now, in his struggle for existence? What do you say, Mr. Esthete?"

I decline to describe the scene that followed. To begin with there was a furious volley of applause. The applause did not come from all—probably from some fifth part of the audience—but they applauded furiously. The rest of the public made for the exit, but as the applauding part of the audience kept pressing forward towards the platform, there was a regular block. The ladies screamed, some of the girls began to cry and asked to go home. Lembke, standing up by his chair, kept gazing wildly about him. Yulia Mihailovna completely lost her head—for the first time during her career amongst us. As for Stepan Trofimovitch, for the first moment he seemed literally crushed by the divinity student's words, but he suddenly raised his arms as though holding them out above the public and yelled:

"I shake the dust from off my feet and I curse you... . It's the end, the end... ."

And turning, he ran behind the scenes, waving his hands menacingly.

"He has insulted the audience! ... Verhovensky!" the angry section roared. They even wanted to rush in pursuit of It was impossible to appease them, at the moment, any way, and—a final catastrophe broke like a bomb on the assembly and exploded in its midst: the third reader, the maniac who kept waving his fist behind the scenes, suddenly ran on to the platform. He looked like a perfect madman. With a broad, triumphant smile, full of boundless self-confidence, he looked round at the agitated hall and he seemed to be delighted at the disorder. He was not in the least disconcerted at having to speak in such an uproar, on the contrary, he was obviously delighted. This was so obvious that it attracted attention at once.

"What's this now?" people were heard asking. "Who is this? Sh-h! What does he want to say?"

"Ladies and gentlemen," the maniac shouted with all his might, standing at the very edge of the platform and speaking with almost as shrill, feminine a voice as Karmazinov's, but without the aristocratic lisp. "Ladies and gentlemen! Twenty years ago, on the eve of war with half Europe, Russia was regarded as an ideal country by officials of all ranks! Literature was in the service of the censorship; military drill was all that was taught at the universities; the troops were trained like a ballet, and the peasants paid the taxes and were mute under the lash of serfdom. Patriotism meant the wringing of bribes from the quick and the dead. Those who did not take bribes were looked upon as rebels because they disturbed the general harmony. The birch copes were extirpated in support of discipline. Europe trembled... . But never in the thousand years of its senseless existence had Russia sunk to such ignominy... ."

He raised his fist, waved it ecstatically and menacingly over his head and suddenly brought it down furiously, as though pounding an adversary to powder. A frantic yell rose from the whole hall, there was a deafening roar of applause; almost half the audience was applauding: their enthusiasm was excusable. Russia was being put to shame publicly, before every one. Who could fail to roar with delight?

“This is the real thing! Come, this is something like! Hurrah! Yes, this is none of your aesthetics!”

The maniac went on ecstatically:

“Twenty years have passed since then. Universities have been opened and multiplied. Military drill has passed into a legend; officers are too few by thousands, the railways have eaten up all the capital and have covered Russia as with a spider’s web, so that in another fifteen years one will perhaps get somewhere. Bridges are rarely on fire, and fires in towns occur only at regular intervals, in turn, at the proper season. In the law courts judgments are as wise as Solomon’s, and the jury only take bribes through the struggle for existence, to escape starvation. The serfs are free, and flog one another instead of being flogged by the land-owners. Seas and oceans of vodka are consumed to support the budget, and in Novgorod, opposite the ancient and useless St. Sophia, there has been solemnly put up a colossal bronze globe to celebrate a thousand years of disorder and confusion; Europe scowls and begins to be uneasy again... . Fifteen years of reforms! And yet never even in the most grotesque periods of its madness has Russia sunk ...”

The last words could not be heard in the roar of the crowd. One could see him again raise his arm and bring it down triumphantly again. Enthusiasm was beyond all bounds: people yelled, clapped their hands, even some of the ladies shouted: “Enough, you can’t beat that!” Some might have been drunk. The orator scanned them all and seemed revelling in his own triumph. I caught a glimpse of Lembke in indescribable excitement, pointing something out to somebody. Yulia Mihailovna, with a pale face, said something in haste to the prince, who had run up to her. But at that moment a group of six men, officials more or less, burst on to the platform, seized the orator and dragged him behind the scenes. I can’t understand how he managed to tear himself away from them, but he did escape, darted up to the edge of the platform again and succeeded in shouting again, at the top of his voice, waving his fist: “But never has Russia sunk ...”

But he was dragged away again. I saw some fifteen men dash behind the scenes to rescue him, not crossing the platform but breaking down the light screen at the side of it... . I saw afterwards, though I could hardly believe my eyes, the girl student (Virginsky’s sister) leap on to the platform with the same roll under her arm, dressed as before, as plump and rosy as ever, surrounded by two or three women and two or three men, and accompanied by her mortal enemy, the schoolboy. I even caught the phrase:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve come to call attention to the I sufferings of poor students and to rouse them to a general protest ...”

But I ran away. Hiding my badge in my pocket I made my way from the house into the street by back passages which I knew of. First of all, of course, I went to Stepan Trofimovitch’s.

Chapter 2: The End of the Fete He Would Not See Me

1

He had shut himself up and was writing. At my repeated knocks and appeals he answered through the door:

“My friend, I have finished everything. Who can ask anything more of me?”

“You haven’t finished anything, you’ve only helped to make a mess of the whole thing. For God’s sake, no epigrams, Stepan Trofimovitch! Open the door. We must take steps; they may still come and insult you... .”

I thought myself entitled to be particularly severe and even rigorous. I was afraid he might be going to do something still more mad. But to my surprise I met an extraordinary firmness.

“Don’t be the first to insult me then. I thank you for the past, but I repeat I’ve done with all men, good and bad. I am writing to Darya Pavlovna, whom I’ve forgotten so unpardonably till now. You may take it to her to-morrow, if you like, now merci.”

“Stepan Trofimovitch, I assure you that the matter is more serious than you think. Do you think that you’ve crushed some one there? You’ve pulverised no one, but have broken yourself to pieces like an empty bottle.” (Oh, I was coarse and discourteous; I remember it with regret.) “You’ve absolutely no reason to write to Darya Pavlovna ... and what will you do with yourself without me? What do you understand about practical life? I expect you are plotting something else? You’ll simply come to grief again if you go plotting something more... .”

He rose and came close up to the door.

“You’ve not been long with them, but you’ve caught the infection of their tone and language. Dieu vous pardonne, mon ami, et Dieu vous garde. But I’ve always seen in you the germs of delicate feeling, and you will get over it perhaps—apres le temps, of course, like all of us Russians. As for what you say about my impracticability, I’ll remind you of a recent idea of mine: a whole mass of people in Russia do nothing whatever but attack other people’s impracticability with the utmost fury and with the tiresome persistence of flies- in the summer, accusing every one of it except themselves. Cher, remember that I am excited, and don’t distress me. Once more merci for everything, and let us part like Karmazinov and the public; that is, let us forget each other with as much generosity as we can. He was posing in begging his former readers so earnestly to forget him; quant a moi, I am not so conceited, and I rest my hopes on the youth of your inexperienced heart. How should you remember a useless old man for long? ‘Live more,’ my friend, as Nastasya wished me on my last name-day (ces pauvres gens ont quelquefois des mots charmants et pleins de philosophie). I do not wish you much happiness—it will bore you. I do not wish you trouble either, but, following the philosophy of the peasant, I will repeat simply ‘live more’ and try not to be much bored; this useless wish I add

from myself. Well, good-bye, and good-bye for good. Don't stand at my door, I will not open it."

He went away and I could get nothing more out of him. In spite of his "excitement," he spoke smoothly, deliberately, with weight, obviously trying to be impressive. Of course he was rather vexed with me and was avenging himself indirectly, possibly even for the yesterday's "prison carts" and "floors that give way." His tears in public that morning, in spite of a triumph of a sort, had put him, he knew, in rather a comic position, and there never was a man more solicitous of dignity and punctilio in his relations with his friends than Stepan Trofimovitch. Oh, I don't blame him. But this fastidiousness and irony which he preserved in spite of all shocks reassured me at the time. A man who was so little different from his ordinary self was, of course, not in the mood at that moment for anything tragic or extraordinary. So I reasoned at the time, and, heavens, what a mistake I made! I left too much out of my reckoning.

In anticipation of events I will quote the few first lines of the letter to Darya Pavlovna, which she actually received the following day:

"Mon enfant, my hand trembles, but I've done with everything. You were not present at my last struggle: you did not come to that matinee, and you did well to stay away. But you will be told that in our Russia, which has grown so poor in men of character, one man had the courage to stand up and, in spite of deadly menaces showered on him from all sides, to tell the fools the truth, that is, that they are fools. Oh, ce sont—des pauvres petits vauriens et rien de plus, des petits—fools—voild le mot! The die is cast; I am going from this town for ever and I know not whither. Every one I loved has turned from me. But you, you are a pure and naive creature; you, a gentle being whose life has been all but linked with mine at the will of a capricious and imperious heart; you who looked at me perhaps with contempt when I shed weak tears on the eve of our frustrated marriage; you, who cannot in any case look on me except as a comic figure—for you, for you is the last cry of my heart, for you my last duty, for you alone! I cannot leave you for ever thinking of me as an ungrateful fool, a churlish egoist, as probably a cruel and ungrateful heart—whom, alas, I cannot forget—is every day describing me to you... ."

And so on and so on, four large pages.

Answering his "I won't open" with three bangs with my fist on the door, and shouting after him that I was sure he would send Nastasya for me three times that day, but I would not come, I gave him up and ran off to Yulia Mihailovna.

2

There I was the witness of a revolting scene: the poor woman was deceived to her face, and I could do nothing. Indeed, what could I say to her? I had had time to reconsider things a little and reflect that I had nothing to go upon but certain feelings and suspicious presentiments. I found her in tears, almost in hysterics, with compresses of eau-de-Cologne and a glass of water. Before her stood Pyotr Stepanovitch, who

talked without stopping, and the prince, who held his tongue as though it had been under a lock. With tears and lamentations she reproached Pyotr Stepanovitch for his "desertion." I was struck at once by the fact that she ascribed the whole failure, the whole ignominy of the matinee, everything in fact, to Pyotr Stepanovitch's absence.

In him I observed an important change: he seemed a shade too anxious, almost serious. As a rule he never seemed serious; he was always laughing, even when he was angry, and he was often angry. Oh, he was angry now! He was speaking coarsely, carelessly, with vexation and impatience. He said that he had been taken ill at Gaganov's lodging, where he had happened to go early in the morning. Alas, the poor woman was so anxious to be deceived again! The chief question which I found being discussed was whether the ball, that is, the whole second half of the fete, should or should not take place. Yulia Mihailovna could not be induced to appear at the ball "after the insults she had received that morning;" in other words, her heart was set on being compelled to do so, and by him, by Pyotr Stepanovitch. She looked upon him as an oracle, and I believe if he had gone away she would have taken to her bed at once. But he did not want to go away; he was desperately anxious that the ball should take place and that Yulia Mihailovna should be present at it.

"Come, what is there to cry about? Are you set on having a scene? On venting your anger on somebody? Well, vent it on me; only make haste about it, for the time is passing and you must make up your mind. We made a mess of it with the matinee; we'll pick up on the ball. Here, the prince thinks as I do. Yes, if it hadn't been for the prince, how would things have ended there?"

The prince had been at first opposed to the ball (that is, opposed to Yulia Mihailovna's appearing at it; the ball was bound to go on in any case), but after two or three such references to his opinion he began little by little to grunt his acquiescence.

I was surprised too at the extraordinary rudeness of Pyotr Stepanovitch's tone. Oh, I scout with indignation the contemptible slander which was spread later of some supposed liaison between Yulia Mihailovna and Pyotr Stepanovitch. There was no such thing, nor could there be. He gained his ascendancy over her from the first only by encouraging her in her dreams of influence in society and in the ministry, by entering into her plans, by inventing them for her, and working upon her with the grossest flattery. He had got her completely into his toils and had become as necessary to her as the air she breathed. Seeing me, she cried, with flashing eyes:

"Here, ask him. He kept by my side all the while, just like the prince did. Tell me, isn't it plain that it was all a preconcerted plot, a base, designing plot to damage Andrey Antonovitch and me as much as possible? Oh, they had arranged it beforehand. They had a plan! It's a party, a regular party."

"You are exaggerating as usual. You've always some romantic notion in your head. But I am glad to see Mr. ..." (He pretended to have forgotten my name.) "He'll give us his opinion."

"My opinion," I hastened to put in, "is the same as Yulia Mihailovna's. The plot is only too evident. I have brought you these ribbons, Yulia Mihailovna. Whether the

ball is to take place or not is not my business, for it's not in my power to decide; but my part as steward is over. Forgive my warmth, but I can't act against the dictates of common sense and my own convictions."

"You hear! You hear!" She clasped her hands.

"I hear, and I tell you this." He turned to me. "I think you must have eaten something which has made you all delirious. To my thinking, nothing has happened, absolutely nothing but what has happened before and is always liable to happen in this town. A plot, indeed! It was an ugly failure, disgracefully stupid. But where's the plot? A plot against Yulia Mihailovna, who has spoiled them and protected them and fondly forgiven them all their schoolboy pranks! Yulia Mihailovna! What have I been hammering into you for the last month continually? What did I warn you? What did you want with all these people—what did you want with them? What induced you to mix yourself up with these fellows? What was the motive, what was the object of it? To unite society? But, mercy on us! will they ever be united?"

"When did you warn me? On the contrary, you approved of it, you even insisted on it. ... I confess I am so surprised... . You brought all sorts of strange people to see me yourself."

"On the contrary, I opposed you; I did not approve of it. As for bringing them to see you, I certainly did, but only after they'd got in by dozens and only of late to make up 'the literary quadrille'—we couldn't get on without these rogues. Only I don't mind betting that a dozen or two more of the same sort were let in without tickets to-day."

"Not a doubt of it," I agreed.

"There, you see, you are agreeing already. Think what the tone has been lately here—I mean in this wretched town. It's nothing but insolence, impudence; it's been a crying scandal all the time. And who's been encouraging it? Who's screened it by her authority? Who's upset them all? Who has made all the small fry huffy? All their family secrets are caricatured in your album. Didn't you pat them on the back, your poets and caricaturists? Didn't you let Lyamshin kiss your hand? Didn't a divinity student abuse an actual state councillor in your presence and spoil his daughter's dress with his tarred boots? Now, can you wonder that the public is set against you?"

"But that's all your doing, yours! Oh, my goodness!"

"No, I warned you. We quarrelled. Do you hear, we quarrelled?"

"Why, you are lying to my face!"

"Of course it's easy for you to say that. You need a victim to vent your wrath on. Well, vent it on me as I've said already. I'd better appeal to you, Mr... ." (He was still unable to recall my name.) "We'll reckon on our fingers. I maintain that, apart from Liputin, there was nothing preconcerted, nothing! I will prove it, but first let us analyse Liputin. He came forward with that fool Lebyadkin's verses. Do you maintain that that was a plot? But do you know it might simply have struck Liputin as a clever thing to do. Seriously, seriously. He simply came forward with the idea of making every one laugh and entertaining them—his protectress Yulia Mihailovna first of all. That was all. Don't you believe it? Isn't that in keeping with all that has been going on here

for the last month? Do you want me to tell the whole truth? I declare that under other circumstances it might have gone off all right. It was a coarse joke—well, a bit strong, perhaps; but it was amusing, you know, wasn't it?"

"What! You think what Liputin did was clever?" Yulia Mihailovna cried in intense indignation. "Such stupidity, such tactlessness, so contemptible, so mean! It was intentional! Oh, you are saying it on purpose! I believe after that you are in the plot with them yourself."

"Of course I was behind the scenes, I was in hiding, I set it all going. But if I were in the plot—understand that, anyway—it wouldn't have ended with Liputin. So according to you I had arranged with my papa too that he should cause such a scene on purpose? Well, whose fault is it that my papa was allowed to read? Who tried only yesterday to prevent you from allowing it, only yesterday?"

"Oh, hier il avait tant d'esprit, I was so reckoning on him; and then he has such manners. I thought with him and Karmazinov ... Only think!

"Yes, only think. But in spite of tant d'esprit papa has made things worse, and if I'd known beforehand that he'd make such a mess of it, I should certainly not have persuaded you yesterday to keep the goat out of the kitchen garden, should I—since I am taking part in this conspiracy against your fete that you are so positive about? And yet I did try to dissuade you yesterday; I tried to because I foresaw it. To foresee everything was, of course, impossible; he probably did not know himself a minute before what he would fire off—these nervous old men can't be reckoned on like other people. But you can still save the situation: to satisfy the public, send to him to-morrow by administrative order, and with all the ceremonies, two doctors to inquire into his health. Even to-day, in fact, and take him straight to the hospital and apply cold compresses. Every one would laugh, anyway, and see that there was nothing to take offence at. I'll tell people about it in the evening at the ball, as I am his son. Karmazinov is another story. He was a perfect ass and dragged out his article for a whole hour. He certainly must have been in the plot with me! 'I'll make a mess of it too,' he thought, 'to damage Yulia Mihailovna.' "

"Oh, Karmazinov! Quelle honte! I was burning, burning with shame for his audience!"

"Well, I shouldn't have burnt, but have cooked him instead. The audience was right, you know. Who was to blame for Karmazinov, again? Did I foist him upon you? Was I one of his worshippers? Well, hang him! But the third maniac, the political—that's a different matter. That was every one's blunder, not only my plot."

"Ah, don't speak of it! That was awful, awful! That was my fault, entirely my fault!"

"Of course it was, but I don't blame you for that. No one can control them, these candid souls! You can't always be safe from them, even in Petersburg. He was recommended to you, and in what terms too! So you will admit that you are bound to appear at the ball to-night. It's an important business. It was you put him on to the platform. You must make it plain now to the public that you are not in league with him, that the fellow is in the hands of the police, and that you were in some inexplicable way

deceived. You ought to declare with indignation that you were the victim of a madman. Because he is a madman and nothing more. That's how you must put it about him. I can't endure these people who bite. I say worse things perhaps, but not from the platform, you know. And they are talking about a senator too."

"What senator? Who's talking?"

"I don't understand it myself, you know. Do you know anything about a senator, Yulia Mihailovna?"

"A senator?"

"You see, they are convinced that a senator has been appointed to be governor here, and that you are being superseded from Petersburg. I've heard it from lots of people."

"I've heard it too," I put in.

"Who said so?" asked Yulia Mihailovna, flushing all over.

"You mean, who said so first? How can I tell? But there it is, people say so. Masses of people are saying so. They were saying so yesterday particularly. They are all very serious about it, though I can't make it out. Of course the more intelligent and competent don't talk, but even some of those listen."

"How mean! And ... how stupid!"

"Well, that's just why you must make your appearance, to show these fools."

"I confess I feel myself that it's my duty, but ... what if there's another disgrace in store for us? What if people don't come? No one will come, you know, no one!"

"How hot you are! They not come! What about the new clothes? What about the girls' dresses? I give you up as a woman after that! Is that your knowledge of human nature?"

"The marshal's wife won't come, she won't."

"But, after all, what has happened? Why won't they come?" he cried at last with angry impatience.

"Ignominy, disgrace—that's what's happened. I don't know what to call it, but after it I can't face people."

"Why? How are you to blame for it, after all? Why do you take the blame of it on yourself? Isn't it rather the fault of the audience, of your respectable residents, your patresfamilias? They ought to have controlled the roughs and the rowdies—for it was all the work of roughs and rowdies, nothing serious. You can never manage things with the police alone in any society, anywhere. Among us every one asks for a special policeman to protect him wherever he goes. People don't understand that society must protect itself. And what do our patresfamilias, the officials, the wives and daughters, do in such cases? They sit quiet and sulk. In fact there's not enough social initiative to keep the disorderly in check."

"Ah, that's the simple truth! They sit quiet, sulk and ... gaze about them."

"And if it's the truth, you ought to say so aloud, proudly, sternly, just to show that you are not defeated, to those respectable residents and mothers of families. Oh, you can do it; you have the gift when your head is clear. You will gather them round you and say it aloud. And then a paragraph in the Voice and the Financial News. Wait a

bit, I'll undertake it myself, I'll arrange it all for you. Of course there must be more superintendence: you must look after the buffet; you must ask the prince, you must ask Mr... . You must not desert us, monsieur, just when we have to begin all over again. And finally, you must appear arm-in-arm with Andrey Antonovitch... . How is Andrey Antonovitch?"

"Oh, how unjustly, how untruly, how cruelly you have always judged that angelic man!" Yulia Mihailovna cried in a sudden, outburst, almost with tears, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pyotr Stepanovitch was positively taken aback for the moment. "Good heavens! I... What have I said? I've always ..."

"You never have, never! You have never done him justice."

"There's no understanding a woman," grumbled Pyotr Stepanovitch, with a wry smile.

"He is the most sincere, the most delicate, the most angelic of men! The most kind-hearted of men!"

"Well, really, as for kind-heartedness ... I've always done him justice. ..."

"Never! But let us drop it. I am too awkward in my defence of him. This morning that little Jesuit, the marshal's wife, also dropped some sarcastic hints about what happened yesterday."

"Oh, she has no thoughts to spare for yesterday now, she is full of to-day. And why are you so upset at her not coming to the ball to-night? Of course, she won't come after getting mixed up in such a scandal. Perhaps it's not her fault, but still her reputation ... her hands are soiled."

"What do you mean; I don't understand? Why are her hands soiled?" Yulia Mihailovna looked at him in perplexity.

"I don't vouch for the truth of it, but the town is ringing with the story that it was she brought them together."

"What do you mean? Brought whom together?"

"What, do you mean to say you don't know?" he exclaimed with well-simulated wonder.

"Why Stavrogin and Lizaveta Nikolaevna."

"What? How?" we all cried out at once.

"Is it possible you don't know? Phew! Why, it is quite a tragic romance: Lizaveta Nikolaevna was pleased to get out of that lady's carriage and get straight into Stavrogin's carriage, and slipped off with 'the latter' to Skvoreshniki in full daylight. Only an hour ago, hardly an hour."

We were flabbergasted. Of course we fell to questioning him, but to our wonder, although he "happened" to be a witness of the scene himself, he could give us no detailed account of it. The thing seemed to have happened like this: when the marshal's wife was driving Liza and Mavriky Nikolaevitch from the matinee to the house of Praskovya Ivanovna (whose legs were still bad) they saw a carriage waiting a short distance, about twenty-five paces, to one side of the front door. When Liza jumped out, she ran

straight to this carriage; the door was flung open and shut again; Liza called to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, "Spare me," and the carriage drove off at full speed to Skvoreshniki. To our hurried questions whether it was by arrangement? Who was in the carriage? Pyotr Stepanovitch answered that he knew nothing about it; no doubt it had been arranged, but that he did not see Stavrogin himself; possibly the old butler, Alexey Yegorytch, might have been in the carriage. To the question "How did he come to be there, and how did he know for a fact that she had driven to Skvoreshniki?" he answered that he happened to be passing and, at seeing Liza, he had run up to the carriage (and yet he could not make out who was in it, an inquisitive man like him!) and that Mavriky Nikolaevitch, far from setting off in pursuit, had not even tried to stop Liza, and had even laid a restraining hand on the marshal's wife, who was shouting at the top of her voice: "She is going to Stavrogin, to Stavrogin." At this point I lost patience, and cried furiously to Pyotr Stepanovitch:

"It's all your doing, you rascal! This was what you were doing this morning. You helped Stavrogin, you came in the carriage, you helped her into it ... it was you, you, you! Yulia Mihailovna, he is your enemy; he will be your ruin too! Beware of him!"

And I ran headlong out of the house. I wonder myself and cannot make out to this day how I came to say that to him. But I guessed quite right: it had all happened almost exactly as I said, as appeared later. What struck me most was the obviously artificial way in which he broke the news. He had not told it at once on entering the house as an extraordinary piece of news, but pretended that we knew without his telling us which was impossible in so short a time. And if we had known it, we could not possibly have refrained from mentioning it till he introduced the subject. Besides, he could not have heard yet that the town was "ringing with gossip" about the marshal's wife in so short a time. Besides, he had once or twice given a vulgar, frivolous smile as he told the story, probably considering that we were fools and completely taken in.

But I had no thought to spare for him; the central fact I believed, and ran from Yulia Mihailovna's, beside myself. The catastrophe cut me to the heart. I was wounded almost to tears; perhaps I did shed some indeed. I was at a complete loss what to do. I rushed to Stepan Trofimovitch's, but the vexatious man still refused to open the door. Nastasya informed me, in a reverent whisper, that he had gone to bed, but I did not believe it. At Liza's house I succeeded in questioning the servants. They confirmed the story of the elopement, but knew nothing themselves. There was great commotion in the house; their mistress had been attacked by fainting fits, and Mavriky Nikolaevitch was with her. I did not feel it possible to ask for Mavriky Nikolaevitch. To my inquiries about Pyotr Stepanovitch they told me that he had been in and out continually of late, sometimes twice in the day. The servants were sad, and showed particular respectfulness in speaking of Liza; they were fond of her. That she was ruined, utterly ruined, I did not doubt; but the psychological aspect of the matter I was utterly unable to understand, especially after her scene with Stavrogin the previous day. To run about the town and inquire at the houses of acquaintances, who would, of course, by now have heard the news and be rejoicing at it, seemed to me revolting, besides being

humiliating for Liza. But, strange to say, I ran to see Darya Pavlovna, though I was not admitted (no one had been admitted into the house since the previous morning). I don't know what I could have said to her and what made me run to her. From her I went to her brother's. Shatov listened sullenly and in silence. I may observe that I found him more gloomy than I had ever seen him before; he was awfully preoccupied and seemed only to listen to me with an effort. He said scarcely anything and began walking up and down his cell from corner to corner, treading more noisily than usual. As I was going down the stairs he shouted after me to go to Liputin's: "There you'll hear everything." Yet I did not go to Liputin's, but after I'd gone a good way towards home I turned back to Shatov's again, and, half opening the door without going in, suggested to him laconically and with no kind of explanation, "Won't you go to Marya Timofyevna to-day?" At this Shatov swore at me, and I went away. I note here that I may not forget it that he did purposely go that evening to the other end of the town to see Marya Timofyevna, whom he had not seen for some time. He found her in excellent health and spirits and Lebyadkin dead drunk, asleep on the sofa in the first room. This was at nine o'clock. He told me so himself next day when we met for a moment in the street. Before ten o'clock I made up my mind to go to the ball, but not in the capacity of a steward (besides my rosette had been left at Yulia Mihailovna's). I was tempted by irresistible curiosity to listen, without asking any questions, to what people were saying in the town about all that had happened. I wanted, too, to have a look at Yulia Mihailovna, if only at a distance. I reproached myself greatly that I had left her so abruptly that afternoon.

3

All that night, with its almost grotesque incidents, and the terrible denouement that followed in the early morning, still seems to me like a hideous nightmare, and is, for me at least, the most painful chapter in my chronicle. I was late for the ball, and it was destined to end so quickly that I arrived not long before it was over. It was eleven o'clock when I reached the entrance of the marshal's house, where the same White Hall in which the matinee had taken place had, in spite of the short interval between, been cleared and made ready to serve as the chief ballroom for the whole town, as we expected, to dance in. But far as I had been that morning from expecting the ball to be a success, I had had no presentiment of the full truth. Not one family of the higher circles appeared; even the subordinate officials of rather more consequence were absent—and this was a very striking fact. As for ladies and girls, Pyotr Stepanovitch's arguments (the duplicity of which was obvious now) turned out to be utterly incorrect: exceedingly few had come; to four men there was scarcely one lady—and what ladies they were! Regimental ladies of a sort, three doctors' wives with their daughters, two or three poor ladies from the country, the seven daughters and the niece of the secretary whom I have mentioned already, some wives of tradesmen, of post-office clerks and other small fry—was this what Yulia Mihailovna expected? Half

the tradespeople even were absent. As for the men, in spite of the complete absence of all persons of consequence, there was still a crowd of them, but they made a doubtful and suspicious impression. There were, of course, some quiet and respectful officers with their wives, some of the most docile fathers of families, like that secretary, for instance, the father of his seven daughters. All these humble, insignificant people had come, as one of these gentlemen expressed it, because it was "inevitable." But, on the other hand, the mass of free-and-easy people and the mass too of those whom Pyotr Stepanovitch and I had suspected of coming in without tickets, seemed even bigger than in the afternoon. So far they were all sitting in the refreshment bar, and had gone straight there on arriving, as though it were the meeting-place they had agreed upon. So at least it seemed to me. The refreshment bar had been placed in a large room, the last of several opening out of one another. Here Prohoritch was installed with all the attractions of the club cuisine and with a tempting display of drinks and dainties. I noticed several persons whose coats were almost in rags and whose get-up was altogether suspicious and utterly unsuitable for a ball. They had evidently been with great pains brought to a state of partial sobriety which would not last long; and goodness knows where they had been brought from, they were not local people. I knew, of course, that it was part of Yulia Mihailovna's idea that the ball should be of the most democratic character, and that "even working people and shopmen should not be excluded if any one of that class chanced to pay for a ticket." She could bravely utter such words in her committee with absolute security that none of the working people of our town, who all lived in extreme poverty, would dream of taking a ticket. But in spite of the democratic sentiments of the committee, I could hardly believe that such sinister-looking and shabby people could have been admitted in the regular way. But who could have admitted them, and with what object? Lyamshin and Liputin had already been deprived of their steward's rosettes, though they were present at the ball, as they were taking part in the "literary quadrille." But, to my amazement, Liputin's place was taken by the divinity student, who had caused the greatest scandal at the matinee by his skirmish with Stepan Trofimovitch; and Lyamshin's was taken by Pyotr Stepanovitch himself. What was to be looked for under the circumstances?

I tried to listen to the conversation. I was struck by the wildness of some ideas I heard expressed. It was maintained in one group, for instance, that Yulia Mihailovna had arranged Liza's elopement with Stavrogin and had been paid by the latter for doing so. Even the sum paid was mentioned. It was asserted that she had arranged the whole fete with a view to it, and that that was the reason why half the town had not turned up at the ball, and that Lembke himself was so upset about it that "his mind had given way," and that, crazy as he was, "she had got him in tow." There was a great deal of laughter too, hoarse, wild and significant. Every one was criticising the ball, too, with great severity, and abusing Yulia Mihailovna without ceremony. In fact it was disorderly, incoherent, drunken and excited babble, so it was difficult to put it together and make anything of it. At the same time there were simple-hearted people enjoying themselves at the refreshment-bar; there were even some ladies of the sort

who are surprised and frightened at nothing, very genial and festive, chiefly military ladies with their husbands. They made parties at the little tables, were drinking tea, and were very merry. The refreshment-bar made a snug refuge for almost half of the guests. Yet in a little time all this mass of people must stream into the ballroom. It was horrible to think of it!

Meanwhile the prince had succeeded in arranging three skimpy quadrilles in the White Hall. The young ladies were dancing, while their parents were enjoying watching them. But many of these respectable persons had already begun to think how they could, after giving their girls a treat, get off in good time before “the trouble began.” Absolutely every one was convinced that it certainly would begin. It would be difficult for me to describe Yulia Mihailovna’s state of mind. I did not talk to her though I went close up to her. She did not respond to the bow I made her on entering; she did not notice me (really did not notice). There was a painful look in her face and a contemptuous and haughty though restless and agitated expression in her eyes. She controlled herself with evident suffering—for whose sake, with what object? She certainly ought to have gone away, still more to have got her husband away, and she remained! From her face one could see that her eyes were “fully opened,” and that it was useless for her to expect any. thing more. She did not even summon Pyotr Stepanovitch (he seemed to avoid her; I saw him in the refreshment-room, he was extremely lively). But she remained at the ball and did not let Andrey Antonovitch leave her side for a moment. Oh, up to the very last moment, even that morning she would have repudiated any hint about his health with genuine indignation. But now her eyes were to be opened on this subject too. As for me, I thought from the first glance that Andrey Antonovitch looked worse than he had done in the morning. He seemed to be plunged into a sort of oblivion and hardly to know where he was. Sometimes he looked about him with unexpected severity —at me, for instance, twice. Once he tried to say something; he began loudly and audibly but did not finish the sentence, throwing a modest old clerk who happened to be near him almost into a panic. But even this humble section of the assembly held sullenly and timidly aloof from Yulia Mihailovna and at the same time turned upon her husband exceedingly strange glances, open and staring, quite out of keeping with their habitually submissive demeanour.

“Yes, that struck me, and I suddenly began to guess about Andrey Antonovitch,” Yulia Mihailovna confessed to me afterwards.

Yes, she was to blame again! Probably when after my departure she had settled with Pyotr Stepanovitch that there should be a ball and that she should be present she must have gone again to the study where Andrey Antonovitch was sitting, utterly “shattered” by the matinee; must again have used all her fascinations to persuade him to come with her. But what misery she must have been in now! And yet she did not go away. Whether it was pride or simply she lost her head, I do not know. In spite of her haughtiness, she attempted with smiles and humiliation to enter into conversation with some ladies, but they were confused, confined themselves to distrustful monosyllables, “Yes” and “No,” and evidently avoided her.

The only person of undoubted consequence who was present at the ball was that distinguished general whom I have described already, the one who after Stavrogin's duel with Gaganov opened the door to public impatience at the marshal's wife's. He walked with an air of dignity through the rooms, looked about, and listened, and tried to appear as though he had come rather for the sake of observation than for the sake of enjoying himself... . He ended by establishing himself beside Yulia Mihailovna and not moving a step away from her, evidently trying to keep up her spirits, and reassure her. He certainly was a most kind-hearted man, of very high rank, and so old that even compassion from him was not wounding. But to admit to herself that this old gossip was venturing to pity her and almost to protect her, knowing that he was doing her honour by his presence, was very vexatious. The general stayed by her and never ceased chattering.

“They say a town can't go on without seven righteous men ... seven, I think it is, I am not sure of the number fixed. ... I don't know how many of these seven, the certified righteous of the town ... have the honour of being present at your ball. Yet in spite of their presence I begin to feel unsafe. *Vous me pardonnez, charmante dame, n'est-ce pas?* I speak allegorically, but I went into the refreshment-room and I am glad I escaped alive... . Our priceless Prohoritch is not in his place there, and I believe his bar will be destroyed before morning. But I am laughing. I am only waiting to see what the 'literary quadrille' is going to be like, and then home to bed. You must excuse a gouty old fellow. I go early to bed, and I would advise you too to go 'by-by,' as they say *aux enfants*. I've come, you know, to have a look at the pretty girls ... whom, of course, I could meet nowhere in such profusion as here. They all live beyond the river and I don't drive out so far. There's a wife of an officer ... in the chasseurs I believe he is ... who is distinctly pretty, distinctly, and ... she knows it herself. I've talked to the sly puss; she is a sprightly one ... and the girls too are fresh-looking; but that's all, there's nothing but freshness. Still, it's a pleasure to look at them. There are some rosebuds, but their lips are thick. As a rule there's an irregularity about female beauty in Russia, and ... they are a little like buns... . *vous me pardonnez, n'est-ce pas?*... with good eyes, however, laughing eyes... . These rose buds are charming for two years when they are young ... even for three ... then they broaden out and are spoiled for ever . . producing in their husbands that deplorable indifference which does so much to promote the woman movement ... that is, if I understand it correctly... . H'm! It's a fine hall; the rooms are not badly decorated. It might be worse. The music might be much worse. ... I don't say it ought to have been. What makes a bad impression is that there are so few ladies. I say nothing about the dresses. It's bad that that chap in the grey trousers should dare to dance the cancan so openly. I can forgive him if he does it in the gaiety of his heart, and since he is the local chemist... . Still, eleven o'clock is a bit early even for chemists. There were two fellows fighting in the refreshment-bar and they weren't turned out. At eleven o'clock people ought to be turned out for fighting, whatever the standard of manners... . Three o'clock is a different matter; then one has to make concessions to public opinion—if only this ball survives till three o'clock. Varvara Petrovna has not

kept her word, though, and hasn't sent flowers. H'm! She has no thoughts for flowers, pauvre mere! And poor Liza! Have you heard? They say it's a mysterious story ... and Stavrogin is to the front again... . H'm! I would have gone home to bed ... I can hardly keep my eyes open. But when is this 'literary quadrille' coming on?"

At last the "literary quadrille" began. Whenever of late there had been conversation in the town on the ball it had invariably turned on this literary quadrille, and as no one could imagine what it would be like, it aroused extraordinary curiosity. Nothing could be more unfavourable to its chance of success, and great was the disappointment.

The side doors of the White Hall were thrown open and several masked figures appeared. The public surrounded them eagerly. All the occupants of the refreshment-bar trooped to the last man into the hall. The masked figures took their places for the dance. I succeeded in making my way to the front and installed myself just behind Yulia Mihailovna, Von Lembke, and the general. At this point Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had kept away till that time, skipped up to Yulia Mihailovna.

"I've been in the refreshment-room all this time, watching," he whispered, with the air of a guilty schoolboy, which he, however, assumed on purpose to irritate her even more. She turned crimson with anger.

"You might give up trying to deceive me now at least, insolent man!" broke from her almost aloud, so that it was heard by other people. Pyotr Stepanovitch skipped away extremely well satisfied with himself.

It would be difficult to imagine a more pitiful, vulgar, dull and insipid allegory than this "literary quadrille." Nothing could he imagined less appropriate to our local society. Yet they say it was Karmazinov's idea. It was Liputin indeed who arranged it with the help of the lame teacher who had been at the meeting at Virginsky's. But Karmazinov had given the idea and had, it was said, meant to dress up and to take a special and prominent part in it. The quadrille was made up of six couples of masked figures, who were not in fancy dress exactly, for their clothes were like every one else's. Thus, for instance, one short and elderly gentleman wearing a dress-coat—in fact, dressed like every one wore a venerable grey beard, tied on (and this constituted his disguise). As he danced he pounded up and down, taking tiny and rapid steps on the same spot with a stolid expression of countenance. He gave vent to sounds in a subdued but husky bass, and this huskiness was meant to suggest one of the well-known papers. Opposite this figure danced two giants, X and Z, and these letters were pinned on their coats, but what the letters meant remained unexplained. "Honest Russian thought" was represented by a middle-aged gentleman in spectacles, dress-coat and gloves, and wearing fetters (real fetters). Under his arm he had a portfolio containing papers relating to some "case." To convince the sceptical, a letter from abroad testifying to the honesty of "honest Russian thought" peeped out of his pocket. All this was explained by the stewards, as the letter which peeped out of his pocket could not be read. "Honest Russian thought" had his right hand raised and in it held a glass as though he wanted to propose a toast. In a line With him on each side tripped a crop-headed nihilist girl; while vis-a-vis danced another elderly gentleman in

a dress-coat with a heavy cudgel in his hand. He was meant to represent a formidable periodical (not a Petersburg one), and seemed to be saying, "I'll pound you to a jelly." But in spite of his cudgel he could not bear the spectacles of "honest Russian thought" fixed upon him and tried to look away, and when he did the pas de deux, he twisted, turned, and did not know what to do with himself—so terrible, probably, were the stings of his conscience! I don't remember all the absurd tricks they played, however; it was all in the same style, so that I felt at last painfully ashamed. And this same expression, as it were, of shame was reflected in the whole public, even on the most sullen figures that had come out of the refreshment-room. For some time all were silent and gazed with angry perplexity. When a man is ashamed he generally begins to get angry and is disposed to be cynical. By degrees a murmur arose in the audience.

"What's the meaning of it?" a man who had come in from the refreshment-room muttered in one of the groups.

"It's silly."

"It's something literary. It's a criticism of the Voice."

"What's that to me?"

From another group:

"Asses!"

"No, they are not asses; it's we who are the asses."

"Why are you an ass?"

"I am not an ass."

"Well, if you are not, I am certainly not."

From a third group:

"We ought to give them a good smacking and send them flying."

"Pull down the hall!"

From a fourth group:

"I wonder the Lembkes are not ashamed to look on!"

"Why should they be ashamed? You are not."

"Yes, I am ashamed, and he is the governor."

"And you are a pig."

"I've never seen such a commonplace ball in my life," a lady observed viciously, quite close to Yulia Mihailovna, obviously with the intention of being overheard. She was a stout lady of forty with rouge on her cheeks, wearing a bright-coloured silk dress. Almost every one in the town knew her, but no one received her. She was the widow of a civil councillor, who had left her a wooden house and a small pension; but she lived well and kept horses. Two months previously she had called on Yulia Mihailovna, but the latter had not received her.

"That might have been foreseen," she added, looking insolently into Yulia Mihailovna's face.

"If you could foresee it, why did you come?" Yulia Mihailovna could not resist saying.

"Because I was too simple," the sprightly lady answered instantly, up in arms and eager for the fray; but the general intervened.

“Chere dame”—he bent over to Yulia Mihailovna—“you’d really better be going. We are only in their way and they’ll enjoy themselves thoroughly without us. You’ve done your part, you’ve opened the ball, now leave them in peace. And Audrey Antonovitch doesn’t seem to be feeling quite satisfactorily. ... To avoid trouble.”

But it was too late.

All through the quadrille Andrey Antonovitch gazed at the dancers with a sort of angry perplexity, and when he heard the comments of the audience he began looking about him uneasily. Then for the first time he caught sight of some of the persons who had come from the refreshment-room; there was an expression of extreme wonder in his face. Suddenly there was a loud roar of laughter at a caper that was cut in the quadrille. The editor of the “menacing periodical, not a Petersburg one,” who was dancing with the cudgel in his hands, felt utterly unable to endure the spectaclled gaze of “honest Russian thought,” and not knowing how to escape it, suddenly in the last figure advanced to meet him standing on his head, which was meant, by the way, to typify the continual turning upside down of common sense by the menacing non-Petersburg gazette. As Lyamshin was the only one who could walk standing on his head, he had undertaken to represent the editor with the cudgel. Yulia Mihailovna had had no idea that anyone was going to walk on his head. “They concealed that from me, they concealed it,” she repeated to me afterwards in despair and indignation. The laughter from the crowd was, of course, provoked not by the allegory, which interested no one, but simply by a man’s walking on his head in a swallow-tail coat. Lembke flew into a rage and shook with fury.

“Rascal!” he cried, pointing to Lyamshin, “take hold of the scoundrel, turn him over ... turn his legs ... his head ... so that his head’s up ... up!”

Lyamshin jumped on to his feet. The laughter grew louder.

“Turn out all the scoundrels who are laughing!” Lembke prescribed suddenly.

There was an angry roar and laughter in the crowd.

“You can’t do like that, your Excellency.”

“You mustn’t abuse the public.”

“You are a fool yourself!” a voice cried suddenly from a corner.

“Filibusters!” shouted some one from the other end of the room.

Lembke looked round quickly at the shout and turned pale. A vacant smile came on to his lips, as though he suddenly understood and remembered something.

“Gentlemen,” said Yulia Mihailovna, addressing the crowd which was pressing round them, as she drew her husband away—“gentlemen, excuse Andrey Antonovitch. Andrey Antonovitch is unwell ... excuse ... forgive him, gentlemen.”

I positively heard her say “forgive him.” It all happened very quickly. But I remember for a fact that a section of the public rushed out of the hall immediately after those words of Yulia Mihailovna’s as though panic-stricken. I remember one hysterical, tearful feminine shriek:

“Ach, the same thing again!”

And in the retreat of the guests, which was almost becoming a crush, another bomb exploded exactly as in the afternoon.

“Fire! All the riverside quarter is on fire!”

I don’t remember where this terrible cry rose first, whether it was first raised in the hall, or whether some one ran upstairs from the entry, but it was followed by such alarm that I can’t attempt to describe it. More than half the guests at the ball came from the quarter beyond the river, and were owners or occupiers of wooden houses in that district. They rushed to the windows, pulled back the curtains in a flash, and tore down the blinds. The riverside was in flames. The fire, it is true, was only beginning, but it was in flames in three separate places—and that was what was alarming.

“Arson! The Shpigulin men!” roared the crowd.

I remember some very characteristic exclamations:

“I’ve had a presentiment in my heart that there’d be arson, I’ve had a presentiment of it these last few days!”

“The Shpigulin men, the Shpigulin men, no one else!”

“We were all lured here on purpose to set fire to it!”

This last most amazing exclamation came from a woman; it was an unintentional involuntary shriek of a housewife whose goods were burning. Every one rushed for the door. I won’t describe the crush in the vestibule over sorting out cloaks, shawls, and pelisses, the shrieks of the frightened women, the weeping of the young ladies. I doubt whether there was any theft, but it was no wonder that in such disorder some went away without their wraps because they were unable to find them, and this grew into a legend with many additions, long preserved in the town. Lembke and Yulia Mihailovna were almost crushed by the crowd at the doors.

“Stop, every one! Don’t let anyone out!” yelled Lembke, stretching out his arms menacingly towards the crowding people.

“Every one without exception to be strictly searched at once!”

A storm of violent oaths rose from the crowd.

“Andrey Antonovitch! Andrey Antonovitch!” cried Yulia Mihailovna in complete despair.

“Arrest her first!” shouted her husband, pointing his finger at her threateningly. “Search her first! The ball was arranged with a view to the fire. ...”

She screamed and fell into a swoon. (Oh, there was no doubt of its being a real one.) The general, the prince, and I rushed to her assistance; there were others, even among the ladies, who helped us at that difficult moment. We carried the unhappy woman out of this hell to her carriage, but she only regained consciousness as she reached the house, and her first utterance was about Andrey Antonovitch again. With the destruction of all her fancies, the only thing left in her mind was Andrey Antonovitch. They sent for a doctor. I remained with her for a whole hour; the prince did so too. The general, in an access of generous feeling (though he had been terribly scared), meant to remain all night “by the bedside of the unhappy lady,” but within ten minutes he

fell asleep in an arm-chair in the drawing-room while waiting for the doctor, and there we left him.

The chief of the police, who had hurried from the ball to the fire, had succeeded in getting Andrey Antonovitch out of the hall after us, and attempted to put him into Yulia Mihailovna's carriage, trying all he could to persuade his Excellency "to seek repose." But I don't know why he did not insist. Andrey Antonovitch, of course, would not hear of repose, and was set on going to the fire; but that was not a sufficient reason. It ended in his taking him to the fire in his droshky. He told us afterwards that Lembke was gesticulating all the way and "shouting orders that it was impossible to obey owing to their unusualness." It was officially reported later on that his Excellency had at that time been in a delirious condition "owing to a sudden fright."

There is no need to describe how the ball ended. A few dozen rowdy fellows, and with them some ladies, remained in the hall. There were no police present. They would not let the orchestra go, and beat the musicians who attempted to leave. By morning they had pulled all Prohoritch's stall to pieces, had drunk themselves senseless, danced the Kamarinsky in its unexpurgated form, made the rooms in a shocking mess, and only towards daybreak part of this hopelessly drunken rabble reached the scene of the fire to make fresh disturbances there. The other part spent the night in the rooms dead drunk, with disastrous consequences to the velvet sofas and the floor. Next morning, at the earliest possibility, they were dragged out by their legs into the street. So ended the fete for the benefit of the governesses of our province.

4

The fire frightened the inhabitants of the riverside just because it was evidently a case of arson. It was curious that at the first cry of "fire" another cry was raised that the Shpigulin men had done it. It is now well known that three Shpigulin men really did have a share in setting fire to the town, but that was all; all the other factory hands were completely acquitted, not only officially but also by public opinion. Besides those three rascals (of whom one has been caught and confessed and the other two have so far escaped), Fedka the convict undoubtedly had a hand in the arson. That is all that is known for certain about the fire till now; but when it comes to conjectures it's a very different matter. What had led these three rascals to do it? Had they been instigated by anyone? It is very difficult to answer all these questions even now.

Owing to the strong wind, the fact that the houses at the riverside were almost all wooden, and that they had been set fire to in three places, the fire spread quickly and enveloped the whole quarter with extraordinary rapidity. (The fire burnt, however, only at two ends; at the third spot it was extinguished almost as soon as it began to burn—of which later.) But the Petersburg and Moscow papers exaggerated our calamity. Not more than a quarter, roughly speaking, of the riverside district was burnt down; possibly less indeed. Our fire brigade, though it was hardly adequate to the size and population of the town, worked with great promptitude and devotion. But it would

not have been of much avail, even with the zealous co-operation of the inhabitants, if the wind had not suddenly dropped towards morning. When an hour after our flight from the ball I made my way to the riverside, the fire was at its height. A whole street parallel with the river was in flames. It was as light as day. I won't describe the fire; every one in Russia knows what it looks like. The bustle and crush was immense in the lanes adjoining the burning street. The inhabitants, fully expecting the fire to reach their houses, were hauling out their belongings, but had not yet left their dwellings, and were waiting meanwhile sitting on their boxes and feather beds under their windows. Part of the male population were hard at work ruthlessly chopping down fences and even whole huts which were near the fire and on the windward side. None were crying except the children, who had been waked out of their sleep, though the women who had dragged out their chattels were lamenting in sing-song voices. Those who had not finished their task were still silent, busily carrying out their goods. Sparks and embers were carried a long way in all directions. People put them out as best they could. Some helped to put the fire out while others stood about, admiring it. A great fire at night always has a thrilling and exhilarating effect. This is what explains the attraction of fireworks. But in that case the artistic regularity with which the fire is presented and the complete lack of danger give an impression of lightness and playfulness like the effect of a glass of champagne. A real conflagration is a very different matter. Then the horror and a certain sense of personal danger, together with the exhilarating effect of a fire at night, produce on the spectator (though of course not in the householder whose goods are being burnt) a certain concussion of the brain and, as it were, a challenge to those destructive instincts which, alas, lie hidden in every heart, even that of the mildest and most domestic little clerk... . This sinister sensation is almost always fascinating. "I really don't know whether one can look at a fire without a certain pleasure." This is word for word what Stepan Trofimovitch said to me one night on returning home after he had happened to witness a fire and was still under the influence of the spectacle. Of course, the very man who enjoys the spectacle will rush into the fire himself to save a child or an old woman; but that is altogether a different matter.

Following in the wake of the crowd of sightseers, I succeeded, without asking questions, in reaching the chief centre of danger, where at last I saw Lembke, whom I was seeking at Yulia Mihailovna's request. His position was strange and extraordinary. He was standing on the ruins of a fence. Thirty paces to the left of him rose the black skeleton of a two-storied house which had almost burnt out. It had holes instead of windows at each story, its roof had fallen in, and the flames were still here and there creeping among the charred beams. At the farther end of the courtyard, twenty paces away, the lodge, also a two-storied building, was beginning to burn, and the firemen were doing their utmost to save it. On the right the firemen and the people were trying to save a rather large wooden building which was not actually burning, though it had caught fire several times and was inevitably bound to be burnt in the end. Lembke stood facing the lodge, shouting and gesticulating. He was giving orders which no one

attempted to carry out. It seemed to me that every one had given him up as hopeless and left him. Anyway, though every one in the vast crowd of all classes, among whom there were gentlemen, and even the cathedral priest, was listening to him with curiosity and wonder, no one spoke to him or tried to get him away. Lembke, with a pale face and glittering eyes, was uttering the most amazing things. To complete the picture, he had lost his hat and was bareheaded.

“It’s all incendiarism! It’s nihilism! If anything is burning, it’s nihilism!” I heard almost with horror; and though there was nothing to be surprised at, yet actual madness, when one sees it, always gives one a shock.

“Your Excellency,” said a policeman, coming up to him, “what if you were to try the repose of home? ... It’s dangerous for your Excellency even to stand here.”

This policeman, as I heard afterwards, had been told off by the chief of police to watch over Andrey Antonovitch, to do his utmost to get him home, and in case of danger even to use force—a task evidently beyond the man’s power.

“They will wipe away the tears of the people whose houses have been burnt, but they will burn down the town. It’s all the work of four scoundrels, four and a half! Arrest the scoundrel! He worms himself into the honour of families. They made use of the governesses to burn down the houses. It’s vile, vile! Aie, what’s he about?” he shouted, suddenly noticing a fireman at the top of the burning lodge, under whom the roof had almost burnt away and round whom the flames were beginning to flare up. “Pull him down! Pull him down! He will fall, he will catch fire, put him out! ... What is he doing there?”

“He is putting the fire out, your Excellency.”

“Not likely. The fire is in the minds of men and not in the roofs of houses. Pull him down and give it up! Better give it up, much better! Let it put itself out. Aie, who is crying now? An old woman! It’s an old woman shouting. Why have they forgotten the old woman?”

There actually was an old woman crying on the ground floor of the burning lodge. She was an old creature of eighty, a relation of the shopkeeper who owned the house. But she had not been forgotten; she had gone back to the burning house while it was still possible, with the insane idea of rescuing her feather bed from a corner room which was still untouched. Choking with the smoke and screaming with the heat, for the room was on fire by the time she reached it, she was still trying with her decrepit hands to squeeze her feather bed through a broken window pane. Lembke rushed to her assistance. Every one saw him run up to the window, catch hold of one corner of the feather bed and try with all his might to pull it out. As ill luck would have it, a board fell at that moment from the roof and hit the unhappy governor. It did not kill him, it merely grazed him on the neck as it fell, but Audrey Antonovitch’s career was over, among us at least; the blow knocked him off his feet and he sank on the ground unconscious.

The day dawned at last, gloomy and sullen. The fire was abating; the wind was followed by a sudden calm, and then a fine drizzling rain fell. I was by that time in

another part, some distance from where Lembke had fallen, and here I overheard very strange conversations in the crowd. A strange fact had come to light. On the very outskirts of the quarter, on a piece of waste land beyond the kitchen gardens, not less than fifty paces from any other buildings, there stood a little wooden house which had only lately been built, and this solitary house had been on fire at the very beginning, almost before any other. Even had it burnt down, it was so far from other houses that no other building in the town could have caught fire from it, and, vice versa, if the whole riverside had been burnt to the ground, that house might have remained intact, whatever the wind had been. It followed that it had caught fire separately and independently and therefore not accidentally. But the chief point was that it was not burnt to the ground, and at daybreak strange things were discovered within it. The owner of this new house, who lived in the neighbourhood, rushed up as soon as he saw it in flames and with the help of his neighbours pulled apart a pile of faggots which had been heaped up by the side wall and set fire to. In this way he saved the house. But there were lodgers in the house—the captain, who was well known in the town, his sister, and their elderly servant, and these three persons—the captain, his sister, and their servant—had been murdered and apparently robbed in the night. (It was here that the chief of police had gone while Lembke was rescuing the feather bed.)

By morning the news had spread and an immense crowd of all classes, even the riverside people who had been burnt out had flocked to the waste land where the new house stood. It was difficult to get there, so dense was the crowd. I was told at once that the captain had been found lying dressed on the bench with his throat cut, and that he must have been dead drunk when he was killed, so that he had felt nothing, and he had “bled like a bull”; that his sister Marya Timofeyevna had been “stabbed all over” with a knife and she was lying on the floor in the doorway, so that probably she had been awake and had fought and struggled with the murderer. The servant, who had also probably been awake, had her skull broken. The owner of the house said that the captain had come to see him the morning before, and that in his drunken bragging he had shown him a lot of money, as much as two hundred roubles. The captain’s shabby old green pocket-book was found empty on the floor, but Marya Timofeyevna’s box had not been touched, and the silver setting of the ikon had not been removed either; the captain’s clothes, too, had not been disturbed. It was evident that the thief had been in a hurry and was a man familiar with the captain’s circumstances, who had come only for money and knew where it was kept. If the owner of the house had not run up at that moment the burning faggot stack would certainly have set fire to the house and “it would have been difficult to find out from the charred corpses how they had died.”

So the story was told. One other fact was added: that the person who had taken this house for the Lebyadkins was no other than Mr. Stavrogin, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, the son of Varvara Petrovna. He had come himself to take it and had had much ado to persuade the owner to let it, as the latter had intended to use it as a tavern; but

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was ready to give any rent he asked and had paid for six months in advance.

“The fire wasn’t an accident,” I heard said in the crowd.

But the majority said nothing. People’s faces were sullen, but I did not see signs of much much indignation. People persisted, however, in gossiping about Stavrogin, saying that the murdered woman was his wife; that on the previous day he had “dishonourably” abducted a young lady belonging to the best family in the place, the daughter of Madame Drozdov, and that a complaint was to be lodged against him in Petersburg; and that his wife had been murdered evidently that he might marry the young lady. Skvoreshniki was not more than a mile and a half away, and I remember I wondered whether I should not let them know the position of affairs. I did not notice, however, that there was anyone egging the crowd on and I don’t want to accuse people falsely, though I did see and recognised at once in the crowd at the fire two or three of the rowdy lot I had seen in the refreshment-room. I particularly remember one thin, tall fellow, a cabinet-maker, as I found out later, with an emaciated face and a curly head, black as though grimed with soot. He was not drunk, but in contrast to the gloomy passivity of the crowd seemed beside himself with excitement. He kept addressing the people, though I don’t remember his words; nothing coherent that he said was longer than “I say, lads, what do you say to this? Are things to go on like this?” and so saying he waved his arms.

Chapter 3: A Romance Ended

1

FROM THE LARGE BALLROOM of Skvoreshniki (the room in which the last interview with Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovitch had taken place) the fire could be plainly seen. At daybreak, soon after five in the morning, Liza was standing at the farthest window on the right looking intently at the fading glow. She was alone in the room. She was wearing the dress she had worn the day before at the matinee—a very smart light green dress covered with lace, but crushed and put on carelessly and with haste. Suddenly noticing that some of the hooks were undone in front she flushed, hurriedly set it right, snatched up from a chair the red shawl she had flung down when she came in the day before, and put it round her neck. Some locks of her luxuriant hair had come loose and showed below the shawl on her right shoulder. Her face looked weary and careworn. but her eyes glowed under her frowning brows. She went up to the window again and pressed her burning forehead against the cold pane. The door opened and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch came in.

“I’ve sent a messenger on horseback,” he said. “In ten minutes we shall hear all about it, meantime the servants say that part of the riverside quarter has been burnt down,

on the right side of the bridge near the quay. It's been burning since eleven o'clock; now the fire is going down."

He did not go near the window, but stood three steps behind her; she did not turn towards him.

"It ought to have been light an hour ago by the calendar, and it's still almost night," she said irritably.

"Calendars always tell lies," he observed with a polite smile, but, a little ashamed; he made haste to add: "It's dull to live by the calendar, Liza."

And he relapsed into silence, vexed at the ineptitude of the second sentence. Liza gave a wry smile.

"You are in such a melancholy mood that you cannot even find words to speak to me. But you need not trouble, there's a point in what you said. I always live by the calendar. Every step I take is regulated by the calendar. Does that surprise you?"

She turned quickly from the window and sat down in a low chair.

"You sit down, too, please. We haven't long to be together and I want to say anything I like... . Why shouldn't you, too, say anything you like?"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sat beside her and softly, almost timidly took her hand.

"What's the meaning of this tone, Liza? Where has it suddenly sprung from? What do you mean by 'we haven't long to be together'? That's the second mysterious phrase since you waked, half an hour ago."

"You are beginning to reckon up my mysterious phrases!" she laughed. "Do you remember I told you I was a dead woman when I came in yesterday? That you thought fit to forget. To forget or not to notice."

"I don't remember, Liza. Why dead? You must live."

"And is that all? You've quite lost your flow of words. I've lived my hour and that's enough. Do you remember Christopher Ivanovitch?"

"No I don't," he answered, frowning.

"Christopher Ivanovitch at Lausanne? He bored you dreadfully. He always used to open the door and say, 'I've come for one minute,' and then stay the whole day. I don't want to be like Christopher Ivanovitch and stay the whole day." A look of pain came into his face.

"Liza, it grieves me, this unnatural language. This affectation must hurt you, too. What's it for? What's the object of it?"

His eyes glowed.

"Liza," he cried, "I swear I love you now more than yesterday when you came to me!"

"What a strange declaration! Why bring in yesterday and to-day and these comparisons?"

"You won't leave me," he went on, almost with despair; "we will go away together, to-day, won't we? Won't we?"

"Aie, don't squeeze my hand so painfully! Where could we go together to-day? To 'rise again' somewhere? No, we've made experiments enough ... and it's too slow for

me; and I am not fit for it; it's too exalted for me. If we are to go, let it be to Moscow, to pay visits and entertain—that's my ideal you know; even in Switzerland I didn't disguise from you what I was like. As we can't go to Moscow and pay visits since you are married, it's no use talking of that."

"Liza! What happened yesterday!"

"What happened is over!"

"That's impossible! That's cruel?"

"What if it is cruel? You must bear it if it is cruel."

"You are avenging yourself on me for yesterday's caprice," he muttered with an angry smile. Liza flushed.

"What a mean thought!"

"Why then did you bestow on me ... so great a happiness? Have I the right to know?"

"No, you must manage without rights; don't aggravate the meanness of your supposition by stupidity. You are not lucky to-day. By the way, you surely can't be afraid of public opinion and that you will be blamed for this 'great happiness'? If that's it, for God's sake don't alarm yourself. It's not your doing at all and you are not responsible to anyone. When I opened your door yesterday, you didn't even know who was coming in. It was simply my caprice, as you expressed it just now, and nothing more! You can look every one in the face boldly and triumphantly!"

"Your words, that laugh, have been making me feel cold with horror for the last hour. That 'happiness' of which you speak frantically is worth ... everything to me. How can I lose you now? I swear I loved you less yesterday. Why are you taking everything from me to-day? Do you know what it has cost me, this new hope? I've paid for it with life."

"Your own life or another's?" He got up quickly.

"What does that mean?" he brought out, looking at her steadily.

"Have you paid for it with your life or with mine? is what I mean. Or have you lost all power of understanding?" cried Liza, flushing. "Why did you start up so suddenly? Why do you stare at me with such a look? You frighten me? What is it you are afraid of all the time? I noticed some time ago that you were afraid and you are now, this very minute ... Good heavens, how pale you are!"

"If you know anything, Liza, I swear I don't ... and I wasn't talking of that just now when I said that I had paid for it with life... ."

"I don't understand you," she brought out, faltering apprehensively.

At last a slow brooding smile came on to his lips. He slowly sat down, put his elbows on his knees, and covered his face with his hands.

"A bad dream and delirium... . We were talking of two different things."

"I don't know what you were talking about... . Do you mean to say you did not know yesterday that I should leave you to-day, did you know or not? Don't tell a lie, did you or not?"

"I did," he said softly.

"Well then, 'what would you have? You knew and yet you accepted 'that moment' for yourself. Aren't we quits?"

“Tell me the whole truth,” he cried in intense distress. “When you opened my door yesterday, did you know yourself that it was only for one hour?”

She looked at him with hatred.

“Really, the most sensible person can ask most amazing questions. And why are you so uneasy? Can it be vanity that a woman should leave you first instead of your leaving her? Do you know, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, since I’ve been with you I’ve discovered that you are very generous to me, and it’s just that I can’t endure from you.”

He got up from his seat and took a few steps about the room.

“Very well, perhaps it was bound to end so. ... But how can it all have happened?”

“That’s a question to worry about! Especially as you know the answer yourself perfectly well, and understand it better than anyone on earth, and were counting on it yourself. I am a young lady, my heart has been trained on the opera, that’s how it all began, that’s the solution.”

“No.”

“There is nothing in it to fret your vanity. It is all the absolute truth. It began with a fine moment which was too much for me to bear. The day before yesterday, when I “insulted” you before every one and you answered me so chivalrously, I went home and guessed at once that you were running away from me because you were married, and not from contempt for me which, as a fashionable young lady, I dreaded more than anything. I understood that it was for my sake, for me, mad as I was, that you ran away. You see how I appreciate your generosity. Then Pyotr Stepanovitch skipped up to me and explained it all to me at once. He revealed to me that you were dominated by a ‘great idea,’ before which he and I were as nothing, but yet that I was a stumbling-block in your path. He brought himself in, he insisted that we three should work together, and said the most fantastic things about a boat and about maple-wood oars out of some Russian song. I complimented him and told him he was a poet, which he swallowed as the real thing. And as apart from him I had known long before that I had not the strength to do anything for long, I made up my mind on the spot. Well, that’s all and quite enough, and please let us have no more explanations. We might quarrel. Don’t be afraid of anyone, I take it all on myself. I am horrid and capricious, I was fascinated by that operatic boat, I am a young lady ... but you know I did think that you were dreadfully in love with me. Don’t despise the poor fool, and don’t laugh at the tear that dropped just now. I am awfully given to crying with self-pity. Come, that’s enough, that’s enough. I am no good for anything and you are no good for anything; it’s as bad for both of us, so let’s comfort ourselves with that. Anyway, it eases our vanity.”

“Dream and delirium,” cried Stavrogin, wringing his hands, and pacing about the room. “Liza, poor child, what have you done to yourself?”

“I’ve burnt myself in a candle, nothing more. Surely you are not crying, too? You should show less feeling and better breeding. ...”

“Why, why did you come to me?”

“Don’t you understand what a ludicrous position you put yourself in in the eyes of the world by asking such questions?”

“Why have you ruined yourself, so grotesquely and so stupidly, and what’s to be done now?”

“And this is Stavrogin, ‘the vampire Stavrogin,’ as you are called by a lady here who is in love with you! Listen! I have told you already, I’ve put all my life into one hour and I am at peace. Do the same with yours ... though you’ve no need to: you have plenty of ‘hours’ and ‘moments’ of all sorts before you.”

“As many as you; I give you my solemn word, not one hour more than you!”

He was still walking up and down and did not see the rapid penetrating glance she turned upon him, in which there seemed a dawning hope. But the light died away at the same moment.

“If you knew what it costs me that I can’t be sincere at this moment, Liza, if I could only tell you ...”

“Tell me? You want to tell me something, to me? God save me from your secrets!” she broke in almost in terror. He stopped and waited uneasily.

“I ought to confess that ever since those days in Switzerland I have had a strong feeling that you have something awful, loathsome, some bloodshed on your conscience ... and yet something that would make you look very ridiculous. Beware of telling me, if it’s true: I shall laugh you to scorn. I shall laugh at you for the rest of your life... . Aie, you are turning pale again? I won’t, I won’t, I’ll go at once.” She jumped up from her chair with a movement of disgust and contempt.

“Torture me, punish me, vent your spite on me,” he cried in despair. “You have the full right. I knew I did not love you and yet I ruined you! Yes, I accepted the moment for my own; I had a hope ... I’ve had it a long time ... my last hope. ... I could not resist the radiance that flooded my heart when you came in to me yesterday, of yourself, alone, of your own accord. I suddenly believed... . Perhaps I have faith in it still.”

“I will repay such noble frankness by being as frank. I don’t want to be a Sister of Mercy for you. Perhaps I really may become a nurse unless I happen appropriately to die to-day; but if I do I won’t be your nurse, though, of course, you need one as much as any crippled creature. I always fancied that you would take me to some place where there was a huge wicked spider, big as a man, and we should spend our lives looking at it and being afraid of it. That’s how our love would spend itself. Appeal to Dashenka; she will go with you anywhere you like.”

“Can’t you help thinking of her even now?”

“Poor little spaniel! Give her my greetings. Does she know that even in Switzerland you had fixed on her for your old age? What prudence! What foresight! Aie, who’s that?”

At the farther end of the room a door opened a crack; a head was thrust in and vanished again hurriedly.

“Is that you, Alexey Yegorytch?” asked Stavrogin. “No, it’s only I.” Pyotr Stepanovitch thrust himself half in again. “How do you do, Lizaveta Nikolaevna?”

Good morning, anyway. I guessed I should find you both in this room. I have come for one moment literally, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. I was anxious to have a couple of words with you at all costs absolutely necessary ... only a few words!"

Stavrogin moved towards him but turned back to Liza at the third step.

"If you hear anything directly, Liza, let me tell you I am to blame for it!"

She started and looked at him in dismay; but he hurriedly went out.

2

The room from which Pyotr Stepanovitch had peeped in was a large oval vestibule. Alexey Yegorytch had been sitting there before Pyotr Stepanovitch came in, but the latter sent him away. Stavrogin closed the door after him and stood expectant. Pyotr Stepanovitch looked rapidly and searchingly at him."

"Well?"

"If you know already," said Pyotr Stepanovitch hurriedly, his eyes looking as though they would dive into Stavrogin's soul, "then, of course, we are none of us to blame, above all not you, for it's such a concatenation ... such a coincidence of events ... in brief, you can't be legally implicated and I've rushed here to tell you so beforehand."

"Have they been burnt? murdered?"

"Murdered but not burnt, that's the trouble, but I give you my word of honour that it's not been my fault, however much you may suspect me, eh? Do you want the whole truth: you see the idea really did cross my mind—you hinted it yourself, not seriously, but teasing me (for, of course, you would not hint it seriously), but I couldn't bring myself to it, and wouldn't bring myself to it for anything, not for a hundred roubles—and what was there to be gained by it, I mean for me, for me... ." (He was in desperate haste and his talk was like the clacking of a rattle.) "But what a coincidence of circumstances: I gave that drunken fool Lebyadkin two hundred and thirty roubles of my own money (do you hear, my own money, there wasn't a rouble of yours and, what's more, you know it yourself) the day before yesterday, in the evening—do you hear, not yesterday after the matinee, but the day before yesterday, make a note of it: it's a very important coincidence for I did not know for certain at that time whether Lizaveta Nikolaevna would come to you or not; I gave my own money simply because you distinguished yourself by taking it into your head to betray your secret to every one. Well, I won't go into that ... that's your affair ... your chivalry . but I must own I was amazed, it was a knock-down blow. And forasmuch as I was exceeding weary of these tragic stories—and let me tell you, I talk seriously though I do use Biblical language—as it was all upsetting my plans in fact, I made up my mind at any cost, and without your knowledge, to pack the Lebyadkins off to Petersburg, especially as he was set on going himself. I made one mistake: I gave the money in your name;—was it a mistake or not? Perhaps it wasn't a mistake, eh? Listen now, listen how it has all turned out... ."

In the heat of his talk he went close up to Stavrogin and took hold of the revers of his coat (really, it may have been on purpose). With a violent movement Stavrogin struck him on the arm.

“Come, what is it ... give over ... you’ll break my arm, . . . what matters is the way things have turned out,” he rattled on, not in the least surprised at the blow. “I forked out the money in the evening on condition that his sister and he should set off early next morning; I trusted that rascal Liputin with the job of getting them into the train and seeing them off. But that beast Liputin wanted to play his schoolboy pranks on the public —perhaps you heard? At the matinee? Listen, listen: they both got drunk, made up verses of which half are Liputin’s; he rigged Lebyadkin out in a dress-coat, assuring me meanwhile that he had packed him off that morning, but he kept him shut somewhere in a back room, till he thrust him on the platform at the matinee. But Lebyadkin got drunk quickly and unexpectedly. Then came the scandalous scene you know of, and then they got him home more dead than alive, and Liputin niched away the two hundred roubles, leaving him only small change. But it appears unluckily that already that morning Lebyadkin had taken that two hundred roubles out of his pocket, boasted of it and shown it in undesirable quarters. And as that was just what Fedka was expecting, and as he had heard something at Kirillov’s (do you remember, your hint?) he made up his mind to take advantage of it. That’s the whole truth. I am glad, anyway, that Fedka did not find the money, the rascal was reckoning on a thousand, you know! He was in a hurry and seems to have been frightened by the fire himself... . Would you believe it, that fire came as a thunderbolt for me. Devil only knows what to make of it! It is taking things into their own hands... . You see, as I expect so much of you I will hide nothing from you: I’ve long been hatching this idea of a fire because it suits the national and popular taste; but I was keeping it for a critical moment, for that precious time when we should all rise up and ... And they suddenly took it into their heads to do it, on their own initiative, without orders, now at the very moment when we ought to be lying low and keeping quiet! Such presumption! ... The fact is, I’ve not got to the bottom of it yet, they talk about two Shpigulin men . . . but if there are any of our fellows in it, if any one of them has had a hand in it—so much the worse for him! You see what comes of letting people get ever so little out of hand! No, this democratic rabble, with its quintets, is a poor foundation; what we want is one magnificent, despotic will, like an idol, resting on something fundamental and external... . Then the quintets will cringe into obedience and be obsequiously ready on occasion. But, anyway, though, they are all crying out now that Stavrogin wanted his wife to be burnt and that that’s what caused the fire in the town, but ...”

“Why, are they all saying that?”

“Well, not yet, and I must confess I have heard nothing of the sort, but what one can do with people, especially when they’ve been burnt out! Vox populi vox Dei. A stupid rumour is soon set going. But you really have nothing to be afraid of. From the legal point of view you are all right, and with your conscience also. For you didn’t want it done, did you? There’s no clue, nothing but the coincidence... . The only thing

is Fedka may remember what you said that night at Kirillov's (and what made you say it?) but that proves nothing and we shall stop Fedka's mouth. I shall stop it to-day. ..."

"And weren't the bodies burnt at all?"

"Not a bit; that ruffian could not manage anything properly. But I am glad, anyway, that you are so calm ... for though you are not in any way to blame, even in thought, but all the same... . And you must admit that all this settles your difficulties capitally: you are suddenly free and a widower and can marry a charming girl this minute with a lot of money, who is already yours, into the bargain. See what can be done by crude, simple coincidence—eh?"

"Are you threatening me, you fool?"

"Come, leave off, leave off! Here you are, calling me a fool, and what a tone to use! You ought to be glad, yet you ... I rushed here on purpose to let you know in good time... . Besides, how could I threaten you? As if I cared for what I could get by threats! I want you to help from goodwill and not from fear. You are the light and the sun... . It's I who am terribly afraid of you, not you of me! I am not Mavriky Nikolaevitch... . And only fancy, as I flew here in a racing droshky I saw Mavriky Nikolaevitch by the fence at the farthest corner of your garden ... in his greatcoat, drenched through, he must have been sitting there all night! Queer goings on! How mad people can be!"

"Mavriky Nikolaevitch? Is that true?"

"Yes, yes. He is sitting by the garden fence. About three hundred paces from here, I think. I made haste to pass him, but he saw me. Didn't you know? In that case I am glad I didn't forget to tell you. A man like that is more dangerous than anyone if he happens to have a revolver about him, and then the night, the sleet, or natural irritability—for after all he is in a nice position, ha ha! What do you think V Why is he sitting there?"

"He is waiting for Lizaveta Nikolaevna, of course."

"Well! Why should she go out to him? And ... in such rain too ... what a fool!"

"She is just going out to him!"

"Eh! That's a piece of news! So then ... But listen, her position is completely changed now. What does she want with Mavriky now? You are free, a widower, and can marry her to-morrow? She doesn't know yet—leave it to me and I'll arrange it all for you. Where is she? We must relieve her mind too."

"Relieve her mind?"

"Rather! Let's go."

"And do you suppose she won't guess what those dead bodies mean?" said Stavrogin, screwing up his eyes in a peculiar way.

"Of course she won't," said Pyotr Stepanovitch with all the confidence of a perfect simpleton, "for legally ... Ech, what a man you are! What if she did guess? Women are so clever at shutting their eyes to such things, you don't understand women! Apart from it's being altogether to her interest to marry you now, because there's no denying she's disgraced herself; apart from that, I talked to her of 'the boat' and I saw that

one could affect her by it, so that shows you what the girl is made of. Don't be uneasy, she will step over those dead bodies without turning a hair—especially as you are not to blame for them; not in the least, are you? She will only keep them in reserve to use them against you when you've been married two or three years. Every woman saves up something of the sort out of her husband's past when she gets married, but by that time ... what may not happen in a year? Ha ha!"

"If you've come in a racing droshky, take her to Mavriky Nikolaevitch now. She said just now that she could not endure me and would leave me, and she certainly will not accept my carriage."

"What! Can she really be leaving? How can this have come about?" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, staring stupidly at him.

"She's guessed somehow during this night that I don't love her ... which she knew all along, indeed."

"But don't you love her?" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, with an expression of extreme surprise. "If so, why did you keep her when she came to you yesterday, instead of telling her plainly like an honourable man that you didn't care for her? That was horribly shabby on your part; and how mean you make me look in her eyes!"

Stavrogin suddenly laughed."

"I am laughing at my monkey," he explained at once.

"Ah! You saw that I was putting it on!" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, laughing too, with great enjoyment. "I did it to amuse you! Only fancy, as soon as you came out to me I guessed from your face that you'd been 'unlucky.' A complete fiasco, perhaps. Eh? There! I'll bet anything," he cried, almost gasping with delight, "that you've been sitting side by side in the drawing-room all night wasting your precious time discussing something lofty and elevated ... There, forgive me, forgive me; it's not my business. I felt sure yesterday that it would all end in foolishness. I brought her to you simply to amuse you, and to show you that you wouldn't have a dull time with me. I shall be of use to you a hundred times in that way. I always like pleasing people. If you don't want her now, which was what I was reckoning on when I came, then ..."

"So you brought her simply for my amusement?"

"Why, what else?"

"Not to make me kill my wife?"

"Come. You've not killed her? What a tragic fellow you are!"

"It's just the same; you killed her."

"I didn't kill her! I tell you I had no hand in it. ... You are beginning to make me uneasy, though... ."

"Go on. You said, 'if you don't want her now, then ...'"

"Then, leave it to me, of course. I can quite easily marry her off to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, though I didn't make him sit down by the fence. Don't take that notion into your head. I am afraid of him, now. You talk about my droshky, but I simply dashed by... . What if he has a revolver? It's a good thing I brought mine. Here it is." He brought a revolver out of his pocket, showed it, and hid it again at once. "I took it

as I was coming such a long way... . But I'll arrange all that for you in a twinkling: her little heart is aching at this moment for Mavriky; it should be, anyway... . And, do you know, I am really rather sorry for her? If I take her to Mavriky she will begin about you directly; she will praise you to him and abuse him to his face. You know the heart of woman! There you are, laughing again! I am awfully glad that you are so cheerful now. Come, let's go. I'll begin with Mavriky right away, and about them ... those who've been murdered ... hadn't we better keep quiet now? She'll hear later on, anyway."

"What will she hear? Who's been murdered? What were you saying about Mavriky Nikolaevitch?" said Liza, suddenly opening the door.

"Ah! You've been listening?"

"What were you saying just now about Mavriky Nikolaevitch? Has he been murdered?"

"Ah! Then you didn't hear? Don't distress yourself, Mavriky Nikolaevitch is alive and well, and you can satisfy yourself of it in an instant, for he is here by the wayside, by the garden fence ... and I believe he's been sitting there all night. He is drenched through in his greatcoat! He saw me as I drove past."

"That's not true. You said 'murdered.' ... Who's been murdered?" she insisted with agonising mistrust.

"The only people who have been murdered are my wife, her brother Lebyadkin, and their servant," Stavrogin brought out firmly.

Liza trembled and turned terribly pale.

"A strange brutal outrage, Lizaveta Nikolaevna. A simple case of robbery," Pyotr Stepanovitch rattled off at once "Simply robbery, under cover of the fire. The crime was committed by Fedka the convict, and it was all that fool Lebyadkin's fault for showing every one his money. ... I rushed here with the news ... it fell on me like a thunderbolt. Stavrogin could hardly stand when I told him. We were deliberating here whether to tell you at once or not?"

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, is he telling the truth?" Liza articulated faintly.

"No; it's false."

"False?" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, starting. "What do you mean by that?"

"Heavens! I-shall go mad!" cried Liza.

"Do you understand, anyway, that he is mad now!" Pyotr Stepanovitch cried at the top of his voice. "After all, his wife has just been murdered. You see how white he is. ... Why, he has been with you the whole night. He hasn't left your side a minute. How can you suspect him?"

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, tell me, as before God, are you guilty or not, and I swear I'll believe your word as though it were God's, and I'll follow you to the end of the earth. Yes, I will. I'll follow you like a dog."

"Why are you tormenting her, you fantastic creature?" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch in exasperation. "Lizaveta Nikolaevna, upon my oath, you can crush me into powder, but he is not guilty. On the contrary, it has crushed him, and he is raving, you see that. He

is not to blame in any way, not in any way, not even in thought! ... It's all the work of robbers who will probably be found within a week and flogged... . It's all the work of Fedka the convict, and some Shpigulin men, all the town is agog with it. That's why I say so too."

"Is that right? Is that right?" Liza waited trembling for her final sentence.

"I did not kill them, and I was against it, but I knew they were going to be killed and I did not stop the murderers. Leave me, Liza," Stavrogin brought out, and he walked into the drawing-room.

Liza hid her face in her hands and walked out of the house. Pyotr Stepanovitch was rushing after her, but at once 'hurried back and went into the drawing-room.

"So that's your line? That's your line? So there's nothing you are afraid of?" He flew at Stavrogin in an absolute fury, muttering incoherently, scarcely able to find words and foaming at the mouth.

Stavrogin stood in the middle of the room and did not answer a word. He clutched a lock of his hair in his left hand and smiled helplessly. Pyotr Stepanovitch pulled him violently by the sleeve.

"Is it all over with you? So that's the line you are taking? You'll inform against all of us, and go to a monastery yourself, or to the devil... . But I'll do for you, though you are not afraid of me!"

"Ah! That's you chattering!" said Stavrogin, noticing him at last. "Run," he said, coming to himself suddenly, "run after her, order the carriage, don't leave her... . Run, run! Take her home so that no one may know ... and that she mayn't go there ... to the bodies ... to the bodies... . Force her to get into the carriage ... Alexey Yegorytch! Alexey Yegorytch!"

"Stay, don't shout! By now she is in Mavriky's arms... . Mavriky won't put her into your carriage... . Stay! There's something more important than the carriage!"

He seized his revolver again. Stavrogin looked at him gravely.

"Very well, kill me," he said softly, almost conciliatorily.

"Foo. Damn it! What a maze of false sentiment a man can get into!" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, shaking with rage. "Yes, really, you ought to be killed! She ought simply to spit at you! Fine sort of 'magic boat,' you are; you are a broken-down, leaky old hulk! ... You ought to pull yourself together if only from spite! Ech! Why, what difference would it make to you since you ask for a bullet through your brains yourself?"

Stavrogin smiled strangely.

"If you were not such a buffoon I might perhaps have said yes now. ... If you had only a grain of sense ..."

"I am a buffoon, but I don't want you, my better half, to be one! Do you understand me?" , .

Stavrogin did understand, though perhaps no one else did. Shatov, for instance, was astonished when Stavrogin told him that Pyotr Stepanovitch had enthusiasm.

"Go to the devil now, and to-morrow perhaps I may wring something out of myself. Come to-morrow."

“Yes? Yes?”

“How can I tell! ... Go to hell. Go to hell.” And he walked out of the room.

“Perhaps, after all, it may be for the best,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered to himself as he hid the revolver.

3

He rushed off to overtake Lizaveta Nikolaevna. She had not got far away, only a few steps, from the house. She had been detained by Alexey Yegorytch, who was following a step behind her, in a tail coat, and without a hat; his head was bowed respectfully. He was persistently entreating her to wait for a carriage; the old man was alarmed and almost in tears.

“Go along. Your master is asking for tea, and there’s no one to give it to him,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, pushing him away. He took Liza’s arm.

She did not pull her arm away, but she seemed hardly to know what she was doing; she was still dazed.

“To begin with, you are going the wrong way,” babbled Pyotr Stepanovitch. “We ought to go this way, and not by the garden, and, secondly, walking is impossible in any case. It’s over two miles, and you are not properly dressed. If you would wait a second, I came in a droshky; the horse is in the yard. I’ll get it instantly, put you in, and get you home so that no one sees you.”

“How kind you are,” said Liza graciously. “Oh, not at all. Any humane man in my position would do the same... .”

Liza looked at him, and was surprised.

“Good heavens! Why I thought it was that old man here still.”

“Listen. I am awfully glad that you take it like this, because it’s all such a frightfully stupid convention, and since it’s come to that, hadn’t I better tell the old man to get the carriage at once. It’s only a matter of ten minutes and we’ll turn back and wait in the porch, eh?”

“I want first ... where are those murdered people?”

“Ah! What next? That was what I was afraid of... . No, we’d better leave those wretched creatures alone; it’s no use your looking at them.”

“I know where they are. I know that house.”

“Well? What if you do know it? Come; it’s raining, and there’s a fog. (A nice job this sacred duty I’ve taken upon myself.) Listen, Lizaveta Nikolaevna! It’s one of two alternatives. Either you come with me in the droshky—in that case wait here, and don’t take another step, for if we go another twenty steps we must be seen by Mavriky Nikolaevitch.”

“Mavriky Nikolaevitch! Where? Where?”

“Well, if you want to go with him, I’ll take you a little farther, if you like, and show you where he sits, but I don’t care to go up to him just now. No, thank you.”

"He is waiting for me. Good God!" she suddenly stopped, and a flush of colour flooded her face.

"Oh! Come now. If he is an unconventional man! You know, Lizaveta Nikolaevna, it's none of my business. I am a complete outsider, and you know that yourself. But, still, I wish you well. ... If your 'fairy boat' has failed you, if it has turned out to be nothing more than a rotten old hulk, only fit to be chopped up ..."

"Ah! That's fine, that's lovely," cried Liza.

"Lovely, and yet your tears are falling. You must have spirit. You must be as good as a man in every way. In our age, when woman ... Foo, hang it," Pyotr Stepanovitch was on the point of spitting. "And the chief point is that there is nothing to regret. It may all turn out for the best. Mavriky Nikolaevitch is a man. ... In fact, he is a man of feeling though not talkative, but that's a good thing, too, as long as he has no conventional notions, of course. ..."

"Lovely, lovely!" Liza laughed hysterically.

"Well, hang it all ... Lizaveta Nikolaevna," said Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly piqued. "I am simply here on your account... . It's nothing to me. ... I helped you yesterday when you wanted it yourself. To-day ... well, you can see Mavriky Nikolaevitch from here; there he's sitting; he doesn't see us. I say, Lizaveta Nikolaevna, have you ever read 'Polenka Saxe'?"

"What's that?"

"It's the name of a novel, 'Polenka Saxe.' I read it when I was a student. ... In it a very wealthy official of some sort, Saxe, arrested his wife at a summer villa for infidelity... . But, hang it; it's no consequence! You'll see, Mavriky Nikolaevitch will make you an offer before you get home. He doesn't see us yet."

"Ach! Don't let him see us!" Liza cried suddenly, like a mad creature. "Come away, come away! To the woods, to the fields!"

And she ran back.

"Lizaveta Nikolaevna, this is such cowardice," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, running after her. "And why don't you want him to see you? On the contrary, you must look him straight in the face, with pride. ... If it's some feeling about that . . some maidenly ... that's such a prejudice, so out of date... But where are you going? Where are you going? Ech! she is running! Better go back to Stavrogin's and take my droshky... . Where are you going? That's the way to the fields! There! She's fallen down! ..."

He stopped. Liza was flying along like a bird, not conscious where she was going, and Pyotr Stepanovitch was already fifty paces behind her. She stumbled over a mound of earth and fell down. At the same moment there was the sound of a terrible shout from behind. It came from Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had seen her flight and her fall, and was running to her across the field. In a flash Pyotr Stepanovitch had retired into Stavrogin's gateway to make haste and get into his droshky.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was already standing in terrible alarm by Liza, who had risen to her feet; he was bending over her and holding her hands in both of his. All the incredible surroundings of this meeting overwhelmed him, and tears were rolling down

his cheeks. He saw the woman for whom he had such reverent devotion running madly across the fields, at such an hour, in such weather, with nothing over her dress, the gay dress she wore the day before now crumpled and muddy from her fall... . He could not utter a word; he took off his greatcoat, and with trembling hands put it round her shoulders. Suddenly he uttered a cry, feeling that she had pressed her lips to his hand.

“Liza,” he cried, “I am no good for anything, but don’t drive me away from you!”

“Oh, no! Let us make haste away from here. Don’t leave me!” and, seizing his hand, she drew him after her. “Mavriky Nikolaevitch,” she suddenly dropped her voice timidly, “I kept a bold face there all the time, but now I am afraid of death. I shall die soon, very soon, but I am afraid, I am afraid to die” she whispered, pressing his hand tight.

“Oh, if there were some one,” he looked round in despair. “Some passer-by! You will get your feet wet, you ... will lose your reason!”

“It’s all right; it’s all right,” she tried to reassure him. “That’s right. I am not so frightened with you. Hold my hand, lead me... . Where are we going now? Home? No! I want first to see the people who have been murdered. His wife has been murdered they say, and he says he killed her himself. But that’s not true, is it? I want to see for myself those three who’ve been killed ... on my account ... it’s because of them his love for me has grown cold since last night. ... I shall see and find out everything. Make haste, make haste, I know the house ... there’s a fire there... . Mavriky Nikolaevitch, my dear one, don’t forgive me in my shame! Why forgive me? Why are you crying? Give me a blow and kill me here in the field, like a dog!”

“No one is your judge now,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch pronounced firmly. “God forgive you. I least of all can be your judge.”

But it would be strange to describe their conversation. And meanwhile they walked hand in hand quickly, hurrying as though they were crazy. They were going straight towards the fire. Mavriky Nikolaevitch still had hopes of meeting a cart at least, but no one came that way. A mist of fine, drizzling rain enveloped the whole country, swallowing up every ray of light, every gleam of colour, and transforming everything into one smoky, leaden, indistinguishable mass. It had long been daylight, yet it seemed as though it were still night. And suddenly in this cold foggy mist there appeared coming towards them a strange and absurd figure. Picturing it now I think I should not have believed my eyes if I had been in Lizaveta Nikolaevna’s place, yet she uttered a cry of joy, and recognised the approaching figure at once. It was Stepan Trofimovitch. How he had gone off, how the insane, impracticable idea of his flight came to be carried out, of that later. I will only mention that he was in a fever that morning, yet even illness did not prevent his starting. He was walking resolutely on the damp ground. It was evident that he had planned the enterprise to the best of his ability, alone with his inexperience and lack of practical sense. He wore “travelling dress,” that is, a greatcoat with a wide patent-leather belt, fastened with a buckle and a pair of new high boots pulled over his trousers. Probably he had for some time past pictured a traveller as looking like this, and the belt and the high boots with the shining tops like a hussar’s,

in which he could hardly walk, had been ready some time before. A broad-brimmed hat, a knitted scarf, twisted close round his neck, a stick in his right hand, and an exceedingly small but extremely tightly packed bag in his left, completed his get-up. He had, besides, in the same right hand, an open umbrella. These three objects—the umbrella, the stick, and the bag—had been very awkward to carry for the first mile, and had begun to be heavy by the second.

“Can it really be you?” cried Liza, looking at him with distressed wonder, after her first rush of instinctive gladness.

“Use,” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, rushing to her almost in delirium too. “Chere, chere... . Can you be out, too . . . in such a fog? You see the glow of fire. Vous ties malheureuse, n'est-ce pas? I see, I see. Don't tell me, but don't question me either. Nous sommes tous malheureux mais il faut les pardonner tons. Pardonnons, Lise, and let us be free for ever. To be quit of the world and be completely free. Il faut pardonner, pardonner, et pardonner!”

“But why are you kneeling down?”

“Because, taking leave of the world, I want to take leave of all my past in your person!” He wept and raised both her hands to his tear-stained eyes. “I kneel to all that was beautiful in my life. I kiss and give thanks! Now I've torn myself in half; left behind a mad visionary who dreamed of soaring to the sky. Vingt-deux ans, here. A shattered, frozen old man. A tutor chez ce marchand, s'il existe pourtant ce marchand... . But how drenched you are, Lise ” he cried, jumping on to his feet, feeling that his knees too were soaked by the wet earth. “And how is it possible ... you are in such a dress ... and on foot, and in these fields? ... You are crying! Vous etes malheureuse. Bah, I did hear something... . But where have you come from now?” He asked hurried questions with an uneasy air, looking in extreme bewilderment at Mavriky Nikolaevitch. “Mais savez-vous l'heure qu'il est?”

“Stepan Trofimovitch, have you heard anything about the people who've been murdered? ... Is it true? Is it true?”

“These people! I saw the glow of their work all night. They were bound to end in this... .” His eyes flashed again.

“I am fleeing away from madness, from a delirious dream. I am fleeing away to seek for Russia. Existe-t-elle, la Russie? Bah! C'est vous, cher capitaine! I've never doubted that I should meet you somewhere on some high adventure... . But take my umbrella, and—why must you be on foot? For God's sake, do at least take my umbrella, for I shall hire a carriage somewhere in any case. I am on foot because Stasie (I mean, Nastasya) would have shouted for the benefit of the whole street if she'd found out I was going away. So I slipped away as far as possible incognito. I don't know; in the Voice they write of there being brigands everywhere, but I thought surely I shouldn't meet a brigand the moment I came out on the road. Chere Lise, I thought you said something of some one's being murdered. Oh, mon Dieu! You are ill!”

“Come along, come along!” cried Liza, almost in hysterics, drawing Mavriky Nikolaevitch after her again. “Wait a minute, Stepan Trofimovitch!” she came back suddenly

to him. "Stay, poor darling, let me sign you with the cross. Perhaps, it would be better to put you under control, but I'd rather make the sign of the cross over you. You, too, pray for 'poor' Liza— just a little, don't bother too much about it. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, give that baby back his umbrella. You must give it him. That's right... . Come, let us go, let us go!"

They reached the fatal house at the very moment when the huge crowd, which had gathered round it, had already heard a good deal of Stavrogin, and of how much it was to his interest to murder his wife. Yet, I repeat, the immense majority went on listening without moving or uttering a word. The only people who were excited were bawling drunkards and excitable individuals of the same sort as the gesticulatory cabinet-maker. Every one knew the latter as a man really of mild disposition, but he was liable on occasion to get excited and to fly off at a tangent if anything struck him in a certain way. I did not see Liza and Mavriky Nikolaevitch arrive. Petrified with amazement, I first noticed Liza some distance away in the crowd, and I did not at once catch sight of Mavriky Nikolaevitch. I fancy there was a moment when he fell two or three steps behind her or was pressed back by the crush. Liza, forcing her way through the crowd, seeing and noticing nothing round her, like one in a delirium, like a patient escaped from a hospital, attracted attention only too quickly, of course. There arose a hubbub of loud talking and at last sudden shouts. Some one bawled out, "It's Stavrogin's woman!" And on the other side, "It's not enough to murder them, she wants to look at them!" All at once I saw an arm raised above her head from behind and suddenly brought down upon it. Liza fell to the ground. We heard a fearful scream from Mavriky Nikolaevitch as he dashed to her assistance and struck with all his strength the man who stood between him and Liza. But at that instant the same cabinetmaker seized him with both arms from behind. For some minutes nothing could be distinguished in the scrimmage that followed. I believe Liza got up but was knocked down by another blow. Suddenly the crowd parted and a small space was left empty round Liza's prostrate figure, and Mavriky Nikolaevitch, frantic with grief and covered with blood, was standing over her, screaming, weeping, and wringing his hands. I don't remember exactly what followed after; I only remember that they began to carry Liza away. I ran after her. She was still alive and perhaps still conscious. The cabinet-maker and three other men in the crowd were seized. These three still deny having taken any part in the dastardly deed, stubbornly maintaining that they have been arrested by mistake. Perhaps it's the truth. Though the evidence against the cabinet-maker is clear, he is so irrational that he is still unable to explain what happened coherently. I too, as a spectator, though at some distance, had to give evidence at the inquest. I declared that it had all happened entirely accidentally through the action of men perhaps moved by ill-feeling, yet scarcely conscious of what they were doing—drunk and irresponsible. I am of that opinion to this day.

Chapter 4: The Last Resolution That Morning

1

MANY people saw Pyotr Stepanovitch. All who saw him remembered that he was in a particularly excited state. At two o'clock he went to see Gaganov, who had arrived from the country only the day before, and whose house was full of visitors hotly discussing the events of the previous day. Pyotr Stepanovitch talked more than anyone and made them listen to him. He was always considered among us as a "chatterbox of a student with a screw loose," but now he talked of Yulia Mihailovna, and in the general excitement the theme was an enthralling one. As one who had recently been her intimate and confidential friend, he disclosed many new and unexpected details concerning her; incidentally (and of course unguardedly) he repeated some of her own remarks about persons known to all in the town, and thereby piqued their vanity. He dropped it all in a vague and rambling way, like a man free from guile driven by his sense of honour to the painful necessity of clearing up a perfect mountain of misunderstandings, and so simple-hearted that he hardly knew where to begin and where to leave off. He let slip in a rather unguarded way, too, that Yulia Mihailovna knew the whole secret of Stavrogin and that she had been at the bottom of the whole intrigue. She had taken him in too, for he, Pyotr Stepanovitch, had also been in love with this unhappy Liza, yet he had been so hoodwinked that he had almost taken her to Stavrogin himself in the carriage. "Yes, yes, it's all very well for you to laugh, gentlemen, but if only I'd known, if I'd known how it would end!" he concluded. To various excited inquiries about Stavrogin he bluntly replied that in his opinion the catastrophe to the Lebyadkins was a pure coincidence, and that it was all Lebyadkin's own fault for displaying his money. He explained this particularly well. One of his listeners observed that it was no good his "pretending"; that he had eaten and drunk and almost slept at Yulia Mihailovna's, yet now he was the first to blacken her character, and that this was by no means such a fine thing to do as he supposed. But Pyotr Stepanovitch immediately defended himself.

"I ate and drank there not because I had no money, and it's not my fault that I was invited there. Allow me to judge for myself how far I need to be grateful for that."

The general impression was in his favour. "He may be rather absurd, and of course he is a nonsensical fellow, yet still he is not responsible for Yulia Mihailovna's foolishness. On the contrary, it appears that he tried to stop her."

About two o'clock the news suddenly came that Stavrogin, about whom there was so much talk, had suddenly left for Petersburg by the midday train. This interested people immensely; many of them frowned. Pyotr Stepanovitch was so much struck that I was told he turned quite pale and cried out strangely, "Why, how could they have let him go?" He hurried away from Gaganov's forthwith, yet he was seen in two or three other houses.

Towards dusk he succeeded in getting in to see Yulia Mihailovna though he had the greatest pains to do so, as she had absolutely refused to see him. I heard of this from the lady herself only three weeks afterwards, just before her departure for Petersburg. She gave me no details, but observed with a shudder that "he had on that occasion astounded her beyond all belief." I imagine that all he did was to terrify her by threatening to charge her with being an accomplice if she "said anything." The necessity for this intimidation arose from his plans at the moment, of which she, of course, knew nothing; and only later, five days afterwards, she guessed why he had been so doubtful of her reticence and so afraid of a new outburst of indignation on her part.

Between seven and eight o'clock, when it was dark, all the five members of the quintet met together at Ensign Erkel's lodgings in a little crooked house at the end of the town. The meeting had been fixed by Pyotr Stepanovitch himself, but he was unpardonably late, and the members waited over an hour for him. This Ensign Erkel was that young officer who had sat the whole evening at Virginsky's with a pencil in his hand and a notebook before him. He had not long been in the town; he lodged alone with two old women, sisters, in a secluded by-street and was shortly to leave the town; a meeting at his house was less likely to attract notice than anywhere. This strange boy was distinguished by extreme taciturnity: he was capable of sitting for a dozen evenings in succession in noisy company, with the most extraordinary conversation going on around him, without uttering a word, though he listened with extreme attention, watching the speakers with his childlike eyes. His face was very pretty and even had a certain look of cleverness. He did not belong to the quintet; it was supposed that he had some special job of a purely practical character. It is known now that he had nothing of the sort and probably did not understand his position himself. It was simply that he was filled with hero-worship for Pyotr Stepanovitch, whom he had only lately met. If he had met a monster of iniquity who had incited him to found a band of brigands on the pretext of some romantic and socialistic object, and as a test had bidden him rob and murder the first peasant he met, he would certainly have obeyed and done it. He had an invalid mother to whom he sent half of his scanty pay—and how she must have kissed that poor little flaxen head, how she must have trembled and prayed over it! I go into these details about him because I feel very sorry for him.

"Our fellows" were excited. The events of the previous night had made a great impression on them, and I fancy they were in a panic. The simple disorderliness in which they had so zealously and systematically taken part had ended in a way they had not expected. The fire in the night, the murder of the Lebyadkins, the savage brutality of the crowd with Liza, had been a series of surprises which they had not anticipated in their programme. They hotly accused the hand that had guided them of despotism and duplicity. In fact, while they were waiting for Pyotr Stepanovitch they worked each other up to such a point that they resolved again to ask him for a definite explanation, and if he evaded again, as he had done before, to dissolve the

quintet and to found instead a new secret society "for the propaganda of ideas" and on their own initiative on the basis of democracy and equality. Liputin, Shigalov, and the authority on the peasantry supported this plan; Lyamshin said nothing, though he looked approving. Virginsky hesitated and wanted to hear Pyotr Stepanovitch first. It was decided to hear Pyotr Stepanovitch, but still he did not come; such casualness added fuel to the flames. Erkel was absolutely silent and did nothing but order the tea, which he brought from his landladies in glasses on a tray, not bringing in the samovar nor allowing the servant to enter.

Pyotr Stepanovitch did not turn up till half-past eight. With rapid steps he went up to the circular table before the sofa round which the company were seated; he kept his cap in his hand and refused tea. He looked angry, severe, and supercilious. He must have observed at once from their faces that they were "mutinous."

"Before I open my mouth, you've got something hidden; out with it."

Liputin began "in the name of all," and declared in a voice quivering with resentment "that if things were going on like that they might as well blow their brains out." Oh, they were not at all afraid to blow their brains out, they were quite ready to, in fact, but only to serve the common cause (a general movement of approbation). So he must be more open with them so that they might always know beforehand, "or else what would things be coming to?" (Again a stir and some guttural sounds.) To behave like this was humiliating and dangerous. "We don't say so because we are afraid, but if one acts and the rest are only pawns, then one would blunder and all would be lost." (Exclamations. "Yes, yes." General approval.)

"Damn it all, what do you want?"

"What connection is there between the common cause and the petty intrigues of Mr. Stavrogin?" cried Liputin, boiling over. "Suppose he is in some mysterious relation to the centre, if that legendary centre really exists at all, it's no concern of ours. And meantime a murder has been committed, the police have been roused; if they follow the thread they may find what it starts from."

"If Stavrogin and you are caught, we shall be caught too," added the authority on the peasantry.

"And to no good purpose for the common cause," Virginsky concluded despondently.

"What nonsense! The murder is a chance crime; it was committed by Fedka for the sake of robbery."

"H'm! Strange coincidence, though," said Liputin, wriggling.

"And if you will have it, it's all through you."

"Through us?"

"In the first place, you, Liputin, had a share in the intrigue yourself; and the second chief point is, you were ordered to get Lebyadkin away and given money to do it; and what did you do? If you'd got him away nothing would have happened."

"But wasn't it you yourself who suggested the idea that it would be a good thing to set him on to read his verses?"

"An idea is not a command. The command was to get him away."

“Command! Rather a queer word... . On the contrary, your orders were to delay sending him off.”

“You made a mistake and showed your foolishness and self-will. The murder was the work of Fedka, and he carried it out alone for the sake of robbery. You heard the gossip and believed it. You were scared. Stavrogin is not such a fool, and the proof of that is he left the town at twelve o’clock after an interview with the vice-governor; if there were anything in it they would not let him go to Petersburg in broad daylight.”

“But we are not making out that Mr. Stavrogin committed the murder himself,” Liputin rejoined spitefully and unceremoniously. “He may have known nothing about it, like me; and you know very well that I knew nothing about it, though I am mixed up in it like mutton in a hash.”

“Whom are you accusing?” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, looking at him darkly.

“Those whose interest it is to burn down towns.”

“You make matters worse by wriggling out of it. However, won’t you read this and pass it to the others, simply as a fact of interest?”

He pulled out of his pocket Lebyadkin’s anonymous letter to Lembke and handed it to Liputin. The latter read it, was evidently surprised, and passed it thoughtfully to his neighbour; the letter quickly went the round.

“Is that really Lebyadkin’s handwriting?” observed Shigalov.

“It is,” answered Liputin and Tolkatchenko (the authority on the peasantry).

“I simply brought it as a fact of interest and because I knew you were so sentimental over Lebyadkin,” repeated Pyotr Stepanovitch, taking the letter back. “So it turns out, gentlemen, that a stray Fedka relieves us quite by chance of a dangerous man. That’s what chance does sometimes! It’s instructive, isn’t it?”

The members exchanged rapid glances.

“And now, gentlemen, it’s my turn to ask questions,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, assuming an air of dignity. “Let me know what business you had to set fire to the town without permission.”

“What’s this! We, we set fire to the town? That is laying the blame on others!” they exclaimed.

“I quite understand that you carried the game too far,” Pyotr Stepanovitch persisted stubbornly, “but it’s not a matter of petty scandals with Yulia Mihailovna. I’ve brought you here gentlemen, to explain to you the greatness of the danger you have so stupidly incurred, which is a menace to much besides yourselves.”

“Excuse me, we, on the contrary, were intending just now to point out to you the greatness of the despotism and unfairness you have shown in taking such a serious and also strange step without consulting the members,” Virginsky, who had been hitherto silent, protested, almost with indignation.

“And so you deny it? But I maintain that you set fire to the town, you and none but you. Gentlemen, don’t tell lies! I have good evidence. By your rashness you exposed the common cause to danger. You are only one knot in an endless network of knots—and your duty is blind obedience to the centre. Yet three men of you incited the Shpigulin

men to set fire to the town without the least instruction to do so, and the fire has taken place.”

“What three? What three of us?”

“The day before yesterday, at three o’clock in the night, you, Tolkatchenko, were inciting Fomka Zavyalov at the ‘Forget-me-not.’ “

“Upon my word!” cried the latter, jumping up, “I scarcely said a word to him, and what I did say was without intention, simply because he had been flogged that morning. And I dropped it at once; I saw he was too drunk. If you had not referred to it I should not have thought of it again. A word could not set the place on fire.”

“You are like a man who should be surprised that a tiny spark could blow a whole powder magazine into the air.”

“I spoke in a whisper in his ear, in a corner; how could you have heard of it?”

Tolkatchenko reflected suddenly.

“I was sitting there under the table. Don’t disturb yourselves, gentlemen; I know every step you take. You smile sarcastically, Mr. Liputin? But I know, for instance, that you pinched your wife black and blue at midnight, three days ago, in your bedroom as you were going to bed.”

Liputin’s mouth fell open and he turned pale. (It was afterwards found out that he knew of this exploit of Liputin’s from Agafya, Liputin’s servant, whom he had paid from the beginning to spy on him; this only came out later.)

“May I state a fact?” said Shigalov, getting up.

“State it.”

Shigalov sat down and pulled himself together.

“So far as I understand—and it’s impossible not to understand it—you yourself at first and a second time later, drew with great eloquence, but too theoretically, a picture of Russia covered with an endless network of knots. Each of these centres of activity, proselytising and ramifying endlessly, aims by systematic denunciation to injure the prestige of local authority, to reduce the villages to confusion, to spread cynicism and scandals, together with complete disbelief in everything and an eagerness for something better, and finally, by means of fires, as a pre-eminently national method, to reduce the country at a given moment, if need be, to desperation. Are those your words which I tried to remember accurately? Is that the programme you gave us as the authorised representative of the central committee, which is to this day utterly unknown to us and almost like a myth?”

“It’s correct, only you are very tedious.”

“Every one has a right to express himself in his own way. Giving us to understand that the separate knots of the general network already covering Russia number by now several hundred, and propounding the theory that if every one does his work successfully, all Russia at a given moment, at a signal ...”

“Ah, damn it all, I have enough to do without you!” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, twisting in his chair.

“Very well, I’ll cut it short and I’ll end simply by asking if we’ve seen the disorderly scenes, we’ve seen the discontent of the people, we’ve seen and taken part in the downfall of local administration, and finally, we’ve seen with our own eyes the town on fire? What do you find amiss? Isn’t that your programme? What can you blame us for?”

“Acting on your own initiative!” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried furiously. “While I am here you ought not to have dared to act without my permission. Enough. We are on the eve of betrayal, and perhaps to-morrow or to-night you’ll be seized. So there. I have authentic information.”

At this all were agape with astonishment.

“You will be arrested not only as the instigators of the fire, but as a quintet. The traitor knows the whole secret of the network. So you see what a mess you’ve made of it!”

“Stavrogin, no doubt,” cried Liputin.

“What ... why Stavrogin?” Pyotr Stepanovitch seemed suddenly taken aback. “Hang it all,” he cried, pulling himself together at once, “it’s Shatov! I believe you all know now that Shatov in his time was one of the society. I must tell you that, watching him through persons he does not suspect, I found, out to my amazement that he knows all about the organisation of the network and ... everything, in fact. To save himself from being charged with having formerly belonged, he will give information against all. He has been hesitating up till now and I have spared him. Your fire has decided him: he is shaken and will hesitate no longer. To-morrow we shall be arrested as incendiaries and political offenders.”

“Is it true? How does Shatov know?” The excitement was indescribable.

“It’s all perfectly true. I have no right to reveal the source from which I learnt it or how I discovered it, but I tell you what I can do for you meanwhile: through one person I can act on Shatov so that without his suspecting it he will put off giving information, but not more than for twenty-four hours.” All were silent.

“We really must send him to the devil!” Tolkatchenko was the first to exclaim.

“It ought to have- been done long ago,” Lyamshin put in malignantly, striking the table with his fist.

“But how is it to be done?” muttered Liputin. Pyotr Stepanovitch at once took up the question and unfolded his plan. The plan was the following day at nightfall to draw Shatov away to a secluded spot to hand over the secret printing press which had been in his keeping and was buried there, and there “to settle things.” He went into various essential details which we will omit here, and explained minutely Shatov’s present ambiguous attitude to the central society, of which the reader knows already.

“That’s all very well,” Liputin observed irresolutely, “but since it will be another adventure ... of the same sort ... it will make too great a sensation.”

“No doubt,” assented Pyotr Stepanovitch, “but I’ve provided against that. We have the means of averting suspicion completely.”

And with the same minuteness he told them about Kirillov, of his intention to shoot himself, and of his promise to wait for a signal from them and to leave a letter behind him taking on himself anything they dictated to him (all of which the reader knows already).

“His determination to take his own life—a philosophic, or as I should call it, insane decision—has become known there” Pyotr Stepanovitch went on to explain. “There not a thread, not a grain of dust is overlooked; everything is turned to the service of the cause. Foreseeing how useful it might be and satisfying themselves that his intention was quite serious, they had offered him the means to come to Russia (he was set for some reason on dying in Russia), gave him a commission which he promised to carry out (and he had done so), and had, moreover, bound him by a promise, as you already know, to commit suicide only when he was told to. He promised everything. You must note that he belongs to the organisation on a particular footing and is anxious to be of service; more than that I can’t tell you. To-morrow, after Shatov’s affair, I’ll dictate a note to him saying that he is responsible for his death. That will seem very plausible: they were friends and travelled together to America, there they quarrelled; and it will all be explained in the letter ... and ... and perhaps, if it seems feasible, we might dictate something more to Kirillov—something about the manifestoes, for instance, and even perhaps about the fire. But I’ll think about that. You needn’t worry yourselves, he has no prejudices; he’ll sign anything.”

There were expressions of doubt. It sounded a fantastic story. But they had all heard more or less about Kirillov; Liputin more than all.

“He may change his mind and not want to,” said Shigalov; “he is a madman anyway, so he is not much to build upon.”

“Don’t be uneasy, gentlemen, he will want to,” Pyotr Stepanovitch snapped out. “I am obliged by our agreement to give him warning the day before, so it must be to-day. I invite Liputin to go with me at once to see him and make certain, and he will tell you, gentlemen, when he comes back—to-day if need be—whether what I say is true. However,” he broke off suddenly with intense exasperation, as though he suddenly felt he was doing people like them too much honour by wasting time in persuading them, “however, do as you please. If you don’t decide to do it, the union is broken up—but solely through your insubordination and treachery. In that case we are all independent from this moment. But under those circumstances, besides the unpleasantness of Shatov’s betrayal and its consequences, you will have brought upon yourselves another little unpleasantness of which you were definitely warned when the union was formed. As far as I am concerned, I am not much afraid of you, gentlemen... . Don’t imagine that I am so involved with you... . But that’s no matter.”

“Yes, we decide to do it,” Liputin pronounced.

“There’s no other way out of it,” muttered Tolkatchenko, “and if only Liputin confirms about Kirillov, then ...

“I am against it; with all my soul and strength I protest against such a murderous decision,” said Virginsky, standing up.

“But?” asked Pyotr Stepanovitch... .

“But what?”

“You said but ... and I am waiting.”

“I don’t think I did say but ... I only meant to say that if you decide to do it, then ...”

“Then?”

Virginsky did not answer.

“I think that one is at liberty to neglect danger to one’s own life,” said Erkel, suddenly opening his mouth, “but if it may injure the cause, then I consider one ought not to dare to neglect danger to one’s life... .”

He broke off in confusion, blushing. Absorbed as they all were in their own ideas, they all looked at him in amazement—it was such a surprise that he too could speak.

“I am for the cause,” Virginsky pronounced suddenly.

Every one got up. It was decided to communicate once more and make final arrangements at midday on the morrow, though without meeting. The place where the printing press was hidden was announced and each was assigned his part and his duty. Liputin and Pyotr Stepanovitch promptly set off together to Kirillov.

2

All our fellows believed that Shatov was going to betray them; but they also believed that Pyotr Stepanovitch was playing with them like pawns. And yet they knew, too, that in any case they would all meet on the spot next day and that Shatov’s fate—was sealed. They suddenly felt like flies caught in a web by a huge spider; they were furious, but they were trembling with terror.

Pyotr Stepanovitch, of course, had treated them badly; it might all have gone off far more harmoniously and easily if he had taken the trouble to embellish the facts ever so little. Instead of putting the facts in a decorous light, as an exploit worthy of ancient Rome or something of the sort, he simply appealed to their animal fears and laid stress on the danger to their own skins, which was simply insulting; of course there was a struggle for existence in everything and there was no other principle in nature, they all knew that, but still ...

But Pyotr Stepanovitch had no time to trot out the Romans; he was completely thrown out of his reckoning. Stavrogin’s flight had astounded and crushed him. It was a lie when he said that Stavrogin had seen the vice-governor; what worried Pyotr Stepanovitch was that Stavrogin had gone off without seeing anyone, even his mother—and it was certainly strange that he had been allowed to leave without hindrance. (The authorities were called to account for it afterwards.) Pyotr Stepanovitch had been making inquiries all day, but so far had found out nothing, and he had never been so upset. And how could he, how could he give up Stavrogin all at once like this! That was why he could not be very tender with the quintet. Besides, they tied his hands: he had already decided to gallop after Stavrogin at once; and meanwhile he was detained

by Shatov; he had to cement the quintet together once for all, in case of emergency. "Pity to waste them, they might be of use." That, I imagine, was his way of reasoning.

As for Shatov, Pyotr Stepanovitch was firmly convinced that he would betray them. All that he had told the others about it was a lie: he had never seen the document nor heard of it, but he thought it as certain as that twice two makes four. It seemed to him that what had happened—the death of Liza, the death of Marya Timofyevna—would be too much for Shatov, and that he would make up his mind at once. Who knows? perhaps he had grounds for supposing it. It is known, too, that he hated Shatov personally; there had at some time been a quarrel between them, and Pyotr Stepanovitch never forgave an offence. I am convinced, indeed, that this was his leading motive.

We have narrow brick pavements in our town, and in some streets only raised wooden planks instead of a pavement. Pyotr Stepanovitch walked in the middle of the pavement, taking up the whole of it, utterly regardless of Liputin, who had no room to walk beside him and so had to hurry a step behind or run in the muddy road if he wanted to speak to him. Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly remembered how he had lately splashed through the mud to keep pace with Stavrogin, who had walked, as he was doing now, taking up the whole pavement. He recalled the whole scene, and rage choked him.

But Liputin, too, was choking with resentment. Pyotr Stepanovitch might treat the others as he liked, but him! Why, he knew more than all the rest, was in closer touch with the work and taking more intimate part in it than anyone, and hitherto his services had been continual, though indirect. Oh, he knew that even now Pyotr Stepanovitch might ruin him if it came to the worst. But he had long hated Pyotr Stepanovitch, and not because he was a danger but because of his overbearing manner. Now, when he had to make up his mind to such a deed, he raged inwardly more than all the rest put together. Alas! he knew that next day "like a slave" he would be the first on the spot and would bring the others, and if he could somehow have murdered Pyotr Stepanovitch before the morrow, without ruining himself, of course, he would certainly have murdered him.

Absorbed in his sensations, he trudged dejectedly after his tormentor, who seemed to have forgotten his existence, though he gave him a rude and careless shove with his elbow now and then. Suddenly Pyotr Stepanovitch halted in one of the principal thoroughfares and went into a restaurant.

"What are you doing?" cried Liputin, boiling over. "This is a restaurant."

"I want a beefsteak."

"Upon my word! It is always full of people."

"What if it is?"

"But ... we shall be late. It's ten o'clock already."

"You can't be too late to go there."

"But I shall be late! They are expecting me back."

“Well, let them; but it would be stupid of you to go to them. With all your bobbery I’ve had no dinner. And the later you go to Kirillov’s the more sure you are to find him.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch went to a room apart. Liputin sat in an easy chair on one side, angry and resentful, and watched him eating. Half an hour and more passed. Pyotr Stepanovitch did not hurry himself; he ate with relish, rang the bell, asked for a different kind of mustard, then for beer, without saying a word to Liputin. He was pondering deeply. He was capable of doing two things at once—eating with relish and pondering deeply. Liputin loathed him so intensely at last that he could not tear himself away. It was like a nervous obsession. He counted every morsel of beefsteak that Pyotr Stepanovitch put into his mouth; he loathed him for the way he opened it, for the way he chewed, for the way he smacked his lips over the fat morsels, he loathed the steak itself. At last things began to swim before his eyes; he began to feel slightly giddy; he felt hot and cold run down his spine by turns.

“You are doing nothing; read that,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly, throwing him a sheet of paper. Liputin went nearer to the candle. The paper was closely covered with bad handwriting, with corrections in every line. By the time he had mastered it Pyotr Stepanovitch had paid his bill and was ready to go. When they were on the pavement Liputin handed him back the paper.

“Keep it; I’ll tell you afterwards... . What do you say to it, though?”

Liputin shuddered all over.

“In my opinion ... such a manifesto ... is nothing but a ridiculous absurdity.”

His anger broke out; he felt as though he were being caught up and carried along.

“If we decide to distribute such manifestoes,” he said, quivering all over, “we’ll make ourselves, contemptible by our stupidity and incompetence.”

“H’m! I think differently,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, walking on resolutely.

“So do I; surely it isn’t your work?”

“That’s not your business.”

“I think too that doggerel, ‘A Noble Personality,’ is the most utter trash possible, and it couldn’t have been written by Herzen.”

“You are talking nonsense; it’s a good poem.”

“I am surprised, too, for instance,” said Liputin, still dashing along with desperate leaps, “that it is suggested that we should act so as to bring everything to the ground. It’s natural in Europe to wish to destroy everything because there’s a proletariat there, but we are only amateurs here and in my opinion are only showing off.”

“I thought you were a Fourierist.”

“Fourier says something quite different, quite different.”

“I know it’s nonsense.”

“No, Fourier isn’t nonsense... . Excuse me, I can’t believe that there will be a rising in May.”

Liputin positively unbuttoned his coat, he was so hot.

“Well, that’s enough; but now, that I mayn’t forget it,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, passing with extraordinary coolness to another subject, “you will have to print this manifesto with your own hands. We’re going to dig up Shatov’s printing press, and you will take it to-morrow. As quickly as possible you must print as many copies as you can, and then distribute them all the winter. The means will be provided. You must do as many copies as possible, for you’ll be asked for them from other places.”

“No, excuse me; I can’t undertake such a ... I decline.”

“You’ll take it all the same. I am acting on the instructions of the central committee, and you are bound to obey.”

“And I consider that our centres abroad have forgotten what Russia is like and have lost all touch, and that’s why they talk such nonsense. ... I even think that instead of many hundreds of quintets in Russia, we are the only one that exists, and there is no network at all,” Liputin gasped finally.

“The more contemptible of you, then, to run after the cause without believing in it ... and you are running after me now like a mean little cur.”

“No, I’m not. We have a full right to break off and found a new society.”

“Fool!” Pyotr Stepanovitch boomed at him threateningly all of a sudden, with flashing eyes.

They stood facing one another for some time. Pyotr Stepanovitch turned and pursued his way confidently.

The idea flashed through Liputin’s mind, “Turn and go back; if I don’t turn now I shall never go back.” He pondered this for ten steps, but at the eleventh a new and desperate idea flashed into his mind: he did not turn and did not go back.

They were approaching Filipov’s house, but before reaching it they turned down a side street, or, to be more accurate, an inconspicuous path under a fence, so that for some time they had to walk along a steep slope above a ditch where they could not keep their footing without holding the fence. At a dark corner in the slanting fence Pyotr Stepanovitch took out a plank, leaving a gap, through which he promptly scrambled. Liputin was surprised, but he crawled through after him; then they replaced the plank after them. This was the secret way by which Fedka used to visit Kirillov.

“Shatov mustn’t know that we are here,” Pyotr Stepanovitch whispered sternly to Liputin.

3

Kirillov was sitting on his leather sofa drinking tea, as he always was at that hour. He did not get up to meet them, but gave a sort of start and looked at the new-comers anxiously.

“You are not mistaken,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, “it’s just that I’ve come about.”

“To-day?”

"No, no, to-morrow ... about this time." And he hurriedly sat down at the table, watching Kirillov's agitation with some uneasiness. But the latter had already regained his composure and looked as usual.

"These people still refuse to believe in you. You are not vexed at my bringing Liputin?"

"To-day I am not vexed; to-morrow I want to be alone."

"But not before I come, and therefore in my presence." .

"I should prefer not in your presence."

"You remember you promised to write and to sign all I dictated."

"I don't care. And now will you be here long?"

"I have to see one man and to remain half an hour, so whatever you say I shall stay that half-hour."

Kirillov did not speak. Liputin meanwhile sat down on one side under the portrait of the bishop. That last desperate idea gained more and more possession of him. Kirillov scarcely noticed him. Liputin had heard of Kirillov's theory before and always laughed at him; but now he was silent and looked gloomily round him.

"I've no objection to some tea," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, moving up. "I've just had some steak and was reckoning on getting tea with you."

"Drink it. You can have some if you like."

"You used to offer it to me," observed Pyotr Stepanovitch sourly.

"That's no matter. Let Liputin have some too."

"No, I ... can't."

"Don't want to or can't?" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, turning quickly to him.

"I am not going to here," Liputin said expressively.

Pyotr Stepanovitch frowned.

"There's a flavour of mysticism about that; goodness knows what to make of you people!"

No one answered; there was a full minute of silence.

"But I know one thing," he added abruptly, "that no superstition will prevent any one of us from doing his duty."

"Has Stavrogin gone?" asked Kirillov.

"Yes."

"He's done well."

Pyotr Stepanovitch's eyes gleamed, but he restrained himself.

"I don't care what you think as long as every one keeps his word."

"I'll keep my word."

"I always knew that you would do your duty like an independent and progressive man."

"You are an absurd fellow."

"That may be; I am very glad to amuse you. I am always glad if I can give people pleasure."

"You are very anxious I should shoot myself and are afraid I might suddenly not?"

“Well, you see, it was your own doing—connecting your plan with our work. Reckoning on your plan we have already done something, so that you couldn’t refuse now because you’ve let us in for it.”

“You’ve no claim at all.”

“I understand, I understand; you are perfectly free, and we don’t come in so long as your free intention is carried out.”

“And am I to take on myself all the nasty things you’ve done?”

“Listen, Kirillov, are you afraid? If you want to cry off, say so at once.”

“I am not afraid.”

“I ask because you are making so many inquiries.”

“Are you going soon?”

“Asking questions again?” Kirillov scanned him contemptuously.

“You see,” Pyotr Stepanovitch went on, getting angrier and angrier, and unable to take the right tone, “you want me to go away, to be alone, to concentrate yourself, but all that’s a bad sign for you—for you above all. You want to think a great deal. To my mind you’d better not think. And really you make me uneasy.”

“There’s only one thing I hate, that at such a moment I should have a reptile like you beside me.”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter. I’ll go away at the time and stand on the steps if you like. If you are so concerned about trifles when it comes to dying, then ... it’s all a very bad sign. I’ll go out on to the steps and you can imagine I know nothing about it, and that I am a man infinitely below you.”

“No, not infinitely; you’ve got abilities, but there’s a lot you don’t understand because you are a low man.”

“Delighted, delighted. I told you already I am delighted to provide entertainment ... at such a moment.”

“You don’t understand anything.”

“That is, I ... well, I listen with respect, anyway.”

“You can do nothing; even now you can’t hide your petty spite, though it’s not to your interest to show it. You’ll make me cross, and then I may want another six months.” Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at his watch. “I never understood your theory, but I know you didn’t invent it for our sakes, so I suppose you would carry it out apart from us. And I know too that you haven’t mastered the idea but the idea has mastered you, so you won’t put it off.”

“What? The idea has mastered me?”

“Yes.”

“And not I mastered the idea? That’s good. You have a little sense. Only you tease me and I am proud.”

“That’s a good thing, that’s a good thing. Just what you need, to be proud.”

“Enough. You’ve drunk your tea; go away.”

“Damn it all, I suppose I must”—Pyotr Stepanovitch got up—“ though it’s early. Listen, Kirillov. Shall I find that man—you know whom I mean—at Myasnitchiha’s? Or has she too been lying?”

“You won’t find him, because he is here and not there.”

“Here! Damn it all, where?”

“Sitting in the kitchen, eating and drinking.”

“How dared he?” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, flushing angrily. “It was his duty to wait ... what nonsense! He has no passport, no money!”

“I don’t know. He came to say good-bye; he is dressed and ready. He is going away and won’t come back. He says you are a scoundrel and he doesn’t want to wait for your money.”

“Ha ha! He is afraid that I’ll ... But even now I can ... if ... Where is he, in the kitchen?”

Kirillov opened a side door into a tiny dark room; from this room three steps led straight to the part of the kitchen where the cook’s bed was usually put, behind the partition. Here, in the corner under the ikons, Fedka was sitting now, at a bare deal table. Before him stood a pint bottle, a plate of bread, and some cold beef and potatoes on an earthenware dish. He was eating in a leisurely way and was already half drunk, but he was wearing his sheep-skin coat and was evidently ready for a journey. A samovar was boiling the other side of the screen, but it was not for Fedka, who had every night for a week or more zealously blown it up and got it ready for “Alexey Nilitch, for he’s such a habit of drinking tea at nights.” I am strongly disposed to believe that, as Kirillov had not a cook, he had cooked the beef and potatoes that morning with his own hands for Fedka.

“What notion is this?” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, whisking into the room. “Why didn’t you wait where you were ordered?”

And swinging his fist, he brought it down heavily on the table.

Fedka assumed an air of dignity.

“You wait a bit, Pyotr Stepanovitch, you wait a bit,” he began, with a swaggering emphasis on each word, “it’s your first duty to understand here that you are on a polite visit to Mr. Kirillov, Alexey Nilitch, whose boots you might clean any day, because beside you he is a man of culture and you are only— foo!”

And he made a jaunty show of spitting to one side. Haughtiness and determination were evident in his manner, and a certain very threatening assumption of argumentative calm that suggested an outburst to follow. But Pyotr Stepanovitch had no time to realise the danger, and it did not fit in with his preconceived ideas. The incidents and disasters of the day had quite turned his head. Liputin, at the top of the three steps, stared inquisitively down from the little dark room.

“Do you or don’t you want a trustworthy passport and good money to go where you’ve been told? Yes or no?”

“D’you see, Pyotr Stepanovitch, you’ve been deceiving me from the first, and so you’ve been a regular scoundrel to me. For all the world like a filthy human louse—

that's how I look on you. You've promised me a lot of money for shedding innocent blood and swore it was for Mr. Stavrogin, though it turns out to be nothing but your want of breeding. I didn't get a farthing out of it, let alone fifteen hundred, and Mr. Stavrogin hit you in the face, which has come to our ears. Now you axe threatening me again and promising me money—what for, you don't say. And I shouldn't wonder if you are sending me to Petersburg to plot some revenge in your spite against Mr. Stavrogin, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, reckoning on my simplicity. And that proves you are the chief murderer. And do you know what you deserve for the very fact that in the depravity of your heart you've given up believing in God Himself, the true Creator? You are no better than an idolater and are on a level with the Tatar and the Mordva. Alexey Nilitch, who is a philosopher, has expounded the true God, the Creator, many a time to you, as well as the creation of the world and the fate that's to come and the transformation of every sort of creature and every sort of beast out of the Apocalypse, but you've persisted like a senseless idol in your deafness and your dumbness and have brought Ensign Erkel to the same, like the veriest evil seducer and so-called atheist. ...”

“Ah, you drunken dog! He strips the ikons of their setting and then preaches about God!”

“D'you see, Pyotr Stepanovitch, I tell you truly that I have stripped the ikons, but I only took out the pearls; and how do you know? Perhaps my own tear was transformed into a pearl in the furnace of the Most High to make up for my sufferings, seeing I am just that very orphan, having no daily refuge. Do you know from the books that once, in ancient times, a merchant with just such tearful sighs and prayers stole a pearl from the halo of the Mother of God, and afterwards, in the face of all the people, laid the whole price of it at her feet, and the Holy Mother sheltered him with her mantle before all the people, so that it was a miracle, and the command was given through the authorities to write it all down word for word in the Imperial books. And you let a mouse in, so you insulted the very throne of God. And if you were not my natural master, whom I dandled in my arms when I was a stripling, I would have done for you now, without budging from this place!”

Pyotr Stepanovitch flew into a violent rage.

“Tell me, have you seen Stavrogin to-day?”

“Don't you dare to question me. Mr. Stavrogin is fairly amazed at you, and he had no share in it even in wish, let alone instructions or giving money. You've presumed with me.”

“You'll get the money and you'll get another two thousand in Petersburg, when you get there, in a lump sum, and you'll get more.”

“You are lying, my fine gentleman, and it makes me laugh to see how easily you are taken in. Mr. Stavrogin stands at the top of the ladder above you, and you yelp at him from below like a silly puppy dog, while he thinks it would be doing you an honour to spit at you.”

“But do you know,” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch in a rage, “that I won’t let you stir a step from here, you scoundrel, and I’ll hand you straight over to the police.”

Fedka leapt on to his feet and his eyes gleamed with fury. Pyotr Stepanovitch pulled out his revolver. Then followed a rapid and revolting scene: before Pyotr Stepanovitch could take aim, Fedka swung round and in a flash struck him on the cheek with all his might. Then there was the thud of a second blow, a third, then a fourth, all on the cheek. Pyotr Stepanovitch was dazed; with his eyes starting out of his head, he muttered something, and suddenly crashed full length to the ground.

“There you are; take him,” shouted Fedka with a triumphant swagger; he instantly took up his cap, his bag from under the bench, and was gone. Pyotr Stepanovitch lay gasping and . unconscious. Liputin even imagined that he had been murdered. Kirillov ran headlong into the kitchen.

“Water!” he cried, and ladling some water in an iron dipper from a bucket, he poured it over the injured man’s head. Pyotr Stepanovitch stirred, raised his head, sat up, and looked blankly about him.

“Well, how are you?” asked Kirillov. Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at him intently, still not recognising him; but seeing Liputin peeping in from the kitchen, he smiled his hateful smile and suddenly got up, picking up his revolver from the floor.

“If you take it into your head to run away to-morrow like that scoundrel Stavrogin,” he cried, pouncing furiously on Kirillov, pale, stammering, and hardly able to articulate his words, “I’ll hang you ... like a fly ... or crush you ... if it’s at the other end of the world ... do you understand!”

And he held the revolver straight at Kirillov’s head; but almost at the same minute, coming completely to himself, he drew back his hand, thrust the revolver into his pocket, and without saying another word ran out of the house. Liputin followed him. They clambered through the same gap and again walked along the slope holding to the fence. Pyotr Stepanovitch strode rapidly down the street so that Liputin could scarcely keep up with him. At the first crossing he suddenly stopped.

“Well?” He turned to Liputin with a challenge.

Liputin remembered the revolver and was still trembling all over after the scene he had witnessed; but the answer seemed to come of itself irresistibly from his tongue:

“I think ... I think that ...”

“Did you see what Fedka was drinking in the kitchen?”

“What he was drinking? He was drinking vodka.”

“Well then, let me tell you it’s the last time in his life he will drink vodka. I recommend you to remember that and reflect on it. And now go to hell; you are not wanted till to-morrow. But mind now, don’t be a fool!”

Liputin rushed home full speed.

He had long had a passport in readiness made out in a false name. It seems a wild idea that this prudent little man, the petty despot of his family, who was, above all things, a sharp man of business and a capitalist, and who was an official too (though he was a Fourierist), should long before have conceived the fantastic project of procuring this passport in case of emergency, that he might escape abroad by means of it if ... he did admit the possibility of this if, though no doubt he was never able himself to formulate what this if might mean.

But now it suddenly formulated itself, and in a most unexpected way. That desperate idea with which he had gone to Kirillov's after that "fool" he had heard from Pyotr Stepanovitch on the pavement, had been to abandon everything at dawn next day and to emigrate abroad. If anyone doubts that such fantastic incidents occur in everyday Russian life, even now, let him look into the biographies of all the Russian exiles abroad. Not one of them escaped with more wisdom or real justification. It has always been the unrestrained domination of phantoms and nothing more.

Running home, he began by locking himself in, getting out his travelling bag, and feverishly beginning to pack. His chief anxiety was the question of money, and how much he could rescue from the impending ruin—and by what means. He thought of it as "rescuing," for it seemed to him that he could not linger an hour, and that by daylight he must be on the high road. He did not know where to take the train either; he vaguely determined to take it at the second or third big station from the town, and to make his way there on foot, if necessary. In that way, instinctively and mechanically he busied himself in his packing with a perfect whirl of ideas in his head—and suddenly stopped short, gave it all up, and with a deep groan stretched himself on the sofa.

He felt clearly, and suddenly realised that he might escape, but that he was by now utterly incapable of deciding whether he ought to make off before or after Shatov's death; that he was simply a lifeless body, a crude inert mass; that he was being moved by an awful outside power; and that, though he had a passport to go abroad, that though he could run away from Shatov (otherwise what need was there of such haste?), yet he would run away, not from Shatov, not before his murder, but after it, and that that was determined, signed, and sealed.

In insufferable distress, trembling every instant and wondering at himself, alternately groaning aloud and numb with terror, he managed to exist till eleven o'clock next morning locked in and lying on the sofa; then came the shock he was awaiting, and it at once determined him. When he unlocked his door and went out to his household at eleven o'clock they told him that the runaway convict and brigand, Fedka, who was a terror to every one, who had pillaged churches and only lately been guilty of murder and arson, who was being pursued and could not be captured by our police, had been found at daybreak murdered, five miles from the town, at a turning off the high road, and that the whole town was talking of it already. He rushed headlong out of the house at once to find out further details, and learned, to begin with, that

Fedka, who had been found with his skull broken, had apparently been robbed and, secondly, that the police already had strong suspicion and even good grounds for believing that the murderer was one of the Shpigulin men called Tomka, the very one who had been his accomplice in murdering the Lebyadkins and setting fire to their house, and that there had been a quarrel between them on the road about a large sum of money stolen from Lebyadkin, which Fedka was supposed to have hidden. Liputin ran to Pyotr Stepanovitch's lodgings and succeeded in learning at the back door, on the sly, that though Pyotr Stepanovitch had not returned home till about one o'clock at night, he had slept there quietly all night till eight o'clock next morning. Of course, there could be no doubt that there was nothing extraordinary about Fedka's death, and that such careers usually have such an ending; but the coincidence of the fatal words that "it was the last time Fedka would drink vodka," with the prompt fulfilment of the prediction, was so remarkable that Liputin no longer hesitated. The shock had been given; it was as though a stone had fallen upon him and crushed him for ever. Returning home, he thrust his travelling-bag under the bed without a word, and in the evening at the hour fixed he was the first to appear at the appointed spot to meet Shatov, though it's true he still had his passport in his pocket.

Chapter 5: A Wanderer

1

THE CATASTROPHE WITH Liza and the death of Marya Timofyevna made an overwhelming impression on Shatov. I have already mentioned that that morning I met him in passing; he seemed to me not himself. He told me among other things that on the evening before at nine o'clock (that is, three hours before the fire had broken out) he had been at Marya Timofyevna's. He went in the morning to look at the corpses, but as far as I know gave no evidence of any sort that morning. Meanwhile, towards the end of the day there was a perfect tempest in his soul, and ... I think I can say with certainty that there was a moment at dusk when he wanted to get up, go out and tell everything. What that everything was, no one but he could say. Of course he would have achieved nothing, and would have simply betrayed himself. He had no proofs whatever with which to convict the perpetrators of the crime, and, indeed, he had nothing but vague conjectures to go upon, though to him they amounted to complete certainty. But he was ready to ruin himself if he could only "crush the scoundrels"—his own words. Pyotr Stepanovitch had guessed fairly correctly at this impulse in him, and he knew himself that he was risking a great deal in putting off the execution of his new awful project till next day. On his side there was, as usual, great self-confidence and contempt for all these "wretched creatures" and for Shatov in particular. He had for years despised Shatov for his "whining idiocy," as he had expressed it in former days abroad, and he was absolutely confident that he could deal with such a guileless

creature, that is, keep an eye on him all that day, and put a check on him at the first sign of danger. Yet what saved “the scoundrels” for a short time was something quite unexpected which they had not foreseen... .

Towards eight o’clock in the evening (at the very time when the quintet was meeting at Erkel’s, and waiting in indignation and excitement for Pyotr Stepanovitch) Shatov was lying in the dark on his bed with a headache and a slight chill; he was tortured by uncertainty, he was angry, he kept making up his mind, and could not make it up finally, and felt, with a curse, that it would all lead to nothing. Gradually he sank into a brief doze and had something like a nightmare. He dreamt that he was lying on his bed, tied up with cords and unable to stir, and meantime he heard a terrible banging that echoed all over the house, a banging on the fence, at the gate, at his door, in Kirillov’s lodge, so that the whole house was shaking, and a far-away familiar voice that wrung his heart was calling to him piteously. He suddenly woke and sat up in bed. To his surprise the banging at the gate went on, though not nearly so violent as it had seemed in his dream. The knocks were repeated and persistent, and the strange voice “that wrung his heart” could still be heard below at the gate, though not piteously but angrily and impatiently, alternating with another voice, more restrained and ordinary. He jumped up, opened the casement pane and put his head out.

“Who’s there?” he called, literally numb with terror.

“If you are Shatov,” the answer came harshly and resolutely from below, “be so good as to tell me straight out and honestly whether you agree to let me in or not?”

It was true: he recognised the voice!

“Marie! ... Is it you?”

“Yes, yes, Marya Shatov, and I assure you I can’t keep the driver a minute longer.”

“This minute ... I’ll get a candle,” Shatov cried faintly. Then he rushed to look for the matches. The matches, as always happens at such moments, could not be found. He dropped the candlestick and the candle on the floor and as soon as he heard the impatient voice from below again, he abandoned the search and dashed down the steep stairs to open the gate.

“Be so good as to hold the bag while I settle with this blockhead,” was how Madame Marya Shatov greeted him below, and she thrust into his hands a rather light cheap canvas handbag studded with brass nails, of Dresden manufacture. She attacked the driver with exasperation.

“Allow me to tell you, you are asking too much. If you’ve been driving me for an extra hour through these filthy streets, that’s your fault, because it seems you didn’t know where to find this stupid street and imbecile house. Take your thirty kopecks and make up your mind that you’ll get nothing more.”

“Ech, lady, you told me yourself Voznesensky Street and this is Bogoyavlensky; Voznesensky is ever so far away. You’ve simply put the horse into a steam.”

“Voznesensky, Bogoyavlensky—you ought to know all those stupid names better than I do, as you are an inhabitant; besides, you are unfair, I told you first of all

Filipov's house and you declared you knew it. In any case you can have me up tomorrow in the local court, but now I beg you to let me alone."

"Here, here's another five kopecks." With eager haste Shatov pulled a five-kopeck piece out of his pocket and gave it to the driver.

"Do me a favour, I beg you, don't dare to do that!" Madame Shatov flared up, but the driver drove off and Shatov, taking her hand, drew her through the gate.

"Make haste, Marie, make haste ... that's no matter, and ... you are wet through. Take care, we go up here— how sorry I am there's no light—the stairs are steep, hold tight, hold tight! Well, this is my room. Excuse my having no light.

. . One minute!"

He picked up the candlestick but it was a long time before the matches were found. Madame Shatov stood waiting in the middle of the room, silent and motionless.

"Thank God, here they are at last!" he cried joyfully, lighting up the room. Marya Shatov took a cursory survey of his abode.

"They told me you lived in a poor way, but I didn't expect it to be as bad as this," she pronounced with an air of disgust, and she moved towards the bed.

"Oh, I am tired!" she sat down on the hard bed, with an exhausted air. "Please put down the bag and sit down on the chair yourself. Just as you like though; you are in the way standing there. I have come to you for a time, till I can get work, because I know nothing of this place and I have no money. But if I shall be in your way I beg you again, be so good as to tell me so at once, as you are bound to do if you are an honest man. I could sell something to-morrow and pay for a room at an hotel, but you must take me to the hotel yourself... . Oh, but I am tired!"

Shatov was all of a tremor.

"You mustn't, Marie, you mustn't go to an hotel? An hotel! What for? What for?"

He clasped his hands imploringly....

"Well, if I can get on without the hotel ... I must, any way, explain the position. Remember, Shatov, that we lived in Geneva as man and wife for a fortnight and a few days; it's three years since we parted, without any particular quarrel though. But don't imagine that I've come back to renew any of the foolishness of the past. I've come back to look for work, and that I've come straight to this town is just because it's all the same to me. I've not come to say I am sorry for anything; please don't imagine anything so stupid as that."

"Oh, Marie! This is unnecessary, quite unnecessary," Shatov muttered vaguely.

"If so, if you are so far developed as to be able to understand that, I may allow myself to add, that if I've come straight to you now and am in your lodging, it's partly because I always thought you were far from being a scoundrel and were perhaps much better than other ... blackguards!"

Her eyes flashed. She must have had to bear a great deal at the hands of some "blackguards."

"And please believe me, I wasn't laughing at you just now when I told you you were good. I spoke plainly, without fine phrases and I can't endure them. But that's all

nonsense. I always hoped you would have sense enough not to pester me... . Enough, I am tired.”

And she bent on him a long, harassed and weary gaze. Shatov stood facing her at the other end of the room, which was five paces away, and listened to her timidly with a look of new life and unwonted radiance on his face. This strong, rugged man, all bristles on the surface, was suddenly all softness and shining gladness. There was a thrill of extraordinary and unexpected feeling in his soul. Three years of separation, three years of the broken marriage had effaced nothing from his heart. And perhaps every day during those three years he had dreamed of her, of that beloved being who had once said to him, “I love you.” Knowing Shatov I can say with certainty that he could never have allowed himself even to dream that a woman might say to him, “I love you.” He was savagely modest and chaste, he looked on himself as a perfect monster, detested his own face as well as his character, compared himself to some freak only fit to be exhibited at fairs. Consequently he valued honesty above everything and was fanatically devoted to his convictions; he was gloomy, proud, easily moved to wrath, and sparing of words. But here was the one being who had loved him for a fortnight (that he had never doubted, never!), a being he had always considered immeasurably above him in spite of his perfectly sober understanding of her errors; ,a being to whom he could forgive everything, everything (of that there could be no question; indeed it was quite the other way, his idea was that he was entirely to blame); this woman, this Marya Shatov, was in his house, in his presence again ... it was almost inconceivable! He was so overcome, there was so much that was terrible and at the same time so much happiness in this event that he could not, perhaps would not—perhaps was afraid to—realise the position. It was a dream. But when she looked at him with that harassed gaze he suddenly understood that this woman he loved so dearly was suffering, perhaps had been wronged. His heart went cold. He looked at her features with anguish: the first bloom of youth had long faded from this exhausted face. It’s true that she was still good-looking— in his eyes a beauty, as she had always been. In reality she was a woman of twenty-five, rather strongly built, above the medium height (taller than Shatov), with abundant dark brown hair, a pale oval face, and large dark eyes now glittering with feverish brilliance. But the light-hearted, naive and good-natured energy he had known so well in the past was replaced now by a sullen irritability and disillusionment, a sort of cynicism which was not yet habitual to her herself, and which weighed upon her. But the chief thing was that she was ill, that he could see clearly. In spite of the awe in which he stood of her he suddenly went up to her and took her by both hands.

“Marie ... you know ... you are very tired, perhaps, for God’s sake, don’t be angry. ... If you’d consent to have some tea, for instance, eh? Tea picks one up so, doesn’t it? If you’d consent!”

“Why talk about consenting! Of course I consent, what a baby you are still. Get me some if you can. How cramped you are here. How cold it is!”

“Oh, I’ll get some logs for the fire directly, some logs ... I’ve got logs.” Shatov was all astir. “Logs ... that is ... but I’ll get tea directly,” he waved his hand as though with desperate determination and snatched up his cap.

“Where are you going? So you’ve no tea in the house?”

“There shall be, there shall be, there shall be, there shall be everything directly. ... I ...” he took his revolver from the shelf, “I’ll sell this revolver directly ... or pawn it... .”

‘ ‘What foolishness and what a time that will take! Take my money if you’ve nothing, there’s eighty kopecks here, I think; that’s all I have. This is like a madhouse.”

“I don’t want your money, I don’t want it I’ll be here directly, in one instant. I can manage without the revolver... .”

And he rushed straight to Kirillov’s. This was probably two hours before the visit of Pyotr Stepanovitch and Liputin to Kirillov. Though Shatov and Kirillov lived in the same yard they hardly ever saw each other, and when they met they did not nod or speak: they had been too long “lying side by side” in America....

“Kirillov, you always have tea; have you got tea and a samovar?”

Kirillov, who was walking up and down the room, as he was in the habit of doing all night, stopped and looked intently at his hurried visitor, though without much surprise.

“I’ve got tea and sugar and a samovar. But there’s no need of the samovar, the tea is hot. Sit down and simply drink it.”

“Kirillov, we lay side by side in America... . My wife has come to me ... I ... give me the tea. ... I shall want the samovar.”

“If your wife is here you want the samovar. But take it later. I’ve two. And now take the teapot from the table. It’s hot, boiling hot. Take everything, take the sugar, all of it. Bread ... there’s plenty of bread; all of it. There’s some veal. I’ve a rouble.”

“Give it me, friend, I’ll pay it back to-morrow! Ach, Kirillov!”

“Is it the same wife who was in Switzerland? That’s a good thing. And your running in like this, that’s a good thing too.”

“Kirillov!” cried Shatov, taking the teapot under his arm and carrying the bread and sugar in both hands. “Kirillov, if ... if you could get rid of your dreadful fancies and give up your atheistic ravings ... oh, what a man you’d be, Kirillov!”

“One can see you love your wife after Switzerland. It’s a good thing you do—after Switzerland. When you want tea, come again. You can come all night, I don’t sleep at all. There’ll be a samovar. Take the rouble, here it is. Go to your wife, I’ll stay here and think about you and your wife.”

Marya Shatov was unmistakably pleased at her husband’s haste and fell upon the tea almost greedily, but there was no need to run for the samovar; she drank only half a cup and swallowed a tiny piece of bread. The veal she refused with disgust and irritation.

"You are ill, Marie, all this is a sign of illness," Shatov remarked timidly as he waited upon her.

"Of course I'm ill, please sit down. Where did you get the tea if you haven't any?" Shatov told her about Kirillov briefly. She had heard something of him.

"I know he is mad; say no more, please; 'there are plenty of fools. So you've been in America? I heard, you wrote."

"Yes, I ... I wrote to you in Paris."

"Enough, please talk of something else. Are you a Slavophil in your convictions?"

"I ... I am not exactly... . Since I cannot be a Russian, I became a Slavophil." He smiled a wry smile with the effort of one who feels he has made a strained and inappropriate jest.

"Why, aren't you a Russian?"

"No, I'm not."

"Well, that's all foolishness. Do sit down, I entreat you. Why are you all over the place? Do you think I am lightheaded? Perhaps I shall be. You say there are only you two in the house."

"Yes... . Downstairs ..."

"And both such clever people. What is there downstairs? You said downstairs?"

"No, nothing."

"Why nothing? I want to know."

"I only meant to say that now we are only two in the yard, but that the Lebyadkins used to live downstairs. ..."

"That woman who was murdered last night?" she started suddenly. "I heard of it. I heard of it as soon as I arrived. There was a fire here, wasn't there?"

"Yes, Marie, yes, and perhaps I am doing a scoundrelly thing this moment in forgiving the scoundrels. ..."

He stood up suddenly and paced about the room, raising his arms as though in a frenzy.

But Marie had not quite understood him. She heard his answers inattentively; she asked questions but did not listen.

"Fine things are being done among you! Oh, how contemptible it all is! What scoundrels men all are! But do sit down, I beg you, oh, how you exasperate me!" and she let her head sink on the pillow, exhausted.

"Marie, I won't... . Perhaps you'll lie down, Marie?" She made no answer and closed her eyes helplessly. Her pale face looked death-like. She fell asleep almost instantly. Shatov looked round, snuffed the candle, looked uneasily at her face once, more, pressed his hands tight in front of him and walked on tiptoe out of the room into the passage. At the top of the stairs he stood in the corner with his face to the wall and remained so for ten minutes without sound or movement. He would have stood there longer, but he suddenly caught the sound of soft cautious steps below. Some one was coming up the stairs. Shatov remembered he had forgotten to fasten the gate.

"Who's there?" he asked in a whisper. The unknown visitor went on slowly mounting the stairs without answering. When he reached the top he stood still; it was impossible to see his face in the dark; suddenly Shatov heard the cautious question:

"Ivan Shatov?"

Shatov said who he was, but at once held out his hand to check his advance. The latter took his hand, and Shatov shuddered as though he had touched some terrible reptile.

"Stand here," he whispered quickly. "Don't go in, I can't receive you just now. My wife has come back. I'll fetch the candle."

When he returned with the candle he found a young officer standing there; he did not know his name but he had seen him before.

"Erkel," said the lad, introducing himself. "You've seen me at Virginsky's."

"I remember; you sat writing. Listen," said Shatov in sudden excitement, going up to him frantically, but still talking in a whisper. "You gave me a sign just now when you took my hand. But you know I can treat all these signals with contempt! I don't acknowledge them... . I don't want them... . I can throw you downstairs this minute, do you know that?"

"No, I know nothing about that and I don't know what you are in such a rage about," the visitor answered without malice and almost ingenuously. "I have only to give you a message, and that's what I've come for, being particularly anxious not to lose time. You have a printing press which does not belong to you, and of which you are bound to give an account, as you know yourself. I have received instructions to request you to give it up to-morrow at seven o'clock in the evening to Liputin. I have been instructed to tell you also that nothing more will be asked of you."

"Nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing. Your request is granted, and you are struck off our list. I was instructed to tell you that positively."

"Who instructed you to tell me?"

"Those who told me the sign."

"Have you come from abroad?"

"I ... I think that's no matter to you."

"Oh, hang it! Why didn't you come before if you were told to?"

"I followed certain instructions and was not alone."

"I understand, I understand that you were not alone. Eh ... hang it! But why didn't Liputin come himself?"

"So I shall come for you to-morrow at exactly six o'clock in the evening, and we'll go there on foot. There will be no one there but us three."

"Will Verhovensky be there?"

"No, he won't. Verhovensky is leaving the town at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Just what I thought!" Shatov whispered furiously, and he struck his fist on his hip. "He's run off, the sneak!"

He sank into agitated reflection. Erkel looked intently at him and waited in silence. "But how will you take it? You can't simply pick it up in your hands and carry it."

"There will be no need to. You'll simply point out the place and we'll just make sure that it really is buried there. We only know whereabouts the place is, we don't know the place itself. And have you pointed the place out to anyone else yet?" Shatov looked at him.

"You, you, a chit of a boy like you, a silly boy like you, you too have got caught in that net like a sheep? Yes, that's just the young blood they want! Well, go along. E-ech! that scoundrel's taken you all in and run away."

Erkel looked at him serenely and calmly but did not seem to understand.

"Verhovensky, Verhovensky has run away!" Shatov growled fiercely.

"But he is still here, he is not gone away. He is not going till to-morrow," Erkel observed softly and persuasively. "I particularly begged him to be present as a witness; my instructions all referred to him (he explained frankly like a young and inexperienced boy). But I regret to say he did not agree on the ground of his departure, and he really is in a hurry."

Shatov glanced compassionately at the simple youth again, but suddenly gave a gesture of despair as though he thought "they are not worth pitying."

"All right, I'll come," he cut him short. "And now get away, be off."

"So I'll come for you at six o'clock punctually." Erkel made a courteous bow and walked deliberately downstairs.

"Little fool!" Shatov could not help shouting after him from the top.

"What is it?" responded the lad from the bottom.

"Nothing, you can go."

"I thought you said something."

2

Erkel was a "little fool" who was only lacking in the higher form of reason, the ruling power of the intellect; but of the lesser, the subordinate reasoning faculties, he had plenty—even to the point of cunning. Fanatically, childishly devoted to "the cause" or rather in reality to Pyotr Verhovensky, he acted on the instructions given to him when at the meeting of the quintet they had agreed and had distributed the various duties for the next day. When Pyotr Stepanovitch gave him the job of messenger, he succeeded in talking to him aside for ten minutes.

A craving for active service was characteristic of this shallow, unreflecting nature, which was for ever yearning to follow the lead of another man's will, of course for the good of "the common" or "the great" cause. Not that that made any difference, for little fanatics like Erkel can never imagine serving a cause except by identifying it with the person who, to their minds, is the expression of it. The sensitive, affectionate and kind-hearted Erkel was perhaps the most callous of Shatov's would-be murderers, and, though he had no personal spite against him, he would have been present at his murder

without-the quiver of an eyelid. He had been instructed; for instance, to have a good look at Shatov's surroundings while carrying out his commission, and when Shatov, receiving him at the top of the stairs, blurted out to him, probably unaware in the heat of the moment, that his wife had come back to him—Erkel had the instinctive cunning to avoid displaying the slightest curiosity, though the idea flashed through his mind that the fact of his wife's return was of great importance for the success of their undertaking.

And so it was in reality; it was only that fact that saved the "scoundrels" from Shatov's carrying out his intention, and at the same time helped them "to get rid of him." To begin with, it agitated Shatov, threw him out of his regular routine, and deprived him of his usual clear-sightedness and caution. Any idea of his own danger would be the last thing to enter his head at this moment when he was absorbed with such different considerations. On the contrary, he eagerly believed that Pyotr Verhovensky was running away the next day: it fell in exactly with his suspicions! Returning to the room he sat down again in a corner, leaned his elbows on his knees and hid his face in his hands. Bitter thoughts tormented him... .

Then he would raise his head again and go on tiptoe to look at her. "Good God! she will be in a fever by to-morrow morning; perhaps it's begun already! She must have caught cold. She is not accustomed to this awful climate, and then a third-class carriage, the storm, the rain, and she has such a thin little pelisse, no wrap at all... . And to leave her like this, to abandon her in her helplessness! Her bag, too, her bag—what a tiny, light thing, all crumpled up, scarcely weighs ten pounds! Poor thing, how worn out she is, how much she's been through! She is proud, that's why she won't complain. But she is irritable, very irritable. It's illness; an angel will grow irritable in illness. What a dry forehead, it must be hot—how dark she is under the eyes, and ... and yet how beautiful the oval of her face is and her rich hair, how ..."

And he made haste to turn away his eyes, to walk away as though he were frightened at the very idea of seeing in her anything but an unhappy, exhausted fellow-creature who needed help—"how could he think of hopes, oh, how mean, how base is man!" And he would go back to his corner, sit down, hide his face in his hands and again sink into dreams and reminiscences ... and again he was haunted by hopes.

"Oh, I am tired, I am tired," he remembered her exclamations, her weak broken voice. "Good God! Abandon her now, and she has only eighty kopecks; she held out her purse, a tiny old thing! She's come to look for a job. What does she know about jobs? What do they know about Russia? Why, they are like naughty children, they've nothing but their own fancies made up by themselves, and she is angry, poor thing, that Russia is not like their foreign dreams! The luckless, innocent creatures! ... It's really cold here, though."

He remembered that she had complained, that he had promised to heat the stove. "There are logs here, I can fetch them if only I don't wake her. But I can do it without waking her. But what shall I do about the veal? When she gets up perhaps she will be hungry... . Well, that will do later: Kirillov doesn't go to bed all night. What could I

cover her with, she is sleeping so soundly, but she must be cold, ah, she must be cold!" And once more he went to look at her; her dress had worked up a little and her right leg was half uncovered to the knee. He suddenly turned away almost in dismay, took off his warm overcoat, and, remaining in his wretched old jacket, covered it up, trying not to look at it.

A great deal of time was spent in righting the fire, stepping about on tiptoe, looking at the sleeping woman, dreaming in the corner, then looking at her again. Two or three hours had passed. During that time Verhovensky and Liputin had been at Kirillov's. At last he, too, began to doze in the corner. He heard her groan; she waked up and called him; he jumped up like a criminal.

"Marie, I was dropping asleep.' ... Ah, what a wretch I am, Marie!"

She sat up, looking about her with wonder, seeming not to recognise where she was, and suddenly leapt up in indignation and anger.

"I've taken your bed, I fell asleep so tired I didn't know what I was doing; how dared you not wake me? How could you dare imagine I meant to be a burden to you?"

"How could I wake you, Marie?"

"You could, you ought to have! You've no other bed here, and I've taken yours. You had no business to put me into a false position. Or do you suppose that I've come to take advantage of your charity? Kindly get into your bed at once and I'll lie down in the corner on some chairs."

"Marie, there aren't chairs enough, and there's nothing to put on them."

"Then simply oil the floor. Or you'll have to lie on the floor yourself. I want to lie on the floor at once, at once!"

She stood up, tried to take a step, but suddenly a violent spasm of pain deprived her of all power and all determination, and with a loud groan she fell back on the bed. Shatov ran up, but Marie, hiding her face in the pillow, seized his hand and gripped and squeezed it with all her might. This lasted a minute.

"Marie darling, there's a doctor Frenzel living here, a friend of mine. ... I could run for him."

"Nonsense!"

"What do you mean by nonsense? Tell me, Marie, what is it hurting you? For we might try fomentations ... on the stomach for instance. ... I can do that without a doctor... . Or else mustard poultices."

"What's this," she asked strangely, raising her head and looking at him in dismay.

"What's what, Marie?" said Shatov, not understanding. "What are you asking about? Good heavens! I am quite bewildered, excuse my not understanding."

"Ach, let me alone; it's not your business to understand. And it would be too absurd ..." she said with a bitter smile. "Talk to me about something. Walk about the room and talk. Don't stand over me and don't look at me, I particularly ask you that for the five-hundredth time!"

Shatov began walking up and down the room, looking at the floor, and doing his utmost not to glance at her.

“There’s—don’t be angry, Marie, I entreat you—there’s some veal here, and there’s tea not far off... . You had so little before.”

She made an angry gesture of disgust. Shatov bit his tongue in despair.

“Listen, I intend to open a bookbinding business here, on rational co-operative principles. Since you live here what do you think of it, would it be successful?”

“Ech, Marie, people don’t read books here, and there are none here at all. And are they likely to begin binding them!”

“Who are they?”

“The local readers and inhabitants generally, Marie.”

“Well, then, speak more clearly. They indeed, and one doesn’t know who they are. You don’t know grammar!”

“It’s in the spirit of the language,” Shatov muttered.

“Oh, get along with your spirit, you bore me. Why shouldn’t the local inhabitant or reader have his books bound?”

“Because reading books and having them bound are two different stages of development, and there’s a vast gulf between them. To begin with, a man gradually gets used to reading, in the course of ages of course, but takes no care of his books and throws them about, not thinking them worth attention. But binding implies respect for books, and implies that not only he has grown fond of reading, but that he looks upon it as something of value. That period has not been reached anywhere in Russia yet. In Europe books have been bound for a long while.”

“Though that’s pedantic, anyway, it’s not stupid, and reminds me of the time three years ago; you used to be rather clever sometimes three years ago.”

She said this as disdainfully as her other capricious remarks.

“Marie, Marie,” said Shatov, turning to her, much moved, “oh, Marie! If you only knew how much has happened in those three years! I heard afterwards that you despised me for changing my convictions. But what are the men I’ve broken with? The enemies of all true life, out-of-date Liberals who are afraid of their own independence, the flunkeys of thought, the enemies of individuality and freedom, the decrepit advocates of deadness and rottenness! All they have to offer is senility, a glorious mediocrity of the most bourgeois kind, contemptible shallowness, a jealous equality, equality without individual dignity, equality as it’s understood by flunkeys or by the French in ‘93. And the worst of it is there are swarms of scoundrels among them, swarms of scoundrels!”

“Yes, there are a lot of scoundrels,” she brought out abruptly with painful effort. She lay stretched out, motionless, as though afraid to move, with her head thrown back on the pillow, rather on one side, staring at the ceiling with exhausted but glowing eyes. Her face was pale, her lips were dry and hot.

“You recognise it, Marie, you recognise it,” cried Shatov. She tried to shake her head, and suddenly the same spasm came over her again. Again she hid her face in the pillow, and again for a full minute she squeezed Shatov’s hand till it hurt. He had run up, beside himself with alarm.

“Marie, Marie! But it may be very serious, Marie!”

"Be quiet ... I won't have it, I won't have it," she screamed almost furiously, turning her face upwards again. "Don't dare to look at me with your sympathy! Walk about the room, say something, talk. ..."

Shatov began muttering something again, like one distraught.

"What do you do here?" she asked, interrupting him with contemptuous impatience.

"I work in a merchant's office. I could get a fair amount of money even here if I cared to, Marie."

"So much the better for you. ..."

"Oh, don't suppose I meant anything, Marie. I said it without thinking."

"And what do you do besides? What are you preaching? You can't exist without preaching, that's your character!"

"I am preaching God, Marie."

"In whom you don't believe yourself. I never could see the idea of that."

"Let's leave that, Marie; we'll talk of that later."

"What sort of person was this Mary a Timofyevna here?"

"We'll talk of that later too, Marie."

"Don't dare to say such things to me! Is it true that her death may have been caused by ... the wickedness ... of these people?"

"Not a doubt of it," growled Shatov.

Marie suddenly raised her head and cried out painfully:

"Don't dare speak of that to me again, don't dare to, never, never!"

And she fell back in bed again, overcome by the same convulsive agony; it was the third time, but this time her groans were louder, in fact she screamed.

"Oh, you insufferable man! Oh, you unbearable man," she cried, tossing about recklessly, and pushing away Shatov as he bent over her.

"Marie, I'll do anything you like I'll walk about and talk... ."

"Surely you must see that it has begun!"

"What's begun, Marie?"

"How can I tell! Do I know anything about it? ... I curse myself! Oh, curse it all from the beginning!"

"Marie, if you'd tell me what's beginning ... or else I ... if you don't, what am I to make of it?"

"You are a useless, theoretical babbler. Oh, curse everything on earth!"

"Marie, Marie!" He seriously thought that she was beginning to go mad.

"Surely you must see that I am in the agonies of childbirth," she said, sitting up and gazing at him with a terrible, hysterical vindictiveness that distorted her whole face. "I curse him before he is born, this child!"

"Marie," cried Shatov, realising at last what it meant. "Marie ... but why didn't you tell me before." He pulled himself together at once and seized his cap with an air of vigorous determination.

“How could I tell when I came in here? Should I have come to you if I’d known? I was told it would be another ten days! Where are you going? ... Where are you going? You mustn’t dare!”

“To fetch a midwife! I’ll sell the revolver. We must get money before anything else now.”

“Don’t dare to do anything, don’t dare to fetch a midwife! Bring a peasant woman, any old woman, I’ve eighty kopecks in my purse... . Peasant women have babies without midwives... . And if I die, so much the better. ...”

“You shall have a midwife and an old woman too. But how am I to leave you alone, Marie!”

But reflecting that it was better to leave her alone now in spite of her desperate state than to leave her without help later, he paid no attention to her groans, nor her angry exclamations, but rushed downstairs, hurrying all he could.

3

First of all he went to Kirillov. It was by now about one o’clock in the night. Kirillov was standing in the middle of the room.

“Kirillov, my wife is in childbirth.”

“How do you mean?”

“Childbirth, bearing a child!”

“You ... are not mistaken?”

“Oh, no, no, she is in agonies! I want a woman, any old woman, I must have one at once... . Can you get one now? You used to have a lot of old women... .”

“Very sorry that I am no good at childbearing,” Kirillov answered thoughtfully; “that is, not at childbearing, but at doing anything for childbearing ... or ... no, I don’t know how to say it.”

“You mean you can’t assist at a confinement yourself? But that’s not what I’ve come for. An old woman, I want a woman, a nurse, a servant!”

“You shall have an old woman, but not directly, perhaps ... If you like I’ll come instead. ...”

“Oh, impossible; I am running to Madame Virginsky, the midwife, now.”

“A horrid woman!”

“Oh, yes, Kirillov, yes, but she is the best of them all. Yes, it’ll all be without reverence, without gladness, with contempt, with abuse, with blasphemy in the presence of so great a mystery, the coming of a new creature! Oh, she is cursing it already!”

“If you like I’ll ...”

“No, no, but while I’m running (oh, I’ll make Madame Virginsky come), will you go to the foot of my staircase and quietly listen? But don’t venture to go in, you’ll frighten her; don’t go in on any account, you must only listen ... in case anything dreadful happens. If anything very bad happens, then run in.”

“I understand. I’ve another rouble. Here it is. I meant to have a fowl to-morrow, but now I don’t want to, make haste, run with all your might. There’s a samovar all the night.”

Kirillov knew nothing of ‘the present design against Shatov, nor had he had any idea in the past of the degree of danger that threatened him. He only knew that Shatov had some old sores with “those people,” and although he was to some extent involved with them himself through instructions he had received from abroad (not that these were of much consequence, however, for he had never taken any direct share in anything), yet of late he had given it all up, having left off doing anything especially for the “cause,” and devoted himself entirely to a life of contemplation. Although Pyotr Stepanovitch had at the meeting invited Liputin to go with him to Kirillov’s to make sure that the latter would take upon himself, at a given moment, the responsibility for the “Shatov business,” yet in his interview with Kirillov he had said no word about Shatov nor alluded to him in any way—probably considering it impolitic to do so, and thinking that Kirillov could not be relied upon. He put off speaking about it till next day, when it would be all over and would therefore not matter to Kirillov; such at least was Pyotr Stepanovitch’s judgment of him. Liputin, too, was struck by the fact that Shatov was not mentioned in spite of what Pyotr Stepanovitch had promised, but he was too much agitated to protest.

Shatov ran like a hurricane to Virginsky’s house, cursing the distance and feeling it endless.

He had to knock a long time at Virginsky’s; every one had been asleep a long while. But Shatov did not scruple to bang at the shutters with all his might. The dog chained up in the yard dashed about barking furiously. The dogs caught it up all along the street, and there was a regular babel of barking.

“Why are you knocking and what do you want?” Shatov heard at the window at last Virginsky’s gentle voice, betraying none of the resentment appropriate to the “outrage.” The shutter was pushed back a little and the casement was opened.

“Who’s there, what scoundrel is it?” shrilled a female voice which betrayed all the resentment appropriate to the “outrage.” It was the old maid, Virginsky’s relation.

“I am Shatov, my wife has come back to me and she is just confined. ...”

“Well, let her be, get along.”

“I’ve come for Arina Prohorovna; I won’t go without Arina Prohorovna!”

“She can’t attend to every one. Practice at night is a special line. Take yourself off to Maksheyev’s and don’t dare to make that din,” rattled the exasperated female voice. He could hear Virginsky checking her; but the old maid pushed him away and would not desist.

“I am not going away!” Shatov cried again.

“Wait a little, wait a little,” Virginsky cried at last, overpowering the lady. “I beg you to wait five minutes, Shatov. I’ll wake Arina Prohorovna. Please don’t knock and don’t shout... . Oh, how awful it all is!”

After five endless minutes, Arina Prohorovna made her appearance.

"Has your wife come?" Shatov heard her voice at the window, . and to his surprise it was not at all ill-tempered, only as usual peremptory, but Arina Prohorovna could not speak except in a peremptory tone.

"Yes, my wife, and she is in labour."

"Marya Ignatyevna?"

"Yes, Marya Ignatyevna. Of course it's Marya Ignatyevna."

A silence followed. Shatov waited. He heard a whispering in the house.

"Has she been here long?" Madame Virginsky asked again.

"She came this evening at eight o'clock. Please make haste."

Again he heard whispering, as though they were consulting. "Listen, you are not making a mistake? Did she send you for me herself?"

"No, she didn't send for you, she wants a peasant woman, so as not to burden me with expense, but don't be afraid, I'll pay you."

"Very good, I'll come, whether you pay or not. I always thought highly of Marya Ignatyevna for the independence of her sentiments, though perhaps she won't remember me. Have you got the most necessary things?"

"I've nothing, but I'll get everything, everything."

"There is something generous even in these people," Shatov reflected, as he set off to Lyamshin's. "The convictions and the man are two very different things, very likely I've been very unfair to them! ... We are all to blame, we are all to blame ... and if only all were convinced of it!"

He had not to knock long at Lyamshin's; the latter, to Shatov's surprise, opened his casement at once, jumping out of bed, barefoot and in his night-clothes at the risk of catching cold; and he was hypochondriacal and always anxious about his health. But there was a special cause for such alertness and haste: Lyamshin had been in a tremor all the evening, and had not been able to sleep for excitement after the meeting of the quintet; he was haunted by the dread of uninvited and undesired visitors. The news of Shatov's giving information tormented him more than anything... . And suddenly there was this terrible loud knocking at the window as though to justify his fears.

He was so frightened at seeing Shatov that he at once slammed the casement and jumped back into bed. Shatov began furiously knocking and shouting.

"How dare you knock like that in the middle of the night?" shouted Lyamshin, in a threatening voice, though he was numb with fear, when at least two minutes later he ventured to open the casement again, and was at last convinced that Shatov had come alone.

"Here's your revolver for you; take it back, give me fifteen roubles."

"What's the matter, are you drunk? This is outrageous, I shall simply catch cold. Wait a minute, I'll just throw my rug over me."

"Give me fifteen roubles at once. If you don't give it me, I'll knock and shout till daybreak; I'll break your window-frame."

"And I'll shout police and you'll be taken to the lock-up."

“And am I dumb? Can’t I shout ‘police’ too? Which of us has most reason to be afraid of the police, you or I?”

“And you can hold such contemptible opinions! I know what you are hinting at. ... Stop, stop, for God’s sake don’t go on knocking! Upon my word, who has money at night? What do you want money for, unless you are drunk?”

“My wife has come back. I’ve taken ten roubles off the price, I haven’t fired it once; take the revolver, take it this minute!”

Lyamshin mechanically put his hand out of the casement and took the revolver; he waited a little, and suddenly thrusting his head out of the casement, and with a shiver running down his spine, faltered as though he were beside himself.

“You are lying, your wife hasn’t come back to you... . It’s ... it’s simply that you want to run away.”

“You are a fool. Where should I run to? It’s for your Pyotr Verhovensky to run away, not for me. I’ve just been to the midwife, Madame Virginsky, and she consented at once to come to me. You can ask them. My wife is in agony; I need the money; give it me!”

A swarm of ideas flared up in Lyamshin’s crafty mind like a shower of fireworks. It all suddenly took a different colour, though still panic prevented him from reflecting.

“But how ... you are not living with your wife?”

“I’ll break your skull for questions like that.”

“Oh dear, I understand, forgive me, I was struck all of a heap... . But I understand, I understand ... is Arina Prohorovna really coming? You said just now that she had gone? You know, that’s not true. You see, you see, you see what lies you tell at every step.”

“By now, she must be with my wife ... don’t keep me ... it’s not my fault you are a fool.”

“That’s a lie, I am not a fool. Excuse me, I really can’t ...”

And utterly distraught he began shutting the casement again for the third time, but Shatov gave such a yell that he put his head out again.

“But this is simply an unprovoked assault! What do you want of me, what is it, what is it, formulate it? And think, only think, it’s the middle of the night!”

“I want fifteen roubles, you sheep’s-head!”

“But perhaps I don’t care to take back the revolver. You have no right to force me. You bought the thing and the matter is settled, and you’ve no right. ... I can’t give you a sum like that in the night, anyhow. Where am I to get a sum like that?”

“You always have money. I’ve taken ten roubles off the price, but every one knows you are a skinflint.”

“Come the day after to-morrow, do you hear, the day after to-morrow at twelve o’clock, and I’ll give you the whole of it, that will do, won’t it?”

Shatov knocked furiously at the window-frame for the third time.

“Give me ten roubles, and to-morrow early the other five.”

“No, the day after to-morrow the other five, to-morrow I swear I shan’t have it. You’d better not come, you’d better not come.”

“Give me ten, you scoundrel!”

“Why are you so abusive. Wait a minute, I must light a candle; you’ve broken the window... . Nobody swears like that at night. Here you are!” He held a note to him out of the window.

Shatov seized it—it was a note for five roubles.

“On my honour I can’t do more, if you were to murder me, I couldn’t; the day after to-morrow I can give you it all, but now I can do nothing.”

“I am not going away!” roared Shatov.

“Very well, take it, here’s some more, see, here’s some more, and I won’t give more. You can shout at the top of your voice, but I won’t give more, I won’t, whatever happens, I won’t, I won’t.”

He was in a perfect frenzy, desperate and perspiring. The two notes he had just given him were each for a rouble. Shatov had seven roubles altogether now.

“Well, damn you, then, I’ll come to-morrow. I’ll thrash you, Lyamshin, if you don’t give me the other eight.”

“You won’t find me at home, you fool!” Lyamshin reflected quickly.

“Stay, stay!” he shouted frantically after Shatov, who was already running off. “Stay, come back. Tell me please, is it true what you said that your wife has come back?”

“Fool!” cried Shatov, with a gesture of disgust, and ran home as hard as he could.

4

I may mention that Anna Prohorovna knew nothing of the resolutions that had been taken at the meeting the day before. On returning home overwhelmed and exhausted, Virginsky had not ventured to tell her of the decision that had been taken, yet he could not refrain from telling her half—that is, all that Verhovensky had told them of the certainty of Shatov’s intention to betray them; but he added at the same time that he did not quite believe it. Arina Prohorovna was terribly alarmed. This was why she decided at once to go when Shatov came to fetch her, though she was tired out, as she had been hard at work at a confinement ah! the night before. She had always been convinced that “a wretched creature like Shatov was capable of any political baseness,” but the arrival of Marya Ignatyevna put things in a different light. Shatov’s alarm, the despairing tone of his entreaties, the way he begged for help, clearly showed a complete change of feeling in the traitor: a man who was ready to betray himself merely for the sake of ruining others would, she thought, have had a different air and tone. In short, Arina Prohorovna resolved to look into the matter for herself, with her own eyes.* Virginsky was very glad of her decision, he felt as though a hundredweight had been lifted off him! He even began to feel hopeful: Shatov’s appearance seemed to him utterly incompatible with Verhovensky’s supposition.

Shatov was not mistaken: on getting home he found Arina Prohorovna already with Marie. She had just arrived, had contemptuously dismissed Kirillov, whom she found hanging about the foot of the stairs, had hastily introduced herself to Marie, who had not recognised her as her former acquaintance, found her in “a very bad way,” that is ill-tempered, irritable and in “a state of cowardly despair,” and within five minutes had completely silenced all her protests.

“Why do you keep on that you don’t want an expensive midwife?” she was saying at the moment when Shatov came in. “That’s perfect nonsense, it’s a false idea arising from the abnormality of your condition. In the hands of some ordinary old woman, some peasant midwife, you’d have fifty chances of going wrong and then you’d have more bother and expense than with a regular midwife. How do you know I am an expensive midwife? You can pay afterwards; I won’t charge you much and I answer for my success; you won’t die in my hands, I’ve seen worse cases than yours. And I can send the baby to a foundling asylum to-morrow, if you like, and then to be brought up in the country, and that’s all it will mean. And meantime you’ll grow strong again, take up some rational work, and in a very short time you’ll repay Shatov for sheltering you and for the expense, which will not be so great.”

“It’s not that ... I’ve no right to be a burden... .”

“Rational feelings and worthy of a citizen, but you can take my word for it, Shatov will spend scarcely anything, if he is willing to become ever so little a man of sound ideas instead of the fantastic person he is. He has only not to do anything stupid, not to raise an alarm, not to run about the town with his tongue out. If we don’t restrain him he will be knocking up all the doctors of the town before the morning; he waked all the dogs in my street. There’s no need of doctors I’ve said already. I’ll answer for everything. You can hire an old woman if you like to wait on you, that won’t cost much. Though he too can do something besides the silly things he’s been doing. He’s got hands and feet, he can run to the chemist’s without offending your feelings by being too benevolent. As though it were a case of benevolence! Hasn’t he brought you into this position? Didn’t he make you break with the family in which you were a governess, with the egoistic object of marrying you? We heard of it, you know ... though he did run for me like one possessed and yell so all the street could hear. I won’t force myself upon anyone and have come only for your sake, on the principle that all of us are bound to hold together! And I told him so before I left the house. If you think I am in the way, good-bye, I only hope you won’t have trouble which might so easily be averted.”

And she positively got up from the chair. Marie was so helpless, in such pain, and—the truth must be confessed—so frightened of what was before her that she dared not let her go. But this woman was suddenly hateful to her, what she said was not what she wanted, there was something quite different in Marie’s soul. Yet the prediction that she might possibly die in the hands of an inexperienced peasant woman overcame her aversion. But she made up for it by being more exacting and more ruthless than ever with Shatov. She ended by forbidding him not only to look at her but even to

stand facing her. Her pains became more violent. Her curses, her abuse became more and more frantic.

“Ech, we’ll send him away,” Arina Prohorovna rapped out. “I don’t know what he looks like, he is simply frightening you; he is as white as a corpse! What is it to you, tell me please, you absurd fellow? What a farce!”

Shatov made no reply, he made up his mind to say nothing. “I’ve seen many a foolish father, half crazy in such cases. But they, at any rate ...”

“Be quiet or leave me to die! Don’t say another word! I won’t have it, I won’t have it!” screamed Marie.

“It’s impossible not to say another word, if you are not out of your mind, as I think you are in your condition. We must talk of what we want, anyway: tell me, have you anything ready? You answer, Shatov, she is incapable.”

“Tell me what’s needed?”

“That means you’ve nothing ready.” She reckoned up all that was quite necessary, and one must do her the justice to say she only asked for what was absolutely indispensable, the barest necessities. Some things Shatov had. Marie took out her key and held it out to him, for him to look in her bag. As his hands shook he was longer than he should have been opening the unfamiliar lock. Marie flew into a rage, but when Arina Prohorovna rushed up to take the key from him, she would not allow her on any account to look into her bag and with peevish cries and tears insisted that no one should open the bag but Shatov.

Some things he had to fetch from Kirillov’s. No sooner had Shatov turned to go for them than she began frantically calling him back and was only quieted when Shatov had rushed impetuously back from the stairs, and explained that he should only be gone a minute to fetch something indispensable and would be back at once.

“Well, my lady, it’s hard to please you,” laughed Arina Prohorovna, “one minute he must stand with his face to the wall and not dare to look at you, and the next he mustn’t be gone for a minute, or you begin crying. He may begin to imagine something. Come, come, don’t be silly, don’t blubber, I was laughing, you know.”

“He won’t dare to imagine anything.”

“Tut, tut, tut, if he didn’t love you like a sheep he wouldn’t run about the streets with his tongue out and wouldn’t have roused all the dogs in the town. He broke my window-frame.”

He found Kirillov still pacing up and down his room so preoccupied that he had forgotten the arrival of Shatov’s wife, and heard what he said without understanding him.

“Oh, yes!” he recollected suddenly, as though tearing himself with an effort and only for an instant from some absorbing idea, “yes ... an old woman. ... A wife or an old woman? Stay a minute: a wife and an old woman, is that it? I remember. I’ve been, the old woman will come, only not just now. Take the pillow. Is there anything else? Yes... . Stay, do you have moments of the eternal harmony, Shatov?”

“You know, Kirillov, you mustn’t go on staying up every night.”

Kirillov came out of his reverie and, strange to say, spoke far more coherently than he usually did; it was clear that he had formulated it long ago and perhaps written it down.

“There are seconds—they come five or six at a time—when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony perfectly attained. It’s something not earthly—I don’t mean in the sense that it’s heavenly—but in that sense that man cannot endure it in his earthly aspect. He must be physically changed or die. This feeling is clear and unmistakable; it’s as though you apprehend all nature and suddenly say, ‘Yes, that’s right.’ God, when He created the world, said at the end of each day of creation, ‘Yes, it’s right, it’s good.’ It ... it’s not being deeply moved, but simply joy. You don’t forgive anything because there is no more need of forgiveness. It’s not that you love—oh, there’s something in it higher than love—what’s most awful is that it’s terribly clear and such joy. If it lasted more than five seconds, the soul could not endure it and must perish. In those five seconds I live through a lifetime, and I’d give my whole life for them, because they are worth it. To endure ten seconds one must be physically changed. I think man ought to give up having children—what’s the use of children, what’s the use of evolution when the goal has been attained? In the gospel it is written that there will be no child-bearing in the resurrection, but that men will be like the angels of the Lord. That’s a hint. Is your wife bearing a child?”

“Kirillov, does this often happen?”

“Once in three days, or once a week.”

“Don’t you have fits, perhaps?”

“No.”

“Well, you will. Be careful, Kirillov. I’ve heard that’s just how fits begin. An epileptic described exactly that sensation before a fit, word for word as you’ve done. He mentioned five seconds, too, and said that more could not be endured. Remember Mahomet’s pitcher from which no drop of water was spilt while he circled Paradise on his horse. That was a case of five seconds too; that’s too much like your eternal harmony, and Mahomet was an epileptic. Be careful, Kirillov, it’s epilepsy!”

“It won’t have time,” Kirillov smiled gently.

#

The night was passing. Shatov was sent hither and thither, abused, called back. Marie was reduced to the most abject terror for life. She screamed that she wanted to live, that “she must, she must,” and was afraid to die. “I don’t want to, I don’t want to!” she repeated. If Arina Prohorovna had not been there, things would have gone very badly. By degrees she gained complete control of the patient—who began to obey every word, every order from her like a child. Arina Prohorovna ruled by sternness not by kindness, but she was first-rate at her work. It began to get light ... Arina Prohorovna suddenly imagined that Shatov had just run out on to the stairs to say his prayers and began laughing. Marie laughed too, spitefully, malignantly, as though

such laughter relieved her. At last they drove Shatov away altogether. A damp, cold morning dawned. He pressed his face to the wall in the corner just as he had done the evening before when Erkel came. He was trembling like a leaf, afraid to think, but his mind caught at every thought as it does in dreams.

He was continually being carried away by day-dreams, which snapped off short like a rotten thread. From the room came no longer groans but awful animal cries, unendurable, incredible. He tried to stop up his ears, but could not, and he fell on his knees, repeating unconsciously, "Marie, Marie!" Then suddenly he heard a cry, a new cry, which made Shatov start and jump up from his knees, the cry of a baby, a weak discordant cry. He crossed himself and rushed into the room. Arina Prohorovna held in her hands a little red wrinkled creature, screaming, and moving its little arms and legs, fearfully helpless, and looking as though it could be blown away by a puff of wind, but screaming and seeming to assert its full right to live. Marie was lying as though insensible, but a minute later she opened her eyes, and bent a strange, strange look on Shatov: it was something quite new, that look. What it meant exactly he was not able to understand yet, but he had never known such a look on her face before.

"Is it a boy? Is it a boy?" she asked Arina Prohorovna in an exhausted voice.

"It is a boy," the latter shouted in reply, as she bound up the child.

When she had bound him up and was about to lay him across the bed between the two pillows, she gave him to Shatov for a minute to hold. Marie signed to him on the sly as though afraid of Arina Prohorovna. He understood at once and brought the baby to show her.

"How ... pretty he is," she whispered weakly with a smile.

"Poo, what does he look like," Arina Prohorovna laughed gaily in triumph, glancing at Shatov's face. "What a funny face!"

"You may be merry, Arina Prohorovna... . It's a great joy," Shatov faltered with an expression of idiotic bliss, radiant at the phrase Marie had uttered about the child.

"Where does the great joy come in?" said Arina Prohorovna good-humouredly, bustling about, clearing up, and working like a convict.

"The mysterious coming of a new creature, a great and inexplicable mystery; and what a pity it is, Arina Prohorovna, that you don't understand it."

Shatov spoke in an incoherent, stupefied and ecstatic way. Something seemed to be tottering in his head and welling up from his soul apart from his own will.

"There were two and now there's a third human being, a new spirit, finished and complete, unlike the handiwork of man; a new thought and a new love ... it's positively frightening... . And there's nothing grander in the world."

"Ech, what nonsense he talks! It's simply a further development of the organism, and there's nothing else in it, no mystery," said Arina Prohorovna with genuine and good-humoured laughter. "If you talk like that, every fly is a mystery. But I tell you what: superfluous people ought not to be born. We must first remould everything so that they won't be superfluous and then bring them into the world. As it is, we shall

have to take him to the Foundling, the day after to-morrow... . Though that's as it should be."

"I will never let him go to the Foundling," Shatov pronounced resolutely, staring at the floor.

"You adopt him as your son?"

"He is my son."

"Of course he is a Shatov, legally he is a Shatov, and there's no need for you to pose as a humanitarian. Men can't get on without fine words. There, there, it's all right, but look here, my friends," she added, having finished clearing up at last, "it's time for me to go. I'll come again this morning, and again in the evening if necessary, but now, since everything has gone off so well, I must run off to my other patients, they've been expecting me long ago. I believe you got an old woman somewhere, Shatov; an old woman is all very well, but don't you, her tender husband, desert her; sit beside her, you may be of use; Marya Ignatyevna won't drive you away, I fancy... . There, there, I was only laughing."

At the gate, to which Shatov accompanied her, she added to him alone.

"You've given me something to laugh at for the rest of my life; I shan't charge you anything; I shall laugh at you in my sleep! I have never seen anything funnier than you last night."

She went off very well satisfied. Shatov's appearance and conversation made it as clear as daylight that this man "was going in for being a father and was a ninny." She ran home on purpose to tell Virginsky about it, though it was shorter and more direct to go to another patient.

"Marie, she told you not to go to sleep for a little time, though, I see, it's very hard for you," Shatov began timidly. "I'll sit here by the window and take care of you, shall I?"

And he sat down, by the window behind the sofa so that she could not see him. But before a minute had passed she called him and fretfully asked him to arrange the pillow. He began arranging it. She looked angrily at the wall.

"That's not right, that's not right... . What hands!"

Shatov did it again.

"Stoop down to me," she said wildly, trying hard not to look at him.

He started but stooped down.

"More ... not so ... nearer," and suddenly her left arm was impulsively thrown round his neck and he felt her warm moist kiss on his forehead.

"Marie!"

Her lips were quivering, she was struggling with herself, but suddenly she raised herself and said with flashing eyes:

"Nikolay Stavrogin is a scoundrel!" And she fell back helplessly with her face in the pillow, sobbing hysterically, and tightly squeezing Shatov's hand in hers.

From that moment she would not let him leave her; she insisted on his sitting by her pillow. She could not talk much but she kept gazing at him and smiling blissfully. She

seemed suddenly to have become a silly girl. Everything seemed transformed. Shatov cried like a boy, then talked of God knows what, wildly, crazily, with inspiration, kissed her hands; she listened entranced, perhaps not understanding him, but caressingly ruffling his hair with her weak hand, smoothing it and admiring it. He talked about Kirillov, of how they would now begin “a new life” for good, of the existence of God, of the goodness of all men... . She took out the child again to gaze at it rapturously.

“Marie,” he cried, as he held the child in his arms, “all the old madness, shame, and deadness is over, isn’t it? Let us work hard and begin a new life, the three of us, yes, yes! ... Oh, by the way, what shall we call him, Marie?”

“What shall we call him?” she repeated with surprise, and there was a sudden look of terrible grief in her face.

She clasped her hands, looked reproachfully at Shatov and hid her face in the pillow.

“Marie, what is it?” he cried with painful alarm.

“How could you, how could you ... Oh, you ungrateful man!”

“Marie, forgive me, Marie ... I only asked you what his name should be. I don’t know... .”

“Ivan, Ivan.” She raised her flushed and tear-stained face. How could you suppose we should call him by another horrible name?”

“Marie, calm yourself; oh, what a nervous state you are in!”

“That’s rude again, putting it down to my nerves. I bet that if I’d said his name was to be that other ... horrible name, you’d have agreed at once and not have noticed it even! Oh, men, the mean ungrateful creatures, they are all alike!”

A minute later, of course, they were reconciled. Shatov persuaded her to have a nap. She fell asleep but still kept his hand in hers; she waked up frequently, looked at him, as though afraid he would go away, and dropped asleep again.

Kirillov sent an old woman “to congratulate them,” as well as some hot tea, some freshly cooked cutlets, and some broth and white bread for Marya Ignatyevna. The patient sipped the broth greedily, the old woman undid the baby’s wrappings and swaddled it afresh, Marie made Shatov have a cutlet too.

Time was passing. Shatov, exhausted, fell asleep himself in his chair, with his head on Marie’s pillow. So they were found by Arina Prohorovna, who kept her word. She waked them up gaily, asked Marie some necessary questions, examined the baby, and again forbade Shatov to leave her. Then, jesting at the “happy couple,” with a shade of contempt and superciliousness she went away as well satisfied as before.

It was quite dark when Shatov waked up. He made haste to light the candle and ran for the old woman; but he had hardly begun to go down the stairs when he was struck by the sound of the soft, deliberate steps of some one coming up towards him. Erkel came in.

“Don’t come in,” whispered Shatov, and impulsively seizing him by the hand he drew him back towards the gate. “Wait here, I’ll come directly, I’d completely forgotten you, completely! Oh, how you brought it back!”

He was in such haste that he did not even run in to Kirillov's, but only called the old woman. Marie was in despair and indignation that "he could dream of leaving her alone."

"But," he cried ecstatically, "this is the very last step! And then for a new life and we'll never, never think of the old horrors again!"

He somehow appeased her and promised to be back at nine o'clock; he kissed her warmly, kissed the baby and ran down quickly to Erkel.

They set off together to Stavrogin's park at Skvoreshniki, where, in a secluded place at the very edge of the park where it adjoined the pine wood, he had, eighteen months before, buried the printing press which had been entrusted to him. It was a wild and deserted place, quite hidden and at some distance from the Stavrogins' house. It was two or perhaps three miles from Filipov's house.

"Are we going to walk all the way? I'll take a cab."

"I particularly beg you not to," replied Erkel. "They insisted on that. A cabman would be a witness."

"Well ... bother! I don't care, only to make an end of it."

They walked very fast.

"Erkel, you little boy," cried Shatov, "have you ever been happy?"

"You seem to be very happy just now," observed Erkel with curiosity.

Chapter 6: A Busy Night

1

During that day Virginsky had spent two hours in running round to see the members of the quintet and to inform them that Shatov would certainly not give information, because his wife had come back and given birth to a child, and no one "who knew anything of human nature "could suppose that Shatov could be a danger at this moment. But to his discomfiture he found none of them at home except Erkel and Lyamshin. Erkel listened in silence, looking candidly into his eyes, and in answer to the direct question "Would he go at six o'clock or not?" he replied with the brightest of smiles that "of course he would go."

Lyamshin was in bed, seriously ill, as it seemed, with his head covered with a quilt. He was alarmed at Virginsky's coming in, and as soon as the latter began speaking he waved him off from under the bedclothes, entreating him to let him alone. He listened to all he said about Shatov, however, and seemed for some reason extremely struck by the news that Virginsky had found no one at home. It seemed that Lyamshin knew already (through Liputin) of Fedka's death, and hurriedly and incoherently told Virginsky about it, at which the latter seemed struck in his turn. To Virginsky's direct question, "Should they go or not?" he began suddenly waving his hands again, entreating him

to let him alone, and saying that it was not his business, and that he knew nothing about it.

Virginsky returned home dejected and greatly alarmed. It weighed upon him that he had to hide it from his family; he was accustomed to tell his wife everything; and if his feverish brain had not hatched a new idea at that moment, a new plan of conciliation for further action, he might have taken to his bed like Lyamshin. But this new idea sustained him; what's more, he began impatiently awaiting the hour fixed, and set off for the appointed spot earlier than was necessary. It was a very gloomy place at the end of the huge park. I went there afterwards on purpose to look at it. How sinister it must have looked on that chill autumn evening! It was at the edge of an old wood belonging to the Crown. Huge ancient pines stood out as vague sombre blurs in the darkness. It was so dark that they could hardly see each other two paces off, but Pyotr Stepanovitch, Liputin, and afterwards Erkel, brought lanterns with them. At some unrecorded date in the past a rather absurd-looking grotto had for some reason been built here of rough unhewn stones. The table and benches in the grotto had long ago decayed and fallen. Two hundred paces to the right was the bank of the third pond of the park. These three ponds stretched one after another for a mile from the house to the very end of the park. One could scarcely imagine that any noise, a scream, or even a shot, could reach the inhabitants of the Stavrogins' deserted house. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's departure the previous day and Alexey Yegorytch's absence left only five or six people in the house, all more or less invalided, so to speak. In any case it might be assumed with perfect confidence that if cries or shouts for help were heard by any of the inhabitants of the isolated house they would only have excited terror; no one would have moved from his warm stove or snug shelf to give assistance.

By twenty past six almost all of them except Erkel, who had been told off to fetch Shatov, had turned up at the trysting-place. This time Pyotr Stepanovitch was not late; he came with Tolkatchenko. Tolkatchenko looked frowning and anxious; all his assumed determination and insolent bravado had vanished. He scarcely left Pyotr Stepanovitch's side, and seemed to have become all at once immensely devoted to him. He was continually thrusting himself forward to whisper fussily to him, but the latter scarcely answered him, or muttered something irritably to get rid of him.

Shigalov and Virginsky had arrived rather before Pyotr Stepanovitch, and as soon as he came they drew a little apart in profound and obviously intentional silence. Pyotr Stepanovitch raised his lantern and examined them with unceremonious and insulting minuteness. "They mean to speak," flashed through his mind.

"Isn't Lyamshin here?" he asked Virginsky. "Who said he was ill?"

"I am here," responded Lyamshin, suddenly coming from behind a tree. He was in a warm greatcoat and thickly muffled in a rug, so that it was difficult to make out his face even with a lantern.

"So Liputin is the only one not here?"

Liputin too came out of the grotto without speaking. Pyotr Stepanovitch raised the lantern again.

“Why were you hiding in there? Why didn’t you come out?”

“I imagine we still keep the right of freedom ... of our actions,” Liputin muttered, though probably he hardly knew what he wanted to express.

“Gentlemen,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, raising his voice for the first time above a whisper, which produced an effect, “I think you fully understand that it’s useless to go over things again. Everything was said and fully thrashed out yesterday, openly and directly. But perhaps—as I see from your faces—some one wants to make some statement; in that case I beg you to make haste. Damn it all! there’s not much time, and Erkel may bring him in a minute. ...”

“He is sure to bring him,” Tolkatchenko put in for some reason.

“If I am not mistaken, the printing press will be handed over, to begin with?” inquired Liputin, though again he seemed hardly to understand why he asked the question.

“Of course. Why should we lose it?” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, lifting the lantern to his face. “But, you see, we all agreed yesterday that it was not really necessary to take it. He need only show you the exact spot where it’s buried; we can dig it up afterwards for ourselves. I know that it’s somewhere ten paces from a corner of this grotto. But, damn it all! how could you have forgotten, Liputin? It was agreed that you should meet him alone and that we should come out afterwards... . It’s strange that you should ask—or didn’t you mean what you said?”

Liputin kept gloomily silent. All were silent. The wind shook the tops of the pine-trees.

“I trust, however, gentlemen, that every one will do his duty,” Pyotr Stepanovitch rapped out impatiently.

“I know that Shatov’s wife has come back and has given birth to a child,” Virginsky said suddenly, excited and gesticulating and scarcely able to speak distinctly. “Knowing what human nature is, we can be sure that now he won’t give information ... because he is happy. ... So I went to every one this morning and found no one at home, so perhaps now nothing need be done... .”

He stopped short with a catch in his breath.

“If you suddenly became happy, Mr. Virginsky,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, stepping up to him, “would you abandon—not giving information; there’s no question of that—but any perilous public action which you had planned before you were happy and which you regarded as a duty and obligation in spite of the risk and loss of happiness?”

“No, I wouldn’t abandon it! I wouldn’t on any account!” said Virginsky with absurd warmth, twitching all over.

“You would rather be unhappy again than be a scoundrel?”

“Yes, yes... . Quite the contrary... . I’d rather be a complete scoundrel ... that is no ... not a scoundrel at all, but on the contrary completely unhappy rather than a scoundrel.”

“Well then, let me tell you that Shatov looks on this betrayal as a public duty. It’s his most cherished conviction, and the proof of it is that he runs some risk himself; though, of course, they will pardon him a great deal for giving information. A man like

that will never give up the idea. No sort of happiness would overcome him. In another day he'll go back on it, reproach himself, and will go straight to the police. What's more, I don't see any happiness in the fact that his wife has come back after three years' absence to bear him a child of Stavrogin's."

"But no one has seen Shatov's letter," Shigalov brought out all at once, emphatically.

"I've seen it," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch. "It exists, and all this is awfully stupid, gentlemen."

"And I protest ..." Virginsky cried, boiling over suddenly: "I protest with all my might. ... I want ... this is what I want. I suggest that when he arrives we all come out and question him, and if it's true, we induce him to repent of it; and if he gives us his word of honour, let him go. In any case we must have a trial; it must be done after trial. We mustn't lie in wait for him and then fall upon him."

"Risk the cause on his word of honour—that's the acme of stupidity! Damnation, how stupid it all is now, gentlemen! And a pretty part you are choosing to play at the moment of danger!"

"I protest, I protest!" Virginsky persisted.

"Don't bawl, anyway; we shan't hear the signal. Shatov, gentlemen... . (Damnation, how stupid this is now!) I've told you already that Shatov is a Slavophil, that is, one of the stupidest set of people... . But, damn it all, never mind, that's no matter! You put me out! ... Shatov is an embittered man, gentlemen, and since he has belonged to the party, anyway, whether he wanted to or no, I had hoped till the last minute that he might have been of service to the cause and might have been made use of as an embittered man. I spared him and was keeping him in reserve, in spite of most exact instructions... . I've spared him a hundred times more than he deserved! But he's ended by betraying us... . But, hang it all, I don't care! You'd better try running away now, any of you! No one of you has the right to give up the job! You can kiss him if you like, but you haven't the right to stake the cause on his word of honour! That's acting like swine and spies in government pay!"

"Who's a spy in government pay here?" Liputin filtered out.

"You, perhaps. You'd better hold your tongue, Liputin; you talk for the sake of talking, as you always do. All men are spies, gentlemen, who funk their duty at the moment of danger. There will always be some fools who'll run in a panic at the last moment and cry out, 'Aie, forgive me, and I'll give them all away!' But let me tell you, gentlemen, no betrayal would win you a pardon now. Even if your sentence were mitigated it would mean Siberia; and, what's more, there's no escaping the weapons of the other side—and their weapons are sharper than the government's."

Pyotr Stepanovitch was furious and said more than he meant to. With a resolute air Shigalov took three steps towards him. "Since yesterday evening I've thought over the question," he began, speaking with his usual pedantry and assurance. (I believe that if the earth had given way under his feet he would not have raised his voice nor have varied one tone in his methodical exposition.) "Thinking the matter over, I've come to the conclusion that the projected murder is not merely a waste of precious

time which might be employed in a more suitable and befitting manner, but presents, moreover, that deplorable deviation from the normal method which has always been' most prejudicial to the cause and has delayed its triumph for scores of years, under the guidance of shallow thinkers and pre-eminently of men of political instead of purely socialistic leanings. I have come here solely to protest against the projected enterprise, for the general edification, intending then to withdraw at the actual moment, which you, for some reason I don't understand, speak of as a moment of danger to you. I am going—not from fear of that danger nor from a sentimental feeling for Shatov, whom I have no inclination to kiss, but solely because all this business from beginning to end is in direct contradiction to my programme. As for my betraying you and my being in the pay of the government, you can set your mind completely at rest. I shall not betray you."

He turned and walked away.

"Damn it all, he'll meet them and warn Shatov!" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, pulling out his revolver. They heard the click of the trigger.

"You may be confident," said Shigalov, turning once more, "that if I meet Shatov on the way I may bow to him, but I shall not warn him."

"But do you know, you may have to pay for this, Mr. Fourier?"

"I beg you to observe that I am not Fourier. If you mix me up with that mawkish theoretical twaddler you simply prove that you know nothing of my manuscript, though it has been in your hands. As for your vengeance, let me tell you that it's a mistake to cock your pistol: that's absolutely against your interests at the present moment. But if you threaten to shoot me to-morrow, or the day after, you'll gain nothing by it but unnecessary trouble. You may kill me, but sooner or later you'll come to my system all the same. Good-bye."

At that instant a whistle was heard in the park, two hundred paces away from the direction of the pond. Liputin at once answered, whistling also as had been agreed the evening before. (As he had lost several teeth and distrusted his own powers, he had this morning bought for a farthing in the market a child's clay whistle for the purpose.) Erkel had warned Shatov on the way that they would whistle as a signal, so that the latter felt no uneasiness.

"Don't be uneasy, I'll avoid them and they won't notice me at all," Shigalov declared in an impressive whisper; and thereupon deliberately and without haste he walked home through the dark park.

Everything, to the smallest detail of this terrible affair, is now fully known. To begin with, Liputin met Erkel and Shatov at the entrance to the grotto. Shatov did not bow or offer him his hand, but at once pronounced hurriedly in a loud voice:

"Well, where have you put the spade, and haven't you another lantern? You needn't be afraid, there's absolutely no one here, and they wouldn't hear at Skvoreshniki now if we fired a cannon here. This is the place, here this very spot."

And he stamped with his foot ten paces from the end of the grotto towards the wood. At that moment Tolkatchenko rushed out from behind a tree and sprang at

him from behind, while Erkel seized him by the elbows. Liputin attacked him from the front. The three of them at once knocked him down and pinned him to the ground. At this point Pyotr Stepanovitch darted up with his revolver. It is said that Shatov had time to turn his head and was able to see and recognise him. Three lanterns lighted up the scene. Shatov suddenly uttered a short and desperate scream. But they did not let him go on screaming. Pyotr Stepanovitch firmly and accurately put his revolver to Shatov's forehead, pressed it to it, and pulled the trigger. The shot seems not to have been loud; nothing was heard at Skvoreshniki, anyway. Shigalov, who was scarcely three paces away, of course heard it—he heard the shout and the shot, but, as he testified afterwards, he did not turn nor even stop. Death was almost instantaneous. Pyotr Stepanovitch was the only one who preserved all his faculties, but I don't think he was quite cool. Squatting on his heels, he searched the murdered man's pockets hastily, though with steady hand. No money was found (his purse had been left under Marya Ignatyevna's pillow). Two or three scraps of paper of no importance were found: a note from his office, the title of some book, and an old bill from a restaurant abroad which had been preserved, goodness knows why, for two years in his pocket. Pyotr Stepanovitch transferred these scraps of paper to his own pocket, and suddenly noticing that they had all gathered round, were gazing at the corpse and doing nothing, he began rudely and angrily abusing them and urging them on. Tolkatchenko and Erkel recovered themselves, and running to the grotto brought instantly from it two stones which they had got ready there that morning. These stones, which weighed about twenty pounds each, were securely tied with cord. As they intended to throw the body in the nearest of the three ponds, they proceeded to tie the stones to the head and feet respectively. Pyotr Stepanovitch fastened the stones while Tolkatchenko and Erkel only held and passed them. Erkel was foremost, and while Pyotr Stepanovitch, grumbling and swearing, tied the dead man's feet together with the cord and fastened the stone to them—a rather lengthy operation—Tolkatchenko stood holding the other stone at arm's-length, his whole person bending forward, as it were, deferentially, to be in readiness to hand it without delay. It never once occurred to him to lay his burden on the ground in the interval. When at last both stones were tied on and Pyotr Stepanovitch got up from the ground to scrutinise the faces of his companions, something strange happened, utterly unexpected and surprising to almost every one.

As I have said already, all except perhaps Tolkatchenko and Erkel were standing still doing nothing. Though Virginsky had rushed up to Shatov with the others he had not seized him or helped to hold him. Lyamshin had joined the group after the shot had been fired. Afterwards, while Pyotr Stepanovitch was busy with the corpse—for perhaps ten minutes—none of them seemed to have been fully conscious. They grouped themselves around and seemed to have felt amazement rather than anxiety or alarm. Liputin stood foremost, close to the corpse. Virginsky stood behind him, peeping over his shoulder with a peculiar, as it were unconcerned, curiosity; he even stood on tiptoe to get a better view. Lyamshin hid behind Virginsky. He took an apprehensive peep from time to time and slipped behind him again at once. When the stones had been tied

on and Pyotr Stepanovitch had risen to his feet, Virginsky began faintly shuddering all over, clasped his hands, and cried out bitterly at the top of his voice:

“It’s not the right thing, it’s not, it’s not at all!” He would perhaps have added something more to his belated exclamation, but Lyamshin did not let him finish: he suddenly seized him from behind and squeezed him with all his might, uttering an unnatural shriek. There are moments of violent emotion, of terror, for instance, when a man will cry out in a voice not his own, unlike anything one could have anticipated from him, and this has sometimes a very terrible effect. Lyamshin gave vent to a scream more animal than human. Squeezing Virginsky from behind more and more tightly and convulsively, he went on shrieking without a pause, his mouth wide open and his eyes starting out of his head, keeping up a continual patter with his feet, as though he were beating a drum. Virginsky was so scared that he too screamed out like a madman, and with a ferocity, a vindictiveness that one could never have expected of Virginsky. He tried to pull himself away from Lyamshin, scratching and punching him as far as he could with his arms behind him. Erkel at last helped to pull Lyamshin away. But when, in his terror, Virginsky had skipped ten paces away from him, Lyamshin, catching sight of Pyotr Stepanovitch, began yelling again and flew at him. Stumbling over the corpse, he fell upon Pyotr Stepanovitch, pressing his head to the latter’s chest and gripping him so tightly in his arms that Pyotr Stepanovitch, Tolkatchenko, and Liputin could all of them do nothing at the first moment. Pyotr Stepanovitch shouted, swore, beat him on the head with his fists. At last, wrenching himself away, he drew his revolver and put it in the open mouth of Lyamshin, who was still yelling and was by now tightly held by Tolkatchenko, Erkel, and Liputin. But Lyamshin went on shrieking in spite of the revolver. At last Erkel, crushing his silk handkerchief into a ball, deftly thrust it into his mouth and the shriek ceased. Meantime Tolkatchenko tied his hands with what was left of the rope.

“It’s very strange,” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, scrutinising the madman with uneasy wonder. He was evidently struck. “I expected something very different from him,” he added thoughtfully.

They left Erkel in charge of him for a time. They had to make haste to get rid of the corpse: there had been so much noise that some one might have heard. Tolkatchenko and Pyotr Stepanovitch took up the lanterns and lifted the corpse by the head, while Liputin and Virginsky took the feet, and so they carried it away. With the two stones it was a heavy burden, and the distance was more than two hundred paces. Tolkatchenko was the strongest of them. He advised them to keep in step, but no one answered him and they all walked anyhow. Pyotr Stepanovitch walked on the right and, bending forward, carried the dead man’s head on his shoulder while with the left hand he supported the stone. As Tolkatchenko walked more than half the way without thinking of helping him with the stone, Pyotr Stepanovitch at last shouted at him with an oath. It was a single, sudden shout. They all went on carrying the body in silence, and it was only when they reached the pond that Virginsky, stooping under his burden and

seeming to be exhausted by the weight of it, cried out again in the same loud and wailing voice:

“It’s not the right thing, no, no, it’s not the right thing!”

The place to which they carried the dead man at the extreme end of the rather large pond, which was the farthest of the three from the house, was one of the most solitary and unfrequented spots in the park, especially at this late season of the year. At that end the pond was overgrown with weeds by the banks. They put down the lantern, swung the corpse and threw it into the pond. They heard a muffled and prolonged splash. Pyotr Stepanovitch raised the lantern and every one followed his example, peering curiously to see the body sink, but nothing could be seen: weighted with the two stones, the body sank at once. The big ripples spread over the surface of the water and quickly passed away. It was over.

Virginsky went off with Erkel, who before giving up Lyamshin to Tolkatchenko brought him to Pyotr Stepanovitch, reporting to the latter that Lyamshin had come to his senses, was penitent and begged forgiveness, and indeed had no recollection of what had happened to him. Pyotr Stepanovitch walked off alone, going round by the farther side of the pond, skirting the park. This was the longest way. To his surprise Liputin overtook him before he got half-way home.

“Pyotr Stepanovitch! Pyotr Stepanovitch! Lyamshin will give information!”

“No, he will come to his senses and realise that he will be the first to go to Siberia if he did. No one will betray us now. Even you won’t.”

“What about you?”

“No fear! I’ll get you all out of the way the minute you attempt to turn traitors, and you know that. But you won’t turn traitors. Have you run a mile and a half to tell me that?”

“Pyotr Stepanovitch, Pyotr Stepanovitch, perhaps we shall never meet again!”

“What’s put that into your head?”

“Only tell me one thing.”

“Well, what? Though I want you to take yourself off.”

“One question, but answer it truly: are we the only quintet in the world, or is it true that there are hundreds of others? It’s a question of the utmost importance to me, Pyotr Stepanovitch.”

“I see that from the frantic state you are in. But do you know, Liputin, you are more dangerous than Lyamshin?”

“I know, I know; but the answer, your answer!”

“You are a stupid fellow! I should have thought it could make no difference to you now whether it’s the only quintet or one of a thousand.”

“That means it’s the only one! I was sure of it ...” cried Liputin. “I always knew it was the only one, I knew it all along.” And without waiting for any reply he turned and quickly vanished into the darkness.

Pyotr Stepanovitch pondered a little.

“No, no one will turn traitor,” he concluded with decision, “but the group must remain a group and obey, or I’U ... What a wretched set they are though!”

2

He first went home, and carefully, without haste, packed his trunk. At six o’clock in the morning there was a special train from the town. This early morning express only ran once a week, and was only a recent experiment. Though Pyotr Stepanovitch had told the members of the quintet that he was only going to be away for a short time in the neighbourhood, his intentions, as appeared later, were in reality very different. Having finished packing, he settled accounts with his landlady to whom he had previously given notice of his departure, and drove in a cab to Erkel’s lodgings, near the station. And then just upon one o’clock at night he walked to Kirillov’s, approaching as before by Fedka’s secret way.

Pyotr Stepanovitch was in a painful state of mind. Apart from other extremely grave reasons for dissatisfaction (he was still unable to learn anything of Stavrogin), he had, it seems— for I cannot assert it for a fact—received in the course of that day, probably from Petersburg, secret information of a danger awaiting him in the immediate future. There are, of course, many legends in the town relating to this period; but if any facts were known, it was only to those immediately concerned. I can only surmise as my own conjecture that Pyotr Stepanovitch may well have had affairs going on in other neighbourhoods as well as in our town, so that he really may have received such a warning. I am convinced, indeed, in spite of Liputin’s cynical and despairing doubts, that he really had two or three other quintets; for instance, in Petersburg and Moscow, and if not quintets at least colleagues and correspondents, and possibly was in very curious relations with them. Not more than three days after his departure an order for his immediate arrest arrived from Petersburg—whether in connection with what had happened among us, or elsewhere, I don’t know. This order only served to increase the overwhelming, almost panic terror which suddenly came upon our local authorities and the society of the town, till then so persistently frivolous in its attitude, on the discovery of the mysterious and portentous murder of the student Shatov—the climax of the long series of senseless actions in our midst—as well as the extremely mysterious circumstances that accompanied that murder. But the order came too late: Pyotr Stepanovitch was already in Petersburg, living under another name, and, learning what was going on, he made haste to make his escape abroad... . But I am anticipating in a shocking way.

He went in to Kirillov, looking ill-humoured and quarrelsome. Apart from the real task before him, he felt, as it were, tempted to satisfy some personal grudge, to avenge himself on Kirillov for something. Kirillov seemed pleased to see him; he had evidently been expecting him a long time with painful impatience. His face was paler than usual; there was a fixed and heavy look in his black eyes.

"I thought you weren't coming," he brought out drearily from his corner of the sofa, from which he had not, however, moved to greet him.

Pyotr Stepanovitch stood before him and, before uttering a word, looked intently at his face.

"Everything is in order, then, and we are not drawing back from our resolution. Bravo!" He smiled an offensively patronising smile. "But, after all," he added with unpleasant jocosity, "if I am behind my time, it's not for you to complain: I made you a present of three hours."

"I don't want extra hours as a present from you, and you can't make me a present ... you fool!"

"What?" Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled, but instantly controlled himself. "What huffiness! So we are in a savage temper?" he rapped out, still with the same offensive superciliousness. "At such a moment composure is what you need. The best thing you can do is to consider yourself a Columbus and me a mouse, and not to take offence at anything I say. I gave you that advice yesterday."

"I don't want to look upon you as a mouse."

"What's that, a compliment? But the tea is cold—and that shows that everything is topsy-turvy. Bah! But I see something in the window, on a plate." He went to the window. "Oh oh, boiled chicken and rice! ... But why haven't you begun upon it yet? So we are in such a state of mind that even chicken ..."

"I've dined, and it's not your business. Hold your tongue!"

"Oh, of course; besides, it's no consequence—though for me at the moment it is of consequence. Only fancy, I scarcely had any dinner, and so if, as I suppose, that chicken is not wanted now ... eh?"

"Eat it if you can."

"Thank you, and then I'll have tea."

He instantly settled himself at the other end of the sofa and fell upon the chicken with extraordinary greediness; at the same time he kept a constant watch on his victim. Kirillov looked at him fixedly with angry aversion, as though unable to tear himself away.

"I say, though," Pyotr Stepanovitch fired off suddenly, while he still went on eating, "what about our business? We are not crying off, are we? How about that document?"

"I've decided in the night that it's nothing to me. I'll write it. About the manifestoes?"

"Yes, about the manifestoes too. But I'll dictate it. Of course, that's nothing to you. Can you possibly mind what's in the letter at such a moment?"

"That's not your business."

"It's not mine, of course. It need only be a few lines, though: that you and Shatov distributed the manifestoes and with the help of Fedka, who hid in your lodgings. This last point about Fedka and your lodgings is very important—the most important of all, indeed. You see, I am talking to you quite openly."

"Shatov? Why Shatov? I won't mention Shatov for anything."

“What next! What is it to you? You can’t hurt him now.”

“His wife has come back to him. She has waked up and has sent to ask me where he is.”

“She has sent to ask you where he is? H’m ... that’s unfortunate. She may send again; no one ought to know I am here.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch was uneasy.

“She won’t know, she’s gone to sleep again. There’s a midwife with her, Arina Virginsky.”

“So that’s how it was... . She won’t overhear, I suppose? I say, you’d better shut the front door.”

“She won’t overhear anything. And if Shatov comes I’ll hide you in another room.”

“Shatov won’t come; and you must write that you quarrelled with him because he turned traitor and informed the police ... this evening ... and caused his death.”

“He is dead!” cried Kirillov, jumping up from the sofa.

“He died at seven o’clock this evening, or rather, at seven o’clock yesterday evening, and now it’s one o’clock.”

“You have killed him! ... And I foresaw it yesterday!”

“No doubt you did! With this revolver here.” (He drew out his revolver as though to show it, but did not put it back again and still held it in his right hand as though in readiness.) “You are a strange man, though, Kirillov; you knew yourself that the stupid fellow was bound to end like this. What was there to foresee in that? I made that as plain as possible over and over again. Shatov was meaning to betray us; I was watching him, and it could not be left like that. And you too had instructions to watch him; you told me so yourself three weeks ago. ...”

“Hold your tongue! You’ve done this because he spat in your face in Geneva!”

“For that and for other things too—for many other things; not from spite, however. Why do you jump up? Why look like that? Oh oh, so that’s it, is it?”

He jumped up and held out his revolver before him. Kirillov had suddenly snatched up from the window his revolver, which had been loaded and put ready since the morning. Pyotr Stepanovitch took up his position and aimed his weapon at Kirillov. The latter laughed angrily.

“Confess, you scoundrel, that you brought your revolver because I might shoot you... . But I shan’t shoot you ... though ... though ...”

And again he turned his revolver upon Pyotr Stepanovitch, as it were rehearsing, as though unable to deny himself the pleasure of imagining how he would shoot him. Pyotr Stepanovitch, holding his ground, waited for him, waited for him till the last minute without pulling the trigger, at the risk of being the first to get a bullet in his head: it might well be expected of “the maniac.” But at last “the maniac” dropped his hand, gasping and trembling and unable to speak.

“You’ve played your little game and that’s enough.” Pyotr Stepanovitch, too, dropped his weapon. “I knew it was only a game; only you ran a risk, let me tell you: I might have fired.”

And he sat down on the sofa with a fair show of composure and poured himself out some tea, though his hand trembled a little. Kirillov laid his revolver on the table and began walking up and down.

“I won’t write that I killed Shatov ... and I won’t write anything now. You won’t have a document!”

“I shan’t?”

“No, you won’t.”

“What meanness and what stupidity!” Pyotr Stepanovitch turned green with resentment. “I foresaw it, though. You’ve not taken me by surprise, let me tell you. As you please, however. If I could make you do it by force, I would. You are a scoundrel, though.” Pyotr Stepanovitch was more and more carried away and unable to restrain himself. “You asked us for money out there and promised us no end of things... . I won’t go away with nothing, however: I’ll see you put the bullet through your brains first, anyway.”

“I want you to go away at once.” Kirillov stood firmly before him.

“No, that’s impossible.” Pyotr Stepanovitch took up his revolver again. “Now in your spite and cowardice you may think fit to put it off and to turn traitor to-morrow, so as to get money again; they’ll pay you for that, of course. Damn it all, fellows like you are capable of anything! Only don’t trouble yourself; I’ve provided for all contingencies: I am not going till I’ve dashed your brains out with this revolver, as I did to that scoundrel Shatov, if you are afraid to do it yourself and put off your intention, damn you!”

“You are set on seeing my blood, too?”

“I am not acting from spite; let me tell you, it’s nothing to me. I am doing it to be at ease about the cause. One can’t rely on men; you see that for yourself. I don’t understand what fancy possesses you to put yourself to death. It wasn’t my idea; you thought of it yourself before I appeared, and talked of your intention to the committee abroad before you said anything to me. And you know, no one has forced it out of you; no one of them knew you, but you came to confide in them yourself, from sentimentalism. And what’s to be done if a plan of action here, which can’t be altered now, was founded upon that with your consent and upon your suggestion? ... your suggestion, mind that! You have put yourself in a position in which you know too much. If you are an ass and go off to-morrow to inform the police, that would be rather a disadvantage to us; what do you think about it? Yes, you’ve bound yourself; you’ve given your word, you’ve taken money. That you can’t deny... .”

Pyotr Stepanovitch was much excited, but for some time past Kirillov had not been listening. He paced up and down the room, lost in thought again.

“I am sorry for Shatov,” he said, stopping before Pyotr Stepanovitch again.

“Why so? I am sorry, if that’s all, and do you suppose ...”

“Hold your tongue, you scoundrel,” roared Kirillov, making an alarming and unmistakable movement; “I’ll kill you.”

“There, there, there! I told a lie, I admit it; I am not sorry at all. Come, that’s enough, that’s enough.” Pyotr Stepanovitch started up apprehensively, putting out his hand.

Kirillov subsided and began walking up and down again.

“I won’t put it off; I want to kill myself now: all are scoundrels.”

“Well, that’s an idea; of course all are scoundrels; and since life is a beastly thing for a decent man ...”

“Fool, I am just such a scoundrel as you, as all, not a decent man. There’s never been a decent man anywhere.”

“He’s guessed the truth at last! Can you, Kirillov, with your sense, have failed to see till now that all men are alike, that there are none better or worse, only some are stupider, than others, and that if all are scoundrels (which is nonsense, though) there oughtn’t to be any people that are not?”

“Ah! Why, you are. really in earnest?” Kirillov looked at him with some wonder. “You speak with heat and simply... . Can it be that even fellows like you have convictions?”

“Kirillov, I’ve never been able to understand why you mean to kill yourself. I only know it’s from conviction ... strong conviction. But if you feel a yearning to express yourself, so to say, I am at your service... . Only you must think of the time.”

“What time is it?”

“Oh oh, just two.” Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at his watch and lighted a cigarette.

“It seems we can come to terms after all,” he reflected.

“I’ve nothing to say to you,” muttered Kirillov.

“I remember that something about God comes into it ... you explained it to me once—twice, in fact. If you stopped yourself, you become God; that’s it, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I become God.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch did not even smile; he waited. Kirillov looked at him subtly.

“You are a political impostor and intriguer. You want to lead me on into philosophy and enthusiasm and to bring about a reconciliation so as to disperse my anger, and then, when I am reconciled with you, beg from me a note to say I killed Shatov.” ”

Pyotr Stepanovitch answered with almost natural frankness.

“Well, supposing I am such a scoundrel. But at the last moments does that matter to you, Kirillov? What are we quarrelling about? Tell me, please. You are one sort of man and I am another—what of it? And what’s more, we are both of us ...”

“Scoundrels.”

“Yes, scoundrels if you like. But you know that that’s only words.”

“All my life I wanted it not to be only words. I lived because I did not want it to be. Even now every day I want it to be not words.”

“Well, every one seeks to be where he is best off. The fish ... that is, every one seeks his own comfort, that’s all. That’s been a commonplace for ages and ages.”

“Comfort, do you say?”

“Oh, it’s not worth while quarrelling over words.”

“No, you were right in what you said; let it be comfort. God is necessary and so must exist.”

“Well, that’s all right, then.”

“But I know He doesn’t and can’t.”

“That’s more likely.”

“Surely you must understand that a man with two such ideas can’t go on living?”

“Must shoot himself, you mean?”

“Surely you must understand that one might shoot oneself for that alone? You don’t understand that there may be a man, one man out of your thousands of millions, one man who won’t bear it and does not want to.”

“All I understand is that you seem to be hesitating... . That’s very bad.”

“Stavrogin, too, is consumed by an idea,” Kirillov said gloomily, pacing up and down the room. He had not noticed the previous remark.

“What?” Pyotr Stepanovitch pricked up his ears. “What idea? Did he tell you something himself?”

“No, I guessed it myself: if Stavrogin has faith, he does not believe that he has faith. If he hasn’t faith, he does not believe that he hasn’t.”

“Well, Stavrogin has got something else worse than that in his head,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered peevishly, uneasily watching the turn the conversation had taken and the pallor of Kirillov.

“Damn it all, he won’t shoot himself!” he was thinking. “I always suspected it; it’s a maggot in the brain and nothing more; what a rotten lot of people!”

“You are the last to be with me; I shouldn’t like to part on bad terms with you,” Kirillov vouchsafed suddenly.

Pyotr Stepanovitch did not answer at once. “Damn it all, what is it now?” he thought again.

“I assure you, Kirillov, I have nothing against you personally as a man, and always ...”

“You are a scoundrel and a false intellect. But I am just the same as you are, and I will shoot myself while you will remain living.”

“You mean to say, I am so abject that I want to go on living.”

He could not make up his mind whether it was judicious to keep up such a conversation at such a moment or not, and resolved “to be guided by circumstances.” But the tone of superiority and of contempt for him, which Kirillov had never disguised, had always irritated him, and now for some reason it irritated him more than ever—possibly because Kirillov, who was to die within an hour or so (Pyotr Stepanovitch still reckoned upon this), seemed to him, as it were, already only half a man, some creature whom he could not allow to be haughty.

“You seem to be boasting to me of your shooting yourself.”

“I’ve always been surprised at every one’s going on living,” said Kirillov, not hearing his remark.

“H’m! Admitting that’s an idea, but ...”

“You ape, you assent to get the better of me. Hold your tongue; you won’t understand anything. If there is no God, then I am God.”

“There, I could never understand that point of yours: why are you God?”

“If God exists, all is His will and from His will I cannot escape. If not, it’s all my will and I am bound to show self-will.”

“Self-will? But why are you bound?”

“Because all will has become mine. Can it be that no one in the whole planet, after making an end of God and believing in his own will, will dare to express his self-will on the most vital point? It’s like a beggar inheriting a fortune and being afraid of it and not daring to approach the bag of gold, thinking himself too weak to own it. I want to manifest my self-will. I may be the only one, but I’ll do it.”

“Do it by all means.”

“I am bound to shoot myself because the highest point of my self-will is to kill myself with my own hands.”

“But you won’t be the only one to kill yourself; there are lots of suicides.”

“With good cause. But to do it without any cause at all, simply for self-will, I am the only one.”

“He won’t shoot himself,” flashed across Pyotr Stepanovitch’s ruined again.

“Do you know,” he observed irritably, “if I were in your place I should kill some one else to show my self-will, not myself. You might be of use. I’ll tell you whom, if you are not afraid. Then you needn’t shoot yourself to-day, perhaps. We may come to terms.”

“To kill some one would be the lowest point of self-will, and you show your whole soul in that. I am not you: I want the highest point and I’ll kill myself.”

“He’s come to it of himself,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered malignantly.

“I am bound to show my unbelief,” said Kirillov, walking about the room. “I have no higher idea than disbelief in God. I have all the history of mankind on my side. Man has done nothing but invent God so as to go on living, and not kill himself; that’s the whole of universal history up till now. I am the first one in the whole history of mankind who would not invent God. Let them know it once for all.”

“He won’t shoot himself,” Pyotr Stepanovitch thought anxiously.

“Let whom know it?” he said, egging him on. “It’s only you and me here; you mean Liputin?”

“Let every one know; all will know. There is nothing secret that will not be made known. He said so.”

And he pointed with feverish enthusiasm to the image of the Saviour, before which a lamp was burning. Pyotr Stepanovitch lost his temper completely.

“So you still believe in Him, and you’ve lighted the lamp; ‘to be on the safe side,’ I suppose?”

The other did not speak.

“Do you know, to my thinking, you believe perhaps more thoroughly than any priest.”

“Believe in whom? In Him? Listen.” Kirillov stood still, gazing before him with fixed and ecstatic look. “Listen to a great idea: there was a day on earth, and in the midst of the earth there stood three crosses. One on the Cross had such faith that he said to another, ‘To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.’ The day ended; both died and passed away and found neither Paradise nor resurrection. His words did not come true. Listen: that Man was the loftiest of all on earth, He was that which gave meaning to life. The whole planet, with everything on it, is mere madness without that Man. There has never been any like Him before or since, never, up to a miracle. For that is the miracle, that there never was or never will be another like Him. And if that is so, if the laws of nature did not spare even Him, have not spared even their miracle and made even Him live in a lie and die for a lie, then all the planet is a lie and rests on a lie and on mockery. So then, the very laws of the planet are a lie and the vaudeville of devils. What is there to live for? Answer, if you are a man.”

“That’s a different matter. It seems to me you’ve mixed up two different causes, and that’s a very unsafe thing to do. But excuse me, if you are God I If the lie were ended and if you realised that all the falsity comes from the belief in that former God?”

“So at last you understand!” cried Kirillov rapturously. “So it can be understood if even a fellow like you understands. Do you understand now that the salvation for all consists in proving this idea to every one I Who will prove it? I! I can’t understand how an atheist could know that there is no God and not kill himself on the spot. To recognise that there is no God and not to recognise at the same instant that one is God oneself is an absurdity, else one would certainly kill oneself. If you recognise it you are sovereign, and then you won’t kill yourself but will live in the greatest glory. But one, the first, must kill himself, for else who will begin and prove it? So I must certainly kill myself, to begin and prove it. Now I am only a god against my will and I am unhappy, because I am bound to assert my will. All are unhappy because all are afraid to express their will. Man has hitherto been so unhappy and so poor because he has been afraid to assert his will in the highest point and has shown his self-will only in little things, like a schoolboy. I am awfully unhappy, for I’m awfully afraid. Terror is the curse of man... . But I will assert my will, I am bound to believe that I don’t believe. I will begin and will make an end of it and open the door, and will save. That’s the only thing that will save mankind and will re-create the next generation physically; for with his present physical nature man can’t get on without his former God, I believe. For three years I’ve been seeking for the attribute of my godhead and I’ve found it; the attribute of my godhead is self-will! That’s all I can do to prove in the highest point my independence and my new terrible freedom. For it is very terrible. I am killing myself to prove my independence and my new terrible freedom.”

His face was unnaturally pale, and there was a terribly heavy look in his eyes. He was like a man in delirium. Pyotr Stepanovitch thought he would drop on to the floor.

“Give me the pen!” Kirillov cried suddenly, quite unexpectedly, in a positive frenzy. “Dictate; I’ll sign anything. I’ll sign that I killed Shatov even. Dictate while it amuses me. I am not afraid of what the haughty slaves will think! You will see for yourself

that all that is secret shall be made manifest! And you will be crushed. ... I believe, I believe!"

Pyotr Stepanovitch jumped up from his seat and instantly handed him an inkstand and paper, and began dictating, seizing the moment, quivering with anxiety.

"I, Alexey Kirillov, declare ..."

"Stay; I won't! To whom am I declaring it?"

Kirillov was shaking as though he were in a fever. This declaration and the sudden strange idea of it seemed to absorb him entirely, as though it were a means of escape by which his tortured spirit strove for a moment's relief.

"To whom am I declaring it? I want to know to whom?"

"To no one, every one, the first person who reads it. Why define it? The whole world!"

"The whole world! Bravo! And I won't have any repentance. I don't want penitence and I don't want it for the police!"

"No, of course, there's no need of it, damn the police! Write, if you are in earnest!" Pyotr Stepanovitch cried hysterically.

"Stay! I want to put at the top a face with the tongue out."

"Ech, what nonsense," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch crossly, "you can express all that without the drawing, by—the tone."

"By the tone? That's true. Yes, by the tone, by the tone of it. Dictate, the tone."

"I, Alexey Kirillov," Pyotr Stepanovitch dictated firmly and peremptorily, bending over Kirillov's shoulder and following every letter which the latter formed with a hand trembling with excitement, "I, Kirillov, declare that to-day, the —th October, at about eight o'clock in the evening, I killed the student Shatov in the park for turning traitor and giving information of the manifestoes and of Fedka, who has been lodging with us for ten days in Filipov's house. I am shooting myself to-day with my revolver, not because I repent and am afraid of you, but because when I was abroad I made up my mind to put an end to my life."

"Is that all?" cried Kirillov with surprise and indignation. "Not another word," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, waving his hand, attempting to snatch the document from him.

"Stay." Kirillov put his hand firmly on the paper. "Stay, it's nonsense! I want to say with whom I killed him. Why Fedka? And what about the fire? I want it all and I want to be abusive in tone, too, in tone!"

"Enough, Kirillov, I assure you it's enough," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch almost imploringly, trembling lest he should tear up the paper; "that they may believe you, you must say it as obscurely as possible, just like that, simply in hints. You must only give them a peep of the truth, just enough to tantalise them. They'll tell a story better than ours, and of course they'll believe themselves more than they would us; and you know, it's better than anything—better than anything! Let me have it, it's splendid as it is; give it to me, give it to me!"

And he kept trying to snatch the paper. Kirillov listened open-eyed and appeared to be trying to reflect, but he seemed beyond understanding now.

“Damn it all,” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried all at once, ill-humouredly, “he hasn’t signed it! Why are you staring like that? Sign!”

“I want to abuse them,” muttered Kirillov. He took the pen, however, and signed. “I want to abuse them.”

“Write ‘Vive la republique,’ and that will be enough.”

“Bravo!” Kirillov almost bellowed with delight. ‘Vive la republique democratique sociale et universelle ou la mart!’ No, no, that’s not it. ‘Liberte, egalite, fraternite ou la mort.’ There, that’s better, that’s better.” He wrote it gleefully under his signature.

“Enough, enough,” repeated Pyotr Stepanovitch.

“Stay, a little more. I’ll sign it again in French, you know. ‘De Kirilloff, gentilhomme russe et citoyen du monde.’ Ha ha!” He went off in a peal of laughter. “No, no, no; stay. I’ve found something better than all. Eureka! ‘Gentilhomme, seminariste russe et citoyen du monde civilise!’ That’s better than any... .” He jumped up from the sofa and suddenly, with a rapid gesture, snatched up the revolver from the window, ran with it into the next room, and closed the door behind him.

Pyotr Stepanovitch stood for a moment, pondering and gazing at the door.

“If he does it at once, perhaps he’ll do it, but if he begins thinking, nothing will come of it.”

Meanwhile he took up the paper, sat down, and looked at it again. The wording of the document pleased him again.

“What’s needed for the moment? What’s wanted is to throw them all off the scent and keep them busy for a time. The park? There’s no park in the town and they’ll guess its Skvoreshniki of themselves. But while they are arriving at that, time will be passing; then the search will take time too; then when they find the body it will prove that the story is true, and it will follow that’s it all true, that it’s true about Fedka too. And Fedka explains the fire, the Lebyadkins; so that it was all being hatched here, at Filipov’s, while they overlooked it and saw nothing—that will quite turn their heads! They will never think of the quintet; Shatov and Kirillov and Fedka and Lebyadkin, and why they killed each other—that will be another question for them. Oh, damn it all, I don’t hear the shot!”

Though he had been reading and admiring the wording of it, he had been listening anxiously all the time, and he suddenly flew into a rage. He looked anxiously at his watch; it was getting late and it was fully ten minutes since Kirillov had gone out... . Snatching up the candle, he went to the door of the room where Kirillov had shut himself up. He was just at the door when the thought struck him that the candle had burnt out, that it would not last another twenty minutes, and that there was no other in the room. He took hold of the handle and listened warily; he did not hear the slightest sound. He suddenly opened the door and lifted up the candle: something uttered a roar and rushed at him. He slammed the door with all his might and pressed his weight against it; but all sounds died away and again there was deathlike stillness.

He stood for a long while irresolute, with the candle in his hand. He had been able to see very little in the second he held the door open, but he had caught a glimpse

of the face of Kirillov standing at the other end of the room by the window, and the savage fury with which the latter had rushed upon him. Pyotr Stepanovitch started, rapidly set the candle on the table, made ready his revolver, and retreated on tiptoe to the farthest corner of the room, so that if Kirillov opened the door and rushed up to the table with the revolver he would still have time to be the first to aim and fire.

Pyotr Stepanovitch had by now lost all faith in the suicide. "He was standing in the middle of the room, thinking," flashed like a whirlwind through Pyotr Stepanovitch's mind, "and the room was dark and horrible too... . He roared and rushed at me. There are two possibilities: either I interrupted him at the very second when he was pulling the trigger or ... or he was standing planning how to kill me. Yes, that's it, he was planning it. ... He knows I won't go away without killing him if he funks it himself—so that he would have to kill me first to prevent my killing him... . And again, again there is silence. I am really frightened: he may open the door all of a sudden... . The nuisance of it is that he believes in God like any priest... . He won't shoot himself for anything! There are lots of these people nowadays 'who've come to it of themselves.' A rotten lot! Oh, damn it, the candle, the candle! It'll go out within a quarter of an hour for certain. ... I must put a stop to it; come what may, I must put a stop to it. ... Now I can kill him... . With that document here no one would think of my killing him. I can put him in such an attitude on the floor with an unloaded revolver in his hand that they'd be certain he'd done it himself... . Ach, damn it! how is one to kill him? If I open the door he'll rush out again and shoot me first. Damn it all, he'll be sure to miss!"

He was in agonies, trembling at the necessity of action and his own indecision. At last he took up the candle and again approached the door with the revolver held up in readiness; he put his left hand, in which he held the candle, on the doorhandle. But he managed awkwardly: the handle clanked, there was a rattle and a creak. "He will fire straightway," flashed through Pyotr Stepanovitch's mind. With his foot he flung the door open violently, raised the candle, and held out the revolver; but no shot nor cry came from within... . There was no one in the room.

He started. The room led nowhere. There was no exit, no means of escape from it. He lifted the candle higher and looked about him more attentively: there was certainly no one. He called Kirillov's name in a low voice, then again louder; no one answered.

"Can he have got out by the window?" The casement in one window was, in fact, open. "Absurd! He couldn't have got away through, the casement." Pyotr Stepanovitch crossed the room and went up to the window. "He couldn't possibly." All at once he turned round quickly and was aghast at something extraordinary.

Against the wall facing the windows on the right of the door stood a cupboard. On the right side of this cupboard, in the corner formed by the cupboard and the wall, stood Kirillov, and he was standing in a very strange way; motionless, perfectly erect, with his arms held stiffly at his sides, his head raised and pressed tightly back against the wall in the very corner, he seemed to be trying to conceal and efface himself. Everything seemed to show that he was hiding, yet somehow it was not easy to believe

it. Pyotr Stepanovitch was standing a little sideways to the corner, and could only see the projecting parts of the figure. He could not bring himself to move to the left to get a full view of Kirillov and solve the mystery. His heart began beating violently, and he felt a sudden rush of blind fury: he started from where he stood, and, shouting and stamping with his feet, he rushed to the horrible place.

But when he reached Kirillov he stopped short again, still more overcome, horror-stricken. What struck him most was that, in spite of his shout and his furious rush, the figure did not stir, did not move in a single limb—as though it were of stone or of wax. The pallor of the face was unnatural, the black eyes were quite unmoving and were staring away at a point in the distance. Pyotr Stepanovitch lowered the candle and raised it again, lighting up the figure from all points of view and scrutinising it. He suddenly noticed that, although Kirillov was looking straight before him, he could see him and was perhaps watching him out of the corner of his eye. Then the idea occurred to him to hold the candle right up to the wretch's face, to scorch him and see what he would do. He suddenly fancied that Kirillov's chin twitched and that something like a mocking smile passed over his lips—as though he had guessed Pyotr Stepanovitch's thought. He shuddered arid, beside himself, clutched violently at Kirillov's shoulder.

Then something happened so hideous and so soon over that Pyotr Stepanovitch could never afterwards recover a coherent impression of it. He had hardly touched Kirillov when the latter bent down quickly and with his head knocked the candle out of Pyotr Stepanovitch's hand; the candlestick fell with a clang on the ground and the candle went out. At the same moment he was conscious of a fearful pain in the little finger of his left hand. He cried out, and all that he could remember was that, beside himself, he hit out with all his might and struck three blows with the revolver on the head of Kirillov, who had bent down to him and had bitten his finger. At last he tore away his finger and rushed headlong to get out of the house, feeling his way in the dark. He was pursued by terrible shouts from the room.

“Directly, directly, directly, directly.” Ten times. But he still ran on, and was running into the porch when he suddenly heard a loud shot. Then he stopped short in the dark porch and stood deliberating for five minutes; at last he made his way back into the house. But he had to get the candle. He had only to feel on the floor on the right of the cupboard for the candlestick; but how was he to light the candle? There suddenly came into his mind a vague recollection: he recalled that when he had run into the kitchen the day before to attack Fedka he had noticed in passing a large red box of matches in a corner on a shelf. Feeling with his hands, he made his way to the door on the left leading to the kitchen, found it, crossed the passage, and went down the steps. On the shelf, on the very spot where he had just recalled seeing it, he felt in the dark a full unopened box of matches. He hurriedly went up the steps again without striking a light, and it was only when he was near the cupboard, at the spot where he had struck Kirillov with the revolver and been bitten by him, that he remembered his bitten finger, and at the same instant was conscious that it was unbearably painful. Clenching his teeth, he managed somehow to light the candle-end, set it in the candlestick again,

and looked about him: near the open casement, with his feet towards the right-hand corner, lay the dead body of Kirillov. The shot had been fired at the right temple and the bullet had come out at the top on the left, shattering the skull. There were splashes of blood and brains. The revolver was still in the suicide's hand on the floor. Death must have been instantaneous. After a careful look round, Pyotr Stepanovitch got up and went out on tiptoe, closed the door, left the candle on the table in the outer room, thought a moment, and resolved not to put it out, reflecting that it could not possibly set fire to anything. Looking once more at the document left on the table, he smiled mechanically and then went out of the house, still for some reason walking on tiptoe. He crept through Fedka's hole again and carefully replaced the posts after him.

3

Precisely at ten minutes to six Pyotr Stepanovitch and Erkel were walking up and down the platform at the railway-station beside a rather long train. Pyotr Stepanovitch was setting off and Erkel was saying good-bye to him. The luggage was in, and his bag was in the seat he had taken in a second-class carriage. The first bell had rung already; they were waiting for the second. Pyotr Stepanovitch looked about him, openly watching the passengers as they got into the train. But he did not meet anyone he knew well; only twice he nodded to acquaintances— a merchant whom he knew slightly, and then a young village priest who was going to his parish two stations away. Erkel evidently wanted to speak of something of importance in the last moments, though possibly he did not himself know exactly of what, but he could not bring himself to begin! He kept fancying that Pyotr Stepanovitch seemed anxious to get rid of him and was impatient for the last bell.

"You look at every one so openly," he observed with some timidity, as though he would have warned him.

"Why not? It would not do for me to conceal myself at present. It's too soon. Don't be uneasy. All I am afraid of is that the devil might send Liputin this way; he might scent me out and race off here."

"Pyotr Stepanovitch, they are not to be trusted," Erkel brought out resolutely. "Liputin?"

"None of them, Pyotr Stepanovitch."

"Nonsense! they are all bound by what happened yesterday. There isn't one who would turn traitor. People won't go to certain destruction unless they've lost their reason."

"Pyotr Stepanovitch, but they will lose their reason." Evidently that idea had already occurred to Pyotr Stepanovitch too, and so Erkel's observation irritated him the more.

"You are not in a funk too, are you, Erkel? I rely on you more than on any of them. I've seen now what each of them is worth. Tell them to-day all I've told you. I leave them in your charge. Go round to each of them this morning. Read them my written instructions to-morrow, or the day after, when you are all together and they

are capable of listening again ... and believe me, they will be by to-morrow, for they'll be in an awful funk, and that will make them as soft as wax... . The great thing is that you shouldn't be downhearted."

"Ach, Pyotr Stepanovitch, it would be better if you weren't going away."

"But I am only going for a few days; I shall be back in no time."

"Pyotr Stepanovitch," Erkel brought out warily but resolutely, "what if you were going to Petersburg? Of course, I understand that you are only doing what's necessary for the cause."

"I expected as much from you, Erkel. If you have guessed that I am going to Petersburg you can realise that I couldn't tell them yesterday, at that moment, that I was going so far for fear of frightening them. You saw for yourself what a state they were in. But you understand that I am going for the cause, for work of the first importance, for the common cause, and not to save my skin, as Liputin imagines."

"Pyotr Stepanovitch, what if you were going abroad? I should understand ... I should understand that you must be careful of yourself because you are everything and we are nothing. I shall understand, Pyotr Stepanovitch." The poor boy's voice actually quivered.

"Thank you, Erkel... . Aie, you've touched my bad finger." (Erkel had pressed his hand awkwardly; the bad finger was discreetly bound up in black silk.) "But I tell you positively again that I am going to Petersburg only to sniff round, and perhaps shall only be there for twenty-four hours and then back here again at once. When I come back I shall stay at Gaganov's country place for the sake of appearances. If there is any notion of danger, I should be the first to take the lead and share it. If I stay longer, in Petersburg I'll let you know at once ... in the way we've arranged, and you'll tell them." The second bell rang.

"Ah, then there's only five, minutes before the train starts. I don't want the group here to break up, you know. I am not afraid; don't be anxious about me. I have plenty of such centres, and it's not much consequence; but there's no harm in haying as many centres as possible. But I am quite at ease about you, though I am leaving you almost alone with those idiots. Don't be uneasy; they won't turn traitor, they won't have the pluck... . Ha ha, you going to-day too?" he cried suddenly in a quite different, cheerful voice to a very young man, who came up gaily to greet him. "I didn't know you were going by the express too. Where are you off to ... your mother's?"

The mother of the young man was a very wealthy landowner in a neighbouring province, and the young man was a distant relation of Yulia Mihailovna's and had been staying about a fortnight in our town.

"No, I am going farther, to R——. I've eight hours to live through in the train. Off to Petersburg?" laughed the young man.

"What makes you suppose I must be going to Petersburg?" said Pyotr Stepanovitch, laughing even more openly.

The young man shook his gloved finger at him.

“Well, you’ve guessed right,” Pyotr Stepanovitch whispered to him mysteriously. “I am going with letters from Yulia Mihailovna and have to call on three or four personages, as you can imagine—bother them all, to speak candidly. It’s a beastly job!”

“But why is she in such a panic? Tell me,” the young man whispered too. “She wouldn’t see even me yesterday. I don’t think she has anything to fear for her husband, quite the contrary; he fell down so creditably at the fire—ready to sacrifice his life, so to speak.”

“Well, there it is,” laughed Pyotr Stepanovitch. “You see, she is afraid that people may have written from here already ... that is, some gentlemen... . The fact is, Stavrogin is at the bottom of it, or rather Prince K... . Ech, it’s a long story; I’ll tell you something about it on the journey if you like—as far as my chivalrous feelings will allow me, at least... . This is my relation, Lieutenant Erkel, who lives down here.”

The young man, who had been stealthily glancing at Erkel, touched his hat; Erkel made a bow.

“But I say, Verhovensky, eight hours in the train is an awful ordeal. Berestov, the colonel, an awfully funny fellow, is travelling with me in the first class. He is a neighbour of ours in the country, and his wife is a Garin (nee de Garine), and you know he is a very decent fellow. He’s got ideas too. He’s only been here a couple of days. He’s passionately fond of whist; couldn’t we get up a game, eh? I’ve already fixed on a fourth—

Pripuhlov, our merchant from T——with a beard, a millionaire—I mean it, a real millionaire; you can take my word for it. ... I’ll introduce you; he is a very interesting money-bag. We shall have a laugh.”

“I shall be delighted, and I am awfully fond of cards in the train, but I am going second class.”

“Nonsense, that’s no matter. Get in with us. I’ll tell them directly to move you to the first class. The chief guard would do anything I tell him. What have you got? ... a bag? a rug?”

“First-rate. Come along!”

Pyotr Stepanovitch took his bag, his rug, and his book, and at once and with alacrity transferred himself to the first class. Erkel helped him. The third bell rang.

“Well, Erkel.” Hurriedly, and with a preoccupied air, Pyotr Stepanovitch held out his hand from the window for the last time. “You see, I am sitting down to cards with them.”

“Why explain, Pyotr Stepanovitch? I understand, I understand it all!”

“Well, au revoir,” Pyotr Stepanovitch turned away suddenly on his name being called by the young man, who wanted to introduce him to his partners. And Erkel saw nothing more of Pyotr Stepanovitch.

He returned home very sad. Not that he was alarmed at Pyotr Stepanovitch’s leaving them so suddenly, but ... he had turned away from him so quickly when that young swell had called to him and ... he might have said something different to him, not “Au

revoir,” or ... or at least have pressed his hand more warmly. That last was bitterest of all. Something else was beginning to gnaw in his poor little heart, something which he could not understand himself yet, something connected with the evening before.

Chapter 7: Stepan Trofimovitch’s Last Wandering

1

I am persuaded that Stepan Trofimovitch was terribly frightened as he felt the time fixed for his insane enterprise drawing near. I am convinced that he suffered dreadfully from terror, especially on the night before he started—that awful night. Nastasya mentioned afterwards that he had gone to bed late and fallen asleep. But that proves nothing; men sentenced to death sleep very soundly, they say, even the night before their execution. Though he set off by daylight, when a nervous man is always a little more confident (and the major, Virginsky’s relative, used to give up believing in God every morning when the night was over), yet I am convinced he could never, without horror, have imagined himself alone on the high road in such a position. No doubt a certain desperation in his feelings softened at first the terrible sensation of sudden solitude in which he at once found himself as soon as he had left Nastasya, and the corner in which he had been warm and snug for twenty years. But it made no difference; even with the clearest recognition of all the horrors awaiting him he would have gone out to the high road and walked along it! There was something proud in the undertaking which allured him in spite of everything. Oh, he might have accepted Varvara Petrovna’s luxurious provision and have remained living on her charity, “comme un humble dependent.” But he had not accepted her charity and was not remaining! And here he was leaving her of himself, and holding aloft the “standard of a great idea, and going to die for it on the open road.” That is how he must have been feeling; that’s how his action must have appeared to him.

Another question presented itself to me more than once. Why did he run away, that is, literally run away on foot, rather than simply drive away? I put it down at first to the impracticability of fifty years and the fantastic bent of his mind under the influence of strong emotion. I imagined that the thought of posting tickets and horses (even if they had bells) would have seemed too simple and prosaic to him; a pilgrimage, on the other hand, even under an umbrella, was ever so much more picturesque and in character with love and resentment. But now that everything is over, I am inclined to think that it all came about in a much simpler way. To begin with, he was afraid to hire horses because Varvara Petrovna might have heard of it and prevented him from going by force; which she certainly would have done, and he certainly would have given in, and then farewell to the great idea for ever. Besides, to take tickets for anywhere he must have known at least where he was going. But to think about that was the greatest agony to him at that moment; he was utterly unable to fix upon a place. For

if he had to fix on any particular town his enterprise would at once have seemed in his own eyes absurd and impossible; he felt that very strongly. What should he do in that particular town rather than in any other? Look out for *ce marchand*? But what *marchand*? At that point his second and most terrible question cropped up. In reality there was nothing he dreaded more than *ce marchand*, whom he had rushed off to seek so recklessly, though, of course, he was terribly afraid of finding him. No, better simply the high road, better simply to set off for it, and walk along it and to think of nothing so long as he could put off thinking. The high road is something very very long, of which one cannot see the end—like human life, like human dreams. There is an idea in the open road, but what sort of idea is there in travelling with posting tickets? Posting tickets mean an end to ideas. *Vive la grande route* and then as God wills.

After the sudden and unexpected interview with Liza which I have described, he rushed on, more lost in forgetfulness than ever. The high road passed half a mile from Skvoreshniki and, strange to say, he was not at first aware that he was on it. Logical reasoning or even distinct consciousness was unbearable to him at this moment. A fine rain kept drizzling, ceasing, and drizzling again; but he did not even notice the rain. He did not even notice either how he threw his bag over his shoulder, nor how much more comfortably he walked with it so. He must have walked like that for nearly a mile or so when he suddenly stood still and looked round. The old road, black, marked with wheel-ruts and planted with willows on each side, ran before him like an endless thread; on the right hand were bare plains from which the harvest had long ago been carried; on the left there were bushes and in the distance beyond them a copse.

And far, far away a scarcely perceptible line of the railway, running aslant, and on it the smoke of a train, but no sound was heard. Stepan Trofimovitch felt a little timid, but only for a moment. He heaved a vague sigh, put down his bag beside a willow, and sat down to rest. As he moved to sit down he was conscious of being chilly and wrapped himself in his rug; noticing at the same time that it was raining, he put up his umbrella. He sat like that for some time, moving his lips from time to time and firmly grasping the umbrella handle. Images of all sorts passed in feverish procession before him, rapidly succeeding one another in his mind.

“Lise, Lise,” he thought, “and with her *ce Maurice*... . Strange people... . But what was the strange fire, and what were they talking about, and who were murdered? I fancy Nastasya has not found out yet and is still waiting for me with my coffee ... cards? Did I really lose men at cards? H’m! Among us in Russia in the times of serfdom, so called... . My God, yes—Fedka!”

He started all over with terror and looked about him. “What if that Fedka is in hiding somewhere behind the bushes? They say he has a regular band of robbers here on the high road. Oh, mercy, I ... I’ll tell him the whole truth then, that I was to blame ... and that I’ve been miserable about him for ten years. More miserable than he was as a soldier, and ... I’ll give him my purse. H’m! *J’ai en tout quarante roubles; il prendra les roubles et il me tuera tout de meme.*”

In his panic he for some reason shut up the umbrella and laid it down beside him. A cart came into sight on the high road in the distance coming from the town.

“Grace a Dieu, that’s a cart and it’s coming at a walking pace; that can’t be dangerous. The wretched little horses here ... I always said that breed ... It was Pyotr Ilyitch though, he talked at the club about horse-breeding and I trumped him, *et puis* ... but what’s that behind? ... I believe there’s a woman in the cart. A peasant and a woman, *cela commence d etre rassurant*. The woman behind and the man in front—*c’est tres rassurant*. There’s a cow behind the cart tied by the horns, *c’est rassurant au plus haut degre*.”

The cart reached him; it was a fairly solid peasant cart. The woman was sitting on a tightly stuffed sack and the man on the front of the cart with his legs hanging over towards Stepan Trofimovitch. A red cow was, in fact, shambling behind, tied by the horns to the cart. The man and the woman gazed open-eyed at Stepan Trofimovitch, and Stepan Trofimovitch gazed back at them with equal wonder, but after he had let them pass twenty paces, he got up hurriedly all of a sudden and walked after them. In the proximity of the cart it was natural that he should feel safer, but when he had overtaken it he became oblivious of everything again and sank back into his disconnected thoughts and fancies. He stepped along with no suspicion, of course, that for the two peasants he was at that instant the most mysterious and interesting object that one could meet on the high road.

“What sort may you be, pray, if it’s not uncivil to ask?” the woman could not resist asking at last when Stepan Trofimovitch glanced absent-mindedly at her. She was a woman of about seven and twenty, sturdily built, with black eyebrows, rosy cheeks, and a friendly smile on her red lips, between which gleamed white even teeth.

“You ... you are addressing me?” muttered Stepan Trofimovitch with mournful wonder.

“A merchant, for sure,” the peasant observed confidently. He was a well-grown man of forty with a broad and intelligent face, framed in a reddish beard.

“No, I am not exactly a merchant, I ... I ... *moi c’est autre chose*.” Stepan Trofimovitch parried the question somehow, and to be on the safe side he dropped back a little from the cart, so that he was walking on a level with the cow.

“Must be a gentleman,” the man decided, hearing words not Russian, and he gave a tug at the horse.

“That’s what set us wondering. You are out for a walk seemingly?” the woman asked inquisitively again.

“You ... you ask me?”

“Foreigners come from other parts sometimes by the train; your boots don’t seem to be from hereabouts... .”

“They are army boots,” the man put in complacently and significantly.

“No, I am not precisely in the army, I ...”

“What an inquisitive woman!” Stepan Trofimovitch mused with vexation. “And how they stare at me ... mais enfin. In fact, it’s strange that I feel, as it were, conscience-stricken before them, and yet I’ve done them no harm.”

The woman was whispering to the man.

“If it’s no offence, we’d give you a lift if so be it’s agreeable.”

Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly roused himself.

“Yes, yes, my friends, I accept it with pleasure, for I’m very tired; but how am I to get in?”

“How wonderful it is,” he thought to himself, “that I’ve been walking so long beside that cow and it never entered my head to ask them for a lift. This ‘real life’ has something very original about it.”

But the peasant had not, however, pulled up the horse.

“But where are you bound for?” he asked with some mistrustfulness.

Stepan Trofimovitch did not understand him at once.

“To Hatovo, I suppose?”

“Hatov? No, not to Hatov’s exactly? ... And I don’t know him though I’ve heard of him.”

“The village of Hatovo, the village, seven miles from here.”

“A village? C’est charmant, to be sure I’ve heard of it... .”

Stepan Trofimovitch was still walking, they had not yet taken him into the cart. A guess that was a stroke of genius flashed through his mind.

“You think perhaps that I am ... I’ve got a passport and I am a professor, that is, if you like, a teacher ... but a head teacher. I am a head teacher. Oui, c’est comme ça qu’on peut traduire. I should be very glad of a lift and I’ll buy you ... I’ll buy you a quart of vodka for it.”

“It’ll be half a rouble, sir; it’s a bad road.”

“Or it wouldn’t be fair to ourselves,” put in the woman.

“Half a rouble? Very good then, half a rouble. C’est encore mieux; fai en tout quarante roubles mais ...”

The peasant stopped the horse and by their united efforts Stepan Trofimovitch was dragged into the cart, and seated on the sack by the woman. He was still pursued by the same whirl of ideas. Sometimes he was aware himself that he was terribly absent-minded, and that he was not thinking of what he ought to be thinking of and wondered at it. This consciousness of abnormal weakness of mind became at moments very painful and even humiliating to him.

“How ... how is this you’ve got a cow behind?” he suddenly asked the woman.

“What do you mean, sir, as though you’d never seen one,” laughed the woman.

“We bought it in the town,” the peasant put in. “Our cattle died last spring ... the plague. All the beasts have died round us, all of them. There aren’t half of them left, it’s heartbreaking.”

And again he lashed the horse, which had got stuck in a rut.

"Yes, that does happen among you in Russia ... in general we Russians ... Well, yes, it happens," Stepan Trofimovitch broke off.

"If you are a teacher, what are you going to Hatovo for? Maybe you are going on farther."

"I ... I'm not going farther precisely... . C'est-d-dire, I'm going to a merchant's."

"To Spasov, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, to Spasov. But that's no matter."

"If you are going to Spasov and on foot, it will take you a week in your boots," laughed the woman.

"I dare say, I dare say, no matter, mes amis, no matter." Stepan Trofimovitch cut her short impatiently.

"Awfully inquisitive people; but the woman speaks better than he does, and I notice that since February 19,* their language has altered a little, and ... and what business is it of mine whether I'm going to Spasov or not? Besides, I'll pay them, so why do they pester me."

"If you are going to Spasov, you must take the steamer," the peasant persisted.

"That's true indeed," the woman put in with animation, "for if you drive along the bank it's twenty-five miles out of the way."

"Thirty-five."

"You'll just catch the steamer at Ustyevo at two o'clock tomorrow," the woman decided finally. But Stepan Trofimovitch was obstinately silent. His questioners, too, sank into silence. The peasant tugged at his horse at rare intervals; the peasant woman exchanged brief remarks with him. Stepan Trofimovitch fell into a doze. He was tremendously surprised when the woman, laughing, gave him a poke and he found himself in a rather large village at the door of a cottage with three windows.

"You've had a nap, sir?"

"What is it? Where am I? Ah, yes! Well ... never mind," sighed Stepan Trofimovitch, and he got out of the cart.

He looked about him mournfully; the village scene seemed strange to him and somehow terribly remote.

* February 19, 1861, the day of the Emancipation of the Serfs, is meant.— Translator's note.

"And the half-rouble, I was forgetting it!" he said to the peasant, turning to him with an excessively hurried gesture; he was evidently by now afraid to part from them.

"We'll settle indoors, walk in," the peasant invited him.

"It's comfortable inside," the woman said reassuringly.

Stepan Trofimovitch mounted the shaky steps. "How can it be?" he murmured in profound and apprehensive perplexity. He went into the cottage, however. "Elle Pa voulu" he felt a stab at his heart and again he became oblivious of everything, even of the fact that he had gone into the cottage.

It was a light and fairly clean peasant's cottage, with three windows and two rooms; not exactly an inn, but a cottage at which people who knew the place were accustomed

to stop “on their way through the village. Stepan Trofimovitch, quite unembarrassed, went to the foremost corner; forgot to greet anyone, sat down and sank into thought. Meanwhile a sensation of warmth, extremely agreeable after three hours of travelling in the damp, was suddenly diffused throughout his person. Even the slight shivers that spasmodically ran down his spine—such as always occur in particularly nervous people when they are feverish and have suddenly come into a Warm room from the cold—became all at once strangely agreeable. He raised his head and the delicious fragrance of the hot pancakes with which the woman of the house was busy at the stove tickled his nostrils. With a childlike smile he leaned towards the woman and suddenly said:

“What’s that? Are they pancakes? Mais ... c’est char-mant.”

“Would you like some, sir?” the woman politely offered him at once.

“I should like some, I certainly should, and ... may I ask you for some tea too,” said Stepan Trofimovitch, reviving.

“Get the samovar? With the greatest pleasure.”

On a large plate with a big blue pattern on it were served the pancakes—regular peasant pancakes, thin, made half of wheat, covered with fresh hot butter, most delicious pancakes. Stepan Trofimovitch tasted them with relish.

“How rich they are and how good! And if one could only have un doigt d’eau de vie.”

“It’s a drop of vodka you would like, sir, isn’t it?”

“Just so, just so, a little, un tout petit new,”

“Five farthings’ worth, I suppose?”

“Five, yes, five, five, five, un tout petit rien,” Stepan Trofimovitch assented with a blissful smile.

Ask a peasant to do anything for you, and if he can, and will, he will serve you with care and friendliness; but ask him to fetch you vodka—and his habitual serenity and friendliness will pass at once into a sort of joyful haste and alacrity; he will be as keen in your interest as though you were one of his family. The peasant who fetches vodka—even though you are going to drink it and not he and he knows that beforehand—seems, as it were, to be enjoying part of your future gratification. Within three minutes (the tavern was only two paces away), a bottle and a large greenish wineglass were set on the table before Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Is that all for me!” He was extremely surprised. “I’ve always had vodka but I never knew you could get so much for five farthings.”

He filled the wineglass, got up and with a certain solemnity crossed the room to the other corner where his fellow-traveller, the black-browed peasant woman, who had shared the sack with him and bothered him with her questions, had ensconced herself. The woman was taken aback, and began to decline, but after having said all that was prescribed by politeness, she stood up and drank it decorously in three sips, as women do, and, with an expression of intense suffering on her face, gave back the wineglass and bowed to Stepan Trofimovitch. He returned the bow with dignity and returned to the table with an expression of positive pride on his countenance.

All this was done on the inspiration of the moment: a second before he had no idea that he would go and treat the peasant woman.

"I know how to get on with peasants to perfection, to perfection, and I've always told them so," he thought complacently, pouring out the rest of the vodka; though there was less than a glass left, it warmed and revived him, and even went a little to his head.

"Je suis malade tout a- fait, mais ce n'est pas trap mauvais d'etre malade."

"Would you care to purchase?" a gentle feminine voice asked close by him.

He raised his eyes and to his surprise saw a lady—une dame, et die en avait Pair, somewhat over thirty, very modest in appearance, dressed not like a peasant, in a dark gown with a grey shawl on her shoulders. There was something very kindly in her face which attracted Stepan Trofimovitch immediately. She had only just come back to the cottage, where her things had been left on a bench close by the place where Stepan Trofimovitch had seated himself. Among them was a portfolio, at which he remembered he had looked with curiosity on going in, and a pack, not very large, of American leather. From this pack she took out two nicely bound books with a cross engraved on the cover, and offered them to Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Et ... mais je crois que c'est l'Evangile ... with the greatest pleasure... . Ah, now I understand... . Vous etes ce qu'on appelle a gospel-woman; I've read more than once... . Half a rouble?"

"Thirty-five kopecks," answered the gospel-woman. "With the greatest pleasure. Je n'ai rien centre l'Evangile, and I've been wanting to re-read it for a long time... ."

The idea occurred to him at the moment that he had not read the gospel for thirty years at least, and at most had recalled some passages of it, seven years before, when reading Kenan's "Vie de Jesus." As he had no small change he pulled out his four ten-rouble notes—all that he had. The woman of the house undertook to get change, and only then he noticed, looking round, that a good many people had come into the cottage, and that they had all been watching him for some time past, and seemed to be talking about him. They were talking too of the fire in the town, especially the owner of the cart who had only just returned from the town with the cow. They talked of arson, of the Shpigulin men.

"He said nothing to me about the fire when he brought me along, although he talked of everything," struck Stepan Trofimovitch for some reason.

"Master, Stepan Trofimovitch, sir, is it you I see? Well, I never should have thought it! ... Don't you know me?" exclaimed a middle-aged man who looked like an old-fashioned house-serf, wearing no beard and dressed in an overcoat with a wide turn-down collar. Stepan Trofimovitch was alarmed at hearing his own name.

"Excuse me," he muttered, "I don't quite remember you."

"You don't remember me. I am Anisim, Anisim Ivanov. I used to be in the service of the late Mr. Gaganov, and many's the time I've seen you, sir, with Varvara Petrovna at the late Avdotya Sergyevna's. I used to go to you with books from her, and twice I brought you Petersburg sweets from her... ."

“Why, yes, I remember you, Anisim,” said Stepan Trofimovitch, smiling. “Do you live here?”

“I live near Spasov, close to the V—— Monastery, in the service of Marta Sergyevna, Avdotya Sergyevna’s sister. Perhaps your honour remembers her; she broke her leg falling out of her carriage on her way to a ball. Now her honour lives near the monastery, and I am in her service. And now as your honour sees, I am on my way to the town to see my kinsfolk.”

“Quite so, quite so.”

“I felt so pleased when I saw you, you used to be so kind to me,” Anisim smiled delightedly. “But where are you travelling to, sir, all by yourself as it seems... . You’ve never been a journey alone, I fancy?”

Stepan Trofimovitch looked at him in alarm.

“You are going, maybe, to our parts, to Spasov?”

“Yes, I am going to Spasov. Il me semble que tout le monde va a Spassof.”

“You don’t say it’s to Fyodor Matveyevitch’s? They will be pleased to see you. He had such a respect for you in old days; he often speaks of you now.”

“Yes, yes, to Fyodor Matveyevitch’s.”

“To be sure, to be sure. The peasants here are wondering; they make out they met you, sir, walking on the high road. They are a foolish lot.”

“I ... I ... Yes, you know, Anisim, I made a wager, you know, like an Englishman, that I would go on foot and I ...”

The perspiration came out on his forehead.

“To be sure, to be sure.” Anisim listened with merciless curiosity. But Stepan Trofimovitch could bear it no longer. He was so disconcerted that he was on the point of getting up and going out of the cottage. But the samovar was brought in, and at the same moment the gospel-woman, who had been out of the room, returned. With the air of a man clutching at a straw he turned to her and offered her tea. Anisim submitted and walked away.

The peasants certainly had begun to feel perplexed: “What sort of person is he? He was found walking on the high road, he says he is a teacher, he is dressed like a foreigner, and has no more sense than a little child; he answers queerly as though he had run away from some one, and he’s got money!” An idea was beginning to gain ground that information must be given to the authorities, “especially as things weren’t quite right in the town.” But Anisim set all that right in a minute. Going into the passage he explained to every one who cared to listen that Stepan Trofimovitch was not exactly a teacher but “a very learned man and busy with very learned studies, and was a landowner of the district himself, and had been living for twenty-two years with her excellency, the general’s widow, the stout Madame Stavrogin, and was by way of being the most important person in her house, and was held in the greatest respect by every one in the town. He used to lose by fifties and hundreds in an evening at the club of the nobility, and in rank he was a councillor, which was equal to a lieutenant-colonel in the army, which was next door to being a colonel. As for his having money, he had

so much from the stout Madame Stavrogin that there was no reckoning it”—and so on and so on.

“Mais c’est une. dame et tres comme il faut,” thought Stepan Trofimovitch, as he recovered from Anisim’s attack, gazing with agreeable curiosity at his neighbour, the gospel pedlar, who was, however, drinking the tea from a saucer and nibbling at a piece of sugar. “Ce petit morceau de sucre, ce n’est rien... . There is something noble and independent about her, and at the same time—gentle. Le comme il faut tout pur, but rather in a different style.”

He soon learned from her that her name was Sofya Matveyevna Ulitin and she lived at K——, that she had a sister there, a widow; that she was a widow too, and that her husband, who was a sub-lieutenant risen from the ranks, had been killed at Sevastopol.

“But you are still so young, vous n’avez pas trente ans.”

“Thirty-four,” said Sofya Matveyevna, smiling.

“What, you understand French?”

“A little. I lived for four years after that in a gentleman’s family, and there I picked it up from the children.”

She told him that being left a widow at eighteen she was for some time in Sevastopol as a nurse, and had afterwards lived in various places, and now she travelled about selling the gospel.

“Mais, mon Dieu, wasn’t it you who had a strange adventure in our town, a very strange adventure?”

She flushed; it turned out that it had been she.

“Ces vauriens, ces malheureux,” he began in a voice quivering with indignation; miserable and hateful recollections stirred painfully in his heart. For a minute he seemed to sink into oblivion.

“Bah, but she’s gone away again,” he thought, with a start, noticing that she was not by his side. “She keeps going out and is busy about something; I notice that she seems upset too... . Bah, je deviens egoiste!”

He raised his eyes and saw Anisim again, but this time in the most menacing surroundings. The whole cottage was full of peasants, and it was evidently Anisim who had brought them all in. Among them were the master of the house, and the peasant with the cow, two other peasants (they turned out to be cab-drivers), another little man, half drunk, dressed like a peasant but clean-shaven, who seemed like a townsman ruined by drink and talked more than any of them. And they were all discussing him, Stepan Trofimovitch. The peasant with the cow insisted on his point that to go round by the lake would be thirty-five miles out of the way, and that he certainly must go by steamer. The half-drunken man and the man of the house warmly retorted:

“Seeing that, though of course it will be nearer for his honour on the steamer over the lake; that’s true enough, but maybe according to present arrangements the steamer doesn’t go there, brother.”

“It does go, it does, it will go for another week,” cried Anisim, more excited than any of them.

“That’s true enough, but it doesn’t arrive punctually, seeing it’s late in the season, and sometimes it’ll stay three days together at Ustyevo.”

“It’ll be there to-morrow at two o’clock punctually. You’ll be at Spasov punctually by the evening,” cried Anisim, eager to do his best for Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Mais qu’est-ce qu’il a, cet homme,” thought Stepan Trofimovitch, trembling and waiting in terror for what was in store for him.

The cab-drivers, too, came forward and began bargaining with him; they asked three roubles to Ustyevo. The others shouted that that was not too much, that that was the fare, and that they had been driving from here to Ustyevo all the summer for that fare.

“But ... it’s nice here too... . And I don’t want ...” Stepan Trofimovitch mumbled in protest.

“Nice it is, sir, you are right there, it’s wonderfully nice at Spasov now and Fyodor Matveyevitch will be so pleased to see you.”

“Man Dieu, mes amis, all this is such a surprise to me.”

At last Sofya Matveyevna came back. But she sat down on the bench looking dejected and mournful.

“I can’t get to Spasov!” she said to the woman of the cottage.

“Why, you are bound to Spasov, too, then?” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, starting.

It appeared that a lady had the day before told her to wait at Hatovo and had promised to take her to Spasov, and now this lady had not turned up after all.

“What am I to do now?” repeated Sofya Matveyevna.

“Mais, ma chere et nouvelle amie, I can take you just as well as the lady to that village, whatever it is, to which I’ve hired horses, and to-morrow—well, to-morrow, we’ll go on together to Spasov.”

“Why, are you going to Spasov too?”

“Mais que faire, et je suis enchante! I shall take you with the greatest pleasure; you see they want to take me, I’ve engaged them already. Which of you did I engage?” Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly felt an intense desire to go to Spasov.

Within a quarter of an hour they were getting into a covered trap, he very lively and quite satisfied, she with her pack beside him, with a grateful smile on her face. Anisim helped them in.

“A good journey to you, sir,” said he, bustling officiously round the trap, “it has been a treat to see you.”

“Good-bye, good-bye, my friend, good-bye.”

“You’ll see Fyodor Matveyevitch, sir ...”

“Yes, my friend, yes ... Fyodor Petrovitch ... only good-bye.”

2

“You see, my friend ... you’ll allow me to call myself your friend, n’est-ce pas?” Stepan Trofimovitch began hurriedly as soon as the trap started. “You see I ... J’aime

le peuple, c'est indispensable, mais il me semble que je ne m'avais jamais vu de pres. Stasie ... cela va sans dire qu'elle est aussi du peuple, mais le vrai peuple, that is, the real ones, who are on the high road, it seems to me they care for nothing, but where exactly I am going ... But let bygones be bygones. I fancy I am talking at , random, but I believe it's from being flustered."

"You don't seem quite well." Sofya Matveyevna watched him' keenly though respectfully.

"No, no, I must only wrap myself up, besides there's a fresh wind, very fresh in fact, but ... let us forget that. That's not what I really meant to say. Chere et incomparable amie, I feel that I am almost happy, and it's your doing. Happiness is not good for me for it makes me rush to forgive all my enemies at once... ."

"Why, that's a very good thing, sir."

"Not always, chere innocente. L'Evangile ... voyez-vous, desormais nous precherons ensemble and I will gladly sell your beautiful little books. Yes, I feel that that perhaps is an idea, quelque chose de tres nouveau dans ce genre. The peasants are religious, c'est admis, but they don't yet know the gospel. I will expound it to them... . By verbal explanation one might correct the mistakes in that remarkable book, which I am of course prepared to treat with the utmost respect. I will be of service even on the high road. I've always been of use, I always told them so et d, cette chere ingrate... . Oh, we will forgive, we will forgive, first of all we will forgive all and always... . We will hope that we too shall be forgiven. Yes, for all, every one of us, have wronged one another, all are guilty!"

"That's a very good saying, I think, sir."

"Yes, yes. ... I feel that I am speaking well. I shall speak to them very well, but what was the chief thing I meant to say? I keep losing the thread and forgetting... . Will you allow me to remain with you? I feel that the look in your eyes and ... I am surprised in fact at your manners. You are simple-hearted, you call me 'sir,' and turn your cup upside down on your saucer ... and that horrid lump of sugar; but there's something charming about you, and I see from your features... Oh, don't blush and don't be afraid of me as a man. Chere et incomparable, pour moi une femme c'est tout. I can't live without a woman, but only at her side, only at her side; ... I am awfully muddled, awfully. I can't remember what I meant to say. Oh, blessed is he to whom God always sends a woman and ... and I fancy, indeed, that I am in a sort of ecstasy. There's a lofty idea in the open road too! That's what I meant to say, that's it—about the idea. Now I've remembered it, but I kept losing it before. And why have they taken us farther. It was nice there too, but here— cela dement trop froid. A propos, j'ai en tout quarante roubles et voila cet argent, take it, take it, I can't take care of it, I shall lose it or it will be taken away from me. ... I seem to be sleepy, I've a giddiness in my head. Yes, I am giddy, I am giddy, I am giddy. Oh, how kind you are, what's that you are wrapping me up in?"

"You are certainly in a regular fever and I've covered you with my rug; only about the money, I'd rather."

“Oh, for God’s sake, n’en parlous plus parce que cela me fait mal. Oh, how kind you are!”

He ceased speaking, and with strange suddenness dropped into a feverish shivery sleep. The road by which they drove the twelve miles was not a smooth one, and their carriage jolted cruelly. Stepan Trofimovitch woke up frequently, quickly raised his head from the little pillow which Sofya Matveyevna had slipped under it, clutched her by the hand and asked “Are you here?” as though he were afraid she had left him. He told her, too, that he had dreamed of gaping jaws full of teeth, and that he had very much disliked it. Sofya Matveyevna was in great anxiety about him.

They were driven straight up to a large cottage with a frontage of four windows and other rooms in the yard. Stepan Trofimovitch waked up, hurriedly went in and walked straight into the second room, which was the largest and best in the house. An expression of fussiness came into his sleepy face. He spoke at once to the landlady, a tall, thick-set woman of forty with very dark hair and a slight moustache, and explained that he required the whole room for himself, and that the door was to be shut and no one else was to be admitted, “parce que nous avons a parler. Oui, fai beaucoup a vous dire, chere amie. I’ll pay you, I’ll pay you,” he said with a wave of dismissal to the landlady.

Though he was in a hurry, he seemed to articulate with difficulty. The landlady listened grimly, and was silent in token of consent, but there was a feeling of something menacing about her silence. He did not notice this, and hurriedly (he was in a terrible hurry) insisted on her going away and bringing them their dinner as quickly as possible, without a moment’s delay.

At that point the moustached woman could contain herself no longer.

“This is not an inn, sir; we don’t provide dinners for travellers. We can boil you some crayfish or set the samovar, but we’ve nothing more. There won’t be fresh fish till to-morrow.”

But Stepan Trofimovitch waved his hands, repeating with wrathful impatience: “I’ll pay, only make haste, make haste.”

They settled on fish, soup, and roast fowl; the landlady declared that fowl was not to be procured in the whole village; she agreed, however, to go in search of one, but with the air of doing him an immense favour.

As soon as she had gone Stepan Trofimovitch instantly sat down on the sofa and made Sofya Matveyevna sit down beside him. There were several arm-chairs as well as a sofa in the room, but they were of a most uninviting appearance. The room was rather a large one, with a corner, in which there was a bed, partitioned off. It was covered with old and tattered yellow paper, and had horrible lithographs of mythological subjects on the walls; in the corner facing the door there was a long row of painted ikons and several sets of brass ones. The whole room with its strangely ill-assorted furniture was an unattractive mixture of the town element and of peasant traditions. But he did not even glance at it all, nor look out of the window at the vast lake, the edge of which was only seventy feet from the cottage.

“At last we are by ourselves and we will admit no one! I want to tell you everything, everything from the very beginning.”

Sofya Matveyevna checked him with great uneasiness.

“Are you aware, Stepan Trofimovitch? ...”

“Comment, vous savez *deja mon nom*?” He smiled with delight.

“I heard it this morning from Anisim Ivanovitch when you were talking to him. But I venture to tell you for my part ...”

And she whispered hurriedly to him, looking nervously at the closed door for fear anyone should overhear — that here in this village, it was dreadful. That though all the peasants were fishermen, they made their living chiefly by charging travellers every summer whatever they thought fit. The village was not on the high road but an out-of-the-way one, and people only called there because the steamers stopped there, and that when the steamer did not call — and if the weather was in the least unfavourable, it would not — then numbers of travellers would be waiting there for several days, and all the cottages in the village would be occupied, and that was just the villagers’ opportunity, for they charged three times its value for everything—and their landlord here was proud and stuck up because he was, for these parts, very rich; he had a net which had cost a thousand roubles.

Stepan Trofimovitch looked almost reproachfully at Sofya Matveyevna’s extremely excited face, and several times he made a motion to stop her. But she persisted and said all she had to say: she said she had been there before already in the summer “with a very genteel lady from the town,” and stayed there too for two whole days till the steamer came, and what they had to put up with did not bear thinking of. “Here, Stepan Trofimovitch, you’ve been pleased to ask for this room for yourself alone. ... I only speak to warn you. ... In the other room there are travellers already. An elderly man and a young man and a lady with children, and by to-morrow before two o’clock the whole house will be filled up, for since the steamer hasn’t been here for two days it will be sure to come to-morrow. So for a room apart and for ordering dinner, and for putting out the other travellers, they’ll charge you a price unheard of even in the capital... .”

But he was in distress, in real distress. “*Assez, mon enfant, I beseech you, nous avons notre argent—et apres, le bon Dieu. And I am surprised that, with the loftiness of your ideas, you ... Assez, assez, vous me tourmentez,*” he articulated hysterically, “we have all our future before us, and you ... you fill me with alarm for the future.”

He proceeded at once to unfold his whole story with such haste that at first it was difficult to understand him. It went on for a long time. The soup was served, the fowl was brought in, followed at last by the samovar, and still he talked on. He told it somewhat strangely and hysterically, and indeed he was ill. It was a sudden, extreme effort of his intellectual faculties, which was bound in his overstrained condition, of course—Sofya Matveyevna foresaw it with distress all the time he was talking—to result immediately afterwards in extreme exhaustion. He began his story almost with his childhood, when, “with fresh heart, he ran about the meadows; it was an hour

before he reached his two marriages and his life in Berlin. I dare not laugh, however. It really was for him a matter of the utmost importance, and to adopt the modern jargon, almost a question of struggling for existence." He saw before him the woman whom he had already elected to share his new life, and was in haste to consecrate her, so to speak. His genius must not be hidden from her... . Perhaps he had formed a very exaggerated estimate of Sofya Matveyevna, but he had already chosen her. He could not exist without a woman. He saw clearly from her face that she hardly understood him, and could not grasp even the most essential part. "Ce n'est rien, nous attendrons, and meanwhile she can feel it intuitively... . My friend, I need nothing but your heart!" he exclaimed, interrupting his narrative, "and that sweet enchanting look with which you are gazing at me now. Oh, don't blush! I've told you already ..." The poor woman who had fallen into his hands found much that was obscure, especially when his autobiography almost passed into a complete dissertation on the fact that no one had been ever able to understand Stepan Trofimovitch, and that "men of genius are wasted in Russia." It was all "so very intellectual," she reported afterwards dejectedly. She listened in evident misery, rather round-eyed. When Stepan Trofimovitch fell into a humorous vein and threw off witty sarcasms at the expense of our advanced and governing classes, she twice made grievous efforts to laugh in response to his laughter, but the result was worse than tears, so that Stepan Trofimovitch was at last embarrassed by it himself and attacked "the nihilists and modern people" with all the greater wrath and zest. At this point he simply alarmed her, and it was not until he began upon the romance of his life that she felt some slight relief, though that too was deceptive. A woman is always a woman even if she is a nun. She smiled, shook her head and then blushed crimson and dropped her eyes, which roused Stepan Trofimovitch to absolute ecstasy and inspiration so much that he began fibbing freely. Varvara Petrovna appeared in his story as an enchanting brunette (who had been the rage of Petersburg and many European capitals) and her husband "had been struck down on the field of Sevastopol" simply because he had felt unworthy of her love, and had yielded her to his rival, that is, Stepan Trofimovitch. ... "Don't be shocked, my gentle one, my Christian," he exclaimed to Sofya Matveyevna, almost believing himself in all that he was telling, "it was something so lofty, so subtle, that we never spoke of it to one another all our lives." As the story went on, the cause of this position of affairs appeared to be a blonde lady (if not Darya Pavlovna I don't know of whom Stepan Trofimovitch could have been thinking), this blonde owed everything to the brunette, and had grown up in her house, being a distant relation. The brunette observing at last the love of the blonde girl to Stepan Trofimovitch, kept her feelings locked up in her heart. The blonde girl, noticing on her part the love of the brunette to Stepan Trofimovitch, also locked her feelings in her own heart. And all three, pining with mutual magnanimity, kept silent in this way for twenty years, locking their feelings in their hearts. "Oh, what a passion that was, what a passion that was!" he exclaimed with a stifled sob of genuine ecstasy. "I saw the full blooming of her beauty" (of the brunette's, that is), "I saw daily with an ache in my heart how she passed by me as though ashamed she was so fair" (once

he said “ashamed she was so fat”). At last he had run away, casting off all this feverish dream of twenty years—vingt ans— and now here he was on the high road... .

Then in a sort of delirium he began explaining to Sofya Matveyevna the significance of their meeting that day, “so chance an encounter and so fateful for all eternity.” Sofya Matveyevna got up from the sofa in terrible confusion at last. He had positively made an attempt to drop on his knees before her, which made her cry. It was beginning to get dark. They had been for some hours shut up in the room... .

“No, you’d better let me go into the other room,” she faltered, “or else there’s no knowing what people may think... .”

She tore herself away at last; he let her go, promising her to go to bed at once. As they parted he complained that he had a bad headache. Sofya Matveyevna had on entering the cottage left her bag and things in the first room, meaning to spend the night with the people of the house; but she got no rest.

In the night Stepan Trofimovitch was attacked by the malady with which I and all his friends were so familiar—the summer cholera, which was always the outcome of any nervous strain or moral shock with him. Poor Sofya Matveyevna did not sleep all night. As in waiting on the invalid she was obliged pretty often to go in and out of the cottage through the landlady’s room, the latter, as well as the travellers who were sleeping there, grumbled and even began swearing when towards morning she set about preparing the samovar. Stepan Trofimovitch was half unconscious all through the attack; at times he had a vision of the samovar being set, of some one giving him something to drink (raspberry tea), and putting something warm to his stomach and his chest. But he felt almost every instant that she was here, beside him; that it was she going out and coming in, lifting him off the bed and settling him in it again. Towards three o’clock in the morning he began to be easier; he sat up, put his legs out of bed and thinking of nothing he fell on the floor at her feet. This was a very different matter from the kneeling of the evening; he simply bowed down at her feet and kissed the hem of her dress.

“Don’t, sir, I am not worth it,” she faltered, trying to get him back on to the bed.

“My saviour,” he cried, clasping his hands reverently before her. “Vous etes noble comme une marquise! I—I am a wretch. Oh, I’ve been dishonest all my life... .”

“Calm yourself!” Sofya Matveyevna implored him.

“It was all lies that I told you this evening—to glorify myself, to make it splendid, from pure wantonness—all, all, every word, oh, I am a wretch, I am a wretch!”

The first attack was succeeded in this way by a second—an attack of hysterical remorse. I have mentioned these attacks already when I described his letters to Varvara Petrovna. He suddenly recalled Lise and their meeting the previous morning. “It was so awful, and there must have been some disaster and I didn’t ask, didn’t find out! I thought only of myself. Oh, what’s the matter with her? Do you know what’s the matter with her?” he besought Sofya Matveyevna.

Then he swore that “he would never change,” that he would go back to her (that is, Varvara Petrovna). “We” (that is, he and Sofya Matveyevna) “will go to her steps every

day when she is getting into her carriage for her morning drive, and we will watch her in secret... . Oh, I wish her to smite me on the other cheek; it's a joy to wish it! I shall turn her my other cheek comme dans votre livre! Only now for the first time I understand what is meant by ... turning the other cheek. I never understood before!"

The two days that followed were among the most terrible in Sofya Matveyevna's life; she remembers them with a shudder to this day. Stepan Trofimovitch became so seriously ill that he could not go on board the steamer, which on this occasion arrived punctually at two o'clock in the afternoon. She could not bring herself to leave him alone, so she did not leave for Spasov either. From her account he was positively delighted at the steamer's going without him.

"Well, that's a good thing, that's capital!" he muttered in his bed. "I've been afraid all the time that we should go. Here it's so nice, better than anywhere... . You won't leave me? Oh, you have not left me!"

It was by no means so nice "here" however. He did not care to hear of her difficulties; his head was full of fancies and nothing else. He looked upon his illness as something transitory, a trifling ailment, and did not think about it at all; he thought of nothing but how they would go and sell "these books." He asked her to read him the gospel.

"I haven't read it for a long time ... in the original. Some one may ask me about it and I shall make a mistake; I ought to prepare myself after all."

She sat down beside him and opened the book.

"You read beautifully," he interrupted her after the first line. "I see, I see I was not mistaken," he added obscurely but ecstatically. He was, in fact, in a continual state of enthusiasm. She read the Sermon on the Mount.

"Assez, assez, man enfant, enough... . Don't you think that that is enough?"

And he closed his eyes helplessly. He was very weak, but had not yet lost consciousness. Sofya Matveyevna was getting up, thinking that he wanted to sleep. But he stopped her.

"My friend, I've been telling lies all my life. Even when I told the truth I never spoke for the sake of the truth, but always for my own sake. I knew it before, but I only see it now... . Oh, where are those friends whom I have insulted with my friendship all my life? And all, all! Savez-vous ... perhaps I am telling lies now; no doubt I am telling lies now. The worst of it is that I believe myself when I am lying. The hardest thing in life is to live without telling lies ... and without believing in one's lies. Yes, yes, that's just it. ... But wait a bit, that can all come afterwards... . We'll be together, together," he added enthusiastically.

"Stepan Trofimovitch," Sofya Matveyevna asked timidly, "hadn't I better send to the town for the doctor?"

He was tremendously taken aback.

"What for? Est-ce que je suis si malade? Mais rien de serieux. What need have we of outsiders? They may find, besides—and what will happen then? No, no, no outsiders and we'll be together."

“Do you know,” he said after a pause, “read me something more, just the first thing you come across.”

Sofya Matveyevna opened the Testament and began reading.

“Wherever it opens, wherever it happens to open,” he repeated.

“‘And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans ...’”

“What’s that? What is it? Where is that from?”

“It’s from the R-Revelation.”

“Oh, je m’en souviens, oui, l’Apocalypse. Lisez, lisez, I am trying our future fortunes by the book. I want to know what has turned up. Read on from there... .”

“‘And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

‘I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.

‘So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

‘Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ “

“That too ... and that’s in your book too!” he exclaimed, with flashing eyes and raising his head from the pillow. “I never knew that grand passage! You hear, better be cold, better be cold than lukewarm, than only lukewarm. Oh, I’ll prove it! Only don’t leave me, don’t leave me alone! We’ll prove it, we’ll prove it!”

“I won’t leave you, Stepan Trofimovitch. I’ll never leave you!” She took his hand, pressed it in both of hers, and laid it against her heart, looking at him with tears in her eyes. (“I felt very sorry for him at that moment,” she said, describing it afterwards.)

His lips twitched convulsively.

“But, Stepan Trofimovitch, what are we to do though? Oughtn’t we to let some of your friends know, or perhaps your relations?”

But at that he was so dismayed that she was very sorry that she had spoken of it again. Trembling and shaking, he besought her to fetch no one, not to do anything. He kept insisting, “No one, no one! We’ll be alone, by ourselves, alone, nous partirons ensemble.”

Another difficulty was that the people of the house too began to be uneasy; they grumbled, and kept pestering Sofya Matveyevna. She paid them and managed to let them see her money. This softened them for the time, but the man insisted on seeing Stepan Trofimovitch’s “papers.” The invalid pointed with a supercilious smile to his little bag. Sofya Matveyevna found in it the certificate of his having resigned his post at the university, or something of the kind, which had served him as a passport all his life. The man persisted, and said that “he must be taken somewhere, because their house wasn’t a hospital, and if he were to die there might be a bother. We should have no end of trouble.” Sofya Matveyevna tried to speak to him of the doctor, but it appeared that sending to the town would cost so much that she had to give up all idea

of the doctor. She returned in distress to her invalid. Stepan Trofimovitch was getting weaker and weaker.

“Now read me another passage... . About the pigs,” he said suddenly.

“What?” asked Sofya Matveyevna, very much alarmed. “About the pigs ... that’s there too ... ces cochons. I remember the devils entered into swine and they all were drowned. You must read me that; I’ll tell you why afterwards. I want to remember it word for word. I want it word for word.”

Sofya Matveyevna knew the gospel well and at once found the passage in St. Luke which I have chosen as the motto of my record. I quote it here again:

“And there was there one herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

“Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

“When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

“Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.”

“My friend,” said Stepan Trofimovitch in great excitement “savez-vous, that wonderful and ... extraordinary passage has been a stumbling-block to me all my life ... dans ce livre so much so that I remembered those verses from childhood. Now an idea has occurred to me; une comparaison. A great number of ideas keep coming into my mind now. You see, that’s exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores, all the foul contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages. Oui, cette Russie que j’aimais toujours. But a great idea and a great Will will encompass it from on high, as with that lunatic possessed of devils ... and all those devils will come forth, all the impurity, all the rottenness that was putrefying on the surface ... and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine; and indeed maybe they have entered into them already! They are we, we and those ... and Petrusha and les autres avec lui ... and I perhaps at the head of them, and we shall cast ourselves down, possessed and raving, from the rocks into the sea, and we shall all be drowned— and a good thing too, for that is all we are fit for. But the sick man will be healed and ‘will sit at the feet of Jesus,’ and all will look upon him with astonishment... . My dear, vous comprendrez apres, but now it excites me very much... . Vous comprendrez apres. Nous comprendrons ensemble.”

He sank into delirium and at last lost consciousness. So it went on all the following day. Sofya Matveyevna sat beside him, crying. She scarcely slept at all for three nights, and avoided seeing the people of the house, who were, she felt, beginning to take some steps. Deliverance only came on the third day. In the morning Stepan Trofimovitch returned to consciousness, recognised her, and held out his hand to her. She crossed herself hopefully. He wanted to look out of the window. “Tiens, un lac!” he said. “Good

heavens, I had not seen it before! ...” At that moment there was the rumble of a carriage at the cottage door and a great hubbub in the house followed.

3

It was Varvara Petrovna herself. She had arrived, with Darya Pavlovna, in a closed carriage drawn by four horses, with two footmen. The marvel had happened in the simplest way: Anisim, dying of curiosity, went to Varvara Petrovna’s the day after he reached the town and gossiped to the servants, telling them he had met Stepan Trofimovitch alone in a village, that the latter had been seen by peasants walking by himself on the high road, and that he had set off for Spasov by way of Ustyevo accompanied by Sofya Matveyevna. As Varvara Petrovna was, for her part, in terrible anxiety and had done everything she could to find her fugitive friend, she was at once told about Anisim. When she had heard his story, especially the details of the departure for Ustyevo in a cart in the company of some Sofya Matveyevna, she instantly got ready and set off post-haste for Ustyevo herself.

Her stern and peremptory voice resounded through the cottage; even the landlord and his wife were intimidated. She had only stopped to question them and make inquiries, being persuaded that Stepan Trofimovitch must have reached Spasov long before. Learning that he was still here and ill, she entered the cottage in great agitation.

“Well, where is he? Ah, that’s you!” she cried, seeing Sofya Matveyevna, who appeared at that very instant in the doorway of the next room. “I can guess from your shameless face that it’s you. Go away, you vile hussy! Don’t let me find a trace of her in the house! Turn her out, or else, my girl, I’ll get you locked up for good. Keep her safe for a time in another house. She’s been in prison once already in the town; she can go back there again. And you, my good man, don’t dare to let anyone in while I am here, I beg of you. I am Madame Stavrogin, and I’ll take the whole house. As for you, my dear, you’ll have to give me a full account of it all.”

The familiar sounds overwhelmed Stepan Trofimovitch. He began to tremble. But she had already stepped behind the screen. With flashing eyes she drew up a chair with her foot, and, sinking back in it, she shouted to Dasha:

“Go away for a time! Stay in the other room. Why are you so inquisitive? And shut the door properly after you.”

For some time she gazed in silence with a sort of predatory look into his frightened face.

“Well, how are you getting on, Stepan Trofimovitch? So you’ve been enjoying yourself?” broke from her with ferocious irony.

“Chere,” Stepan Trofimovitch faltered, not knowing what he was saying, “I’ve learnt to know real life in Russia ... et je precherai l’Evangile.”

“Oh, shameless, ungrateful man!” she wailed suddenly, clasping her hands. ” As though you had not disgraced me enough, you’ve taken up with ... oh, you shameless old reprobate!”

“Chere . .

.” His voice failed him and he could not articulate a syllable but simply gazed with eyes wide with horror.

“Who is she?”

“C’est un ange; c’était plus qu’un ange pour moi. She’s been all night ... Oh, don’t shout, don’t frighten her, chere, chere ...”

With a loud noise, Varvara Petrovna pushed back her chair, uttering a loud cry of alarm.

“Water, water!”

Though he returned to consciousness, she was still shaking with terror, and, with pale cheeks, looked at his distorted face. It was only then, for the first time, that she guessed the seriousness of his illness.

“Darya,” she whispered suddenly to Darya Pavlovna, “send at once for the doctor, for Salzfish; let Yegorytch go at once. Let him hire horses here and get another carriage from the town. He must be here by night.”

Dasha flew to do her bidding. Stepan Trofimovitch still gazed at her with the same wide-open, frightened eyes; his blanched lips quivered.

“Wait a bit, Stepan Trofimovitch, wait a bit, my dear!” she said, coaxing him like a child. “There, there, wait a bit! Darya will come back and ... My goodness, the landlady, the landlady, you come, anyway, my good woman!”

In her impatience she ran herself to the landlady.

“Fetch that woman back at once, this minute. Bring her back, bring her back!”

Fortunately Sofya Matveyevna had not yet had time to get away and was only just going out of the gate with her pack and her bag. She was brought back. She was so panic-stricken that she was trembling in every limb. Varvara Petrovna pounced on her like a hawk on a chicken, seized her by the hand and dragged her impulsively to Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Here, here she is, then. I’ve not eaten her. You thought I’d eaten her.”

Stepan Trofimovitch clutched Varvara Petrovna’s hand, raised it to his eyes, and burst into tears, sobbing violently and convulsively.

“There, calm yourself, there, there, my dear, there, poor dear man’! Ach, mercy on us! Calm yourself, will you?” she shouted frantically. “Oh, you bane of my life!”

“My dear,” Stepan Trofimovitch murmured at last, addressing Sofya Matveyevna, “stay out there, my dear, I want to say something here. ...”

Sofya Matveyevna hurried out at once.

“Cherie ... cherie ...” he gasped.

“Don’t talk for a bit, Stepan Trofimovitch, wait a little till you’ve rested. Here’s some water. Do wait, will you!”

She sat down on the chair again. Stepan Trofimovitch held her hand tight. For a long while she would not allow him to speak. He raised her hand to his lips and fell to kissing it. She set her teeth and looked away into the corner of the room.

“Je vous aimais,” broke from him at last. She had never heard such words from him, uttered in such a voice.

“H’m!” she growled in response.

“Je vous aimais toute ma vie ... vingt ans!”

She remained silent for two or three minutes.

“And when you were getting yourself up for Dasha you sprinkled yourself with scent,” she said suddenly, in a terrible whisper.

Stepan Trofimovitch was dumbfounded.

“You put on a new tie ...”

Again silence for two minutes.

“Do you remember the cigar?”

“My friend,” he faltered, overcome with horror.

“That cigar at the window in the evening ... the moon was shining ... after the harbour ... at Skvoreshniki? Do you remember, do you remember?” She jumped up from her place, seized his pillow by the corners and shook it with his head on it. “Do you remember, you worthless, worthless, ignoble, cowardly, worthless man, always worthless!” she hissed in her furious whisper, restraining herself from speaking loudly. At last she left him and sank on the chair, covering her face with her hands. “Enough!” she snapped out, drawing herself up. “Twenty years have passed, there’s no calling them back. I am a fool too.”

“Je vous aimais.” He clasped his hands again.

“Why do you keep on with your aimais and aimais? Enough!” she cried, leaping up again. “And if you don’t go to sleep at once I’ll ... You need rest; go to sleep, go to sleep at once, shut your eyes. Ach, mercy on us, perhaps he wants some lunch! What do you eat? What does he eat? Ach, mercy on us! Where is that woman? Where is she?”

There was a general bustle again. But Stepan Trofimovitch faltered in a weak voice that he really would like to go to sleep une heure, and then un bouillon, un the... . enfin il est si heureux. He lay back and really did seem to go to sleep (he probably pretended to). Varvara Petrovna waited a little, and stole out on tiptoe from behind the partition.

She settled herself in the landlady’s room, turned out the landlady and her husband, and told Dasha to bring her that woman. There followed an examination in earnest.

“Tell me all about it, my good girl. Sit down beside me; that’s right. Well?”

“I met Stepan Trofimovitch ...”

“Stay, hold your tongue! I warn you that if you tell lies or conceal anything, I’ll ferret it out. Well?”

“Stepan Trofimovitch and I ... as soon as I came to Hatovo ...” Sofya Matveyevna began almost breathlessly.

“Stay, hold your tongue, wait a bit! Why do you gabble like that? To begin with, what sort of creature are you?”

Sofya Matveyevna told her after a fashion, giving a very brief account of herself, however, beginning with Sevastopol. Varvara Petrovna listened in silence, sitting up erect in her chair, looking sternly straight into the speaker's eyes.

"Why are you so frightened? Why do you look at the ground? I like people who look me straight in the face and hold their own with me. Go on."

She told of their meeting, of her books, of how Stepan Trofimovitch had regaled the peasant woman with vodka ... "That's right, that's right, don't leave out the slightest detail," Varvara Petrovna encouraged her.

At last she described how they had set off, and how Stepan Trofimovitch had gone on talking, "really ill by that time," and here had given an account of his life from the very beginning, talking for some hours. "Tell me about his life."

Sofya Matveyevna suddenly stopped and was completely nonplussed.

"I can't tell you anything about that, madam," she brought out, almost crying; "besides, I could hardly understand a word of it."

"Nonsense! You must have understood something."

"He told a long time about a distinguished lady with black hair." Sofya Matveyevna flushed terribly though she noticed Varvara Petrovna's fair hair and her complete dissimilarity with the "brunette" of the story.

"Black-haired? What exactly? Come, speak!"

"How this grand lady was deeply in love with his honour all her life long and for twenty years, but never dared to speak, and was shamefaced before him because she was a very stout lady... ."

"The fool!" Varvara Petrovna rapped out thoughtfully but resolutely.

Sofya Matveyevna was in tears by now.

"I don't know how to tell any of it properly, madam, because I was in a great fright over his honour; and I couldn't understand, as he is such an intellectual gentleman."

"It's not for a goose like you to judge of his intellect. Did he offer you his hand?"

The speaker trembled.

"Did he fall in love with you? Speak! Did he offer you his hand?" Varvara Petrovna shouted peremptorily.

"That was pretty much how it was," she murmured tearfully. "But I took it all to mean nothing, because of his illness," she added firmly, raising her eyes.

"What is your name?"

"Sofya Matveyevna, madam,"

"Well, then, let me tell you, Sofya Matveyevna, that he is a wretched and worthless little man... . Good Lord! Do you look upon me as a wicked woman '!"

Sofya Matveyevna gazed open-eyed.

"A wicked woman, a tyrant? Who has ruined his life?"

"How can that be when you are crying yourself, madam?"

Varvara Petrovna actually had tears in her eyes.

“Well, sit down, sit down, don’t be frightened. Look me straight in the face again. Why are you blushing? Dasha, come here. Look at her. What do you think of her? Her heart is pure... .”

And to the amazement and perhaps still greater alarm of Sofya Matveyevna, she suddenly patted her on the cheek.

“It’s only a pity she is a fool. Too great a fool for her age. That’s all right, my dear, I’ll look after you. I see that it’s all nonsense. Stay near here for the time. A room shall be taken for you and you shall have food and everything else from me ... till I ask for you.”

Sofya Matveyevna stammered in alarm that she must hurry on.

“You’ve no need to hurry. I’ll buy all your books, and meantime you stay here. Hold your tongue; don’t make excuses. If I hadn’t come you would have stayed with him all the same, wouldn’t you?”

“I wouldn’t have left him on any account,” Sofya Matveyevna brought out softly and firmly, wiping her tears.

It was late at night when Doctor Salzfish was brought. He was a very respectable old man and a practitioner of fairly wide experience who had recently lost his post in the service in consequence of some quarrel on a point of honour with his superiors. Varvara Petrovna instantly and actively took him under her protection. He examined the patient attentively, questioned him, and cautiously pronounced to Varvara Petrovna that “the sufferer’s” condition was highly dubious in consequence of complications, and that they must be prepared “even for the worst.” Varvara Petrovna, who had during twenty years get accustomed to expecting nothing serious or decisive to come from Stepan Trofimovitch, was deeply moved and even turned pale. “Is there really no hope?”

“Can there ever be said to be absolutely no hope? But ...” She did not go to bed all night, and felt that the morning would never come. As soon as the patient opened his eyes and returned to consciousness (he was conscious all the time, however, though he was growing weaker every hour), she went up to him with a very resolute air.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, one must be prepared for anything. I’ve sent for a priest. You must do what is right... .”

Knowing his convictions, she was terribly afraid of his refusing. He looked at her with surprise.

“Nonsense, nonsense!” she vociferated, thinking he was already refusing. “This is no time for whims. You have played the fool enough.”

“But ... am I really so ill, then?”

He agreed thoughtfully. And indeed I was much surprised to learn from Varvara Petrovna afterwards that he showed no fear of death at all. Possibly it was that he simply did not believe it, and still looked upon his illness as a trifling one.

He confessed and took the sacrament very readily. Every one, Sofya Matveyevna, and even the servants, came to congratulate him on taking the sacrament. They were

all moved to tears looking at his sunken and exhausted face and his blanched and quivering lips.

“Oui, mes amis, and I only wonder that you ... take so much trouble. I shall most likely get up to-morrow, and we will ... set off... . Toute cette ceremonie ... for which, of course, I feel every proper respect ... was ...”

“I beg you, father, to remain with the in valid,” said Varvara Petrovna hurriedly, stopping the priest, who had already taken off his vestments. “As soon as tea has been handed, I beg you to begin to speak of religion, to support his faith.”

The priest spoke; every one was standing or sitting round the sick-bed.

“In our sinful days,” the priest began smoothly, with a cup of tea in his hand, “faith in the Most High is the sole refuge of the race of man in all the trials and tribulations of life, as well as its hope for that eternal bliss promised to the righteous.”

Stepan Trofimovitch seemed to revive, a subtle smile strayed on his lips.

“Man pere, je vous remercie et vous etes bien bon, mais ...”

“No mais about it, no mais at all!” exclaimed Varvara Petrovna, bounding up from her chair. “Father,” she said, addressing the priest, “he is a man who ... he is a man who ... You will have to confess him again in another hour! That’s the sort of man he is.”

Stepan Trofimovitch smiled faintly.

“My friends,” he said, “God is necessary to me, if only because He is the only being whom one can love eternally.”

Whether he was really converted, or whether the stately ceremony of the administration of the sacrament had impressed him and stirred the artistic responsiveness of his temperament or not, he firmly and, I am told, with great feeling uttered some words which were in flat contradiction with many of his former convictions.

“My immortality is necessary if only because God will not be guilty of injustice and extinguish altogether the flame of love for Him once kindled in my heart. And what is more precious than love? Love is higher than existence, love is the crown of existence; and how is it possible that existence should not be under its dominance? If I have once loved Him and rejoiced in my love, is it possible that He should extinguish me and my joy and bring me to nothingness again? If there is a God, then I am immortal. Voila ma profession de foi.”

“There is a God, Stepan Trofimovitch, I assure you there is,” Varvara Petrovna implored him. “Give it up, drop all your foolishness for once in your life!” (I think she had not quite understood his profession de foi.)

“My friend,” he said, growing more and more animated, though his voice broke frequently, “as soon as I understood ... that turning of the cheek, I ... understood something else as well. J’ai menti toute ma vie, all my life, all! I should like ... but that will do to-morrow... . To-morrow we will all set out.”

Varvara Petrovna burst into tears. He was looking about for some one.

“Here she is, she is here!” She seized Sofya Matveyevna by the hand and led her to him. He smiled tenderly.

“Oh, I should dearly like to live again!” he exclaimed with an extraordinary rush of energy. “Every minute, every instant of life ought to be a blessing to man ... they ought to be, they certainly ought to be! It’s the duty of man to make it so; that’s the law of his nature, which always exists even if hidden... . Oh, I wish I could see Petrusha ... and all of them ... Shatov ...”

I may remark that as yet no one had heard of Shatov’s fate— not Varvara Petrovna nor Darya Pavlovna, nor even Salzfish, who was the last to come from the town.

Stepan Trofimovitch became more and more excited, feverishly so, beyond his strength.

“The mere fact of the ever present idea that there exists something infinitely more just and more happy than I am fills me through and through with tender ecstasy—and glorifies me— oh, whoever I may be, whatever I have done! What is far more essential for man than personal happiness is to know and to believe at every instant that there is somewhere a perfect and serene happiness for all men and for everything... . The one essential condition of human existence is that man should always be able to bow down before something infinitely great. If men are deprived of the infinitely great they will not go on living and will die of despair. The Infinite and the Eternal are as essential for man as the little planet on which he dwells. My friends, all, all: hail to the Great Idea! The Eternal, Infinite Idea! It is essential to every man, whoever he may be, to bow down before what is the Great Idea. Even the stupidest man needs something great. Petrusha ... oh, how I want to see them all again! They don’t know, they don’t know that that same Eternal, Grand Idea lies in them all!”

Doctor Salzfish was not present at the ceremony. Coming in suddenly, he was horrified, and cleared the room, insisting that the patient must not be excited.

Stepan Trofimovitch died three days later, but by that time he was completely unconscious. He quietly went out like a candle that is burnt down. After having the funeral service performed, Varvara Petrovna took the body of her poor friend to Skvoreshniki. His grave is in the precincts of the church and is already covered with a marble slab. The inscription and the railing will be added in the spring.

Varvara Petrovna’s absence from town had lasted eight days. Sofya Matveyevna arrived in the carriage with her and seems to have settled with her for good. I may mention that as soon as Stepan Trofimovitch lost consciousness (the morning that he received the sacrament) Varvara Petrovna promptly asked Sofya Matveyevna to leave the cottage again, and waited on the invalid herself unassisted to the end, but she sent for her at once when he had breathed his last. Sofya Matveyevna was terribly alarmed by Varvara Petrovna’s proposition, or rather command, that she should settle for good at Skvoreshniki, but the latter refused to listen to her protests.

“That’s all nonsense! I will go with you to sell the gospel. I have no one in the world now.”

“You have a son, however,” Salzfish observed.

“I have no son!” Varvara Petrovna snapped out—and it was like a prophecy.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

ALL THE CRIMES AND VILLAINIES THAT had been perpetrated were discovered with extraordinary rapidity, much more quickly than Pyotr Stepanovitch had expected. To begin with, the luckless Marya Ignatyevna waked up before daybreak on the night of her husband's murder, missed him and flew into indescribable agitation, not seeing him beside her. The woman who had been hired by Anna Prohorovna, and was there for the night, could not succeed in calming her, and as soon as it was daylight ran to fetch Arina Prohorovna herself, assuring the invalid that the latter knew where her husband was, and when he would be back. Meantime Arina Prohorovna was in some anxiety too; she had already heard from her husband of the deed perpetrated that night at Skvoreshniki. He had returned home about eleven o'clock in a terrible state of mind and body; wringing his hands, he flung himself face downwards on his bed and shaking with convulsive sobs kept repeating, "It's not right, it's not right, it's not right at all!" He ended, of course, by confessing it all to Arina Prohorovna—but to no one else in the house. She left him on his bed, sternly impressing upon him that "if he must blubber he must do it in his pillow so as not to be overheard, and that he would be a fool if he showed any traces of it next day." She felt somewhat anxious, however, and began at once to clear things up in case of emergency: she succeeded in hiding or completely destroying all suspicious papers, books, manifestoes perhaps. At the same time she reflected that she, her sister, her aunt, her sister-in-law the student, and perhaps even her long-eared brother had really nothing much to be afraid of. When the nurse ran to her in the morning she went without a second thought to Marya Ignatyevna's. She was desperately anxious, moreover, to find out whether what her husband had told her that night in a terrified and frantic whisper, that was almost like delirium, was true—that is, whether Pyotr Stepanovitch had been right in his reckoning that Kirillov would sacrifice himself for the general benefit.

But she arrived at Marya Ignatyevna's too late: when the latter had sent off the woman and was left alone, she was unable to bear the suspense; she got out of bed, and throwing round her the first garment she could find, something very light and unsuitable for the weather, I believe, she ran down to Kirillov's lodge herself, thinking that he perhaps would be better able than anyone to tell her something about her husband. The terrible effect on her of what she saw there may well be imagined. It is remarkable that she did not read Kirillov's last letter, which lay conspicuously on the table, overlooking it, of course, in her fright. She ran back to her room, snatched up her baby, and went with it out of the house into the street. It was a damp morning, there was a fog. She met no passers-by in such an out-of-the-way street. She ran on breathless through the wet, cold mud, and at last began knocking at the doors of the houses. In the first house no one came to the door, in the second they were so long in coming that she gave it up impatiently and began knocking at a third door. This was the house of a merchant called Titov. Here she wailed and kept declaring incoherently that her husband was murdered, causing a great flutter in the house. Something was

known about Shatov and his story in the Titov household; they were horror-stricken that she should be running about the streets in such attire and in such cold with the baby scarcely covered in her arms, when, according to her story, she had only been confined the day before. They thought at first that she was delirious, especially as they could not make out whether it was Kirillov who was murdered or her husband. Seeing that they did not believe her she would have run on farther, but they kept her by force, and I am told she screamed and struggled terribly. They went to Filipov's, and within two hours Kirillov's suicide and the letter he had left were known to the whole town. The police came to question Marya Ignatyevna, who was still conscious, and it appeared at once that she had not read Kirillov's letter, and they could not find out from her what had led her to conclude that her husband had been murdered. She only screamed that if Kirillov was murdered, then her husband was murdered, they were together. Towards midday she sank into a state of unconsciousness from which she never recovered, and she died three days later. The baby had caught cold and died before her.

Arina Prohorovna not finding Marya Ignatyevna and the baby, and guessing something was wrong, was about to run home, but she checked herself at the gate and sent the nurse to inquire of the gentleman at the lodge whether Marya Ignatyevna was not there and whether he knew anything about her. The woman came back screaming frantically. Persuading her not to scream and not to tell anyone by the time-honoured argument that "she would get into trouble," she stole out of the yard.

It goes without saying that she was questioned the same morning as having acted as midwife to Marya Ignatyevna; but they did not get much out of her. She gave a very cool and sensible account of all she had herself heard and seen at Shatov's, but as to what had happened she declared that she knew nothing, and could not understand it.

It may well be imagined what an uproar there was in the town. A new "sensation," another murder! But there was another element in this case: it was clear that a secret society of murderers, incendiaries, and revolutionists did exist, did actually exist. Liza's terrible death, the murder of Stavrogin's wife, Stavrogin himself, the fire, the ball for the benefit of the governesses, the laxity of manners and morals in Yulia Mihailovna's circle... . Even in the disappearance of Stepan Trofimovitch people insisted on scenting a mystery. All sorts of things were whispered about Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. By the end of the day people knew of Pyotr Stepanovitch's absence too, and, strange to say, less was said of him than of anyone. What was talked of most all that day was "the senator." There was a crowd almost all day at Filipov's house. The police certainly were led astray by Kirillov's letter. They believed that Kirillov had murdered Shatov and had himself committed suicide. Yet, though the authorities were thrown into perplexity, they were not altogether hoodwinked. The word "park," for instance, so vaguely inserted in Kirillov's letter, did not puzzle anyone as Pyotr Stepanovitch had expected it would. The police at once made a rush for Skvoreshniki, not simply because it was the only park in the neighbourhood but also led thither by a sort of instinct because all the

horrors of the last few days were connected directly or indirectly with Skvoreshniki. That at least is my theory. (I may remark that; Varvara Petrovna had driven off early that morning in chase of Stepan Trofimovitch, and knew nothing of what had happened in the town.)

The body was found in the pond that evening. What led to the discovery of it was the finding of Shatov's cap at the scene of the murder, where it had been with extraordinary carelessness overlooked by the murderers. The appearance of the body, the medical examination and certain deductions from it roused immediate suspicions that Kirillov must have had accomplices. It became evident that a secret society really did exist of which Shatov and Kirillov were members and which was connected with the manifestoes. Who were these accomplices? No one even thought of any member of the quintet that day. It was ascertained that Kirillov had lived like a hermit, and in so complete a seclusion that it had been possible, as stated in the letter, for Fedka to lodge with him for so many days, even while an active search was being made for him. The chief thing that worried every one was the impossibility of discovering a connecting-link in this chaos.

There is no saying what conclusions and what disconnected theories our panic-stricken townspeople would have reached, if the whole mystery had not been suddenly solved next day, thanks to Lyamshin.

He broke down. He behaved as even Pyotr Stepanovitch had towards the end begun to fear he would. Left in charge of Tolkatchenko, and afterwards of Erkel, he spent all the following day lying in his bed with his face turned to the wall, apparently calm, not uttering a word, and scarcely answering when he was spoken to. This is how it was that he heard nothing all day of what was happening in the town. But Tolkatchenko, who was very well informed about everything, took into his head by the evening to throw up the task of watching Lyamshin which Pyotr Stepanovitch had laid upon him, and left the town, that is, to put it plainly, made his escape; the fact is, they lost their heads as Erkel had predicted they would. I may mention, by the way, that Liputin had disappeared the same day before twelve o'clock. But things fell out so that his disappearance did not become known to the authorities till the evening of the following day, when, the police went to question his family, who were panic-stricken at his absence but kept quiet from fear of consequences. But to return to Lyamshin: as soon as he was left alone (Erkel had gone home earlier, relying on Tolkatchenko) he ran out of his house, and, of course, very soon learned the position of affairs. Without even returning home he too tried to run away without knowing where he was going. But the night was so dark and to escape was so terrible and difficult, that after going through two or three streets, he returned home and locked himself up for the whole night. I believe that towards morning he attempted to commit suicide but did not succeed. He remained locked up till midday—and then suddenly he ran to the authorities. He is said to have crawled on his knees, to have sobbed and shrieked, to have kissed the floor crying out that he was not worthy to kiss the boots of the officials standing before him. They soothed him, were positively affable to him. His examination lasted, I am told,

for three hours. He confessed everything, everything, told every detail, everything he knew, every point, anticipating their questions, hurried to make a clean breast of it all, volunteering unnecessary information without being asked. It turned out that he knew enough, and presented things in a fairly true light: the tragedy of Shatov and Kirillov, the fire, the death of the Lebyadkins, and the rest of it were relegated to the background. Pyotr Stepanovitch, the secret society, the organisation, and the network were put in the first place. When asked what was the object of so many murders and scandals and dastardly outrages, he answered with feverish haste that “it was with the idea of systematically undermining the foundations, systematically destroying society and all principles; with the idea of nonplussing every one and making hay of everything, and then, when society was tottering, sick and out of joint, cynical and sceptical though filled with an intense eagerness for self-preservation and for some guiding idea, suddenly to seize it in their hands, raising the standard of revolt and relying on a complete network of quintets, which were actively, meanwhile, gathering recruits and seeking out the weak spots which could be attacked.” In conclusion, he said that here in our town Pyotr Stepanovitch had organised only the first experiment in such systematic disorder, so to speak as a programme for further activity, and for all the quintets—and that this was his own (Lyamshin’s) idea, his own theory, “and that he hoped they would remember it and bear in mind how openly and properly he had given his information, and therefore might be of use hereafter.” Being asked definitely how many quintets there were, he answered that there were immense numbers of them, that all Russia was overspread with a network, and although he brought forward no proofs, I believe his answer was perfectly sincere. He produced only the programme of the society, printed abroad, and the plan for developing a system of future activity roughly sketched in Pyotr Stepanovitch’s own handwriting. It appeared that Lyamshin had quoted the phrase about “undermining the foundation,” word for word from this document, not omitting a single stop or comma, though he had declared that it was all his own, theory. Of Yulia Mihailovna he very funnily and quite without provocation volunteered the remark, that “she was innocent and had been made a fool of.” But, strange to say, he exonerated Nikolay Stavrogin from all share in the secret society, from any collaboration with Pyotr Stepanovic. (Lyamshin had no conception of the secret and very absurd hopes that Pyotr Stepanovitch was resting on Stavrogin.) According to his story Nikolay Stavrogin had nothing whatever to do with the death of the Lebyadkins, which had been planned by Pyotr Stepanovitch alone and with the subtle aim of implicating the former in the crime, and therefore making him dependent on Pyotr Stepanovitch; but instead of the gratitude on which Pyotr Stepanovitch had reckoned with shallow confidence, he had roused nothing but indignation and even despair in “the generous heart of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch.” He wound up, by a hint, evidently intentional, volunteered hastily, that Stavrogin was perhaps a very important personage, but that there was some secret about that, that he had been living among us, so to say, incognito, that he had some commission, and that very possibly he would come back to us again from Petersburg. (Lyamshin was convinced that Stavrogin had

gone to Petersburg), but in quite a different capacity and in different surroundings, in the suite of persons of whom perhaps we should soon hear, and that all this he had heard from Pyotr Stepanovitch, "Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's secret enemy."

Here I will note that two months later, Lyamshin admitted that he had exonerated Stavrogin on purpose, hoping that he would protect him and would obtain for him a mitigation in the second degree of his sentence, and that he would provide him with money and letters of introduction in Siberia. From this confession it is evident that he had an extraordinarily exaggerated conception of Stavrogin's powers.

On the same day, of course, the police arrested Virginsky and in their zeal took his whole family too. (Arina Prohorovna, her sister, aunt, and even the girl student were released long ago; they say that Shigalov too will be set free very shortly because he cannot be classed with any of the other prisoners. But all that is so far only gossip.) Virginsky at once pleaded guilty. He was lying ill with fever when he was arrested. I am told that he seemed almost relieved; "it was a load off his heart," he is reported to have said. It is rumoured that he is giving his evidence without reservation, but with a certain dignity, and has not given up any of his "bright hopes," though at the same time he curses the political method (as opposed to the Socialist one), in which he had been unwittingly and heedlessly carried "by the vortex of combined circumstances." His conduct at the time of the murder has been put in a favourable light, and I imagine that he too may reckon on some mitigation of his sentence. That at least is what is asserted in the town.

But I doubt whether there is any hope for mercy in Erkel's case. Ever since his arrest he has been obstinately silent, or has misrepresented the facts as far as he could. Not one word of regret has been wrung from him so far. Yet even the sternest of the judges trying him has been moved to some compassion by his youth, by his helplessness, by the unmistakable evidence that he is nothing but a fanatical victim of a political impostor, and, most of all, by his conduct to his mother, to whom, as it appears, he used to send almost the half of his small salary. His mother is now in the town; she is a delicate and ailing woman, aged beyond her years; she weeps and positively grovels on the ground imploring mercy for her son. Whatever may happen, many among us feel sorry for Erkel.

Liputin was arrested in Petersburg, where he had been living for a fortnight. His conduct there sounds almost incredible and is difficult to explain. He is said to have had a passport in a forged name and quite a large sum of money upon him, and had every possibility of escaping abroad, yet instead of going he remained in Petersburg. He spent some time hunting for Stavrogin and Pyotr Stepanovitch. Suddenly he took to drinking and gave himself up to a debauchery that exceeded all bounds, like a man who had lost all reason and understanding of his position. He was arrested in Petersburg drunk in a brothel. There is a rumour that he has not by any means lost heart, that he tells lies in his evidence and is preparing for the approaching trial hopefully (?) and, as it were, triumphantly. He even intends to make a speech at the trial. Tolkatchenko, who was arrested in the neighbourhood ten days after his flight,

behaves with incomparably more decorum; he does not shuffle or tell lies, he tells all he knows, does not justify himself, blames himself with all modesty, though he, too, has a weakness for rhetoric; he tells readily what he knows, and when knowledge of the peasantry and the revolutionary elements among them is touched upon, he positively attitudinises and is eager to produce an effect. He, too, is meaning, I am told, to make a speech at the trial. Neither he nor Liputin seem very much afraid, curious as it seems.

I repeat that the case is not yet over. Now, three months afterwards, local society has had time to rest, has recovered, has got over it, has an opinion of its own, so much so that some people positively look upon Pyotr Stepanovitch as a genius or at least as possessed of "some characteristics of a genius." "Organisation!" they say at the club, holding up a finger. But all this is very innocent and there are not many people who talk like that. Others, on the other hand, do not deny his acuteness, but point out that he was utterly ignorant of real life, that he was terribly theoretical, grotesquely and stupidly one-sided, and consequently shallow in the extreme. As for his moral qualities all are agreed; about that there are no two opinions.

I do not know whom to mention next so as not to forget anyone. Mavriky Nikolaevitch has gone away for good, I don't know where. Old Madame Drozdov has sunk into dotage... I have still one very gloomy story to tell, however. I will confine myself to the bare facts.

On her return from Ustyevo, Varvara Petrovna stayed at her town house. All the accumulated news broke upon her at once and gave her a terrible shock. She shut herself up alone. It was evening; every one was tired and went to bed early.

In the morning a maid with a mysterious air handed a note to Darya Pavlovna. The note had, so she said, arrived the evening before, but late, when all had gone to bed, so that she had not ventured to wake her. It had not come by post, but had been put in Alexey Yegorytch's hand in Skvoreshniki by some unknown person. And Alexey Yegorytch had immediately set off and put it into her hands himself and had then returned to Skvoreshniki.

For a long while Darya Pavlovna gazed at the letter with a beating heart, and dared not open it. She knew from whom it came: the writer was Nikolay Stavrogin. She read what was written on the envelope: "To Alexey Yegorytch, to be given secretly to Darya Pavlovna."

Here is the letter word for word, without the slightest correction of the defects in style of a Russian aristocrat who had never mastered the Russian grammar in spite of his European education.

"Dear Darya Pavlovna,—At one time you expressed a wish to be my nurse and made me promise to send for you when I wanted you. I am going away in two days and shall not come back. Will you go with me?

"Last year, like Herzen, I was naturalised as a citizen of the canton of Uri, and that nobody knows. There I've already bought a little house, I've still twelve thousand roubles left; we'll go and live there for ever. I don't want to go anywhere else ever.

“It’s a very dull place, a narrow valley, the mountains restrict both vision and thought. It’s very gloomy. I chose the place because there was a little house to be sold. If you don’t like it I’ll sell it and buy another in some other place.

“I am not well, but I hope to get rid of hallucinations in that air. It’s physical, and as for the moral you know everything; but do you know all?”

“I’ve told you a great deal of my life, but not all. Even to you! Not all. By the way, I repeat that in my conscience I feel myself responsible for my wife’s death. I haven’t seen you since then, that’s why I repeat it. I feel guilty about Lizaveta Nikolaevna too; but you know about that; you foretold almost all that.

“Better not come to me. My asking you to is a horrible meanness. And why should you bury your life with me? You are dear to me, and when I was miserable it was good to be beside you; only with you I could speak of myself aloud. But that proves nothing. You defined it yourself, ‘a nurse’— it’s your own expression; why sacrifice so much? Grasp this, too, that I have no pity for you since I ask you, and no respect for you since I reckon on you. And yet I ask you and I reckon on you. In any case I need your answer for I must set off very soon. In that case I shall go alone.

“I expect nothing of Uri; I am simply going. I have not chosen a gloomy place on purpose. I have no ties in Russia— everything is as alien to me there as everywhere. It’s true that I dislike living there more than anywhere; but I can’t hate anything even there!

“I’ve tried my strength everywhere. You advised me to do this ‘that I might learn to know myself.’ As long as I was experimenting for myself and for others it seemed infinite, as it has all my life. Before your eyes I endured a blow from your brother; I acknowledged my marriage in public. But to what to apply my strength, that is what I’ve never seen, and do not see now in spite of all your praises in Switzerland, which I believed in. I am still capable, as I always was, of desiring to do something good, and of feeling pleasure from it; at the same time I desire evil and feel pleasure from that too. But both feelings are always too petty, and are never very strong. My desires are too weak; they are not enough to guide me. On a log one may cross a river but not on a chip. I say this that you may not believe that I am going to Uri with hopes of any sort.

“As always I blame no one. I’ve tried the depths of debauchery and wasted my strength over it. But I don’t like vice and I didn’t want it. You have been watching me of late. Do you know that I looked upon our iconoclasts with spite, from envy of their hopes? But you had no need to be afraid. I could not have been one of them for I never shared anything with them. And to do it for fun, from spite I could not either, not because I am afraid of the ridiculous—I cannot be afraid of the ridiculous—but because I have, after all, the habits of a gentleman and it disgusted me. But if I had felt more spite and envy of them I might perhaps have joined them. You can judge how hard it has been for me, and how I’ve struggled from one thing to another.

“Dear friend! Great and tender heart which I divined! Perhaps you dream of giving me so much love and lavishing on me so much that is beautiful from your beautiful

soul, that you hope to set up some aim for me at last by it? No, it's better for you to be more cautious, my love will be as petty as I am myself and you will be unhappy. Your brother told me that the man who loses connection with his country loses his gods, that is, all his aims. One may argue about everything endlessly, but from me nothing has come but negation, with no greatness of soul, no force. Even negation has not come from me. Everything has always been petty and spiritless. Kirillov, in the greatness of his soul, could not compromise with an idea, and shot himself; but I see, of course, that he was great-souled because he had lost his reason. I can never lose my reason, and I can never believe in an idea to such a degree as he did. I cannot even be interested in an idea to such a degree. I can never, never shoot myself.

"I know I ought to kill myself, to brush myself off the earth like a nasty insect; but I am afraid of suicide, for I am afraid of showing greatness of soul. I know that it will be another sham again—the last deception in an endless series of deceptions. What good is there in deceiving oneself? Simply to play at greatness of soul? Indignation and shame I can never feel, therefore not despair.

"Forgive me for writing so much. I wrote without noticing. A hundred pages would be too little and ten lines would be enough. Ten lines would be enough to ask you to be a nurse. Since I left Skvoreshniki I've been living at the sixth station on the line, at the stationmaster's. I got to know him in the time of debauchery five years ago in Petersburg. No one knows I am living there. Write to him. I enclose the address.

"Nikolay Stavrogin."

Darya Pavlovna went at once and showed the letter to Varvara Petrovna. She read it and asked Dasha to go out of the room so that she might read it again alone; but she called her back very quickly.

"Are you going?" she asked almost timidly.

"I am going," answered Dasha.

"Get ready! We'll go together."

Dasha looked at her inquiringly.

"What is there left for me to do here? What difficulty will it make? I'll be naturalised in Uri, too, and live in the valley... . Don't be uneasy, I won't be in the way."

They began packing quickly to be in time to catch the midday train. But in less than half an hour's time Alexey Yegorytch arrived from Skvoreshniki. He announced that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had suddenly arrived that morning by the early train, and was now at Skvoreshniki but "in such a state that his honour did not answer any questions, walked through all the rooms and shut himself up in his own wing. ..."

"Though I received no orders I thought it best to come and inform you," Alexey Yegorytch concluded with a very significant expression.

Varvara Petrovna looked at him searchingly and did not question him. The carriage was got ready instantly. Varvara Petrovna set off with Dasha. They say that she kept crossing herself on the journey.

In Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's wing of the house all the doors were open and he was nowhere to be seen.

“Wouldn’t he be upstairs?” Fomushka ventured.

It was remarkable that several servants followed Varvara Petrovna while the others all stood waiting in the drawing-room. They would never have dared to commit such a breach of etiquette before. Varvara Petrovna saw it and said nothing.

They went upstairs. There there were three rooms; but they found no one there.

“Wouldn’t his honour have gone up there?” some one suggested, pointing to the door of the loft. And in-fact, the door of the loft which was always closed had been opened and was standing ajar. The loft was right under the roof and was reached by a long, very steep and narrow wooden ladder. There was a sort of little room up there too.

“I am not going up there. Why should he go up there?” said Varvara Petrovna, turning terribly pale as she looked at the servants. They gazed back at her and said nothing. Dasha was trembling.

Varvara Petrovna rushed up the ladder; Dasha followed, but she had hardly entered the loft when she uttered a scream and fell senseless.

The citizen of the canton of Uri was hanging there behind the door. On the table lay a piece of paper with the words in pencil: “No one is to blame, I did it myself.” Beside it on the table lay a hammer, a piece of soap, and a large nail—obviously an extra one in case of need. The strong silk cord upon which Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had hanged himself had evidently been chosen and prepared beforehand and was thickly smeared with soap. Everything proved that there had been premeditation and consciousness up to the last moment.

At the inquest our doctors absolutely and emphatically rejected all idea of insanity.

The Raw Youth

Translated by Constance Garnett (1861-1946)

Part 1

Chapter 1

1

I cannot resist sitting down to write the history of the first steps in my career, though I might very well abstain from doing so... . I know one thing for certain: I shall never again sit down to write my autobiography even if I live to be a hundred. One must be too disgustingly in love with self to be able without shame to write about oneself. I can only excuse myself on the ground that I am not writing with the same object with which other people write, that is, to win the praise of my readers. It has suddenly occurred to me to write out word for word all that has happened to me during this last year, simply from an inward impulse, because I am so impressed by all that has happened. I shall simply record the incidents, doing my utmost to exclude everything extraneous, especially all literary graces. The professional writer writes for thirty years, and is quite unable to say at the end why he has been writing for all that time. I am not a professional writer and don't want to be, and to drag forth into the literary market-place the inmost secrets of my soul and an artistic description of my feelings I should regard as indecent and contemptible. I foresee, however, with vexation, that it will be impossible to avoid describing feelings altogether and making reflections (even, perhaps, cheap ones), so corrupting is every sort of literary pursuit in its effect, even if it be undertaken only for one's own satisfaction. The reflections may indeed be very cheap, because what is of value for oneself may very well have no value for others. But all this is beside the mark. It will do for a preface, however. There will be nothing more of the sort. Let us get to work, though there is nothing more difficult than to begin upon some sorts of work—perhaps any sort of work.

2

I am beginning—or rather, I should like to begin—these notes from the 19th of September of last year, that is, from the very day I first met ...

But to explain so prematurely who it was I met before anything else is known would be cheap; in fact, I believe my tone is cheap. I vowed I would eschew all literary graces, and here at the first sentence I am being seduced by them. It seems as if writing sensibly can't be done simply by wanting to. I may remark, also, that I fancy writing is more difficult in Russian than in any other European language. I am now reading

over what I have just written, and I see that I am much cleverer than what I have written. How is it that what is expressed by a clever man is much more stupid than what is left in him? I have more than once during this momentous year noticed this with myself in my relations with people, and have been very much worried by it.

Although I am beginning from the 19th of September, I must put in a word or two about who I am and where I had been till then, and what was consequently my state of mind on the morning of that day, to make things clearer to the reader, and perhaps to myself also.

3

I have passed the leaving examination at the grammar school, and now I am in my twenty-first year. My surname is Dolgoruky, and my legal father is Makar Ivanov Dolgoruky, formerly a serf in the household of the Versilovs. In this way I am a legitimate son, although I am, as a matter of fact, conspicuously illegitimate, and there is not the faintest doubt about my origin.

The facts are as follows. Twenty-two years ago Versilov (that is my father), being twenty-five years old, visited his estate in the province of Tula. I imagine that at that time his character was still quite unformed. It is curious that this man who, even in my childhood, made such an impression upon me, who had such a crucial influence on the whole bent of my mind, and who perhaps has even cast his shadow over the whole of my future, still remains, even now, a complete enigma to me in many respects. Of this, more particulars later. There is no describing him straight off. My whole manuscript will be full of this man, anyway.

He had just been left a widower at that time, that is, when he was twenty-five. He had married one of the Fanariotovs—a girl of high rank but without much money—and by her he had a son and a daughter. The facts that I have gathered about this wife whom he lost so early are somewhat scanty, and are lost among my materials, and, indeed, many of the circumstances of Versilov's private life have eluded me, for he has always been so proud, disdainful, reserved and casual with me, in spite of a sort of meekness towards me which was striking at times. I will mention, however, to make things clear beforehand, that he ran through three fortunes in his lifetime, and very big ones too, of over fourteen hundred souls, and maybe more. Now, of course, he has not a farthing.

He went to the village on that occasion, "God knows why," so at least he said to me afterwards. His young children were, as usual, not with him but with relations. This was always his method with his children, legitimate and illegitimate alike. The house-serfs on this estate were rather numerous, and among them was a gardener called Makar Ivanov Dolgoruky. Here I will note in parenthesis, to relieve my mind once and for all, I doubt whether anyone can ever have raged against his surname as I have all my life; this is stupid, of course, but so it has been. Every time I entered a school or met persons whom I had to treat with respect as my elders, every wretched little teacher,

tutor, priest—anyone you like—on asking my name and hearing it was Dolgoruky, for some reason invariably thought fitting to add, “Prince Dolgoruky?” And every single time I was forced to explain to these futile people, “No, SIMPLY Dolgoruky.”

That SIMPLY began to drive me mad at last. Here I note as a curious phenomenon that I don’t remember a single exception; every one asked the question. For some it was apparently quite superfluous, and indeed I don’t know how the devil it could have been necessary for anyone. But all, every one of them asked it. On hearing that I was SIMPLY Dolgoruky, the questioner usually looked me up and down with a blank and stupidly apathetic stare that betrayed that he did not know why he had asked the question. Then he would walk away. My comrades and schoolfellows were the most insulting of all. How do schoolboys question a new-comer? The new boy, abashed and confused on the first day of entering a school (whatever school it may be), is the victim of all; they order him about, they tease him, and treat him like a lackey. A stout, chubby urchin suddenly stands still before his victim and watches him persistently for some moments with a stern and haughty stare. The new boy stands facing him in silence, looks at him out of the corner of his eyes, and, if he is not a coward, waits to see what is going to happen.

“What’s your name?”

“Dolgoruky.”

“Prince Dolgoruky?”

“No, simply Dolgoruky.”

“Ah, simply! Fool.”

And he was right; nothing could be more foolish than to be called Dolgoruky without being a prince. I have to bear the burden of that foolishness through no fault of my own. Later on, when I began to get very cross about it, I always answered the question “Are you a prince?” by saying, “No, I’m the son of a servant, formerly a serf.”

At last, when I was roused to the utmost pitch of fury, I resolutely answered:

“No, simply Dolgoruky, the illegitimate son of my former owner.”

I thought of this when I was in the sixth form of the grammar school, and though I was very soon after thoroughly convinced that I was stupid, I did not at once give up being so. I remember that one of the teachers opined—he was alone in his opinion, however—that I was “filled with ideas of vengeance and civic rights.” As a rule this reply was received with a sort of meditative pensiveness, anything but flattering to me.

At last one of my schoolfellows, a very sarcastic boy, to whom I hardly talked once in a year, said to me with a serious countenance, looking a little away:

“Such sentiments do you credit, of course, and no doubt you have something to be proud of; but if I were in your place I should not be too festive over being illegitimate ... you seem to expect congratulations!”

From that time forth I dropped BOASTING of being illegitimate.

I repeat, it is very difficult to write in Russian: here I have covered three pages with describing how furious I have been all my life with my surname, and after all the reader

will, no doubt, probably have deduced that I was really furious at not being a prince but simply Dolgoruky. To explain again and defend myself would be humiliating.

4

And so among the servants, of whom there were a great number besides Makar Ivanitch, there was a maid, and she was eighteen when Makar Dolgoruky, who was fifty, suddenly announced his intention of marrying her. In the days of serfdom marriages of house-serfs, as every one knows, only took place with the sanction of their masters, and were sometimes simply arranged by the latter. At that time “auntie” was living on the estate; not that she was my aunt, though: she had, in fact, an estate of her own; but, I don’t know why, every one knew her all her life as “auntie”—not mine in particular but an aunt in general, even in the family of Versilov, to whom she can hardly have been related. Her name was Tatyana Pavlovna Prutkov, In those days she still had, in the same province and district, a property of thirty-five serfs of her own. She didn’t exactly administer Versilov’s estate (of five hundred serfs), but, being so near a neighbour, she kept a vigilant eye on it, and her superintendence, so I have heard, was as efficient as that of any trained steward. However, her efficiency is nothing to do with me. But, to dispose of all suspicion of cringing or flattery on my part, I should like to add that this Tatyana Pavlovna was a generous and even original person.

Well, far from checking the gloomy Makar Dolgoruky’s matrimonial inclinations (I am told he was gloomy in those days), she gave them the warmest encouragement.

Sofia Andreyevna, the serf-girl of eighteen (that is, my mother), had been for some years fatherless and motherless. Her father, also a serf, who had a great respect for Makar Dolgoruky and was under some obligation to him, had six years before, on his death-bed, beckoned to the old gardener and, pointing significantly to his daughter, had, in the presence of the priest and all the servants, bequeathed her to him, saying, “When she’s grown up, marry her.” This was, so they say, a quarter of an hour before he expired, so that it might, if need be, have been put down to delirium; besides which, he had no right to dispose of property, being a serf. Every one heard his words. As for Makar Ivanovitch, I don’t know in what spirit he afterwards entered upon the marriage, whether with great eagerness or simply as the fulfilment of a duty. Probably he preserved an appearance of complete indifference. He was a man who even at that time knew how to “keep up his dignity.” It was not that he was a particularly well-educated or reading man (though he knew the whole of the church service and some lives of the saints, but this was only from hearing them). It was not that he was a sort of backstairs philosopher; it was simply that he was a man of obstinate, and even at times rash character, was conceited in his talk, autocratic in his judgment, and “respectful in his life,” to use his own surprising expression; that is what he was like at that time. Of course, he was universally respected, but, I am told, disliked by every one. It was a different matter when he ceased to be a house-serf; then he was spoken about as a saint and a man who had suffered much. That I know for a fact.

As for my mother, Tatyana Pavlovna had kept her till the age of eighteen in her house, although the steward had urged that the girl should be sent to Moscow to be trained. She had given the orphan some education, that is, taught her sewing and cutting out clothes, ladylike deportment, and even a little reading. My mother was never able to write decently. She looked upon this marriage with Makar Ivanovitch as something settled long ago, and everything that happened to her in those days she considered very good and all for the best. She went to her wedding looking as unmoved as anyone could on such an occasion, so much so that even Tatyana Pavlovna called her a fish. All this about my mother's character at that time I heard from Tatyana Pavlovna herself. Versilov arrived just six months after this wedding.

5

I only want to say that I have never been able to find out or to guess to my own satisfaction what led up to everything between him and my mother. I am quite ready to believe, as he himself assured me last year with a flushed face, though he talked of all this with the most unconstrained and flippant air, that there was no romance about it at all, that it had just happened. I believe that it did just happen, and that little phrase JUST HAPPENED is delightful, yet I always wanted to know how it could have come about. I have always hated that sort of nastiness all my life and always shall. It's not simply a disgraceful curiosity on my part, of course. I may remark that I knew absolutely nothing of my mother till a year ago. For the sake of Versilov's comfort I was sent away to strangers, but of that later, and so I can never picture what she looked like at that time. If she had not been at all pretty, what could a man such as Versilov have then found attractive in her? This question is of importance to me because it throws a light on an extremely interesting side of that man's character. It is for that reason I ask it and not from depravity. Gloomy and reserved as he always was, he told me himself on one occasion, with that charming candour which he used to produce (from the devil knows where—it seemed to come out of his pocket when he saw it was indispensable) that at that time he was a "very silly young puppy"; not that he was exactly sentimental, but just that he had lately read "Poor Anton" and "Polinka Sachs," two literary works which exerted an immense, humanizing influence on the younger generation of that day. He added that it was perhaps through "Poor Anton" that he went to the country, and he added it with the utmost gravity. How did that "silly puppy" begin at first with my mother? I have suddenly realized that if I had a single reader he would certainly be laughing at me as a most ridiculous raw youth, still stupidly innocent, putting himself forward to discuss and criticize what he knows nothing about. It is true that I know nothing about it, though I recognize that not at all with pride, for I know how stupid such inexperience is in a great dolt of twenty; only I would tell such a gentleman that he knows nothing about it himself, and I will prove it to him. It is true that I know nothing about women, and I don't want to either, for I shall always despise that sort of thing, and I have sworn I will all my life.

But I know for certain, though, that some women fascinate by their beauty, or by anything you like, all in a minute, while you may ruminate over another for six months before you understand what is in her; and that to see through and love such a woman it is not enough to look at her, it is not enough to be simply ready for anything, one must have a special gift besides. Of that I am convinced, although I do know nothing about it: and if it were not true it would mean degrading all women to the level of domestic animals, and only keeping them about one as such; possibly this is what very many people would like.

I know from several sources that my mother was by no means a beauty, though I have never seen the portrait of her at that age which is in existence. So it was impossible to have fallen in love with her at first sight. Simply to “amuse himself” Versilov might have pitched on some one else, and there was some one else in the house, an unmarried girl too, Anfisa Konstantinovna Sapozhkov, a housemaid. To a man who had brought “Poor Anton” with him to the country it must have seemed shameful to take advantage of his seigniorial rights to violate the sanctity of a marriage, even that of his serf, for I repeat, he spoke with extreme seriousness of this “Poor Anton” only a few months ago, that is, twenty years after the event. Why, “Poor Anton” only had his horse taken from him, but this was a wife! So there must have been something peculiar in this case, and Mlle. Sapozhkov was the loser by it (or rather, I should say, the gainer). I attacked him with all these questions once or twice last year when it was possible to talk to him (for it wasn’t always possible to talk to him). And, in spite of all his society polish and the lapse of twenty years, I noticed that he winced. But I persisted. On one occasion, anyway, although he maintained the air of worldly superciliousness which he invariably thought fit to assume with me, he muttered strangely that my mother was one of those “defenceless” people whom one does not fall in love with—quite the contrary, in fact—but whom one suddenly pities for their gentleness, perhaps, though one cannot tell what for. That no one ever knows, but one goes on pitying them, one pities them and grows fond of them. “In fact, my dear boy, there are cases when one can’t shake it off.” That was what he told me. And if that was how it really happened I could not look upon him as the “silly puppy” he had proclaimed himself. That is just what I wanted.

He went on to assure me, however, that my mother loved him “through servility.” He positively pretended it was because he was her master! He lied, thinking this was chic! He lied against his conscience, against all honour and generosity.

I have said all this, of course, as it were to the credit of my mother. But I have explained already that I knew nothing whatever of her as she was then. What is more, I know the rigidity of her environment, and the pitiful ideas in which she had become set from her childhood and to which she remained enslaved for the rest of her life. The misfortune happened, nevertheless. I must correct myself, by the way. Letting my fancy run away with me, I have forgotten the fact which I ought to have stated first of all, that is, that the misfortune happened at the very outset (I hope that the reader will not be too squeamish to understand at once what I mean). In fact, it began

with his exercising his seignorial rights, although Mlle. Sapozhkov was passed over. But here, in self-defence, I must declare at once that I am not contradicting myself. For—good Lord!—what could a man like Versilov have talked about at that date with a person like my mother even if he had felt the most overwhelming love for her? I have heard from depraved people that men and women very often come together without a word being uttered, which is, of course, the last extreme of monstrous loathsomeness. Nevertheless, I do not see how Versilov could have begun differently with my mother if he had wanted to. Could he have begun by expounding “Polinka Sachs” to her? And besides, they had no thoughts to spare for Russian literature; on the contrary, from what he said (he let himself go once), they used to hide in corners, wait for each other on the stairs, fly apart like bouncing balls, with flushed cheeks if anyone passed by, and the “tyrant slave-owner” trembled before the lowest scrubbing-maid, in spite of his seignorial rights. And although it was at first an affair of master and servant, it was that and yet not that, and after all, there is no really explaining it. In fact, the more you go into it the more obscure it seems. The very depth and duration of their love makes it more mysterious, for it is a leading characteristic of such men as Versilov to abandon as soon as their object is attained. That did not happen, though. To transgress with an attractive, giddy flirt who was his serf (and my mother was not a flirt) was not only possible but inevitable for a depraved young puppy (and they were all depraved, every one of them, the progressives as well as the reactionaries), especially considering his romantic position as a young widower and his having nothing to do. But to love her all his life is too much. I cannot guarantee that he did love her, but he has dragged her about with him all his life—that’s certain.

I put a great many questions to my mother, but there is one, most important, which, I may remark, I did not venture to ask her directly, though I got on such familiar terms with her last year; and, what is more, like a coarse, ungrateful puppy, considering she had wronged me, I did not spare her feelings at all. This was the question: how she after six months of marriage, crushed by her ideas of the sanctity of wedlock, crushed like some helpless fly, respecting her Makar Ivanovitch as though he had been a god—how she could have brought herself in about a fortnight to such a sin? Was my mother a depraved woman, perhaps? On the contrary, I may say now at once that it is difficult to imagine anyone more pure-hearted than she was then and has been all her life. The explanation may be, perhaps, that she scarcely knew what she was doing (I don’t mean in the sense in which lawyers nowadays urge this in defence of their thieves and murderers), but was carried away by a violent emotion, which sometimes gains a fatal and tragic ascendancy when the victim is of a certain degree of simplicity. There is no telling: perhaps she fell madly in love with ... the cut of his clothes, the Parisian style in which he parted his hair, his French accent—yes, French, though she didn’t understand a word of it—the song he sang at the piano; she fell in love with something she had never seen or heard of (and he was very handsome), and fell in love with him straight away, once for all, hopelessly, fell in love with him altogether—manners, song, and all. I have heard that this did sometimes happen to peasant girls in the days of

serfdom, and to the most virtuous, too. I understand this, and the man is a scoundrel who puts it down to nothing but servility. And so perhaps this young man may have had enough direct power of fascination to attract a creature who had till then been so pure and who was of a different species, of an utterly different world, and to lead her on to such evident ruin. That it was to her ruin my mother, I hope, realized all her life; only probably when she went to it she did not think of ruin at all; but that is how it always is with these “defenceless” creatures, they know it is ruin and they rush upon it.

Having sinned, they promptly repented. He told me flippantly that he sobbed on the shoulder of Makar Ivanovitch, whom he sent for to his study expressly for the purpose, and she—she meanwhile was lying unconscious in some little back room in the servants’ quarters... .

6

But enough of questions and scandalous details. After paying Makar Ivanovitch a sum of money for my mother, Versilov went away shortly afterwards, and ever since, as I have mentioned already, he dragged her about with him, almost everywhere he went, except at certain times when he absented himself for a considerable period. Then, as a rule, he left her in the care of “auntie,” that is, of Tatyana Pavlovna Prutkov, who always turned up on such occasions. They lived in Moscow, and also in other towns and villages, even abroad, and finally in Petersburg. Of all that later, though perhaps it is not worth recording. I will only mention that a year after my mother left Makar Ivanovitch, I made my appearance, and a year later my sister, and ten or eleven years afterwards a sickly child, my younger brother, who died a few months later. My mother’s terrible confinement with this baby was the end of her good looks, so at least I was told: she began rapidly to grow older and feebler.

But a correspondence with Makar Ivanovitch was always kept up. Wherever the Versilovs were, whether they lived for some years in the same place, or were moving about, Makar Ivanovitch never failed to send news of himself to the “family.” Strange relations grew up, somewhat ceremonious and almost solemn. Among the gentry there is always an element of something comic in such relations, I know. But there was nothing of the sort in this case. Letters were exchanged twice a year, never more nor less frequently, and they were extraordinarily alike. I have seen them. There was scarcely anything personal in them. On the contrary, they were practically nothing but ceremonious statements of the most public incidents, and the most public sentiments, if one may use such an expression of sentiments; first came news of his own health, and inquiries about their health, then ceremonious hopes, greetings and blessings—that was all.

I believe that this publicity and impersonality is looked upon as the essence of propriety and good breeding among the peasants. “To our much esteemed and respected spouse, Sofia Andreyevna, we send our humblest greetings... .” “We send to our beloved

children, our fatherly blessing, ever unalterable." The children were mentioned by name, including me. I may remark here that Makar Ivanovitch had so much wit as never to describe "His high-born most respected master, Andrey Petrovitch" as his "benefactor"; though he did invariably, in each letter, send him his most humble greetings, beg for the continuance of his favour, and call down upon him the blessing of God. The answers to Makar Ivanovitch were sent shortly after by my mother, and were always written in exactly the same style. Versilov, of course, took no part in the correspondence. Makar Ivanovitch wrote from all parts of Russia, from the towns and monasteries in which he sometimes stayed for a considerable time. He had become a pilgrim, as it is called. He never asked for anything; but he invariably turned up at home once in three years on a holiday, and stayed with my mother, who always, as it happened, had her own lodgings apart from Versilov's. Of this I shall have to say more later, here I will only mention that Makar Ivanovitch did not loll on the sofa in the drawing-room, but always sat discreetly somewhere in the background. He never stayed for long: five days or a week.

I have omitted to say that he had the greatest affection and respect for his surname, "Dolgoruky." Of course this was ludicrous stupidity. And what was most stupid was that he prized his name just because there were princes of the name. A strange, topsy-turvy idea.

I have said that the family were always together, but I mean except for me, of course. I was like an outcast, and, almost from my birth, had been with strangers. But this was done with no special design, but simply because it had happened so. When I was born my mother was still young and good-looking, and therefore necessary to Versilov; and a screaming child, of course, was always a nuisance, especially when they were travelling. That was how it happened that until I was nineteen I had scarcely seen my mother except on two or three brief occasions. It was not due to my mother's wishes, but to Versilov's lofty disregard for people.

7

Now for something quite different. A month earlier, that is a month before the 19th of September, I had made up my mind in Moscow to renounce them all, and to retire into my own idea, finally. I record that expression "retire into my own idea" because that expression may explain my leading motive, my object in life. What that "idea" of mine is, of that there will be only too much said later. In the solitary years of my dreamy life in Moscow it sprang up in my mind before I had left the sixth form of the grammar school, and from that time perhaps never left me for an instant. It absorbed my whole existence. Till then I had lived in dreams; from my childhood upwards I have lived in the world of dreams, always of a certain colour. But after this great and all-absorbing idea turned up, my dreams gained in force, took a definite shape; and became rational instead of foolish. School did not hinder my dreams, and it did not hinder the idea either. I must add, however, that I came out badly in the leaving exam, though I had always been one of the first in all the forms up to the seventh, and this

was a result of that same idea, a result of a false deduction from it perhaps. So it was not school work that hindered the idea, but the idea that hindered school work, and it hindered university work too. When I left school I intended at once not only to cut myself off from my family completely, but from all the world if necessary, though I was only nineteen at the time. I wrote through a suitable person to tell them to leave me entirely alone, not to send me any more money for my maintenance, and, if possible, to forget me altogether (that is if they ever did remember me), and finally “nothing would induce” me to enter the university. An alternative presented itself from which there was no escaping: to refuse to enter the university and go on with my education, or to defer putting my idea into practice for another four years. I went for the idea without faltering, for I was absolutely resolved about it. In answer to my letter, which had not been addressed to him, Versilov, my father, whom I had only seen once for a moment when I was a boy of ten (though even in that moment he made a great impression upon me), summoned me to Petersburg in a letter written in his own hand, promising me a private situation. This cold, proud man, careless and disdainful of me, after bringing me into the world and packing me off to strangers, knew nothing of me at all and had never even regretted his conduct; who knows, perhaps he had only a vague and confused idea of my existence, for it appeared afterwards that the money for my maintenance in Moscow had not been furnished by him but by other people. Yet the summons of this man who so suddenly remembered me and deigned to write to me with his own hand, by flattering me, decided my fate. Strange to say, what pleased me in his note (one tiny sheet of paper) was that he said not a word about the university, did not ask me to change my mind, did not blame me for not wanting to continue my studies, did not, in fact, trot out any parental flourishes of the kind usual in such cases, and yet this was wrong of him since it betrayed more than anything his lack of interest in me. I resolved to go, the more readily because it would not hinder my great idea. “I’ll see what will come of it,” I argued, “in any case I shall associate with them only for a time; possibly a very short time. But as soon as I see that this step, tentative and trifling as it is, is keeping me from the GREAT OBJECT, I shall break off with them, throw up everything and retreat into my shell.” Yes, into my shell! “I shall hide in it like a tortoise.” This comparison pleased me very much. “I shall not be alone,” I went on musing, as I walked about Moscow those last days like one possessed. “I shall never be alone as I have been for so many awful years till now; I shall have my idea to which I will never be false, even if I like them all there, and they make me happy, and I live with them for ten years!” It was, I may remark beforehand, just that impression, that is, just the twofold nature of the plans and objects definitely formed before leaving Moscow, and never out of my mind for one instant in Petersburg (for I hardly think there was a day in Petersburg which I had not fixed on beforehand as the final date for breaking off with them and going away), it was this, I say, that was, I believe, one of the chief causes of many of the indiscretions I have been guilty of during this year, many nasty things, many even low things, and stupid ones of course. To be sure, a father, something I had never had before, had appeared upon the scene. This thought

intoxicated me as I made my preparations in Moscow and sat in the railway carriage. That he was my father would be nothing. I was not fond of sentimentality, but this man had humiliated me and had not cared to know me, while all those years I had been chewing away at my dreams of him, if one may use such an expression. From my childhood upward, my dreams were all coloured by him; all hovered about him as the final goal. I don't know whether I hated him or loved him; but his figure dominated the future and all my schemes of life. And this happened of itself. It grew up with me.

Another thing which influenced me in leaving Moscow was a tremendous circumstance, a temptation which even then, three months before my departure (before Petersburg had been mentioned), set my heart leaping and throbbing. I was drawn to this unknown ocean by the thought that I could enter it as the lord and master of other people's destinies, and what people, too! But the feelings that were surging in my heart were generous and not despotic—I hasten to declare it that my words may not be mistaken. Moreover, Versilov might think (if he ever deigned to think of me) that a small boy who had just left school, a raw youth, was coming who would be agape with wonder at everything. And meanwhile I knew all his private life, and had about me a document of the utmost importance, for which (I know that now for a fact) he would have given some years of his life, if I had told him the secret at the time. But I notice that I am talking in riddles. One cannot describe feelings without facts. Besides which, there will be enough about all this in its proper place; it is with that object I have taken up my pen. Writing like this is like a cloud of words or the ravings of delirium.

8

Finally, to pass once for all to the 19th of September, I will observe briefly and, so to say, cursorily, that I found them all, that is Versilov, my mother and my sister (the latter I saw for the first time in my life) in difficult circumstances, almost destitute, or at least, on the verge of destitution. I knew of this before leaving Moscow, but yet I was not prepared for what I saw. I had been accustomed from childhood to imagine this man, this "future father of mine" in brilliant surroundings, and could not picture him except as the leading figure everywhere. Versilov had never shared the same lodgings with my mother, but had always taken rooms for her apart. He did this, of course, out of regard for their very contemptible "proprieties." But here they were all living together in a little wooden lodge in a back street in the Semyonovsky Polk. All their things were in pawn, so that, without Versilov's knowledge, I gave my mother my secret sixty roubles. SECRET, because I had saved them up in the course of two years out of my pocket money, which was five roubles a month. I had begun saving from the very day I had conceived my "idea," and so Versilov must know nothing about the money. I trembled at the thought of that.

My help was like a drop in the ocean. My mother worked hard and my sister too took in sewing. Versilov lived in idleness, indulged his whims and kept up a number of his

former rather expensive habits. He grumbled terribly, especially at dinner, and he was absolutely despotic in all his ways. But my mother, my sister, Tatyana Pavlovna and the whole family of the late Andronikov (the head of some department who used also to manage Versilov's affairs and had died three months before), consisting of innumerable women, grovelled before him as though he were a fetish. I had not imagined this. I may remark that nine years before he had been infinitely more elegant. I have said already that I had kept the image of him in my dreams surrounded by a sort of brilliance, and so I could not conceive how it was possible after only nine years for him to look so much older and to be so worn out; I felt at once sad, sorry, ashamed. The sight of him was one of the most painful of my first impressions on my arrival. Yet he was by no means an old man, he was only forty-five. Looking at him more closely I found in his handsome face something even more striking than what I had kept in my memory. There was less of the brilliance of those days, less external beauty, less elegance even; but life had, as it were, stamped on that face something far more interesting than before.

Meanwhile poverty was not the tenth or twentieth fraction of his misfortunes, and I knew that. There was something infinitely more serious than poverty, apart from the fact that there was still a hope that Versilov might win the lawsuit he had been contesting for the last year with the Princes Sokolsky and might in the immediate future come into an estate to the value of seventy thousand or more. I have said above that Versilov had run through three fortunes in his life, and here another fortune was coming to his rescue again! The case was to be settled very shortly. It was just then that I arrived. It is true that no one would lend him money on his expectations, there was nowhere he could borrow, and meanwhile they had to suffer.

Versilov visited no one, though he sometimes was out for the whole day. It was more than a year since he had been BANISHED from society. In spite of all my efforts, this scandal remained for the most part a mystery though I had been a whole month in Petersburg. Was Versilov guilty or not guilty—that was what mattered to me, that is what I had come to Petersburg for! Every one had turned against him—among others all the influential and distinguished people with whom he had been particularly clever in maintaining relations all his life—in consequence of rumours of an extremely low and—what was much worse in the eyes of the “world”—scandalous action which he was said to have committed more than a year ago in Germany. It was even reported that he had received a slap in the face from Prince Sokolsky (one of those with whom he was now in litigation) and had not followed it by a challenge. Even his children (the legitimate ones), his son and daughter, had turned against him and were holding aloof. It is true that through the influence of the Fanariotovs and old Prince Sokolsky (who had been a friend of Versilov) the son and daughter moved in the very highest circles. Yet, watching him all that month, I saw a haughty man who had rather cast off “society” than been cast off by it, so independent was his air. But had he the right to look like that—that was the question that agitated me. I absolutely had to find out the whole truth at the earliest possible date, for I had come—to judge this man.

I still kept my power hidden from him, but I had either to accept him or to reject him altogether. But that would have been too painful to me and I was in torment. I will confess it frankly at last: the man was dear to me!

And meanwhile I was living in the same flat with him, working, and scarcely refraining from being rude. In fact I did not refrain. After spending a month with him I became more convinced every day that I could not possibly appeal to him for a full explanation. This man in his pride remained an enigma to me, while he wounded me deeply. He was positively charming to me, and jested with me, but I should have liked quarrels better than such jests. There was a certain note of ambiguity about all my conversations with him, or more simply, a strange irony on his part. From our first meeting, on my arrival from Moscow, he did not treat me seriously. I never could make out why he took up this line. It is true that by this means he succeeded in remaining impenetrable, but I would not have humbled myself so far as to ask him to treat me seriously. Besides, he had certain wonderful and irresistible ways which I did not know how to deal with. In short he behaved to me as though I were the greenest of raw youths, which I was hardly able to endure, though I knew it would be so. I, too, gave up talking seriously in consequence, and waited; in fact, I almost gave up talking altogether. I waited for a person on whose arrival in Petersburg I might finally learn the truth; that was my last hope. In any case I prepared myself for a final rupture, and had already taken all necessary measures. I was sorry for my mother but—"either him or me," that was the choice I meant to offer her and my sister. I had even fixed on the day; and meanwhile I went to my work.

Chapter 2

1

On that 19th of September I was also to receive my first salary for the first month of my work in Petersburg in my "private" situation. They did not ask me about this job but simply handed me over to it, I believe, on the very first day of my arrival. This was very unmannerly, and it was almost my duty to protest. The job turned out to be a situation in the household of old Prince Sokolsky. But to protest then would have meant breaking off relations on the spot, and though I was not in the least afraid of that, it would have hindered the attainment of my primary objects; and so in silence I accepted the job for the time, maintaining my dignity by silence. I must explain from the very first that this Prince Sokolsky, a wealthy man and a privy councillor, was no relation at all of the Moscow princes of that name (who had been poor and insignificant for several generations past) with whom Versilov was contesting his lawsuit. It was only that they had the same name. Yet the old prince took a great interest in them, and was particularly fond of one of them who was, so to speak, the head of the family—a young officer. Versilov had till recently had an immense influence in this old man's affairs and

had been his friend, a strange sort of friend, for the poor old prince, as I detected, was awfully afraid of him, not only at the time when I arrived on the scene, but had apparently been always afraid of him all through their friendship. They had not seen each other for a long time, however. The dishonourable conduct of which Versilov was accused concerned the old prince's family. But Tatyana Pavlovna had intervened and it was through her that I was placed in attendance on the old prince, who wanted a "young man" in his study. At the same time it appeared that he was very anxious to do something to please Versilov, to make, so to speak, the first advance to him, and Versilov ALLOWED it. The old man had made the arrangement in the absence of his daughter, the widow of a general, who would certainly not have permitted him to take this step. Of this later, but I may remark that the strangeness of his relations with Versilov impressed me in the latter's favour. It occurred to the imagination that if the head of the injured family still cherished a respect for Versilov, the rumours of Versilov's scoundrelly behaviour must be absurd, or at least exaggerated, and might have more than one explanation. It was partly this circumstance which kept me from protesting against the situation; in accepting it I hoped to verify all this.

Tatyana Pavlovna was playing a strange part at the time when I found her in Petersburg. I had almost forgotten her, and had not at all expected to find her possessed of such influence. She had met me three or four times during my life in Moscow, and had always turned up, goodness knows where from, sent by some one or other whenever I needed fitting out—to go into Touchard's boarding school, or two and a half years later, when I was being transferred to the grammar school and sent to board with Nikolay Semyonovitch, a friend I shall never forget. She used to spend the whole day with me and inspect my linen and my clothes. She drove about the town with me, took me to Kuznetsky Street, bought me what was necessary, provided me with a complete outfit, in fact, down to the smallest box and penknife. All the while she nagged at me, scolded me, reproached me, cross-examined me, quoting as examples to me various phantom boys among her relations and acquaintances who were all said to be better than I was. She even pinched me and actually gave me several vicious pokes. After fitting me out and installing me, she would disappear completely for several years. On this occasion, too, she turned up at once on my arrival to instal me again. She was a spare little figure with a sharp nose like a beak, and sharp little eyes like a bird's. She waited on Versilov like a slave, and grovelled before him as though he were the Pope, but she did it through conviction. But I soon noticed with surprise that she was respected by all and, what was more, known to every one everywhere. Old Prince Sokolsky treated her with extraordinary deference; it was the same thing with his family; the same with Versilov's haughty children; the same with the Fanariotovs; and yet she lived by taking in sewing, and washing lace, and fetched work from the shops. She and I fell out at the first word, for she thought fit to begin nagging at me just as she had done six years before. And from that time forward we quarrelled every day, but that did not prevent us from sometimes talking, and I must confess that by the

end of the month I began to like her: for her independent character, I believe. But I did not tell her so.

I realized at once that I had only been given this post at the old invalid prince's in order to "amuse" him, and that that was my whole duty. Naturally this was humiliating, and I should at once have taken steps, but the queer old fellow soon made an unexpected impression upon me. I felt something like compassion for him, and by the end of the month I had become strangely attached to him; anyway I gave up my intention of being rude. He was not more than sixty, however, but there had been a great to-do with him a year and a half before, when he suddenly had a fit. He was travelling somewhere and went mad on the way, so there was something of a scandal of which people talked in Petersburg. As is usual in such cases, he was instantly taken abroad, but five months later he suddenly reappeared perfectly well, though he gave up the service. Versilov asserted seriously (and with noticeable heat) that he had not been insane at all, but had only had some sort of nervous fit. I promptly made a note of Versilov's warmth about it. I may observe, however, that I was disposed to share his opinion. The old man only showed perhaps an excessive frivolity at times, not quite appropriate to his years, of which, so they say, there was no sign in him before. It was said that in the past he had been a councillor of some sort, and on one occasion had quite distinguished himself in some commission with which he had been charged. After knowing him for a whole month, I should never have supposed he could have any special capacity as a councillor. People observed (though I saw nothing of it) that after his fit he developed a marked disposition to rush into matrimony, and it was said that he had more than once reverted to this idea during the last eighteen months, that it was known in society and a subject of interest. But as this weakness by no means fell in with the interests of certain persons of the prince's circle, the old man was guarded on all sides. He had not a large family of his own; he had been a widower for twenty years, and had only one daughter, the general's widow, who was now daily expected from Moscow. She was a young person whose strength of will was evidently a source of apprehension to the old man. But he had masses of distant relatives, principally through his wife, who were all almost beggars, besides a multitude of protégés of all sorts, male and female, all of whom expected to be mentioned in his will, and so they all supported the general's widow in keeping watch over the old man. He had, moreover, had one strange propensity from his youth up (I don't know whether it was ridiculous or not) for making matches for poor girls. He had been finding husbands for the last twenty-five years—for distant relations, for the step-daughters of his wife's cousins, for his god-daughters; he even found a husband for the daughter of his house porter. He used to take his protégées into his house when they were little girls, provide them with governesses and French mademoiselles, then have them educated in the best boarding schools, and finally marry them off with a dowry. The calls upon him were continually increasing. When his protégées were married they naturally produced more little girls and all these little girls became his protégées. He was always having to stand as

god-father. The whole lot turned up to congratulate him on his birthdays, and it was all very agreeable to him.

I noticed at once that the old man had lurking in his mind a painful conviction (it was impossible to avoid noticing it, indeed) that every one had begun to look at him strangely, that every one had begun to behave to him not as before, not as to a healthy man. This impression never left him even at the liveliest social functions. The old man had become suspicious, had begun to detect something in every one's eyes. He was evidently tormented by the idea that every one suspected him of being mad. He sometimes looked mistrustfully even at me. And if he had found out that some one was spreading or upholding such rumours, the benevolent old man would have become his implacable foe. I beg that this circumstance may be noted. I may add that it was what decided me from the first day not to be rude to him; in fact, I was glad if I were able sometimes to amuse or entertain him; I don't think that this confession can cast any slur on my dignity.

The greater part of his money was invested. He had since his illness become a partner in a large joint stock enterprise, a very safe one, however. And though the management was in other hands he took a great interest in it, too, attended the shareholders' meetings, was appointed a director, presided at the board-meetings, opposed motions, was noisy and obviously enjoyed himself. He was very fond of making speeches: every one could judge of his brain anyway. And in general he developed a great fancy for introducing profound reflections and bon mots in his conversation, even in the intimacy of private life. I quite understand it.

On the ground floor of his house there was something like a private office where a single clerk kept the books and accounts and also managed the house. This clerk was quite equal to the work alone, though he had some government job as well, but by the prince's own wish I was engaged to assist him; but I was immediately transferred to the prince's study, and often had no work before me, not even books or papers to keep up appearances. I am writing now sobered by time; and about many things feel now almost like an outsider; but how can I describe the depression (I recall it vividly at this moment) that weighed down my heart in those days, and still more, the excitement which reached such a pitch of confused feverishness that I did not sleep at night—all due to my impatience, to the riddles I had set myself to solve.

2

To ask for money, even a salary, is a most disgusting business, especially if one feels in the recesses of one's conscience that one has not quite earned it. Yet the evening before, my mother had been whispering to my sister apart from Versilov ("so as not to worry Andrey Petrovitch") that she intended to take the ikon which for some reason was particularly precious to her to the pawnbroker's. I was to be paid fifty roubles a month, but I had no idea how I should receive the money; nothing had been said to me about it.

Meeting the clerk downstairs three days before, I inquired of him whom one was to ask for one's salary. He looked at me with a smile as though of astonishment (he did not like me).

"Oh, you get a salary?"

I thought that on my answering he would add:

"What for?"

But he merely answered drily, that he "knew nothing about it," and buried himself in the ruled exercise book into which he was copying accounts from some bills.

He was not unaware, however, that I did something. A fortnight before I had spent four days over work he had given me, making a fair copy, and as it turned out, almost a fresh draft of something. It was a perfect avalanche of "ideas" of the prince's which he was preparing to present to the board of directors. These had to be put together into a whole and clothed in suitable language. I spent a whole day with the prince over it afterwards, and he argued very warmly with me, but was well satisfied in the end. But I don't know whether he read the paper or not. I say nothing of the two or three letters, also about business, which I wrote at his request.

It was annoying to me to have to ask for my salary because I had already decided to give up my situation, foreseeing that I should be obliged through unavoidable circumstances to go away. When I waked up and dressed that morning in my garret upstairs, I felt that my heart was beating, and though I pooh-pooed it, yet I was conscious of the same excitement as I walked towards the prince's house. That morning there was expected a woman, whose presence I was reckoning upon for the explanation of all that was tormenting me! This was the prince's daughter, the young widow of General Ahmakov, of whom I have spoken already and who was bitterly hostile to Versilov. At last I have written that name! I had never seen her, of course, and could not imagine how I should speak to her or whether I should speak, but I imagined (perhaps on sufficient grounds) that with her arrival there would be some light thrown on the darkness surrounding Versilov in my eyes. I could not remain unmoved. It was frightfully annoying that at the very outset I should be so cowardly and awkward; it was awfully interesting, and, still more, sickening—three impressions at once. I remember every detail of that day!

My old prince knew nothing of his daughter's probable arrival, and was not expecting her to return from Moscow for a week. I had learnt this the evening before quite by chance: Tatyana Pavlovna, who had received a letter from Mme. Ahmakov, let it out to my mother. Though they were whispering and spoke in veiled allusions, I guessed what was meant. Of course I was not eavesdropping, I simply could not avoid listening when I saw how agitated my mother was at the news of this woman's arrival. Versilov was not in the house.

I did not want to tell the old prince because I could not help noticing all that time how he was dreading her arrival. He had even let drop three days before, though only by a timid and remote hint, that he was afraid of her coming on my account; that is that he would have trouble about me. I must add, however, that in his own family he

preserved his independence and was still master in his own house, especially in money matters. My first judgment of him was that he was a regular old woman, but I was afterwards obliged to revise my opinion, and to recognize that, if he were an old woman, there was still a fund of obstinacy, if not of real manliness, in him. There were moments when one could hardly do anything with him in spite of his apprehensive and yielding character. Versilov explained this to me more fully later. I recall now with interest that the old prince and I scarcely ever spoke of his daughter, we seemed to avoid it: I in particular avoided it, while he, on his side, avoided mentioning Versilov, and I guessed that he would not answer if I were to ask him one of the delicate questions which interested me so much.

If anyone cares to know what we did talk about all that month I must answer that we really talked of everything in the world, but always of the queerest things. I was delighted with the extraordinary simplicity with which he treated me. Sometimes I looked with extreme astonishment at the old man and wondered how he could ever have presided at meetings. If he had been put into our school and in the fourth class too, what a nice schoolfellow he would have made. More than once, too, I was surprised by his face; it was very serious-looking, almost handsome and thin; he had thick curly grey hair, wide-open eyes; and he was besides slim and well built; but there was an unpleasant, almost unseemly, peculiarity about his face, it would suddenly change from excessive gravity to an expression of exaggerated playfulness, which was a complete surprise to a person who saw him for the first time. I spoke of this to Versilov, who listened with curiosity; I fancy that he had not expected me to be capable of making such observations; he observed casually that this had come upon the prince since his illness and probably only of late.

We used to talk principally of two abstract subjects—of God and of His existence, that is, whether there was a God or not—and of women. The prince was very religious and sentimental. He had in his study a huge stand of ikons with a lamp burning before them. But something seemed to come over him—and he would begin expressing doubts of the existence of God and would say astounding things, obviously challenging me to answer. I was not much interested in the question, speaking generally, but we both got very hot about it and quite genuinely. I recall all those conversations even now with pleasure. But what he liked best was gossiping about women, and he was sometimes positively disappointed at my disliking this subject of conversation, and making such a poor response to it.

He began talking in that style as soon as I went in that morning. I found him in a jocose mood, though I had left him the night before extremely melancholy. Meanwhile it was absolutely necessary for me to settle the matter of the salary—before the arrival of certain persons. I reckoned that that morning we should certainly be interrupted (it was not for nothing my heart was beating) and then perhaps I should not be able to bring myself to speak of money. But I did not know how to begin about money and I was naturally angry at my stupidity. And, as I remember now in my vexation at some

too jocular question of his, I blurted out my views on women point-blank and with great vigour.

And this led him to be more expansive with me than ever.

3

“I don’t like women because they’ve no manners, because they are awkward, because they are not self-reliant, and because they wear unseemly clothes!” I wound up my long tirade incoherently.

“My dear boy, spare us!” he cried, immensely delighted, which enraged me more than ever.

I am ready to give way and be trivial only about trifles. I never give way in things that are really important. In trifles, in little matters of etiquette, you can do anything you like with me, and I curse this peculiarity in myself. From a sort of putrid good nature I’ve sometimes been ready to knuckle under to some fashionable snob, simply flattered by his affability, or I’ve let myself be drawn into argument with a fool, which is more unpardonable than anything. All this is due to lack of self-control, and to my having grown up in seclusion, but next day it would be the same thing again: that’s why I was sometimes taken for a boy of sixteen. But instead of gaining self-control I prefer even now to bottle myself up more tightly than ever in my shell—“I may be clumsy—but good-bye!”—however misanthropic that may seem. I say that seriously and for good. But I don’t write this with reference to the prince or even with reference to that conversation.

“I’m not speaking for your entertainment,” I almost shouted at him. “I am speaking from conviction.”

“But how do you mean that women have no manners and are unseemly in their dress? That’s something new.”

“They have no manners. Go to the theatre, go for a walk. Every man knows the right side of the road, when they meet they step aside, he keeps to the right, I keep to the right. A woman, that is a lady—it’s ladies I’m talking about—dashes straight at you as though she doesn’t see you, as though you were absolutely bound to skip aside and make way for her. I’m prepared to make way for her as a weaker creature, but why has she the right, why is she so sure it’s my duty—that’s what’s offensive. I always curse when I meet them. And after that they cry out that they’re oppressed and demand equality; a fine sort of equality when she tramples me under foot and fills my mouth with sand.”

“With sand?”

“Yes, because they’re not decently dressed—it’s only depraved people don’t notice it. In the law-courts they close the doors when they’re trying cases of indecency. Why do they allow it in the streets, where there are more people? They openly hang bustles on behind to look as though they had fine figures; openly! I can’t help noticing; the young lad notices it too; and the child that’s growing into a boy notices it too; it’s

abominable. Let old rakes admire them and run after them with their tongues hanging out, but there is such a thing as the purity of youth which must be protected. One can only despise them. They walk along the parade with trains half a yard long behind them, sweeping up the dust. It's a pleasant thing to walk behind them: you must run to get in front of them, or jump on one side, or they'll sweep pounds of dust into your mouth and nose. And what's more it's silk, and they'll drag it over the stones for a couple of miles simply because it's the fashion, when their husbands get five hundred roubles a year in the Senate: that's where bribes come in! I've always despised them. I've cursed them aloud and abused them."

Though I describe this conversation somewhat humorously in the style that was characteristic of me at that time, my ideas are still the same.

"And how do you come off?" the prince queried.

"I curse them and turn away. They feel it, of course, but they don't show it, they prance along majestically without turning their heads. But I only came to actual abuse on one occasion with two females, both wearing tails on the parade; of course I didn't use bad language, but I said aloud that long tails were offensive."

"Did you use that expression?"

"Of course I did. To begin with, they trample upon the rules of social life, and secondly, they raise the dust, and the parade is meant for all. I walk there, other men walk, Fyodor, Ivan, it's the same for all. So that's what I said. And I dislike the way women walk altogether, when you look at their back view; I told them that too, but only hinted at it."

"But, my dear boy, you might get into serious trouble; they might have hauled you off to the police station."

"They couldn't do anything. They had nothing to complain of: a man walks beside them talking to himself. Every one has the right to express his convictions to the air. I spoke in the abstract without addressing them. They began wrangling with me of themselves; they began to abuse me, they used much worse language than I did; they called me milksop, said I ought to go without my dinner, called me a nihilist, and threatened to hand me over to the police; said that I'd attacked them because they were alone and weak women, but if there'd been a man with them I should soon sing another tune. I very coolly told them to leave off annoying me, and I would cross to the other side of the street. And to show them that I was not in the least afraid of their men, and was ready to accept their challenge, I would follow them to their house, walking twenty paces behind them, then I would stand before the house and wait for their men. And so I did."

"You don't say so?"

"Of course it was stupid, but I was roused. They dragged me over two miles in the heat, as far as the 'institutions,' they went into a wooden house of one storey—a very respectable-looking one I must admit—one could see in at the windows a great many flowers, two canaries, three pug-dogs and engravings in frames. I stood for half an hour in the street facing the house. They peeped out two or three times, then pulled

down all the blinds. Finally an elderly government clerk came out of the little gate; judging from his appearance he had been asleep and had been waked up on purpose; he was not actually in a dressing-gown, but he was in a very domestic-looking attire. He stood at the gate, folded his hands behind him, and proceeded to stare at me—I at him. Then he looked away, then gazed at me again, and suddenly began smiling at me. I turned and walked away.”

“My dear boy, how Schilleresque! I’ve always wondered at you; with your rosy cheeks, your face blooming with health, and such an aversion, one may say, for women! How is it possible that woman does not make a certain impression on you at your age? Why, when I was a boy of eleven, *mon cher*, my tutor used to notice that I looked too attentively at the statues in the Summer Gardens.”

“You would like me to take up with some Josephine here, and come and tell you all about it! Rather not; I saw a woman completely naked when I was thirteen; I’ve had a feeling of disgust ever since.”

“Do you mean it? But, *cher enfant*, about a fresh, beautiful woman there’s a scent of apples; there’s nothing disgusting.”

“In the little boarding school I was at before I went to the grammar school, there was a boy called Lambert. He was always thrashing me, for he was three years older than I was, and I used to wait on him, and take off his boots. When he was going to be confirmed an abbé, called Rigaud, came to congratulate him on his first communion, and they dissolved in tears on each other’s necks, and the abbé hugged him tightly to his bosom. I shed tears, too, and felt very envious. He left school when his father died, and for two years I saw nothing of him. Then I met him in the street. He said he would come and see me. By that time I was at the grammar school and living at Nikolay Semyonovitch’s. He came in the morning, showed me five hundred roubles, and told me to go with him. Though he had thrashed me two years before, he had always wanted my company, not simply to take off his boots, but because he liked to tell me things. He told me that he had taken the money that day out of his mother’s desk, to which he had made a false key, for legally all his father’s money was his, and so much the worse for her if she wouldn’t give it to him. He said that the Abbé Rigaud had been to lecture him the day before, that he’d come in, stood over him, begun whimpering, and described all sorts of horrors, lifting up his hands to heaven. “And I pulled out a knife and told him I’d cut his throat” (he pronounced it ‘thr-r-roat’). We went to Kuznetsky Street. On the way he informed me that his mother was the abbé’s mistress, and that he’d found it out, and he didn’t care a hang for anything, and that all they said about the sacrament was rubbish. He said a great deal more, and I felt frightened. In Kuznetsky Street he bought a double-barrelled gun, a game bag, cartridges, a riding-whip, and afterwards a pound of sweets. We were going out into the country to shoot, and on the way we met a bird-catcher with cages of birds. Lambert bought a canary from him. In a wood he let the canary go, as it couldn’t fly far after being in the cage, and began shooting at it, but did not hit it. It was the first time in his life he had fired off a gun, but he had wanted to buy a gun years before; at

Touchard's even we were dreaming of one. He was almost choking with excitement. His hair was black, awfully black, his face was white and red, like a mask, he had a long aquiline nose, such as are common with Frenchmen, white teeth and black eyes. He tied the canary by a thread to a branch, and an inch away fired off both barrels, and the bird was blown into a hundred feathers. Then we returned, drove to an hotel, took a room, and began eating, and drinking champagne; a lady came in... . I remember being awfully impressed by her being so splendidly dressed; she wore a green silk dress. It was then I saw ... all that I told you about... . Afterwards, when we had begun drinking, he began taunting and abusing her; she was sitting with nothing on, he took away her clothes and when she began scolding and asking for her clothes to dress again, he began with all his might beating her with the riding-whip on her bare shoulders. I got up, seized him by the hair, and so neatly that I threw him on the ground at once. He snatched up a fork and stuck it in my leg. Hearing the outcry, people ran in, and I had time to run away. Ever since then it's disgusted me to think of nakedness; and, believe me, she was a beauty."

As I talked, the prince's face changed from a playful expression to one of great sadness.

"Mon pauvre enfant! I have felt convinced all along that there have been very many unhappy days in your childhood."

"Please don't distress yourself!"

"But you were alone, you told me so yourself, but for that Lambert; you have described it so well, that canary, the confirmation and shedding tears on the abbé's breast, and only a year or so later saying that of his mother and the abbé! ... Oh, mon cher, the question of childhood in our day is truly awful; for a time those golden heads, curly and innocent, flutter before one and look at one with their clear eyes like angels of God, or little birds, and afterwards ... and afterwards it turns out that it would have been better if they had not grown up at all!"

"How soft you are, prince! It's as though you had little children of your own. Why, you haven't any and never will have."

"Tiens!" His whole face was instantly transformed, "that's just what Alexandra Petrovna said—the day before yesterday, he-he!— Alexandra Petrovna Sinitsky—you must have met her here three weeks ago—only fancy, the day before yesterday, in reply to my jocular remark that if I do get married now I could set my mind at rest, there'd be no children, she suddenly said, and with such spite, 'On the contrary, there certainly would be; people like you always have them, they'll arrive the very first year, you'll see.' He-he! And they've all taken it into their heads, for some reason, that I'm going to get married; but though it was spiteful I admit it was— witty!"

"Witty—but insulting!"

"Oh, cher enfant, one can't take offence at some people. There's nothing I prize so much in people as wit, which is evidently disappearing among us; though what Alexandra Petrovna said—can hardly be considered wit."

“What? What did you say?” I said, catching at his words—“one can’t take offence at some people. That’s just it! Some people are not worth noticing—an excellent principle! Just the one I need. I shall make a note of it. You sometimes say the most delightful things, prince.”

He beamed all over.

“N’est ce pas? Cher enfant, true wit is vanishing; the longer one lives the more one sees it. Eh, mais ... c’est moi qui connait les femmes! Believe me, the life of every woman, whatever she may profess, is nothing but a perpetual search for some one to submit to ... so to speak a thirst for submission. And mark my words, there’s not a single exception.”

“Perfectly true! Magnificent!” I cried rapturously. Another time we should have launched into philosophical disquisitions on this theme, lasting for an hour, but suddenly I felt as though something had bitten me, and I flushed all over. I suddenly imagined that in admiring his bon mots I was flattering him as a prelude to asking for money, and that he would certainly think so as soon as I began to ask for it. I purposely mention this now.

“Prince, I humbly beg you to pay me at once the fifty roubles you owe me for the month,” I fired off like a shot, in a tone of irritability that was positively rude.

I remember (for I remember every detail of that morning) that there followed between us then a scene most disgusting in its realistic truth. For the first minute he did not understand me, stared at me for some time without understanding what money I was talking about. It was natural that he should not realize I was receiving a salary—and indeed, why should I? It is true that he proceeded to assure me afterwards that he had forgotten, and when he grasped the meaning of my words, he instantly began taking out fifty roubles, but he was flustered and turned crimson. Seeing how things stood, I got up and abruptly announced that I could not take the money now, that in what I had been told about a salary they had made a mistake, or deceived me to induce me to accept the situation, and that I saw only too well now, that I did nothing to earn one, for I had no duties to perform. The prince was alarmed and began assuring me that I was of the greatest use to him, that I should be still more useful to him in the future, and that fifty roubles was so little that he should certainly add to it, for he was bound to do so, and that he had made the arrangement himself with Tatyana Pavlovna, but had “unpardonably forgotten it.” I flushed crimson and declared resolutely that it was degrading for me to receive a salary for telling scandalous stories of how I had followed two draggle-tails to the ‘institutions,’ that I had not been engaged to amuse him but to do work, and that if there was no work I must stop it, and so on, and so on. I could never have imagined that anyone could have been so scared as he was by my words. Of course it ended in my ceasing to protest, and his somehow pressing the fifty roubles into my hand: to this day I recall with a blush that I took it. Everything in the world always ends in meanness, and what was worst of all, he somehow succeeded in almost proving to me that I had unmistakably earned the money, and I was so stupid as to believe it, and so it was absolutely impossible to avoid taking it.

“Cher, cher enfant!” he cried, kissing and embracing me (I must admit I was on the point of tears myself, goodness knows why, though I instantly restrained myself, and even now I blush as I write it). “My dear boy, you’re like one of the family to me now; in the course of this month you’ve won a warm place in my heart! In ‘society’ you get ‘society’ and nothing else. Katerina Nikolaevna (that was his daughter’s name) is a magnificent woman and I’m proud of her, but she often, my dear boy, very often, wounds me. And as for these girls (*elles sont charmantes*) and their mothers who come on my birthday, they merely bring their embroidery and never know how to tell one anything. I’ve accumulated over sixty cushions embroidered by them, all dogs and stags. I like them very much, but with you I feel as if you were my own—not son, but brother, and I particularly like it when you argue against me; you’re literary, you have read, you can be enthusiastic... .”

“I have read nothing, and I’m not literary at all. I used to read what I came across, but I’ve read nothing for two years and I’m not going to read.”

“Why aren’t you going to?”

“I have other objects.”

“Cher ... it’s a pity if at the end of your life you say, like me, ‘*Je sais tout, mais je ne sais rien de bon.*’ I don’t know in the least what I have lived in this world for! But ... I’m so much indebted to you ... and I should like, in fact ...”

He suddenly broke off, and with an air of fatigue sank into brooding. After any agitation (and he might be overcome by agitation at any minute, goodness knows why) he generally seemed for some time to lose his faculties and his power of self-control, but he soon recovered, so that it really did not matter. We sat still for a few minutes. His very full lower lip hung down ... what surprised me most of all was that he had suddenly spoken of his daughter, and with such openness too. I put it down, of course, to his being upset.

“Cher enfant, you don’t mind my addressing you so familiarly, do you?” broke from him suddenly.

“Not in the least. I must confess that at the very first I was rather offended by it and felt inclined to address you in the same way, but I saw it was stupid because you didn’t speak like that to humiliate me.”

But he had forgotten his question and was no longer listening.

“Well, how’s your FATHER?” he said, suddenly raising his eyes and looking dreamily at me.

I winced. In the first place he called Versilov my FATHER, which he had never permitted himself to do before, and secondly, he began of himself to speak of Versilov, which he had never done before.

“He sits at home without a penny and is very gloomy,” I answered briefly, though I was burning with curiosity.

“Yes, about money. His lawsuit is being decided to-day, and I’m expecting Prince Sergay as soon as he arrives. He promised to come straight from the court to me. Their whole future turns on it. It’s a question of sixty or seventy thousand. Of course, I’ve

always wished well to Andrey Petrovitch" (Versilov's name), "and I believe he'll win the suit, and Prince Sergay has no case. It's a point of law."

"The case will be decided to-day?" I cried, amazed. The thought that Versilov had not deigned to tell me even that was a great shock to me. "Then he hasn't told my mother, perhaps not anyone," it suddenly struck me. "What strength of will!"

"Then is Prince Sokolsky in Petersburg?" was another idea that occurred to me immediately.

"He arrived yesterday. He has come straight from Berlin expressly for this day."

That too was an extremely important piece of news for me. And he would be here to-day, that man who had given HIM a slap in the face!

"Well, what then?" The old prince's face suddenly changed again. "He'll preach religion as before and ... and ... maybe run after little girls, unfledged girls, again. He-he! There's a very funny little story about that going about even now... . He-he!"

"Who will preach? Who will run after little girls?"

"Andrey Petrovitch! Would you believe it, he used to pester us all in those days. 'Where are we going?' he would say. 'What are we thinking about?' That was about it, anyway. He frightened and chastened us. 'If you're religious,' he'd say, 'why don't you become a monk?' That was about what he expected. Mais quelle idée! If it's right, isn't it too severe? He was particularly fond of frightening me with the Day of Judgment—me of all people!"

"I've noticed nothing of all this, and I've been living with him a month," I answered, listening with impatience. I felt fearfully vexed that he hadn't pulled himself together and was rambling on so incoherently.

"It's only that he doesn't talk about that now, but, believe me, it was so. He's a clever man, and undoubtedly very learned; but is his intellect quite sound? All this happened to him after his three years abroad. And I must own he shocked me very much and shocked every one. *Cher enfant, j'aime le bon Dieu...* . I believe, I believe as much as I can, but I really was angry at the time. Supposing I did put on a frivolous manner, I did it on purpose because I was annoyed—and besides, the basis of my objection was as serious as it has been from the beginning of the world. 'If there is a higher Being,' I said, 'and He has a PERSONAL existence, and isn't some sort of diffused spirit for creation, some sort of fluid (for that's even more difficult to understand), where does He live?' *C'était bête*, no doubt, my dear boy, but, you know, all the arguments come to that. *Un domicile* is an important thing. He was awfully angry. He had become a Catholic out there."

"I've heard that too. But it was probably nonsense."

"I assure you by everything that's sacred. You've only to look at him... . But you say he's changed. But in those days how he used to worry us all! Would you believe it, he used to behave as though he were a saint and his relics were being displayed. He called us to account for our behaviour, I declare he did! Relics! *En voilà un autre!* It's all very well for a monk or a hermit, but here was a man going about in a dress-coat and all the rest of it, and then he sets up as a saint! A strange inclination in a man in

good society, and a curious taste, I admit. I say nothing about that; no doubt all that's sacred, and anything may happen... . Besides, this is all l'inconnu, but it's positively unseemly for a man in good society. If anything happened to me and the offer were made me I swear I should refuse it. I go and dine to-day at the club and then suddenly make a miraculous appearance as a saint! Why, I should be ridiculous. I put all that to him at the time... . He used to wear chains."

I turned red with anger.

"Did you see the chains yourself?"

"I didn't see them myself but ..."

"Then let me tell you that all that is false, a tissue of loathsome fabrications, the calumny of enemies, that is, of one chief and inhuman enemy—for he has only one enemy—your daughter!"

The old prince flared up in his turn.

"Mon cher, I beg and insist that from this time forth you never couple with that revolting story the name of my daughter."

I stood up. He was beside himself. His chin was quivering.

"Cette histoire infame! I did not believe it, I never would believe it, but ... they tell me, believe it, believe it, I ..."

At that instant a footman came in and announced visitors. I dropped into my chair again.

4

Two ladies came in. They were both young and unmarried. One was a stepdaughter of a cousin of the old prince's deceased wife or something of the sort, a protégée of his for whom he had already set aside a dowry, and who (I mention it with a view to later events) had money herself: the other was Anna Andreyevna Versilov, the daughter of Versilov, three years older than I. She lived with her brother in the family of Mme. Fanariotov. I had only seen her once before in my life, for a minute in the street, though I had had an encounter, also very brief, with her brother in Moscow. (I may very possibly refer to this encounter later—if I have space, that is, for it is hardly worth recording.) Anna Andreyevna had been from childhood a special favourite of the old prince (Versilov's acquaintance with the prince dated from very long ago). I was so overcome by what had just happened that I did not even stand up on their entrance, though the old prince rose to greet them. Afterwards I thought it would be humiliating to get up, and I remained where I was. What overwhelmed me most was the prince's having shouted at me like that three minutes before, and I did not know whether to go away or not. But the old man, as usual, had already forgotten everything, and was all pleasure and animation at sight of the young ladies. At the very moment of their entrance he hurriedly whispered to me, with a rapid change of expression and a mysterious wink:

"Look at Olympiada, watch her, watch her; I'll tell you why after... ."

I did look at her rather carefully, but I saw nothing special about her. She was a plump, not very tall young lady, with exceedingly red cheeks. Her face was rather pleasing, of the sort that materialists like. She had an expression of kindness, perhaps, but with a touch of something different. She could not have been very brilliant intellectually—that is, not in the higher sense—for one could see cunning in her eyes. She was not more than nineteen. In fact, there was nothing remarkable about her. In our school we should have called her a cushion. (I only give this minute description of her because it will be useful later on.)

Indeed, all I have written hitherto with, apparently, such unnecessary detail is all leading up to what is coming and is necessary for it. It will all come in in its proper place; I cannot avoid it; and if it is dull, pray don't read it.

Versilov's daughter was a very different person. She was tall and somewhat slim, with a long and strikingly pale face and splendid black hair. She had large dark eyes with an earnest expression, a small mouth, and most crimson lips. She was the first woman who did not disgust me by her horrid way of walking. She was thin and slender, however. Her expression was not altogether good-natured, but was dignified. She was twenty-two. There was hardly a trace of resemblance to Versilov in her features, and yet, by some miracle, there was an extraordinary similarity of expression. I do not know whether she was pretty; that is a matter of taste. They were both very simple in their dress, so that it is not worth while to describe it. I expected to be at once insulted by some glance or gesture of Mlle. Versilov, and I was prepared for it. Her brother had insulted me in Moscow the first time we ever met. She could hardly know me by sight, but no doubt she had heard I was in attendance on the prince. Whatever the prince did or proposed to do at once aroused interest and was looked upon as an event in the whole gang of his relations and expectant beneficiaries, and this was especially so with his sudden partiality for me. I knew for a fact that the old prince was particularly solicitous for Anna Andreyevna's welfare and was on the look-out for a husband for her. But it was more difficult to find a suitor for Mlle. Versilov than for the ladies who embroidered on canvas.

And, lo and behold! contrary to all my expectations, after shaking hands with the prince and exchanging a few light, conventional phrases with him, she looked at me with marked curiosity, and, seeing that I too was looking at her, bowed to me with a smile. It is true that she had only just come into the room, and so might naturally bow to anyone in it, but her smile was so friendly that it was evidently premeditated; and, I remember, it gave me a particularly pleasant feeling.

"And this ... this is my dear young friend Arkady Andreyevitch Dol ..." The prince faltered, noticing that she bowed to me while I remained sitting—and he suddenly broke off; perhaps he was confused at introducing me to her (that is, in reality, introducing a brother to a sister). The "cushion" bowed to me too; but I suddenly leapt up with a clumsy scrape of my chair: it was a rush of simulated pride, utterly senseless, all due to vanity.

“Excuse me, prince, I am not Arkady Andreyevitch but Arkady Makarovitch!” I rapped out abruptly, utterly forgetting that I ought to have bowed to the ladies. Damnation take that unseemly moment!

“Mais tiens!” cried the prince, tapping his forehead with his finger.

“Where have you studied?” I heard the stupid question drawled by the “cushion,” who came straight up to me.

“In Moscow, at the grammar school.”

“Ah! so I have heard. Is the teaching good there?”

“Very good.”

I remained standing and answered like a soldier reporting himself.

The young lady’s questions were certainly not appropriate, but she did succeed in smoothing over my stupid outbreak and relieving the embarrassment of the prince, who was meanwhile listening with an amused smile to something funny Mlle. Versilov was whispering in his ear, evidently not about me. But I wondered why this girl, who was a complete stranger to me, should put herself out to smooth over my stupid behaviour and all the rest of it. At the same time, it was impossible to imagine that she had addressed me quite casually; it was obviously premeditated. She looked at me with too marked an interest; it was as though she wanted me, too, to notice her as much as possible. I pondered over all this later, and I was not mistaken.

“What, surely not to-day?” the prince cried suddenly, jumping up from his seat.

“Why, didn’t you know?” Mlle. Versilov asked in surprise. “Olympie! the prince didn’t know that Katerina Nikolaevna would be here to-day. Why, it’s to see her we’ve come. We thought she’d have arrived by the morning train and have been here long ago. She has just driven up to the steps; she’s come straight from the station, and she told us to come up and she would be here in a minute... . And here she is!”

The side-door opened and—**THAT WOMAN WALKED IN!**

I knew her face already from the wonderful portrait of her that hung in the prince’s study. I had been scrutinizing the portrait all that month. I spent three minutes in the study in her presence, and I did not take my eyes off her face for a second. But if I had not known her portrait and had been asked, after those three minutes, what she was like, I could not have answered, for all was confusion within me.

I only remember from those three minutes the image of a really beautiful woman, whom the prince was kissing and signing with the cross, and who looked quickly at once—the very minute she came in— at me. I distinctly heard the prince muttering something, with a little simper, about his new secretary and mentioning my name, evidently pointing at me. Her face seemed to contract; she threw a vicious glance at me, and smiled so insolently that I took a sudden step forward, went up to the prince, and muttered, trembling all over and unable to finish my words (I believe my teeth were chattering):

“From this time I ... I’ve business of my own... . I’m going.”

And I turned and went out. No one said a word to me, not even the prince; they all simply stared. The old prince told me afterwards that I turned so white that he “was simply frightened.”

But there was no need.

Chapter 3

1

Indeed there was no need: a higher consideration swallowed up all petty feelings, and one powerful emotion made up to me for everything. I went out in a sort of ecstasy. As I stepped into the street I was ready to sing aloud. To match my mood it was an exquisite morning, sunshine, people out walking, noise, movement, joyousness, and crowds. Why, had not that woman insulted me? From whom would I have endured that look and that insolent smile without instant protest however stupid it might be. I did not mind about that. Note that she had come expressly to insult me as soon as she could, although she had never seen me. In her eyes I was an “envoy from Versilov,” and she was convinced at that time, and for long afterwards, that Versilov held her fate in his hands and could ruin her at once if he wanted to, by means of a certain document; she suspected that, anyway. It was a duel to the death. And yet—I was not offended! It was an insult, but I did not feel it. How should I? I was positively glad of it; though I had come here to hate her I felt I was beginning to love her.

I don't know whether the spider perhaps does not hate the fly he has marked and is snaring. Dear little fly! It seems to me that the victim is loved, or at least may be loved. Here I love my enemy; I am delighted, for instance, that she is so beautiful. I am delighted, madam, that you are so haughty and majestic. If you were meeker it would not be so delightful. You have spat on me—and I am triumphant. If you were literally to spit in my face I should really not be angry because you—are my victim; MINE and not HIS. How fascinating was that idea! Yes, the secret consciousness of power is more insupportably delightful than open domination. If I were a millionaire I believe I should take pleasure in going about in the oldest clothes and being taken for a destitute man, almost a beggar, being jostled and despised. The consciousness of the truth would be enough for me.

That is how I should interpret my thoughts and happiness, and much of what I was feeling that day. I will only add that in what I have just written there is too much levity; in reality my feeling was deeper and more modest. Perhaps even now I am more modest in myself than in my words and deeds—God grant it may be so!

Perhaps I have done amiss in sitting down to write at all. Infinitely more remains hidden within than comes out in words. Your thought, even if it is an evil one, is always deeper while it is in your mind; it becomes more absurd and dishonourable when it is put into words. Versilov once said to me that the opposite was true only with horrid

people, they simply tell lies, it is easy for them; but I am trying to write the whole truth, and that's fearfully difficult!

2

On that 19th of September I took one other "step."

For the first time since I arrived I had money in my pocket, for the sixty roubles I had saved up in two years I had given to my mother, as I mentioned before. But, a few days before, I had determined that on the day I received my salary I would make an "experiment" of which I had long been dreaming. The day before I had cut out of the paper an address; it was an advertisement that on the 19th of September at twelve o'clock in the morning, in such- and-such a street, at number so-and-so, there would be a sale by the local police authority of the effects of Mme. Lebrecht, and that the catalogue, valuation, and property for sale could be inspected on the day of the auction, and so on.

It was just past one. I hurried to the address on foot. I had not taken a cab for more than two years—I had taken a vow not to (or I should never have saved up my sixty roubles). I had never been to an auction, I had never ALLOWED myself this indulgence. And though my present step was only an EXPERIMENT yet I had made up my mind not to take even that step till I had left the grammar school, when I should break off with everything, hide myself in my shell, and become perfectly free. It is true that I was far from being in my shell and far from being free yet, but then I was only taking this step by way of an experiment—simply to look into it, as it were to indulge a fancy, and after that not to recur to it perhaps for a long while, till the time of beginning seriously. For every one else this was only a stupid little auction, but for me it was the first plank in the ship in which a Columbus would set out to discover his America. That was my feeling then.

When I arrived I went into the furthest corner of the yard of the house mentioned in the advertisement, and entered Mme. Lebrecht's flat, which consisted of an entry and four small low-pitched rooms. In the first room there was a crowd of about thirty persons, half of them people who had come to bargain, while the rest, judging from their appearance, were either inquisitive outsiders, or connoisseurs, or representatives of Mme. Lebrecht. There were merchants and Jews gloating over the objects made of gold, and a few people of the well-dressed class. The very faces of some of these gentlemen remain stamped in my memory. In the doorway leading to the room on the right there was placed a table so that it was impossible to pass; on it lay the things catalogued for sale. There was another room on the left, but the door into it was closed, though it was continually being opened a little way, and some one could be seen peeping through the crack, no doubt some one of the numerous family of Mme. Lebrecht, who must have been feeling very much ashamed at the time. At the table between the doors, facing the public, sat the warrant officer, to judge by his badge, presiding over the sale. I found the auction half over; I squeezed my way up to the

table as soon as I went in. Some bronze candlesticks were being sold. I began looking at the things.

I looked at the things and wondered what I could buy, and what I could do with bronze candlesticks, and whether my object would be attained, and how the thing would be done, and whether my project would be successful, and whether my project were not childish. All this I wondered as I waited. It was like the sensation one has at the gambling table at the moment before one has put down a card, though one has come to do so, feeling, "if I like I'll put it down, if I don't I'll go away—I'm free to choose!" One's heart does not begin to throb at that point, but there is a faint thrill and flutter in it—a sensation not without charm. But indecision soon begins to weigh painfully upon one: one's eyes grow dizzy, one stretches out one's hand, picks up a card, but mechanically, almost against one's will, as though some one else were directing one's hand. At last one has decided and thrown down the card—then the feeling is quite different—immense. I am not writing about the auction; I am writing about myself; who else would feel his heart throbbing at an auction?

Some were excited, some were waiting in silence, some had bought things and were regretting it. I felt no sympathy with a gentleman who, misunderstanding what was said, bought an electro-plated milk-jug in mistake for a silver one for five roubles instead of two; in fact it amused me very much. The warrant officer passed rapidly from one class of objects to another: after the candlesticks, displayed earrings, after earrings an embroidered leather cushion, then a money-box—probably for the sake of variety, or to meet the wishes of the purchasers. I could not remain passive even for ten minutes. I went up to the cushion, and afterwards to the cash-box, but at the critical moment my tongue failed me: these objects seemed to me quite out of the question. At last I saw an album in the warrant officer's hand.

"A family album in real morocco, second-hand, with sketches in water-colour and crayon, in a carved ivory case with silver clasps—priced two roubles!"

I went up: it looked an elegant article, but the carving was damaged in one place. I was the only person who went up to look at it, all were silent; there was no bidding for it. I might have undone the clasps and taken the album out of the case to look at it, but I did not make use of my privilege, and only waved a trembling hand as though to say "never mind."

"Two roubles, five kopecks," I said. I believe my teeth were chattering again.

The album was knocked down to me. I at once took out the money, paid for it, snatched up the album, and went into a corner of the room. There I took it out of its case, and began looking through it with feverish haste—it was the most trumpery thing possible—a little album of the size of a piece of notepaper, with rubbed gilt edges, exactly like the albums girls used to keep in former days when they left school. There were crayon and colour sketches of temples on mountain-sides, Cupids, a lake with floating swans; there were verses:

On a far journey I am starting, From Moscow I am departing, From my dear ones I am parting. And with post-horses flying South.

They are enshrined in my memory!

I made up my mind that I had made a mess of it; if there ever was anything no one could possibly want it was this.

“Never mind,” I decided, “one’s bound to lose the first card; it’s a good omen, in fact.”

I felt thoroughly light-hearted.

“Ach, I’m too late; is it yours? You have bought it?” I suddenly heard beside me the voice of a well-dressed, presentable-looking gentleman in a blue coat. He had come in late.

“I am too late. Ach, what a pity! How much was it?”

“Two roubles, five kopecks.”

“Ach, what a pity! Would you give it up?”

“Come outside,” I whispered to him, in a tremor.

We went out on the staircase.

“I’ll let you have it for ten roubles,” I said, feeling a shiver run down my back.

“Ten roubles! Upon my word!”

“As you like.”

He stared at me open-eyed. I was well dressed, not in the least like a Jew or a second-hand dealer.

“Mercy on us—why it’s a wretched old album, what use is it to anyone? The case isn’t worth anything certainly. You certainly won’t sell it to anyone.”

“I see you will buy it.”

“But that’s for a special reason. I only found out yesterday. I’m the only one who would. Upon my word, what are you thinking about!”

“I ought to have asked twenty-five roubles, but as there was, after all, a risk you might draw back, I only asked for ten to make sure of it. I won’t take a farthing less.”

I turned and walked away.

“Well, take four roubles,” he said, overtaking me in the yard, “come, five!”

I strode on without speaking.

“Well, take it then!”

He took out ten roubles. I gave him the album.

“But you must own it’s not honest! Two roubles—and then ten, eh?”

“Why not honest? It’s a question of market.”

“What do you mean by market!” He grew angry.

“When there’s a demand one has a market—if you hadn’t asked for it I shouldn’t have sold it for forty kopecks.”

Though I was serious and didn’t burst out laughing I was laughing inwardly—not from delight—I don’t know why myself, I was almost breathless.

“Listen,” I muttered, utterly unable to restrain myself, but speaking in a friendly way and feeling quite fond of him. “Listen, when as a young man the late James Rothschild, the Parisian one, who left seventeen hundred million francs (he nodded), heard of the murder of the Duc de Berri some hours before anybody else he sent the news to the

proper quarter, and by that one stroke in an instant made several millions—that's how people get on!"

"So you're a Rothschild, are you?" he cried as though indignant with me for being such a fool.

I walked quickly out of the house. One step, and I had made seven roubles ninety-five kopecks. It was a senseless step, a piece of child's play I admit, but it chimed in with my theories, and I could not help being deeply stirred by it. But it is no good describing one's feelings. My ten roubles were in my waistcoat pocket, I thrust in two fingers to feel it—and walked along without taking my hand out. After walking a hundred yards along the street I took the note out to look at it, I looked at it and felt like kissing it. A carriage rumbled up to the steps of a house. The house porter opened the door and a lady came out to get into the carriage. She was young, handsome and wealthy-looking, gorgeously dressed in silk and velvet, with a train more than two yards long. Suddenly a pretty little portfolio dropped out of her hand and fell on the ground; she got into the carriage. The footman stooped down to pick the thing up, but I flew up quickly, picked it up and handed it to the lady, taking off my hat. (The hat was a silk one, I was suitably dressed for a young man.) With a very pleasant smile, though with an air of reserve, the lady said to me: "Merci, m'sieu!" The carriage rolled away. I kissed the ten-rouble note.

3

That same day I was to go and see Efim Zvyerev, one of my old schoolfellows at the grammar school, who had gone to a special college in Petersburg. He is not worth describing, and I was not on particularly friendly terms with him; but I looked him up in Petersburg. He might (through various circumstances which again are not worth relating) be able to give me the address of a man called Kraft, whom it was very important for me to see as soon as he returned from Vilna. Efim was expecting him that day or the next, as he had let me know two days before. I had to go to the Petersburg Side, but I did not feel tired.

I found Efim (who was also nineteen) in the yard of his aunt's house, where he was staying for the time. He had just had dinner and was walking about the yard on stilts. He told me at once that Kraft had arrived the day before, and was staying at his old lodgings close by, and that he was anxious to see me as soon as possible, as he had something important to tell me.

"He's going off somewhere again," added Efim.

As in the present circumstances it was of great importance to see Kraft I asked Efim to take me round at once to his lodging, which it appeared was in a back street only a few steps away. But Efim told me that he had met him an hour ago and that he was on his way to Dergatchev's.

"But come along to Dergatchev's. Why do you always cry off? Are you afraid?"

Kraft might as a fact stay on at Dergatchev's, and in that case where could I wait for him? I was not afraid of going to Dergatchev's, but I did not want to go to his house, though Efim had tried to get me there three times already. And on each occasion had asked "Are you afraid?" with a very nasty smile at my expense. It was not a case of fear I must state at once; if I was afraid it was of something quite different. This time I made up my mind to go. Dergatchev's, too, was only a few steps away. On the way I asked Efim if he still meant to run away to America.

"Maybe I shall wait a bit," he answered with a faint smile.

I was not particularly fond of him; in fact I did not like him at all. He had fair hair, and a full face of an excessive fairness, an almost unseemly childish fairness, yet he was taller than I was, but he would never have been taken for more than seventeen. I had nothing to talk to him about.

"What's going on there? Is there always a crowd?" I asked.

"But why are you always so frightened?" he laughed again.

"Go to hell!" I said, getting angry.

"There won't be a crowd at all. Only friends come, and they're all his own set. Don't worry yourself."

"But what the devil is it to me whether they're his set or not! I'm not one of his set. How can they be sure of me?"

"I am bringing you and that's enough. They've heard of you already. Kraft can answer for you, too."

"I say, will Vassin be there?"

"I don't know."

"If he is, give me a poke and point him out as soon as we go in. As soon as we go in. Do you hear?"

I had heard a good deal about Vassin already, and had long been interested in him.

Dergatchev lived in a little lodge in the courtyard of a wooden house belonging to a merchant's wife, but he occupied the whole of it. There were only three living rooms. All the four windows had the blinds drawn down. He was a mechanical engineer, and did work in Petersburg. I had heard casually that he had got a good private berth in the provinces, and that he was just going away to it.

As soon as we stepped into the tiny entry we heard voices. There seemed to be a heated argument and some one shouted:

"Quae medicamenta non sanant, ferrum sanat, quae ferrum non sanat— ignis sanat!"

I certainly was in some uneasiness. I was, of course, not accustomed to society of any kind. At school I had been on familiar terms with my schoolfellows, but I was scarcely friends with anyone; I made a little corner for myself and lived in it. But this was not what disturbed me. In any case I vowed not to let myself be drawn into argument and to say nothing beyond what was necessary, so that no one could draw any conclusions about me; above all—to avoid argument.

In the room, which was really too small, there were seven men; counting the ladies, ten persons. Dergatchev was five-and-twenty, and was married. His wife had a sister

and another female relation, who lived with them. The room was furnished after a fashion, sufficiently though, and was even tidy. There was a lithographed portrait on the wall, but a very cheap one; in the corner there was an ikon without a setting, but with a lamp burning before it.

Dergatchev came up to me, shook hands and asked me to sit down.

“Sit down; they’re all our own set here.”

“You’re very welcome,” a rather nice-looking, modestly dressed young woman added immediately, and making me a slight bow she at once went out of the room. This was his wife, and she, too, seemed to have been taking part in the discussion, and went away to nurse the baby. But there were two other ladies left in the room; one very short girl of about twenty, wearing a black dress, also rather nice-looking, and the other a thin, keen-eyed lady of thirty. They sat listening eagerly, but not taking part in the conversation. All the men were standing except Kraft, Vassin and me. Efim pointed them out to me at once, for I had never seen Kraft before, either. I got up and went up to make their acquaintance. Kraft’s face I shall never forget. There was no particular beauty about it, but a positive excess of mildness and delicacy, though personal dignity was conspicuous in everything about him. He was twenty-six, rather thin, above medium height, fair-haired, with an earnest but soft face; there was a peculiar gentleness about his whole personality. And yet if I were asked I would not have changed my own, possibly very commonplace, countenance for his, which struck me as so attractive. There was something in his face I should not have cared to have in mine, too marked a calm (in a moral sense) and something like a secret, unconscious pride. But I probably could not have actually formed this judgment at the time. It seems so to me now, in the light of later events.

“I’m very glad you’ve come,” said Kraft. “I have a letter which concerns you. We’ll stay here a little and then go home.”

Dergatchev was a strong, broad-shouldered, dark-complexioned man of medium height, with a big beard. His eyes showed acuteness, habitual reserve, and a certain incessant watchfulness; though he was for the most part silent, he evidently controlled the conversation. Vassin’s face did not impress me much, though I had heard of him as extraordinarily intelligent: he had fair hair, large light grey eyes, and a very open face. But at the same time there was something, as it were, too hard in it; one had a presentiment that he would not be communicative, but he looked undeniably clever, cleverer than Dergatchev, of a more profound intellect—cleverer than anyone in the room. But perhaps I am exaggerating. Of the other young men I only recall two; one a tall, dark man of twenty-seven, with black whiskers, who talked a great deal, a teacher or something of the sort; the other was a fellow of my own age, with good lines in his face, wearing a Russian tunic without sleeves. He was silent, and listened attentively. He turned out afterwards to be a peasant.

“No, that’s not the way to put it,” the black-whiskered teacher began, obviously continuing the previous discussion. He talked more than anyone in the room.

"I'm not talking of mathematical proofs, but that idea which I am prepared to believe without mathematical proof ..."

"Wait a bit, Tihomirov," Dergatchev interrupted loudly, "the new-comers don't understand. You see," he suddenly addressed himself to me alone (and I confess if he intended to put me as a novice through an examination or to make me speak, it was adroitly done on his part; I felt it and prepared myself) "it's all our friend Kraft, who is well known to us all for his character and the solidity of his convictions. From a very ordinary fact he has deduced a very extraordinary conviction that has surprised us all. He has deduced that the Russians are a second-rate people ..."

"Third-rate," shouted some one.

"A second-rate people destined to serve as the raw material for a nobler race, and not to play an independent part in the history of humanity. In view of this theory of his, which is perhaps correct, Kraft has come to the conclusion that the activity of every Russian must in the future be paralysed by this idea, that all, so to speak, will fold their hands and ..."

"Excuse me, Dergatchev, that's not the way to put it," Tihomirov interrupted impatiently again (Dergatchev at once gave way), "considering that Kraft has made a serious study of the subject, has made on a physiological basis deductions which he regards as mathematically proved, and has spent perhaps two years on his idea (which I should be prepared a priori to accept with equanimity), considering all this, that is considering Kraft's excitement and earnestness, the case must be considered as a phenomenon. All this leads up to a question which Kraft cannot understand, and that's what we must attend to—I mean, Kraft's not understanding it, for that's the phenomenon. We must decide whether this phenomenon belongs to the domain of pathology as a solitary instance, or whether it is an occurrence which may be normally repeated in others; that's what is of interest for the common cause. I believe Kraft about Russia, and I will even say that I am glad of it, perhaps; if this idea were assimilated by all it would free many from patriotic prejudice and untie their hands ..."

"I am not influenced by patriotism," said Kraft, speaking with a certain stiffness. All this debate seemed distasteful to him.

"Whether patriotism or not we need not consider," observed Vassin, who had been very silent.

"But how, tell me, please, could Kraft's deduction weaken the impulse to the cause of humanity," shouted the teacher. (He was the only one shouting. All the others spoke in a low voice.) "Let Russia be condemned to second-rateness, but we can still work and not for Russia alone. And, what's more, how can Kraft be a patriot if he has ceased to believe in Russia?"

"Besides being a German," a voice interrupted again.

"I am a Russian," said Kraft.

"That's a question that has no direct bearing on the subject," observed Dergatchev to the speaker who had interrupted.

“Take a wider view of your idea,” cried Tihomirov, heeding nothing. “If Russia is only the material for nobler races why shouldn’t she serve as such material? It’s a sufficiently attractive part for her to play. Why not accept the idea calmly, considering how it enlarges the task? Humanity is on the eve of its regeneration, which is already beginning. None but the blind deny the task before us. Let Russia alone, if you’ve lost faith in her, and work for the future, for the future unknown people that will be formed of all humanity without distinction of race. Russia would perish some time, anyway; even the most gifted peoples exist for fifteen hundred or at the most two thousand years. Isn’t it all the same whether it’s two thousand or two hundred? The Romans did not last fifteen hundred years as a vital force, they too have turned into material. They ceased to exist long ago, but they’ve left an idea, and it has become an element in the future of mankind. How can one tell a man there’s nothing to be done? I can’t conceive of a position in which there ever could be nothing to do! Work for humanity and don’t trouble about the rest. There’s so much to do that life isn’t long enough if you look into it more closely.”

“One must live in harmony with the laws of nature and truth,” Mme. Dergatchev observed from the doorway. The door was slightly ajar and one could see that she was standing there, listening eagerly, with the baby at her breast which was covered.

Kraft listened with a faint smile and brought out at last with a somewhat harassed face, but with earnest sincerity:

“I don’t understand how, if one is under the influence of some over-mastering idea which completely dominates one’s mind and one’s heart, one can live for something else which is outside that idea.”

“But if it is logically, mathematically proved to you that your deduction is erroneous—that your whole idea is erroneous, that you have not the slightest right to exclude yourself from working for the welfare of humanity simply because Russia is predestined to a second-rate part, if it is pointed out to you, that in place of your narrow horizon infinity lies open before you, that instead of your narrow idea of patriotism ...”

“Ah!” Kraft waved his hand gently, “I’ve told you there is no question of patriotism.”

“There is evidently a misunderstanding,” Vassin interposed suddenly, “the mistake arises from the fact that Kraft’s conclusion is not a mere logical theory but, so to say, a theory that has been transmuted into a feeling. All natures are not alike; in some men a logical deduction is sometimes transmuted into a very powerful emotion which takes possession of the whole being, and is sometimes very difficult to dislodge or alter. To cure such a man the feeling itself must be changed, which is only possible by replacing it by another, equally powerful one. That’s always difficult, and in many cases impossible.”

“That’s a mistake,” roared the argumentative teacher, “a logical proof of itself will dissipate prejudices. A rational conviction will give rise to feeling, too. Thought arises from feeling, and dominating a man in its turn formulates new feeling.”

“People are very different. Some change their feelings readily, while for others it’s hard to do so,” responded Vassin, as though disinclined to continue the argument; but I was delighted by his idea.

“That’s perfectly true what you say,” I said, turning to him, all at once breaking the ice and suddenly beginning to speak; “that to change a feeling one must replace it by another. Four years ago a general in Moscow ... I didn’t know him, you see, but ... Perhaps he couldn’t have inspired respect of himself ... And the fact itself may seem irrational but ... But he had lost a child, that’s to say two little girls who had died one after another of scarlatina. And he was utterly crushed, and did nothing but grieve, so that one couldn’t bear to go and look at him, and he ended by dying scarcely six months later. It’s a fact that he died of it! What could have saved him? The answer is—a feeling of equal strength. One would have had to dig those two little girls out of the grave and give them back to him—that would have been the only thing, I mean in that way. And he died. Yet one might have presented him with excellent reflections: that life is transitory, that all are mortal; one might have produced statistics to show how many children do die of scarlatina ... he was on the retired list... .”

I stopped, out of breath, and looked round.

“That’s nothing to do with it,” said some one.

“The instance you have quoted, though it’s not quite in the same category, is very similar and illustrates the subject,” said Vassin, turning to me.

4

Here I must confess why I was so delighted with what Vassin had said about the “idea transmuted into feeling,” and at the same time I must confess to a fiendish disgrace. Yes, I was afraid to go to Dergatchev’s, though not for the reason Efim imagined. I dreaded going because I had been afraid of them even before I left Moscow. I knew that they (or some of their sort, it’s all the same) were great in argument and would perhaps shatter “my idea.” I was firmly resolved in myself that I wouldn’t give away my idea or say a word to them about it; but they (or again some of their sort) might easily say something to me which would destroy my faith in my “idea,” even though I might not utter a syllable about it. There were questions connected with my “idea” which I had not settled, but I did not want anyone to settle them but myself. For the last two years I had even given up reading for fear of meeting with some passage opposed to my “idea” which might shake me. And all at once Vassin had solved the difficulty and reassured me on the most essential point. After all, what was I afraid of and what could they do to me, whatever skill in argument they might have? I perhaps was the only one who understood what Vassin meant by “an idea transformed into an emotion.” It’s not enough to refute a fine idea, one must replace it by something fine of equal strength; or else, refusing absolutely to part with my feeling, in my heart I should refute the refutation, however strong the argument might be, whatever they might say. And what could they give me in place of it? And therefore I might be braver, I was

bound to be more manly. While I was delighted with Vassin, I felt ashamed, and felt myself an insignificant child.

Then there followed fresh ignominy. It was not a contemptible desire to show off my intelligence that made me break the ice and speak, it was an impulse to “throw myself on his neck.” The impulse to throw myself on people’s necks that they might think well of me and take me to their hearts or something of the sort (pure beastliness, in fact) I look upon as the most abject of my weaknesses, and I suspected it in myself long ago; in fact, when I was in the corner in which I entrenched myself for so many years, though I don’t regret doing so, I knew I ought to behave in company with more austerity. What comforted me after every such ignominious scene was that my “idea” was as great a secret as ever, and that I hadn’t given it away. With a sinking at my heart I sometimes imagined that when I did let out my idea to some one I should suddenly have nothing left, that I should become like every one else, and perhaps I should give up the idea; and so I was on my guard and preserved it, and trembled at the thought of chattering. And now at Dergatchev’s, almost at the first contact with anyone, I broke down. I hadn’t betrayed anything, of course, but I had chattered unpardonably; it was ignominious. It is a horrid thing to remember! No, I must not associate with people. I think so even now. Forty years hence I will speak. My idea demands a corner.

5

As soon as Vassin expressed approval I felt irresistibly impelled to talk.

“I consider that every one has a right to have his own feelings ... if they are from conviction ... and that no one should reproach him with them,” I went on, addressing Vassin. Though I spoke boldly, it was as though I was not speaking, not my own tongue moving in my mouth.

“Re-all-ly?” the same voice which had interrupted Dergatchev and shouted at Kraft that he was a German interposed with an ironical drawl. Regarding the speaker as a complete nonentity, I addressed the teacher as though he had called out to me.

“It’s my conviction that I should not dare to judge anyone,” I said, quivering, and conscious that I was going to make a fool of myself.

“Why so mysterious?” cried the voice of the nonentity again.

“Every man has his own idea,” I went on, gazing persistently at the teacher, who for his part held his tongue and looked at me with a smile.

“Yours is?” cried the nonentity.

“Too long to describe... . But part of my idea is that I should be left alone. As long as I’ve two roubles I want to be independent of every one (don’t excite yourself, I know the objection that will be made) and to do nothing—not even to work for that grand future of humanity which Mr. Kraft is invited to work for. Personal freedom, that is, my own, is the first thing, and I don’t care about anything else.”

My mistake was that I lost my temper.

“In other words you advocate the tranquillity of the well-fed cow?”

“So be it. Cows don’t hurt anyone. I owe no one anything. I pay society in the form of taxes that I may not be robbed, killed or assaulted, and no one dare demand anything more. I personally, perhaps, may have other ideas, and if I want to serve humanity I shall, and perhaps ten times as much as those who preach about it; only I want no one to dare to demand it of me, to force me to it like Mr. Kraft. I must be perfectly free not to lift a finger if I like. But to rush and ‘fall on everybody’s neck’ from love to humanity, and dissolve in tears of emotion—is only a fashion. And why should I be bound to love my neighbour, or your future humanity which I shall never see, which will never know anything about me, and which will in its turn disappear and leave no trace (time counts for nothing in this) when the earth in its turn will be changed into an iceberg, and will fly off into the void with an infinite multitude of other similar icebergs; it’s the most senseless thing one could possibly imagine. That’s your teaching. Tell me why I am bound to be so noble, especially if it all lasts only for a moment?”

“P-poo!” cried a voice.

I had fired off all this with nervous exasperation, throwing off all restraint. I knew that I was making a fool of myself, but I hurried on, afraid of being interrupted. I felt that my words were pouring out like water through a sieve, incoherently, nineteen to the dozen, but I hurried on to convince them and get the better of them. It was a matter of such importance to me. I had been preparing for it for three years. But it was remarkable that they were all suddenly silent, they said absolutely nothing, every one was listening. I went on addressing my remarks to the teacher.

“That’s just it. A very clever man has said that nothing is more difficult than to answer the question ‘Why we must be honourable.’ You know there are three sorts of scoundrels in the world; naïve scoundrels, that is, convinced that their villany is the highest virtue; scoundrels who are ashamed, that is, ashamed of their own villany, though they fully intend to persevere with it; and lastly simple scoundrels, pure-bred scoundrels. For example I had a schoolfellow called Lambert who told me at sixteen that when he came into his fortune it would be his greatest satisfaction to feed on meat and bread while the children of the poor were dying of hunger; and when they had no fuel for their fires he would buy up a whole woodstack, build it up in a field and set fire to it there, and not give any of it to the poor. Those were his feelings! Tell me, what am I to say to a pure-blooded scoundrel like that if he asks me why he should be honourable? Especially now in these times which you have so transformed, for things have never been worse than they are now. Nothing is clear in our society. You deny God, you see, deny heroism. What blind, deaf, dull-witted stagnation of mind can force me to act in one way, if it’s more to my advantage to do the opposite? You say ‘a rational attitude to humanity is to your own advantage, too’; but what if I think all these rational considerations irrational, and dislike all these socialist barracks and phalanxes? What the devil do I care for them or for the future when I shall only live once on earth! Allow me to judge of my advantage for myself; it’s more amusing.

What does it matter to me what will happen in a thousand years to your humanity if, on your principles, I'm to get for it neither love, nor future life, nor recognition of my heroism? No, if that's how it is I'd rather live in the most ignorant way for myself and let them all go to perdition!"

"An excellent sentiment!"

"Though I'm always ready to go with them."

"That's one better!"—the same voice again.

The others still remained silent, they all scrutinized me, staring; but little by little in different parts of the room there rose a titter, subdued indeed, but they were all laughing at me to my face. Vassin and Kraft were the only ones not laughing, the gentleman with the black whiskers was sniggering too; he sneered at me persistently and listened.

"I'm not going to tell you my idea," I cried, quivering all over, "nothing would induce me, but I ask you on the other hand, from your point of view—don't imagine I'm speaking for myself, for I dare say I love humanity a thousand times more than all of you put together! Tell me, and you must, you are bound now to answer because you are laughing, tell me, what inducement do you hold out to me to follow you? Tell me, how do you prove to me that you'll make things better? How will you deal with my individual protest in your barracks? I have wanted to meet you, gentlemen, for ever so long. You will have barracks, communistic homes, stricte necessaire, atheism, and communistic wives without children—that's your ideal, I know all about it. And for all this, for this little part of mediocre advantage which your rational system guarantees me, for a bit of bread and a warm corner you take away all my personal liberty! For instance; if my wife's carried off, are you going to take away my personal liberty so that I mayn't bash my rival's brains in? You'll tell me I shall be more sensible then myself, but what will the wife say to a husband so sensible, if she has the slightest self-respect? Why it's unnatural; you ought to be ashamed!"

"You're a specialist on the woman question then?" the voice of the nonentity pronounced malignantly.

For one instant I had an impulse to fly at him and pommel him with my fists. He was a short fellow with red hair and freckles though what the devil does his appearance matter?

"Don't excite yourself. I've never once had relations with a woman," I rapped out, for the first time addressing him directly.

"A priceless avowal which might have been made more politely in the presence of ladies."

But there was a general movement among them; they were all looking for their hats and taking leave—not on my account, of course, but simply because it was time to break up. But I was crushed with shame at the way they all ignored me. I jumped up, too.

"Allow me to ask your name. You kept looking at me," said the teacher, coming up to me with a very nasty smile.

“Dolgoruky.”

“Prince Dolgoruky?”

“No, simply Dolgoruky, legally the son of a former serf, Makar Dolgoruky, but the illegitimate son of my former master, Monsieur Versilov. Don’t make a mistake, gentlemen, I don’t tell you this to make you all fall upon my neck and begin howling like calves from sentimentality.”

There was a loud and unceremonious roar of laughter, so much so that the baby, who was asleep in the next room, waked up and began squealing. I trembled with fury. Every one shook hands with Dergatchev and went out without taking the slightest notice of me.

“Come along,” said Kraft, touching me.

I went up to Dergatchev, pressed his hand and shook it vigorously several times.

“You must excuse Kudryumov’s being so rude to you” (Kudryumov was the red-haired man), said Dergatchev.

I followed Kraft out. I was not in the least ashamed.

6

There is of course an immense difference between what I am now and what I was then.

Still “not in the least ashamed” I overtook Vassin on the stairs, leaving Kraft behind as of secondary importance, and with the most natural air as though nothing had happened I asked:

“I believe you know my father, I mean Versilov.”

“He’s not exactly an acquaintance of mine,” Vassin answered at once (and without a trace of that insulting refinement of politeness which delicate people adopt when they speak to people who have just disgraced themselves), “but I do know him a little; I have met him and I’ve heard him talk.”

“If you’ve heard him no doubt you do know him, for you are you! What do you think of him? Forgive the abrupt question but I need to know. It’s what YOU would think, just your opinion that I need.”

“You are asking a great deal of me. I believe that man is capable of setting himself tremendous tasks and possibly carrying them through—but without rendering an account of his doings to anyone.”

“That’s true, that’s very true—he’s a very proud man! Is he a sincere man? Tell me, what do you think about his being a Catholic? But I forgot, perhaps you don’t know?”

If I had not been so excited I should not, of course, have fired off such questions so irrelevantly at a man of whom I had heard but whom I had never seen before. I was surprised that Vassin did not seem to notice how rude I was.

“I heard something about it, but I don’t know how far it may be true,” he answered in the same calm and even tone as before.

“Not a bit! It’s false! Do you suppose he can believe in God?”

“He—is a very proud man, as you said just now, and many very proud people like to believe in God, especially those who despise other people. Many strong natures seem to have a sort of natural craving to find some one or something to which they can do homage. Strong natures often find it very difficult to bear the burden of their strength.”

“Do you know that must be awfully true,” I cried again. “Only I should like to understand ...”

“The reason is obvious. They turn to God to avoid doing homage to men, of course without recognizing how it comes about in them; to do homage to God is not so humiliating. They become the most fervent of believers—or to be more accurate the most fervently desirous of believing; but they take this desire for belief itself. These are the people who most frequently become disillusioned in the end. As for Monsieur Versilov, I imagine that he has some extremely sincere characteristics. And altogether he interested me.”

“Vassin!” I cried, “you rejoice my heart! It’s not your intelligence I wonder at; I am astonished that you, a man of such a lofty nature and so far above me, can walk with me and talk to me as simply and courteously as though nothing had happened!”

Vassin smiled.

“You are too flattering, and all that has happened is that you have shown a weakness for abstract conversation. You have probably been through a long period of silence.”

“For three years I have been silent; for three years I have been preparing to speak ... You couldn’t of course have thought me a fool, you’re so extraordinarily clever, though no one could have behaved more stupidly; but you must have thought me a scoundrel.”

“A scoundrel!”

“Yes, certainly! Tell me, don’t you secretly despise me for saying I was Versilov’s illegitimate son... . Boasting I was the son of a serf?”

“You worry yourself too much. If you think you did wrong in saying so you’ve only to avoid saying it again. You have fifty years before you.”

“Oh, I know that I ought to be very silent with other people. This throwing oneself on people’s necks is the lowest of all vices; I told them so just now, and here I am doing it to you! But there is a difference, isn’t there? If you realize that difference, if you are capable of realizing it, then I bless this moment!”

Vassin smiled again.

“Come and see me if you care to,” he said. “I have work now and am busy, but I shall be pleased to see you.”

“I thought from your face just now that you were too hard and uncommunicative.”

“That may very well be true. I saw something of your sister Lizaveta Makarovna at Luga, last year... . Kraft has stopped and I believe is waiting for you. He has to turn here.”

I pressed Vassin’s hand warmly, and ran up to Kraft, who had walked on ahead all the while I talked to Vassin. We walked in silence to his lodgings. I could not speak to him and did not want to. One of the strongest traits in Kraft’s character was delicacy.

Chapter 4

1

Kraft had been somewhere in the service, and at the same time had been a paid assistant of Andronikov's in the management of the private business which the deceased gentleman had always carried on in addition to his official duties. What mattered to me was, that from his close association with Andronikov, Kraft might well know a great deal of what interested me. But Marie Ivanovna, the wife of Nikolay Semyonovitch, with whom I had boarded so many years while I was at the grammar school in Moscow, was a favourite niece of Andronikov and was brought up by him, and from her I learnt that Kraft had actually been "commissioned" to give me something. I had been expecting him for a whole month.

He lived in a little flat of two rooms quite apart from the rest of the house, and at the moment, having only just returned, he had no servant. His trunk stood open, not yet unpacked. His belongings lay about on the chairs, and were spread out on the table in front of the sofa: his travelling bag, his cashbox, his revolver and so on. As we went in, Kraft seemed lost in thought, as though he had altogether forgotten me. He had perhaps not noticed that I had not spoken to him on the way. He began looking for something at once, but happening to catch a glimpse of himself in the looking-glass he stood still for a full minute gazing at his own face. Though I noticed this peculiar action, and recalled it all afterwards, I was depressed and disturbed. I was not feeling equal to concentrating my mind. For a moment I had a sudden impulse to go straight away and to give it all up for ever. And after all what did all these things amount to in reality? Was it not simply an unnecessary worry I had taken upon myself? I sank into despair at the thought that I was wasting so much energy perhaps on worthless trifles from mere sentimentality, while I had facing me a task that called for all my powers. And meanwhile my incapacity for any real work was clearly obvious from what had happened at Dergatchev's.

"Kraft, shall you go to them again?" I asked him suddenly.

He turned slowly to me as though hardly understanding me. I sat down on a chair.

"Forgive them," said Kraft suddenly.

I fancied, of course, that this was a sneer, but looking attentively at him, I saw such a strange and even wonderful ingenuousness in his face that I positively wondered at his asking me so earnestly to "forgive" them. He brought up a chair and sat down beside me.

"I know that I am perhaps a medley of all sorts of vanities and nothing more," I began, "but I'm not apologizing."

"And you've no need to apologize to anyone," he said, quietly and earnestly. He talked all the time quietly and very slowly.

“I may be guilty in my own eyes... . I like being guilty in my own eyes... . Kraft, forgive me for talking nonsense. Tell me, surely you don’t belong to that circle? That’s what I wanted to ask.”

“They are no sillier than other people and no wiser; they are mad like every one else... .”

“Why, is every one mad?” I asked, turning towards him with involuntary curiosity.

“All the best people are mad nowadays; it’s the carnival of mediocrity and ineptitude and nothing else... . But it’s not worth talking about.”

As he talked he looked away into the air and began sentences and broke off without finishing them. I was particularly struck by a note of despondency in his voice.

“Surely Vassin is not one of them, Vassin has a mind, Vassin has a moral idea!” I cried.

“There are no moral ideas now. It suddenly appears that there is not one left and, what’s worse, that there never have been any.”

“Never have been any in the past?”

“Let us leave that!” he brought out with unmistakable weariness.

I was touched by his sorrowful earnestness. Ashamed of my own egoism I began to drop into his tone.

“The present day,” he began after a pause lasting two minutes, looking away into space, “the present day is the golden age of mediocrity and callousness, of a passion for ignorance, idleness, inefficiency, a craving for everything ready-made. No one thinks; it’s rare for anyone to work out an idea for himself.”

He broke off again and paused for a while; I listened. “Nowadays they are stripping Russia of her forests, and exhausting her natural wealth, turning the country into a waste and making it only fit for the Kalmucks. If a man looks forward and plants a tree every one laughs at him, and tells him he won’t live to enjoy it. On the other hand those with aspirations discuss nothing but what will be in a thousand years. The idea that sustained men has utterly gone. It’s as though they were all at an hotel and were leaving Russia to-morrow. They are alive if they could only... .”

“Excuse me, Kraft, you said they worried their heads about what would happen in a thousand years. But you despair about the future of Russia ... isn’t that an anxiety of the same sort?”

“It—it’s the most essential question in the world!” he said irritably, and jumped up quickly from his seat.

“Ah, yes! I forgot,” he said suddenly in quite a different voice, looking at me in perplexity. “I asked you to come for something special and meanwhile ... for heaven’s sake excuse me.”

He seemed suddenly to wake up from a sort of dream, and was almost disconcerted; he took a letter out of a portfolio on the table and gave it to me.

“This is what I have to give you. It’s a document of some importance,” he began, speaking collectedly and with a businesslike air. Long afterwards, when I recalled it, I was struck by this faculty in him (at an hour such as this was—for him!) of turning

such wholehearted attention on another person's affairs and going into them with such firmness and composure.

"It is a letter of Stolbyeev's, that is of the man whose will gave rise to Versilov's lawsuit with the Princes Sokolsky. The case is just being decided in the court, and will certainly be decided in Versilov's favour; the law is on his side. Meanwhile, in this letter, a private letter written two years ago, the deceased sets forth his real dispositions, or more accurately his desires, and expresses them rather in favour of the Sokolskys than of Versilov. At any rate the points on which the Sokolskys rest their case in contesting the will are materially strengthened by this letter. Versilov's opponents would give a great deal for this letter, though it really has no positive legal value. Alexey Nikanoritch (Andronikov), who managed Versilov's affairs, kept this letter and not long before his death gave it to me, telling me to 'take care of it'; perhaps he had a presentiment that he was dying and was anxious about his papers. I was unwilling to judge of Alexey Nikanoritch's intentions in the case, and I must confess that at his death I found myself in disagreeable uncertainty what to do with this document, especially as the case was so soon to be concluded. But Marie Ivanovna, in whom Alexey Nikanoritch seems to have put great confidence in his lifetime, helped me out of the difficulty. She wrote to me three weeks ago telling me that I was to give the letter to you, as this would, she BELIEVED (her own expression) be in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, and I am very glad that I can at last give it to you."

"Tell me," I said, dumbfounded at this new and unexpected information, "what am I to do with this letter now? How am I to act?"

"That's for you to decide."

"Impossible; my hands are tied, you must admit that! Versilov is so reckoning on this fortune ... and, you know, he'll be utterly lost without it; and it suddenly appears that a document like this exists!"

"It only exists here in this room."

"Is that really so?" I looked at him attentively.

"If you can't decide how to act in this case, what can I advise you?"

"But I can't give it to the Sokolskys either. I should ruin all Versilov's hopes, and be a traitor to him besides... . On the other hand if I give it to Versilov I plunge the innocent into poverty, and I should put Versilov in a hopeless dilemma too; he would either have to give up the fortune or become a thief."

"You exaggerate the importance of the matter."

"Tell me one thing: is this letter decisive, conclusive?"

"No, it isn't. I'm not much of a lawyer. A lawyer on the other side would, no doubt, know how to make use of such a document and to turn it to account; but Alexey Nikanoritch considered positively that if this letter were put forward it would have no great legal value, so that Versilov's case might be won all the same. This letter is more a matter of conscience, so to say... ."

"But that's what matters most of all," I interrupted, "just because it would put Versilov in a hopeless dilemma."

“He may on the contrary destroy the document, and so escape all danger.”

“Have you any grounds for supposing such a thing of him, Kraft? That’s what I want to know; that’s why I’m here.”

“I believe every one would do the same in his place.”

“Would you behave so, yourself?”

“I’m not going to receive a fortune, so I can’t tell about myself.”

“Very well,” I said, putting the letter in my pocket. “The matter’s settled for the present. Listen, Kraft. Marie Ivanovna, who has, I assure you, told me a great deal, said to me that you and only you could tell me the truth of what happened at Ems a year and a half ago between Versilov and Mme. Ahmakov. I’ve been looking forward to seeing you as a sun that would throw light on everything. You don’t know my position, Kraft. I beseech you to tell me the whole truth. What I want to know is what kind of man He is, and now—now I need to know it more than ever.”

“I wonder Marie Ivanovna did not tell you all about it herself; she might have heard it all from Andronikov, and of course she has heard it and very likely knows more than I do.”

“Andronikov was not clear about it himself, so Marie Ivanovna told me. It seems a maze to which no one has the clue. The devil himself would be lost in it. I know that you were at Ems yourself at the time.”

“I never knew the whole of it, but what I do know I will willingly tell you if you like, though I doubt whether I shall satisfy you.”

2

I won’t reproduce his story word for word, but will only give a brief summary of it.

A year and a half before, Versilov (through the old prince) became a constant visitor at the Ahmakovs’ (they were all abroad then, at Ems) and made a great impression on the general himself, a man who had during three years of marriage squandered all his wife’s large dowry over cards, and as a result of his irregular life had already had a paralytic stroke, though he was not an old man. He had recovered from it before going abroad, and was staying at Ems for the sake of his daughter by his first wife. She was a girl of seventeen, in delicate health—consumptive—and said to be extremely beautiful, but at the same time very fantastical. She had no dowry; but they rested their hopes, as usual, on the old prince. Mme. Ahmakov was said to be a good stepmother, but the girl, for some reason, became particularly attached to Versilov. He was preaching at that time “something impassioned,” as Kraft expressed it, some sort of new life; “was in a state of religious fervour of the most exalted kind,” in the strange and perhaps ironical phrase of Andronikov, which was repeated to me. But it was noticeable that they all soon began to dislike him. The general was positively afraid of him. Kraft did not altogether deny the rumour that Versilov succeeded in instilling into the invalid husband’s mind the suspicion that his wife, Katerina Nikolaevna, was not indifferent to the young Prince Sokolsky (who had left Ems and was at that time

in Paris). He did this not directly, but “after his usual fashion”—by hints, inferences, and all sorts of roundabout ways, “at which he is a great master,” said Kraft. I may say that Kraft considered him, and preferred to consider him, altogether rather as an impostor and an inveterate intriguer than as a man genuinely possessed by some exalted, or at least original, idea. I knew, apart from Kraft, that Versilov, who had at first had an extraordinary influence on Katerina Nikolaevna, had by degrees come to an open rupture with her. What lay behind all this I could not find out from Kraft, but every one confirmed the story of the mutual hatred that had sprung up between them after their friendship. Then came a strange circumstance: Katerina Nikolaevna’s invalid stepdaughter apparently fell in love with Versilov, or was struck by something in him, or was inflamed by his eloquence or I don’t know what; but it is known that at one time Versilov spent almost every day at her side. It ended by the young lady’s suddenly announcing to her father that she wanted to marry Versilov. That this actually had happened was confirmed by every one—by Kraft, by Andronikov, and by Marie Ivanovna, and even Tatyana Pavlovna once spoke about it before me. They asserted also that Versilov not only desired it himself but positively insisted on a marriage with this girl, and that these two creatures of such different species, one old and the other young, were in complete agreement about it. But the father was alarmed at the idea. As he became more estranged from Katerina Nikolaevna, whom he had been very fond of, he now began almost to idolize his daughter, especially after his stroke. But the bitterest opposition to the idea of such a marriage came from Katerina Nikolaevna. There followed a great number of secret and extremely unpleasant family wrangles, disputes, mortifying and in fact revolting scenes. At last the father began to give way before the persistence of the love-sick girl who was, as Kraft expressed it, “fanaticized” by Versilov. But Katerina Nikolaevna still resisted it with implacable hatred. And it is at this stage that the muddle begins which no one can understand. But this was Kraft’s conjecture based on the facts—only a conjecture, however.

He thought Versilov had succeeded, IN HIS CHARACTERISTIC WAY, in subtly suggesting to the young person that the reason Katerina Nikolaevna would not agree was that she was in love with him herself, and had been for a long time past worrying him with her jealousy, pursuing him and intriguing; that she had declared her feeling to him and was now ready to horsewhip him for loving some one else: something of that sort, anyway. Worst of all, that he had “hinted” this to the girl’s father, the husband of the “unfaithful” wife, explaining that the prince had only been a passing amusement. The house, of course, began to be a perfect hell. In some versions of the story Katerina Nikolaevna was devoted to her stepdaughter and now was in despair at being calumniated to her, to say nothing of her relations with her invalid husband. And, what is more, there existed another version, which, to my grief, I found Kraft fully believed, and therefore I believed myself (of all this I had heard already). It was maintained (Andronikov, it was said, had heard it from Katerina Nikolaevna herself) that, on the contrary, Versilov had in the past, before his feeling for the girl, made love to Katerina Nikolaevna; that though she had been his friend and had been for

a time carried away by his religious exaltation, yet she had constantly opposed and mistrusted him, and that she had met Versilov's declaration with deep resentment and had ridiculed him vindictively; that she had formally dismissed him for having openly suggested that she should become his wife as her husband was expected to have a second attack very shortly. On this theory Katerina Nikolaevna must have felt a peculiar hatred for Versilov when she saw him afterwards so openly trying to win her stepdaughter's hand. Marie Ivanovna, who told me all this in Moscow, believed in both versions—both together, that is; she maintained that there was nothing inconsistent in all this, that it was something in the style of *la haine dans l'amour*, of the wounded pride of love on both sides, etc. etc.—something, in fact, like a very subtle, intricate romance, quite out of keeping with any serious and common-sense man and, moreover, with an element of nastiness in it. But Marie Ivanovna, in spite of her estimable character, had been from childhood upwards saturated with sentiment, from the novels which she read day and night. The sequel exhibited Versilov's evident baseness, his lying and intriguing, something dark and loathsome in him, the more so as the affair had a tragic ending. The poor infatuated girl poisoned herself, they say, by means of phosphorus matches, though even now I don't know whether to believe that last detail. They did their utmost to hush it up, anyway. The young lady was ill for a fortnight and then died. So the matches remained an open question, but Kraft firmly believed in them. Shortly afterwards the young lady's father died too—it was said from his grief, which brought on a second stroke, though this did not occur till three months later. But after the young lady's funeral the young Prince Sokolsky, who had returned to Ems from Paris, gave Versilov a slap in the face in a public garden, and the latter had not replied with a challenge but had, on the contrary, showed himself next day on the promenade as though nothing had happened. Then every one turned against him, in Petersburg as well. Though Versilov kept up with some acquaintances, they were quite in a different circle. All his aristocratic friends blamed him, though, as a fact, scarcely anyone knew the details; they only knew something of the young lady's romantic death and the slap in the face. Only two or three persons knew the story fully, so far as that was possible. The one who had known most of all was the deceased, Andronikov, who had for many years had business relations with the Ahmakovs, and had had to do with Katerina Nikolaevna particularly in one case. But he kept all these secrets even from his own family and had only told part of the story to Kraft and Marie Ivanovna, and that from necessity.

“The chief point is that there is a document in existence,” concluded Kraft, “which Mme. Ahmakov is very much afraid of.”

And this was what he told me about that. When the old prince, Katerina Nikolaevna's father, was abroad, beginning to recover from his attack, she was so indiscreet as to write to Andronikov in dead secret (Katerina Nikolaevna put implicit faith in him) an extremely compromising letter. During his convalescence the old prince actually did, it was said, display a propensity to waste his money—almost to fling it away, in fact; he began buying, when he was abroad, quite useless but expensive objects, pic-

tures, vases, making donations and subscriptions of large sums to various institutions out there, and goodness knows what. He almost bought, on the sly, for an immense sum, a ruined and encumbered estate from a fashionable Russian spendthrift; and, finally, began even dreaming of matrimony. And in view of all this, Katerina Nikolaevna, who had never left her father's side during his illness, wrote to Andronikov, as a "lawyer" and "an old friend," inquiring whether "it would be legally possible to put the old prince under guardianship or to declare him incompetent to manage his own affairs, and, if so, how it could best be done without scandal, that no one might blame her and that her father's feelings might be spared, etc. etc." It was said that Andronikov advised her against this and dissuaded her; and later on, when the old prince had completely recovered, it was impossible to return to the idea: but the letter remained in Andronikov's hands. And now he had died, and Katerina Nikolaevna had at once remembered the letter: if it turned up among the deceased's papers and fell into the old prince's hands, he would, no doubt, have cast her off for ever, cut her out of his will and not have given her another farthing during his lifetime. The thought that his own daughter did not believe in his sanity, and even wanted to have him certified as a lunatic would change the lamb into a wild beast. Her husband's gambling habits had left her at his death without a farthing, and she had only her father to look to. She fully hoped to receive from him a second dowry as ample as the first.

Kraft did not quite know what had become of the letter, but observed that Andronikov never tore up papers of consequence, and he was, besides, a man of "broad principles" as well as "broad intelligence." (I was positively surprised at the independence of Kraft's criticism of Andronikov, whom he had loved and respected so much.) But Kraft felt convinced that Versilov had obtained possession of the compromising document through his close relations with Andronikov's widow and daughters; it was known, indeed, that they had at once, of necessity, handed over all the deceased's papers to Versilov. He knew, too, that Katerina Nikolaevna was already aware that the letter was in Versilov's possession and that she was frightened on account of it, imagining that Versilov would take the letter straight to her old father; that on her return from abroad she had searched for the document in Petersburg, had been at the Andronikovs', and was still hunting for it now, so that she must still have some hope that the letter was not in Versilov's hands; and, finally, that she had gone to Moscow simply with the same object, and had entreated Marie Ivanovna to look for it among the papers that had remained with her. She had only recently, since her return to Petersburg, heard of the existence of Marie Ivanovna, and of the footing on which the latter had stood with Andronikov.

"You don't think she found it at Marie Ivanovna's?" I asked. "I have my own ideas."

"If Marie Ivanovna has not told even you about it, probably she hasn't got it."

"Then you suppose the document is in Versilov's hands?"

"Most likely it is. I don't know, though. Anything is possible," he answered with evident weariness.

I gave up questioning him, and indeed there was no object in doing so. All that mattered most had been made clear to me, in spite of all this sordid tangle; all that I feared most was confirmed.

"It's all like a delirious nightmare," I said, deeply dejected, as I took up my hat.

"Is the man so dear to you?" asked Kraft. I read his deep sympathy on his face at that minute.

"I felt I shouldn't learn the whole story from you," said I. "Mme. Ahmakov is the only hope left me. I was resting my hopes on her. Perhaps I shall go to her and perhaps not."

Kraft looked at me with some surprise.

"Good-bye, Kraft," I said. "Why force oneself on people who don't want to see one? Isn't it better to break with everything, eh?"

"And what then?" he asked almost sullenly, keeping his eyes on the ground.

"Retreat within oneself! Break with everything and withdraw within oneself!"

"To America?"

"To America! Within oneself, simply within oneself! That's my whole idea, Kraft!" I said enthusiastically.

He looked at me with some curiosity.

"Have you such a place 'within yourself'?"

"Yes. Good-bye, Kraft; thank you. I am sorry to have troubled you. If I were in your place and had that sort of Russia in my head I'd send them all to hell; I'd say: 'Get out with you; keep your fretting and intriguing to yourselves—it's nothing to do with me.'"

"Stay a little longer," he said suddenly when he was already with me at the front door.

I was a little surprised. I went back and sat down again. Kraft sat opposite. We looked at each other with a sort of smile. I can see it all now. I remember that I felt a sort of wonder at him.

"What I like in you is that you're so—courteous," I said suddenly.

"Yes?"

"I feel that, because I don't often succeed in being courteous myself, though I should like to. And yet perhaps it's better for people to be rude to one; at least they save one from the misfortune of liking them."

"What hour of the day do you like best?" he asked, evidently not listening to me.

"What hour? I don't know. I don't like sunset."

"No?" he brought out with a peculiar curiosity.

"Are you going away again?"

"Yes. I'm going away."

"Soon?"

"Yes."

"Surely you don't want a revolver to get to Vilna?" I asked, without the faintest hidden meaning in my words—and indeed there was no meaning at all! I asked the

question simply because I happened to glance at the revolver and I was at a loss for something to say.

He turned and looked intently at the revolver.

“No, I take it simply from habit.”

“If I had a revolver I should keep it hidden somewhere, locked up. It really is a temptation, you know. I may not believe in an epidemic of suicide, but if it’s always catching my eye, there really are moments, you know, when it might tempt one.”

“Don’t talk about it,” he said, and suddenly got up from his chair.

“I wasn’t thinking of myself,” I said, standing up too. “I’m not going to use it. If you were to give me three lives it wouldn’t be enough for me.”

“Long life to you,” broke from him.

He gave me an absent-minded smile and, strange to say, walked straight into the passage as though to show me out, probably not noticing what he was doing.

“I wish you every sort of success, Kraft,” I said, as I went out on to the stairs.

“That’s as it may be,” he answered firmly.

“Till we meet again.”

“That’s as it may be, too.”

I remember his last glance at me.

3

And this was the man for whom my heart had been beating all those years! And what had I expected from Kraft, what new information?

As I came away from Kraft’s I felt very hungry. It was evening and I had had no dinner. I went to a little restaurant in Great Prospect that I might not have to spend more than twenty, or at most twenty-five, kopecks—I would not have allowed myself to spend more at that time. I took some soup for myself, and as I ate it I sat looking out of window. There were a great many people in the room, and there was a smell of burnt meat, restaurant napkins, and tobacco. It was nasty. Over my head a dumb nightingale, gloomy and pensive, was pecking at the bottom of its cage. There was a noise in the adjoining billiard-room, but I sat there and sank into deep thought. The setting sun (why was Kraft surprised at my not liking the sunset?) aroused in me a new and unexpected sensation quite out of keeping with my surroundings. I was haunted by the soft look in my mother’s eyes, her dear eyes which had been watching me so timidly the whole month. Of late I had been very rude at home, to her especially. I had a desire to be rude to Versilov, but not daring, in my contemptible way tormented her instead. I had thoroughly frightened her, in fact; often she looked at me with such imploring eyes when Andrey Petrovitch came in, afraid of some outburst on my part. It was a very strange thing that, sitting here in the restaurant, I realized for the first time that, while Versilov spoke to me familiarly, she always addressed me deferentially. I had wondered at it before and had not been impressed in her favour by it, but now I

realized it particularly, and strange ideas passed one after another through my brain. I sat there a long time, till it got quite dark. I thought about my sister too.

It was a fateful moment for me. At all costs I must decide. Could I be incapable of decision? What is the difficulty of breaking with them if they don't want me either? My mother and sister? But I should not leave them, anyway, however things turned out.

It is true that the entrance of that man into my life, though only for an instant in my early childhood, was the turning-point from which my conscious development began. Had he not met me then, my mind, my way of thinking, my fate, would certainly have been different, even in spite of the character ordained me by destiny, which I could not anyway have escaped.

But it turned out that this man was only a dream, the dream of my childhood. I had invented him myself, and in reality he was a different man who fell far below my imagination. I had come to find a genuine man, not a man like this. And why had I fallen in love with him once and for ever in that brief moment when I saw him as a child? That "for ever" must vanish. Some time, if I have space for it, I will describe that meeting, the most futile incident leading up to nothing. But I had built it up into a pyramid. I had begun building that pyramid as I lay in my little bed, when, falling asleep, I could dream and weep—what for I cannot tell. Because I had been abandoned? Because I was tormented? But I was only tormented a little, and only for two years at Touchard's, the school into which he thrust me before leaving me for ever. Afterwards no one tormented me; quite the contrary; I looked scornfully at my schoolfellows. And I can't endure the self-pity of the forlorn. There is no rôle more revolting than that of the orphan, the illegitimate, the outcast and all such wretched creatures, for whom I never feel any pity when they solemnly parade before the public and begin piteously but insistently whining of how they have been treated. I could beat them all! Will none of the filthy, conventional herd understand that it would be ten times as creditable to hold their tongues, not to whine and not to DEIGN to complain! And if he does deign he deserves his fate, the bastard. That's my view!

But what is absurd is not that I used to dream of him in my little bed but that, almost forgetting my chief object, I have come here for the sake of him, of that "imagined" man. I have come to help him to stamp out a calumny, to crush his enemies. The document of which Kraft had spoken, that woman's letter to Andronikov about which she was so afraid, which might ruin her and reduce her to poverty, which she supposed to be in Versilov's hands, was not in his possession but in mine, sewn up in my coat pocket! I had sewn it there myself, and no one in the whole world knew of it. The fact that the romantic Marie Ivanovna, in whose keeping the letter was left "to be preserved," thought fit to give it to me and to no one else was only her own idea and a matter for her to decide, which I am not called upon to explain, though I may discuss it later if it seems appropriate. But, armed with this unexpected weapon, I could not help yielding to the temptation to come to Petersburg. Of course, I proposed to assist this man secretly without display or excitement, without expecting his praise or his

embraces. And never, never would I condescend to reproach him for anything. And indeed, was it his fault that I had fallen in love with him and had created a fantastic ideal of him? Though, indeed, I did not perhaps love him at all! His original mind, his interesting character, his intrigues and adventures, and what my mother had been to him—all that, it seemed could not keep me. It was enough that my fantastic doll was shattered, and that I could not, perhaps, love him any more. And so what was keeping me? why was I sticking there?—that was the question. The upshot of it all was that only I was a fool, no one else.

But, expecting honesty from others, I will be honest myself. I must confess that the letter sewn up in my pocket did not only arouse in me the passionate desire to rush to Versilov's aid. Now it is quite clear to me, and even then I thought of it with a blush. I had visions of a woman—a proud, aristocratic creature—whom I should meet face to face. She would laugh at me, despise me, as though I were a mouse; she would not even suspect that her future was in my power. This idea intoxicated me even in Moscow, and still more in the train on the way; I have confessed this already. Yes, I hated that woman, but already I loved her as my victim; and all this was true, all this was real. But this was childishness which I should not have expected even from anyone like me. I am describing my feelings then, that is, what passed through my mind as I sat in the restaurant under the nightingale and made up my mind to break with them for ever. The memory of my recent meeting with that woman sent a rush of colour to my face. An ignominious meeting! An ignominious and stupid impression, and—what mattered most—it showed my incapacity for action. It proved—I thought then—that I was not strong enough to withstand the stupidest lure, though I told Kraft myself just now that I had my place “within myself,” and work of my own, and that if I had three lives they wouldn't be enough for me. I said that proudly. My having abandoned my idea and mixed myself up with Versilov's affairs was to some extent excusable, but that I should run from side to side like a frightened hare and be drawn into every trifle—that, of course, was simply my own folly. What induced me to go to Dergatchev's and to burst out with my imbecilities, though I knew long ago that I am incapable of saying anything cleverly or sensibly, that it is always better for me to be silent? And some Vassin or other reassures me with the reflection that I've fifty years of life ahead of me and so I've no need to worry. It was a good reply, I admit, and did credit to his unmistakable intelligence; it was good because it was the simplest, and what is simplest is never understood till the last, when everything that is cleverer or stupider has been tried already. But I knew that answer before Vassin; I'd had an inkling of that thought more than three years ago; what's more, my “idea” was to some extent included in it. Such were my reflections in the restaurant.

I felt disgusted as I made my way towards Semyonovsky Polk at eight o'clock in the evening, worn out with walking and with thinking. It was quite dark by then and the weather had changed; it was dry, but a horrid Petersburg wind had sprung up, blowing keenly and malignantly on my back and whirling up the dust and sand. How many sullen faces of poor people hurrying home to their corners from work and trade! Every

one had his own sullen anxiety in his face, and there was perhaps not one common uniting thought in the crowd! Kraft was right; every one was different. I met a little boy, so little that it was strange he could be out alone in the street at that hour; he seemed to have lost his way. A peasant-woman stopped for a minute to listen to him, but, not understanding what he said, waved her hand and went on, leaving him alone in the darkness. I was going towards him, but he suddenly took fright and ran away.

As I approached the house I made up my mind that I should never go and see Vassin. I had an intense longing as I went up the stairs to find them at home alone, without Versilov, that I might have time before he came in to say something nice to my mother or to my dear sister, to whom I had scarcely said anything particular all that month. It so happened that he was not at home.

4

By the way, as I am bringing on to the scene this “new character” (I am speaking of Versilov), I will introduce briefly a formal account of him, though it is of no significance. I do this to make things more comprehensible for the reader, and because I can’t foresee where this account could fit in in the later part of my story.

He studied at the university but went into a cavalry regiment of the guards. He married Mlle. Fanariotov and retired from the army. He went abroad, and on his return lived a life of worldly gaiety in Moscow. On his wife’s death he spent some time in the country; then came the episode with my mother. Then he lived for a long time somewhere in the south. During the war with Europe he served in the army but did not reach the Crimea and was never in action. At the conclusion of the war he left the service and went abroad. He took my mother with him, though he left her at Königsberg. The poor woman used sometimes, shaking her head, to tell with a sort of horror how she had spent six months there with her little girl, not knowing the language, absolutely friendless, and in the end penniless, as though she were lost in a forest. Then Tatyana Pavlovna came to fetch her and took her back to some place in the Novgorod Province. Then, on the emancipation of the serfs, Versilov became one of the first “mediators,” and is said to have performed his duties admirably; but he soon gave this up, and in Petersburg was occupied with the conduct of various private lawsuits. Andronikov always had a high opinion of his capacity; he had a great respect for him, and only said he did not understand his character. Then Versilov gave that up too, and went abroad again—this time for a long period, several years. Then came his close intimacy with old Prince Sokolsky. During this period his financial position underwent two or three radical changes. At one time he fell into complete poverty, then grew wealthy and rose again.

Having brought my story to this point, I am determined to describe my “idea” too. For the first time since its conception I will translate it into words. I am determined to reveal it, so to speak, to the reader, partly for the sake of greater clearness in what I have to explain further. And it is not only confusing for the reader; even I, the

author, am beginning to get muddled by the difficulty of explaining each step without explaining what led up to it and induced me to take it. By keeping up this “attitude of silence” I have clumsily descended to one of those “literary graces” which I have ridiculed above. Before entering upon my Petersburg romance with all my ignominious adventures in it, I find this preface is necessary. But I was not tempted to silence for the sake of literary “grace” but was forced to it by the nature of the case, that is, the difficulty of the case; even now, when it is all over, I find it very difficult to put this idea into words. Besides, I must describe it in its aspect at that time, that is, the form it took and the way I looked at it, not now, but then, and that is a fresh difficulty. To describe some things is almost impossible. The ideas that are the simplest and the clearest are the most difficult to understand. If before the discovery of America Columbus had begun telling his idea to other people, I am convinced that for a very long time people would not have understood him. And indeed they did not understand him. I don’t mean to compare myself with Columbus, and if anyone imagines that I do he ought to be ashamed of himself, that’s all.

Chapter 5

1

My “idea” is—to become a Rothschild. I invite the reader to keep calm and not to excite himself.

I repeat it. My “idea” is to become a Rothschild, to become as rich as Rothschild, not simply rich, but as rich as Rothschild. What objects I have in view, what for, and why—all that shall come later. First I will simply show that the attainment of my object is a mathematical certainty.

It is a very simple matter; the whole secret lies in two words: OBSTINACY and PERSEVERANCE.

“We have heard that; it’s nothing new,” people will tell me. Every “vater,” in Germany repeats this to his children, and meanwhile your Rothschild (James Rothschild the Parisian, is the one I mean) is unique while there are millions of such “vaters.”

I should answer:

“You assert that you’ve heard it, but you’ve heard nothing. It’s true that you’re right about one thing. When I said that this was ‘very simple,’ I forgot to add that it is most difficult. All the religions and the moralities of the world amount to one thing: ‘Love virtue and avoid vice.’ One would think nothing could be simpler. But just try doing something virtuous and giving up any one of your vices; just try it. It’s the same with this.

“That’s why your innumerable German ‘vaters’ may, for ages past reckoning, have repeated those two wonderful words which contain the whole secret, and, meanwhile,

Rothschild remains unique. It shows it's the same but not the same, and these 'vaters' don't repeat the same idea.

"No doubt they too have heard of obstinacy and perseverance, but to attain my object what I need is not these German 'vaters' 'obstinacy or these 'vaters' 'perseverance.'"

"The mere fact that he is a 'vater'—I don't mean only the Germans—that he has a family, that he is living like other people, has expenses like other people, has obligations like other people, means that he can't become a Rothschild, but must remain an average man. I understand quite clearly that in becoming a Rothschild, or merely desiring to become one, not in the German 'vaters' way but seriously, I must at the same time cut myself off from society."

Some years ago I read in the newspaper that on one of the steamers on the Volga there died a beggar who went about begging in rags and was known to every one. On his death they found sewn up in his shirt three thousand roubles in notes. The other day I read of another beggar of the "respectable" sort, who used to go about the restaurants holding out his hand. He was arrested and there was found on him five thousand roubles. Two conclusions follow directly from this. The first, that OBSTINACY in saving even the smallest coin will produce enormous results in the long run (time is of no account in this), and secondly that the most unskilful form of accumulation if only PERSEVERING is mathematically certain of success.

Meanwhile there are perhaps a good number of respectable, clever, obstinate people who cannot save either three or five thousand, however much they struggle, though they would be awfully glad to have such a sum. Why is that? The answer is clear: it is because not one of them, in spite of all their wishing it, DESIRES it to such a degree that, for instance, if he is not able to save by other means, he is ready to become a beggar, and so persistent that after becoming a beggar, he will not waste the first farthing he is given on an extra crust of bread for himself or his family. With this system of saving, that is in beggary, one must live on bread and salt and nothing more, to save up such sums; at least, so I imagine. That is no doubt what the two beggars I have mentioned above did do; they must have eaten nothing but bread and have lived almost in the open air. There is no doubt that they had no intention of becoming Rothschilds; they were simply Harpavons or Ilyushkins in their purest form, nothing more; but, when there is intelligent accumulation in quite a different form with the object of becoming a Rothschild, no less strength of will is needed than in the case of those two beggars. The German "vater" does not show such strength of will. There are many kinds of strength in the world, especially of strength of will and of desire. There is the temperature of boiling water and there is the temperature of molten iron.

One wants here the same thing as in a monastery, the same heroic asceticism. Feeling is wanted, not only idea. What for? Why? Is it moral and not monstrous to wear sackcloth and eat black bread all one's life to heap up filthy lucre? These questions I will consider later. Now I am discussing only the possibility of attaining the object. When I thought of my "idea" and it was forged in white heat, I began asking myself—

am I capable of asceticism? With this object, for the whole of the first month I took bread and water, not more than two and a half pounds of black bread a day. To do this I was obliged to deceive Nikolay Semyonovitch who was clever, and Marie Ivanovna who was anxious for my welfare. Though I wounded her and somewhat surprised Nikolay Semyonovitch who was a man of great delicacy, I insisted on having my dinner brought to my room. There I simply got rid of it. I poured the soup out of window on to the nettles or elsewhere, the meat I either flung out of window to a dog, or wrapping it up in paper put it in my pocket and threw it away after, and so on. As the bread given me for dinner was much less than two and a half pounds I bought bread on the sly. I stood this for a month perhaps, only upsetting my stomach a little, but the next month I added soup to the bread and drank a glass of tea morning and evening, and I assure you I passed a year like that in perfect health and content, as well as in a moral ecstasy and perpetual secret delight. Far from regretting the dainties I missed, I was overjoyed. At the end of the year, having convinced myself I was capable of standing any fast, however severe, I began eating as they did, and went back to dine with them. Not satisfied with this experiment I made a second; apart from the sum paid to Nikolay Semyonovitch for my board I was allowed five roubles a month for pocket money. I resolved to spend only half. This was a very great trial, but after at most two years I had in my pocket by the time I went to Petersburg seventy roubles saved entirely in this way, besides other money. The result of these two experiments was of vast importance to me: I had learnt positively that I could so will a thing as to attain my objects, and that I repeat is the essence of “my idea”—the rest is all nonsense.

2

Let us, however, look into the nonsense too.

I have described my two experiments. In Petersburg, as the reader knows, I made a third. I went to the auction and at one stroke made a profit of seven roubles ninety-five kopecks. This of course was not a real experiment, it was only by way of sport and diversion. I simply wanted to filch a moment from the future, and to test how I should go and behave. I had decided even at the very first, in Moscow, to put off really beginning till I was perfectly free. I fully realized that I must, for instance, finish my work at school. (The university, as the reader knows already, I sacrificed.) There is no disputing that I went to Petersburg with concealed anger in my heart. No sooner had I left the grammar school and become free for the first time, than I suddenly saw that Versilov's affairs would distract me from beginning my enterprise for an indefinite period. But though I was angry I went to Petersburg feeling perfectly serene about my object.

It is true I knew nothing of practical life; but I had been thinking about it for three years and could have no doubt about it. I had pictured a thousand times over how I should begin. I should suddenly find myself, as though dropped from the clouds, in one

of our two capitals (I pitched on Petersburg or Moscow for my beginning, and by choice Petersburg, to which I gave the preference through certain considerations), perfectly free, not dependent on anyone, in good health, and with a hundred roubles hidden in my pocket, as the capital for my first investment. Without a hundred roubles it would be impossible to begin, as, without it, even the earliest period of success would be too remote. Apart from my hundred roubles I should have, as the reader knows already, courage, obstinacy, perseverance, absolute isolation and secrecy. Isolation was the principal thing. I greatly disliked the idea of any connection or association with others until the last moment. Speaking generally I proposed beginning my enterprise alone, that was a *sine qua non*. People weigh upon me, and with them I should have been uneasy, and uneasiness would have hindered my success. Generally speaking, all my life up to now, in all my dreams of how I would behave with people, I always imagined myself being very clever; it was very different in reality—I was always very stupid; and I confess sincerely, with indignation, I always gave myself away and was flustered, and so I resolved to cut people off altogether. I should gain by it independence, tranquillity of mind and clearness of motive.

In spite of the terrible prices in Petersburg I determined once for all that I should never spend more than fifteen kopecks on food, and I knew I should keep my word. This question of food I had thought over minutely for a long time past. I resolved, for instance, sometimes to eat nothing but bread and salt for two days together, and to spend on the third day what I had saved on those two days. I fancied that this would be better for my health than a perpetual uniform fast on a minimum of fifteen kopecks. Then I needed a corner, literally a “corner,” solely to sleep the night in and to have a refuge in very bad weather. I proposed living in the street, and, if necessary, I was ready to sleep in one of the night refuges where they give you a piece of bread and a glass of tea as well as a night’s lodging. Oh, I should be quite capable of hiding my money so that it should not be stolen in the “corner,” or in the refuge, and should not even be suspected, I’ll answer for that!

“Steal from me? Why, I’m afraid of stealing myself!” I once heard a passer-by in the street say gaily. Of course I only apply to myself the caution and smartness of it, I don’t intend to steal. What is more, while I was in Moscow, perhaps from the very first day of my “idea,” I resolved that I would not be a pawnbroker or usurer either; there are Jews for that job, and such Russians as have neither intelligence nor character. Pawnbroking and usury are for the commonplace.

As for clothes, I resolved to have two suits, one for every day and one for best. When once I had got them I felt sure I should wear them a long time. I purposely trained myself to wear a suit for two and a half years, and in fact I discovered a secret: for clothes always to look new and not to get shabby they should be brushed as often as possible, five or six times a day. Brushing does not hurt the cloth. I speak from knowledge. What does hurt it is dust and dirt. Dust is the same thing as stones if you look at it through the microscope, and, however hard a brush is, it is almost the same as fur. I trained myself to wear my boots evenly. The secret lies in putting down the

whole sole at once, and avoiding treading on the side. One can train oneself to this in a fortnight, after that the habit is unconscious. In this way boots last on an average a third as long again. That is the experience of two years.

Then followed my activity itself.

I started with the hypothesis that I had a hundred roubles. In Petersburg there are so many auction sales, petty hucksters' booths and people who want things, that it would be impossible not to sell anything one bought for a little more. Over the album I had made seven roubles ninety-five kopecks profit on two roubles five kopecks of capital invested. This immense profit was made without any risk: I could see from his eyes that the purchaser would not back out. Of course I know quite well that this was only a chance; but it is just such chances I am on the look-out for, that is why I have made up my mind to live in the street. Well, granted that such a chance is unusual, no matter; my first principle will be to risk nothing, and the second to make every day more than the minimum spent on my subsistence, that the process of accumulation may not be interrupted for a single day.

I shall be told that "all this is a dream, you don't know the streets, and you'll be taken in at the first step." But I have will and character, and the science of the streets is a science like any other: persistence, attention and capacity can conquer it. In the grammar school right up to the seventh form I was one of the first; I was very good at mathematics. Why, can one possibly exaggerate the value of experience and knowledge of the streets to such a fantastic pitch as to predict my failure for certain? That is only what people say who have never made an experiment in anything, have never begun any sort of life, but have grown stiff in second-hand stagnation. "One man breaks his nose, so another must break his." No, I won't break mine. I have character and if I pay attention I can learn anything. But is it possible to imagine that with constant persistence, with incessant vigilance, and continual calculation and reflection, with perpetual activity and alertness one could fail to find out how to make twenty kopecks to spare every day? Above all I resolved not to struggle for the maximum profit, but always to keep calm. As time went on after heaping up one or two thousand I should, of course, naturally rise above second-hand dealing and street trading. I know, of course, far too little as yet about the stock exchange, about shares, banking and all that sort of thing. But to make up for that I know, as I know I have five fingers on my hand, that I should learn all the stock exchange and banking business as well as anyone else, and that the subject would turn out to be perfectly simple, because one is brought to it by practice. What need is there of the wisdom of Solomon so long as one has character; efficiency, skill and knowledge come of themselves. If only one does not leave off "willing."

The great thing is to avoid risks, and that can only be done if one has character. Not long ago in Petersburg I had before me a subscription list of shares in some railway investments; those who succeeded in getting shares made a lot of money. For some time the shares went up and up. Well, if one day some one who had not succeeded in getting a share, or was greedy for more, had offered to buy mine at a premium of so much per

cent., I should certainly have sold it. People would have laughed at me, of course, and have said that if I had waited I should have made ten times as much. Quite so, but my premium is safer, for it's a bird in the hand while yours is on the bush. I shall be told that one can't make much like that; excuse me, that's your mistake, the mistake of all our Kokorevs, Polyakovs, and Gubonins. Let me tell you the truth; perseverance and persistence in money making and still more in saving is much more effective than these cent. per cent. profits.

Not long before the French Revolution there was a man called Law in Paris who invented of himself a scheme what was theoretically magnificent but which came utterly to grief in practice afterwards. All Paris was in excitement. Law's shares were bought up at once before allotment. Money from all parts of Paris poured as from a sack into the house where the shares were subscribed. But the house was not enough at last, the public thronged the street, people of all callings, all classes, all ages: bourgeois, noblemen, their children, countesses, marquises, prostitutes, were all struggling in one infuriated, half-crazy, rabid mob. Rank, the prejudices of birth and pride, even honour and good name were all trampled in the same mire; all, even women, were ready to sacrifice anyone to gain a few shares. The list at last was passed down into the streets, but there was nothing to write on. Then it was suggested to a hunchback that he should lend his back for the time as a table on which people could sign their names for shares. The hunchback agreed—one can fancy at what a price. Some time (a very short time) after, they were all bankrupt, the whole thing went smash, the whole idea was exploded and the shares were worth nothing. Who got the best of it? Why, the hunchback, because he did not take shares but louis-d'or in cash. Well, I am that hunchback! I had strength of will enough not to eat, and to save seventy-two roubles out of my kopecks; I shall have strength enough to restrain myself and prefer a safe profit to a large one, even when every one around me is carried away by a fever of excitement. I am trivial only about trifles, not in what is important. I have often lacked fortitude for enduring little things ever since the inception of my idea, but for enduring big things I shall always have enough. When in the morning my mother gave me cold coffee before I set out to work, I was angry and rude to her, and yet I was the same person who had lived a whole month on bread and water.

In short not to make money, not to learn how to make money, would be unnatural. It would be unnatural, too, in spite of incessant and regular saving, unflagging care and mental sobriety, self-control, economy, and growing energy—it would be unnatural, I repeat, to fail to become a millionaire. How did the beggar make his money if not by fanatical determination and perseverance? Am I inferior to a beggar? "And after all, supposing I don't arrive at anything, suppose my calculation is incorrect, suppose I fall and come to grief; no matter, I shall go on, I shall go on, because I want to." That is what I said in Moscow.

I shall be told that there is no "idea" in this, absolutely nothing new. But I say, and for the last time, that there are an immense number of ideas in it, and a vast amount that is new.

Oh, I foresaw how trivial all objections would be, and that I should be as trivial myself in expounding my “idea”: why, what have I said after all? I haven’t told a hundredth part of it. I feel that it is trivial, superficial, crude, and, somehow, too young for my age.

3

I’ve still to answer the questions, “What for?” and “Why?” Whether it’s moral,” and all the rest of it. I’ve undertaken to answer them.

I am sad at disappointing the reader straight off, sad and glad too. Let him know that in my idea there is absolutely no feeling of “revenge,” nothing “Byronic”—no curses, no lamentations over my orphaned state, no tears over my illegitimacy, nothing, nothing of the sort. In fact, if a romantic lady should chance to come across my autobiography she would certainly turn up her nose. The whole object of my “idea” is—isolation. But one can arrive at isolation without straining to become a Rothschild. What has Rothschild got to do with it?

Why, this. That besides isolation I want power.

Let me tell the reader, he will perhaps be horrified at the candour of my confession, and in the simplicity of his heart will wonder how the author could help blushing: but my answer is that I’m not writing for publication, and I may not have a reader for ten years, and by that time everything will be so thoroughly past, settled and defined that there will be no need to blush. And so, if I sometimes in my autobiography appeal to my reader it is simply a form of expression. My reader is an imaginary figure.

No, it was not being illegitimate, with which I was so taunted at Touchard’s, not my sorrowful childhood, it was not revenge, nor the desire to protest, that was at the bottom of my idea; my character alone was responsible for everything. At twelve years old, I believe, that is almost at the dawn of real consciousness, I began to dislike my fellow-creatures. It was not that I disliked them exactly, but that their presence weighed upon me. I was sometimes in my moments of purest sincerity quite sad that I never could express everything even to my nearest and dearest, that is, I could but will not; for some reason I restrain myself, so that I’m mistrustful, sullen and reserved. Again, I have noticed one characteristic in myself almost from childhood, that I am too ready to find fault, and given to blaming others. But this impulse was often followed at once by another which was very irksome to me: I would ask myself whether it were not my fault rather than theirs. And how often I blamed myself for nothing! To avoid such doubts I naturally sought solitude. Besides, I found nothing in the company of others, however much I tried, and I did try. All the boys of my own age anyway, all my schoolfellows, all, every one of them, turned out to be inferior to me in their ideas. I don’t recall one single exception.

Yes, I am a gloomy person; I’m always shutting myself up. I often love to walk out of a room full of people. I may perhaps do people a kindness, but often I cannot see the slightest reason for doing them a kindness. People are not such splendid creatures

that they are worth taking much trouble about. Why can't they approach me openly and directly, why must I always be forced to make the first overtures?

That is the question I asked myself. I am a grateful creature, and have shown it by a hundred imbecilities. If some one were frank with me, I should instantly respond with frankness and begin to love them at once. And so I have done, but they have all deceived me promptly, and have withdrawn from me with a sneer. The most candid of them all was Lambert, who beat me so much as a child, but he was only an open brute and scoundrel. And even his openness was only stupidity. Such was my state of mind when I came to Petersburg.

When I came out from Dergatchev's (and goodness only knows what made me go to him) I had gone up to Vassin, and in a rush of enthusiasm I had begun singing his praises. And that very evening I felt that I liked him much less. Why? Just because by my praise of him I had demeaned myself before him. Yet one might have thought it would have been the other way: a man just and generous enough to give another his due, even to his own detriment, ought to stand higher in personal dignity than anyone. And though I quite understood this, I did like Vassin less, much less in fact. I purposely choose an example with which the reader is familiar. I even thought of Kraft with a bitter, sickly feeling, because he had led me into the passage, and this feeling lasted till the day when Kraft's state of mind at the time was revealed, and it was impossible to be angry with him. From the time when I was in the lowest class in the grammar-school, as soon as any of my comrades excelled me in school work, or witty answers or physical strength, I immediately gave up talking or having anything to do with them. Not that I disliked them or wished them not to succeed; I simply turned away from them because such was my character.

Yes, I thirsted for power, I've thirsted for it all my life, power and solitude. I dreamed of it at an age when every one would have laughed at me to my face if they could have guessed what was in my head. That was why I so liked secrecy. And indeed all my energy went into dreams, so much so that I had no time to talk. This led to my being unsociable, and my absentmindedness led people to more unpleasant conclusions about me, but my rosy cheeks belied their suspicions.

I was particularly happy when, covering myself up in bed at night, I began in complete solitude, with no stir or sound of other people round me, to re-create life on a different plan. I was most desperately dreamy up to the time of the "idea," when all my dreams became rational instead of foolish, and passed from the fantastic realms of romance to the reasonable world of reality.

Everything was concentrated into one object. Not that they were so very stupid before, although there were masses and masses of them. But I had favourites ... there is no need to bring them in here, however.

Power! I am convinced that very many people would think it very funny if they knew that such a "pitiful" creature was struggling for power. But I shall surprise them even more: perhaps from my very first dreams that is, almost from my earliest childhood, I could never imagine myself except in the foremost place, always and in every situation

in life. I will add a strange confession: it is the same perhaps to this day. At the same time, let me observe that I am not apologizing for it.

That is the point of my idea, that is the force of it, that money is the one means by which the humblest nonentity may rise to the FOREMOST PLACE. I may not be a nonentity, but I know from the looking-glass that my exterior does not do me justice, for my face is commonplace. But if I were as rich as Rothschild, who would find fault with my face? And wouldn't thousands of women be ready to fly to me with all their charms if I whistled to them? I am sure that they would honestly consider me good-looking. Suppose I am clever. But were I as wise as Solomon some one would be found wiser still, and I should be done for. But if I were a Rothschild what would that wise man be beside me? Why, they would not let him say a word beside me! I may be witty, but with Talleyrand or Piron I'm thrown into the shade; but if I were Rothschild, where would Piron be, and where Talleyrand even, perhaps? Money is, of course, despotic power, and at the same time it is the greatest leveller, and that is its chief power. Money levels all inequality. I settled all that in Moscow.

You will see, of course, in this idea nothing but insolence, violence, the triumph of the nonentity over the talented. I admit that it is an impudent idea (and for that reason a sweet one). But let it pass: you imagine that I desire power to be able to crush, to avenge myself. That is just the point, that that is how the commonplace would behave. What is more, I'm convinced that thousands of the wise and talented who are so exalted, if the Rothschilds' millions suddenly fell to their lot could not resist behaving like the most vulgar and commonplace, and would be more oppressive than any. My idea is quite different. I'm not afraid of money. It won't crush me and it won't make me crush others.

What I want isn't money, or rather money is not necessary to me, nor power either. I only want what is obtained by power, and cannot be obtained without it; that is, the calm and solitary consciousness of strength! That is the fullest definition of liberty for which the whole world is struggling! Liberty! At last I have written that grand word... . Yes, the solitary consciousness of strength is splendid and alluring. I have strength and I am serene. With the thunderbolts in his hands Jove is serene; are his thunders often heard? The fool fancies that he is asleep. But put a literary man or a peasant-woman in Jove's place, and the thunder would never cease!

If I only have power, I argued, I should have no need to use it. I assure you that of my own free will I should take the lowest seat everywhere. If I were a Rothschild, I would go about in an old overcoat with an umbrella. What should I care if I were jostled in the crowd, if I had to skip through the mud to avoid being run over? The consciousness that I was myself, a Rothschild, would even amuse me at the moment. I should know I could have a dinner better than anyone, that I could have the best cook in the world, it would be enough for me to know it. I would eat a piece of bread and ham and be satisfied with the consciousness of it. I think so even now.

I shouldn't run after the aristocracy, but they would run after me. I shouldn't pursue women, but they would fly to me like the wind, offering me all that women

can offer. "The vulgar" run after money, but the intelligent are attracted by curiosity to the strange, proud and reserved being, indifferent to everything. I would be kind, and would give them money perhaps, but I would take nothing from them. Curiosity arouses passion, perhaps I may inspire passion. They will take nothing away with them I assure you, except perhaps presents that will make me twice as interesting to them.

... to me enough The consciousness of this.

It is strange, but true, that I have been fascinated by this picture since I was seventeen.

I don't want to oppress or torment anyone and I won't, but I know that if I did want to ruin some man, some enemy of mine, no one could prevent me, and every one would serve me, and that would be enough again. I would not revenge myself on anyone. I could never understand how James Rothschild could consent to become a Baron! Why, for what reason, when he was already more exalted than anyone in the world. "Oh, let that insolent general insult me at the station where we are both waiting for our horses! If he knew who I was he would run himself to harness the horses and would hasten to assist me into my modest vehicle! They say that some foreign count or baron at a Vienna railway station put an Austrian banker's slippers on for him in public; and the latter was so vulgar as to allow him to do it. Oh, may that terrible beauty (yes, terrible, there are such!), that daughter of that luxurious and aristocratic lady meeting me by chance on a steamer or somewhere, glance askance at me and turn up her nose, wondering contemptuously how that humble, unpresentable man with a book or paper in his hand could dare to be in a front seat beside her! If only she knew who was sitting beside her! And she will find out, she will, and will come to sit beside me of her own accord, humble, timid, ingratiating, seeking my glance, radiant at my smile." ... I purposely introduce these early day-dreams to express what was in my mind. But the picture is pale, and perhaps trivial. Only reality will justify everything.

I shall be told that such a life would be stupid: why not have a mansion, keep open house, gather society round you, why not have influence, why not marry? But what would Rothschild be then? He would become like every one else. All the charm of the "idea" would disappear, all its moral force. When I was quite a child I learnt Pushkin's monologue of the "Miserly Knight." Pushkin has written nothing finer in conception than that! I have the same ideas now.

"But yours is too low an ideal," I shall be told with contempt. "Money, wealth. Very different from the common weal, from self-sacrifice for humanity."

But how can anyone tell how I should use my wealth? In what way is it immoral, in what way is it degrading, that these millions should pass out of dirty, evil, Jewish hands into the hands of a sober and resolute ascetic with a keen outlook upon life? All these dreams of the future, all these conjectures, seem like a romance now, and perhaps I am wasting time in recording them. I might have kept them to myself. I know, too, that these lines will very likely be read by no one, but if anyone were to read them, would he believe that I should be unable to stand the test of the Rothschild millions? Not because they would crush me, quite the contrary. More than once in my dreams I have

anticipated that moment in the future, when my consciousness will be satiated, and power will not seem enough for me. Then, not from ennui, not from aimless weariness, but because I have a boundless desire for what is great, I shall give all my millions away, let society distribute all my wealth, and I—I will mix with nothingness again! Maybe I will turn into a beggar like the one who died on the steamer, with the only difference that they wouldn't find money sewn up in my shirt. The mere consciousness that I had had millions in my hands and had flung them away into the dirt like trash would sustain me in my solitude. I am ready to think the same even now. Yes, my "idea" is a fortress in which I can always, at every turn, take refuge from every one, even if I were a beggar dying on a steamer. It is my poem! And let me tell you I must have the WHOLE of my vicious will, simply to prove TO MYSELF that I can renounce it.

No doubt I shall be told that this is all romance, and that if I got my millions I should not give them up and become a beggar. Perhaps I should not. I have simply sketched the ideal in my mind.

But I will add seriously that if I did succeed in piling up as much money as Rothschild, that it really might end in my giving it all up to the public (though it would be difficult to do so before I reached that amount). And I shouldn't give away half because that would be simply vulgar: I should be only half as rich, that would be all. I should give away all, all to the last farthing, for on becoming a beggar I should become twice as rich as Rothschild! If other people don't understand this it's not my fault; I'm not going to explain it.

"The fanaticism, the romanticism of insignificance and impotence!" people will pronounce, "the triumph of commonplaceness and mediocrity!" Yes, I admit that it is in a way the triumph of commonplaceness and mediocrity, but surely not of impotence. I used to be awfully fond of imagining just such a creature, commonplace and mediocre, facing the world and saying to it with a smile, "You are Galileos, and Copernicuses, Charlemagnes and Napoleons, you are Pushkins and Shakespeares, you are field-mars-hals and generals, and I am incompetence and illegitimacy, and yet I am higher than all of you, because you bow down to it yourself." I admit that I have pushed this fancy to such extremes that I have struck out even my education. It seemed to me more picturesque if the man were sordidly ignorant. This exaggerated dream had a positive influence at the time on my success in the seventh form of the grammar-school. I gave up working simply from fanaticism, feeling that lack of education would add a charm to my ideal. Now I've changed my views on that point; education does not detract from it.

Gentlemen, can it be that even the smallest independence of mind is so distasteful to you? Blessed he who has an ideal of beauty, even though it be a mistaken one! But I believe in mine. It is only that I've explained it clumsily, crudely. In ten years, of course, I should explain it better, and I treasure that in my memory.

I've finished with my idea. If my account of it has been commonplace and superficial it is I that am to blame and not the idea. I have already pointed out that the simplest ideas are always the most difficult to understand.

Now I will add that they are also the most difficult to explain; moreover, I have described my "idea" in its earliest phase. The converse is the rule with ideas: commonplace and shallow ideas are extraordinarily quickly understood, and are invariably understood by the crowd, by the whole street. What is more, they are regarded as very great, and as the ideas of genius, but only for the day of their appearance. The cheap never wears. For a thing to be quickly understood is only a sign of its commonplaceness. Bismarck's idea was received as a stroke of genius instantly, and Bismarck himself was looked on as a genius, but the very rapidity of its reception was suspicious. Wait for ten years, and then we shall see what remains of the idea and of Bismarck himself. I introduce this extremely irrelevant observation, of course, not for the sake of comparison, but also for the sake of remembering it. (An explanation for the too unmannerly reader.)

And now I will tell two anecdotes to wind up my account of the "idea," that it may not hinder my story again.

In July, two months before I came to Petersburg, when my time was all my own, Marie Ivanovna asked me to go to see an old maiden lady who was staying in the Troitsky suburb to take her a message of no interest for my story. Returning the same day, I noticed in the railway carriage an unattractive-looking young man, not very poorly though grubbily dressed, with a pimply face and a muddy dark complexion. He distinguished himself by getting out at every station, big and little, to have a drink. Towards the end of the journey he was surrounded by a merry throng of very low companions. One merchant, also a little drunk, was particularly delighted at the young man's power of drinking incessantly without becoming drunk. Another person, who was awfully pleased with him, was a very stupid young fellow who talked a great deal. He was wearing European dress and smelt most unsavoury—he was a footman as I found out afterwards; this fellow got quite friendly with the young man who was drinking, and, every time the train stopped, roused him with the invitation: "It's time for a drop of vodka," and they got out with their arms round each other. The young man who drank scarcely said a word, but yet more and more companions joined him, he only listened to their chatter, grinning incessantly with a drivelling snigger, and only from time to time, always unexpectedly, brought out a sound something like "Ture-lure-loo!" while he put his finger up to his nose in a very comical way. This diverted the merchant, and the footman and all of them, and they burst into very loud and free and easy laughter. It is sometimes impossible to understand why people laugh. I joined them too, and, I don't know why, the young man attracted me too, perhaps by his very open disregard for the generally accepted conventions and proprieties. I didn't see, in fact, that he was simply a fool. Anyway, I got on to friendly terms with

him at once, and, as I got out of the train, I learnt from him that he would be in the Tverskoy Boulevard between eight and nine. It appeared that he had been a student. I went to the Boulevard, and this was the diversion he taught me: we walked together up and down the boulevards, and a little later, as soon as we noticed a respectable woman walking along the street, if there were no one else near, we fastened upon her. Without uttering a word we walked one on each side of her, and with an air of perfect composure as though we didn't see her, began to carry on a most unseemly conversation. We called things by their names, preserving unruffled countenances as though it were the natural thing to do; we entered into such subtleties in our description of all sorts of filth and obscenity as the nastiest mind of the lewdest debauchee could hardly have conceived. (I had, of course, acquired all this knowledge at the boarding school before I went to the grammar school, though I knew only words, nothing of the reality.) The woman was dreadfully frightened, and made haste to try and get away, but we quickened our pace too—and went on in the same way. Our victim, of course, could do nothing; it was no use to cry out, there were no spectators; besides, it would be a strange thing to complain of. I repeated this diversion for eight days. I can't think how I can have liked doing it; though, indeed, I didn't like doing it—I simply did it. At first I thought it original, as something outside everyday conventions and conditions, besides I couldn't endure women. I once told the student that in his "Confessions" Jean Jacques Rousseau describes how, as a youth, he used to behave indecently in the presence of women. The student responded with his "ture-lure-loo!" I noticed that he was extraordinarily ignorant, and that his interests were astonishingly limited. There was no trace in him of any latent idea such as I had hoped to find in him. Instead of originality I found nothing in him but a wearisome monotony. I disliked him more and more. The end came quite unexpectedly. One night when it was quite dark, we persecuted a girl who was quickly and timidly walking along the boulevard. She was very young, perhaps sixteen or even less, very tidily and modestly dressed; possibly a working girl hurrying home from work to an old widowed mother with other children; there is no need to be sentimental though. The girl listened for some time, and hurried as fast as she could with her head bowed and her veil drawn over her face, frightened and trembling. But suddenly she stood still, threw back her veil, showing, as far as I remember, a thin but pretty face, and cried with flashing eyes:

"Oh, what scoundrels you are!"

She may have been on the verge of tears, but something different happened. Lifting her thin little arm, she gave the student a slap in the face which could not have been more dexterously delivered. It did come with a smack! He would have rushed at her, swearing, but I held him back, and the girl had time to run away. We began quarrelling at once. I told him all I had been saving up against him in those days. I told him he was the paltriest commonplace fool without the trace of an idea. He swore at me... . (I had once explained to him that I was illegitimate), then we spat at each other, and I've never seen him since. I felt frightfully vexed with myself that evening, but not so much the next day, and by the day after I had quite forgotten it. And though I sometimes

thought of that girl again, it was only casually, for a moment. It was only after I had been a fortnight in Petersburg, I suddenly recalled the whole scene. I remembered it, and I was suddenly so ashamed that tears of shame literally ran down my cheeks. I was wretched the whole evening, and all that night, and I am rather miserable about it now. I could not understand at first how I could have sunk to such a depth of degradation, and still less how I could have forgotten it without feeling shame or remorse. It is only now that I understand what was at the root of it; it was all due to my "idea." Briefly, I conclude that, having something fixed, permanent and overpowering in one's mind in which one is terribly absorbed, one is, as it were, removed by it from the whole world, and everything that happens, except the one great thing, slips by one. Even one's impressions are hardly formed correctly. And what matters most—one always has an excuse. However much I worried my mother at that time, however disgracefully I neglected my sister, "Oh, I've my 'idea,' nothing else matters," was what I said to myself, as it were. If I were slighted and hurt, I withdrew in my mortification and at once said to myself, "Ah, I'm humiliated, but still I have my idea, and they know nothing about that." The "idea" comforted me in disgrace and insignificance. But all the nasty things I did took refuge, as it were, under the "idea." It, so to speak, smoothed over everything, but it also put a mist before my eyes; and such a misty understanding of things and events may, of course, be a great hindrance to the "idea" itself, to say nothing of other things.

Now for another anecdote.

On the 1st of April last year, Marie Ivanovna was keeping her name-day; some visitors, though only a few, came for the evening. Suddenly Agrafena rushed in, out of breath, announcing that a baby was crying in the passage before the kitchen, and that she didn't know what to do. We were all excited at the news. We went out and saw a bark basket, and in the basket a three or four weeks old child, crying. I picked up the basket and took it into the kitchen. Then I immediately found a folded note: "Gracious benefactors, show kind charity to the girl christened Arina, and we will join with her to send our tears to the Heavenly throne for you for ever, and congratulate you on your name-day, Persons unknown to you."

Then Nikolay Semyonovitch, for whom I have such a respect, greatly disappointed me. He drew a very long face and decided to send the child at once to the Foundling Home. I felt very sad. They lived very frugally but had no children, and Nikolay Semyonovitch was always glad of it. I carefully took little Arina out of the basket and held her up under the arms. The basket had that sour, pungent odour characteristic of a small child which has not been washed for a long time. I opposed Nikolay Semyonovitch, and suddenly announced that I would keep the child at my expense. In spite of his gentleness he protested with some severity, and, though he ended by joking, he adhered to his intention in regard to the foundling. I got my way, however. In the same block of buildings, but in a different wing, there lived a very poor carpenter, an elderly man, given to drink, but his wife, a very healthy and still youngish peasant woman, had only just lost a baby, and, what is more, the only child she had had in eight years of

marriage, also a girl, and by a strange piece of luck also called Arina. I call it good luck, because while we were arguing in the kitchen, the woman, hearing of what had happened, ran in to look at the child, and when she learned that it was called Arina, she was greatly touched. She still had milk, and unfastening her dress she put the baby to her breast. I began persuading her to take the child home with her, saying I would pay for it every month. She was afraid her husband would not allow it, but she took it for the night. Next morning, her husband consented to her keeping it for eight roubles a month, and I immediately paid him for the first month in advance. He at once spent the money on drink. Nikolay Semyonovitch, still with a strange smile, agreed to guarantee that the money should be paid regularly every month. I would have given my sixty roubles into Nikolay Semyonovitch's keeping as security, but he would not take it. He knew, however, that I had the money, and trusted me. Our momentary quarrel was smoothed over by this delicacy on his part. Marie Ivanovna said nothing, but wondered at my undertaking such a responsibility. I particularly appreciated their delicacy in refraining from the slightest jest at my expense, but, on the contrary, taking the matter with proper seriousness. I used to run over to the carpenter's wife three times a day, and at the end of a week I slipped an extra three roubles into her hand without her husband's knowledge. For another three I bought a little quilt and swaddling clothes. But ten days later little Arina fell ill. I called in a doctor at once, he wrote a prescription, and we were up all night, tormenting the mite with horrid medicine. Next day he declared that he had been sent for too late, and answered my entreaties—which I fancy were more like reproaches—by saying with majestic evasiveness: "I am not God." The baby's little tongue and lips and whole mouth were covered with a minute white rash, and towards evening she died, gazing at me with her big black eyes, as though she understood already. I don't know why I never thought to take a photograph of the dead baby. But will it be believed, that I cried that evening, and, in fact, I howled as I had never let myself do before, and Marie Ivanovna had to try to comfort me, again without the least mockery either on her part or on Nikolay Semyonovitch's. The carpenter made a little coffin, and Marie Ivanovna finished it with a frill and a pretty little pillow, while I bought flowers and strewed them on the baby. So they carried away my poor little blossom, whom it will hardly be believed I can't forget even now. A little afterwards, however, this sudden adventure made me reflect seriously. Little Arina had not cost me much, of course; the coffin, the burial, the doctor, the flowers, and the payment to the carpenter's wife came altogether to thirty roubles. As I was going to Petersburg I made up this sum from the forty roubles sent me by Versilov for the journey, and from the sale of various articles before my departure, so that my capital remained intact. But I thought: "If I am going to be turned aside like this I shan't get far." The affair with the student showed that the "idea" might absorb me till it blurred my impressions and drew me away from the realities of life. The incident with little Arina proved, on the contrary, that no "idea" was strong enough to absorb me, at least so completely that I should

not stop short in the face of an overwhelming fact and sacrifice to it at once all that I had done for the "idea" by years of labour. Both conclusions were nevertheless true.

Chapter 6

1

My hopes were not fully realized. I did not find them alone though Versilov was not at home, Tatyana Pavlovna was sitting with my mother, and she was, after all, not one of the family. Fully half of my magnanimous feelings disappeared instantly. It is wonderful how hasty and changeable I am; in such cases a straw, a grain of sand is enough to dissipate my good mood and replace it by a bad one. My bad impressions, I regret to say, are not so quickly dispelled, though I am not resentful... . When I went in, I had a feeling that my mother immediately and hastily broke off what she was saying to Tatyana Pavlovna; I fancied they were talking very eagerly. My sister turned from her work only for a moment to look at me and did not come out of her little alcove again. The flat consisted of three rooms. The room in which we usually sat, the middle room or drawing-room, was fairly large and almost presentable. In it were soft, red armchairs and a sofa, very much the worse for wear, however (Versilov could not endure covers on furniture); there were rugs of a sort and several tables, including some useless little ones. On the right was Versilov's room, cramped and narrow with one window; it was furnished with a wretched-looking writing-table covered with unused books and crumpled papers, and an equally wretched-looking easy chair with a broken spring that stuck up in one corner and often made Versilov groan and swear. On an equally threadbare sofa in this room he used to sleep. He hated this study of his, and I believe he never did anything in it; he preferred sitting idle for hours together in the drawing-room. On the left of the drawing-room there was another room of the same sort in which my mother and sister slept. The drawing-room was entered from the passage at the end of which was the kitchen, where the cook, Lukerya, lived, and when she cooked, she ruthlessly filled the whole flat with the smell of burnt fat. There were moments when Versilov cursed his life and fate aloud on account of the smell from the kitchen, and in that one matter I sympathized with him fully; I hated that smell, too, though it did not penetrate to my room: I lived upstairs in an attic under the roof, to which I climbed by a very steep and shaky ladder. The only things worth mentioning in it were a semicircular window, a low-pitched ceiling, a sofa covered with American leather on which at night Lukerya spread sheets and put a pillow for me. The rest of the furniture consisted of two articles, a perfectly plain deal table and a wooden rush-bottomed chair. We still preserved, however, some relics of former comfort. In the drawing-room, for instance, we had a fairly decent china lamp, and on the wall hung a large and splendid engraving of the Sistine Madonna; facing it on the other wall was an immense and expensive photograph of the cast-bronze gates of the cathedral

of Florence. In the corner of the same room was a shrine of old-fashioned family ikons, one of which had a gilt-silver setting—the one they had meant to pawn, while another (the image of Our Lady) had a velvet setting embroidered in pearls. Under the ikons hung a little lamp which was lighted on every holiday. Versilov evidently had no feeling for the ikons in their inner meaning and religious significance, but he restrained himself. He merely screwed up his eyes, sometimes complaining that the lamplight reflected in the gilt setting hurt them, but he did not hinder my mother from lighting the lamp.

I usually entered in gloomy silence, looking away into some corner, and sometimes without even greeting anyone. As a rule I returned earlier than to-day, and they used to send my dinner to me upstairs. Going into the room I said, “Good evening, mother,” a thing I had never done before. Though even this time I was unable from a sort of bashfulness to make myself look at her, and I sat down in the opposite corner of the room. I was awfully tired, but I did not think of that.

“That lout of yours still walks in as rudely as ever,” Tatyana Pavlovna hissed at me. She had been in the habit in old days of using abusive epithets to me and it had become an established tradition between us.

My mother faltered “Good evening” to me, using the formal mode of address, and evidently embarrassed at my greeting her. “Your dinner has been ready a long while,” she added, almost overcome by confusion: “I hope the soup is not cold, I will order the cutlets at once... .” She was hastily jumping up to go to the kitchen and, for the first time perhaps during that whole month, I felt ashamed that she should run about to wait on me so humbly, though till that moment I had expected it of her.

“Thank you very much, mother, I have had dinner already. May I stay and rest here if I am not in the way?”

“Oh ... of course... . how can you ask, pray sit down... .”

“Don’t worry yourself, mother, I won’t be rude to Andrey Petrovitch again,” I rapped out all at once.

“Good heavens! how noble of him,” cried Tatyana Pavlovna. “Sonia darling, you don’t mean to say you still stand on ceremony with him? Who is he to be treated with such deference, and by his own mother, too! Look at you, why you behave as though you were afraid of him, it is disgraceful.”

“I should like it very much, mother, if you would call me Arkasha.”

“Oh ... yes ... certainly, yes I will,” my mother said hurriedly. I ... don’t always ... henceforward I will.”

She blushed all over. Certainly her face had at times a great charm... . It had a look of simplicity, but by no means of stupidity. It was rather pale and anaemic, her cheeks were very thin, even hollow; her forehead was already lined by many wrinkles, but there were none round her eyes, and her eyes were rather large and wide open, and shone with a gentle and serene light which had drawn me to her from the very first day. I liked her face, too, because it did not look particularly depressed or drawn; on the contrary, her expression would have been positively cheerful, if she had not been so often agitated, sometimes almost panic-stricken over trifles, starting up from her

seat for nothing at all, or listening in alarm to anything new that was said, till she was sure that all was well and as before. What mattered to her was just that all should be as before; that there should be no change, that nothing new should happen, not even new happiness... . It might have been thought that she had been frightened as a child. Besides her eyes, I liked the oval of her rather long face, and I believe if it had been a shade less broad across the cheekbones she might have been called beautiful, not only in her youth but even now. She was not more than thirty-nine, but grey hairs were already visible in her chestnut hair.

Tatyana Pavlovna glanced at her in genuine indignation.

“A booby like him! And you tremble before him, you are ridiculous, Sofia, you make me angry, I tell you!”

“Ah, Tatyana Pavlovna, why should you attack him now? But you are joking perhaps, eh?” my mother added, detecting something like a smile on Tatyana Pavlovna’s face. Her scoldings could not indeed be always taken seriously. But she smiled (if she did smile) only at my mother, of course, because she loved her devotedly, and no doubt noticed how happy she was at that moment at my meekness.

“Of course, I can’t help feeling hurt, if you will attack people unprovoked, Tatyana Pavlovna, and just when I’ve come in saying ‘Good evening, mother,’ a thing I’ve never done before,” I thought it necessary to observe at last.

“Only fancy,” she boiled over at once: “He considers it as something to be proud of. Am I to go down on my knees to you, pray, because for once in your life you’ve been polite? and as though it were politeness! Why do you stare into the corner when you come in? I know how you tear and fling about before her! You might have said ‘Good evening’ to me, too, I wrapped you in your swaddling clothes, I am your godmother.”

I need not say I did not deign to answer. At that moment my sister came in and I made haste to turn to her.

“Liza, I saw Vassin to-day and he inquired after you. You have met him?”

“Yes, last year in Luga,” she answered quite simply, sitting down beside me and looking at me affectionately. I don’t know why, but I had fancied she would flush when I spoke of Vassin. My sister was a blonde; very fair with flaxen hair, quite unlike both her parents. But her eyes and the oval of her face were like our mother’s. Her nose was very straight, small, and regular; there were tiny freckles in her face, however, of which there was no sign in my mother’s. There was very little resemblance to Versilov, nothing but the slenderness of figure, perhaps, her tallness and something charming in her carriage. There was not the slightest likeness between us—we were the opposite poles.

“I knew his honour for three months,” Liza added.

“Is it Vassin you call ‘his honour,’ Liza? You should call him by his name. Excuse my correcting you, sister, but it grieves me that they seem to have neglected your education.”

“But it’s shameful of you to remark upon it before your mother,” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, firing up; “and you are talking nonsense, it has not been neglected at all.”

"I am not saying anything about my mother," I said sharply, defending myself. "Do you know, mother, that when I look at Liza it's as though it were you over again; you have given her the same charm of goodness, which you must have had yourself, and you have it to this day and always will have it... . I was only talking of the surface polish, of the silly rules of etiquette, which are necessary, however. I am only indignant at the thought that when Versilov has heard you call Vassin 'his honour' he has not troubled to correct you at all—his disdain and his indifference to us are so complete. That's what makes me furious."

"He is a perfect bear himself, and he is giving us lessons in good manners! Don't you dare talk of Versilov before your mother, sir, or before me either, I won't stand it!" Tatyana Pavlovna flashed out.

"I got my salary to-day, mother, fifty roubles; take it, please; here!"

I went up to her and gave her the money; she was in a tremor of anxiety at once.

"Oh, I don't know about taking it," she brought out, as though afraid to touch the money. I did not understand.

"For goodness' sake, mother, if you both think of me as one of the family, as a son and a brother... ."

"Oh, I've been to blame, Arkady: I ought to have confessed something to you, but I am afraid of you... ."

She said this with a timid and deprecating smile; again I did not understand and interrupted.

"By the way, did you know, mother, that Andrey Petrovitch's case against the Sokolskys is being decided to-day?"

"Ah! I knew," she cried, clasping her hands before her (her favourite gesture) in alarm.

"To-day?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna startled, "but it's impossible, he would have told us. Did he tell you?" she turned to my mother.

"Oh! no ... that it was to-day ... he didn't. But I have been fearing it all the week. I would have prayed for him to lose it even, only to have it over and off one's mind, and to have things as they used to be again."

"What! hasn't he even told you, mother?" I exclaimed. "What a man! There's an example of the indifference and contempt I spoke of just now."

"It's being decided, how is it being decided? And who told you?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna, pouncing upon me. "Speak, do."

"Why, here he is himself! Perhaps he will tell you," I announced, catching the sound of his step in the passage and hastily sitting down again beside Liza.

"Brother, for God's sake, spare mother, and be patient with Andrey Petrovitch ..."

she whispered to me.

"I will, I will," with that I turned to her and pressed her hand.

Liza looked at me very mistrustfully, and she was right.

2

He came in very much pleased with himself, so pleased that he did not feel it necessary to conceal his state of mind. And, indeed, he had become accustomed of late to displaying himself before us without the slightest ceremony, not only in his bad points but even where he was ridiculous, a thing which most people are afraid to do; at the same time, he fully recognized that we should understand to the smallest detail. In the course of the last year, so Tatyana Pavlovna observed, he had become slovenly in his dress: his clothes though old were always well cut and free from foppishness. It is true that he was prepared to put on clean linen only on every alternate day, instead of every day, which was a real distress to my mother; it was regarded by them as a sacrifice, and the whole group of devoted women looked upon it as an act of heroism. He always wore soft wide-brimmed black hats. When he took off his hat his very thick but silvery locks stood up in a shock on his head; I liked looking at his hair when he took off his hat.

“Good evening; still disputing; and is he actually one of the party? I heard his voice from outside in the passage; he has been attacking me I suppose?”

It was one of the signs of his being in a good humour for him to be witty at my expense; I did not answer, of course. Lukerya came in with a regular sackful of parcels and put them on the table.

“Victory! Tatyana Pavlovna! the case is won, and the Sokolskys certainly won’t venture to appeal. I’ve won the day! I was able to borrow a thousand roubles at once. Sonia, put down your work, don’t try your eyes. Back from work, Liza?”

“Yes, father,” answered Liza, looking at him affectionately; she used to call him father; nothing would have induced me to submit to doing the same.

“Tired?”

“Yes.”

“Give up your work, don’t go to-morrow, and drop it altogether.”

“Father, that will be worse for me.”

“I beg you will ... I greatly dislike to see women working, Tatyana Pavlovna.”

“How can they get on without work? a woman’s not to work?”

“I know, I know; that’s excellent and very true, and I agree with it beforehand, but—I mean needlework particularly. Only imagine, I believe that’s one of the morbid anomalous impressions of my childhood. In my dim memories of the time when I was five or six years old I remember more often than anything—with loathing, of course—a solemn council of wise women, stern and forbidding, sitting at a round table with scissors, material, patterns, and a fashion-plate. They thought they knew all about it, and shook their heads slowly and majestically, measuring, calculating, and preparing to cut out. All those kind people who were so fond of me had suddenly become unapproachable, and if I began to play I was carried out of the room at once. Even my poor nurse, who held me by the hand and took no notice of my shouting and pulling at her, was listening and gazing enraptured, as though at a kind of paradise.

The sternness of those sensible faces and the solemnity with which they faced the task of cutting out is for some reason distressing for me to picture even now. Tatyana Pavlovna, you are awfully fond of cutting out. Although it may be aristocratic, yet I do prefer a woman who does not work at all. Don't take that as meant for you, Sonia... . How could you, indeed! Woman is an immense power without working. You know that, though, Sonia. What's your opinion, Arkady Makarovitch? No doubt you disagree?"

"No, not at all," I answered—"that's a particularly good saying that woman is an immense power, though I don't understand why you say that about work. And she can't help working if she has no money—as you know yourself."

"Well, that's enough," and he turned to my mother, who positively beamed all over (when he addressed me she was all of a tremor); "at least, to begin with, I beg you not to let me see you doing needlework for me. No doubt, Arkady, as a young man of the period you are something of a socialist; well, would you believe it, my dear fellow, none are so fond of idleness as the toiling masses."

"Rest perhaps, not idleness."

"No, idleness, doing nothing; that's their ideal! I knew a man who was for ever at work, though he was not one of the common people, he was rather intellectual and capable of generalizing. Every day of his life, perhaps, he brooded with blissful emotion on visions of utter idleness, raising the ideal to infinity, so to speak, to unlimited independence, to everlasting freedom, dreaming, and idle contemplation. So it went on till he broke down altogether from overwork. There was no mending him, he died in a hospital. I am sometimes seriously disposed to believe that the delights of labour have been invented by the idle, from virtuous motives, of course. It is one of the 'Geneva ideas' of the end of last century. Tatyana Pavlovna, I cut an advertisement out of the newspaper the day before yesterday, here it is"; he took a scrap of paper out of his waist-coat pocket. "It is one of those everlasting students, proficient in classics and mathematics and prepared to travel, to sleep in a garret or anywhere. Here, listen: 'A teacher (lady) prepares for all the scholastic establishments (do you hear, for all) and gives lessons in arithmetic!' Prepares for all the scholastic establishments—in arithmetic, therefore, may we assume? No, arithmetic is something apart for her. It is a case of simple hunger, the last extremity of want. It is just the ineptitude of it that's so touching: it's evident that the lady has never prepared anyone for any school, and it is doubtful whether she is fit to teach anything. Yet at her last gasp she wastes her one remaining rouble and prints in the paper that she prepares for all the scholastic establishments, and what's more, gives lessons in arithmetic. *Per tutto mundo e in altri siti.*"

"Oh, Andrey Petrovitch, she ought to be helped! Where does she live?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Oh, there are lots of them!" He put the advertisement in his pocket. "That bag's full of treats for you, Liza, and you, Tatyana Pavlovna; Sonia and I don't care for sweet things. And perhaps for you, young man. I bought the things myself at Eliseyev's and at Ballé's. Too long we've gone hungry, as Lukerya said. (NB—None of us had ever gone

hungry.) Here are grapes, sweets, duchesses and strawberry tarts; I've even brought some excellent liqueur; nuts, too. It's curious that to this day I'm fond of nuts as I have been from a child, Tatyana Pavlovna, and of the commonest nuts, do you know. Liza takes after me; she is fond of cracking nuts like a squirrel. But there's nothing more charming, Tatyana Pavlovna, than sometimes when recalling one's childhood to imagine oneself in a wood, in a copse, gathering nuts... . The days are almost autumnal, but bright; at times it's so fresh, one hides in the bushes, one wanders in the wood, there's a scent of leaves... . I seem to see something sympathetic in your face, Arkady Makarovitch?"

"The early years of my childhood, too, were spent in the country."

"But I thought you were brought up in Moscow, if I am not mistaken."

"He was living in Moscow at the Andronikovs' when you went there; but till then he used to live in the country with your aunt, Varvara Stepanovna," Tatyana Pavlovna put in.

"Sonia, here's some money, put it away. I promise you, in a few days, five thousand."

"So there's no hope then for the Sokolskys?" asked Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Absolutely none, Tatyana Pavlovna."

"I have always sympathized with you and all of yours, Andrey Petrovitch, and I have always been a friend of the family, but though the Sokolskys are strangers, yet, upon my word, I am sorry for them. Don't be angry, Andrey Petrovitch."

"I have no intention of going shares with them, Tatyana Pavlovna!"

"You know my idea, of course, Andrey Petrovitch; they would have settled the case out of court, if at the very beginning you had offered to go halves with them; now, of course, it is too late. Not that I venture to criticize... . I say so because I don't think the deceased would have left them out of his will altogether."

"Not only he wouldn't have left them out, he'd have certainly left them everything, and would have left none out but me, if he'd known how to do things and to write a will properly; but as it is, the law's on my side, and it's settled. I can't go shares, and I don't want to, Tatyana Pavlovna, and that is the end of the matter."

He spoke with real exasperation, a thing he rarely allowed himself to do. Tatyana Pavlovna subsided. My mother looked down mournfully. Versilov knew that she shared Tatyana Pavlovna's views.

"He has not forgotten that slap in the face at Ems," I thought to myself. The document given me by Kraft and at that moment in my pocket would have a poor chance if it had fallen into his hands. I suddenly felt that the whole responsibility was still weighing upon me, and this idea, together with all the rest, had, of course, an irritating effect upon me.

"Arkady, I should like you to be better dressed, my dear fellow; your suit is all right, but for future contingencies I might recommend you to an excellent Frenchman, most conscientious and possessed of taste."

"I beg you never to make such suggestions again," I burst out suddenly.

"What's that?"

"It is not that I consider it humiliating, of course, but we are not agreed about anything; on the contrary, our views are entirely opposed, for in a day or two—tomorrow—I shall give up going to the prince's, as I find there is absolutely no work for me to do there."

"But you are going and sitting there with him—that is the work."

"Such ideas are degrading."

"I don't understand; but if you are so squeamish, don't take money from him, but simply go. You will distress him horribly, he has already become attached to you, I assure you... . However, as you please... ." He was evidently put out.

"You say, don't ask for money, but thanks to you I did a mean thing to-day: you did not warn me, and I demanded my month's salary from him to-day."

"So you have seen to that already; I confess I did not expect you to ask for it; but how sharp you all are nowadays! There are no young people in these days, Tatyana Pavlovna." He was very spiteful: I was awfully angry too.

"I ought to have had things out with you ... you made me do it, I don't know now how it's to be."

"By the way, Sonia, give Arkady back his sixty roubles at once; and you, my dear fellow, don't be angry at our repaying it so quickly. I can guess from your face that you have some enterprise in your mind and that you need it... . So invest it ... or something of the sort."

"I don't know what my face expresses, but I did not expect mother would have told you of that money when I so particularly asked her... ." I looked at my mother with flashing eyes, I cannot express how wounded I felt.

"Arkasha, darling, for God's sake forgive me, I couldn't possibly help speaking of it... ."

"My dear fellow, don't make a grievance of her telling me your secrets: besides, she did it with the best intentions—it was simply a mother's longing to boast of her son's feeling for her. But I assure you I should have guessed without that you were a capitalist. All your secrets are written on your honest countenance. He has 'his idea,' Tatyana Pavlovna, as I told you."

"Let's drop my honest countenance," I burst out again. "I know that you often see right through things, but in some cases you see no further than your own nose, and I have marvelled at your powers of penetration. Well then, I have 'my idea.' That you should use that expression, of course, was an accident, but I am not afraid to admit it; I have 'an idea' of my own, I am not afraid and I am not ashamed of it."

"Don't be ashamed, that's the chief thing."

"And all the same I shall never tell it you."

"That's to say you won't condescend to; no need to, my dear fellow, I know the nature of your idea as it is; in any case it implies:

Into the wilderness I flee.

Tatyana Pavlovna, my notion is that he wants ... to become a Rothschild, or something of the kind, and shut himself up in his grandeur... . No doubt he'll magnanimously

allow us a pension, though perhaps he won't allow me one—but in any case he will vanish from our sight. Like the new moon he has risen, only to set again.”

I shuddered in my inmost being; of course, it was all chance; he knew nothing of my idea and was not speaking about it, though he did mention Rothschild; but how could he define my feelings so precisely, my impulse to break with them and go away? He divined everything and wanted to defile beforehand with his cynicism the tragedy of fact. That he was horribly angry, of that there could be no doubt.

“Mother, forgive my hastiness, for I see that there's no hiding things from Andrey Petrovitch in any case,” I said, affecting to laugh and trying if only for a moment to turn it into a joke.

“That's the very best thing you can do, my dear fellow, to laugh. It is difficult to realize how much every one gains by laughing even in appearance; I am speaking most seriously. He always has an air, Tatyana Pavlovna, of having something so important on his mind, that he is quite abashed at the circumstance himself.”

“I must ask you in earnest, Andrey Petrovitch, to be more careful what you say.”

“You are right, my dear boy; but one must speak out once for all, so as never to touch upon the matter again. You have come to us from Moscow, to begin making trouble at once. That's all we know as yet of your object in coming. I say nothing, of course, of your having come to surprise us in some way. And all this month you have been snorting and sneering at us. Yet you are obviously an intelligent person, and as such you might leave such snorting and sneering to those who have no other means of avenging themselves on others for their own insignificance. You are always shutting yourself up, though your honest countenance and your rosy cheeks bear witness that you might look every one straight in the face with perfect innocence. He's a neurotic; I can't make out, Tatyana Pavlovna, why they are all neurotic nowadays... ?”

“If you did not even know where I was brought up, you are not likely to know why a man's neurotic.”

“Oh, so that's the key to it! You are offended at my being capable of forgetting where you were brought up!”

“Not in the least. Don't attribute such silly ideas to me. Mother! Andrey Petrovitch praised me just now for laughing; let us laugh—why sit like this! Shall I tell you a little anecdote about myself? Especially as Andrey Petrovitch knows nothing of my adventures.”

I was boiling. I knew this was the last time we should be sitting together like this, that when I left that house I should never enter it again, and so on the eve of it all I could not restrain myself. He had challenged me to such a parting scene himself.

“That will be delightful, of course, if it is really amusing,” he observed, looking at me searchingly. “Your manners were rather neglected where you were brought up, my dear fellow, though they are pretty passable. He is charming to-day, Tatyana Pavlovna, and it's a good thing you have undone that bag at last.”

But Tatyana Pavlovna frowned; she did not even turn round at his words, but went on untying the parcels and laying out the good things on some plates which had been

brought in. My mother, too, was sitting in complete bewilderment, though she had misgivings, of course, and realized that there would be trouble between us. My sister touched my elbow again.

3

“I simply want to tell you all,” I began, with a very free-and-easy air, “how a father met for the first time a dearly loved son: it happened ‘wherever you were brought up’ ...”

“My dear fellow, won’t it be ... a dull story? You know, *tous les genres*... .”

“Don’t frown, Andrey Petrovitch, I am not speaking at all with the object you imagine. All I want is to make every one laugh.”

“Well, God hears you, my dear boy. I know that you love us all ... and don’t want to spoil our evening,” he mumbled with a sort of affected carelessness.

“Of course, you have guessed by my face that I love you?”

“Yes, partly by your face, too.”

“Just as I guessed from her face that Tatyana Pavlovna’s in love with me. Don’t look at me so ferociously, Tatyana Pavlovna, it is better to laugh! it is better to laugh!”

She turned quickly to me, and gave me a searching look which lasted half a minute.

“Mind now,” she said, holding up her finger at me, but so earnestly that her words could not have referred to my stupid joke, but must have been meant as a warning in case I might be up to some mischief.

“Andrey Petrovitch, is it possible you don’t remember how we met for the first time in our lives?”

“Upon my word I’ve forgotten, my dear fellow, and I am really very sorry. All that I remember is that it was a long time ago ... and took place somewhere... .”

“Mother, and don’t you remember how you were in the country, where I was brought up, till I was six or seven I believe, or rather were you really there once, or is it simply a dream that I saw you there for the first time? I have been wanting to ask you about it for a long time, but I’ve kept putting it off; now the time has come.”

“To be sure, Arkasha, to be sure I stayed with Varvara Stepanovna three times; my first visit was when you were only a year old, I came a second time when you were nearly four, and afterwards again when you were six.”

“Ah, you did then; I have been wanting to ask you about it all this month.”

My mother seemed overwhelmed by a rush of memories, and she asked me with feeling:

“Do you really mean, Arkasha, that you remembered me there?”

“I don’t know or remember anything, only something of your face remained in my heart for the rest of my life, and the fact, too, that you were my mother. I recall everything there as though it were a dream, I’ve even forgotten my nurse. I have a faint recollection of Varvara Stepanovna, simply that her face was tied up for toothache. I remember huge trees near the house—lime-trees I think they were—then sometimes

the brilliant sunshine at the open windows, the little flower garden, the little paths and you, mother, I remember clearly only at one moment when I was taken to the church there, and you held me up to receive the sacrament and to kiss the chalice; it was in the summer, and a dove flew through the cupola, in at one window and out at another... .”

“Mercy on us, that’s just how it was,” cried my mother, throwing up her hands, “and the dear dove I remember, too, now. With the chalice just before you, you started, and cried out, ‘a dove, a dove.’”

“Your face or something of the expression remained in my memory so distinctly that I recognized you five years after in Moscow, though nobody there told me you were my mother. But when I met Andrey Petrovitch for the first time, I was brought from the Andronikovs’; I had been vegetating quietly and happily with them for five years on end. I remember their flat down to the smallest detail, and all those ladies who have all grown so much older here; and the whole household, and how Andronikov himself used to bring the provisions, poultry, fish, and sucking-pigs from the town in a fish-basket. And how at dinner instead of his wife, who always gave herself such airs, he used to help the soup, and how we all laughed at his doing it, he most of all. The young ladies there used to teach me French. But what I liked best of all was Krylov’s Fables. I learned a number of them by heart and every day I used to recite one to Andronikov ... going straight into his tiny study to do so without considering whether he were busy or not. Well, it was through a fable of Krylov’s that I got to know you, Andrey Petrovitch. I see you are beginning to remember.”

“I do recall something, my dear fellow, that you repeated something to me ... a fable or a passage from ‘Woe from Wit,’ I fancy. What a memory you have, though!”

“A memory! I should think so! it’s the one thing I’ve remembered all my life.”

“That’s all right, that’s all right, my dear fellow, you are quite waking me up.”

He actually smiled; as soon as he smiled, my mother and sister smiled after him, confidence was restored; but Tatyana Pavlovna, who had finished laying out the good things on the table and settled herself in a corner, still bent upon me a keen and disapproving eye. “This is how it happened,” I went on: “one fine morning there suddenly appeared the friend of my childhood, Tatyana Pavlovna, who always made her entrance on the stage of my existence with dramatic suddenness. She took me away in a carriage to a grand house, to sumptuous apartments. You were staying at Madame Fanariotov’s, Andrey Petrovitch, in her empty house, which she had bought from you; she was abroad at that time. I always used to wear short jackets; now all of a sudden I was put into a pretty little blue greatcoat, and a very fine shirt. Tatyana Pavlovna was busy with me all day and bought me lots of things; I kept walking through all the empty rooms, looking at myself in all the looking- glasses. And wandering about in the same way the next morning, at ten o clock, I walked quite by chance into your study. I had seen you already the evening before, as soon as I was brought into the house, but only for an instant on the stairs. You were coming downstairs to get into your carriage and drive off somewhere; you were staying alone in Moscow then, for a short time after a very

long absence, so that you had engagements in all directions and were scarcely ever at home. When you met Tatyana Pavlovna and me you only drawled ‘Ah!’ and did not even stop.”

“He describes it with a special love,” observed Versilov, addressing Tatyana Pavlovna; she turned away and did not answer.

“I can see you now as you were then, handsome and flourishing. It is wonderful how much older and less good-looking you have grown in these years; please forgive this candour, you were thirty-seven even then, though. I gazed at you with admiration; what wonderful hair you had, almost jet black, with a brilliant lustre without a trace of grey; moustaches and whiskers, like the setting of a jewel: I can find no other expression for it; your face of an even pallor; not like its sickly pallor to-day, but like your daughter, Anna Andreyevna, whom I had the honour of seeing this morning; dark, glowing eyes, and gleaming teeth, especially when you laughed. And you did laugh, when you looked round as I came in; I was not very discriminating at that time, and your smile rejoiced my heart. That morning you were wearing a dark blue velvet jacket, a sulphur coloured necktie, and a magnificent shirt with Alençon lace on it; you were standing before the looking-glass with a manuscript in your hand, and were busy declaiming Tchatsky’s monologue, and especially his last exclamation: ‘A coach, I want a coach.’”

“Good heavens!” cried Versilov. “Why, he’s right! Though I was only in Moscow for so short a time, I undertook to play Tchatsky in an amateur performance at Alexandra Petrovna Vitovtov’s in place of Zhileyko, who was ill!”

“Do you mean to say you had forgotten it?” laughed Tatyana Pavlovna.

“He has brought it back to my mind! And I own that those few days in Moscow were perhaps the happiest in my life! We were still so young then ... and all so fervently expecting something... . It was then in Moscow I unexpectedly met so much... . But go on, my dear fellow: this time you’ve done well to remember it all so exactly... .”

“I stood still to look at you and suddenly cried out, ‘Ah, how good, the real Tchatsky’ You turned round at once and asked: ‘Why, do you know Tchatsky already?’ and you sat down on a sofa, and began drinking your coffee in the most charming humour—I could have kissed you. Then I informed you that at the Andronikovs’ every one read a great deal, and that the young ladies knew a great deal of poetry by heart, and used to act scenes out of ‘Woe from Wit’ among themselves, and that all last week we had been reading aloud in the evening ‘A Sportsman’s Sketches,’ but what I liked best of all was Krylov’s Fables, and that I knew them by heart. You told me to repeat one, and I repeated ‘The Girl who was Hard to Please.’”

A maid her suitor shrewdly scanned.

“Yes! Yes! I remember it all now,” cried Versilov again; “but, my dear fellow, I remember you, too, clearly now; you were such a charming boy then, a thoughtful boy even, and, I assure you, you, too, have changed for the worse in the course of these nine years.”

At this point all of them, even Tatyana Pavlovna, laughed. It was evident that Andrey Petrovitch had deigned to jest, and had paid me out in the same coin for my

biting remark about his having grown old. Every one was amused, and indeed, it was well said.

“As I recited, you smiled, but before I was half-way through the fable you rang the bell and told the footman who answered it to ask Tatyana Pavlovna to come, and she ran in with such a delighted face, that though I had seen her the evening before I scarcely knew her. For Tatyana Pavlovna, I began the fable again, I finished it brilliantly, even Tatyana Pavlovna smiled, and you, Andrey Petrovitch cried ‘Bravo!’ and observed with warmth that if it had been ‘The Ant and the Grasshopper’ it would not be wonderful that a sensible boy of my age should recite it sensibly, but this fable

A maid her suitor shrewdly scanned. Indeed, that’s not a crime.

was different. “Listen how he brings out ‘Indeed, that’s not a crime,’” you said; in fact, you were enthusiastic. Then you said something in French to Tatyana Pavlovna, and she instantly frowned and began to protest, and grew very hot, in fact; but as it was impossible to oppose Andrey Petrovitch if he once took an idea into his head, she hurriedly carried me off to her room, there my hands and face were washed again, my shirt was changed, my hair was pomaded and even curled.

“Then towards evening Tatyana Pavlovna dressed herself up rather grandly as I had never expected to see her, and she took me with her in the carriage. It was the first time in my life I had been to a play; it was at a private performance at Mme. Vitovtov’s. The lights, the chandeliers, the ladies, the officers, the generals, the young ladies, the curtain, the rows of chairs, were utterly unlike anything I had seen before. Tatyana Pavlovna took a very modest seat in one of the back rows, and made me sit down beside her. There were, of course, other children like me in the room, but I had no eyes for anything, I simply waited with a sinking of my heart for the performance. When you came on, Andrey Petrovitch, I was ecstatic to the point of tears. What for and why, I don’t understand. Why those tears of rapture? It has been a strange recollection for me ever since, for these last nine years! I followed the drama with a throbbing heart; all I understood of it, of course, was that SHE was deceiving HIM, and that he was ridiculed by stupid people who were not worth his little finger. When he was reciting at the ball I understood that he was humiliated and insulted, that he was reproaching all these miserable people, but that he was—great, great! No doubt my training at the Andronikovs’ helped me to understand, and your acting, Andrey Petrovitch! It was the first time I had seen a play! When you went off shouting ‘A coach, a coach!’ (and you did that shout wonderfully) I jumped up from my seat, and while the whole audience burst into applause, I, too, clapped my hands and cried ‘bravo’ at the top of my voice. I vividly recall how at that instant I felt as though I had been pierced by a pin in my back ‘a little below the waist’; Tatyana Pavlovna had given me a ferocious pinch; but I took no notice of it. As soon as ‘Woe from Wit’ was over, Tatyana Pavlovna took me home, of course. ‘You can’t stay for the dancing, and it’s only on your account I am not staying!’ you hissed at me all the way home in the carriage, Tatyana Pavlovna. All night I was delirious, and by ten o’clock the next morning I was standing at the study door, but it was shut; there were people with you and you were engaged in

some business with them; then you drove off and were away the whole day till late at night—so I did not see you again! What I meant to say to you, I have forgotten, of course, and indeed I did not know then, but I longed passionately to see you as soon as possible. And at eight o'clock next morning you were graciously pleased to set off for Serpuhov; at that time you had just sold your Tula estate to settle with your creditors, but there was still left in your hands a tempting stake; that was why you had come at that time to Moscow, where you had not been able to show yourself till then for fear of your creditors, and this Serpuhov ruffian was the only one of them who had not agreed to take half of what you owed him instead of the whole. When I questioned Tatyana Pavlovna, she did not even answer me. 'It's no business of yours, but the day after to-morrow I shall take you to your boarding school: get your exercise-books ready, take your lesson books, put them all in order, and you must learn to pack your little box yourself, you can't expect to be waited on, sir.' You were drumming this and that into my ears all those three days, Tatyana Pavlovna. It ended in my being taken in my innocence to school at Touchard's, adoring you, Andrey Petrovitch; our whole meeting was a trivial incident, perhaps, but would you believe it, six months afterwards I longed to run away from Touchard's to you!"

"You describe it capitally, you have brought it all back so vividly," Versilov pronounced incisively; "but what strikes me most in your story is the wealth of certain strange details, concerning my debts, for instance. Apart from the fact that these details are hardly a suitable subject for you to discuss, I can't imagine how you managed to get hold of them."

"Details? how I got hold of them? Why I repeat, for the last nine years I have been doing nothing but getting hold of facts about you."

"A strange confession, and a strange way of spending your time."

He turned half-reclining in his easy chair, and even yawned slightly, whether intentionally or not I could not say.

"Well, shall I go on telling you how I wanted to run to you from Touchard's?"

"Forbid him, Andrey Petrovitch; suppress him and send him away," Tatyana Pavlovna burst out.

"That won't do, Tatyana Pavlovna," Versilov answered her impressively. "Arkasha has evidently something on his mind, and so he must be allowed to finish. Well, let him speak! When he's said what he's got to say, it will be off his mind, and what matters most to him is that he should get it off his mind. Begin your new story, my dear fellow; I call it new, but you may rest assured that I know how it ends."

4

"I ran away, that is, I tried to run away to you, very simply. Tatyana Pavlovna, do you remember after I had been there a fortnight Touchard wrote you a letter—didn't he? Marie Ivanovna showed me the letter afterwards; that turned up among Andronikov's papers, too. Touchard suddenly discovered that the fees he had asked

were too small, and with ‘dignity’ announced in his letter to you that little princes and senator’s children were educated in his establishment, and that it was lowering its tone to keep a pupil of such humble origin as me unless the remuneration were increased.”

“Mon cher, you really might... .”

“Oh that’s nothing, that’s nothing,” I interrupted, “I am only going to say a little about Touchard. You wrote from the provinces a fortnight later, Tatyana Pavlovna, and answered with a flat refusal. I remember how he walked into our classroom, flushing crimson. He was a very short thick-set little Frenchman of five- and-forty, a Parisian cobbler by origin, though he had from time immemorial held a position in Moscow as an instructor in the French language, and even had an official rank, of which he was extremely proud; he was a man of crass ignorance. There were only six of us pupils; among them there actually was a nephew of a Moscow senator; and we all lived like one family under the supervision of his wife, a very affected lady, who was the daughter of a Russian government clerk. During that fortnight I had given myself great airs before my schoolfellows. I boasted of my blue overcoat, and my papa, Andrey Petrovitch, and their questions: why I was called Dolgoruky and not Versilov did not embarrass me in the least, since I did not know why.”

“Andrey Petrovitch!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, in a voice almost menacing. My mother, on the contrary, was watching me intently, and evidently wished me to go on.

“Ce Touchard ... I actually recall him now ... he was a fussy little man,” Versilov admitted; “but he was recommended to me by the very best people... .”

“Ce Touchard walked in with the letter in his hand, went up to the big oak table, at which all six of us were seated learning something by heart; he seized me firmly by the shoulder, picked me up from the chair, and ordered me to collect my exercise-books. ‘Your place is not here but there,’ he said, pointing to a tiny room on the left of the passage, where there was nothing but a plain deal table, a rush-bottom chair, and an American leather sofa—exactly like what I have upstairs in the attic. I went into it in amazement, very much downcast; I had never been roughly treated before. Half an hour later when Touchard had gone out of the schoolroom, I began to exchange glances and smiles with my schoolfellows; they, of course, were laughing at me; but I had no suspicion of it and thought we were laughing because we were merry. At that moment Touchard darted in, seized me by the forelock, and dragged me about.

“‘Don’t you dare sit with gentlemanly boys, you are a child of low origin and no better than a lackey.’

“And he gave me a stinging blow on my chubby, rosy cheek. He must have enjoyed doing so and he struck me a second time, and a third. I cried violently and was terribly astonished. For a whole hour I sat with my face hidden in my hands crying and crying. Something had happened which was utterly beyond my comprehension. I don’t understand how a man, not of spiteful character, a foreigner like Touchard, who rejoiced at the emancipation of the Russian peasants, could have beaten a foolish child like me. I was only amazed, not resentful, however. I had not yet learnt to resent an

insult. It seemed to me that I had somehow been naughty, that when I was good again I should be forgiven, and that we should all be merry again at once, that we should go out to play in the yard and live happy ever after.”

“My dear fellow, if I had only known... .” Versilov drawled with the careless smile of a rather weary man. “What a scoundrel that Touchard was, though! I have not given up all hope, however, that you may make an effort and forgive us for all that at last, and that we may all live happy ever after.”

He yawned decisively.

“But I am not blaming you at all, and believe me, I am not complaining of Touchard,” I cried, a little disconcerted. “Though, indeed, he beat me for ten months or so. I remember I was always trying to appease him in some way; I used to rush to kiss his hands, I was always kissing them, and I was always crying and crying. My schoolfellows laughed at me and despised me, because Touchard began to treat me sometimes like a servant, he used to order me to bring him his clothes when he was dressing. My menial instincts were of use to me there; I did my very utmost to please him, and was not in the least offended, because I did not at that time understand it at all, and I am surprised to this day that I could have been so stupid as not to realize that I was not on an equal footing with the rest. It’s true my schoolfellows made many things clear to me even then; it was a good school. Touchard came in the end to prefer giving me a kick to slapping me in the face, and six months later he even began to be affectionate; only he never failed to beat me once a month or so to remind me not to forget myself. He soon let me sit with the other boys, too, and allowed me to play with them, but not once during those two and a half years did Touchard forget the difference in our social positions, and from time to time, though not very frequently, he employed me in menial tasks, I verily believe, to remind me of it.

“I was running away; that’s to say, I was on the point of running away for five months after those first two months. I have always been slow in taking action. When I got into bed and pulled the quilt over me, I began thinking of you at once, Andrey Petrovitch, only of you, of no one else; I don’t in the least know why it was so. I dreamed about you too. I used always to be passionately imagining that you would walk in, and I would rush up to you and you would take me out of that place, and bring me home with you to the same study, and that we would go to the theatre again, and so on. Above all, that we should not part again—that was the chief thing! As soon as I had to wake up in the morning the jeers and contempt of the boys began again; one of them actually began beating me and making me put on his boots for him; he called me the vilest names, particularly aiming at making my origin clear to me, to the diversion of all who heard him. When at last Touchard himself became comprehensible, something unbearable began in my soul. I felt that I should never be forgiven here. Oh, I was beginning by degrees to understand what it was they would not forgive me and of what I was guilty! And so at last I resolved to run away. For two whole months I dreamed of it incessantly at last—it was September—I made up my mind. I waited for Saturday, when my schoolfellows used to go home for the week-end, and meanwhile I secretly

and carefully got together a bundle of the most necessary things; all the money I had was two roubles. I meant to wait till dusk; ‘then I will go downstairs,’ I thought, ‘and I’ll go out and walk away!’ Where? I knew that Andronikov had moved to Petersburg, and I resolved that I would look for Mme. Fanariotov’s house in Arbaty; ‘I’ll spend the night walking or sitting somewhere, and in the morning I’ll ask some one in the courtyard of the house, where Andrey Petrovitch is now, and if not in Moscow, in what town or country. They will be sure to tell me. I’ll walk away, and then ask some one, somewhere else, by which gate to go out to reach such a town; and then I’ll go and walk and walk, I shall keep on walking; I shall sleep somewhere under the bushes; I shall eat nothing but bread, and for two roubles I can get bread enough for a long time.’

“I could not manage to run away on Saturday, however; I had to wait till next day, Sunday, and as luck would have it, Touchard and his wife were going away somewhere for the Sunday; there was no one left in the house but Agafya and me. I awaited the night in terrible agitation, I remember. I sat at the window in the schoolroom, looking out at the dusty street, the little wooden houses, and the few passers-by. Touchard lived in an out-of-the-way street; from the windows I could see one of the city gates; ‘Isn’t it the one?’ I kept wondering. The sun set in a red glow, the sky was so cold-looking, and a piercing wind was stirring up the dust, just as it is to-day. It was quite dark at last; I stood before the ikon and began to pray, only very, very quickly, I was in haste; I caught up my bundle, and went on tip-toe down the creaking stairs, horribly afraid that Agafya would hear me from the kitchen. The door was locked, I turned the key, and at once a dark, dark night loomed black before me like a boundless perilous unknown land, and the wind snatched off my cap. I was just going out on the same side of the pavement; I heard a hoarse volley of oaths from a drunken man in the street. I stood, looked, and slowly turned, slowly went upstairs, slowly took off my things, put down my little bundle and lay down flat, without tears, and without thoughts, and it was from that moment, Andrey Petrovitch, that I began to think. It was from that moment that I realized that besides being a lackey, I was a coward, too, and my real development began!”

“Well, I see through you once and for all from this minute,” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, jumping up from her seat, and so suddenly, that I was utterly unprepared for it; “yes, you were not only a lackey then, you are a lackey now; you’ve the soul of a lackey! Why should not Andrey Petrovitch have apprenticed you to a shoemaker? it would have been an act of charity to have taught you a trade! Who would have expected more than that of him? Your father, Makar Ivanovitch, asked—in fact, he insisted—that you, his children, should not be brought up to be above your station. Why, you think nothing of his having educated you for the university, and that through him you have received class rights. The little rascals teased him, to be sure, so he has sworn to avenge himself on humanity... . You scoundrel!”

I must confess I was struck dumb by this outburst, I got up and stood for some time staring and not knowing what to say.

“Well, certainly Tatyana Pavlovna has told me something new,” I said at last, turning resolutely to Versilov; “yes, certainly I am such a lackey that I can’t be satisfied with Versilov’s not having apprenticed me to a shoemaker; even ‘rights’ did not touch me. I wanted the whole of Versilov, I wanted a father ... that’s what I asked for—like a regular lackey. Mother, I’ve had it on my conscience for eight years—when you came to Moscow alone to see me at Touchard’s, the way I received you then, but I have no time to speak of it now. Tatyana Pavlovna won’t let me tell my story, Good-bye till to-morrow, mother; we may see each other again. Tatyana Pavlovna! what if I am so utterly a lackey that I am quite unable to admit the possibility of a man’s marrying again when his wife is alive? Yet you know that all but happened to Andrey Petrovitch at Ems! Mother, if you don’t want to stay with a husband who may take another wife to-morrow, remember you have a son who promises to be a dutiful son to you for ever; remember, and let us go away, only on condition that it is ‘either he, or I’ will you? I don’t ask you for an answer at once, of course: I know that such questions can’t be answered straight off.”

But I could not go on, partly because I was excited and confused. My mother turned pale and her voice seemed to fail her: she could not utter a word. Tatyana Pavlovna said something in a very loud voice and at great length which I could not make out, and twice she pushed me on the shoulder with her fist. I only remember that she shouted that “my words were a sham, the broodings of a petty soul, counted over and turned inside out.” Versilov sat motionless and very serious, he was not smiling. I went upstairs to my room. The last thing I saw as I went out was the reproach in my sister’s eyes; she shook her head at me sternly.

Chapter 7

1

I describe all these scenes without sparing myself, in order to recall it clearly and revive the impression. As I went up to my attic, I did not know in the least whether I ought to be ashamed or triumphant as though I had done my duty. Had I been ever so little more experienced, I should have had a misgiving that the least doubt in such cases must be taken as a bad sign, but another fact threw me out in my reckoning: I don’t know what I was pleased about, but I felt awfully pleased, in spite of my being uncertain, and of my realizing distinctly that I had not come off with flying colours downstairs. Even Tatyana Pavlovna’s spiteful abuse of me struck me as funny and amusing and did not anger me at all. Probably all this was because I had anyway broken my chains and for the first time felt myself free.

I felt, too, that I had weakened my position: how I was to act in regard to the letter about the inheritance was more obscure than ever. Now it would be certainly taken for granted that I was revenging myself on Versilov. But while all this discussion was

going on downstairs I had made up my mind to submit the question of the letter to an impartial outsider and to appeal to Vassin for his decision, or, failing Vassin, to take it to some one else. I had already made up my mind to whom. I would go to see Vassin once, for that occasion only, I thought to myself, and then—then I would vanish for a long while, for some months, from the sight of all, especially of Vassin. Only my mother and sister I might see occasionally. It was all inconsistent and confused; I felt that I had done something, though not in the right way, and I was satisfied: I repeat, I was awfully pleased anyway.

I meant to go to bed rather early, foreseeing I should have a lot to do next day. Besides finding a lodging and moving, I had another project which in one way or another I meant to carry out. But the evening was not destined to end without surprises, and Versilov succeeded in astonishing me extremely. He had certainly never been into my attic, and lo and behold, before I had been an hour in my room I heard his footsteps on the ladder: he called to me to show a light. I took a candle, and stretching out my hand, which he caught hold of, I helped him up.

“Merci, my dear fellow; I’ve never climbed up here before, not even when I took the lodgings. I imagined what sort of place it was, but I never supposed it was quite such a hole as this.” He stood in the middle of my attic, looking around with curiosity. “Why, this is a coffin, a regular coffin.”

It really had a resemblance to the inside of a coffin, and I positively admired the way he had described it in one word. It was a long narrow box of a room, the ceiling sloped away from the wall at the height of my shoulder, and the top of it was within easy reach of my hand. Versilov unconsciously stood stooping, afraid of hitting his head against the ceiling; he did not knock it, however, and, finally more or less reassured, he seated himself on the sofa, where my bed had already been made up. But I did not sit down, I looked at him in the greatest amazement.

“Your mother says she does not know whether to take the money you gave her this evening for your board for the month. But for a coffin like this, instead of taking your money, we ought rather to offer you compensation! I have never been up and ... I can’t conceive how you can exist here!”

“I am used to it. But what I can’t get used to is seeing you in my room after what has just happened downstairs.”

“O, yes, you were distinctly rude downstairs, but ... I, too, have a special object which I will explain to you, though indeed there is nothing extraordinary in my coming; even the scene downstairs is in the regular order of things; but for mercy’s sake do explain this: what you told us downstairs after preparing us and approaching the subject so solemnly was surely not all you meant to disclose or communicate? Was there really nothing else?”

“That was all, or we’ll assume it was all.”

“It’s not much, my dear fellow: I must own that from your beginning and the way you urged us to laugh, in fact from your eagerness to talk, I expected more.”

“But that does not matter to you, surely?”

“But I speak simply from a sense of proportion; it was not worth making such a fuss about, it was quite disproportionate; you’ve been sitting mute a whole month, preparing to speak, and when it comes—it’s nothing.”

“I meant to say more, but I am ashamed of having said even that. Not everything can be put into words, there are things it’s better never to say at all; I said a good deal, but you did not understand.”

“Why, so you, too, are sometimes distressed at the impossibility of putting thought into words! That’s a noble sorrow, my dear fellow, and it’s only vouchsafed to the elect: the fool is always satisfied with what he has said, and always, too, says more than he need; they love to have something to spare.”

“As I see I did, for instance; I said more than I need: I asked for the ‘whole of Versilov,’ that was a great deal too much; I don’t need Versilov at all.”

“My dear fellow, I see you want to retrieve your failure downstairs. It is very evident you repent it, and as repentance among us always involves immediately attacking some one, you are very anxious to hit hard this time. I have come too soon, and you have not yet cooled down, and besides you are not very good at standing criticism. But sit down, for mercy’s sake; I have come to tell you something; thank you, that’s right. From what you said to your mother, as you went out, it’s quite clear that it is better for us to separate. I have come to persuade you to do so as gently and with as little fuss as possible, to avoid grieving and alarming your mother any further. My coming up here even has cheered her. She believes in a way that we may still be reconciled and that everything will go on as before. I imagine that if we were to laugh heartily once or twice we should fill their timid hearts with delight. They may be simple souls, but they are sincere and true-hearted in their love. Why not humour them on occasion? Well, that’s one thing. Another thing: why should we necessarily part thirsting for revenge, gnashing our teeth, vowing vengeance, etc. Of course there is no manner of need to fall on each other’s necks, but we might part, so to say, with mutual respect, mightn’t we?”

“That’s all nonsense! I promise to go away without a fuss—and that’s enough. And is it for my mother’s sake you are anxious? But it strikes me that my mother’s peace of mind has absolutely nothing to do with it, and you are simply saying that.”

“You don’t believe it?”

“You talk to me just as though I were a baby.”

“I am ready to beg your pardon a thousand times over for that, in fact for everything you bring up against me, for those years of your childhood and the rest of it, but, cher enfant, what will be the use of it? You are too clever to want to be put into such a stupid position. To say nothing of my not understanding, so far, the exact nature of your accusations. What is it you blame me for in reality? For your not having been born a Versilov? Bah! You laugh contemptuously and wave your hands, so that’s not it?”

“No, I assure you. I assure you I don’t think it an honour to be called Versilov.”

“Let’s leave honour out of the question; and, besides, your answer was bound to be democratic; but if so, what are you blaming me for?”

“Tatyana Pavlovna told me just now all I needed to know, and had always failed to grasp, till she spoke. That is, that you did not apprentice me to a shoemaker, and that consequently I had to be grateful, too. I can’t understand why it is I am not grateful, even now, even after I have been taught my lesson. Isn’t it the pride of your race showing itself in me, Andrey Petrovitch?”

“Probably not, and apart from that, you must admit that by your sallies downstairs you’ve only bullied and tormented your mother instead of crushing me, as you intended. Yet I should have thought it was not for you to judge her. Besides, what wrong has she done you? Explain to me, too, by the way, my dear fellow: for what reason and with what object did you spread abroad that you were illegitimate, at your boarding school and at the grammar school, and everywhere you have been, to every casual stranger, as I hear you have? I hear that you did this with a peculiar relish. And yet that’s all nonsense, and a revolting calumny: you are legitimate, a Dolgoruky, the son of Makar Ivanovitch Dolgoruky, a respectable man, remarkable for his intelligence and character. That you have received a superior education is entirely owing to your former master, Versilov, and what’s the upshot of it? By proclaiming your illegitimacy, which is a calumny in itself, you first and foremost gave away your mother’s secret, and from a false pride exposed your mother to the criticism of every dirty stranger. My dear fellow, that was very discreditable, especially as your mother is in no way to blame: she has a nature of the greatest purity, and that her name is not Versilov is simply because her husband is still living.”

“Enough, I entirely agree with you, and I have enough faith in your intelligence to hope that you won’t go on rating at me too long for it. You are so fond of moderation; and yet there’s a moderation in all things, even in your sudden love for my mother. I’ll tell you what would be better: since you have gone so far as to come up and see me and mean to spend a quarter of an hour or half an hour with me (I still don’t know what for, we’ll assume for my mother’s peace of mind), and what’s more, in spite of the scene downstairs, seem so eager to talk to me, you had better tell me about my father— tell me about Makar Ivanovitch the pilgrim. I want to hear from you about him: I have been intending to ask you for some time past. Now that we are parting perhaps for a long time, I should very much like to get from you an answer to another question: has it really been impossible for you during these twenty years to affect my mother’s traditional ideas—and now my sister’s, too—so as to dissipate by your civilizing influence the primitive darkness of her environment? Oh, I am not speaking of the purity of her nature. She’s infinitely nobler than you, morally anyway, excuse my saying so ... but she’s only an infinitely noble corpse. Versilov is the only one living, everything else about him and everything connected with him exists only on the express condition of having the honour to nourish him with its force, its living sap. But I suppose she, too, was once alive, wasn’t she? I suppose you loved something in her, didn’t you? I suppose she was once a woman?”

“My dear fellow, she never was, if you will have it,” he assured me, at once dropping into his habitual manner with me, with which I was so familiar, and by which I was so enraged, that is he was apparently all sincerity and open-heartedness, but if one looked more closely there was nothing in him but the deepest irony: “she never was. The Russian woman never is a woman.”

“Is the Polish woman, the French woman? Or the Italian, the passionate Italian, that’s the sort to fascinate the civilized upper-class Russian of the type of Versilov?”

“Well, I certainly did not expect to meet a Slavophil,” laughed Versilov.

I remember his story, word for word: he began talking with great readiness indeed, and with evident pleasure. It was quite clear to me, that he had come up not to have a gossip with me, and not to pacify my mother either, but with some other object.

2

“Your mother and I have spent these twenty years together in silence,” he began, prattling on (it was utterly affected and unnatural), “and all that passed between us took place in silence. The chief characteristic of our twenty years’ connection has been its—dumbness. I believe we have never once quarrelled. It is true I have often gone away and left her alone, but it has always ended in my coming back. *Nous revenons toujours*; indeed, it’s a fundamental characteristic of men; it’s due to their magnanimity. If marriage depended on women alone, not a single marriage would last. Meekness, submissiveness, self-abasement, and at the same time firmness, strength, real strength, that’s your mother’s character. Take note, that she’s the best of all the women I’ve met in my life. And that she has strength I can bear witness: I have seen how that strength has supported her. When it’s a matter, I won’t say of convictions—convictions are out of the question— but what they look upon as convictions, and so, to their thinking, sacred, she is ready to face torture. Well, I leave you to judge, whether I am much like a torturer. That’s why I have preferred to remain silent about almost everything, and not simply because it was more convenient, and I confess I don’t regret it. In this way our life has gone on of itself on broad and humane lines, so that indeed I take no credit to myself for it. I must say by the way in parenthesis, that for some reason she never believed in my humanity, and so was always in a tremor; but, though she has trembled, she has never given in to any advanced ideas. They are so good at that, while we never understand that sort of thing, and in fact they are much better at managing things for themselves than we are. They are able to go on living their own lives in positions most unnatural to them, and in positions most strange to them they remain always the same. But we can’t do that.”

“Who are ‘they’? I don’t quite understand you.”

“The people, my dear fellow, I’m speaking of the common people. They have shown their great living force, and their historical breadth both morally and politically. But, to come back to ourselves, I may remark about your mother, that she is not always dumb; your mother sometimes speaks, but she speaks in such a way that you see at

once that you simply waste time in talking to her, even though you might have been preparing her for five years beforehand. Moreover, she makes the most unexpected objections. Note again, that I am far from calling her a fool; on the contrary, she has intelligence of a sort, and even remarkable intelligence; though perhaps you will not believe in her intelligence... .”

“Why not? What I don’t believe is that you really believe in her intelligence yourself, and are not pretending.”

“Yes? You look upon me as such a chameleon? My dear fellow, I am allowing you a little too much licence ... like a spoilt son... . So be it for the time.”

“Tell me if you can the truth about my father.”

“About Makar Ivanovitch? Makar Ivanovitch was, as you are aware, a house-serf, who, so to speak, had a yearning for glory of a sort... .”

“I bet that at this minute you feel envious of him!”

“On the contrary, my dear fellow, on the contrary, and if you like I am very glad to see you in such a flippant mood; I swear that I am in a penitent frame of mind, and just now, at this moment, I regret a thousand times over all that happened twenty years ago. And besides, God knows, it all happened quite accidentally ... well, and, so far as in me lay, humanely too;—as I conceived of an act of humanity in those days anyway. Oh, in those days we were all boiling over with zeal for doing good, for serving the public weal, for a higher ideal; we disapproved of class distinctions, of the privileges of our rank, of our property and even of usury, at least some of us did... . I declare we did. There were not many of us, but we said good things, and sometimes, I assure you, did good things, too.”

“That was when you sobbed on his shoulder.”

“I am ready to agree with you on every point beforehand. By the way, you heard of that shoulder from me, and so, at this moment, you are making spiteful use of my frankness and confidence in you; but you must admit that there was not so much harm in that episode as might seem at the first glance, especially for that period. To be sure we were only making a beginning then. Of course it was a pose, but I did not know at the time that it was a pose. Have you, for instance, never posed in practical affairs?”

“I was rather sentimental downstairs, just now, and as I came up here I felt horribly ashamed at the thought that you might imagine I had been posing. It is true in some cases, though one’s feelings are sincere, one makes a display of one’s feelings. I swear that everything I said downstairs was absolutely genuine.”

“That’s exactly it; you have very successfully defined it in a phrase, ‘though one’s feelings are sincere one makes a display of one’s self’; but do you know it was just the same with me. Though I was making a display of them, my sobs were perfectly genuine. I don’t deny that Makar Ivanovitch might, if he had been wittily disposed, have looked upon my sobs as the climax of mockery, but in those days he was too honest to be so clear-sighted. I don’t know whether he felt sorry for me or not. I remember that I had a great desire that he should.”

“Do you know,” I interrupted him, “you’re jeering now when you say that? And in fact, all this last month whenever you have talked to me, you have been jeering. Why have you done so, whenever you have talked with me?”

“You think so?” he answered mildly; “you are very suspicious; however, if I do laugh it’s not at you, or, at least not only at you, don’t be uneasy. But I am not laughing now, and then—in short I did everything I could then, and, believe me, not for my personal advantage. We, that is, superior people, unlike the common people, do not know how to act for our personal advantage: on the contrary, we made a mess of it as far as we possibly could, and I suspect that that was considered among us in those days ‘our higher advantage,’ in an exalted sense of course. The present generation of advanced people are much keener on the main chance than we were. Even before our ‘sin’ I explained the whole position to Makar Ivanovitch with extraordinary directness. I am ready to admit now, that a great deal need not have been explained at all, especially with such directness; to say nothing of humanity it would have been far more polite, but ... but there’s no pulling up when you once begin dancing, and want to cut a fine caper. And perhaps our cravings for the fine and exalted only amount to that in reality. All my life I have never been able to make up my mind about it. However, that is too deep a subject for our superficial conversation, but I assure you I am sometimes ready to die with shame, when I recall it. I offered him at the time three thousand roubles, and I remember he did not say a word and I did all the talking. Only fancy, I imagined that he was afraid of me, that is of my rights of ownership over him, and I remember I did my utmost to reassure him; I kept trying to persuade him to have no apprehension, but to tell me his wishes frankly and without sparing me. By way of guarantee I promised him, that if he did not accept my terms, that is three thousand with freedom (for himself and his wife, of course)—and a journey wherever he pleased (without his wife, of course)—then let him say so straight out, and I would at once give him his freedom, let his wife go, and compensate them both with the same three thousand, I believe, and they should not go away from me, but I would go away myself in solitude for three years to Italy. Mon ami, I should not have taken Mlle. Sapozhkov with me to Italy, you may be sure of that. I was extremely pure at that epoch. And, do you know, Makar Ivanovitch knew perfectly well that I should do as I promised; but he still remained silent, and only when I was about to throw myself on his neck, for the third time, he drew back, waved his hand, and went out of the room with a certain lack of ceremony, indeed, which I assure you surprised me at the time. I caught a glimpse of myself in the looking-glass and I can’t forget it.

“As a rule when they don’t speak it’s worst of all, and he was a gloomy character, and I must confess that far from feeling sure of him I was awfully afraid of him, when I summoned him to my study. In that class there are types, and many of them, who are, so to speak, the very incarnation of all that’s ill-bred, and one’s more afraid of that than a beating. Sic. And what a risk I was running, what a risk! Why, what if he had begun shouting for all the servants to hear, had howled, this village Uriah, what would have become of me, such a juvenile David, and what should I have done then? That’s

why I trotted out the three thousand first of all, that was instinctive; but luckily I was mistaken: this Makar Ivanovitch was something quite different.”

“Tell me, had you ‘sinned’ then? You said just now that you summoned the husband beforehand.”

“Well, do you see ... that is ... as one understands it... .”

“Oh, you had then. You said just now you were mistaken in him, that he was something different; how different?”

“Well, how exactly I don’t know to this day, but somehow different, and, do you know, positively very decent. I think so because in the end I felt more than ever ashamed to face him. Next day he agreed to the journey, without any words, but without, of course, forgetting one of the inducements I had offered him.”

“He took the money?”

“I should think so! And you know, my dear fellow, in that point he surprised me too. I had not, of course, three thousand at the time in my pocket, but I procured seven hundred and handed it over to him as the first instalment; and what do you think? He demanded the remaining two thousand three hundred from me in the form of a credit note made payable to a certain merchant for security. And two years later, by means of that credit note, he got the money out of me before a court, and with interest too, so that he surprised me again, especially as he had literally gone collecting funds for building a church, and has been a pilgrim ever since, that is, for the last twenty years. I don’t understand what a pilgrim should want money of his own for ... money which is such a worldly thing... . I offered the money at the minute of course with perfect sincerity, and, so to speak, in the first flush of feeling, but afterwards, after the lapse of so many minutes, I might naturally have thought better of it ... and might have reckoned that he would spare me ... or, so to say, spare US, me and her, and would have waited for a time at least. But he lost no time however... .”

Here I must make a necessary note. If my mother were to outlive M. Versilov, she would have been left literally without a farthing in her old age, had it not been for Makar Ivanovitch’s three thousand, which had been doubled long ago by the accumulation of interest, and which he had the previous year left her intact in his will. He had seen through Versilov even in those days.

“You told me once that Makar Ivanovitch had come several times on a visit to you, and always stayed at mother’s lodgings?”

“Yes, my dear boy: and I must confess at first I was awfully frightened of these visits. He has come six or seven times altogether during this period, that is, the last twenty years, and on the first occasions I used to hide myself if I were in the house when he arrived. At first I could not make out what it meant, and why he had turned up. But afterwards I thought that from certain points of view it was by no means so stupid on his part. Afterwards it somehow occurred to me to feel curious about him; I came out to have a look at him, and formed, I assure you, a very original impression of him. This was on his third or fourth visit, at the time when I had just been appointed a mediator, and when, of course, I was getting all my energies to work

to study Russia. I heard from him a very great deal that was new to me. I found in him, besides, what I had never expected to find: a sort of benign serenity, an evenness of temper, and what was more surprising than anything, something almost like gaiety. Not the faintest allusion to THAT (tu comprends) and a very great capacity for talking sense, and talking extremely well, that is, with none of that silly servantish profundity, which I confess to you I can't endure, democratic as I am, and with none of those far-fetched Russian expressions which 'the genuine Russian peasant' makes use of in novels and on the stage. At the same time very little about religion, unless one begins upon the subject, and most charming descriptions of the monastery and monastic life, if one asks questions about it. And above all—respectfulness, that modest courtesy, just that courtesy which is essential for the truest equality, and without which, indeed, in my opinion, one cannot be really superior. The truest good-breeding is in such cases attained through the complete absence of conceit, and the man shows himself secure in his self-respect in his own station of life whatever that may be, and whatever fate may befall him. This power of respecting one's self in one's own position is extremely rare, as rare, anyway, as real personal dignity... . You will see that for yourself if you live long enough. But what struck me most of all, especially later on, and not at the beginning," added Versilov, "was the fact that this Makar had an extraordinary stateliness, and was, I assure you, very handsome. It is true he was old, but—

Dark visaged, tall, erect,

simple and dignified; I actually wondered how my poor Sonia could have preferred me THEN; at that time he was fifty, but he was still a fine fellow, and compared with him I was such a featherhead. I remember, however, that he was unpardonably grey even then; so he must have been just as grey-headed when he married her... . Perhaps that had an influence."

Versilov had a very nasty aristocratic trick: after saying (when he could not help it) some particularly clever and fine things, he would all at once intentionally cap them with some stupid saying such as this remark about Makar Ivanovitch's grey hair, and the influence it had on my mother. He did this on purpose, probably without knowing why he did it, from a silly snobbish habit. To hear him, one would suppose he was speaking quite seriously, and all the while he was posing to himself, or laughing.

3

I don't know why but I was suddenly overcome by an intense exasperation. In fact, I recall with extreme dissatisfaction some of my behaviour during those minutes; I suddenly got up from my seat.

"I tell you what," I said: "you say you came up chiefly that my mother might imagine we were reconciled. Time enough has passed for her to imagine it; will you be so good as to leave me alone?"

He flushed slightly and got up from his place.

“My dear boy, you are extremely unceremonious with me. However, good-bye; there is no winning love by force. I will only venture upon one question: do you really want to leave the prince?”

“Aha! I knew you had some object in your mind... .”

“That is, you suspect I came up to induce you to stay with the prince, for some purpose of my own. But do you suppose, my dear fellow, that I sent for you from Moscow for some purpose of my own? Oh! how suspicious you are. On the contrary, I was anxious for your good in every way. And even now, since my position has so improved, I should have liked you to let me and your mother help you sometimes.”

“I don’t like you, Versilov.”

“And ‘Versilov’ too! By the way, I greatly regret that I can’t transmit you the name, seeing that in reality constitutes my whole offence, if offence there is, doesn’t it? but again I couldn’t marry a married woman, could I?”

“That was why, I suppose, you wanted to marry an unmarried one?”

A slight spasm passed over his face.

“You are thinking of Ems. Listen, Arkady, you went so far as to allude to that downstairs, pouring contempt upon me before your mother. You must know that that’s where you make your greatest mistake. You know nothing whatever of what happened with Lidya Ahmakov. You don’t know how much your mother had to do with it all, although she was not with me at the time, and if I have ever seen a good woman it was when I looked at your mother then. But that’s enough; all that is a secret still, and you—you talk of what you don’t know, and have heard about from outsiders.”

“Only to-day the prince told me that you have a special fancy for unfledged girls.”

“The prince said that?”

“Yes, listen, would you like me to tell you exactly what you have come up to me for? I have been sitting here all this time wondering what was the secret object of this visit, and now I believe I’ve guessed it.”

He was just going out, but he stopped and turned to me in expectation.

“I blurted out just now that Touchard’s letter to Tatyana Pavlovna was among Andronikov’s papers, and at his death came into the hands of Marie Ivanovna. I saw how your face suddenly twitched, and I only guessed why just now, when your face twitched again in the same way. The idea suddenly occurred to you that if one letter in Andronikov’s keeping had come into Marie Ivanovna’s hands, why shouldn’t another? And Andronikov might have left very important letters, mightn’t he?”

“So I came up here hoping to make you talk about it?”

“You know that yourself.”

He turned very pale.

“You did not imagine that of yourself; there’s a woman’s influence in it; and what hatred there is in your words—in your coarse supposition!”

“A woman? I have seen that woman for the first time today! Perhaps it’s just to spy on her you want me to stay on with the old prince.”

“I see, though, that you will do well in your new line. Isn’t that perhaps ‘your idea’? Go on, my dear fellow, you have an unmistakable gift for detective work. Given talent, one must perfect it.”

He paused to take breath.

“Take care, Versilov, don’t make me your enemy!”

“My dear fellow, in such cases no one gives utterance to his last thoughts, but keeps them to himself. And with that, show me a light, if you please; though you are my enemy you are not so much so as to want me to break my neck, I suppose. *Tiens, mon ami, only fancy,*” he went on, as he descended the ladder, “all this month I have been taking you for a good-natured fellow. You so want to live and are so thirsting for life that I do believe three lives would not be enough for you: one can see that in your face, and people like that are generally good-natured. And how mistaken I’ve been!”

4

I can’t express how my heart ached when I was left alone; it was as though I had cut off a piece of my own living flesh! Why I had so suddenly lost my temper, and why I had so insulted him—so persistently and intentionally—I couldn’t say now; nor could I at the time, of course. And how pale he had turned! And who knows, perhaps that paleness was the expression of the truest and purest feeling and the deepest sorrow, and not of anger or of offence. I always fancied that there had been a moment when he really loved me. Why, why could I not believe that now, especially when so much had been made clear?

I had flown into a sudden fury and actually driven him away, partly perhaps by my sudden guess that he had come to find out whether there were not another letter left by Andronikov in Marie Ivanovna’s possession. That he must have been on the lookout for those letters, and that he was on the look-out for them I knew. But who knows, perhaps at that minute I had made a horrible blunder! And who knows, perhaps, by that blunder I had led him to think of Marie Ivanovna and the possibility of her having letters.

And finally, there was something else that was strange: again he had repeated word for word my own thought (about three lives), which I had expressed to Kraft that evening, and, what is more, in my very words. The coincidence was of course a chance again, but how he knew the inmost core of my nature; what insight, what penetration! But if he so well understood one thing, why was it he utterly failed to understand something else? Was it possible he was not pretending, could he really be incapable of divining that it was not the noble rank of a Versilov I wanted, that it was not my birth I could not forgive him, but that all my life I had wanted Versilov himself, the whole man, the father, and that this idea had become part of myself. Was it possible that so subtle a man could be so crude and so stupid? And if not, why did he drive me to fury, why did he pretend?

Chapter 8

1

I tried to get up as early as possible in the morning. As a rule we, that is my mother, my sister and I, used to get up about eight o'clock. Versilov used to lie comfortably in bed till half-past nine. Punctually at half-past eight my mother used to bring me up my coffee. But this time I slipped out of the house at eight o'clock without waiting for it. I had the day before mapped out roughly my plan of action for the whole of this day. In spite of my passionate resolve to carry out this plan I felt that there was a very great deal of it that was uncertain and indefinite in its most essential points. That was why I lay all night in a sort of half-waking state; I had an immense number of dreams, as though I were light-headed, and I hardly fell asleep properly all night. In spite of that I got up feeling fresher and more confident than usual. I was particularly anxious not to meet my mother. I could not have avoided speaking to her on a certain subject, and I was afraid of being distracted from the objects I was pursuing by some new and unexpected impression.

It was a cold morning and a damp, milky mist hovered over everything. I don't know why, but I always like the early workaday morning in Petersburg in spite of its squalid air; and the self-centred people, always absorbed in thought, and hurrying on their affairs, have a special attraction for me at eight o'clock in the morning. As I hasten on my road I particularly like either asking some one a practical question, or being asked one by some passer-by: both question and answer are always brief, clear, and to the point; they are spoken without stopping and almost always in a friendly manner, and there is a greater readiness to answer than at any other hour. In the middle of the day, or in the evening, the Petersburger is far more apt to be abusive or jeering. It is quite different early in the morning, before work has begun, at the soberest and most serious hour of the day. I have noticed that.

I set off again for the Petersburg Side. As I had to be back in Fontanka by twelve o'clock to see Vassin (who was always more likely to be at home at midday), I hurried on without stopping, though I had a great longing to have a cup of coffee. It was absolutely necessary to find Efim Zvyerev at home too; I went to him and almost missed him; he had finished his coffee and was just ready to go out.

"What brings you here so often?" was how he greeted me without getting up from his seat.

"I will explain that directly."

The early morning everywhere, including Petersburg, has a sobering effect on a man's nature. Some of the passionate dreams of night evaporate completely with the light and chill of morning, and it has happened to me myself sometimes to recall in the morning my dreams and even my actions of the previous night, with shame and self-reproach. But I will remark, however, in passing, I consider a Petersburg morning—which might be thought the most prosaic on the terrestrial globe—almost

the most fantastic in the world. That is my personal view, or rather impression, but I am prepared to defend it. On such a Petersburg morning, foul, damp and foggy, the wild dream of some Herman out of Pushkin's "Queen of Spades" (a colossal figure, an extraordinary and regular Petersburg type—the type of the Petersburg period!) would, I believe, be more like solid reality. A hundred times over, in such a fog, I have been haunted by a strange but persistent fancy: "What if this fog should part and float away, would not all this rotten and slimy town go with it, rise up with the fog, and vanish like smoke, and the old Finnish marsh be left as before, and in the midst of it, perhaps, to complete the picture, a bronze horseman on a panting, overdriven steed." In fact I cannot find words for my sensations, for all this is fantastic after all—poetic, and therefore nonsensical; nevertheless I have often been and often am haunted by an utterly senseless question: "Here they are all flitting to and fro, but how can one tell, perhaps all this is some one's dream, and there is not one real person here, nor one real action. Some one who is dreaming all this will suddenly wake up—and everything will suddenly disappear." But I am digressing.

I must say by way of preface that there are projects and dreams in every one's experience so eccentric that they might well be taken at first sight for madness. It was with such a phantasy in my mind that I arrived that morning at Efim's,—I went to Efim because I had no one else in Petersburg to whom I could apply on this occasion. Yet Efim was the last person to whom I should have gone with such a proposition if I had had any choice. When I was sitting opposite him, I was actually struck myself with the thought that I was the incarnation of fever and delirium, sitting opposite the incarnation of prose and the golden mean. Yet on my side there was an idea and true feeling, while on his there was nothing but the practical conviction, that things were not done like that. In short I explained to him briefly and clearly that I had absolutely no one else in Petersburg whom I could send by way of a second in matter vitally affecting my honour; that he, Efim, was an old comrade, and therefore had no right to refuse, and that I wanted to challenge a lieutenant in the Guards, Prince Sokolsky, because more than a year ago he had given my father a slap in the face at Ems. I may mention by the way that Efim knew all the details of my family circumstances, my relations with Versilov, and almost all that I knew myself of Versilov's career; I had on various occasions talked to him of my private affairs, except, of course, of certain secrets. He sat and listened as his habit was, all ruffling up his feathers like a sparrow in a cage, silent and serious, with his puffy face and his untidy, flaxen-white hair. A set smile of mockery never left his lips. This smile was all the nastier for being quite unintentional and unconscious; it was evident that he genuinely and sincerely considered himself at that moment vastly superior to me in intellect and character. I suspected, too, that he despised me for the scene the evening before at Dergatchev's; that was bound to be so. Efim was the crowd, Efim was the man in the street, and the man in the street has no reverence for anything but success.

"And Versilov knows nothing of this?" he asked.

"Of course not."

“Then what right have you to meddle in his affairs? That’s the first question. And the second one is, what do you want to show by it?”

I was prepared for the objection, and at once explained to him that it was not so stupid as he supposed. To begin with, the insolent prince would be shown that there are people, even in our class, who know what is meant by honour; and secondly, Versilov would be put to shame and learn a lesson. And in the third place, what mattered most of all, even if Versilov had been right in refusing to challenge him in accordance with his convictions at the time, he would see that there was some one who was capable of feeling the insult to him so keenly that he accepted it as an insult to himself, and was prepared to lay down his life for his, Versilov’s, interests ... although he was leaving him for ever... .

“Wait a minute, don’t shout, my aunt does not like it. Tell me, is it this same Prince Sokolsky that Versilov is at law with about a will? If so, this will be quite a new and original way of winning a lawsuit—to kill your opponent in a duel.”

I explained to him *en toutes lettres*, that he was simply silly and impertinent, and that if his sarcastic grin was growing broader and broader, it only showed his conceit and commonplaceness, and that he was incapable of imagining that I had had the lawsuit in my mind from the very beginning, and that reflection on that subject was not confined to his sagacity. Then I informed him that the case was already decided, and, moreover, it had not been brought by Prince Sokolsky but by the Princes Sokolsky, so that if a Prince Sokolsky were killed the others would be left, but that no doubt it would be necessary to put off the challenge till the end of the time within which an appeal was possible, not that the Solkoskys would as a fact appeal, but simply as a matter of good form. When the latest possible date for an appeal had passed, the challenge would follow; that I had come about it now, not that the duel would take place immediately, but that I must be prepared at any rate in time to find a second, if he, Efim, refused, as I knew no one. That was why, I said, I had come.

“Well, come and talk about it then, or else you’ll be leading us a wild-goose chase.”

He stood up and took his cap.

“So you’ll go then?”

“No, of course I won’t.”

“Why not?”

“Well, for one reason if I agreed now that I would go then, you would begin hanging about here every evening till the time for the appeal was over. And besides, it’s simply nonsense, and that’s all about it. And am I going to mess up my career for you? Why, Prince Sokolsky will ask me at once: ‘Who sent you?’—‘Dolgoruky’— ‘And what’s Dolgoruky got to do with Versilov?’ And am I to explain your pedigree to him, pray? Why, he’d burst out laughing!”

“Then you give him a punch in the face!”

“But it’s all gibberish.”

“You’re afraid! You so tall and the strongest at the grammar school!”

"I'm afraid, of course, I am afraid. Besides, the prince won't fight, for they only fight their equals."

"I am a gentleman, too, by education. I have rights, I am his equal ... on the contrary, he is not my equal."

"You are a small boy."

"How a small boy?"

"Just a small boy; we are both boys but he is grown up."

"You fool! But I might have been married a year ago by the law."

"Well, get married then, but anyway you are a —! you will grow up one day!"

I saw, of course, that he thought fit to jeer at me. I might not indeed have told all this foolish episode, and it would have been better in fact for it to have perished in obscurity; besides, it's revolting in its pettiness and gratuitousness, though it had rather serious consequences.

But to punish myself still further I will describe it fully. Realizing that Efim was jeering at me, I permitted myself to push him on the shoulder with my right hand, or rather my right fist. Then he took me by the shoulder, turned me upside down and—proved to me conclusively that he was the strongest of us at the grammar school.

2

The reader will doubtless imagine that I was in a terrible state of mind when I came out from Efim's; he will be mistaken, however. I quite realized that what had happened was only schoolboyishness, but the gravity of my purpose remained unchanged. I got some coffee at Vassilyevsky Island, purposely avoiding the restaurant I had been at the evening before on the Petersburg Side; the restaurant and its nightingale were doubly hateful to me. It is a strange characteristic of mine that I am capable of hating places and things as though they were people. On the other hand I have happy places in Petersburg, that is places where I have at some time or other been happy. And I am careful of those places, and purposely avoid visiting them as far as possible, that later on when I am alone and unhappy I may go back to them to brood over my griefs and my memories. Over my coffee I did full justice to Efim and his common sense. Yes, he was more practical than I was, but I doubt whether he was in closer touch with reality. A realism that refuses to look beyond the end of its nose is more dangerous than the maddest romanticism, because it is blind. But while I did justice to Efim (who probably at that moment imagined that I was wandering about the streets swearing)—I did not give up one point in my convictions, and I have not to this day. I have seen people who at the first bucket of cold water have abandoned their course of action, and even their idea, and begun laughing themselves at what an hour before they looked upon as sacred. Oh, how easily that is done! Even if Efim were more right than I in the main, and I were foolish beyond all foolishness and giving myself airs, yet at the very bottom of it all there was a point of view upon which I was right: there was something

to be said on my side also, and what is more, too, it was something they could never understand.

I reached Vassin's in Fontanka, near the Semyonovsky bridge, at twelve o'clock punctually, but I did not find him at home. His work was in Vassilyevsky Island, and he was only at home at certain fixed hours, almost always at midday. And as it was a holiday I made sure of finding him; not finding him I decided to wait, although it was my first visit.

I reasoned that the matter of the letter was a question of conscience, and in choosing Vassin to decide it I was showing him the deepest respect, which no doubt must be flattering to him. Of course, I was really worried by this letter and was genuinely persuaded of the necessity of an outside opinion; but I suspect that I could have got out of my difficulty without any outside help. And what is more I was aware of that myself; I had only to give the letter to Versilov, to put it into his hands and then let him do what he liked with it—that would have settled it. To set myself up as judge, as arbitrator in a matter of this sort was indeed utterly irregular. By confining myself to handing over the letter, especially in silence, I should have scored at once, putting myself into a position of superiority over Versilov. For renouncing all the advantages of the inheritance as far as I was concerned (for some part of it would have been sure, sooner or later, to have fallen to me as Versilov's son), I should have secured for ever a superior moral attitude in regard to Versilov's future action. Nobody, on the other hand, could reproach me for ruining the Sokolskys, since the document had no decisive legal value. All this I thought over and made perfectly clear to myself, sitting in Vassin's empty room, and it even occurred to me suddenly that I had come to Vassin's, so thirsting for his advice how to act, simply to show him what a generous and irreproachable person I was, and so to avenge myself for my humiliation before him the previous evening.

As I recognized all this, I felt great vexation; nevertheless I did not go away, but sat on, though I knew for certain that my vexation would only grow greater every five minutes.

First of all, I began to feel an intense dislike for Vassin's room. "Show me your room and I will tell you your character," one really may say that. Vassin had a furnished room in a flat belonging to people evidently poor, who let lodgings for their living and had other lodgers besides Vassin. I was familiar with poky apartments of this sort, scarcely furnished, yet with pretensions to comfort: there is invariably a soft sofa from the second-hand market, which is dangerous to move; a washing-stand and an iron bed shut off by a screen. Vassin was evidently the best and the most to be depended on of the lodgers. Lodging-house keepers always have one such best lodger, and particularly try to please him. They sweep and tidy his room more carefully, and hang lithographs over his sofa; under the table they lay an emaciated-looking rug. People who are fond of stuffy tidiness and, still more, of obsequious deference in their landladies are to be suspected. I felt convinced that Vassin himself was flattered by his position as best lodger. I don't know why, but the sight of those two tables piled up with books

gradually enraged me. The books, the papers, the inkstand, all were arrayed with a revolting tidiness, the ideal of which would have coincided with the loftiest conceptions of a German landlady and her maidservant. There were a good many books, not merely magazines and reviews, but real books, and he evidently read them, and he probably sat down to read or to write with an extremely important and precise expression. I don't know why, but I prefer to see books lying about in disorder. Then, at any rate, work is not made into a sacred rite. No doubt Vassin was extremely polite to his visitors, but probably every gesture he made told them plainly, "I will spend an hour and a half with you, and afterwards, when you go away, I'll set to work." No doubt one might have a very interesting conversation with him and hear something new from him, but he would be thinking, "Here we are talking now, and I am interesting you very much, but when you go away, I shall proceed to something more interesting... ." Yet I did not go away, but went on sitting there. That I had absolutely no need of his advice I was by now thoroughly convinced.

I stayed for over an hour sitting on one of the two rush-bottom chairs which had been placed by the window. It enraged me, too, that time was passing and that before evening I had to find a lodging. I was so bored that I felt inclined to take up a book, but I did not. At the very thought of distracting my mind I felt more disgusted than ever. For more than an hour there had been an extraordinary silence, when I began gradually and unconsciously to distinguish the sound of whispering, which kept growing louder, and came from somewhere close by, the other side of a door that was blocked up by the sofa. There were two voices, evidently women's, so much I could hear, but I could not distinguish the words. And yet I was so bored that I began to listen. It was obvious that they were talking earnestly and passionately, and that they were not talking about patterns. They were discussing or disputing about something, or one voice was persuading, or entreating, while the other was refusing or protesting. They must have been other lodgers. I soon got tired, and my ear became accustomed to the sound, so that though I went on listening, it was only mechanically, and sometimes quite without remembering that I was listening, when suddenly something extraordinary happened, as though some one had jumped down off a chair on to both feet, or had suddenly leapt up and stamped; then I heard a moan, then suddenly a shriek, or rather not a shriek but an infuriated animal squeal, reckless whether it could be overheard or not.

I rushed to the door and opened it; another door at the end of the corridor was opened simultaneously, the door of the landlady's room as I learned later, and from it two inquisitive faces peeped out. The shriek, however, ceased at once, and suddenly the door next to mine opened, and a young woman—so at least she seemed to me—dashed out, and rushed downstairs. The other woman, who was elderly, tried to stop her, but did not succeed, and could only moan after her:

"Olya, Olya, where are you going? Och!" But noticing our two open doors, she promptly closed hers, leaving a crack through which she listened till Olya's footsteps had died away completely on the stairs. I turned to my window. All was silence. It was a trivial and perhaps ridiculous incident, and I left off thinking of it.

About a quarter of an hour later I heard in the corridor at Vassin's door a loud and free-and-easy masculine voice. Some one took hold of the door-handle, and opened the door far enough for me to see in the passage a tall man who had already obviously seen and indeed had carefully scrutinized me, although he had not yet entered the room, but still holding the door-handle went on talking to the landlady at the other end of the passage. The landlady called back to him in a thin, piping little voice which betrayed that he was an old acquaintance, respected and valued by her as a visitor of consequence, and a gentleman of a merry disposition. The merry gentleman shouted witticisms, but his theme was only the impossibility of finding Vassin at home. He declared that this was his destiny from his birth up, that he would wait again as before. And all this, no doubt, seemed the height of wit to the landlady. Finally the visitor flung the door wide open and came in.

He was a well-dressed gentleman, evidently turned out by a good tailor, as they say, "like a real gentleman," though there was nothing of "the real gentleman" about him, in spite, I fancy, of his desire to appear one. He was not exactly free and easy, but somehow naturally insolent, which is anyway less offensive than an insolence practised before the looking-glass. His brown, slightly grizzled hair, his black eyebrows, big beard and large eyes instead of helping to define his character, actually gave him something universal, like every one else. This sort of man laughs and is ready to laugh, but for some reason one is never cheerful in his company. He quickly passes from a jocular to a dignified air, from dignity to playfulness or winking, but all this seems somehow put on and causeless... . However, there is no need to describe him further. I came later on to know this gentleman more intimately, and therefore I have a more definite impression of him now than when he opened the door and came into the room. However, even now I should find it difficult to say anything exact or definite about him, because the chief characteristic of such people is just their incompleteness, their artificiality and their indefiniteness.

He had scarcely sat down when it dawned upon me that he must be Vassin's stepfather, one M. Stebelkov, of whom I had already heard something, but so casually that I couldn't tell what it was: I could only remember that it was not to his advantage. I knew that Yassin had long ago been left an orphan under this gentleman's control, but that for some years past he had not been under his influence, that their aims and interests were different, and that they lived entirely separated in all respects. It came back to my mind, too, that this Stebelkov had some money, that he was, indeed, something of a speculator and spendthrift; in fact I had probably heard something more definite about him, but I have forgotten. He looked me up and down, without bowing to me, however, put his top hat down on a table in front of the sofa, kicked away the table with an air of authority, and instead of quietly sitting down, flung himself full length on the sofa (on which I had not ventured to sit) so that it positively creaked, and dangling his legs held his right foot up in the air and began admiring the tip of his patent-leather boot. Of course he turned at once to me and stared at me with his big and rather fixed-looking eyes.

"I don't find him in," he gave me a slight nod.

I did not speak.

"Not punctual! He has his own ideas. From the Petersburg Side?"

"You mean you've come from the Petersburg Side?" I asked him in my turn.

"No, I asked whether you had."

"I ... yes, I have ... but how did you know?"

"How did I know? H'm!" He winked, but did not deign to explain.

"I don't live on the Petersburg Side, but I've just been there and have come from there."

He remained silent, still with the same significant smile, which I disliked extremely. There was something stupid in his winking.

"From M. Dergatchev's?" he said at last.

"From Dergatchev's?" I opened my eyes. He gazed at me triumphantly. "I don't know him."

"H'm!"

"Well, as you please," I answered. I began to loathe him.

"H'm... . To be sure. No, excuse me: you buy a thing at a shop, at another shop next door another man buys something else, and what, do you suppose? Money from a tradesman who is called a money-lender ... for money too is an article of sale, and a money-lender is a tradesman too... . You follow me?"

"Certainly I follow."

"A third purchaser comes along, and pointing to one shop, he says, 'This is sound.' Then he points to the other shop and says, 'This is unsound.' What am I to conclude about this purchaser?"

"How can I tell."

"No, excuse me. I'll take an example, man lives by good example. I walk along the Nevsky Prospect, and observe on the other side of the street a gentleman whose character I should like to investigate more closely. We walk, one each side of the street as far as the gate leading to Morskaya, and there, just where the English shop is, we observe a third gentleman, who has just been run over. Now mark: a fourth gentleman walks up, and wishes to investigate the character of all three of us, including the man who has been run over, from the point of view of practicability and soundness... . Do you follow?"

"Excuse me, with great difficulty."

"Quite so; just what I thought. I'll change the subject. I was at the springs in Germany, the mineral springs, as I had frequently been before, no matter which springs. I go to drink the waters and see an Englishman. It is difficult as you know to make acquaintance with an Englishman; two months later, having finished my cure, we were walking, a whole party of us, with alpenstocks on the mountain, no matter what mountain. At a pass there is an étape, the one where the monks make Chartreuse, note that. I meet a native standing in solitude looking about him in silence. I wish to form my conclusions in regard to his soundness: what do you think, can I apply for

conclusions to the crowd of Englishmen with whom I am travelling solely because I was unable to talk to them at the springs?"

"How can I tell? Excuse me, it's very difficult to follow you."

"Difficult, is it?"

"Yes, you weary me."

"H'm." He winked and made a gesture, probably intended to suggest victory and triumph; then with stolid composure he took out of his pocket a newspaper which he had evidently only just bought, unfolded it and began reading the last page, apparently intending to leave me undisturbed. For five minutes he did not look at me.

"Brestograevskies haven't gone smash, eh! Once they've started, they go on! I know a lot that have gone smash."

He looked at me with intense earnestness.

"I don't know much about the Stock Exchange so far," I answered.

"You disapprove of it."

"What?"

"Money."

"I don't disapprove of money but ... but I think ideas come first and money second."

"That is, allow me to say... . Here you have a man, so to say, with his own capital... ."

"A lofty idea comes before money, and a society with money but without a lofty idea comes to grief."

I don't know why, but I began to grow hot. He looked at me rather blankly, as though he were perplexed, but suddenly his whole face relaxed in a gleeful and cunning smile.

"Versilov, hey? He's fairly scored, he has! Judgment given yesterday, eh?"

I suddenly perceived to my surprise that he knew who I was, and perhaps knew a great deal more. But I don't understand why I flushed and stared in a most idiotic way without taking my eyes off him. He was evidently triumphant. He looked at me in high glee, as though he had found me out and caught me in the cleverest way.

"No," he said, raising both his eyebrows; "you ask me about M. Versilov. What did I say to you just now about soundness? A year and a half ago over that baby he might have made a very perfect little job, but he came to grief."

"Over what baby?"

"The baby who is being brought up now out of the way, but he won't gain anything by it ... because... ."

"What baby? What do you mean?"

"His baby, of course, his own by Mlle. Lidya Ahmakov... . 'A charming girl very fond of me... .' phosphorus matches—eh?"

"What nonsense, what a wild story! He never had a baby by Mlle. Ahmakov!"

"Go on! I've been here and there, I've been a doctor and I've been an accoucheur. My name's Stebelkov, haven't you heard of me? It's true I haven't practised for a long time, but practical advice on a practical matter I could give."

"You're an accoucheur ... did you attend Mlle. Ahmakov?"

“No, I did not attend her. In a suburb there was a doctor Granz, burdened with a family; he was paid half a thaler, such is the position of doctors out there, and no one knew him either, so he was there instead of me... . I recommended him, indeed, because he was so obscure and unknown. You follow? I only gave practical advice when Versilov, Andrey Petrovitch, asked for it; but he asked me in dead secret, tête-à-tête. But Andrey Petrovitch wanted to catch two hares at once.”

I listened in profound astonishment.

“‘Chase two hares, catch neither,’ according to the popular, or rather peasant, proverb. What I say is: exceptions continually repeated become a general rule. He went after another hare, or, to speak plain Russian, after another lady, and with no results. Hold tight what you’ve got. When he ought to be hastening a thing on, he potters about: Versilov, that ‘petticoat prophet,’ as young Prince Sokolsky well described him before me at the time. Yes, you had better come to me! If there is anything you want to know about Versilov, you had better come to me!”

He was evidently delighted at my open-mouthed astonishment. I had never heard anything before about a baby. And at that moment the door of the next room slammed as some one walked rapidly in.

“Versilov lives in Mozhaisky Street, at Litvinov’s house, No. 17; I have been to the address bureau myself!” a woman’s voice cried aloud in an irritable tone; we could hear every word. Stebelkov raised his eyebrows and held up his finger. “We talk of him here, and there already he’s... . Here you have exceptions continually occurring! Quand on parle d’une corde... .”

He jumped up quickly and sitting down on the sofa, began listening at the door in front of which the sofa stood. I too was tremendously struck. I reflected that the speaker was probably the same young girl who had run down the stairs in such excitement. But how did Versilov come to be mixed up in this too? Suddenly there came again the same shriek, the furious shriek of some one savage with anger, who has been prevented from getting or doing something. The only difference was that the cries and shrieks were more prolonged than before. There were sounds of a struggle, a torrent of words, “I won’t, I won’t,” “Give it up, give it up at once!” or something of the sort, I don’t remember exactly. Then, just as before, some one rushed to the door and opened it. Both the people in the room rushed out into the passage, one just as before, trying to restrain the other. Stebelkov, who had leapt up from the sofa, and been listening with relish, fairly flew to the door, and with extreme lack of ceremony dashed into the passage straight upon the two. I too, of course, ran to the door. But his appearance in the passage acted like a pail of cold water. The two women vanished instantly, and shut the door with a slam.

Stebelkov was on the point of dashing after them, but he stopped short, held up his finger with a smile, and stood considering. This time I detected in his smile something nasty, evil and malignant. Seeing the landlady, who was again standing in her doorway, he ran quickly across the passage to her on tiptoe; after whispering to her for a minute or two, and no doubt receiving information, he came back to the room, resuming his

air of ponderous dignity, picked up his top-hat from the table, looked at himself in the looking-glass as he passed, ruffled up his hair, and with self-complacent dignity went to the next door without even a glance in my direction. For an instant he held his ear to the door, listening, then winked triumphantly across the passage to the landlady, who shook her finger and wagged her head at him, as though to say, "Och, naughty man, naughty man!" Finally with an air of resolute, even of shrinking delicacy, he knocked with his knuckles at the door. A voice asked:

"Who's there?"

"Will you allow me to enter on urgent business?" Stebelkov pronounced in a loud and dignified voice.

There was a brief delay, yet they did open the door, first only a little way; but Stebelkov at once clutched the door-handle and would not let them close it again. A conversation followed, Stebelkov began talking loudly, still pushing his way into the room. I don't remember the words, but he was speaking about Versilov, saying that he could tell them, could explain everything—"Yes, I can tell you," "Yes, you come to me"—or something to that effect. They quickly let him in, I went back to the sofa and began to listen, but I could not catch it all, I could only hear that Versilov's name was frequently mentioned. From the intonations of his voice I guessed that Stebelkov by now had control of the conversation, that he no longer spoke insinuatingly but authoritatively, in the same style as he had talked to me—"you follow?" "kindly note that," and so on. With women, though, he must have been extraordinarily affable. Already I had twice heard his loud laugh, probably most inappropriate, because accompanying his voice, and sometimes rising above it, could be heard the voices of the women, and they sounded anything but cheerful, and especially that of the young woman, the one who had shrieked: she talked a great deal, rapidly and nervously, making apparently some accusation or complaint, and seeking judgment or redress. But Stebelkov did not give way, he raised his voice higher and higher, and laughed more and more often; such men are unable to listen to other people. I soon jumped up from the sofa, for it seemed to me shameful to be eavesdropping, and went back again to the rush-bottom chair by the window. I felt convinced that Vassin did not think much of this gentleman, but that, if anyone else had expressed the same opinion, he would have at once defended him with grave dignity, and have observed that, "he was a practical man, and one of those modern business people who were not to be judged from our theoretical and abstract standpoints." At that instant, however, I felt somehow morally shattered, my heart was throbbing and I was unmistakably expecting something.

About ten minutes passed; suddenly in the midst of a resounding peal of laughter some one leapt up from a chair with just the same noise as before, then I heard shrieks from both the women. I heard Stebelkov jump up too and say something in quite a different tone of voice, as though he were justifying himself and begging them to listen... . But they did not listen to him; I heard cries of anger: "Go away! You're a scoundrel, you're a shameless villain!" In fact it was clear that he was being turned out of the room. I opened the door at the very minute when he skipped into the passage, as

it seemed literally thrust out by their hands. Seeing me he cried out at once, pointing at me: "This is Versilov's son! If you don't believe me, here is his son, his own son! I assure you!" And he seized me by the arm as though I belonged to him. "This is his son, his own son!" he repeated, though he added nothing by way of explanation, as he led me to the ladies.

The young woman was standing in the passage, the elderly one a step behind her, in the doorway. I only remember that this poor girl was about twenty, and pretty, though thin and sickly looking; she had red hair, and was somehow a little like my sister; this likeness flashed upon me at the time, and remained in my memory; but Liza never had been, and never could have been in the wrathful frenzy by which the girl standing before me was possessed: her lips were white, her light grey eyes were flashing, she was trembling all over with indignation. I remember, too, that I was in an exceedingly foolish and undignified position, for, thanks to this insolent scoundrel, I was at a complete loss what to say.

"What do you mean, his son! If he's with you he's a scoundrel too. If you are Versilov's son," she turned suddenly to me, "tell your father from me that he is a scoundrel, that he's a mean, shameless wretch, that I don't want his money... . There, there, there, give him this money at once!"

She hurriedly took out of her pocket several notes, but the older lady (her mother, as it appeared later) clutched her hand:

"Olya, but you know ... perhaps it's not true ... perhaps it's not his son!"

Olya looked at her quickly, reflected, looked at me contemptuously and went back into the room; but before she slammed the door she stood still in the doorway and shouted to Stebelkov once more:

"Go away!"

And she even stamped her foot at him. Then the door was slammed and locked. Stebelkov, still holding me by the shoulder, with his finger raised and his mouth relaxed in a slow doubtful grin, bent a look of inquiry on me.

"I consider the way you've behaved with me ridiculous and disgraceful," I muttered indignantly. But he did not hear what I said, though he was still staring at me.

"This ought to be looked into," he pronounced, pondering.

"But how dare you drag me in? Who is this? What is this woman? You took me by the shoulder, and brought me in—what does it mean?"

"Yes, by Jove! A young person who has lost her fair fame ... a frequently recurring exception—you follow?" And he poked me in the chest with his finger.

"Ech, damnation!" I pushed away his finger. But he suddenly and quite unexpectedly went off into a low, noiseless, prolonged chuckle of merriment. Finally he put on his hat and, with a rapid change to an expression of gloom, he observed, frowning:

"The landlady must be informed ... they must be turned out of the lodgings, to be sure, and without loss of time too, or they'll be ... you will see! Mark my words, you will see! Yes, by Jove!" he was gleeful again all at once. "You'll wait for Grisha, I suppose?"

“No, I shan’t wait,” I answered resolutely.

“Well, it’s all one to me... .”

And without adding another syllable he turned, went out, and walked downstairs, without vouchsafing a glance in the landlady’s direction, though she was evidently expecting news and explanations. I, too, took up my hat, and asking the landlady to tell Vassin that I, Dolgoruky, had called, I ran downstairs.

3

I had merely wasted my time. On coming out I set to work at once to look for lodgings; but I was preoccupied. I wandered about the streets for several hours, and, though I went into five or six flats with rooms to let, I am sure I passed by twenty without noticing them. To increase my vexation I found it far more difficult to get a lodging than I had imagined. Everywhere there were rooms like Vassin’s, or a great deal worse, while the rent was enormous, that is, not what I had reckoned upon. I asked for nothing more than a “corner” where I could turn round, and I was informed contemptuously that if that was what I wanted, I must go where rooms were let “in corners.” Moreover, I found everywhere numbers of strange lodgers, in whose proximity I could not have lived; in fact, I would have paid anything not to have to live in their proximity. There were queer gentlemen in their waistcoats without their coats, who had dishevelled beards, and were inquisitive and free-and-easy in their manners. In one tiny room there were about a dozen such sitting over cards and beer, and I was offered the next room. In another place I answered the landlady’s inquiries so absurdly that they looked at me in surprise, and in one flat I actually began quarrelling with the people. However, I won’t describe these dismal details; I only felt that I was awfully tired. I had something to eat in a cookshop when it was almost dark. I finally decided that I would go and give Versilov the letter concerning the will, with no one else present (making no explanation), that I would go upstairs, pack my things in my trunk and bag, and go for the night, if need be, to an hotel. At the end of the Obuhovsky Prospect, at the Gate of Triumph, I knew there was an inn where one could get a room to oneself for thirty kopecks; I resolved for one night to sacrifice that sum, rather than sleep at Versilov’s. And as I was passing the Institute of Technology, the notion suddenly struck me to call on Tatyana Pavlovna, who lived just opposite the institute. My pretext for going in was this same letter about the will, but my overwhelming impulse to go in was due to some other cause, which I cannot to this day explain. My mind was in a turmoil, brooding over “the baby,” the “exceptions that pass into rules.” I had a longing to tell some one, or to make a scene, or to fight, or even to have a cry—I can’t tell which, but I went up to Tatyana Pavlovna’s. I had only been there once before, with some message from my mother, soon after I came from Moscow, and I remember I went in, gave my message, and went out a minute later, without sitting down, and indeed she did not ask me to.

I rang the bell, and the cook at once opened the door to me, and showed me into the room without speaking. All these details are necessary that the reader may understand how the mad adventure, which had so vast an influence on all that followed, was rendered possible. And to begin with, as regards the cook. She was an ill-tempered, snub-nosed Finnish woman, and I believe hated her mistress Tatyana Pavlovna, while the latter, on the contrary, could not bring herself to part with her from a peculiar sort of infatuation, such as old maids sometimes show for damp-nosed pug dogs, or somnolent cats. The Finnish woman was either spiteful and rude or, after a quarrel, would be silent for weeks together to punish her mistress. I must have chanced upon one of these dumb days, for even when I asked her, as I remember doing, whether her mistress were at home, she made no answer, but walked off to the kitchen in silence. Feeling sure after this that Tatyana Pavlovna was at home, I walked into the room, and finding no one there, waited expecting that she would come out of her bedroom before long; otherwise, why should the cook have shown me in? Without sitting down, I waited two minutes, three; it was dusk and Tatyana Pavlovna's dark flat seemed even less hospitable from the endless yards of cretonne hanging about. A couple of words about that horrid little flat, to explain the surroundings of what followed. With her obstinate and peremptory character, and the tastes she had formed from living in the country in the past, Tatyana Pavlovna could not put up with furnished lodgings, and had taken this parody of a flat simply in order to live apart and be her own mistress. The two rooms were exactly like two bird-cages, set side by side, one smaller than the other; the flat was on the third storey, and the windows looked into the courtyard. Coming into the flat, one stepped straight into a tiny passage, a yard and a half wide; on the left, the two afore-mentioned bird-cages, and at the end of the passage the tiny kitchen. The five hundred cubic feet of air required to last a human being twelve hours were perhaps provided in this room, but hardly more. The rooms were hideously low-pitched, and, what was stupider than anything, the windows, the doors, the furniture, all were hung or draped with cretonne, good French cretonne, and decorated with festoons; but this made the room twice as dark and more than ever like the inside of a travelling-coach. In the room where I was waiting it was possible to turn round, though it was cumbered up with furniture, and the furniture, by the way, was not at all bad: there were all sorts of little inlaid tables, with bronze fittings, boxes, an elegant and even sumptuous toilet table. But the next room, from which I expected her to come in, the bedroom, screened off by a thick curtain, consisted literally of a bedstead, as appeared afterwards. All these details are necessary to explain the foolishness of which I was guilty.

So I had no doubts and was waiting, when there came a ring at the bell. I heard the cook cross the little passage with lagging footsteps, and admit the visitors, still in silence, just as she had me. They were two ladies and both were talking loudly, but what was my amazement when from their voices I recognized one as Tatyana Pavlovna, and the other as the woman I was least prepared to meet now, above all in such circumstances! I could not be mistaken: I had heard that powerful, mellow, ringing

voice the day before, only for three minutes it is true, but it still resounded in my heart. Yes, it was “yesterday’s woman.” What was I to do? I am not asking the reader this question, I am only picturing that moment to myself, and I am utterly unable to imagine even now how it came to pass that I suddenly rushed behind the curtain, and found myself in Tatyana Pavlovna’s bedroom. In short, I hid myself, and had scarcely time to do so when they walked in. Why I hid and did not come forward to meet them, I don’t know. It all happened accidentally and absolutely without premeditation.

After rushing into the bedroom and knocking against the bed, I noticed at once that there was a door leading from the bedroom into the kitchen, and so there was a way out of my horrible position, and I could make my escape but—oh, horror! the door was locked, and there was no key in it. I sank on the bed in despair; I realized that I should overhear their talk, and from the first sentence, from the first sound of their conversation, I guessed that they were discussing delicate and private matters. Oh, of course, a straightforward and honourable man should even then have got up, come out, said aloud, “I’m here, stop!” and, in spite of his ridiculous position, walked past them; but I did not get up, and did not come out; I didn’t dare, I was in a most despicable funk.

“My darling Katerina Nikolaevna, you distress me very much,” Tatyana Pavlovna was saying in an imploring voice. “Set your mind at rest once for all, it’s not like you. You bring joy with you wherever you go, and now suddenly ... I suppose you do still believe in me? Why, you know how devoted I am to you. As much so as to Andrey Petrovitch, and I make no secret of my undying devotion to him... . But do believe me, I swear on my honour he has no such document in his possession, and perhaps no one else has either; and he is not capable of anything so underhand, it’s wicked of you to suspect him. This hostility between you two is simply the work of your own imaginations... .”

“There is such a document, and he is capable of anything. And there, as soon as I go in yesterday, the first person I meet is ce petit espion, whom he has foisted on my father.”

“Ach, ce petit espion! To begin with he is not an espion at all, for it was I, I insisted on his going to the prince, or else he would have gone mad, or died of hunger in Moscow—that was the account they sent us of him; and what’s more, that unmannerly urchin is a perfect little fool, how could he be a spy?”

“Yes, he is a fool, but that does not prevent his being a scoundrel. If I hadn’t been so angry, I should have died of laughing yesterday: he turned pale, he ran about, made bows and talked French. And Marie Ivanovna talked of him in Moscow as a genius. That that unlucky letter is still in existence and is in dangerous hands somewhere, I gathered chiefly from Marie Ivanovna’s face.”

“My beauty! why you say yourself she has nothing!”

“That’s just it, that she has; she does nothing but tell lies, and she is a good hand at it, I can tell you! Before I went to Moscow, I still had hopes that no papers of any sort were left, but then, then... .”

“Oh, it’s quite the contrary, my dear, I am told she is a good-natured and sensible creature; Andronikov thought more of her than of any of his other nieces. It’s true I don’t know her well—but you should have won her over, my beauty! It’s no trouble to you to win hearts—why, I’m an old woman, but here I’m quite in love with you already, and can’t resist kissing you... . But it would have been nothing to you to win her heart.”

“I did, Tatyana Pavlovna, I tried; she was enchanted with me, but she’s very sly too... . Yes, she’s a regular type, and a peculiar Moscow type... . And would you believe it, she advised me to apply to a man here called Kraft, who had been Andronikov’s assistant. ‘Maybe he knows something,’ she said. I had some idea of what Kraft was like, and in fact, I had a faint recollection of him; but as she talked about Kraft, I suddenly felt certain that it was not that she simply knew nothing but that she knew all about it and was lying.”

“But why, why? Well, perhaps you might find out from him! That German, Kraft, isn’t a chatterbox, and I remember him as very honest—you really ought to question him! Only I fancy he is not in Petersburg now... .”

“Oh, he came back yesterday evening, I have just been to see him... . I have come to you in such a state, I’m shaking all over. I wanted to ask you, Tatyana Pavlovna, my angel, for you know every one, wouldn’t it be possible to find out from his papers, for he must have left papers, to whom they will come now? They may come into dangerous hands again! I wanted to ask your advice.”

“But what papers are you talking about?” said Tatyana Pavlovna, not understanding. “Why, you say you have just been at Kraft’s?”

“Yes, I have been, I have, I have just been there, but he’s shot himself! Yesterday evening.”

I jumped up from the bed. I was able to sit through being called a spy and an idiot, and the longer the conversation went on the more impossible it seemed to show myself. It was impossible to contemplate! I inwardly determined with a sinking heart to stay where I was till Tatyana Pavlovna went to the door with her visitor (if, that is, I were lucky, and she did not before then come to fetch something from the bedroom), and afterwards, when Mme. Ahmakov had gone out, then, if need be, I’d fight it out with Tatyana Pavlovna... . But when, now, suddenly hearing about Kraft, I jumped up from the bed, I shuddered all over. Without thinking, without reflecting, or realizing what I was doing, I took a step, lifted the curtain, and appeared before the two of them. It was still light enough for them to see me, pale and trembling... . They both cried out, and indeed they well might.

“Kraft?” I muttered, turning to Mme. Ahmakov—“he has shot himself? Yesterday? At sunset?”

“Where were you? Where have you come from?” screamed Tatyana Pavlovna, and she literally clawed my shoulder. “You’ve been spying? You have been eavesdropping?”

“What did I tell you just now?” said Katerina Nikolaevna, getting up from the sofa and pointing at me.

I was beside myself.

“It’s a lie, it’s nonsense!” I broke in furiously. “You called me a spy just now, my God! You are not worth spying on, life’s not worth living in the same world with such people as you, in fact! A great-hearted man has killed himself, Kraft has shot himself—for the sake of an idea, for the sake of Hecuba... . But how should you know about Hecuba? ... And here—one’s to live among your intrigues, to linger in the midst of your lying, your deceptions and underhand plots... . Enough!”

“Slap him in the face! Slap him in the face!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, and as Katerina Nikolaevna did not move, though she stared fixedly at me (I remember it all minutely), Tatyana Pavlovna would certainly have done so herself without loss of time, so that I instinctively raised my hand to protect my face; and this gesture led her to imagine that I meant to strike her.

“Well, strike me, strike me, show me that you are a low cur from your birth up: you are stronger than women, why stand on ceremony with them!”

“That’s enough of your slander!” I cried. “I have never raised my hand against a woman! You are shameless, Tatyana Pavlovna, you’ve always treated me with contempt. Oh, servants must be treated without respect! You laugh, Katerina Nikolaevna, at my appearance I suppose; yes, God has not blessed me with the elegance of your young officers. And, yet I don’t feel humbled before you, on the contrary I feel exalted... . I don’t care how I express myself, only I’m not to blame! I got here by accident, Tatyana Pavlovna, it’s all the fault of your cook, or rather of your devotion to her: why did she bring me in here without answering my question? And afterwards to dash out of a woman’s bedroom seemed so monstrous, that I made up my mind not to show myself, but to sit and put up with your insults... . You are laughing again, Katerina Nikolaevna!”

“Leave the room, leave the room, go away!” screamed Tatyana Pavlovna, almost pushing me out. “Don’t think anything of his abuse, Katerina Nikolaevna: I’ve told you that they sent us word that he was mad!”

“Mad? They sent word? Who sent you word? No matter, enough of this, Katerina Nikolaevna! I swear to you by all that’s sacred, this conversation and all that I’ve heard shall remain hidden... . Am I to blame for having learned your secrets? Especially as I am leaving your father’s service to-morrow, so as regards the letter you are looking for, you need not worry yourself!”

“What’s that... . What letter are you talking about?” asked Katerina Nikolaevna in such confusion that she turned pale, or perhaps I fancied it. I realized that I had said too much.

I walked quickly out; they watched me go without a word, with looks of intense amazement. I had in fact set them a riddle.

Chapter 9

1

I hurried home and—marvellous to relate—I was very well satisfied with myself. That's not the way one talks to women, of course, and to such women too—it would be truer to say such a woman, for I was not considering Tatyana Pavlovna. Perhaps it's out of the question to say to a woman of that class that one spits on her intrigues, but I had said that, and it was just that that I was pleased with. Apart from anything else, I was convinced that by taking this tone I had effaced all that was ridiculous in my position. But I had not time to think much about that: my mind was full of Kraft. Not that the thought of him distressed me very greatly, but yet I was shaken to my inmost depths, and so much so that the ordinary human feeling of pleasure at another man's misfortune—at his breaking his leg or covering himself with disgrace, at his losing some one dear to him, and so on—even this ordinary feeling of mean satisfaction was completely eclipsed by another absolutely single-hearted feeling, a feeling of sorrow, of compassion for Kraft—at least I don't know whether it was compassion, but it was a strong and warm-hearted feeling. And I was glad of this too. It's marvellous how many irrelevant ideas can flash through the mind at the very time when one is shattered by some tremendous piece of news, which one would have thought must overpower all other feelings and banish all extraneous thoughts, especially petty ones; yet petty ones, on the contrary, obtrude themselves. I remember, too, that I was gradually overcome by a quite perceptible nervous shudder, which lasted several minutes, in fact all the time I was at home and talking to Versilov.

This interview followed under strange and exceptional circumstances. I had mentioned already that we lived in a separate lodge in the courtyard; this lodging was marked "No. 13." Before I had entered the gate I heard a woman's voice asking loudly, with impatience and irritation, "Where is No. 13?" The question was asked by a lady who was standing close to the gate and had opened the door of the little shop; but apparently she got no answer there, or was even repulsed, for she came down the steps, resentful and angry.

"But where is the porter?" she cried, stamping her foot. I had already recognized the voice.

"I am going to No. 13," I said, approaching her. "Whom do you want?"

"I have been looking for the porter for the last hour. I keep asking every one; I have been up all the staircases."

"It's in the yard. Don't you recognize me?"

But by now she had recognized me.

"You want Versilov; you want to see him about something, and so do I," I went on. "I have come to take leave of him for ever. Come along."

"You are his son?"

“That means nothing. Granted, though, that I am his son, yet my name’s Dolgoruky; I am illegitimate. This gentleman has an endless supply of illegitimate children. When conscience and honour require it a son will leave his father’s house. That’s in the Bible. He has come into a fortune too, and I don’t wish to share it, and I go to live by the work of my hands. A noble-hearted man will sacrifice life itself, if need be; Kraft has shot himself, Kraft for the sake of an idea, imagine, a young man, yet he overcame hope... . This way, this way! We live in a lodge apart. But that’s in the Bible; children leave their parents and make homes for themselves... . If the idea draws one on ... if there is an idea! The idea is what matters, the idea is everything... .”

I babbled on like this while we were making our way to the lodge. The reader will, no doubt, observe that I don’t spare myself much, though I give myself a good character on occasion; I want to train myself to tell the truth. Versilov was at home. I went in without taking off my overcoat; she did the same. Her clothes were dreadfully thin: over a wretched gown of some dark colour was hung a rag that did duty for a cloak or mantle; on her head she wore an old and frayed sailor-hat, which was very unbecoming. When we went into the room my mother was sitting at her usual place at work, and my sister came out of her room to see who it was, and was standing in the doorway. Versilov, as usual, was doing nothing, and he got up to meet us. He looked at me intently with a stern and inquiring gaze.

“It’s nothing to do with me,” I hastened to explain, and I stood on one side. “I only met this person at the gate; she was trying to find you and no one could direct her. I have come about my own business, which I shall be delighted to explain afterwards... .”

Versilov nevertheless still scrutinized me curiously.

“Excuse me,” the girl began impatiently. Versilov turned towards her.

“I have been wondering a long while what induced you to leave money for me yesterday... . I ... in short ... here’s your money!” she almost shrieked, as she had before, and flung a bundle of notes on the table. “I’ve had to hunt for you through the address bureau, or I should have brought it before. Listen, you!” She suddenly addressed my mother, who had turned quite pale. “I don’t want to insult you; you look honest, and perhaps this is actually your daughter. I don’t know whether you are his wife, but let me tell you that this gentleman gets hold of the advertisements on which teachers and governesses have spent their last farthing and visits these luckless wretches with dishonourable motives, trying to lure them to ruin by money. I don’t understand how I could have taken his money yesterday: he looked so honest... . Get away, don’t say a word! You are a villain, sir! Even if you had honourable intentions I don’t want your charity. Not a word, not a word! Oh, how glad I am that I have unmasked you now before your women! Curse you!”

She ran to the door, but turned for one instant in the doorway to shout.

“You’ve come into a fortune, I’m told.”

With that she vanished like a shadow. I repeat again, it was frenzy. Versilov was greatly astonished; he stood as though pondering and reflecting on something. At last he turned suddenly to me:

“You don’t know her at all?”

“I happened to see her this morning when she was raging in the passage at Vassin’s; she was screaming and cursing you. But I did not speak to her and I know nothing about it, and just now I met her at the gate. No doubt she is that teacher you spoke of yesterday, who also gives lessons in arithmetic.”

“Yes, she is. For once in my life I did a good deed and... . But what’s the matter with you?”

“Here is this letter,” I answered. “I don’t think explanation necessary: it comes from Kraft, and he got it from Andronikov. You will understand what’s in it. I will add that no one but me in the whole world knows about that letter, for Kraft, who gave me that letter yesterday just as I was leaving him, has shot himself.”

While I was speaking with breathless haste he took the letter and, holding it lightly poised in his left hand, watched me attentively. When I told him of Kraft’s suicide I looked at him with particular attention to see the effect. And what did I see? The news did not make the slightest impression on him. If he had even raised an eyebrow! On the contrary, seeing that I had paused, he drew out his eyeglasses, which he always had about him hanging on a black ribbon, carried the letter to the candle and, glancing at the signature, began carefully examining it. I can’t express how mortified I was at this supercilious callousness. He must have known Kraft very well: it was, in any case, such an extraordinary piece of news! Besides, I naturally desired it to produce an effect. Knowing that the letter was long, I turned, after waiting, and went out. My trunk had been packed long ago, I had only to stuff a few things into my bag. I thought of my mother and that I had not gone up to speak to her. Ten minutes later, when I had finished my preparations and was meaning to go for a cab, my sister walked into my attic.

“Here are your sixty roubles; mother sends it and begs you again to forgive her for having mentioned it to Andrey Petrovitch. And here’s twenty roubles besides. You gave her fifty yesterday for your board; mother says she can’t take more than thirty from you because you haven’t cost fifty, and she sends you twenty roubles back.”

“Well, thanks, if she is telling the truth. Good-bye, sister, I’m going.”

“Where are you going now?”

“For the time being to an hotel, to escape spending the night in this house. Tell mother that I love her.”

“She knows that. She knows that you love Andrey Petrovitch too. I wonder you are not ashamed of having brought that wretched girl here!”

“I swear I did not; I met her at the gate.”

“No, it was your doing.”

“I assure you... .”

“Think a little, ask yourself, and you will see that you were the cause.”

"I was only very pleased that Versilov should be put to shame. Imagine, he had a baby by Lidya Ahmakov ... but what am I telling you!"

"He? A baby? But it is not his child! From whom have you heard such a falsehood?"

"Why, you can know nothing about it."

"Me know nothing about it? But I used to nurse the baby in Luga. Listen, brother: I've seen for a long time past that you know nothing about anything, and meanwhile you wound Andrey Petrovitch— and ... mother too."

"If he is right, then I shall be to blame. That's all, and I love you no less for it. What makes you flush like that, sister? And more still now! Well, never mind, anyway, I shall challenge that little prince for the slap he gave Versilov at Ems. If Versilov was in the right as regards Mlle. Ahmakov, so much the better."

"Brother, what are you thinking of?"

"Luckily, the lawsuit's over now... . Well, now she has turned white!"

"But the prince won't fight you," said Liza, looking at me with a wan smile in spite of her alarm.

"Then I will put him to shame in public. What's the matter with you, Liza?"

She had turned so pale that she could not stand, and sank on to my sofa.

"Liza," my mother's voice called from below.

She recovered herself and stood up; she smiled at me affectionately.

"Brother, drop this foolishness, or put it off for a time till you know about ever so many things: it's awful how little you understand."

"I shall remember, Liza, that you turned pale when you heard I was going to fight a duel."

"Yes, yes, remember that too!" she said, smiling once more at parting, and she went downstairs.

I called a cab, and with the help of the man I hauled my things out of the lodge. No one in the house stopped me or opposed my going. I did not go in to say good-bye to my mother as I did not want to meet Versilov again. When I was sitting in the cab a thought flashed upon me:

"To Fontanka by Semyonovsky Bridge," I told the man, and went back to Vassin's.

2

It suddenly struck me that Vassin would know already about Kraft, and perhaps know a hundred times more than I did; and so it proved to be. Vassin immediately informed me of all the facts with great precision but with no great warmth; I concluded that he was very tired, and so indeed he was. He had been at Kraft's himself in the morning. Kraft had shot himself with a revolver (that same revolver) after dark, as was shown by his diary. The last entry in the diary was made just before the fatal shot, and in it he mentioned that he was writing almost in the dark and hardly able to distinguish the letters, that he did not want to light a candle for fear that it should set fire to something when he was dead. "And I don't want to light it and then, before

shooting, put it out like my life," he added strangely, almost the last words. This diary he had begun three days before his death, immediately on his return to Petersburg, before his visit to Dergatchev's. After I had gone away he had written something in it every quarter of an hour; the last three or four entries were made at intervals of five minutes. I expressed aloud my surprise that though Vassin had had this diary so long in his hands (it had been given him to read), he had not made a copy of it, especially as it was not more than a sheet or so and all the entries were short. "You might at least have copied the last page!" Vassin observed with a smile that he remembered it as it was; moreover, that the entries were quite disconnected, about anything that came into his mind. I was about to protest that this was just what was precious in this case, but without going into that I began instead to insist on his recalling some of it, and he did recall a few sentences—for instance, an hour before he shot himself, "That he was chilly," "That he thought of drinking a glass of wine to warm himself, but had been deterred by the idea that it might cause an increase in the flow of blood." "It was almost all that sort of thing," Vassin remarked in conclusion.

"And you call that nonsense!" I cried.

"And when did I call it nonsense? I simply did not copy it. But though it's not nonsense, the diary certainly is somewhat ordinary, or rather, natural—that is, it's just what it's bound to be in such circumstances... ."

"But the last thoughts, the last thoughts!"

"The last thoughts sometimes are extremely insignificant. One such suicide complained, in fact, in a similar diary that not one lofty idea visited him at that important hour, nothing but futile and petty thoughts."

"And that he was chilly, was that too a futile thought?"

"Do you mean his being chilly, or the thought about the blood? Besides, it's a well-known fact that very many people who are capable of contemplating their approaching death, whether it's by their own hand or not, frequently show a tendency to worry themselves about leaving their body in a presentable condition. It was from that point of view that Kraft was anxious about the blood."

"I don't know whether that is a well-known fact ... or whether that is so," I muttered; "but I am surprised that you consider all that natural, and yet it's not long since Kraft was speaking, feeling, sitting among us. Surely you must feel sorry for him?"

"Oh, of course, I'm sorry, and that's quite a different thing; but, in any case, Kraft himself conceived of his death as a logical deduction. It turns out that all that was said about him yesterday at Dergatchev's was true. He left behind him a manuscript book full of abstruse theories, proving by phrenology, by craniology, and even by mathematics, that the Russians are a second-rate race, and that therefore, since he was a Russian, life was not worth living for him. What is more striking about it, if you like, is that it shows one can make any logical deduction one pleases; but to shoot oneself in consequence of a deduction does not always follow."

"At least one must do credit to his strength of will."

“Possibly not that only,” Vassin observed evasively; it was clear that he assumed stupidity or weakness of intellect. All this irritated me.

“You talked of feeling yourself yesterday, Vassin.”

“I don’t gainsay it now; but what has happened betrays something in him so crudely mistaken that, if one looks at it critically, it checks one’s compassion in spite of oneself.”

“Do you know that I guessed yesterday from your eyes that you would disapprove of Kraft, and I resolved not to ask your opinion, that I might not hear evil of him; but you have given it of yourself, and I am forced to agree with you in spite of myself; and yet I am annoyed with you! I am sorry for Kraft.”

“Do you know we are going rather far... .”

“Yes, yes,” I interrupted, “but it’s a comfort, anyway, that in such cases those who are left alive, the critics of the dead, can say of themselves: ‘Though a man has shot himself who was worthy of all compassion and indulgence, we are left, at any rate, and so there’s no great need to grieve.’”

“Yes, of course, from that point of view... . Oh, but I believe you are joking, and very cleverly! I always drink tea at this time, and am just going to ask for it: you will join me, perhaps.”

And he went out, with a glance at my trunk and bag.

I had wanted to say something rather spiteful, to retaliate for his judgment of Kraft, and I had succeeded in saying it, but it was curious that he had taken my consoling reflection that “such as we are left” as meant seriously. But, be that as it may, he was, anyway, more right than I was in everything, even in his feelings. I recognized this without the slightest dissatisfaction, but I felt distinctly that I did not like him.

When they had brought in the tea I announced that I was going to ask for his hospitality for one night only, and if this were impossible I hoped he would say so, and I would go to an hotel. Then I briefly explained my reasons, simply and frankly stating that I had finally quarrelled with Versilov, without, however, going into details. Vassin listened attentively but without the slightest excitement. As a rule he only spoke in reply to questions, though he always answered with ready courtesy and sufficient detail. I said nothing at all about the letter concerning which I had come to ask his advice in the morning, and I explained that I had looked in then simply to call on him. Having given Versilov my word that no one else should know of the letter, I considered I had no right to speak of it to anyone. I felt it for some reason peculiarly repugnant to speak of certain things to Vassin—of some things and not of others; I succeeded, for instance, in interesting him in my description of the scenes that had taken place that morning in the passage, in the next room, and finally at Versilov’s. He listened with extreme attention, especially to what I told him of Stebelkov. When I told him how Stebelkov asked about Dergatchev he made me repeat the question again, and seemed to ponder gravely over it, though he did laugh in the end. It suddenly occurred to me at that moment that nothing could ever have disconcerted Vassin; I remember, however, that this idea presented itself at first in a form most complimentary to him.

“In fact, I could not gather much from what M. Stebelkov said,” I added finally; “he talks in a sort of muddle ... and there is something, as it were, feather-headed about him... .”

Vassin at once assumed a serious air.

“He certainly has no gift for language, but he sometimes manages to make very acute observations at first sight, and in fact he belongs to the class of business men, men of practical affairs, rather than of theoretical ideas; one must judge them from that point of view... .”

It was exactly what I had imagined him saying that morning. “He made an awful row next door, though, and goodness knows how it might have ended.”

Of the inmates of the next room, Vassin told me that they had been living there about three weeks and had come from somewhere in the provinces; that their room was very small, and that to all appearance they were very poor; that they stayed in and seemed to be expecting something. He did not know the young woman had advertised for lessons, but he had heard that Versilov had been to see them; it had happened in his absence, but the landlady had told him of it. The two ladies had held themselves aloof from every one, even from the landlady. During the last few days he had indeed become aware that something was wrong with them, but there had been no other scenes like the one that morning. I recall all that was said about the people next door because of what followed. All this time there was a dead silence in the next room. Vassin listened with marked interest when I told him that Stebelkov had said he must talk to the landlady about our neighbours and that he had twice repeated, “Ah! you will see! you will see!”

“And you will see,” added Vassin, “that that notion of his stands for something; he has an extraordinarily keen eye for such things.”

“Why, do you think the landlady ought to be advised to turn them out?”

“No, I did not mean that they should be turned out ... simply that there might be a scandal ... but all such cases end one way or another... . Let’s drop the subject.”

As for Versilov’s visit next door, he absolutely refused to give any opinion.

“Anything is possible: a man feels that he has money in his pocket ... but he may very likely have given the money from charity; that would perhaps be in accordance with his traditions and his inclinations.”

I told him that Stebelkov had chattered that morning about “a baby.”

“Stebelkov is absolutely mistaken about that,” Vassin brought out with peculiar emphasis and gravity (I remembered this particularly). “Stebelkov sometimes puts too much faith in his practical common sense, and so is in too great a hurry to draw conclusions to fit in with his logic, which is often very penetrating; and all the while the actual fact may be far more fantastic and surprising when one considers the character of the persons concerned in it. So it has been in this case; having a partial knowledge of the affair, he concluded the child belonged to Versilov; and yet the child is not Versilov’s.”

I pressed him, and, to my great amazement, learned from him that the infant in question was the child of Prince Sergay Sokolsky. Lidya Ahmakov, either owing to her illness or to some fantastic streak in her character, used at times to behave like a lunatic. She had been fascinated by the prince before she met Versilov, "and he had not scrupled to accept her love," to use Vassin's expression. The liaison had lasted but for a moment; they had quarrelled, as we know already, and Lidya had dismissed the prince, "at which the latter seems to have been relieved." "She was a very strange girl," added Vassin; "it is quite possible that she was not always in her right mind. But when he went away to Paris, Prince Sokolsky had no idea of the condition in which he had left his victim, he did not know until the end, until his return. Versilov, who had become a friend of the young lady's, offered her his hand, in view of her situation (of which it appears her parents had no suspicion up to the end). The lovesick damsel was overjoyed, and saw in Versilov's offer "something more than self-sacrifice," though that too she appreciated. "Of course, though, he knew how to carry it through," Vassin added. "The baby (a girl) was born a month or six weeks before the proper time; it was placed out somewhere in Germany but afterwards taken back by Versilov and is now somewhere in Russia—perhaps in Petersburg."

"And the phosphorus matches?"

"I know nothing about that," Vassin said in conclusion. "Lidya Ahmakov died a fortnight after her confinement: what had happened I don't know. Prince Sokolsky, who had only just returned from Paris, learned there was a child, and seems not to have believed at first that it was his child... . The whole affair has, in fact, been kept secret by all parties up till now."

"But what a wretch this prince must be," I cried indignantly. "What a way to treat an invalid girl!"

"She was not so much of an invalid then... . Besides, she sent him away herself... . It is true, perhaps, that he was in too great a hurry to take advantage of his dismissal."

"You justify a villain like that!"

"No, only I don't call him a villain. There is a great deal in it besides simple villainy. In fact, it's quite an ordinary thing."

"Tell me, Vassin, did you know him intimately? I should particularly value your opinion, owing to a circumstance that touches me very nearly."

But to this Vassin replied with excessive reserve. He knew the prince, but he was, with obvious intention, reticent in regard to the circumstances under which he had made his acquaintance. He added further that one had to make allowances for Prince Sokolsky's character. "He is impressionable and full of honourable impulses, but has neither good sense nor strength of will enough to control his desires. He is not a well-educated man; many ideas and situations are beyond his power to deal with, and yet he rushes upon them. He will, for example, persist in declaring, 'I am a prince and descended from Rurik; but there's no reason why I shouldn't be a shoemaker if I have to earn my living; I am not fit for any other calling. Above the shop there shall be, 'Prince So- and-so, Bootmaker'—it would really be a credit.' He would say that and

act upon it, too, that's what matters," added Vassin; "and yet it's not the result of strong conviction, but only the most shallow impressionability. Afterwards repentance invariably follows, and then he is always ready to rush to an opposite extreme; his whole life is passed like that. Many people come to grief in that way nowadays," Vassin ended, "just because they are born in this age."

I could not help pondering on his words.

"Is it true that he was turned out of his regiment?" I asked.

"I don't know whether he was turned out, but he certainly did leave the regiment through some unpleasant scandal. I suppose you know that he spent two or three months last autumn at Luga."

"I ... I know that you were staying at Luga at that time."

"Yes, I was there too for a time. Prince Sokolsky knew Lizaveta Makarovna too."

"Oh! I didn't know. I must confess I've had so little talk with my sister... . But surely he was not received in my mother's house?" I cried.

"Oh, no; he was only slightly acquainted with them through other friends."

"Ah, to be sure, what did my sister tell me about that child? Was the baby at Luga?"

"For a while."

"And where is it now?"

"No doubt in Petersburg."

"I never will believe," I cried in great emotion, "that my mother took any part whatever in this scandal with this Lidya!"

"Apart from these intrigues, of which I can't undertake to give the details, there was nothing particularly reprehensible in Versilov's part of the affair," observed Vassin, with a condescending smile. I fancy he began to feel it difficult to talk to me, but he tried not to betray it.

"I will never, never believe," I cried again, "that a woman could give up her husband to another woman; that I won't believe! ... I swear my mother had no hand in it!"

"It seems, though, she did not oppose it."

"In her place, from pride I should not have opposed it."

"For my part, I absolutely refuse to judge in such a matter," was Vassin's final comment.

Perhaps, for all his intelligence, Vassin really knew nothing about women, so that a whole cycle of ideas and phenomena remained unknown to him. I sank into silence. Vassin had a temporary berth in some company's office, and I knew that he used to bring work home with him. When I pressed him, he admitted that he had work to do now, accounts to make up, and I begged him warmly not to stand on ceremony with me. I believe this pleased him; but before bringing out his papers he made up a bed for me on the sofa. At first he offered me his bed, but when I refused it I think that too gratified him. He got pillows and a quilt from the landlady. Vassin was extremely polite and amiable, but it made me feel uncomfortable, seeing him take so much trouble on my account. I had liked it better when, three weeks before, I had spent a night at

Efim's. I remember how he concocted a bed for me, also on a sofa, and without the knowledge of his aunt, who would, he thought, for some reason, have been vexed if she had known he had a schoolfellow staying the night with him. We laughed a great deal. A shirt did duty for a sheet and an overcoat for a pillow. I remember how Efim, when he had completed the work, patted the sofa tenderly and said to me:

“Vous dormirez comme un petit roi.”

And his foolish mirth and the French phrase, as incongruous in his mouth as a saddle on a cow, made me enjoy sleeping at that jocose youth's. As for Vassin, I felt greatly relieved when he sat down to work with his back to me. I stretched myself on the sofa and, looking at his back, pondered deeply on many things.

3

And indeed I had plenty to think about. Everything seemed split up and in confusion in my soul, but certain sensations stood out very definitely, though from their very abundance I was not dominated by any one of them. They all came, as it were, in disconnected flashes, one after another, and I had no inclination, I remember, to dwell on any one of my impressions or to establish any sequence among them. Even the idea of Kraft had imperceptibly passed into the background. What troubled me most of all was my own position, that here I had “broken off,” and that my trunk was with me, and I was not at home, and was beginning everything new. It was as though all my previous intentions and preparations had been in play, “and only now—and above all so SUDDENLY—everything was beginning in reality.” This idea gave me courage and cheered me up, in spite of the confusion within me over many things.

But ... but I had other sensations; one of them was trying to dominate the others and to take possession of my soul, and, strange to say, this sensation too gave me courage and seemed to hold out prospects of something very gay. Yet this feeling had begun with fear: I had been afraid for a long time, from the very hour that in my heat I had, unawares, said too much to Mme. Ahmakov about the “document.” “Yes, I said too much,” I thought, “and maybe they will guess something ... it's a pity! No doubt they will give me no peace if they begin to suspect, but ... let them! Very likely they won't find me, I'll hide! And what if they really do run after me ... ?” And then I began recalling minutely in every point, and with growing satisfaction, how I had stood up before Katerina Nikolaevna and how her insolent but extremely astonished eyes had gazed at me obstinately. Going away, I had left her in the same amazement, I remembered; “her eyes are not quite black, though ... it's only her eyelashes that are so black, and that's what makes her eyes look so dark... .”

And suddenly, I remember, I felt horribly disgusted at the recollection ... and sick and angry both at them and at myself. I reproached myself and tried to think of something else. “Why did I not feel the slightest indignation with Versilov for the incident with the girl in the next room?” it suddenly occurred to me to wonder. For my part, I was firmly convinced that he had had amorous designs and had come to

amuse himself, but I was not particularly indignant at this. It seemed to me, indeed, that one could not have conceived of his behaving differently, and although I really was glad he had been put to shame, yet I did not blame him. It was not that which seemed important to me; what was important was the exasperation with which he had looked at me when I came in with the girl, the way he had looked at me as he had never done before.

“At last he has looked at me SERIOUSLY,” I thought, with a flutter at my heart. Ah, if I had not loved him I should not have been so overjoyed at his hatred!

At last I began to doze and fell asleep. I can just remember being aware of Vassin’s finishing his work, tidying away his things, looking carefully towards my sofa, undressing and putting out the light.

It was one o’clock at night.

4

Almost exactly two hours later I woke up with a start and, jumping up as though I were frantic, sat on my sofa. From the next room there arose fearful lamentations, screams, and sounds of weeping. Our door was wide open, and people were shouting and running to and fro in the lighted passage. I was on the point of calling to Vassin, but I realized that he was no longer in his bed. I did not know where to find the matches; I fumbled for my clothes and began hurriedly dressing in the dark. Evidently the landlady, and perhaps the lodgers, had run into the next room. Only one voice was wailing, however, that of the older woman: the youthful voice I had heard the day before, and so well remembered, was quite silent; I remember that this was the first thought that came into my mind. Before I had finished dressing Vassin came in hurriedly. He laid his hand on the matches instantly and lighted up the room. He was in his dressing-gown and slippers, and he immediately proceeded to dress.

“What’s happened?” I cried.

“A most unpleasant and bothersome business,” he answered almost angrily; “that young girl you were telling me about has hanged herself in the next room.”

I could not help crying out. I cannot describe the pang at my heart! We ran out into the passage. I must own I did not dare go into the room, and only saw the unhappy girl afterwards, when she had been taken down, and even then, indeed, at some distance and covered with a sheet, beyond which the two narrow soles of her shoes stood out. So I did not for some reason look into her face. The mother was in a fearful condition; our landlady was with her— not, however, greatly alarmed. All the lodgers in the flat had gathered round. There were only three of them: an elderly naval man, always very peevish and exacting, though on this occasion he was quite quiet, and an elderly couple, respectable people of the small functionary class who came from the province of Tver. I won’t attempt to describe the rest of that night, the general commotion and afterwards the visit of the police. Literally till daylight I kept shuddering and felt it my duty to sit up, though I did absolutely nothing. And indeed every one had an

extraordinarily cheery air, as though they had been particularly cheered by something. Vassin went off somewhere. The landlady turned out to be rather a decent woman, much better than I had imagined her. I persuaded her (and I put it down to my credit) that the mother must not be left alone with the daughter's corpse, and that she must, at least until to-morrow, take her into her room. The landlady at once agreed, and though the mother struggled and shed tears, refusing to leave her daughter, she did at last move into the landlady's room, and the latter immediately ordered the samovar to be brought. After that the lodgers went back to their rooms and shut the doors, but nothing would have induced me to go to bed, and I remained a long time with the landlady, who was positively relieved at the presence of a third person, and especially one who was able to give some information bearing on the case.

The samovar was most welcome, and in fact the samovar is the most essential thing in Russia, especially at times of particularly awful, sudden, and eccentric catastrophes and misfortunes; even the mother was induced to drink two cups—though, of course, only with much urging and almost compulsion. And yet I can honestly say that I have never seen a bitterer and more genuine sorrow than that poor mother's.

After the first paroxysms of sobbing and hysterics she was actually eager to talk, and I listened greedily to her story. There are unhappy people, especially women, who must be allowed to talk as freely as possible when they are in trouble. Moreover, there are characters too, blurred so to speak by sorrow, who all their life long have suffered, have suffered terribly much both of great sorrow and of continual worry about trifles, and who can never be surprised by anything, by any sort of sudden calamity, and who, above all, never, even beside the coffin of their dearest, can forget the rules of behaviour for propitiating people, which they have learnt by bitter experience. And I don't criticize it: there is neither the vulgarity of egoism nor the insolence of culture in this; there is perhaps more genuine goodness to be found in these simple hearts than in heroines of the loftiest demeanour, but the long habit of humiliation, the instinct of self-preservation, the years of timid anxiety and oppression, leave their mark at last. The poor girl who had died by her own hand was not like her mother in this. They were alike in face, however, though the dead girl was decidedly good-looking. The mother was not a very old woman, fifty at the most; she, too, was fair, but her eyes were sunken, her cheeks were hollow, and she had large yellow, uneven teeth. And indeed everything had a tinge of yellowness: the skin on her hands and face was like parchment; her dark dress had grown yellow with age, and the nail on the forefinger of her right hand* had been, I don't know why, carefully and tidily plastered up with yellow wax.

The poor woman's story was in parts quite disconnected. I will tell it as I understood it and as I remember it.

* This must be an error on Dostoevsky's part. Russian women sometimes plaster with wax the forefinger of the left hand to protect it from being pricked in sewing.—Translator's Note.

They had come from Moscow. She had long been a widow—"the widow of an official, however." Her husband had been in the government service, but had left them practically nothing "except a pension of two hundred roubles." But what are two hundred roubles? Olya grew up, however, and went to the high school—"and how well she did, how good she was at her lessons; she won the silver medal when she left" (at this point, of course, prolonged weeping). The deceased husband had lost a fortune of nearly four thousand roubles, invested with a merchant here in Petersburg. This merchant had suddenly grown rich again. "I had papers, I asked advice; I was told, 'Try, and you will certainly get it... .' I wrote, the merchant agreed: 'Go yourself,' I was told. Olya and I set off, and arrived a month ago. Our means were small: we took this room because it was the smallest of all and, as we could see ourselves, in a respectable house, and that's what mattered most to us. We were inexperienced women; every one takes advantage of us. Well, we paid you for one month. With one thing and another, Petersburg is ruinous. Our merchant gives us a flat refusal—"I don't know you or anything about you"; and the paper I had was not regular, I knew that. Then I was advised to go to a celebrated lawyer; he was a professor, not simply a lawyer but an expert, so he'd be sure to tell me what to do. I took him my last fifteen roubles. The lawyer came out to me, and he did not listen to me for three minutes: 'I see,' says he, 'I know,' says he. 'If the merchant wants to,' says he, 'he'll pay the money; if he doesn't want to, he won't, and if you take proceedings you may have to pay yourself, perhaps; you had far better come to terms.' He made a joke, then, out of the Gospel: 'Make peace,' said he, 'while your enemy is in the way with you, lest you pay to the uttermost farthing.' He laughed as he saw me out. My fifteen roubles were wasted! I came back to Olya; we sat facing one another. I began crying. Olya did not cry; she sat there, proud and indignant. She has always been like that with me; all her life, even when she was tiny, she was never one to moan, she was never one to cry, but she would sit and look fierce; it used to make me creep to look at her. And—would you believe it?—I was afraid of her, I was really quite afraid of her; I've been so for a long time past. I often wanted to grieve, but I did not dare before her. I went to the merchant for the last time. I cried before him freely: he said it was all right, and would not even listen. Meanwhile I must confess that, not having reckoned on being here for so long, we had been for some time without a penny. I began taking our clothes one by one to the pawnbroker's; we have been living on what we have pawned. I stripped myself of everything; she gave me the last of her linen, and I cried bitterly at taking it. She stamped, then she jumped up and ran off to the merchant herself. He was a widower; he talked to her. 'Come at five o'clock the day after to-morrow,' says he, 'perhaps I shall have something to say to you.' She came home quite gay: 'He says he may have something to say to me.' Well, I was pleased too, but yet I somehow felt a sort of chill at my heart. 'Something will come of it,' I thought, but I did not dare to question her. Two days later she came back from the merchant's, pale and trembling all over, and threw herself on her bed. I

saw what it meant, and did not dare to question her. And—would you believe it?—the villain had offered her fifteen roubles. ‘If I find you pure and virtuous I’ll hand you over another forty.’ He said that to her face—he wasn’t ashamed to. At that she flew at him, so she told me; he thrust her out, and even locked himself in the next room. And meanwhile I must confess, to tell the truth, we had nothing to eat. We brought out a jacket lined with hare-fur; we sold it. She went to a newspaper and put in an advertisement at once: she offered lessons in all subjects and in arithmetic. ‘If they’ll only pay thirty kopecks,’ she said. And in the end I began to be really alarmed at her: she would sit for hours at the window without saying a word, staring at the roof of the house opposite, and then she would suddenly cry out, ‘If I could only wash or dig!’ She would say one sentence like that and stamp her foot. And there was no one we knew here, no one we could go to: I wondered what would become of us. And all the while I was afraid to talk to her. One day she fell asleep in the daytime. She waked up, opened her eyes, and looked at me; I was sitting on the box, and I was looking at her too. She got up, came to me without saying a word, and threw her arms round me. And we could not help crying, both of us; we sat crying and clinging to each other. It was the first time in her life I had seen her like that. And just as we were sitting like that, your Nastasya came in and said, ‘There’s a lady inquiring for you.’ This was only four days ago. The lady came in; we saw she was very well dressed, though she spoke Russian, it seemed to me, with a German accent. ‘You advertised that you give lessons,’ she said. We were so delighted then, we made her sit down. She laughed in such a friendly way: ‘It’s not for me,’ she said, but my niece has small children; and if it suits you, come to us, and we will make arrangements.’ She gave an address, a flat in Voznessensky Street. She went away. Dear Olya set off the same day; she flew there. She came back two hours later; she was in hysterics, in convulsions. She told me afterwards: ‘I asked the porter where flat No. so-and-so was.’ The porter looked at her and said, ‘And what do you want to go to that flat for?’ He said that so strangely that it might have made one suspicious, but she was so self-willed, poor darling, so impatient, she could not bear impertinent questions. ‘Go along, then,’ he said, and he pointed up the stairs to her and went back himself to his little room. And what do you think! She went in, asked for the lady, and on all sides women ran up to her at once—horrid creatures, rouged; they rushed at her, laughing. ‘Please come in, please come in,’ they cried; they dragged her in. Some one was playing the piano. ‘I tried to get away from them,’ she said, ‘but they would not let me go.’ She was frightened, her legs gave way under her. They simply would not let her go; they talked to her coaxingly, they persuaded her, they uncorked a bottle of porter, they pressed it on her. She jumped up trembling, screamed at the top of her voice ‘Let me go, let me go!’ She rushed to the door; they held the door, she shrieked. Then the one who had been to see us the day before ran up and slapped my Olya twice in the face and pushed her out of the door: ‘You don’t deserve to be in a respectable house, you skinny slut!’ And another shouted after her on the stairs: ‘You came of yourself to beg of us because you have nothing to eat, but we won’t look at such an ugly fright!’ All that night she lay in a fever and delirious and

in the morning her eyes glittered; she got up and walked about. 'Justice,' she cried, 'she must be brought to justice!' I said nothing, but I thought, 'If you brought her up how could we prove it?' She walked about with set lips, wringing her hands and tears streaming down her face. And her whole face seemed darkened from that time up to the very end. On the third day she seemed better; she was quiet and seemed calmer. And then at four o'clock in the afternoon M. Versilov came to us. And I must say I can't understand, even now, how Olya, who was always so mistrustful, was ready to listen to him almost at the first word. What attracted us both more than anything was that he had such a grave, almost stern air; he spoke gently, impressively, and so politely—more than politely, respectfully even—and yet at the same time he showed no sign of trying to make up to us: it was plain to see he had come with a pure heart. 'I read your advertisement in the paper,' said he. 'You did not word it suitably, madam, and you may damage your prospects by that.' And he began explaining—I must own I did not understand—something about arithmetic, but I saw that Olya flushed and seemed to brighten up altogether. She listened and talked readily (and, to be sure, he must be a clever man!); I heard her even thank him. He questioned her so minutely about everything, and it seemed that he had lived a long time in Moscow, and it turned out that he knew the head mistress of the high school. 'I will be sure to find you lessons,' said he, 'for I know a great many people here, and I can, in fact, apply to many influential people, so that if you would prefer a permanent situation we might look out for that... . Meanwhile,' said he, 'forgive me one direct question: can I be of some use to you at once? It will be your doing me a favour, not my doing you one,' said he, 'if you will allow me to be of use to you in any way. Let it be a loan,' said he, 'and as soon as you have a situation, in a very short time, you will be able to repay me. Believe me, on my honour,' said he, 'if ever I were to come to poverty and you had plenty of everything I would come straight to you for some little help. I would send my wife and daughter' ... at least, I don't remember all his words, only I was moved to tears, for I saw that Olya's lips were trembling with gratitude too. 'If I take it,' she answered him, 'it is because I trust an honourable and humane man, who might have been my father... .' That was very well said by her, briefly and with dignity. 'A humane man,' said she. He stood up at once: 'I will get you lessons and a situation without fail. I will set to work this very day, for you have quite a satisfactory diploma too... .' I forgot to say that he looked through all her school certificates when he first came in; she showed them to him, and he examined her in several subjects... . 'You see, he examined me, mamma,' Olya said to me afterwards, 'and what a clever man he is,' she said; 'it is not often one speaks to such a well-educated, cultured man... .' And she was quite radiant. The money—sixty roubles, lay on the table: 'Take it, mamma,' said she; 'when I get a situation we will pay it back as soon as possible. We will show that we are honest and that we have delicacy: he has seen that already, though.' Then she paused. I saw her draw a deep breath. 'Do you know, mamma,' she said to me suddenly, 'if we had been coarse we should perhaps have refused to take it through pride, but by taking it now we only show our delicacy of feeling and that we trust him completely,

out of respect for his grey hair, don't we?' At first I did not quite understand: 'But why, Olya, not accept the benevolence a wealthy and honourable man if he has a good heart too?' She scowled at me. 'No, mamma,' she said, 'that's not it; I don't want benevolence, but his humanity is precious. And it would have been better really not to have taken the money at all, since he has promised to get me a situation; that's enough ... though we are in need.' 'Well, Olya,' said I, 'our need is so great that we could not have refused it.' I actually laughed. Well, I was pleased, but an hour later she turned to me: 'Don't spend that money yet, mamma,' said she resolutely. 'What?' said I. 'I mean it,' she said, and she broke off and said no more. She was silent all the evening, only at two o'clock in the night I waked up and heard Olya tossing in her bed: 'Are you awake, mamma?' 'Yes, I am awake.' 'Do you know, he meant to insult me.' 'What nonsense, what nonsense,' I said. 'There is no doubt of it,' she said; 'he is a vile man; don't dare to spend a farthing of his money.' I tried to talk to her. I burst out crying, in bed as I was. She turned away to the wall. 'Be quiet,' she said, 'let me go to sleep!' In the morning I looked at her; she was not like herself. And you may believe it or not, before God I swear she was not in her right mind then! From the time that she was insulted in that infamous place there was darkness and perplexity in her heart ... and in her brain. Looking at her that morning, I had misgivings about her; I was alarmed. I made up my mind I would not say a word to contradict her. 'He did not even leave his address, mamma,' she said. 'For shame, Olya,' I said; 'you listened to him last night; you praised him and were ready to shed tears of gratitude.' That was all I said, but she screamed and stamped. 'You are a woman of low feelings,' she said, 'brought up in the old slavish ideas... .' And then, without a word, she snatched up her hat, ran out. I called after her. I wondered what was the matter with her, where she had run. She had run to the address bureau to find out where Versilov lived. 'I'll take him back the money today and fling it in his face; he meant to insult me,' she said, 'like Safronov (that is the merchant), but Safronov insulted me like a coarse peasant, but he like a cunning Jesuit.' And just then, unhappily, that gentleman knocked at the door: 'I hear the name of Versilov,' he said; 'I can tell you about him.' When she heard Versilov's name she pounced on him. She was in a perfect frenzy; she kept talking away. I gazed at her in amazement. She was always a silent girl and had never talked to anyone like that, and with a perfect stranger too. Her cheeks were burning, her eyes glittered... . And he said at once: 'You are perfectly right, madam. Versilov,' said he, 'is just like the generals here, described in the newspapers; they dress themselves up with all their decorations and go after all the governesses who advertise in the papers. Sometimes they find what they want, or, if they don't, they sit and talk a little, make bushels of promises and go away, having got diversion out of it, anyway.' Olya actually laughed, but so bitterly, and I saw the gentleman take her hand and press it to his heart. 'I am a man of independent means, madam,' said he, 'and might well make a proposal to a fair maiden, but I'd better,' said he, 'kiss your little hand to begin with... .' And he was trying to kiss her hand. How she started! But I came to the rescue, and together we turned him out of the room. Then, towards evening, Olya snatched the

money from me and ran out. When she came back she said, 'I have revenged myself on that dishonourable man, mamma.' 'Oh, Olya, Olya,' I said, 'perhaps we have thrown away our happiness. You have insulted a generous, benevolent man!' I cried— I was so vexed with her I could not help it. She shouted at me. 'I won't have it, I won't have it!' she cried; 'if he were ever so honest, I don't want his charity! I don't want anyone to pity me!' I went to bed with no thought of anything. How many times I had looked on that nail in your wall where once there had been a looking-glass—it never entered my head, never; I never thought of it yesterday and I'd never thought of it before; I had no inkling of it, and I did not expect it of Olya at all. I usually sleep heavily and snore; it's the blood going to my head, and sometimes it goes to my heart. I call out in my sleep so that Olya wakes me up at night. 'What is the matter with you, mamma?' she would say; 'you sleep so heavily there's no waking you.' 'Oh, Olya,' I said, 'I do, I do.' That's how I must have slept this night, so that, after waiting a bit, she got up without fear of waking me. The strap, a long one from our trunk, had been lying about all that month where we could see it; only yesterday morning I had been thinking of tidying it away. And the chair she must have kicked away afterwards, and she had put her petticoat down beside it to prevent its banging on the floor. And it must have been a long time afterwards, a whole hour or more afterwards, that I waked up and called 'Olya, Olya'; all at once I felt something amiss, and called her name. Either because I did not hear her breathing in her bed, or perhaps I made out in the dark that the bed was empty— anyway, I got up suddenly and felt with my hand; there was no one in the bed and the pillow was cold. My heart sank; I stood still as though I were stunned; my mind was a blank. 'She's gone out,' I thought. I took a step, and by the bed I seemed to see her standing in the corner by the door. I stood still and gazed at her without speaking, and through the darkness she seemed to look at me without stirring... . 'But why has she got on a chair,' I wondered. 'Olya,' I whispered. I was frightened. 'Olya, do you hear?' But suddenly, as it were, it all dawned upon me. I went forward, held out both arms and put them round her, and she swayed in my arms; I swayed and she swayed with me. I understood and would not understand... . I wanted to cry out, but no cry came... . Ach! I fell on the floor and shrieked... ."

* * * * *

"Vassin," I said at six o'clock in the morning, "if it had not been for your Stebelkov this might not have happened."

"Who knows?—most likely it would have happened. One can't draw such a conclusion; everything was leading up to it, apart from that... . It is true that Stebelkov sometimes... ."

He broke off and frowned disagreeably. At seven o'clock he went out again; he still had a great deal to do. I was left at last entirely alone. It was by now daylight. I felt rather giddy. I was haunted by the figure of Versilov: this lady's story had brought him out in quite a different light. To think this over better, I lay down on Vassin's bed just as I was, in my clothes and my boots, just for a minute, with no intention of going to

sleep— and suddenly I fell asleep; I don't remember how it happened, indeed. I slept almost four hours; nobody waked me.

Chapter 10

1

I woke about half-past ten, and for a long time I could not believe my eyes: on the sofa on which I had slept the previous night was sitting my mother, and beside her—the unhappy mother of the dead girl. They were holding each other's hands, they were talking in whispers, I suppose, that they might not wake me, and both were crying. I got up from the bed, and flew straight to kiss my mother. She positively beamed all over, kissed me and made the sign of the cross over me three times with the right hand. Before we had time to say a word the door opened, and Versilov and Vassin came in. My mother at once got up and led the bereaved woman away. Vassin gave me his hand, while Versilov sank into an armchair without saying a word to me. Mother and he had evidently been here for some time. His face looked overcast and careworn.

“What I regret most of all,” he began saying slowly to Vassin, evidently in continuation of what they had been discussing outside, “is that I had no time to set it all right yesterday evening; then probably this terrible thing would not have happened! And indeed there was time, it was hardly eight o'clock. As soon as she ran away from us last night, I inwardly resolved to follow her and to reassure her, but this unforeseen and urgent business, though of course I might quite well have put it off till to-day ... or even for a week—this vexatious turn of affairs has hindered and ruined everything. That's just how things do happen!”

“Perhaps you would not have succeeded in reassuring her; things had gone too far already, apart from you,” Vassin put in.

“No, I should have succeeded, I certainly should have succeeded. And the idea did occur to me to send Sofia Andreyevna in my place. It flashed across my mind, but nothing more. Sofia Andreyevna alone would have convinced her, and the unhappy girl would have been alive. No, never again will I meddle ... in ‘good works’ ... and it is the only time in my life I have done it! And I imagined that I had kept up with the times and understood the younger generation. But we elders grow old almost before we grow ripe. And, by the way, there are a terrible number of modern people who go on considering themselves the younger generation from habit, because only yesterday they were such, and meantime they don't notice that they are no longer under the ban of the orthodox.”

“There has been a misunderstanding, and the misunderstanding is quite evident,” Vassin observed reasonably. “Her mother maintains that after the cruel way she was insulted in that infamous house, she seemed to lose her reason. Add to that her circumstances, the insult in the first place from the merchant ... all this might have happened

in the past, and, to my mind, is in no way particularly characteristic of the younger generation of to-day.”

“It’s impatient, the present generation, and has little understanding of reality; and, although that’s true of all young people in all ages, it’s particularly so in this ... tell me, what part had Mr. Stebelkov in the trouble?”

“Mr. Stebelkov,” I put in suddenly, “was the cause of it all. If it hadn’t been for him nothing would have happened. He poured oil on the flames.”

Versilov listened, but he did not glance at me. Vassin frowned.

“I blame myself for one ridiculous circumstance,” Versilov went on deliberately, dwelling on each syllable as before, “I believe that in my usual stupid way I allowed myself to be lively after a fashion—this frivolous little laugh—in fact, I was not sufficiently abrupt, dry and gloomy, three characteristics which seem to be greatly prized by the young generation. In fact, I gave her grounds for suspecting me of being a gay deceiver.”

“Quite the opposite,” I put in abruptly again, “the mother lays particular stress on your having made the best possible impression through your gravity, severity even, and sincerity—those were her very words. The dead girl herself praised you on the same grounds directly after you’d gone.”

“Y-yes?” Versilov mumbled with a cursory glance in my direction at last. “Take this scrap of paper, it’s essential to the business”— he held out a tiny sheet to Vassin. Vassin took it, and seeing I was looking at him with curiosity, gave it to me to read. It was a note of two straggling lines scrawled in pencil, and perhaps in the dark:

“Mother darling, forgive me for cutting short my *début* into life. Your Olya who is causing you such grief.”

“That was only found this morning,” Vassin explained

“What a strange letter!” I cried in astonishment.

“Why strange?” asked Vassin.

“How can anyone use humorous expressions at such a minute?”

Vassin looked at me inquiringly.

“And the humour is strange too,” I went on. “It’s the conventional school jargon that schoolfellows use with one another. Who could write ‘cut short my *début* into life’ at such a moment, in such a letter to her unhappy mother—and she seems to have loved her mother too.”

“Why not write it?” said Vassin, still not understanding.

“There’s absolutely no humour about it,” observed Versilov at last, “the expression, of course, is inappropriate, and quite incongruous, and may, as you say, have been picked up from some high-school slang or from some journalistic stuff; but the dead girl used it in that awful letter quite simply and earnestly”

“That’s impossible; she had completed her studies and won the silver medal.”

“A silver medal has nothing to do with it. Lots of them complete their studies as brilliantly nowadays.”

“The younger generation again,” said Vassin, smiling.

“Not at all,” said Versilov, getting up and taking his hat. If the present generation is deficient on the literary side there’s no doubt that it possesses other qualifications,” he added with unusual gravity. “At the same time ‘many’ does not mean ‘all’: you, for instance, I don’t accuse of being badly educated on the literary side, and you’re a young man too.”

“Vassin saw nothing wrong in the use of ‘début’ either,” I could not resist saying.

Versilov held out his hand to Vassin without speaking. The latter took up his cap to go with him, calling out to me: “Goodbye for now.” Versilov went out without noticing me. I too had no time to lose. Come what might, I had to run and find a lodging—now more necessary than ever. My mother was not with the landlady. She had gone out, taking the bereaved woman with her. I went out into the street, feeling particularly cheerful and confident. A new and mighty feeling had sprung up in my soul. As luck would have it, everything helped to maintain this mood. I was exceptionally fortunate and quickly found a lodging in every way suitable. Of this lodging later, but for the moment I will continue with what is more important.

It was past one when I went back to Vassin’s to fetch my trunk, and again found him at home. When he saw me he cried with a sincere and good-humoured air:

“How glad I am you’ve caught me! I was just going out. I can tell you a piece of news that I think will interest you particularly.”

“I’m sure of that,” I cried.

“I say, you do look cheerful! Tell me, did you know anything about a letter that was preserved by Kraft, and came into Versilov’s hands yesterday, something concerning the lawsuit he has just won? In this letter, the testator declares intentions contrary to the decision in the lawcourts yesterday. The letter was written long ago. I know nothing definite about it in fact, but don’t you know something?”

“To be sure I do. The day before yesterday Kraft took me home with him from those people on purpose to give me the letter, and I gave it to Versilov yesterday.”

“Yes? That’s just what I thought. Only fancy, that’s just the business Versilov was speaking of just now, that prevented him from coming yesterday evening to see that girl—it was owing to that letter. Versilov went straight yesterday evening to Prince Sokolsky’s lawyer, handed in the letter, and refused to take the fortune he had won. By now this refusal has been put into legal form. Versilov is not making Prince Sokolsky a present of the money, but declares that he acknowledges his claim to it.”

I was dumbfounded, but ecstatic. I had in reality been convinced that Versilov would destroy the letter, and, what is more, though I had told Kraft that this would be dishonourable, and although I had repeated this to myself in the restaurant, and had told myself that “it was to find a true man, not a man like this that I had come”—yet deeper down, that is, in my inmost soul, I felt that there was nothing to be done but to destroy the letter, that is to say, I looked upon this as quite a natural thing to do. If I blamed Versilov for it afterwards I simply blamed him on purpose, to keep up appearances, and to maintain my moral superiority. But hearing now of Versilov’s noble action I was moved to genuine and whole-hearted enthusiasm, blaming myself

with shame and remorse for my cynicism and indifference to principle, and instantly exalting Versilov to heights far above me. I almost embraced Vassin.

“What a man! What a man!” I exclaimed, rapturously. “Who else would have done it?”

“I quite agree with you that very many people would not have done it ... and that it was undoubtedly an extremely disinterested action... .”

“But ... ? Finish, Vassin. You have a ‘but’?”

“Yes, of course there is a ‘but’; Versilov’s action, to my mind, is a little too hasty, and not quite ingenuous,” said Vassin with a smile.

“Not ingenuous?”

“Yes. There’s too much of the ‘hero on the pedestal’ about it. For in any case he might have done the same thing without injuring himself. Some part of the inheritance, if not half of it, might well have remained with him, even from the most scrupulous standpoint, especially as the letter has no legal significance, and he has already won the case. The lawyer on the other side shares my opinion. I’ve just been talking to him. His conduct would have been no less handsome; but simply through a whim due to pride, things have turned out differently. What’s more, Mr. Versilov let himself be carried away by his feelings, and acted too precipitately. He said himself yesterday that he might have put it off for a whole week... .”

“Do you know, Vassin, I can’t help agreeing with you, but ... I like it better so, it pleases me more!”

“However, it’s a matter of taste! You asked for my opinion or I should have held my tongue.”

“Even if there is something of the ‘pedestal’ about it, so much the better,” I said. “A pedestal may be a pedestal but in itself it’s a very precious thing. This ‘pedestal’ is, anyway, an ‘ideal’ of a sort, and it’s by no means an improvement that some modern souls are without it: it’s better to have it even in a slightly distorted form! And I’m sure you think so yourself, Vassin darling, Vassin, my dear Vassin! I am raving but of course you understand me. That’s what you’re for, Vassin. In any case I embrace and kiss you, Vassin!”

“So pleased?”

“Yes, awfully pleased. For the man ‘was dead and liveth, he was lost and is found’! Vassin, I’m a miserable wretch of a boy, I’m not as good as you. I recognize it just because at some moments I’m different, deeper and loftier. I say this because the day before yesterday I flattered you to your face (and I did that because I had been humiliated and crushed)—I hated you for it for two whole days. I swore the same night that I would never come and see you, and I came to you yesterday morning simply from spite, do you understand, FROM SPITE. I sat here alone criticizing your room and you, and every one of your books and your landlady. I tried to humble you and laugh at you.”

“You shouldn’t say that... .”

“Yesterday evening, when I concluded from some phrase of yours that you did not understand women, I felt glad that I was able to detect you in it. This morning, when I scored off you over the ‘début,’ I was awfully pleased again, and all because I had praised you up so before.”

“I should think so indeed!” Vassin cried at last (he still went on smiling, not in the least surprised at me). “Why, that happens with almost every one, only no one admits it, and one ought not to confess it at all, because in any case it passes, and leads to nothing.”

“Is it really the same with every one? Is every one the same? And you say that quite calmly? Why, one can’t go on living with such views!”

“You think then that:

To me more dear the lie ennobling Than Truth’s dark infamy revealed!”

“But that’s true, you know,” I cried. “There’s a sacred axiom in those two lines!”

“I don’t know. I can’t undertake to decide whether those lines are true or not. Perhaps, as always, the truth lies in the mean: that is, that in one case truth is sacred and in another falsehood. The only thing I know for certain is that that idea will long remain one of the questions most disputed among men. In any case I observe that at the moment you’re longing to dance. Well, dance away then, exercise is wholesome; but I have a mass of work to get through this morning ... and I’ve lingered on with you till I’m late!”

“I’m going! I’m going! I’m just off! One word only,” I cried, after seizing my trunk, “my ‘throwing myself on your neck’ again; it’s simply because when I came in you told me this news with such genuine pleasure and were ‘so glad’ I had found you, and after the ‘début’ incident this morning; that real gladness of yours turned my ‘youthful ardent soul’ to you again. Well, good-bye, good-bye, I’ll do my best not to come in the future, and I know that that will please you very much, as I see from your eyes, and it will be an advantage to both of us.”

Chattering like this, and almost spluttering in my joyful babble, I hauled up my trunk and set off with it to my lodging. What delighted me most of all was that Versilov had been so unmistakably angry with me, and had been unwilling to speak to me or look at me. As soon as I had deposited my trunk, I at once flew off to my old prince. I must confess that I had rather felt not seeing him those two days. Besides, he would no doubt have heard already about Versilov.

2

I knew he would be delighted to see me, and I protest that I should have gone, apart from Versilov altogether. What had alarmed me yesterday and that morning was the thought that I might meet Katerina Nikolaevna; but now I was afraid of nothing.

He embraced me joyfully.

“About Versilov! Have you heard?” I began forthwith on the great news.

“Cher enfant, my dear boy, it’s so magnanimous, so noble—in fact it made an overwhelming impression even on Kilyan” (this was the clerk downstairs). “It’s injudicious on his part, but it’s magnificent, it’s heroic! One must cherish the ideal!”

“Yes, one must, mustn’t one? We were always agreed about that.”

“My dear boy, we always have agreed. Where have you been? I wanted very much to come and see you but I didn’t know where to find you ... for I couldn’t go to Versilov’s anyway... . Though now, after all this ... you know, my boy, I believe it’s by this he has always conquered the women’s hearts, by these qualities, no doubt of it... .”

“By the way, for fear I forget it, I’ve been saving this up for you. A very low fellow, a ridiculous fool, abusing Versilov to my face yesterday, used the expression that he was a ‘petticoat prophet’; what an expression—was it his own expression? I have been treasuring it up for you... .”

“A ‘petticoat prophet’? Mais ... c’est charmant! Ha-ha! But that fits him so well, or rather it doesn’t—foo! ... But it’s so apt ... at least it’s not apt at all but... .”

“Never mind, never mind, don’t worry yourself, look upon it simply as a bon mot!”

“It’s a capital bon mot, and do you know, it has a deep significance... There’s a perfectly true idea in it. That is, would you believe it... . In fact, I’ll tell you a tiny little secret. Have you noticed that girl Olympiada? Would you believe it, she’s got a little heartache for Andrey Petrovitch; in fact it goes so far as cherishing a ...”

“Cherishing! What doesn’t she deserve?” I cried with a gesture of contempt.

“Mon cher, don’t shout, it’s all nonsense, it may be you’re right from your point of view. By the way, what was the matter with you last time you were here and Katerina Nikolaevna arrived? ... You staggered; I thought you were going to fall down, and was on the point of rushing to support you.”

“Never mind that now. The fact is I was simply confused for a special reason... .”

“You’re blushing now.”

“And you must rub it in of course. You know that she’s on bad terms with Versilov ... and then all this; so it upset me. Ech, leave that; later!”

“Yes, let’s leave it! I’m delighted to... . In fact, I’ve been very much to blame in regard to her and I remember I grumbled about her to you... . Forget it, my dear; she will change her opinion of you, too. I quite foresee that... . Ah, here’s Prince Sergay!”

A handsome young officer walked in. I looked at him eagerly, I had never seen him before. I call him handsome for every one called him so, but there was something not altogether attractive in that handsome young face. I note this as the impression made the first instant, my first view of him, which remained with me always.

He was thin and finely built, with brown hair, a fresh but somewhat sallow skin and an expression of determination. There was a rather hard look in his beautiful dark eyes even when he was perfectly calm. But his resolute expression repelled one just because one felt that its resoluteness cost him little. But I cannot put it into words... . It is true that his face was able to change suddenly from hardness to a wonderfully friendly, gentle and tender expression, and, what is more, with unmistakable frankness. It was just that frankness which was attractive. I will note another characteristic: in spite of

its friendliness and frankness his face never looked gay; even when he laughed with whole-hearted mirth there was always a feeling that there was no trace in his heart of genuine, serene, lighthearted gaiety... . But it is extremely difficult to describe a face like this. I'm utterly incapable of it. In his usual stupid way the old prince hastened to introduce us.

"This is my young friend Arkady Andreyevitch Dolgoruky" (again "Andreyovitch!").

The young man turned to me with redoubled courtesy, but it was evident that my name was quite unknown to him.

"He's ... a relation of Andrey Petrovitch's," murmured my vexatious old prince. (How tiresome these old men sometimes are with their little ways!) The young man at once realized who I was.

"Ach! I heard of you long ago... ." he said quickly. "I had the very great pleasure of making the acquaintance of your sister Lizaveta Makarovna last year at Luga... . She talked to me about you too."

I was surprised; there was a glow of real pleasure in his face.

"Excuse me, prince," I answered, drawing back both my hands, "I ought to tell you frankly, and I'm glad to be speaking in the presence of our dear prince, that I was actually desirous of meeting you, and quite recently, only yesterday, desired it with very different motives. I tell you this directly although it may surprise you. In short, I wanted to challenge you for the insult you offered to Versilov a year and a half ago in Ems. And though perhaps you would not have accepted my challenge, as I'm only a schoolboy, and not of age, yet I should have sent you the challenge, however you might have taken it or whatever you might have done, and I confess I have the same intention still."

The old prince told me afterwards that I succeeded in pronouncing these words with great dignity.

There was a look of genuine distress on the young man's face.

"You didn't let me finish," he answered earnestly. "The real cordiality with which I greeted you is due to my present feeling for Andrey Petrovitch. I'm sorry I cannot at once tell you all the circumstances. But I assure you on my honour that I have long regarded my unfortunate conduct at Ems with the greatest regret. I resolved on my return to Petersburg to make every reparation within my power, that is, literally to make him an apology in any form he might select. The highest and weightiest considerations have caused this change in my views. The fact that we were at law with one another would not have affected my determination in the least. His action in regard to me yesterday has, so to speak, moved me to the depths of my soul, and even now, would you believe it, I can't get over it. And now, I must tell you, I've come to the prince to inform him of an astounding circumstance. Three hours ago, that is, just at the time when he was drawing up the deed with the lawyer, a friend of Andrey Petrovitch's came to me bringing a challenge from him to a duel ... a formal challenge for the affair at Ems... ."

“He challenged you?” I cried, and I felt that my eyes glowed and the blood rushed into my face.

“Yes, challenged me. I at once accepted the challenge, but resolved before our meeting to send him a letter in which I explain my view of my conduct, and my deep regret for my horrible blunder ... for it was only a blunder, an unlucky, fatal blunder! I may observe that my position in the regiment forced me to run the risk of this duel, and that by sending such a letter before our meeting I have exposed myself to public censure ... do you understand? But in spite of that, I made up my mind to send it, and I’ve only not done so because an hour after the challenge I received another letter from him in which he apologizes for having troubled me, asks me to forget the challenge, and adds that he regrets his ‘momentary outburst of cowardice and egoism’—his own words. So that he relieves me from all obligation to send the letter. I had not yet dispatched it, but I have come to say something about this to the prince... . And I assure you I have suffered far more from the reproaches of my conscience than anyone... . Is this sufficient explanation for you, Arkady Makarovitch, for the time at any rate? Will you do me the honour to believe in my complete sincerity?”

I was completely conquered. I found a perfect frankness, which was the last thing I had expected. Indeed, I had expected nothing of this kind. I muttered something in reply and forthwith held out both hands. He shook both of them in his delightedly. Then he drew the old prince away and talked to him for five minutes in the latter’s bedroom.

“If you want to do me particular pleasure,” he said frankly in a loud voice, addressing me as he came out of the prince’s room, “come back straight with me and I will show you the letter I am just sending to Andrey Petrovitch and with it his letter to me.”

I consented with the utmost readiness. My old prince made a great bustle at seeing us off and called me, too, apart into his room for a minute.

“Mon ami, how glad I am, how glad I am... . We’ll talk of it all later. By the way, I’ve two letters here in my portfolio. One has to be delivered with a personal explanation and the other must go to the bank—and there too... .”

And he at once gave me two commissions which he pretended were urgent and required exceptional effort and attention. I should have to go, deliver them myself, give a receipt and so on.

“Ha, you are cunning!” I cried as I took the letters, “I swear all this is nonsense and you’ve no work for me to do at all. You’ve invented these two jobs on purpose to make me believe that I am of use and not taking money for nothing.”

“Mon enfant, I protest that you are mistaken. They are both urgent matters. Cher enfant!” he cried, suddenly overcome by a rush of emotion, “my dear young friend” (he put both hands on my head), “I bless you and your destiny. Let us always be as true-hearted as to-day ... as kind-hearted and good as possible, let us love all that is fair and good ... in all its varied forms... . Well, enfin ... enfin rendons grâce ... et je te benis!”

He could not go on, but whimpered over my head. I must confess I was almost in tears too; anyway I embraced my queer old friend with sincere and delighted feeling. We kissed each other warmly.

3

Prince Sergay as I shall call him (that is Prince Sergay Petrovitch Sokolsky) drove me in a smart victoria to his flat, and my first impression was one of surprise at its magnificence. Not that it was really magnificent, but it was a flat such as “well-to-do people” live in, light, large, lofty rooms (I saw two of them) and the furniture well padded, comfortable, abundant and of the best— though I’ve no idea whether it was in the Versailles or Renaissance style. There were rugs, carvings, and statuettes, though everybody said that the Sokolskys were beggars, and had absolutely nothing. I had heard, however, that Prince Sergay had cut a dash wherever he could, here, in Moscow, in his old regiment and in Paris, that he was a gambler and that he had debts. My coat was crumpled and covered with fluff, too, because I had slept in it without undressing, and this was the fourth day I had worn my shirt. My coat was not really shabby but when I went into Prince Sergay’s, I recalled Versilov’s suggestion that I should have a new suit.

“Only fancy, owing to a case of suicide, I slept all night without undressing,” I observed with a casual air, and as he immediately looked attentive I briefly told the story. But what interested him most was evidently his letter. What seemed strangest to me was that he had not smiled nor betrayed the slightest symptom of amusement when I had told him I meant to challenge him to a duel. Though I should have been able to prevent his laughing, his gravity was strange in a man of his class. We sat opposite one another in the middle of the room, at his immense writing table, and he handed me for my inspection the fair copy of his letter to Versilov. The letter was very much like all that he had just told me at the old prince’s; it was written with warmth, indeed. I really did not know at first what to make of his evident frankness and his apparent leaning towards what was good and right, but I was already beginning to be conquered by it, for after all what reason had I for disbelieving it? Whatever he was like, and whatever stories were told of him, he yet might have good impulses. I looked, too, at Versilov’s second note, which consisted of seven lines—his withdrawal of his challenge. Though he did, it is true, speak of his own cowardice and egoism, yet on the whole the note was suggestive of a sort of disdain ... or rather there was apparent in the whole episode a superlative nonchalance. I did not, however, utter this thought aloud.

“What do you think of this withdrawal, though?” I asked, “you don’t suppose he acted from cowardice, do you?”

“Of course not,” said Prince Sergay with a smile, though a very grave one, and in fact he was becoming more and more preoccupied. “I know quite well how manly he is. It’s a special point of view ... his peculiar turn of ideas.”

“No doubt,” I broke in warmly. “A fellow called Vassin says that there’s too much of the ‘pedestal’ about the line he has taken with this letter and his refusing to take the fortune... . But to my mind things like that aren’t done for effect but correspond with something fundamental within.”

“I know Mr. Vassin very well,” observed Prince Sergay.

“Oh, yes, you must have seen him in Luga.”

We suddenly glanced at one another, and, I remember, I flushed a little. Anyway he changed the subject. I had a great longing to talk, however. The thought of one person I had met the day before tempted me to ask him certain questions, but I did not know how to approach the subject. And altogether I felt ill at ease. I was impressed, too, by his perfect breeding, his courtesy, his manner, his absence of constraint, in fact by the polish which these aristocrats acquire almost from the cradle. I saw two glaring mistakes in grammar in his letter. And as a rule, when I meet such people I’m not at all overawed and only become more abrupt, which is sometimes, perhaps, a mistake. But on this occasion the thought that I was covered with fluff contributed to my discomfiture so that, in fact, I floundered a little and dropped into being over-familiar. I caught Prince Sergay eyeing me very intently at times.

“Tell me, prince,” I blurted out suddenly, “don’t you secretly think it absurd that a youngster like me should think of challenging you, especially for an affront to some one else?”

“An affront to a father may well be resented. No, I don’t think it’s absurd.”

“It seems to me that it’s dreadfully absurd ... from one point of view, not of course from my own. Especially as my name is Dolgoruky and not Versilov. And if you’re telling me a falsehood, or are trying to smooth things over simply from worldly politeness, it stands to reason that you are deceiving me in everything else.”

“No, I don’t think it’s absurd,” he repeated with great seriousness. “How could you help feeling like a son to your father? It’s true, you’re young ... because ... I don’t know ... I believe that a youth not of age can’t fight a duel ... and a challenge can’t be accepted from him ... by the rules... . But there is, if you like, one serious objection to be made: if you send a challenge without the knowledge of the offended party on whose behalf you are acting, you seem to be guilty of a certain lack of respect to him, don’t you? ...”

Our conversation was interrupted by a footman who came in to make some announcement. Prince Sergay, who seemed to have been expecting him, went at once to meet him without finishing what he was saying. So the announcement was made in an undertone and I did not hear it.

“Excuse me,” said Prince Sergay, turning to me, “I’ll be back in a moment.”

And he went out. I was left alone; I walked up and down the room, thinking. Strange to say, he attracted me and at the same time repelled me intensely. There was something in him for which I could not find a name, though it was very repellent. “If he isn’t laughing at me he certainly must be very guileless, but if he has been laughing at me then ... perhaps I should think him cleverer... .” I thought rather oddly. I went up to

the table, and read the letter to Versilov once more. In my abstraction I didn't notice the time, but when I roused myself I found that the prince's minute had lasted at least a quarter of an hour. This disturbed me a little; I walked up and down once more, at last I took my hat and decided, I remember, to go out to try and find some one to send to Prince Sergay, and when he came, to say good-bye to him at once, declaring that I had work to do and could stay no longer. I fancied that that would be the most suitable thing to do, for I was rather tormented by the idea that he was treating me very casually in leaving me so long.

There were two doors in the room, both shut, and on the same side, one at each end of it. Forgetting which door I had come in by, or rather lost in thought, I opened one of them, and suddenly, in a long narrow room, I saw, sitting on the sofa, my sister Liza. There was no one else in the room and she was certainly waiting for some one. But before I had time even to feel surprised, I heard the voice of Prince Sergay speaking loudly to some one, and returning to the study. I hurriedly closed the door and Prince Sergay, coming in at the other, noticed nothing. I remember he began to apologize and said something about "Anna Fyodorovna." But I was so amazed and confused that I hardly took in what he said, and could only mutter that I simply must go home, and stubbornly persisting in this, I beat a hasty retreat. The well-bred prince must have looked with curiosity at my manners. He came with me right into the hall, still talking, and I neither answered nor looked at him.

4

I turned to the left when I got into the street and walked away at random. There was nothing coherent in my mind. I walked along slowly and I believe I had walked a good way, some five hundred paces, when I felt a light tap on my shoulder. I turned and saw Liza; she had overtaken me and tapped me on the shoulder with her umbrella. There was a wonderful gaiety and a touch of roguishness in her beaming eyes.

"How glad I am you came this way, or I shouldn't have met you to-day!" She was a little out of breath from walking fast.

"How breathless you are."

"I've been running so as to catch you up."

"Liza, was it you I saw just now?"

"Where?"

"At the prince's... . At Prince Sokolsky's."

"No, it wasn't me. You didn't see me... ."

I made no answer and we walked on for ten paces. Liza burst into a fit of laughter.

"It was me, of course it was! Why, you saw me yourself, you looked into my eyes, and I looked into yours, so how can you ask whether you saw me? What a character! And do you know I dreadfully wanted to laugh when you looked at me then. You looked so awfully funny."

She laughed violently. I felt all the anguish in my heart fade away at once.

“But tell me how did you come to be there?”

“To see Anna Fyodorovna.”

“What Anna Fyodorovna?”

“Mme. Stolbyeév. When we were staying in Luga I used to spend whole days with her. She used to receive mother, too, and used even to come and see us, though she visited scarcely anyone else there. She is a distant relation of Andrey Petrovitch’s, and a relation of Prince Sokolsky’s too: she’s a sort of old aunt of his.”

“Then she lives at Prince Sokolsky’s?”

“No, he lives with her.”

“Then whose flat is it?”

“It’s her flat. The whole flat has been hers for the last year. Prince Sokolsky has only just arrived and is staying with her. Yes, and she’s only been in Petersburg four days herself.”

“I say, Liza, bother her flat and her too!”

“No, she’s splendid.”

“Well, let her be, that’s her affair. We’re splendid too! See what a day it is, see how jolly! How pretty you are to-day, Liza. But you’re an awful baby though.”

“Arkady, tell me, that girl, the one who came yesterday... .”

“Oh, the pity of it, Liza! The pity of it!”

“Ach, what a pity! What a fate! Do you know it’s a sin for us to be walking here so happily while her soul is hovering somewhere in darkness, in some unfathomable darkness, after her sin and the wrong done her... . Arkady, who was responsible for her suicide? Oh, how terrible it is! Do you ever think of that outer darkness? Ach, how I fear death, and how sinful it is. I don’t like the dark, what a glorious thing the sun is! Mother says it’s a sin to be afraid... . Arkady, do you know mother well?”

“Very little, Liza. Very little so far.”

“Ah, what a wonderful person she is; and you ought to get to know her! She needs understanding... .”

“Yes, but you see, I didn’t know you either; but I know you now, thoroughly. I’ve found you out altogether in one minute. Though you are afraid of death, Liza, you must be proud, bold, plucky. Better than I am, ever so much better! I like you awfully, Liza. Ach, Liza! let death come when it must, but meantime let us live— let us live! Oh, let us pity that poor girl, but let us bless life all the same! Don’t you think so? I have an ‘idea,’ Liza. Liza, you know, of course, that Versilov has refused to take the fortune? You don’t know my soul, Liza, you don’t know what that man has meant to me... .”

“Not know indeed! I know all that.”

“You know all about it? But, of course, you would! You’re clever, cleverer than Vassin. Mother and you have eyes that are penetrating and humane, I mean a point of view that is. I’m talking nonsense... . Liza, I’m not good for much, in lots of ways.”

“You want taking in hand, that’s all.”

“Take me in hand, Liza. How nice it is to look at you to-day. Do you know that you are very pretty? I have never seen your eyes before... . I’ve only seen them for the first time to-day ... where did you get them to-day, Liza? Where have you bought them? What price have you paid for them? Liza, I’ve never had a friend, and I’ve thought the idea of friendship nonsense; but it’s not nonsense with you... . Shall we be friends! You understand what I mean?”

“I quite understand.”

“And you know—we’ll simply be friends, no conditions, no contract.”

“Yes, simply, simply, with only one condition: that if we ever blame one another, if we’re displeased about anything, if we become nasty and horrid, even if we forget all this,—we will never forget this day, and this hour! Let’s vow that to ourselves. Let us vow that we will always remember this day and how we walked arm in arm together, and how we laughed and were gay... . Yes? Shall we?”

“Yes, Liza, yes, I swear. But, Liza, I feel as though I’m hearing you talk for the first time... . Liza, have you read much?”

“He has never asked till now! Only yesterday for the first time, when I said something, you deigned to notice me, honoured sir, Mr. Wiseacre.”

“But why didn’t you begin to talk to me if I’ve been such a fool?”

“I kept expecting you’d grow wiser. I’ve been watching you from the very first, Arkady Makarovitch, and as I watched you I said to myself ‘he’ll come to me, it’s bound to end in his coming’—and I made up my mind I’d better leave you the honour of taking the first step. ‘No,’ I said to myself, ‘you can run after me.’”

“Ah, you coquette! Come, Liza, tell me honestly, have you been laughing at me for the last month?”

“Oh, you are funny, you’re awfully funny, Arkady! And do you know, what I’ve been loving you for most all this month is your being so queer. But in some ways you’re a horrid boy too—I say that for fear you should grow conceited. And do you know who else has been laughing at you? Mother’s been laughing at you, mother and I together. ‘Oh my,’ we whispered, ‘what a queer boy! My goodness, what a queer boy!’ And you sat all the while imagining that we were trembling before you.”

“Liza, what do you think about Versilov?”

“I think a great deal about him; but we won’t talk about him just now, you know. There’s no need to talk of him to-day, is there?”

“Quite so! Yes, you’re awfully clever, Liza! You are certainly cleverer than I am. You wait a bit, Liza, I’ll make an end of all this, and then I shall have something to tell you... .”

“What are you frowning at?”

“I’m not frowning, Liza, it’s nothing... . You see, Liza, it’s best to be open: it’s a peculiarity of mine that I don’t like some tender spots on my soul being touched upon ... or rather, it’s shameful to be often displaying certain feelings for the admiration of all, isn’t it? So that I sometimes prefer to frown and hold my tongue. You’re clever, you must understand.”

“Yes, and what’s more, I’m the same myself; I understand you in everything. Do you know that mother’s the same too?”

“Ah, Liza! Oh, to live a long while on this earth! Ah? What did you say?”

“I said nothing.”

“You’re looking?”

“Yes, and so are you. I look at you and love you.”

I went with her almost all the way home and gave her my address. As we parted, for the first time in my life I kissed her... .

5

And all this would have been very nice but there was one thing that was not nice: one painful thought had been throbbing in my mind all night and I could not shake it off. This was, that when I had met that unhappy girl at the gate I told her I was leaving the house myself, leaving home, that one left bad people and made a home for oneself, and that Versilov had a lot of illegitimate children. Such words from a son about his father must, of course, have confirmed all her suspicions of Versilov’s character and of his having insulted her. I had blamed Stebelkov, but perhaps I had been the chief one to pour oil on the flames. That thought was awful, it is awful even now... . But then, that morning, though I’d begun to be uneasy, I told myself it was all nonsense. “Oh, ‘things had gone too far already’ apart from me,” I repeated from time to time, “it’s nothing; it will pass! I shall get over it. I shall make up for this somehow, I’ve fifty years before me!”

But yet the idea haunted me.

Part 2

Chapter 1

1

I pass over an interval of almost two months. The reader need not be uneasy, everything will be clear from the latter part of my story. I start again from the 15th of November, a day I remember only too well for many reasons. To begin with, no one who had known me two months before would have recognized me, externally anyway, that is to say, anyone would have known me but would not have been able to make me out. To begin with I was dressed like a dandy. The conscientious and tasteful Frenchman, whom Versilov had once tried to recommend me, had not only made me a whole suit, but had already been rejected as not good enough. I already had suits made by other, superior, tailors, of a better class, and I even ran up bills with them. I had an account, too, at a celebrated restaurant, but I was still a little nervous there and paid on the spot whenever I had money, though I knew it was *mauvais ton*, and that I was compromising myself by doing so. A French barber on the Nevsky Prospect was on familiar terms with me, and told me anecdotes as he dressed my hair. And I must confess I practised my French on him. Though I know French, and fairly well indeed, yet I'm afraid of beginning to speak it in grand society; and I dare say my accent is far from Parisian. I have a smart coachman, Matvey, with a smart turn-out, and he is always at my service when I send for him; he has a pale sorrel horse, a fast trotter (I don't like greys). Everything is not perfect, however: it's the 15th of November and has been wintry weather for the last three days, and my fur coat is an old one, lined with raccoon, that once was Versilov's. It wouldn't fetch more than twenty-five roubles. I must get a new one, and my pocket is empty, and I must, besides, have money in reserve for this evening whatever happens—without that I shall be ruined and miserable: that was how I put it to myself at the time. Oh, degradation! Where had these thousands come from, these fast trotters, these expensive restaurants? How could I all at once change like this and forget everything? Shame! Reader, I am beginning now the story of my shame and disgrace, and nothing in life can be more shameful to me than these recollections.

I speak as a judge and I know that I was guilty. Even in the whirl in which I was caught up, and though I was alone without a guide or counsellor, I was, I swear, conscious of my downfall, and so there's no excuse for me. And yet, for those two

months I was almost happy—why almost? I was quite happy! And so happy—would it be believed—that the consciousness of my degradation, of which I had glimpses at moments (frequent moments!) and which made me shudder in my inmost soul, only intoxicated me the more. “What do I care if I’m fallen! And I won’t fall, I’ll get out of it! I have a lucky star!” I was crossing a precipice on a thin plank without a rail, and I was pleased at my position, and even peeped into the abyss. It was risky and it was delightful. And “my idea?” My “idea” later, the idea would wait. Everything that happened was simply “a temporary deviation.” “Why not enjoy oneself?” That’s what was amiss with my idea, I repeat, it admitted of all sorts of deviations; if it had not been so firm and fundamental I might have been afraid of deviating.

And meanwhile I kept on the same humble lodging; I kept it on but I didn’t live in it; there I kept my trunk, my bag, and my various properties. But I really lived with Prince Sergay. I spent my days there and I slept there at night. And this went on for weeks... . How this came to pass I’ll tell in a minute, but meanwhile I will describe my little lodging. It was already dear to me. Versilov had come to see me there of himself, first of all after our quarrel, and often subsequently. I repeat, this was a period of shame but of great happiness... . Yes, and everything at that time was so successful and so smiling. “And what was all that depression in the past about?” I wondered in some ecstatic moments, “why those old painful self-lacerations, my solitary and gloomy childhood, my foolish dreams under my quilt, my vows, my calculations, even my ‘idea’? I imagined and invented all that, and it turns out that the world’s not like that at all; see how happy and gay I am: I have a father—Versilov; I have a friend— Prince Sergay; I have besides ... but that ‘besides’ we’ll leave.”

Alas, it was all done in the name of love, magnanimity, honour, and afterwards it turned out hideous, shameless and ignominious.

Enough.

2

He came to see me for the first time three days after our rupture. I was not at home, and he waited for me. Though I had been expecting him every day, when I went into my tiny cupboard of a room there was a mist before my eyes, and my heart beat so violently that I stopped short in the doorway. Fortunately my landlord was with him, having thought it necessary to introduce himself at once, that the visitor might not be bored with waiting. He was eagerly describing something to Versilov. He was a titular counsellor, a man about forty, much disfigured by small-pox, very poor, and burdened with a consumptive wife and an invalid child. He was of a very communicative and unassuming character, but not without tact. I was relieved at his presence, which was a positive deliverance for me, for what could I have said to Versilov? I had known, known in earnest that Versilov would come of his own prompting—exactly as I wanted him to, for nothing in the world would have induced me to go to him first, and not from obstinacy, but just from love of him; a sort of jealous love—I can’t express it. Indeed,

the reader won't find me eloquent at any time. But though I had been expecting him for those three days, and had been continually picturing how he would come in, yet though I tried my utmost, I could not imagine what we should say to one another at first, after all that had happened.

"Ah, here you are!" he said to me affectionately, holding out his hand and not getting up. "Sit down with us; Pyotr Ippolitovitch is telling me something very interesting about that stone near the Pavlovsky barracks ... or somewhere in that direction."

"Yes, I know the stone," I made haste to answer, dropping into a chair beside him. They were sitting at the table. The whole room was just fourteen feet square. I drew a deep breath.

There was a gleam of pleasure in Versilov's eyes. I believe he was uncertain, and afraid I should be demonstrative. He was reassured.

"You must begin again, Pyotr Ippolitovitch." They were already calling each other by their names.

"It happened in the reign of the late Tsar," Pyotr Ippolitovitch said, addressing me nervously and with some uneasiness, anxious as to the effect of his story. "You know that stone—a stupid stone in the street, and what use is it, it's only in the way, you'd say, wouldn't you? The Tsar rode by several times, and every time there was the stone. At last the Tsar was displeased, and with good reason; a rock, a regular rock standing in the street, spoiling it. 'Remove the stone!' Well, he said remove it—you understand what that means—'remove the stone!' The late Tsar—do you remember him? What was to be done with the stone? They all lost their heads, there was the town council, and a most important person, I can't remember his name, one of the greatest personages of the time, who was put in charge of the matter. Well, this great personage listened; they told him it would cost fifteen thousand roubles, no less, and in silver too (for it was not till the time of the late Tsar that paper money could be changed into silver). 'Fifteen thousand, what a sum!' At first the English wanted to bring rails, and remove it by steam; but think what that would have cost! There were no railways then, there was only one running to Tsarskoe-Selo."

"Why, they might have smashed it up!" I cried, frowning. I felt horribly vexed and ashamed in Versilov's presence. But he was listening with evident pleasure. I understood that he was glad to have the landlord there, as he too was abashed with me. I saw that. I remember I felt it somehow touching in him.

"Smash it up! Yes, that was the very idea they arrived at. And Montferant, too,—he was building St. Isaak's Cathedral at the time.—Smash it up, he said, and then take it away. But what would that cost?"

"It would cost nothing. Simply break it up and carry it away."

"No, excuse me, a machine would be wanted to do it, a steam-engine, and besides, where could it be taken? And such a mountain, too! 'Ten thousand,' they said, 'not less than ten or twelve thousand.'"

"I say, Pyotr Ippolitovitch, that's nonsense, you know. It couldn't have been so... ."

But at that instant Versilov winked at me unseen, and in that wink I saw such delicate compassion for the landlord, even distress on his account, that I was delighted with it, and I laughed.

“Well, well then,” cried the landlord, delighted; he had noticed nothing, and was awfully afraid, as such story-tellers always are, that he would be pestered with questions; “but then a Russian workman walks up, a young fellow, you know the typical Russian, with a beard like a wedge, in a long-skirted coat, and perhaps a little drunk too ... but no, he wasn’t drunk. He just stands by while those Englishmen and Montferant are talking away, and that great personage drives up just then in his carriage, and listens, and gets angry at the way they keep discussing it and can’t decide on anything. And suddenly he notices the workman at a distance standing there and smiling deceitfully, that is, not deceitfully though, I’m wrong there, what is it... ?”

“Derisively,” Versilov prompted him discreetly.

“Derisively, yes, a little derisively, that kind, good Russian smile, you know; the great personage was in a bad humour, you understand: ‘What are you waiting here for, big beard?’ said he. ‘Who are you?’

“‘Why, I’m looking at this stone here, your Highness,’ says he. Yes, I believe he said Highness, and I fancy it was Prince Suvorov, the Italian one, the ancestor of the general... . But no, it was not Suvorov, and I’m so sorry I’ve forgotten who it was exactly, but though he was a Highness he was a genuine thorough-bred Russian, a Russian type, a patriot, a cultured Russian heart; well, he saw what was up.

“‘What is it,’ says he. ‘Do you want to take away the stone? What are you sniggering about?’

“‘At the Englishmen, chiefly, your Highness. They ask a prodigious price because the Russian purse is fat, and they’ve nothing to eat at home. Let me have a hundred roubles, your Highness,’ says he; ‘by to-morrow evening we’ll move the stone.’

“Can you imagine such a proposition? The English, of course, are ready to devour him; Montferant laughs. But that Highness with the pure Russian heart says: ‘Give him a hundred roubles! But surely you won’t remove it?’ says he.

“‘To-morrow evening, your Highness, we’ll have it on the move,’ says he.

“‘But how will you do it?’

“‘If you’ll excuse me, your Highness, that’s our secret,’ he says, and in that Russian way, you know. It pleased him: ‘Hey, give him anything he wants.’ And so they left it. What would you suppose he did?’”

The landlord paused, and looked from one to the other with a face full of sentiment.

“I don’t know,” said Versilov, smiling; I scowled.

“Well, I’ll tell you what he did,” said the landlord, with as much triumph as though it were his own achievement, “he hired some peasants with spades, simple Russians, and began digging a deep hole just at the edge of it. They were digging all night; they dug an immense hole as big as the stone and just about an inch and a half deeper, and when they dug it out he told them to dig out the earth from under the stone, cautiously, little by little. Well, naturally, as they’d dug the earth away the stone had

nothing to stand upon, it began to overbalance; and as soon as it began to shake they pushed with their hands upon the stone, shouting hurrah, in true Russian style, and the stone fell with a crash into the hole! Then they shovelled earth on it, rammed it down with a mallet, paved it over with little stones—the road was smooth, the stone had disappeared!”

“Only fancy!” cried Versilov.

“The people rushed up to be sure, in multitudes innumerable; the Englishmen had seen how it would be long before; they were furious. Montferant came up: ‘That’s the peasant style,’ says he, ‘it’s too simple,’ says he. ‘That’s just it, that it’s so simple, but you never thought of it, you fools!’ And so I tell you that commander, that great personage, simply embraced him and kissed him. ‘And where do you come from?’ says he. ‘From the province of Yaroslav, your Excellency, we’re tailors by trade, and we come to Petersburg in the summer to sell fruit.’ Well, it came to the ears of the authorities; the authorities ordered a medal to be given him, so he went about with a medal on his neck; but he drank himself to death afterwards, they say; you know the typical Russian, he has no self-restraint! That’s why the foreigners have got the better of us so far, yes, there it is!”

“Yes, of course, the Russian mind... .” Versilov was beginning.

But at this point, luckily, the landlord was called away by his invalid wife, and hastened off, or I should have been unable to restrain myself. Versilov laughed.

“He’s been entertaining me for a whole hour, my dear. That stone ... is the very model of patriotic unseemliness among such stories, but how could I interrupt him? As you saw, he was melting with delight. And what’s more, I believe the stone’s there still, if I’m not mistaken, and hasn’t been buried in the hole at all.”

“Good heavens, yes!” I cried, “that’s true! How could he dare! ...”

“What’s the matter? Why, I believe you’re really indignant; he certainly has muddled things up. I heard a story of the sort about a stone when I was a child, only of course it was a little different, and not about the same stone. That ‘it came to the ears of the authorities!’ Why, there was a paean of glory in his heart when he uttered that phrase ‘it came to the ears of the authorities.’ In the pitiful narrowness of their lives they can’t get on without such stories. They have numbers of them, chiefly owing to their incontinence. They’ve learnt nothing, they know nothing exactly, and they have a longing to talk about something besides cards and their wares, something of universal interest, something poetic... . What sort of man is this Pyotr Ippolitovitch?”

“A very poor creature, and unfortunate too.”

“Well, there, you see, perhaps he doesn’t even play cards. I repeat, in telling that foolish story he was satisfying his love for his neighbour: you see, he wanted to make us happy. His sentiment of patriotism was gratified too; they’ve got another story, for instance, that the English gave Zavyalov a million on condition that he shouldn’t put his stamp on his handiwork.”

“Oh, goodness, I’ve heard that story too.”

“Who hasn’t heard it, and the teller of it knows, too, that you have heard it, but still he tells it, INTENTIONALLY supposing that you haven’t. The vision of the Swedish king, I believe, is a little out of date with them now, but in my youth it used to be repeated unctuously, in a mysterious whisper. And so was the story of some one’s having knelt in the Senate before the Senators at the beginning of last century. There were lots of anecdotes about Commander Bashutsky, too, how he carried away a monument. They simply love anecdotes of the court; for instance, tales of Tchernyshev, a minister in the last reign, how when he was an old man of seventy he got himself up to look like a man of thirty, so much so that the late Tsar was amazed at the levées...”

“I’ve heard that too.”

“Who hasn’t heard it? All these anecdotes are the height of indecency; but, let me tell you, this kind of indecency is far more deeply rooted and widely spread than we imagine. The desire to lie with the object of giving pleasure to your neighbour one meets even in Russian society of the highest breeding, for we all suffer from this incontinence of our hearts. Only anecdotes of a different type are current among us; the number of stories they tell about America is simply amazing, and they’re told by men even of ministerial rank! I must confess I belong to that indecent class myself, and I’ve suffered from it all my life.”

“I’ve told anecdotes about Tchernyshev several times myself.”

“You’ve told them yourself?”

“There’s another lodger here besides me, marked with smallpox too, an old clerk, but he’s awfully prosaic, and as soon as Pyotr Ippolitovitch begins to speak he tries to refute him and contradict. He’s reduced Pyotr Ippolitovitch to such a point that he waits on the old fellow like a slave, and does everything to please him, simply to make him listen.”

“That’s another type of the indecent, one even perhaps more revolting than the first. The first sort is all ecstasy! ‘You only let me lie,’ he seems to say, ‘you’ll see how nice it will be.’ The second sort is all spleen and prose. ‘I won’t let you lie,’ he says, ‘where, when, in what year?’—in fact a man with no heart. My dear boy, we must always let a man lie a little. It’s quite innocent. Indeed we may let him lie a great deal. In the first place it will show our delicacy, and secondly, people will let us lie in return—two immense advantages at once. Que diable! one must love one’s neighbour. But it’s time for me to be off. You’ve arranged the place charmingly,” he added, getting up from his chair. “I’ll tell Sofia Andreyevna and your sister that I’ve been here and found you quite well. Good-bye, my dear.”

Could this be all? This was not at all what I wanted. I was expecting something different, something important, though I quite understood that this was how it must be. I got up with a candle to light him down the stairs. The landlord would have come forward, but without Versilov’s seeing it I seized him by the arm and thrust him back savagely. He stared with astonishment, but immediately vanished.

“These staircases ...” Versilov mumbled, dwelling on the syllables evidently in order to say something, and evidently afraid I might say something, “I’m no longer used to such stairs, and you’re on the third storey, but now I can find the way... . Don’t trouble, my dear, you’ll catch cold, too.”

But I did not leave him. We were going down the second flight.

“I’ve been expecting you for the last three days,” broke from me suddenly, as it were of itself; I was breathless.

“Thank you, my dear.”

“I knew you’d be sure to come.”

“And I knew that you knew I should be sure to come. Thank you, my dear.”

He was silent. We had reached the outer door, and I still followed him. He opened the door; the wind rushing in blew out my candle. Then I clutched his hand. It was pitch dark. He started but said nothing. I stooped over his hand and kissed it greedily several times, many times.

“My darling boy, why do you love me so much?” he said, but in quite a different voice. His voice quivered, there was a ring of something quite new in it as though it were not he who spoke.

I tried to answer something, but couldn’t, and ran upstairs. He stood waiting where he was, and it was only when I was back in the flat that I heard the front door open and shut with a slam. I slipped by the landlord, who turned up again, and went into my room, fastened the latch, and without lighting the candle threw myself on my bed, buried my face in the pillow and cried and cried. It was the first time I had cried since I was at Touchard’s. My sobs were so violent, and I was so happy ... but why describe it?

I write this now without being ashamed of it, for perhaps it was all good, in spite of its absurdity.

3

But didn’t I make him suffer for it! I became frightfully overbearing. There was no reference to this scene between us afterwards. On the contrary, we met three days later as though nothing had happened—what’s more, I was almost rude that evening, and he too seemed rather dry. This happened in my room again; for some reason I had not been to see him in spite of my longing to see my mother.

We talked all this time, that is throughout these two months, only of the most abstract subjects. And I can’t help wondering at it; we did nothing but talk of abstract subjects—of the greatest interest and of vast significance for humanity, of course, but with no bearing whatever on the practical position. Yet many, many aspects of the practical position needed, and urgently needed, defining and clearing up, but of that we did not speak. I did not even say anything about my mother or Liza or ... or indeed about myself and my whole history. Whether this was due to shame or to youthful stupidity I don’t know. I expect it was stupidity, for shame I could have overcome. But

I domineered over him frightfully, and absolutely went so far as insolence more than once, even against my own feelings. This all seemed to happen of itself, inevitably; I couldn't restrain myself. His tone was as before, one of light mockery, though always extremely affectionate in spite of everything. I was struck, too, by the fact that he preferred coming to me, so that at last I very rarely went to see my mother, not more than once a week, especially towards the latter part of the time, as I became more and more absorbed in frivolity. He used always to come in the evenings, to sit and chat with me, he was very fond of talking to the landlord too, which enraged me in a man like him.

The idea struck me that he might have nowhere to go except to see me. But I knew for a fact that he had acquaintances, and that he had, indeed, of late renewed many of his old ties in society, which he had dropped the year before. But he did not seem to be particularly fascinated by them, and seemed to have renewed many of them simply in a formal way; he preferred coming to see me.

I was sometimes awfully touched by the timid way in which he almost always opened my door, and for the first minute looked with strange anxiety into my eyes. "Am I in the way?" he seemed to ask, "tell me, and I'll go." He even said as much sometimes. Once, for instance, towards the end he came in when I had just put on a suit, brand new from the tailor's, and was just setting off to Prince Sergay's, to go off somewhere with him (where, I will explain later). He sat down without noticing that I was on the point of going out; he showed at moments a remarkable absence of mind. As luck would have it, he began to talk of the landlord. I fired up.

"Oh, damn the landlord!"

"Ah, my dear," he said, getting up, "I believe you're going out and I'm hindering you... . Forgive me, please."

And he meekly hastened to depart. Such meekness towards me from a man like him, a man so aristocratic and independent, who had so much individuality, at once stirred in my heart all my tenderness for him, and trust in him. But if he loved me so much, why did he not check me at the time of my degradation? If he had said one word I should perhaps have pulled up. Though perhaps I should not. But he did see my foppery, my flaunting swagger, my smart Matvey (I wanted once to drive him back in my sledge but he would not consent, and indeed it happened several times that he refused to be driven in it), he could see I was squandering money—and he said not a word, not a word, he showed no curiosity even! I'm surprised at that to this day; even now. And yet I didn't stand on ceremony with him, and spoke openly about everything, though I never gave him a word of explanation. He didn't ask and I didn't speak.

Yet on two or three occasions we did speak on the money question. I asked him on one occasion, soon after he renounced the fortune he had won, how he was going to live now.

"Somehow, my dear," he answered with extraordinary composure.

I know now that more than half of Tatyana Pavlovna's little capital of five thousand roubles has been spent on Versilov during the last two years.

Another time it somehow happened that we talked of my mother.

“My dear boy,” he said mournfully, “I used often to say to Sofia Andreyevna at the beginning of our life together, though indeed I’ve said it in the middle and at the end too: ‘My dear, I worry you and torment you, and I don’t regret it as long as you’re before me, but if you were to die I know I should kill myself to atone for it.’”

I remember, however, that he was particularly open that evening.

“If only I were a weak-willed nonentity and suffered from the consciousness of it! But you see that’s not so, I know I’m exceedingly strong, and in what way do you suppose? Why just in that spontaneous power of accommodating myself to anything whatever, so characteristic of all intelligent Russians of our generation. There’s no crushing me, no destroying me, no surprising me. I’ve as many lives as a cat. I can with perfect convenience experience two opposite feelings at one and the same time, and not, of course, through my own will. I know, nevertheless, that it’s dishonourable just because it’s so sensible. I’ve lived almost to fifty, and to this day I don’t know whether it’s a good thing I’ve gone on living or not. I like life, but that follows as a matter of course. But for a man like me to love life is contemptible. Of late there has been a new movement, and the Krafts won’t accommodate themselves to things, and shoot themselves. But it’s evident that the Krafts are stupid, we, to be sure, are clever—so that one can draw no parallel, and the question remains open anyway. And can it be that the earth is only for such as we? In all probability it is; but the idea is a comfortless one. However ... however, the question remains open, anyway.”

He spoke mournfully and yet I didn’t know whether he was sincere or not. He always had a manner which nothing would have made him drop.

4

Then I besieged him with questions, I fell upon him like a starving man on bread. He always answered me readily and straightforwardly, but in the end always went off into the widest generalizations, so that in reality one could draw no conclusions from it. And yet these questions had worried me all my life, and I frankly confess that even in Moscow I had put off settling them till I should meet him in Petersburg. I told him this plainly, and he did not laugh at me—on the contrary, I remember he pressed my hand.

On general politics and social questions I could get nothing out of him, and yet in connection with my “idea” those subjects troubled me more than anything. Of men like Dergatchev I once drew from him the remark that “they were below all criticism,” but at the same time he added strangely that “he reserved the right of attaching no significance to his opinions.” For a very long time he would say nothing on the question how the modern state would end, and how the social community would be built up anew, but in the end I literally wrenched a few words out of him.

“I imagine that all that will come about in a very commonplace way,” he said once. “Simply un beau matin, in spite of all the balance-sheets on budget days, and the

absence of deficits, all the states without exception will be unable to pay, so that they'll all be landed in general bankruptcy. At the same time all the conservative elements of the whole world will rise up in opposition to everything, because they will be the bondholders and creditors, and they won't want to allow the bankruptcy. Then, of course, there will follow a general liquidation, so to speak; the Jews will come to the fore and the reign of the Jews will begin: and then all those who have never had shares in anything, and in fact have never had anything at all, that is all the beggars, will naturally be unwilling to take part in the liquidation... . A struggle will begin, and after seventy-seven battles the beggars will destroy the shareholders and carry off their shares and take their places as shareholders, of course. Perhaps they'll say something new too, and perhaps they won't. Most likely they'll go bankrupt too. Further than that, my dear boy, I can't undertake to predict the destinies by which the face of this world will be changed. Look in the Apocalypse though ..."

"But can it all be so materialistic? Can the modern world come to an end simply through finance?"

"Oh, of course, I've only chosen one aspect of the picture, but that aspect is bound up with the whole by indissoluble bonds, so to speak."

"What's to be done?"

"Oh dear, don't be in a hurry; it's not all coming so soon. In any case, to do nothing is always best, one's conscience is at rest anyway, knowing that one's had no share in anything."

"Aië, do stop that, talk sense. I want to know what I'm to do and how I'm to live."

"What you are to do, my dear? Be honest, never lie, don't covet your neighbour's house; in fact, read the Ten Commandments—it's written there once for all."

"Don't talk like that, all that's so old, and besides ... it's all words; I want something real."

"Well, if you're fearfully devoured by eunui, try to love some one or something, or at any rate to attach yourself to something."

"You're only laughing! Besides, what can I do alone with your Ten Commandments?"

"Well, keep them in spite of all your doubts and questions, and you'll be a great man."

"Whom no one will know of."

"There is nothing hidden that shall not be made manifest."

"You're certainly laughing."

"Well, if you take it so to heart you'd better try as soon as possible to specialize, take up architecture or the law, and then when you're busy with serious work you'll be more settled in your mind and forget trifles."

I was silent. What could I gather from this? And yet, after every such conversation I was more troubled than before. Moreover I saw clearly that there always remained in him, as it were, something secret, and that drew me to him more and more.

"Listen," I said, interrupting him one day, "I always suspect that you say all this only out of bitterness and suffering, but that secretly you are a fanatic over some idea, and are only concealing it, or ashamed to admit it."

"Thank you, my dear."

"Listen, nothing's better than being useful. Tell me how, at the present moment, I can be most of use. I know it's not for you to decide that, but I'm only asking for your opinion. You tell me, and what you say I swear I'll do! Well, what is the great thought?"

"Well, to turn stones into bread. That's a great thought."

"The greatest? Yes, really, you have suggested quite a new path. Tell me, is it the greatest?"

"It's very great, my dear boy, very great, but it's not the greatest. It's great but secondary, and only great at the present time. Man will be satisfied and forget; he will say: 'I've eaten it and what am I to do now?' The question will remain open for all time."

"You spoke once of the 'Geneva ideas.' I didn't understand what was meant by the 'Geneva ideas.'"

"The 'Geneva idea' is the idea of virtue without Christ, my boy, the modern idea, or, more correctly, the ideas of all modern civilization. In fact, it's one of those long stories which it's very dull to begin, and it will be a great deal better if we talk of other things, and better still if we're silent about other things."

"You always want to be silent!"

"My dear, remember that to be silent is good, safe, and picturesque."

"Picturesque?"

"Of course. Silence is always picturesque, and the man who is silent always looks nicer than the man who is speaking."

"Why, talking as we do is no better than being silent. Damn such picturesqueness, and still more damn such profitableness."

"My dear," he said suddenly, rather changing his tone, speaking with real feeling and even with a certain insistence, "I don't want to seduce you from your ideals to any sort of bourgeois virtue, I'm not assuring you that 'happiness is better than heroism'; on the contrary 'heroism is finer than any happiness,' and the very capacity for it alone constitutes happiness. That's a settled thing between us. I respect you just for being able in these mawkish days to set up some sort of an 'idea' in your soul (don't be uneasy, I remember perfectly well). But yet one must think of proportion, for now you want to live a resounding life, to set fire to something, to smash something, to rise above everything in Russia, to call up storm-clouds, to throw every one into terror and ecstasy, while you vanish yourself in North America. I've no doubt you've something of that sort in your heart, and so I feel it necessary to warn you, for I really love you, my dear."

What could I gather from that either? There was nothing in it but anxiety for me, for my material prosperity; it betrayed the father with the father's kindly but prosaic

feelings. Was this what I wanted by way of an idea for the sake of which any honest father would send his son to face death, as the ancient Roman Horatius sent his sons for the idea of Rome?

I often pressed him on the subject of religion, but there the fog was thicker than ever. When I asked him what to do about that, he answered in the stupidest way, as though to a child:

“You must have faith in God, my dear.”

“But what if I don’t believe in all that?” I cried irritably once.

“A very good thing, my dear.”

“How a good thing?”

“It’s a most excellent symptom, dear boy; a most hopeful one, for our atheists in Russia, if only they are really atheists and have some little trace of intelligence, are the best fellows in the whole world, and always disposed to be kind to God, for they’re invariably good-humoured, and they’re good-humoured because they’re immensely pleased at being atheists. Our atheists are respectable people and extremely conscientious, pillars of the fatherland, in fact... .”

This was something, of course, but it was not what I wanted. On one occasion, however, he spoke out, but so strangely that he surprised me more than ever, especially after the stories of Catholicism and penitential chains that I had heard about him.

“Dear boy,” he said one day, not in my room, but in the street, when I was seeing him home after a long conversation, “to love people as they are is impossible. And yet we must. And therefore do them good, overcoming your feelings, holding your nose and shutting your eyes (the latter’s essential). Endure evil from them as far as may be without anger, ‘mindful that you too are a man.’ Of course you’ll be disposed to be severe with them if it has been vouchsafed to you to be ever so little more intelligent than the average. Men are naturally base and like to love from fear. Don’t give in to such love, and never cease to despise it. Somewhere in the Koran Allah bids the prophet look upon the ‘froward’ as upon mice, do them good, and pass them by—a little haughty, but right. Know how to despise them even when they are good, for most often it is in that they are base. Oh, my dear, it’s judging by myself I say that. Anyone who’s not quite stupid can’t live without despising himself, whether he’s honest or dishonest—it makes no difference. To love one’s neighbour and not despise him—is impossible. I believe that man has been created physically incapable of loving his neighbour. There has been some mistake in language here from the very first, and ‘love for humanity’ must be understood as love for that humanity which you have yourself created in your soul (in other words, you have created yourself and your love is for yourself)—and which, therefore, never will be in reality.”

“Never will be?”

“My dear boy, I agree that if this were true, it would be stupid, but that’s not my fault, and I was not consulted at the creation. I reserve the right to have my own opinion about it.”

“How is it they call you a Christian, then?” I cried. “A monk in chains, a preacher? I don’t understand it!”

“Why, who calls me that?”

I told him; he listened very attentively, but cut short the conversation.

I can’t remember what led to this memorable conversation; but he was positively irritated, which scarcely ever happened to him. He spoke passionately and without irony, as though he were not speaking to me. But again I didn’t believe him. He could not speak on such subjects seriously to anyone like me.

Chapter 2

1

On that morning, the 15th of November, I found him at Prince Sergay’s. I had brought the prince and him together, but they had ties apart from me (I mean the affair abroad, and all that). Moreover, the prince had promised to divide the disputed fortune with him, giving him a third, which would mean twenty thousand at least. I remember at the time I thought it awfully strange that he was giving him only a third and not the full half; but I said nothing. Prince Sergay gave this promise of his own accord; Versilov had not said a syllable to suggest it, had not dropped a hint. Prince Sergay came forward himself and Versilov only let it pass in silence, never once alluded to it, and showed no sign that he had the least recollection of a promise. I may mention, by the way, that Prince Sergay was absolutely enchanted with him at first and still more with the things he said. He fell into positive raptures about him, and several times expressed his feelings to me. Sometimes when he was alone with me he exclaimed about himself, almost with despair, that he was “so ill-educated, that he was on the wrong track! ...” Oh, we were still so friendly then! ... I kept trying to impress Versilov with Prince Sergay’s good points only, and excused his defects though I saw them myself; but Versilov listened in silence, or smiled.

“If he has faults he has at least as many virtues as defects!” I once exclaimed to Versilov when I was alone with him.

“Goodness, how you flatter him!” he said laughing.

“How do I flatter him?” I said, not understanding.

“As many virtues! Why he must be a saint if he has as many virtues as defects!”

But, of course, that was not his opinion. In general he avoided speaking of Prince Sergay at that time, as he did indeed of everything real, but of the prince particularly. I suspected, even then, that he went to see Prince Sergay without me, and that they were on rather peculiar terms, but I did not go into that. I was not jealous either at his talking to him more seriously than to me, more positively, so to speak, with less mockery; I was so happy at the time that I was actually pleased at it. I explained it

too by Prince Sergay's being of rather limited intelligence, and so being fond of verbal exactitude; some jests he absolutely failed to see.

But of late he had, as it were, begun to emancipate himself. His feelings for Versilov seemed beginning to change. Versilov with his delicate perception noticed it. I may mention at this point that Prince Sergay's attitude to me, too, became different at the same time, rather too obviously, in fact. Only the lifeless forms of our warm earlier relations were maintained. Yet I went on going to see him; I could not indeed help it, having once been drawn into it. Oh, how clumsy and inexperienced I was then; it is almost beyond belief that mere foolishness of heart can have brought anyone to such humiliation and lack of perception. I took money from him and thought that it didn't matter, that it was quite right. Yet that is not true: even then I knew that it was not right, but it was simply that I thought very little about it. I did not go to the prince to get money, though I needed the money so much. I knew I did not go for the sake of the money, but I realized that I went every day to borrow money. But I was in a whirl then, and besides all that I had something very different in my soul—it was singing with joy!

When I went in at eleven o'clock in the morning I found Versilov just finishing a long tirade. Prince Sergay was walking about the room listening, and Versilov was sitting down. Prince Sergay seemed in some excitement. Versilov was almost always able to work him into a state of excitement. He was exceedingly impressionable, to a degree of simplicity, indeed, which had often made me look down on him. But, I repeat, of late I had detected in him something like a resentful sneer. He stopped short, seeing me, and a quiver seemed to pass over his face. I knew in my heart to what to attribute the shadow over him that morning, but I had not expected that his face would be so distorted by it. I knew that he had an accumulation of anxieties, but it was revolting that I didn't know more than a tenth part of them—the rest had been kept so far a dead secret from me. What made it stupid and revolting was that I often obtruded my sympathy on him, gave advice and often laughed condescendingly at his weakness at being so upset "about such trifles." He used to be silent; but he must have detested me at those moments; I was in an utterly false position and had no suspicion of it. Oh, I call God to witness that of the chief trouble I had no suspicion!

He courteously held out his hand to me, however; Versilov nodded, without interrupting himself. I stretched myself on the sofa—my tone and manners were horrible at that time! My swagger went even further: I used to treat his acquaintances as though they were my own. Oh, if it could only be done all over again, I should know how to behave very differently!

Two words, that I may not forget. Prince Sergay was still living in the same flat, but now occupied almost the whole of it. Mme. Stolbyeev, whose flat it was, after staying only a month, had gone away again.

2

They were talking of the aristocracy. I may mention that Prince Sergay grew sometimes much excited over this subject in spite of his progressive notions. I suspect indeed that many of his misdoings had their source and origin in this idea. Attaching great significance to his princely rank, he threw money away in all directions although he was a beggar, and became involved in debt. Versilov had more than once hinted that this extravagance was not the essence of princeliness, and tried to instil into him a higher conception of it; but Prince Sergay had begun to show signs of resentment at being instructed. Evidently there had been something of the same sort that morning, but I hadn't arrived in time for the beginning of it. Versilov's words struck me at first as reactionary, but he made up for that later on.

"The word honour means duty," he said (I only give the sense as far as I remember it); "when the upper class rules in a state the country is strong. The upper class always has its sense of honour, and its code of honour, which may be imperfect but almost always serves as a bond and strengthens the country; an advantage morally and still more politically. But the slaves, that is all those not belonging to the ruling class, suffer. They are given equal rights to prevent their suffering. That's what has been done with us, and it's an excellent thing. But in all experience so far (in Europe that is to say) a weakening of the sense of honour and duty has followed the establishment of equal rights. Egoism has replaced the old consolidating principle and the whole system has been shattered on the rock of personal freedom. The emancipated masses, left with no sustaining principle, have ended by losing all sense of cohesion, till they have given up defending the liberties they have gained. But the Russian type of aristocrat has never been like the European nobility. Our nobility, even now that it has lost its privileges, might remain the leading class as the upholders of honour, enlightenment, science, and higher culture, and, what is of the greatest importance, without cutting themselves off into a separate caste, which would be the death of the idea. On the contrary, the entrance to this class has been thrown open long ago among us, and now the time has come to open it completely. Let every honourable and valiant action, every great achievement in science enable a man to gain the ranks of the highest class. In that way the class is automatically transformed into an assembly of the best people in a true and literal sense, not in the sense in which it was said of the privileged caste in the past. In this new, or rather renewed form, the class might be retained."

The prince smiled sarcastically.

"What sort of an aristocracy would that be? It's some sort of masonic lodge you're sketching; not an aristocracy."

Prince Sergay had been, I repeat, extremely ill-educated. I turned over with vexation on the sofa, though I was far from agreeing with Versilov. Versilov quite understood that the prince was sneering.

"I don't know in what sense you talk of a masonic lodge," he answered. "Well, if even a Russian prince recoils from such an idea, no doubt the time for it has not arrived."

The idea of honour and enlightenment as the sacred keys that unlock for any man the portals of a class thus continually renewed is, of course, a Utopia. But why is it an impossible one? If the thought is living though only in a few brains it is not yet lost, but shines like a tiny flame in the depths of darkness.”

“You are fond of using such words as ‘higher culture,’ ‘great idea,’ ‘sustaining principle’ and such; I should like to know what you mean exactly by a ‘great idea’?”

“I really don’t know how to answer that question, dear prince,” Versilov responded with a subtle smile. “If I confess to you that I myself am not able to answer, it would be more accurate. A great idea is most often a feeling which sometimes remains too long undefined. I only know that it’s that which has been the source of living life, gay joyous life, I mean, not theoretical and artificial; so that the great idea, from which it flows, is absolutely indispensable, to the general vexation, of course.”

“Why vexation?”

“Because, to live with ideas is dreary, and it’s always gay without them.”

The prince swallowed the rebuke.

“And what do you mean by this living life as you call it?” (He was evidently cross.)

“I don’t know that either, prince; I only know that it must be something very simple, the most everyday thing, staring us in the face, a thing of every day, every minute, and so simple that we can never believe it to be so simple, and we’ve naturally been passing it by for thousands of years without noticing it or recognizing it.”

“I only meant to say that your idea of the aristocracy is equivalent to denying the aristocracy,” observed Prince Sergay.

“Well, if you will have it so, perhaps there never has been an aristocracy in Russia.”

“All this is very obscure and vague. If one says something, one ought, to my mind, to explain it... .”

Prince Sergay contracted his brows and stole a glance at the clock on the wall. Versilov got up and took his hat.

“Explain?” he said, “no, it’s better not to, besides, I’ve a passion for talking without explanations. That’s really it. And there’s another strange thing: if it happens that I try to explain an idea I believe in, it almost always happens that I cease to believe what I have explained. I’m afraid of that fate now. Good-bye, dear prince; I always chatter unpardonably with you.”

He went out; the prince escorted him politely, but I felt offended.

“What are you ruffling up your feathers about?” he fired off suddenly, walking past me to his bureau without looking at me.

“I’m ruffling up my feathers,” I began with a tremor in my voice, “because, finding in you such a queer change of tone to me and even to Versilov I ... Versilov may, of course, have begun in rather a reactionary way, but afterwards he made up for it and ... there was perhaps a profound meaning in what he said, but you simply didn’t understand, and ...”

“I simply don’t care to have people putting themselves forward to teach me and treating me as though I were a schoolboy,” he snapped out, almost wrathfully.

“Prince, such expressions ...”

“Please spare me theatrical flourishes—if you will be so kind. I know that what I am doing is—contemptible, that I’m—a spendthrift, a gambler, perhaps a thief... . Yes, a thief, for I gamble away the money belonging to my family, but I don’t want anybody’s judgment. I don’t want it and I won’t have it. I’m—the judge of my own actions. And why this ambiguity? If he wants to say anything to me let him say it straight out, and not go in for this mysterious prophetic twaddle. To tell me all this he ought to have the right to, he ought to be an honourable man himself... .”

“In the first place I didn’t come in at the beginning and I don’t know what you were talking about, and, secondly, what has Versilov done dishonourable, allow me to ask?”

“Please, that’s enough, that’s enough. You asked me for three hundred roubles yesterday. Here it is... .”

He laid the money on the table before me, sat down in the armchair, leaned nervously against the back of it, and crossed one leg over the other. I was thrown into confusion.

“I don’t know ...” I muttered, “though I did ask you for it ... and though I do need the money now, since you take such a tone ...”

“Don’t talk about tone. If I spoke sharply you must excuse me. I assure you that I’ve no thoughts to spare for it. Listen to this: I’ve had a letter from Moscow. My brother Sasha, who was only a child, as you know, died four days ago. My father, as you know too, has been paralysed for the last two years, and now, they write to me, he’s worse, he can’t utter a word and knows nobody. They were relieved to get the inheritance, and want to take him abroad, but the doctor writes that he’s not likely to live a fortnight. So I’m left with my mother and sister ... that is, almost alone... . In fact, I’m—alone. This fortune ... this fortune—oh, it would have been better perhaps if it had not come to me at all! But this is what I wanted to tell you: I promised Andrey Petrovitch a minimum of twenty thousand... . And, meanwhile, only imagine, owing to legal formalities I’ve been able to do nothing. I haven’t even ... we, that is ... my father that is, has not yet been informed of the inheritance. And meanwhile I’ve lost so much money during the last three weeks, and that scoundrel Stebelkov charges such a rate of interest... . I’ve given you almost the last... .”

“Oh, prince, if that’s how it is ...”

“I didn’t mean that. I didn’t mean that. Stebelkov will bring some to-day, no doubt, and there’ll be enough to go on with, but what the devil’s one to think of Stebelkov? I entreated him to get me ten thousand, so that I might at least give Andrey Petrovitch that much. It worries me, it plagues me to think of my promise to give him a third. I gave my word and I must keep it. And I swear I’ll do my utmost to free myself from obligations in that direction anyhow. They weigh upon me, they weigh upon me, they’re insufferable! This burdensome tie... . I can’t bear to see Andrey Petrovitch, for I can’t look him in the face... . Why does he take advantage of it?”

“What does he take advantage of, prince?” I stood before him in amazement. “Has he ever so much as hinted at it?”

“Oh, no, and I appreciate it, it’s I who reproach myself. And in fact I’m getting more and more involved... . This Stebelkov... .”

“Listen, prince, do calm yourself, please. I see you get more excited the more you talk, and yet it may be all imagination. Oh, I’ve got myself into difficulties too, unpardonably, contemptibly. But I know it’s only temporary ... and as soon as I win back a certain sum, then ... I say, with this three hundred, I owe you two thousand five hundred, don’t I?”

“I’m not asking it from you, I believe,” the prince said suddenly with a sneer.

“You say ten thousand for Versilov. If I borrow from you now the money will be taken off Versilov’s twenty thousand; otherwise I won’t consent. But ... but I shall certainly pay it back myself... . But can you possibly imagine that Versilov comes to you to get the money?”

“It would be easier for me if he did come for the money,” Prince Sergay observed enigmatically.

“You talk of some ‘burdensome tie.’ ... If you mean with Versilov and me, upon my soul it’s an insult. And you say why isn’t he what he preaches—that’s your logic! And, in the first place it’s not logic, allow me to tell you, for even if he’s not, he can’t help saying what’s true... . And besides, why do you talk about ‘preaching’? You call him a ‘prophet.’ Tell me, was it you who called him a ‘petticoat prophet’ in Germany?”

“No, it was not I.”

“Stebelkov told me it was you.”

“He told a lie. I’m—no hand at giving derisive nicknames. But if a man preaches honour he ought to be honourable himself—that’s my logic, and if it’s incorrect I don’t care. I prefer it to be so. And I won’t have anyone dare to come and judge me in my own house and treat me like a baby! That’s enough!” he shouted, waving his hand to stop me... . “Ah, at last!”

The door opened and Stebelkov walked in.

3

He was exactly the same, just as jauntily dressed; and squared his chest and stared into one’s face as stupidly as ever, imagining that he was being very sly, and exceedingly well satisfied with himself. On this occasion he looked about him in a strange way on entering; there was a look of peculiar caution and penetration in his face, as though he wanted to guess something from our countenances. He instantly subsided, however, and his face beamed with a self-satisfied smile, that “pardonably-insolent” smile, which was yet unspeakably repulsive to me.

I had known for a long time that he was a great torment to Prince Sergay. He had come once or twice when I was present. I ... I too had had a transaction with him during that month, but on this occasion I was rather surprised at the way he came in.

“In a minute,” Prince Sergay said, without greeting him, and, turning his back on us both, he began looking in his desk for the necessary papers and accounts. As

for me, I was mortally offended by his last words. The suggestion that Versilov was dishonourable was so clear (and so astonishing!) that it could not be allowed to pass without a full explanation. But that was impossible before Stebelkov. I reclined on the sofa again and turned over a book that was lying before me.

“Byelinsky, part two! That’s something new! Are you trying to cultivate your mind?” I exclaimed, I fancy, very unnaturally.

He was busily engaged and in great haste, but at my words he turned.

“I beg you to leave that book alone,” he brought out sharply.

This was beyond all endurance, especially before Stebelkov! To make it worse Stebelkov gave a sly and loathsome smirk, and made a stealthy sign to me in Prince Sergay’s direction. I turned away from the fool.

“Don’t be angry, prince; I’ll leave you to your most important visitor, and meanwhile I’ll disappear... .”

I made up my mind to be casual in my manner.

“Is that me—the most important visitor?” Stebelkov put in, jocosely pointing at himself with his finger.

“Yes, you; you’re the most important person and you know it too!”

“No, excuse me. Everywhere in the world there’s a second person. I am a second person. There is a first person and a second person. The first acts and the second takes. So the first person turns into the second person, and the second person turns into the first person. Is that so or not?”

“It may be so. But as usual I don’t understand you.”

“Excuse me. In France there was a revolution and every one was executed. Napoleon came along and took everything. The revolution is the first person, and Napoleon the second person. But it turned out that the revolution became the second person and Napoleon became the first person. Is that right?”

I may observe, by the way, that in his speaking to me of the French Revolution I saw an instance of his own cunning which amused me very much. He still persisted in regarding me as some sort of revolutionist, and whenever he met me thought it necessary to begin on some topic of the sort.

“Come along,” said Prince Sergay, and they went together into the other room. As soon as I was alone I made up my mind to give him back the three hundred as soon as Stebelkov had gone. I needed the money terribly, still I resolved to do so.

They remained in the other room, and for ten minutes I heard nothing, then suddenly they began talking loudly. They were both talking, but Prince Sergay suddenly shouted as though in violent irritation, approaching frenzy. He was sometimes very hasty, so that I was not surprised. But at that moment a footman came in to announce a visitor; I motioned him to the other room and instantly there was silence there. Prince Sergay came out with an anxious face, though he smiled; the footman hastened away, and half a minute later a visitor came in.

It was a visitor of great consequence, with shoulder-knots and a family crest. He was a gentleman not over thirty, of high rank, and of a severe appearance. I may remark

that Prince Sergay did not yet really belong to the highest circles in Petersburg, in spite of his passionate desire to do so (I was aware of this desire), and so he must have been glad to see a visitor like this. The acquaintance had, as I knew, only been formed through great efforts on the part of Prince Sergay. The guest was returning Prince Sergay's visit, and unhappily came upon him at the wrong moment. I saw Prince Sergay look at Stebelkov with an agonized and hopeless expression; but Stebelkov encountered his eyes as though nothing whatever were the matter, and without the faintest idea of effacing himself, sat down on the sofa with a free-and-easy air and began passing his hand through his hair, probably to display his independence. He even assumed an important countenance, in fact he was utterly impossible. As for me, I knew, of course, how to behave, decently even then, and should never have disgraced anyone; but what was my amazement when I caught on Prince Sergay's face the same hopeless, miserable and vindictive look directed at me: he was ashamed of us both then, and put me on a level with Stebelkov. That idea drove me to fury. I lolled even more at my ease, and began turning over the leaves of the book, as though the position were no concern of mine. Stebelkov, on the contrary, bent forward open-eyed to listen to their conversation, probably supposing that this was a polite and affable thing to do. The visitor glanced once or twice at Stebelkov, and at me too, indeed.

They talked of family news; this gentleman had at some time known Prince Sergay's mother, who was one of a distinguished family. From what I could gather, in spite of his politeness and the apparent good-nature of his tone, the visitor was very formal and evidently valued his own dignity so highly as to consider a visit from him an honour to anyone whatever. Had Prince Sergay been alone, that is had we not been present, he would certainly have been more dignified and more resourceful. As it was, something tremulous in his smile, possibly an excess of politeness, and a strange absent-mindedness, betrayed him.

They had hardly been sitting there five minutes when another visitor was announced, also of the compromising kind. I knew this one very well and had heard a great deal about him, though he did not know me at all. He was still quite a young man, though twenty-three, who was handsome and elegantly dressed and had a fine house, but moved in distinctly doubtful circles. A year before he had been serving in one of the smartest cavalry regiments, but had been forced to give up his commission, and every one knew for what reason. His relations had even advertised in the papers that they would not be responsible for his debts, but he still continued his profligate manner of life, borrowing money at ten per cent. a month, playing desperately in gambling circles, and squandering his money on a notorious Frenchwoman. A week before, he had succeeded one evening in winning twelve thousand roubles and was triumphant. He was on friendly terms with Prince Sergay: they often played together tête-à-tête; but Prince Sergay positively shuddered seeing him now. I noticed this from where I lay. This youth made himself at home everywhere, talked with noisy gaiety, saying anything that came into his head without restraint. And of course it could never have

occurred to him that our host was in such a panic over the impression his associates would make upon his important visitor.

He interrupted their conversation by his entrance, and began at once describing his play on the previous day, before he had even sat down.

"I believe you were there too," he said, breaking off at the third sentence to address the important gentleman, mistaking him for one of his own set; but looking at him more closely he cried at once:

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I mistook you for one of the party yesterday!"

"Alexey Vladimirovitch Darzan—Ippolit Alexandrovitch Nastchokin," Prince Sergay made haste to introduce them. This youth could still be introduced. He belonged to a good family and it was a distinguished name; but us he did not introduce, and we went on sitting in our corners. I absolutely refused to turn my head in their direction, but Stebelkov began smirking gleefully at the sight of the young man, and was unmistakably threatening to begin talking. This began to amuse me.

"I met you several times last year at Countess Verigin's," said Darzan.

"I remember you, but I believe you were in military uniform then," Nastchokin observed genially.

"Yes, I was, but thanks to... . But Stebelkov here? How does he come here? It's just thanks to these pretty gentlemen here that I'm not in the army now!" he pointed to Stebelkov, and burst out laughing. Stebelkov laughed gleefully too, probably taking it as a compliment. Prince Sergay blushed and made haste to address a question to Nastchokin, and Darzan, going up to Stebelkov, began talking of something very warmly, though in a whisper.

"I believe you saw a great deal of Katerina Nikolaevna Ahmakov abroad?" the visitor asked Prince Sergay.

"Oh yes, I knew her... ."

"I believe we shall soon be hearing a piece of news about her. They say she's engaged to Baron Büiring."

"That's true!" cried Darzan.

"Do you know it for a fact?" Prince Sergay asked Nastchokin with evident agitation, bringing out his question with peculiar emphasis.

"I've been told so, and people are talking about it; but I don't know it for a fact."

"Oh, it is a fact!" said Darzan, going up to him. "Dubasov told me so yesterday, he's always the first to know news like that. Yes, and the prince ought to know... ."

Nastchokin waited till Darzan had finished, and turned to Prince Sergay again.

"She's not very often seen now."

"Her father has been ill for the last month," Prince Sergay observed drily.

"She's a lady of many adventures!" Darzan blurted out suddenly.

I raised my head and sat up.

"I have the pleasure of knowing Katerina Nikolaevna personally, and I take upon myself the duty of declaring that all scandalous stories about her are mere lies and infamy ... and invented by those who have sought her favour without success."

After this stupid outburst I relapsed into silence, still sitting upright and gazing at them all with a flushed face. Every one turned to me, but Stebelkov suddenly guffawed; Darzan, too, simpered and seemed surprised.

“Arkady Makarovitch Dolgoruky,” said Prince Sergay, indicating me to Darzan.

“Oh, believe me, PRINCE,” said Darzan, frankly and good-naturedly addressing me, “I am only repeating what I’ve heard; if there are rumours they have not been of my spreading.”

“I did not mean it for you!” I answered quickly, but Stebelkov had burst into an outrageous roar of laughter, caused as he explained afterwards by Darzan’s having addressed me as prince. My diabolical surname had got me into a mess again. Even now I blush at the thought that I had not the courage—through shame, of course—to set right this blunder and to protest aloud that I was “simply Dolgoruky.” It was the first time in my life I had let it pass. Darzan looked in perplexity at me and at Stebelkov’s laughter.

“Ah yes! Who was the pretty girl I met on the stairs just now, a slim, fair little thing?” he suddenly asked Prince Sergay.

“I really don’t know,” the latter answered quickly, reddening.

“How should you?” laughed Darzan.

“Though ... it ... it might have been... .” Prince Sergay faltered oddly.

“It was ... this gentleman’s sister, Lizaveta Makarovna!” said Stebelkov suddenly pointing to me, “for I met her just now too... .”

“Ah indeed!” Prince Sergay put in quickly, speaking this time, however, with an extremely grave and dignified expression, “it must have been Lizaveta Makarovna, who is a great friend of Anna Fyodorovna Stolbyeev, in whose flat I am staying; she must have come to-day to see Darya Onisimovna, another of Anna Fyodorovna’s great friends, whom she left in charge of the house when she went away... .”

This was all true. Darya Onisimovna was the mother of poor Olya, whose story I have told already. Tatyana Pavlovna had found a refuge for the poor woman at last with Mme. Stolbyeev. I know very well that Liza had been sometimes at Mme. Stolbyeev’s, and had lately visited there Darya Onisimovna, of whom every one at home was very fond; but after this statement by Prince Sergay—sensible as it was, however—and still more Stebelkov’s stupid outburst, and perhaps because I had been called prince, I suddenly flushed all over. Luckily at that very instant Nastchokin stood up to take leave; he offered his hand to Darzan also. At the moment Stebelkov and I were left alone; he nodded his head to me in the direction of Darzan, who was standing in the doorway with his back to us; I shook my fist at Stebelkov.

A minute later Darzan, too, got up to go, after arranging with Prince Sergay to meet him next day at some place, a gambling house, I believe. As he went out he shouted something to Stebelkov, and made me a slight bow. Hardly had he gone out when Stebelkov jumped up and stood in the middle of the room, pointing to the ceiling with his finger:

"I'll tell you the trick that fine young gentleman played last week. He gave an IOU to Averyanov and signed a false name to it. That IOU is still in existence, but it's not been honoured! It's criminal! Eight thousand!"

"And no doubt that IOU is in your hands?" I cried, glaring at him savagely.

"I have a bank, I have a mont-de-piété, I am not a broker. Have you heard that there is a mont-de-piété in Paris? Bread and benevolence for the poor; I have a mont-de-piété... ."

Prince Sergay rudely and angrily cut him short.

"What are you doing here? What are you staying for?"

"But," Stebelkov blinked rapidly, "what about that? Won't it do?"

"No, no, no," Prince Sergay shouted, stamping; "I've said so."

"Well, if so ... that's so... . But that's a mistake... ."

He turned abruptly and with bowed head and bent spine went quickly out of the room. Prince Sergay called after him when he was in the doorway:

"You may as well know, sir, that I am not in the least afraid of you."

He was very much irritated, he was about to sit down, but glancing at me, remained standing. His eyes seemed to say to me also, "Why are you hanging about here too?"

"Prince, I ..." I was beginning.

"I've really no time to listen, Arkady Makarovitch, I'm just going out."

"One minute, prince, it's very important; and, to begin with, take back your three hundred."

"What's this now?"

He was walking up and down, but he stopped short.

"This now is that after all that has passed ... and what you've said about Versilov ... that he was dishonourable, and in fact your tone all the time... . In short, I can't possibly take it."

"You've been TAKING it for the last month, though."

He suddenly sat down on the chair. I was standing at the table, and with one hand I patted the volume of Byelinsky, while I held my hat in the other.

"I had different feelings, prince ... and, in fact, I would never have brought it to such a sum ... it was the gambling ... in short, I can't!"

"You have not distinguished yourself to-day, and so you are in a rage; I'll ask you to leave that book alone."

"What does that mean: 'not distinguished myself'? And, in fact, before your visitors you almost put me on a level with Stebelkov."

"So that's the key to the riddle!" he said with a biting smile. "You were abashed by Darzan's calling you prince, too."

He laughed spitefully. I flared up.

"I simply don't understand; I wouldn't take your title as a gift."

"I know your character. How absurdly you cried out in defence of Mme. Ahmakov ... let that book alone!"

"What's the meaning of it?" I cried.

“L-l-let the book alone!” he yelled suddenly, drawing himself up in the low chair, with a ferocious movement, as though about to spring at me.

“This is beyond all limits,” I said, and I walked quickly out of the room, but before I had reached the end of the drawing-room, he shouted to me from the study:

“Arkady Makarovitch, come back! Co-ome ba-ack! Co-ome ba-ack!”

I went on without heeding. He hastily overtook me, seized me by the arm, and dragged me back into the study. I did not resist.

“Take it,” he said, pale with excitement, handing me the three hundred roubles I had thrown on the table. “You must take it ... or else we ... you must!”

“Prince, how can I take it?”

“Oh, I’ll beg your pardon ... if you like ... all right, forgive me! ...”

“I have always liked you, prince, and if you feel the same ...”

“I do; take it... .”

I took the money. His lips were trembling.

“I can understand, prince, that you are exasperated by that scoundrel ... but I won’t take it, prince, unless we kiss each other, as we have done when we’ve quarrelled before.”

I was trembling, too, as I said this.

“Now for sentimentality,” muttered Prince Sergay, with an embarrassed smile, but he bent down and kissed me. I shuddered; at the instant he kissed me I caught on his face an unmistakable look of aversion.

“Did he bring you the money, anyway? ...”

“Aië, never mind.”

“I was asking on your account... .”

“Yes he did, he did.”

“Prince, we have been friends ... and in fact, Versilov... .”

“Yes, yes. That’s all right!”

“And in fact ... I really don’t know ... about this three hundred... .”

I was holding the money in my hand.

“Take it, ta-ake it!” he smiled again, but there was something very vicious in his smile.

I took the money.

Chapter 3

1

I took the money because I loved him. If anyone disbelieves this I must inform him that at the moment when I took the money I was firmly convinced that I could have obtained it from another source. And so I really took it, not because I was in desperate straits, but from delicacy, not to hurt his feelings. Alas, that was how I reasoned at the

time! But yet my heart was very heavy as I went out from him. I had seen that morning an extraordinary change in his attitude to me; he had never taken such a tone before, and, as regards Versilov, it was a case of positive mutiny. Stebelkov had no doubt annoyed him very much that morning, but he had begun to be the same before seeing Stebelkov. I repeat once more; the change from his original manner might indeed have been noticed for some days past, but not in the same way, not in the same degree, that was the point.

The stupid gossip about that major, Baron Büring, might have some effect on him... I too had been disturbed by it, but ... the fact is, I had something else in my heart at that time that shone so resplendent that I heedlessly let many things pass unnoticed, made haste to let them pass, to get rid of them, and to go back to that resplendence...

It was not yet one o'clock. From Prince Sergay's I drove with my Matvey straight off to—it will hardly be believed to whom—to Stebelkov! The fact is that he had surprised me that morning, not so much by turning up at Prince Sergay's (for he had promised to be there) as by the way he had winked at me; he had a stupid habit of doing so, but that morning it had been apropos of a different subject from what I had expected. The evening before, a note had come from him by post, which had rather puzzled me. In it he begged me to go to him between two and three to-day, and that "he might inform me of facts that would be a surprise to me."

And in reference to that letter he had that morning, at Prince Sergay's, made no sign whatever. What sort of secrets could there be between Stebelkov and me? Such an idea was positively ridiculous; but, after all that had happened, I felt a slight excitement as I drove off to him. I had, of course, a fortnight before applied to him for money, and he was ready to lend it, but for some reason we did not come to terms, and I did not take the money: on that occasion, too, he had muttered something vague, as his habit was, and I had fancied he wanted to make me some offer, to suggest some special conditions; and as I had treated him disdainfully every time I had met him at Prince Sergay's, I proudly cut short any idea of special terms, though he pursued me to the door. I borrowed the money afterwards from Prince Sergay.

Stebelkov lived in a very comfortable style. He had his own establishment, a flat of four rooms, with handsome furniture, men and women servants, and a housekeeper, who was, however, by no means young. I went in angrily.

"Listen, my good man," I began from the door; "to begin with, what's the meaning of that letter? I don't care for letters to be passing between us. And why did you not make any statement you wanted to make at Prince Sergay's this morning? I was at your service."

"And why did you hold your tongue, too, this morning, instead of questioning me?" he said with a broad grin of intense self-satisfaction.

"Because it's not I want something of you, but you want something of me," I cried, suddenly growing hot.

“Why have you come to see me, if that’s so?” he cried, almost jumping out of his chair with glee. I turned instantly, and would have gone out, but he seized me by the shoulder.

“No, no, I was joking, it’s a matter of importance, as you’ll see for yourself.”

I sat down, I must admit I was inquisitive. We were seated facing one another at the end of a big writing table. He smiled slyly, and was just holding up his finger.

“None of your slyness, please, and no fingers either, and above all, none of your allegories! Come straight to the point, or I’ll go away at once,” I cried angrily again.

“You ... are proud!” he pronounced in a tone of stupid reproach, rocking in his easy-chair and turning his wrinkled forehead towards the ceiling.

“One has to be with you!”

“You ... took money from Prince Sergay to-day, three hundred roubles; I have money too, my money is better than his.”

“How do you know I took it?” I asked, greatly astonished. “Can he have told you that himself?”

“He told me; don’t worry yourself, in the course of conversation it happened to come up, it just happened to come up, it was not on purpose. He told me. And you need not have taken it. Is that so, or not?”

“But I hear that you squeeze out an exorbitant interest.”

“I have a *mont-de-piété*, but I don’t squeeze. I only lend to friends, and not to other people, the *mont-de-piété* is for them... .”

This *mont-de-piété* was an ordinary pawnbroker’s shop, which flourished under another name, in a different quarter of the town.

“But I lend large sums to friends.”

“Why, is Prince Sergay such a friend of yours?”

“A friend; but ... he plays the fool, and he’d better not dare to play the fool.”

“Why is he so much in your power? Does he owe you a great deal?”

“He ... does owe a great deal.”

“He’ll pay you; he has come into a fortune ...”

“That is not his fortune; he owes money, and owes something else, too. The fortune’s not enough. I’ll lend to you without interest.”

“As though I were a ‘friend’ too? How have I earned that?” I laughed.

“You will earn it.” Again he rocked his whole person forward on a level with me, and was again holding up his fingers.

“Stebelkov! Speak without flourishing your fingers or I go.”

“I say, he may marry Anna Andreyevna!” and he screwed up his left eye fiendishly.

“Listen, Stebelkov, your conversation is taking such a scandalous turn... . How dare you utter the name of Anna Andreyevna!”

“Don’t lose your temper.”

“I am listening, though it’s against the grain, for I see clearly you have something up your sleeve, and I want to find out what it is ... but you may try my patience too far, Stebelkov!”

“Don’t be angry, don’t be proud. Humble your pride a little and listen; and then you’ll be proud again. You know, of course, about Anna Andreyevna. The prince may make a match ... you know, of course ...”

“I have heard of the idea, of course, I know all about it, but I have never spoken to Prince Sergay about it, I only know that the idea originated with old Prince Sokolsky, who is ill now; but I have never talked to him about it and I have had nothing to do with it. I tell you this, simply to make things clear. I will ask you in the first place: what is your object in mentioning it to me? And secondly, can Prince Sergay possibly discuss such subjects with YOU?”

“He does not discuss them with me; he does not want to discuss them with me, but I mention them to him, and he does not want to listen. He shouted at me this morning.”

“I should think so! I commend him.”

“Old Prince Sokolsky will give Anna Andreyevna a good dowry; she’s a favourite. Then when the prince marries her, he’ll repay me all the money he owes. And he will pay other debts as well. He’ll certainly pay them! But now he has nothing to pay with.”

“What do you want of me?”

“To answer the great question: you are known everywhere, you go everywhere, you can find out anything.”

“Oh, damnation ... find out what?”

“Whether Prince Sergay wishes it, whether Anna Andreyevna wishes it, whether the old prince wishes it.”

“And you dare to propose that I should be your spy, and—for money!” I burst out indignantly.

“Don’t be too proud, don’t be too proud, humble your pride only a little, only for five minutes.” He made me sit down again. He was evidently not intimidated by my words or gestures; but I made up my mind to hear him out.

“I must find out quickly, find out quickly, because ... because it will soon be too late. You saw how he swallowed the pill this morning, when the officer mentioned the baron for Mme. Ahmakov.”

I certainly demeaned myself by listening further, but my curiosity was irresistibly aroused.

“Listen, you worthless fellow!” I said resolutely. “Though I’m sitting here listening, and allow you to speak of such persons ... and even answer you, it’s not in the least that I admit your right to do so. I simply see in it some piece of rascality... . And in the first place, what hopes can Prince Sergay have in reference to Katerina Nikolaevna?”

“None whatever, yet he is furious.”

“That’s untrue!”

“Yes, he is. Mme. Ahmakov is no go, then, now. He has lost that stake. Now he has only Anna Andreyevna to fall back on. I will give you two thousand ... without interest and without an IOU.”

Having delivered himself of this, he sat back in his chair, with a determined and important expression, and stared goggle-eyed at me. I too stared.

"You've a suit from Bolshaya Milliona; you need money, you want money; my money's better than his. I will give you more than two thousand ..."

"But what for? what for? damn it all!" I stamped my foot. He bent towards me and brought out impressively:

"For you not to hinder."

"But I'm not interfering as it is," I shouted.

"I know that you are holding your tongue, that's excellent."

"I don't want your approbation. For my part I am very anxious for it myself, but I consider it's not my business, and in fact that it would be unseemly for me to meddle."

"There, you see, you see, unseemly!" he held up his finger.

"What do you see?"

"Unseemly ... Ha!" and he suddenly laughed. "I understand, I understand, that it would be unseemly of you, but you won't interfere?" he winked; but in that wink there was something so insolent, so low and even jeering: evidently he was assuming some meanness on my part and was reckoning upon it; that was clear, but I hadn't a notion what was meant.

"Anna Andreyevna is your sister, too," he pronounced insinuatingly.

"Don't you dare to speak of that. And in fact don't dare to speak of Anna Andreyevna at all."

"Don't be too proud, only one more minute! Listen! he will get the money and provide for every one," Stebelkov said impressively, "every one, EVERY ONE, you follow?"

"So you think I'll take money from him?"

"You are taking it now."

"I am taking my own."

"How is it your own?"

"It's Versilov's money, he owes Versilov twenty thousand."

"Versilov then, not you."

"Versilov is my father."

"No, you are a Dolgoruky, not a Versilov."

"It's all the same." Yes, indeed, I was able to argue like that then! I knew it was not the same, I was not so stupid as all that, but again it was from "delicacy" that I reasoned so.

"Enough!" I cried. "I can't make out what you are talking about, and how dare you ask me to come for such nonsense."

"Can you really not understand? Is it on purpose or not?" Stebelkov brought out slowly, looking at me with a penetrating and incredulous smile.

"I swear I don't understand."

"I tell you he'll be able to provide for every one, EVERY ONE; you've only not to interfere, and don't try to persuade him."

"You must have gone out of your mind. Why do you keep trotting out that 'every one.' Do you mean he'll provide for Versilov?"

“You’re not the only one, nor Versilov either ... there is some one else, too, and Anna Andreyevna is just as much your sister AS LIZAVETA MAKAROVNA!”

I gazed at him open-eyed. There was a sudden glimpse of something like compassion for me in his loathsome eyes:

“You don’t understand, so much the better! That’s good, very good, that you don’t understand. It’s very laudable ... if you really don’t understand.”

I was absolutely furious.

“Go to hell with your silly nonsense, you madman!” I shouted, taking up my hat.

“It’s not silly nonsense! So you are going, but you’ll come again, you know.”

“No,” I rapped out in the doorway.

“You’ll come, and then we shall have another talk. That will be the real talk. Two thousand, remember!”

2

He made such a filthy and confused impression on me, that when I got out I tried not to think of it at all, but dismissed it with a curse. The idea that Prince Sergay was capable of talking to him of me and of that money stabbed me like a pin. “I’ll win and pay him back to-day,” I thought resolutely. Stupid and inarticulate as Stebelkov was, I had seen the full-blown scoundrel in all his glory. And what mattered most to me, it was impossible to avoid intrigue in this business. Only I had not the time just then to go into any sort of intrigues, and that may have been the chief reason why I was as blind as a hen! I looked anxiously at my watch, but it was not yet two o’clock; so it was still possible to pay a call; otherwise I should have been worn out with excitement before three o’clock. I went to Anna Andreyevna Versilov, my sister. I had got to know her some time before at my old prince’s, during his illness. He thought that I had not seen him for three or four days fretted my conscience, but I was reckoning on Anna Andreyevna: the old prince had become extremely attached to her of late, and even spoke of her to me as his guardian angel. And by the way, the idea of marrying her to Prince Sergay really had occurred to the old prince, and he had even expressed it more than once to me, in secret of course. I had mentioned this suggestion to Versilov, for I had noticed that though he was so indifferent to all the practical affairs of life, he seemed particularly interested whenever I told him of my meeting Anna Andreyevna. When I mentioned the old prince’s idea, Versilov muttered that Anna Andreyevna had plenty of sense, and was quite capable of getting out of a delicate position without the advice of outsiders. Stebelkov was right, of course, in saying that the old man meant to give her a dowry, but how could he dare to reckon on getting anything out of it! Prince Sergay had shouted after him that morning that he was not in the least afraid of him: surely Stebelkov had not actually spoken to him of Anna Andreyevna in the study? I could fancy how furious I should have been in Prince Sergay’s place.

I had been to see Anna Andreyevna pretty often of late. But there was one queer thing about my visits: it always happened that she arranged for me to come, and

certainly expected me, but when I went in she always made a pretence of my having come unexpectedly and by chance; I noticed this peculiarity in her, but I became much attached to her nevertheless. She lived with Mme. Fanariotov, her grandmother, as an adopted child, of course (Versilov had never contributed anything for her keep), but she was very far from being in the position in which the protégées of illustrious ladies are usually described as being; for instance, the one in the house of the old countess, in Pushkin's "Queen of Spades."

Anna Andreyevna was more in the position of the countess herself. She lived quite independently in the house, that is to say, though on the same storey and in the same flat as the Fanariotovs she had two rooms completely apart, so that I, for instance, never once met any of the family as I went in or came out. She was free to receive any visitors she liked, and to employ her time as she chose. It is true that she was in her twenty-third year. She had almost given up going out into society of late, though Mme. Fanariotov spared no expense for her granddaughter, of whom I was told she was very fond. Yet what I particularly liked about Anna Andreyevna was that I always found her so quietly dressed and always occupied with something, a book or needlework. There was something of the convent, even of the nun about her, and I liked it very much. She was not very talkative, but she always spoke with judgment and knew how to listen, which I never did. When I told her that she reminded me of Versilov, though they had not a feature in common, she always flushed a little. She often blushed and always quickly, invariably with a faint flush, and I particularly liked this peculiarity in her face. In her presence I never spoke of Versilov by his surname, but always called him Andrey Petrovitch, and this had somehow come to pass of itself. I gathered indeed that the Fanariotovs must have been ashamed of Versilov, though indeed I only drew this conclusion from Anna Andreyevna, and again I'm not sure that the word "ashamed" is appropriate in this connection; but there was some feeling of that sort. I talked to her too about Prince Sergay, and she listened eagerly, and was, I fancy, interested in what I told her of him; but it somehow happened that I always spoke of him of my own accord, and she never questioned me about him. Of the possibility of a marriage between them I had never dared to speak, though I often felt inclined to, for the idea was not without attraction for me. But there were very many things of which, in her room, I could not have ventured to speak, yet on the other hand I felt very much at home there. Another thing I liked was that she was so well educated, and had read so much—real books too; she had read far more than I had.

She had invited me the first time of her own accord. I realized even at the time that she might be reckoning on getting some information out of me at one time or another. Oh, lots of people were able to get information of all sorts out of me in those days! "But what of it," I thought, "it's not only for that that she's asking me." In fact I was positively glad to think I might be of use to her ... and when I sat with her I always felt that I had a sister sitting beside me, though we never once spoke of our relationship by so much as a word or a hint, but behaved as though it did not exist at all. When I was with her it was absolutely unthinkable to speak of it, and indeed looking at

her I was struck with the absurd notion that she might perhaps know nothing of our relationship—so completely did she ignore it in her manner to me.

3

When I went in I found Liza with her. This almost astonished me. I knew very well that they had seen each other before; they had met over the “baby.” I will perhaps later on, if I have space, tell how Anna Andreyevna, always so proud and so delicate, was possessed by the fantastic desire to see that baby, and how she had there met Liza. But yet I had not expected that Anna Andreyevna would ever have invited Liza to come to see her. It was a pleasant surprise to me. Giving no sign of this, of course, I greeted Anna Andreyevna, and warmly pressing Liza’s hand sat down beside her. Both were busily occupied: spread out on the table and on their knees was an evening dress of Anna Andreyevna’s, expensive but “old,” that is, worn three times; and Anna Andreyevna wanted to alter it. Liza was “a master-hand” at such work, and had real taste, and so a “solemn council of wise women” was being held. I recalled Versilov’s words and laughed; and indeed I was in a radiantly happy state of mind.

“You are in very good spirits to-day and that’s very pleasant,” observed Anna Andreyevna, uttering her words gravely and distinctly. Her voice was a rich mellow contralto, and she always spoke quietly and gently, with a droop of her long eyelashes, and a faint smile on her pale face.

“Liza knows how disagreeable I am when I am not in good spirits,” I answered gaily.

“Perhaps Anna Andreyevna knows that too,” mischievous Liza gibed at me. My darling! If I had known what was on her mind at that time!

“What are you doing now?” asked Anna Andreyevna. (I may remark that she had asked me to come and see her that day.)

“I am sitting here wondering why I always prefer to find you reading rather than with needlework. Yes, really needlework doesn’t suit you, somehow. I agree with Andrey Petrovitch about that.”

“You have still not made up your mind to enter the university, then?”

“I am very grateful to you for not having forgotten our conversation: it shows you think of me sometimes, but ... about the university my ideas are not quite definite ... besides, I have plans of my own.”

“That means he has a secret,” observed Liza.

“Leave off joking, Liza. Some clever person said the other day that by our progressive movement of the last twenty years, we had proved above everything that we are filthily uneducated. That was meant for our university men, too.”

“No doubt father said that,” remarked Liza, “you very often repeat his ideas.”

“Liza, you seem to think I’ve no mind of my own.”

“In these days it’s a good thing to listen to intelligent men, and repeat their words,” said Anna Andreyevna, taking my part a little.

“Just so, Anna Andreyevna,” I assented warmly. “The man who doesn’t think of the position of Russia to-day is no patriot! I look at Russia perhaps from a strange point of view: we lived through the Tatar invasion, and afterwards two centuries of slavery, no doubt because they both suited our tastes. Now freedom has been given us, and we have to put up with freedom: shall we know how to? Will freedom, too, turn out to suit our taste? That’s the question.”

Liza glanced quickly at Anna Andreyevna, and the latter immediately cast down her eyes and began looking about for something; I saw that Liza was doing her utmost to control herself but all at once our eyes chanced to meet, and she burst into a fit of laughter; I flared up.

“Liza, you are insupportable!”

“Forgive me!” she said suddenly, leaving off laughing and speaking almost sadly. “Goodness knows what I can be thinking about ...”

And there was a tremor almost as of tears in her voice. I felt horribly ashamed; I took her hand and kissed it warmly.

“You are very good,” Anna Andreyevna said softly, seeing me kiss Liza’s hand.

“I am awfully glad that I have found you laughing this time, Liza,” I said. “Would you believe it, Anna Andreyevna, every time I have met her lately she has greeted me with a strange look, and that look seemed to ask, ‘has he found out something? is everything all right?’ Really, there has been something like that about her.”

Anna Andreyevna looked keenly and deliberately at her. Liza dropped her eyes. I could see very clearly, however, that they were on much closer and more intimate terms than I could have possibly imagined; the thought was pleasant.

“You told me just now that I am good; you would not believe, Anna Andreyevna, how much I change for the better when I’m with you, and how much I like being with you,” I said with warmth.

“I am awfully glad that you say that just now,” she answered with peculiar significance. I must mention that she never spoke to me of the reckless way I was living, and the depths to which I was sinking, although (I knew it) she was not only aware of all this, but even made inquiries about it indirectly.

So that this now was something like the first hint on the subject, and my heart turned to her more warmly than ever.

“How is our patient?” I asked.

“Oh, he is much better; he is up, and he went for a drive yesterday and again to-day. You don’t mean to say you have not been to see him to-day? He is eagerly expecting you.”

“I have behaved very badly to him, but now you’re looking after him, and have quite taken my place; he is a gay deceiver, and has thrown me over for you.”

A serious look came into her face, very possibly because my tone was rather too flippant.

“I have just been at Prince Sergay’s,” I muttered, “and I ... by the way, Liza, you went to see Darya Onisimovna this morning, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” she answered briefly, without raising her head. “But you do go to see the invalid every day, I believe, don’t you?” she asked suddenly, probably in order to say something.

“Yes, I go to see him, but I don’t get there,” I said laughing. “I go in and turn to the left.”

“Even the prince has noticed that you go to see Katerina Nikolaevna very often. He was speaking of it yesterday and laughing,” said Anna Andreyevna.

“What, what did he laugh at?”

“He was joking, you know his way. He said that, on the contrary, the only impression that a young and beautiful woman makes on a young man of your age is one of anger and indignation,” Anna Andreyevna broke into sudden laughter.

“Listen ... that was a very shrewd saying of his,” I cried. “Most likely it was not he said it, but you said it to him.”

“Why so? No, it was he said it.”

“Well, but suppose the beautiful lady takes notice of him, in spite of his being so insignificant, of his standing in the corner and fuming at the thought that he is ‘only a boy’; suppose she suddenly prefers him to the whole crowd of admirers surrounding her, what then?” I asked with a bold and defiant air. My head was throbbing.

“Then you are completely done for,” laughed Liza.

“Done for,” I cried. “No, I’m not done for. I believe that’s false. If a woman stands across my path she must follow me. I am not going to be turned aside from my path with impunity... .”

I remember Liza once happened to mention long afterwards that I pronounced this phrase very strangely, earnestly, and as though reflecting deeply; and at the same time it was “so absurd, it was impossible to keep from laughing”; Anna Andreyevna did, in fact, laugh again.

“Laugh at me, laugh away,” I cried in exultation, for I was delighted with the whole conversation and the tone of it; “from you it’s a pleasure to me. I love your laugh, Anna Andreyevna! It’s a peculiarity of yours to keep perfectly quiet, and then suddenly laugh, all in one minute, so that an instant before one could not guess what was coming from your face. I used to know a lady in Moscow, I used to sit in a corner and watch her from a distance. She was almost as handsome as you are, but she did not know how to laugh like you; her face was as attractive as yours, but it lost all its attractiveness when she laughed; what’s so particularly attractive in you ... is just that faculty... . I have been meaning to tell you so for a long time.”

When I said of this Moscow lady that “she was as handsome as you” I was not quite ingenuous. I pretended that the phrase had dropped from me unawares, without my noticing it: I knew very well that such “unconscious” praise is more highly valued by a woman than the most polished compliment. And though Anna Andreyevna might flush, I knew that it pleased her. And indeed I invented the lady: I had known no such lady in Moscow; I had said so simply to compliment Anna Andreyevna, and give her pleasure.

“One really might imagine,” she said with a charming laugh, “that you had come under the influence of some fair lady during the last few days.”

I felt I was being carried away ... I longed indeed to tell them something ... but I refrained.

“By the way, only lately you spoke of Katerina Nikolaevna with very hostile feelings.”

“If I did speak ill of her in any way,” I cried with flashing eyes, “what’s to blame for it is the monstrous slander—that she is an enemy of Andrey Petrovitch’s; there’s a libelous story about him, too, that he was in love with her, made her an offer and other absurdities of the sort. The notion is as grotesque as the other scandalous story, that during her husband’s lifetime she promised Prince Sergay to marry him as soon as she should be a widow, and afterwards would not keep her word. But I have it first hand that it was not so at all, and that it was all only a joke. I know it first hand. She did, in fact, when she was abroad, say to him in a playful moment: ‘Perhaps in the future’; but what did that amount to beyond an idle word? I know very well that the prince on his side can attach no sort of consequence to such a promise; and indeed he has no intention of doing so,” I added on second thoughts. “I fancy he has very different ideas in his head,” I put in slyly. “Nastchokin said this morning at Prince Sergay’s that Katerina Nikolaevna was to be married to Baron Buring. I assure you he received the news with the greatest equanimity, you can take my word for it.”

“Has Nastchokin been at Prince Sergay’s?” Anna Andreyevna asked with grave emphasis, apparently surprised.

“Oh yes; he seems to be one of those highly respectable people ...”

“And did Nastchokin speak to him of this match with Buring?” asked Anna Andreyevna, showing sudden interest.

“Not of the match, but of the possibility of one—he spoke of it as a rumour; he said there was such a rumour going the round of the drawing-rooms; for my part I am certain it’s nonsense.”

Anna Andreyevna pondered a moment and bent over her sewing.

“I love Prince Sergay,” I added suddenly with warmth. “He has his failings, no doubt; I have told you so already, especially a certain tendency to be obsessed by one idea ... and, indeed, his faults are a proof of the generosity of his heart, aren’t they? But we almost had a quarrel with him to-day about an idea; it’s his conviction that one must be honourable if one talks of what’s honourable, if not, all that you say is a lie. Now, is that logical? Yet it shows the high standard of honesty, duty, and truth in his soul, doesn’t it? ... Oh, good heavens, what time is it,” I cried, suddenly happening to glance at the clock on the wall.

“Ten minutes to three,” she responded tranquilly, looking at the clock. All the time I had talked of Prince Sergay she listened to me with her eyes cast down, with a rather sly but charming smile: she knew why I was praising him. Liza listened with her head bent over her work. For some time past she had taken no part in the conversation.

I jumped up as though I were scalded.

“Are you late for some appointment?”

“Yes ... No ... I am late though, but I am just off. One word only, Anna Andreyevna,” I began with feeling; “I can’t help telling you to-day! I want to confess that I have often blessed your kindness, and the delicacy with which you have invited me to see you... . My acquaintance with you has made the strongest impression on me... . In your room I am, as it were, spiritually purified, and I leave you better than when I came. That’s true. When I sit beside you I am not only unable to speak of anything evil, I am incapable even of evil thoughts; they vanish away in your presence and, if I recall anything evil after seeing you, I feel ashamed of it at once, I am cast down and blush inwardly. And do you know, it pleased me particularly to find my sister with you to-day... . It’s a proof of your generosity ... of such a fine attitude... . In one word, you have shown something so SISTERLY, if I may be allowed to break the ice, to ...”

As I spoke she got up from her seat, and turned more and more crimson; but suddenly she seemed in alarm at something, at the overstepping of some line which should not have been crossed and she quickly interrupted me.

“I assure you I appreciate your feelings with all my heart... . I have understood them without words for a long time past... .”

She paused in confusion, pressing my hand. Liza, unseen by her, suddenly pulled at my sleeve. I said good-bye and went out, but Liza overtook me in the next room.

4

“Liza, why did you tug at my sleeve?” I asked her.

“She is horrid, she is cunning, she is not worth it... . She keeps hold of you to get something out of you,” she murmured in a rapid, angry whisper. I had never before seen such a look on her face.

“For goodness’ sake, Liza! she is such a delightful girl!”

“Well, then, I’m horrid.”

“What’s the matter with you?”

“I am very nasty. She may be the most delightful girl, and I am nasty. That’s enough, let me alone. Listen: mother implores you about something ‘of which she does not dare to speak,’ so she said, Arkady darling! Give up gambling, dear one, I entreat you ... and so does mother... .”

“Liza, I know, but ... I know that it’s pitiful cowardice, but ... but it’s all of no consequence, really! You see I’ve got into debt like a fool, and I want to win simply to pay it off. I can win, for till now I’ve been playing at random, for the fun of the thing, like a fool, but now I shall tremble over every rouble... . It won’t be me if I don’t win! I have not got a passion for it; it’s not important, it’s simply a passing thing; I assure you I am too strong to be unable to stop when I like. I’ll pay back the money and then I shall be altogether yours, and tell mother that I shall stay with you always... .”

“That three hundred roubles cost you something this morning!”

“How do you know?” I asked, startled.

“Darya Onisimovna heard it all this morning ...”

But at that moment Liza pushed me behind the curtain, and we found ourselves in the so-called “lantern,” that is a little circular room with windows all round it. Before I knew where we were I caught the sound of a voice I knew, and the clang of spurs, and recognized a familiar footstep.

“Prince Sergay,” I whispered.

“Yes,” she whispered.

“Why are you so frightened?”

“It’s nothing; I don’t want him to meet me.”

“Tiens, you don’t mean to say he’s trying to flirt with you?” I said smiling. “I’d give it to him if he did. Where are you going?”

“Let us go, I will come with you.”

“Have you said good-bye?”

“Yes, my coat’s in the hall.”

We went out; on the stairs I was struck by an idea.

“Do you know, Liza, he may have come to make her an offer!”

“N-n-no ... he won’t make her an offer ...” she said firmly and deliberately, in a low voice.

“You don’t know, Liza, though I quarrelled with him this morning— since you’ve been told of it already—yet on my honour I really love him and wish him success. We made it up this morning. When we are happy we are so good-natured... . One sees in him many fine tendencies ... and he has humane feelings too... . The rudiments anyway ... and in the hands of such a strong and clever girl as Anna Andreyevna, he would rise to her level and be happy. I am sorry I’ve no time to spare ... but let us go a little way together, I should like to tell you something... .”

“No, you go on, I’m not going that way. Are you coming to dinner?”

“I am coming, I am coming as I promised. Listen, Liza, a low brute, a loathsome creature in fact, called Stebelkov, has a strange influence over his doings ... an IOU... . In short he has him in his power, and he has pressed him so hard, and Prince Sergay has humiliated himself so far that neither of them see any way out of it except an offer to Anna Andreyevna. And really she ought to be warned, though that’s nonsense; she will set it all to rights later. But what do you think, will she refuse him?”

“Good-bye, I am late,” Liza muttered, and in the momentary look on her face I saw such hatred that I cried out in horror:

“Liza, darling, what is it?”

“I am not angry with you; only don’t gamble... .”

“Oh, you are talking of that; I’m not going to.”

“You said just now: ‘when we are happy.’ Are you very happy then?”

“Awfully, Liza, awfully! Good heavens, why it’s past three o’clock! ... Good-bye, Liza. Lizotchka darling, tell me: can one keep a woman waiting? Isn’t it inexcusable?”

“Waiting to meet you, do you mean?” said Liza faintly smiling, with a sort of lifeless, trembling smile.

“Give me your hand for luck.”

“For luck? my hand? I won’t, not for anything.”

She walked away quickly. And she had exclaimed it so earnestly! I jumped into my sledge.

Yes, yes, this was “happiness,” and it was the chief reason why I was as blind as a mole, and had no eyes or understanding, except for myself.

Chapter 4

1

Now I am really afraid to tell my story. It all happened long ago; and it is all like a mirage to me now. How could such a woman possibly have arranged a rendezvous with such a contemptible urchin as I was then? Yet so it seemed at first sight! When, leaving Liza, I raced along with my heart throbbing, I really thought that I had gone out of my mind: the idea that she had granted me this interview suddenly appeared to me such an obvious absurdity, that it was impossible for me to believe in it. And yet I had not the faintest doubt of it; the more obviously absurd it seemed, the more implicitly I believed in it.

The fact that it had already struck three troubled me: “If an interview has been granted me, how can I possibly be late for it,” I thought. Foolish questions crossed my mind, too, such as: “Which was my better course now, boldness or timidity?” But all this only flashed through my mind because I had something of real value in my heart, which I could not have defined. What had been said the evening before was this: “Tomorrow at three o’clock I shall be at Tatyana Pavlovna’s,” that was all. But in the first place, she always received me alone in her own room, and she could have said anything she liked to me there, without going to Tatyana Pavlovna’s for the purpose; so why have appointed another place of meeting? And another question was: would Tatyana Pavlovna be at home or not? If it were a tryst then Tatyana Pavlovna would not be at home. And how could this have been arranged without telling Tatyana Pavlovna beforehand? Then was Tatyana Pavlovna in the secret? This idea seemed to me wild, and in a way indelicate, almost coarse.

And, in fact, she might simply have been going to see Tatyana Pavlovna, and have mentioned the fact to me the previous evening with no object in view, but I had misunderstood her. And, indeed, it had been said so casually, so quickly, and after a very tedious visit. I was for some reason overcome with stupidity the whole evening: I sat and mumbled, and did not know what to say, raged inwardly, and was horribly shy, and she was going out somewhere, as I learnt later, and was evidently relieved when I got up to go. All these reflections surged into my mind. I made up my mind at last that when I arrived I would ring the bell. “The cook will open the door,” I thought, “and I shall ask whether Tatyana Pavlovna is at home. If she is not then it’s a tryst.” But I had no doubt of it, no doubt of it!

I ran up the stairs and when I was at the door all my fears vanished. "Come what may," I thought, "if only it's quickly!" The cook opened the door and with revolting apathy snuffled out that Tatyana Pavlovna was not at home. "But isn't there some one else? Isn't there some one waiting for her?" I wanted to ask, but I did not ask, "I'd better see for myself," and muttering to the cook that I would wait, I took off my fur coat and opened the door... .

Katerina Nikolaevna was sitting at the window "waiting for Tatyana Pavlovna."

"Isn't she at home?" she suddenly asked me, in a tone of anxiety and annoyance as soon as she saw me. And her face and her voice were so utterly incongruous with what I had expected that I came to a full stop in the doorway.

"Who's not at home?" I muttered.

"Tatyana Pavlovna! Why, I asked you yesterday to tell her that I would be with her at three o'clock."

"I ... I have not seen her at all."

"Did you forget?"

I sat completely overwhelmed. So this was all it meant! And the worst of it was it was all as clear as twice two makes four, and I— I had all this while persisted in believing it.

"I don't remember your asking me to tell her. And in fact you didn't ask me: you simply said you would be here at three o'clock," I burst out impatiently, I did not look at her.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly; "but if you forgot to tell her, though you knew I should be here, what has brought you here?"

I raised my head; there was no trace of mockery or anger in her face, there was only her bright, gay smile, and a look more mischievous than usual. Though, indeed, her face always had an expression of almost childish mischief.

"There, you see I've caught you; well, what are you going to say now?" her whole face seemed to be saying.

I did not want to answer and looked down again. The silence lasted half a minute.

"Have you just come from papa?" she asked.

"I have come from Anna Andreyevna's, I haven't been to see Prince Nikolay Ivanitch at all ... and you know that," I added suddenly.

"Did anything happen to you at Anna Andreyevna's?"

"You mean that I look as though I were crazy? But I looked crazy before I went to Anna Andreyevna."

"And you didn't recover your wits there?"

"No, I didn't. And what's more I heard that you were going to marry Baron Büring."

"Did she tell you that?" she asked with sudden interest.

"No, it was I told her; I heard Nastchokin tell Prince Sergay so this morning."

I still kept my eyes cast down and did not look at her; to look at her meant to be flooded with radiance, joy, and happiness, and I did not want to be happy. Indignation had stung me to the heart, and in one instant I had taken a tremendous resolution.

Then I began to speak, I hardly knew what about. I was breathless, and spoke indistinctly, but I looked at her boldly. My heart was throbbing. I began talking of something quite irrelevant, though perhaps not incoherently. At first she listened with a serene, patient smile, which never left her face, but little by little signs of surprise and then of alarm passed over her countenance. The smile still persisted, but from time to time it seemed tremulous. "What's the matter?" I asked her, noticing that she shuddered all over.

"I am afraid of you," she answered, almost in trepidation.

"Why don't you go away?" I said. "As Tatyana Pavlovna is not at home, and you know she won't be, you ought to get up and go."

"I meant to wait for her, but now ... really... ."

She made a movement to get up.

"No, no, sit down," I said, stopping her; "there, you shuddered again, but you smile even when you're frightened... . You always have a smile. There, now you are smiling all over... ."

"You are raving."

"Yes, I am."

"I am frightened ..." she whispered again.

"Frightened of what?"

"That you'll begin knocking down the walls ..." she smiled again, though she really was scared.

"I can't endure your smile ... !"

And I talked away again. I plunged headlong. It was as though something had given me a shove. I had never, never talked to her like that, I had always been shy. I was fearfully shy now, but I talked; I remember I talked about her face.

"I can't endure your smile any longer!" I cried suddenly. "Why did I even in Moscow picture you as menacing, magnificent, using venomous drawing-room phrases? Yes, even before I left Moscow, I used to talk with Marie Ivanovna about you, and imagined what you must be like... . Do you remember Marie Ivanovna? You've been in her house. When I was coming here I dreamed of you all night in the train. For a whole month before you came I gazed at your portrait, in your father's study, and could make nothing of it. The expression of your face is childish mischief and boundless good-nature—there! I have been marvelling at it all the time I've been coming to see you. Oh, and you know how to look haughty and to crush one with a glance. I remember how you looked at me at your father's that day when you had arrived from Moscow ... I saw you then, but if you were to ask me how I went out of the room or what you were like, I could not tell you—I could not even have told whether you were tall or short. As soon as I saw you I was blinded. Your portrait is not in the least like you: your eyes are not dark, but light, it's only the long eyelashes that make them look dark. You are plump, you are neither tall nor short, you have a buxom fullness, the light full figure of a healthy peasant girl. And your face is quite countrified, too, it's the face of a village beauty—don't be offended. Why, it's fine, it's better so—a round, rosy, clear,

bold, laughing, and ... bashful face! Really, bashful. Bashful! of Katerina Nikolaevna Ahmakov! Bashful and chaste, I swear! More than chaste—childlike!—that’s your face! I have been astounded by it all this time, and have been asking myself, is the woman so, too? I know now that you are very clever, but do you know, at first I thought you were a simpleton? You have a bright and lively mind, but without embellishments of any sort... . Another thing I like is that your smile never deserts you; that’s my paradise! I love your calmness, too, your quietness, and your uttering your words so smoothly, so calmly and almost lazily, it’s just that laziness I like. I believe if a bridge were to break down under you, you would say something in a smooth and even voice... . I imagined you as the acme of pride and passion, and for the last two months you’ve been talking to me as one student talks to another. I never imagined that you had such a brow; it’s rather low, like the foreheads of statues, but soft and as white as marble, under your glorious hair. Your bosom is high, your movements are light. You are extraordinarily beautiful, but there’s no pride about you. It’s only now I’ve come to believe it, I’ve disbelieved in it all this time!”

She listened to this wild tirade with large wide-open eyes, she saw that I was trembling. Several times she lifted her gloved hand with a charming apprehensive gesture to stop me, but every time she drew it back in dismay and perplexity. Sometimes she even stepped back a little. Two or three times the smile lighted up her face again; at one time she flushed very red, but in the end was really frightened and turned pale. As soon as I stopped she held out her hand, and in a voice that was still even, though it had a note of entreaty, said:

“You must not say that ... you can’t talk like that... .”

And suddenly she got up from her place, deliberately gathering up her scarf and sable muff.

“Are you going?” I cried.

“I’m really afraid of you ... you are abusing ...” she articulated slowly and as it were with compassion and reproach.

“Listen, on my honour I won’t knock down the walls.”

“But you’ve begun already,” she could not refrain from smiling. “I don’t even know if you will allow me to pass.” And she seemed to be actually afraid I would not let her go.

“I will open the door myself, but let me tell you I’ve taken a tremendous resolution; and if you care to give light to my soul, come back, sit down, and listen to just two words. But if you won’t, then go away, and I will open the door to you myself!”

She looked at me and sat down again.

“Some women would have gone out with a show of indignation, but you sit down!” I cried in exaltation.

“You have never allowed yourself to talk like this before.”

“I was always afraid before, I came in now not knowing what I should say. You imagine I’m not afraid now: I am. But I’ve just taken a tremendous resolution, and I feel I shall carry it out. And as soon as I took that resolution I went out of my mind

and began saying all this... . Listen, this is what I have to say, am I your spy or not? Answer me that question!"

The colour rushed into her face.

"Don't answer yet, Katerina Nikolaevna, but listen to every thing and then tell the whole truth."

I had broken down all barriers at once and plunged headlong into space.

2

"Two months ago I was standing here behind the curtain ... you know ... and you talked to Tatyana Pavlovna about the letter. I rushed out, and beside myself, I blurted out the truth. You saw at once that I knew something ... you could not help seeing it ... you were trying to find an important document, and were uneasy about it... . Wait a bit, Katerina Nikolaevna, don't speak yet. I must tell you that your suspicion was well founded: that document does exist ... that is to say it did... . I have seen it—your letter to Andronikov, that's it, isn't it?"

"You've seen that letter?" she asked quickly, in embarrassment and agitation. "When did you see it?"

"I saw it ... I saw it at Kraft's ... you know, the man that shot himself... ."

"Really? You saw it yourself? What became of it?"

"Kraft tore it up."

"In your presence, did you see him?"

"Yes, he tore it up, probably because he was going to die... . I did not know then, of course, that he was going to shoot himself... ."

"So it has been destroyed, thank God!" she commented slowly with a deep sigh, and she crossed herself.

I was not lying to her, that is to say I was lying because the letter in question was in my hands and had never been in Kraft's, but that was a mere detail; in what really mattered I did not lie, because at the instant I told the lie I nerved myself to burn the letter that very evening. I swear that if it had been in my pocket that moment I would have taken it out and given it her; but I hadn't it with me, it was at my lodging. Perhaps though I should not have given it her because I should have felt horribly ashamed to confess to her then that I had it, and had been keeping it and waiting so long before I gave it back. It made no difference, I should have burnt it at home in any case, and I was not lying! I swear that at that moment my heart was pure.

"And since that's how it is," I went on, almost beside myself, "tell me, have you been attracting me, have you been welcoming me in your drawing-room because you suspected that I knew of the letter? Stay, Katerina Nikolaevna, one minute more, don't speak, but let me finish: all the time I've been coming to see you, all this time I've been suspecting that it was only because of that that you made much of me, to get that letter out of me, to lead me on to telling you about it... . Wait one more minute: I suspected it, but I suffered. Your duplicity was more than I could bear, for I found you

a noble creature! I tell you plainly; I was your enemy, but I found you a noble creature! I was utterly vanquished. But your duplicity, that is the suspicion of your duplicity, was anguish... . Now everything must be settled, everything must be explained, the time has come for it; but wait yet a little longer, don't speak, let me tell you how I look at it myself, just now at this moment; I tell you plainly, if it has been so I don't resent it ... that is, I mean, I'm not offended, for it's so natural; I understand, you see. What is there unnatural or wrong about it? You were worried about a letter, you suspected that So-and-so knew all about it; well, you might very naturally desire So-and-so to speak out... . There's no harm in that, none at all. I am speaking sincerely. Yet now you must tell me something ... you must confess (forgive the word), I must have the truth. I want it for a reason! And so tell me, why did you make much of me? Was it to get that letter out of me ... Katerina Nikolaevna?"

I spoke as though I were falling from a height, and my forehead was burning. She was listening to me now without apprehension; on the contrary, her face was full of feeling; but she looked somehow abashed, as though she were ashamed.

"It was for that," she said slowly and in a low voice. "Forgive me, I did wrong," she added suddenly, with a faint movement of her hands towards me. I had never expected this ... had expected anything rather than those two words—even from her whom I knew already.

"And you tell me you did wrong! so simply: 'I did wrong,'" I cried.

"Oh, for a long time I've been feeling that I was not treating you fairly ... and, indeed, I'm glad to be able to speak of it... ."

"For a long time you've been feeling that? Why did you not speak of it before?"

"Oh, I did not know how to say it," she smiled; "that is, I should have known how," she smiled again, "but I always felt ashamed ... because at first it really was only on that account that I 'attracted' you, as you expressed it; but very soon afterwards I felt disgusted and sick of all this deception, I assure you!" she added with bitter feeling; "and of all this troublesome business!"

"And why—why couldn't you have asked me then straightforwardly? You should have said: 'you know about the letter, why do you pretend?' And I should have told you at once, I should have confessed at once!"

"Oh, I was ... a little afraid of you. I must admit I did not trust you either. And after all, if I dissembled, you did the same," she added with a laugh.

"Yes, yes, I have been contemptible!" I cried, overwhelmed. "Oh, you don't know yet the abyss into which I have fallen."

"An abyss already! I recognize your style," she smiled softly. "That letter," she added mournfully, "was the saddest and most indiscreet thing I ever did. The consciousness of it was a continual reproach. Moved by circumstances and apprehension, I had doubts of my dear generous-hearted father. Knowing that that letter might fall ... into the hands of malicious people ... and I had good reasons for fearing this" (she added hotly), "I trembled that they might use it, might show my father ... and it might make a tremendous impression on him ... in his condition ... on his health ... and he might be

estranged from me... . Yes,” she added, looking me candidly in the face, and probably catching some shade in my expression; “yes, and I was afraid for my future too; I was afraid that he ... under the influence of his illness ... might deprive me of his favour... . That feeling came in too; no doubt I did him an injustice; he is so kind and generous, that no doubt he would have forgiven me. That’s all. But I ought not to have treated you as I did,” she concluded, again seeming suddenly abashed. “You have made me feel ashamed.”

“No, you have nothing to be ashamed of,” I cried.

“I certainly did reckon ... on your impulsiveness ... and I recognize it,” she brought out, looking down.

“Katerina Nikolaevna! Who forces you to make such confessions to me, tell me that?” I cried, as though I were drunk. “Wouldn’t it have been easy for you to get up, and in the most exquisite phrases to prove to me subtly and as clearly as twice two make four that though it was so, yet it was nothing of the sort—you understand, as people of your world know how to deal with the truth? I am crude and foolish, you know, I should have believed you at once, I should have believed anything from you, whatever you said! It would have cost you nothing to behave like that, of course! You are not really afraid of me, you know! How could you be so willing to humiliate yourself like this before an impudent puppy, a wretched raw youth?”

“In this anyway I’ve not humiliated myself before you,” she enunciated with immense dignity, apparently not understanding my exclamation.

“No, indeed, quite the contrary, that’s just what I am saying... .”

“Oh, it was so wrong, so thoughtless of me!” she exclaimed, putting her hand to her face, as though to hide it. “I felt ashamed yesterday, that’s why I was not myself when I was with you... . The fact is,” she added, “that circumstances have made it absolutely essential for me at last to find out the truth about that unlucky letter, or else I should have begun to forget about it ... for I have not let you come to see me simply on account of that,” she added suddenly.

There was a tremor at my heart.

“Of course not,” she went on with a subtle smile, “of course not! I ... You very aptly remarked, Arkady Makarovitch, that we have often talked together as one student to another. I assure you I am sometimes very much bored in company; I have felt so particularly since my time abroad and all these family troubles ... I very rarely go anywhere, in fact, and not simply from laziness. I often long to go into the country. There I could read over again my favourite books, which I have laid aside for so long, and have never been able to bring myself to read again. I have spoken to you of that already. Do you remember, you laughed at my reading the Russian newspapers at the rate of two a day.”

“I didn’t laugh... .”

“Of course not, for you, too, were excited over them, and I confessed, too, long ago, that I am Russian, and love Russia. You remember we always read ‘facts’ as you called them” (she smiled). “Though you are at times somewhat ... strange, yet sometimes you

grew so eager and would say such good things, and you were interested just in what I was interested in. When you are a 'student' you are charming and original. Nothing else suits you so well," she added, with a sly and charming smile. "Do you remember we sometimes talked for hours about nothing but figures, reckoned and compared, and took trouble to find out how many schools there are in Russia, and in what direction progress is being made? We reckoned up the murders and serious crimes and set them off against the cheering items... . We wanted to find out in what direction we were moving, and what would happen to us in the end. In you I found sincerity. In our world men never talk like that to us, to women. Last week I was talking to Prince X. about Bismarck, for I was very much interested, and could not make up my mind about him, and only fancy, he sat down beside me and began telling me about him very fully, indeed, but always with a sort of irony, and that patronizing condescension which I always find so insufferable, and which is so common in 'great men' when they talk to us women if we meddle with 'subjects beyond our sphere.' ... Do you remember that we almost had a quarrel, you and I, over Bismarck? You showed me that you had ideas of your own 'far more definite' than Bismarck's," she laughed suddenly. "I have only met two people in my whole life who talked to me quite seriously; my husband, a very, very intelligent and hon-our-able man," she pronounced the words impressively, "and you know whom... ."

"Versilov!" I cried; I hung breathless on every word she uttered.

"Yes, I was very fond of listening to him, I became at last absolutely open ... perhaps too open with him, but even then he did not believe in me!"

"Did not believe in you?"

"No, no one has ever believed in me."

"But Versilov, Versilov!"

"He did not simply disbelieve in me," she pronounced, dropping her eyes, and smiling strangely, "but considered that I had all the vices."

"Of which you have not one!"

"No, even I have some."

"Versilov did not love you, so he did not understand you," I cried with flashing eyes. Her face twitched.

"Say no more of that and never speak to me of ... of that man," she added hotly, with vehement emphasis. "But that's enough: I must be going"—she got up to go. "Well, do you forgive me or not?" she added, looking at me brightly.

"Me ... forgive you... . Listen, Katerina Nikolaevna, and don't be angry; is it true that you are going to be married?"

"That's not settled," she said in confusion, seeming frightened of something.

"Is he a good man? Forgive me, forgive me that question!"

"Yes, very."

"Don't answer further, don't vouchsafe me an answer! I know that such questions from me are impossible! I only wanted to know whether he is worthy of you or not, but I will find out for myself."

“Ah, listen!” she said in dismay.

“No, I won’t, I won’t. I’ll step aside... . Only this one thing I want to say: God grant you every happiness according to your choice ... for having given me so much happiness in this one hour! Your image is imprinted on my heart for ever now. I have gained a treasure: the thought of your perfection. I expected duplicity and coarse coquetry and was wretched because I could not connect that idea with you. I’ve been thinking day and night lately, and suddenly everything has become clear as daylight! As I was coming here I thought I should bear away an image of jesuitical cunning, of deception, of an inquisitorial serpent, and I found honour, magnificence, a student. You laugh. Laugh away! You are holy, you know, you cannot laugh at what is sacred... .”

“Oh no, I’m only laughing because you use such wonderful expressions... . But what is an ‘inquisitorial serpent’?” she laughed.

“You let slip to-day a priceless sentence,” I went on ecstatically. “How could you to my face utter the words; ‘I reckoned on your impulsiveness’? Well, granted you are a saint, and confess even that, because you imagined yourself guilty in some way and want to punish yourself ... though there was no fault of any sort, for, if there had been, from you everything is holy! But yet you need not have uttered just that word, that expression! ... Such unnatural candour only shows your lofty purity, your respect for me, your faith in me!” I cried incoherently. “Oh, do not blush, do not blush! ... And how, how could anyone slander you, and say that you are a woman of violent passions? Oh, forgive me: I see a look of anguish on your face; forgive a frenzied boy his clumsy words! Besides, do words matter now? Are you not above all words? ... Versilov said once that Othello did not kill Desdemona and afterwards himself because he was jealous, but because he had been robbed of his ideal... . I understand that, because to-day my ideal has been restored to me!”

“You praise me too much: I don’t deserve this,” she pronounced with feeling. “Do you remember what I told you about your eyes?” she added playfully.

“That I have microscopes for eyes, and that I exaggerate every fly into a camel! No, this time it’s not a camel... . What, you are going?”

She was standing in the middle of the room with her muff and her shawl in her hands.

“No, I shall wait till you’re gone, and then I shall go afterwards. I must write a couple of words to Tatyana Pavlovna.”

“I’m going directly, directly, but once more: may you be happy alone, or with the man of your choice, and God bless you! All that I need is my ideal!”

“Dear, good Arkady Makarovitch, believe me I ... My father always says of you ‘the dear, good boy!’ Believe me I shall always remember what you have told me of your lonely childhood, abandoned amongst strangers, and your solitary dreams... . I understand only too well how your mind has been formed ... but now though we are students,” she added, with a deprecating and shamefaced smile, pressing my hand, “we can’t go on seeing each other as before and, and ... no doubt you will understand that?”

“We cannot?”

“No, we cannot, for a long time, we cannot ... it’s my fault... . I see now that it’s quite out of the question... . We shall meet sometimes at my father’s.”

“You are afraid of my ‘impulsiveness,’ my feelings, you don’t believe in me!” I would have exclaimed, but she was so overcome with shame that my words refused to be uttered.

“Tell me,” she said, stopping me all at once in the doorway, “did you see yourself that ... that letter was torn up? You are sure you remember it? How did you know at the time that it was the letter to Andronikov?”

“Kraft told me what was in it, and even showed it to me... . Good-bye! When I am with you in your study I am shy of you, but when you go away I am ready to fall down and kiss the spot where your foot has touched the floor... .” I brought out all at once, unconsciously, not knowing how or why I said it. And without looking at her I went quickly out of the room.

I set off for home; there was rapture in my soul. My brain was in a whirl, my heart was full. As I drew near my mother’s house I recalled Liza’s ingratitude to Anna Andreyevna, her cruel and monstrous saying that morning, and my heart suddenly ached for them all!

“How hard their hearts are! And Liza too, what’s the matter with her?” I thought as I stood on the steps.

I dismissed Matvey and told him to come to my lodging for me at nine o’clock.

Chapter 5

1

I was late for dinner, but they had not yet sat down to table, they had waited for me. Perhaps because I did not often dine with them, some special additions to the menu had been made on my account: with the savouries there were sardines and so on. But to my surprise and regret, I found them all rather worried and out of humour. Liza scarcely smiled when she saw me, and mother was obviously uneasy; Versilov gave me a smile, but it was a forced one. “Have they been quarrelling?” I wondered. Everything went well at first, however; Versilov only frowned over the soup with dumplings in it, and made wry faces when he was handed the beef olives.

“I have only to mention that a particular dish does not suit me, for it to reappear next day,” he pronounced in vexation.

“But how’s one to invent things, Andrey Petrovitch? There’s no inventing a new dish of any sort,” my mother answered timidly.

“Your mother is the exact opposite of some of our newspapers, to whom whatever is new is good,” Versilov tried to make a joke in a more playful and amiable voice; but it somehow fell flat, and only added to the discomfiture of my mother, who of course

could make nothing of the comparison of herself with the newspapers, and looked about her in perplexity. At that moment Tatyana Pavlovna came in, and announcing that she had already dined, sat down near mother, on the sofa.

I had not yet succeeded in gaining the good graces of that lady, quite the contrary in fact; she used to fall foul of me more than ever, for everything, and about everything. Her displeasure had of late become more accentuated than ever; she could not endure the sight of my foppish clothes, and Liza told me that she almost had a fit when she heard that I kept a coachman and a smart turn-out. I ended by avoiding meeting her as far as possible. Two months before, when the disputed inheritance was given up to Prince Sergay, I had run to Tatyana Pavlovna, meaning to talk over Versilov's conduct with her, but I met with no trace of sympathy; on the contrary she was dreadfully angry: she was particularly vexed that the whole had been given back, instead of half the fortune; she observed sharply:

"I'll bet you are persuaded that he has given up the money and challenged the prince to a duel, solely to regain the good opinion of Arkady Makarovitch."

And indeed she was almost right. I was in reality feeling something of the sort at the time.

As soon as she came in I saw at once that she would infallibly attack me. I was even inclined to believe that she had come in expressly with that object, and so I immediately became exceptionally free-and-easy in my manner; this was no effort to me, for what had just happened had left me still radiant and joyful. I may mention once and for all that a free-and-easy manner never has been right for me, that is to say, it never suits me, but always covers me with disgrace. So it happened now. I instantly said the wrong thing, with no evil intent, but simply from thoughtlessness; noticing that Liza was horribly depressed, I suddenly blurted out, without thinking of what I was saying:

"I haven't dined here for such ages, and now I have come, see how bored you are, Liza!"

"My head aches," answered Liza.

"Good gracious!" said Tatyana Pavlovna, instantly catching at it. "What if you are ill? Arkady Makarovitch has deigned to come to dinner, you must dance and be merry."

"You really are the worry of my life, Tatyana Pavlovna. I will never come again when you are here!" and I brought my hand down on the table with genuine vexation; mother started, and Versilov looked at me strangely. I laughed at once and begged their pardon.

"Tatyana Pavlovna, I take back the word 'worry,'" I said, turning to her, with the same free-and-easy tone.

"No, no," she snapped out, "it's much more flattering to be a worry to you than to be the opposite, you may be sure of that."

"My dear boy, one must learn to put up with the small worries of life," Versilov murmured with a smile, "life is not worth living without them."

"Do you know, you are sometimes a fearful reactionary," I cried, laughing nervously.

“My dear boy, it doesn’t matter.”

“Yes, it does! Why not tell the blunt truth to an ass, if he is an ass?”

“Surely you are not speaking of yourself? To begin with, I can’t judge anyone, and I don’t want to.”

“Why don’t you want to, why can’t you?”

“Laziness and distaste. A clever woman told me once that I had no right to judge others because ‘I don’t know how to suffer,’ that before judging others, one must gain the right to judge, from suffering. Rather exalted, but, as applied to me, perhaps it’s true, so that I very readily accepted the criticism.”

“Wasn’t it Tatyana Pavlovna who told you that?” I cried.

“Why, how do you know?” said Versilov, glancing at me with some surprise.

“I knew it from Tatyana Pavlovna’s face: she gave a sudden start.”

I guessed by chance. The phrase, as it appeared later, actually had been uttered by Tatyana Pavlovna, the evening before, in a heated discussion. And indeed, I repeat, I had, brimming over with joy and expansiveness, swooped down upon them at an unfortunate moment; all of them had their separate troubles, and they were heavy ones.

“I don’t understand it,” I went on, “because it’s all so abstract; it’s dreadful how fond you are of abstract discussion, Andrey Petrovitch; it’s a sign of egoism; only egoists are fond of generalization.”

“That’s not a bad saying, but don’t persecute me.”

“But let me ask,” I insisted expansively, “what’s the meaning of ‘gaining the right to judge?’ Anyone who is honest may be a judge, that’s my idea.”

“You won’t find many judges in that case.”

“I know one anyway.”

“Who’s that?”

“He is sitting and talking to me now.”

Versilov laughed strangely, he stooped down to my ear, and taking me by the shoulder whispered, “He is always lying to you.”

I don’t know to this day what was in his mind, but evidently he was in some agitation at the time (in consequence of something he had learned, as I found out later). But those words, “he is always lying to you,” were so unexpected and uttered so earnestly, and with such a strange and far from playful expression, that it gave me a nervous shudder. I was almost alarmed and looked at him wildly; but Versilov made haste to laugh.

“Well, thank God!” murmured my mother, who was uneasy at seeing him whisper to me, “I was almost thinking... . Don’t be angry with us, Arkasha; you’ll have clever friends apart from us, but who is going to love you, if we don’t love one another?”

“The love of one’s relations is immoral, mother, just because it’s undeserved; love ought to be earned.”

“You’ll earn it later on, but here you are loved without.”

Every one suddenly laughed.

“Well, mother, you may not have meant to shoot, but you hit your bird!” I cried, laughing, too.

“And you actually imagined that there’s something to love you for,” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, falling upon me again: “You are not simply loved for nothing, you are loved in spite of loathing.”

“Oh not a bit of it,” I cried gaily; “do you know, perhaps, some one told me to-day I was loved.”

“Said it laughing at you!” Tatyana Pavlovna said suddenly with a sort of unnatural malignity, as though she had just been waiting for me to say that, “yes, a person of delicacy, especially a woman, would be moved to disgust by the uncleanness of your soul. Your hair is done with a smart parting, you have fine linen, and a suit made by a French tailor, but it’s all uncleanness really! Who’s paid your tailor’s bill, who keeps you, and gives you money to play roulette with? Think who it is you’ve been so shameless as to sponge on!”

My mother flushed painfully, and I had never seen a look of such shame on her face before. Everything seemed to be giving way within me.

“If I am spending money it’s my own, and I am not bound to give an account of it to anyone,” I blurted out, turning crimson.

“Whose own? What money’s your own?”

“If it’s not mine, it’s Andrey Petrovitch’s. He won’t refuse it me... . I borrowed from what Prince Sergay owes Andrey Petrovitch... .”

“My dear boy,” Versilov said firmly, all of a sudden, “not a farthing of that money is mine.”

The phrase was horribly significant. I was dumbfounded. Oh, of course, considering my paradoxical and careless attitude at that time, I might quite well have turned it off with some outburst of “generous” feeling, or high-sounding phrase, or something, but I suddenly caught on Liza’s face a resentful accusing expression, an expression I had not deserved, almost a sneer, and a devil seemed to prompt me.

“You seem,” I said, turning to her suddenly, “to visit Darya Onisimovna very often at Prince Sergay’s flat, miss, so will you be pleased to give her this three hundred roubles, which you’ve given me such a nagging about already to-day?”

I took out the money and held it out to her. But will it be believed that those mean words were uttered entirely without motive, that is, without the faintest allusion to anything. And indeed there could have been no such allusion, for at that moment I knew absolutely nothing. Perhaps I had just a desire to vex her by something comparatively most innocent, by way of a gibe, “Since you are such an interfering young lady, wouldn’t you like to return the money yourself to the prince, a charming young man and a Petersburg officer, as you are so anxious to meddle in young men’s business.” But what was my amazement when my mother got up, and, with a menacing gesture, cried:

“How dare you! How dare you!”

I could never have conceived of anything like it from her, and I too jumped up from my seat, not exactly in alarm, but with a sort of anguish, a poignant wound in my heart, suddenly realizing that something dreadful had happened. But unable to control herself, mother hid her face in her hands and ran out of the room. Liza followed her out without so much as a glance at me. Tatyana Pavlovna gazed at me for half a minute in silence.

“Can you really have meant to jeer?” she exclaimed enigmatically, looking at me in profound astonishment, but without waiting for me to answer, she, too, ran out to join them. With an unsympathetic, almost angry expression, Versilov got up from the table, and took his hat from the corner.

“I imagine that you are not so much a fool as an innocent,” he mumbled to me ironically. “If they come back, tell them to have their pudding without waiting for me. I am going out for a little.”

I remained alone; at first I felt bewildered, then I felt resentful, but afterwards I saw clearly that I was to blame. However, I did not know exactly how I was to blame, I simply had a feeling of it. I sat in the window and waited. After waiting ten minutes, I, too, took my hat, and went upstairs to the attic, which had been mine. I knew that they, that is my mother and Liza, were there, and that Tatyana Pavlovna had gone away. And so I found them on my sofa, whispering together about something. They left off whispering at once, when I appeared; to my amazement they were not angry with me; mother anyway smiled at me.

“I am sorry, mother,” I began.

“Never mind!” mother cut me short, “only love each other and never quarrel and God will send you happiness.”

“He is never nasty to me, mother, I assure you,” Liza said with conviction and feeling.

“If it hadn’t been for that Tatyana Pavlovna nothing would have happened,” I cried; “she’s horrid!”

“You see, mother? You hear?” said Liza with a motion towards me.

“What I want to tell you both is this,” I declared: “if there is anything nasty in the world, it’s I that am nasty, and all the rest is delightful!”

“Arkasha, don’t be angry, darling, but if you really would give up ...”

“Gambling, you mean, gambling? I will give it up, mother. I am going there for the last time to-day—especially since Andrey Petrovitch himself has declared that not a farthing of that money is his, you can’t imagine how I blush... . I must go into it with him, though ... Mother darling, last time I was here I said something clumsy ... it was nonsense, darling; I truly want to believe, it was only swagger, I love Christ... .”

On my last visit there had been a conversation about religion. Mother had been much grieved and upset. When she heard my words now, she smiled at me as though I were a little child.

“Christ forgives everything, Arkasha; he forgives your wrongdoing and worse than yours. Christ is our Father, Christ never fails us, and will give light in the blackest night... .”

I said good-bye to them, and went away, thinking over the chances of seeing Versilov that day; I had a great deal to talk over with him, and it had been impossible that afternoon. I had a strong suspicion that he would be waiting for me at my lodging. I walked there on foot; it had turned colder and begun to freeze and walking was very pleasant.

2

I lived near the Voznesenky Bridge, in a huge block of flats overlooking the courtyard. Almost as I went into the gate I ran into Versilov coming out.

“As usual when I go for a walk, I only get as far as your lodging, and I’ve been to Pyotr Ippolitovitch’s, but I got tired of waiting for you; your people there are for ever quarrelling, and to-day his wife is even a little tearful; I looked in and came away.”

For some reason I felt annoyed.

“I suppose you never go to see anyone except me and Pyotr Ippolitovitch; you have no one else in all Petersburg to go to.”

“My dear fellow ... but it doesn’t matter.”

“Where are you going now?”

“I am not coming back to you. If you like we’ll go for a walk, it’s a glorious evening.”

“If instead of abstract discussions, you had talked to me like a human being, and had for instance given me the merest hint about that confounded gambling, I should perhaps not have let myself be drawn into it like a fool,” I said suddenly.

“You regret it? That’s a good thing,” he answered, bringing out his words reluctantly; “I always suspected that play was not a matter of great consequence with you, but only a temporary aberration... . You are right, my dear boy, gambling is beastly, and what’s more one may lose.”

“And lose other people’s money, too.”

“Have you lost other people’s money?”

“I have lost yours. I borrowed of Prince Sergay, from what was owing you. Of course it was fearfully stupid and absurd of me ... to consider your money mine, but I always meant to win it back.”

“I must warn you once more, my dear boy, that I have no money in Prince Sergay’s hands. I know that young man is in straits himself, and I am not reckoning on him for anything, in spite of his promises.”

“That makes my position twice as bad... . I am in a ludicrous position! And what grounds has he for lending me money, and me for borrowing in that case?”

“That’s your affair... . But there’s not the slightest reason for you to borrow money from him, is there?”

“Except that we are comrades... .”

“No other reason? Is there anything which has made you feel it possible to borrow from him? Any consideration whatever?”

“What sort of consideration do you mean? I don’t understand.”

“So much the better if you don’t, and I will own, my boy, that I was sure of it. Brisons-là, mon cher, and do try to avoid playing somehow.”

“If only you had told me before! You seem half-hearted about it even now.”

“If I had spoken to you about it before, we should only have quarrelled, and you wouldn’t have let me come and see you in the evenings so readily. And let me tell you, my dear, that all such saving counsels and warnings are simply an intrusion into another person’s conscience, at another person’s expense. I have done enough meddling with the consciences of others, and in the long run I get nothing but taunts and rebuffs for it. Taunts and rebuffs, of course, don’t matter; the point is that one never obtains one’s object in that way: no one listens to you, however much you meddle ... and every one gets to dislike you.”

“I am glad that you have begun to talk to me of something besides abstractions. I want to ask you one thing, I have wanted to for a long time, but it’s always been impossible when I’ve been with you. It is a good thing we are in the street. Do you remember that evening, the last evening I spent in your house, two months ago, how we sat upstairs in my ‘coffin,’ and I questioned you about mother and Makar Ivanovitch; do you remember how free and easy I was with you then? How could you allow a young puppy to speak in those terms of his mother? And yet you made not the faintest sign of protest; on the contrary, ‘you let yourself go,’ and so made me worse than ever.”

“My dear boy, I’m very glad to hear ... such sentiments, from you... . Yes, I remember very well; I was actually waiting to see the blush on your cheek, and if I fell in with your tone, it was just to bring you to the limit... .”

“And you only deceived me then, and troubled more than ever the springs of purity in my soul! Yes, I’m a wretched raw youth, and I don’t know from minute to minute what is good and what is evil. Had you given me the tiniest hint of the right road, I should have realized things and should have been eager to take the right path. But you only drove me to fury.”

“Cher enfant, I always foresaw that, one way or another, we should understand one another; that ‘blush’ has made its appearance of itself, without my aid, and that I swear is better for you... . I notice, my dear boy, that you have gained a great deal of late ... can it be the companionship of that princeling?”

“Don’t praise me, I don’t like it. Don’t leave me with a painful suspicion that you are flattering me without regard for truth, so as to go on pleasing me. Well, lately ... you see ... I’ve been visiting ladies. I am very well received, you know, by Anna Andreyevna, for instance.”

“I know that from her, my dear boy. Yes, she is very charming and intelligent. Mais brisons-là, mon cher. It’s odd how sick I feel of everything to-day, spleen I suppose. I put it down to haemorrhoids. How are things at home? All right? You made it up, of course, and embraces followed? Celà va sans dire. It’s melancholy sometimes to go

back to them, even after the nastiest walk. In fact, I sometimes go a longer way round in the rain, simply to delay the moment of returning to the bosom of my family... . And how bored I am there, good God, how bored!”

“Mother ...”

“Your mother is a most perfect and delightful creature, mais... . In short I am probably unworthy of them. By the way, what’s the matter with them to-day? For the last few days they’ve all been out of sorts somehow... . I always try to ignore such things you know, but there is something fresh brewing to-day... . Have you noticed nothing?”

“I know nothing positive, and in fact I should not have noticed it at all if hadn’t been for that confounded Tatyana Pavlovna, who can never resist trying to get her knife in. You are right; there is something wrong. I found Liza at Anna Andreyevna’s this morning, and she was so ... she surprised me in fact. You know, of course, that she visits Anna Andreyevna?”

“I know, my dear. And you ... when were you at Anna Andreyevna’s, to-day? At what time? I want to know for a reason.”

“From two till three. And only fancy as I was going out Prince Sergay arrived... .”

Then I described my whole visit very circumstantially. He listened without speaking; he made no comment whatever on the possibility of a match between Prince Sergay and Anna Andreyevna; in response to my enthusiastic praise of Anna Andreyevna he murmured again that “she was very charming.”

“I gave her a great surprise this morning, with the latest bit of drawing-room gossip that Mme. Ahmakov is to be married to Baron Büiring,” I said all of a sudden, as though something were torn out of me.

“Yes? Would you believe it, she told me that ‘news’ earlier in the day, much earlier than you can have surprised her with it.”

“What do you mean?” I was simply struck dumb. “From whom could she have heard it? Though after all, there’s no need to ask; of course she might have heard it before I did; but only imagine, she listened to me when I told her as though it were absolutely news to her! But ... but what of it? Hurrah for ‘breadth!’ One must take a broad view of people’s characters, mustn’t one? I, for instance, should have poured it all out at once, and she shuts it up in a snuff box ... and so be it, so be it, she is none the less a most delightful person, and a very fine character!”

“Oh, no doubt of it, every one must go his own way. And something more original—these fine characters can sometimes baffle one completely—just imagine. Anna Andreyevna took my breath away this morning by asking: ‘Whether I were in love with Katerina Nikolaevna Ahmakov or not?’”

“What a wild and incredible question!” I cried, dumbfounded again. There was actually a mist before my eyes I had never yet broached this subject with him, and here he had begun on it himself.

“In what way did she put it?”

“No way, my dear boy, absolutely no way; the snuff-box shut again at once, more closely than ever, and what’s more, observe, I’ve never admitted the conceivability of such questions being addressed to me, nor has she ... however, you say yourself that you know her and therefore you can imagine how far such a question is characteristic... . Do you know anything about it by chance?”

“I am just as puzzled as you are. Curiosity, perhaps, or a joke.”

“Oh, quite the contrary, it was a most serious question, hardly a question in fact, more a cross-examination, and evidently there were very important and positive reasons for it. Won’t you be going to see her? Couldn’t you find out something? I would ask you as a favour, do you see ...”

“But the strangest thing is that she could imagine you to be in love with Katerina Nikolaevna! Forgive me, I can’t get over my amazement. I should never, never have ventured to speak to you on this subject, or anything like it.”

“And that’s very sensible of you, my dear boy.”

“Your intrigues and your relations in the past—well, of course, the subject’s out of the question between us, and indeed it would be stupid of me, but of late, the last few days, I have several times exclaimed to myself that if you had ever loved that woman, if only for a moment—oh, you could never have made such a terrible mistake in your opinion of her as you did! I know what happened, I know of your enmity, of your aversion, so to say, for each other, I’ve heard of it, I’ve heard too much of it; even before I left Moscow I heard of it, but the fact that stands out so clearly is intense aversion, intense hostility, the very OPPOSITE of love, and Anna Andreyevna suddenly asks point-blank, ‘Do you love her?’ Can she have heard so little about it? It’s wild! She was laughing, I assure you she was laughing!”

“But I observe, my dear boy,” said Versilov, and there was something nervous and sincere in his voice, that went to one’s heart, as his words rarely did: “that you speak with too much heat on this subject. You said just now that you have taken to visiting ladies ... of course, for me to question you ... on that subject, as you expressed it... . But is not ‘that woman’ perhaps on the list of your new acquaintances?”

“That woman” ... my voice suddenly quivered; “listen, Andrey Petrovitch, listen. That woman is what you were talking of with Prince Sergay this morning, ‘living life,’ do you remember? You said that living life is something so direct and simple, something that looks you so straight in the face, that its very directness and clearness make us unable to believe that it can be the very thing we’re seeking so laboriously all our lives... . With ideas like that, you met the ideal woman and in perfection, in the ideal, you recognized ‘all the vices’! That’s what you did!”

The reader can guess what a state of frenzy I was in.

“All the vices! Oho! I know that phrase,” cried Versilov: “and if things have gone so far, that you are told of such a phrase, oughtn’t I to congratulate you? It suggests such a degree of intimacy, that perhaps you deserve credit for a modesty and reserve of which few young men are capable.”

There was a note of sweet, friendly and affectionate laughter in his voice ... there was something challenging and charming in his words, and in his bright face, as far as I could see it in the night. He was strangely excited. I beamed all over in spite of myself.

“Modesty, reserve! Oh, no, no!” I exclaimed blushing and at the same time squeezing his hand, which I had somehow seized and was unconsciously holding. “No, there’s no reason! ... In fact there’s nothing to congratulate me on, and nothing of the sort can ever, ever happen.”

I was breathless and let myself go, I so longed to let myself go, it was so very agreeable to me.

“You know... . Well, after all I will ... just this once... . You are my darling, splendid father; you will allow me to call you father; it’s utterly out of the question for a son to speak to his father—for anyone, in fact, to speak to a third person—of his relations with a woman, even if they are of the purest! In fact, the purer they are the greater the obligation of silence. It would be distasteful, it would be coarse; in short, a confidant is out of the question! But if there’s nothing, absolutely nothing, then surely one may speak, mayn’t one?”

“As your heart tells you!”

“An indiscreet, a very indiscreet question: I suppose in the course of your life you’ve known women, you’ve had intimacies? ... I only ask generally, generally, I don’t mean anything particular!” I blushed, and was almost choking with delight.

“We will assume there have been transgressions.”

“Well then, I want to ask you this, and you tell me what you think of it, as a man of more experience: a woman suddenly says, as she is taking leave of you, casually, looking away, ‘Tomorrow at three o’clock I shall be at a certain place ... at Tatyana Pavlovna’s, for example,’” I burst out, taking the final plunge. My heart throbbed and stood still; I even ceased speaking, I could not go on. He listened eagerly. “And so next day at three o’clock I went to Tatyana Pavlovna’s, and this is what I thought: ‘when the cook opens the door’—you know her cook—‘I shall ask first thing whether Tatyana Pavlovna is at home? And if the cook says Tatyana Pavlovna is not at home, but there’s a visitor waiting for her,’ what ought I to conclude, tell me if it were you... . In short, if you ...”

“Simply that an appointment had been made you. Then I suppose that did happen, and it happened to-day. Yes?”

“Oh no, no, no, nothing, nothing of the sort! It did happen, but it wasn’t that; it was an appointment, but not of that sort, and I hasten to say so or I should be a blackguard; it did happen, but... .”

“My dear fellow, all this begins to be so interesting that I suggest ...”

“I used to give away ten roubles and twenty-five roubles at a time to those who begged of me. For a drink! just a few coppers, it’s a lieutenant implores your aid, a former lieutenant begging of you!”

Our road was suddenly barred by the figure of a tall beggar possibly, in fact, a retired lieutenant. What was most singular was that he was very well dressed for his profession, and yet he was begging.

3

I purposely do not omit this paltry incident of the wretched lieutenant, for my picture of Versilov is not complete without the petty details of his surroundings at that minute, which was so momentous for him—momentous it was, and I did not know it!

“If you don’t leave off, sir, I shall call the police at once,” Versilov said, suddenly raising his voice unnaturally, and standing still before the lieutenant. I could never imagine such anger from a man so philosophic, and for such a trivial cause. And, note, our conversation was interrupted at the point of most interest to him, as he had just said himself.

“What, you haven’t a five-kopeck piece?” the lieutenant cried rudely, waving his hand in the air. “And indeed what canaille have five kopecks nowadays! the low rabble! the scoundrels! He goes dressed in beaver, and makes all this to-do about a copper!”

“Constable,” cried Versilov.

But there was no need to shout, a policeman was standing close by, at the corner, and he had heard the lieutenant’s abuse himself.

“I ask you to bear witness to this insult, I ask you to come to the police-station,” said Versilov.

“O-ho, I don’t care, there’s nothing at all you can prove! You won’t show yourself so wonderfully clever!”

“Keep hold of him, constable, and take us to the police-station,” Versilov decided emphatically.

“Surely we are not going to the police-station? Bother the fellow!” I whispered to him.

“Certainly we are, dear boy. The disorderly behaviour in our streets begins to bore one beyond endurance, and if everyone did his duty it would make it better for us all. C’est comique, mais c’est ce que nous ferons.”

For a hundred paces the lieutenant kept up a bold and swaggering demeanour, and talked with heat; he declared “that it was not the thing to do,” that it was “all a matter of five kopecks,” and so on, and so on. But at last he began whispering something to the policeman. The policeman, a sagacious man, with apparently a distaste for exhibitions of “nerves” in the street, seemed to be on his side, though only to a certain degree. He muttered in an undertone, in reply, that “it was too late for that now,” that “it had gone too far,” and that “if you were to apologize, for instance, and the gentleman would consent to accept your apology, then perhaps... .”

“Come li-isten, honoured sir, where are we going? I ask you what are we hurrying to and what’s the joke of it?” the lieutenant cried aloud: “if a man who is down on his

luck is willing to make an apology ... in fact, if you want to put him down ... damn it all! we are not in a drawing-room, we are in the street! For the street, that's apology enough... .”

Versilov stopped, and suddenly burst out laughing; I actually imagined that he had got the whole thing up for amusement, but it was not so.

“I entirely accept your apology, Monsieur l’officier, and I assure you that you are a man of ability. Behave like that in the drawing-room; it will soon pass muster perfectly there, too, and meanwhile here are twenty kopecks for you; eat and drink your fill with it; pardon me, constable, for troubling you; I would have thanked you more substantially for your pains, but you are so highly respectable nowadays... . My dear boy,” he added turning to me, “there’s an eating house close here, it’s really a horrible sewer, but one could get tea there, and I invite you to a cup ... this way, quite close, come along.”

I repeat, I had never seen him so excited, though his face was full of brightness and gaiety; yet I noticed that when he was taking the coin out of his purse to give it to the officer, his hands trembled, and his fingers refused to obey him, so that at last he asked me to take out the money, and give it to the man for him; I cannot forget it.

He took me to a little restaurant on the canal side, in the basement. The customers were few. A loud barrel-organ was playing out of tune, there was a smell of dirty dinner napkins; we sat down in a corner.

“Perhaps you don’t know. I am sometimes so bored ... so horribly bored in my soul ... that I like coming to all sorts of stinking holes like this. These surroundings, the halting tune from ‘Lucia,’ the waiters in their unseemly Russian getup, the fumes of cheap tobacco, the shouts from the billiard-room, it’s all so vulgar and prosaic that it almost borders on the fantastic... . Well, my dear boy, that son of Mars interrupted us, I believe, at the most interesting moment... . Here’s the tea; I like the tea here... . Imagine Pyotr Ippolitovitch suddenly began to-day assuring the other lodger, the one marked with small-pox, that during the last century a special committee of lawyers was appointed in the English parliament to examine the trial of Christ before the High Priest and Pilate, with the sole object of finding how the case would have gone nowadays by modern law, and that the inquiry was conducted with all solemnity, with counsel for the prosecution and all the rest of it... . And that the jury were obliged to uphold the original verdict... . A wonderful story! That fool of a lodger began to argue about it, lost his temper, quarrelled and declared he should leave next day... . The landlady dissolved in tears at the thought of losing his rent ... Mais passons. In these restaurants they sometimes have nightingales. Do you know the old Moscow anecdote à la Pyotr Ippolitovitch? A nightingale was singing in a Moscow restaurant, a merchant came in; ‘I must have my fancy, whatever it costs, said he, ‘what’s the price of the nightingale?’ ‘A hundred roubles.’ ‘Roast it and serve it.’ So they roasted it and served it up. ‘Cut me off two-pennorth.’ I once told it to Pyotr Ippolitovitch, but he did not believe it, and was quite indignant.”

He said a great deal more. I quote these fragments as a sample of his talk. He repeatedly interrupted me every time I opened my mouth to begin my story. He began each time talking of some peculiar and utterly irrelevant nonsense; he talked gaily, excitedly; laughed, goodness knows what at, and even chuckled in an undignified way, as I had never seen him do before. He swallowed a glass of tea at one gulp, and poured out another. Now I can understand it, he was like a man who had received a precious, interesting, and long-expected letter, and who lays it down before him and purposely refrains from opening it, turning it over and over in his hands, examining the envelope and the seal, going to see to things in another room, in short deferring the interesting moment of perusal, knowing that it cannot escape him. And all this he does to make his enjoyment more complete.

I told him all there was to tell, of course, everything from the very beginning, and it took me perhaps an hour telling it. And indeed how could I have helped telling him? I had been dying to talk of it that afternoon. I began with our very first meeting at the old prince's on the day she arrived from Moscow; then I described how it had all come about by degrees. I left nothing out, and indeed I could not have left anything out; he led me on, he guessed what was coming and prompted me. At moments it seemed to me that something fantastic was happening, that he must have been sitting or standing behind the door, for those two months; he knew beforehand every gesture I made, every feeling I had felt. I derived infinite enjoyment from this confession to him, for I found in him such intimate softness, such deep psychological subtlety, such a marvellous faculty for guessing what I meant from half a word. He listened as tenderly as a woman. And above all he knew how to save me from feeling ashamed; at times he stopped me at some detail; often when he stopped me he repeated nervously: "Don't forget details; the great thing is, not to forget any details; the more minute a point is, the more important it may sometimes be." And he interrupted me several times with words to that effect. Oh, of course I began at first in a tone of superiority, superiority to her, but I quickly dropped into sincerity. I told him honestly that I was ready to kiss the spot on the floor where her foot had rested. The most beautiful and glorious thing was that he absolutely understood that she might "be suffering from terror over the letter" and yet remain the pure and irreproachable being she had revealed herself to be. He absolutely realized what was meant by the word "student." But when I was near the end of my story I noticed that behind his good-natured smile there were signs in his face from time to time of some impatience, some abruptness and preoccupation; when I came to the letter, I thought to myself:

"Shall I tell him the exact truth or not?" and I did not tell it, in spite of my enthusiasm. I note this here that I may remember it all my life. I explained to him, as I had done to her, that it had been destroyed by Kraft. His eyes began to glow; a strange line, a line of deep gloom was visible on his forehead.

"You are sure you remember, my dear boy, that that letter was burned by Kraft in the candle? You are not mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken," I repeated.

“The point is that that scrap of paper is of such importance to her, and if you had only had it in your hands to-day, you might... .” But what “I might” he did not say. “But you haven’t it in your hands now?”

I shuddered all over inwardly, but not outwardly. Outwardly I did not betray myself, I did not turn a hair; but I was still unwilling to believe in the question:

“Haven’t it in my hands! In my hands now? How could I since Kraft burned it that day?”

“Yes?” A glowing intent look was fastened upon me, a look I shall never forget; he smiled, however, but all his good-nature, all the feminine softness that had been in his expression suddenly vanished. It was replaced by something vague and troubled; he became more and more preoccupied. If he had controlled himself at that moment, as he had till then, he would not have asked me that question about the letter; he had asked it, no doubt, because he was carried away himself. I say this, however, only now; at the time, I did not so quickly perceive the change that had come over him; I still went on plunging, and there was still the same music in my heart. But my story was over; I looked at him.

“It’s strange,” he said suddenly, when I had told him everything to the minutest detail: “it’s a very strange thing, my dear boy: you say that you were there from three o’clock till four and that Tatyana Pavlovna was not at home?”

“From three o’clock till half-past four exactly.”

“Well, only fancy, I went to see Tatyana Pavlovna exactly at half- past four to the minute, and she met me in the kitchen: I nearly always go to see her by the back entrance.”

“What, she met you in the kitchen?” I cried, staggering back in amazement.

“And she told me she could not ask me in; I only stayed two minutes, I only looked in to ask her to come to dinner.”

“Perhaps she had only just come home from somewhere?”

“I don’t know, of course not, though she was wearing a loose dressing-gown. That was at half-past four exactly.”

“But ... Tatyana Pavlovna didn’t tell you I was there?”

“No, she did not tell me you were there ... otherwise I should have known it, and should not have asked you about it.”

“Listen, that’s awfully important... .”

“Yes ... from a certain point of view; and you’ve turned quite white, my dear; but, after all, what is there important in it?”

“They’ve been laughing at me as though I were a baby!”

“It’s simply ‘that she was afraid of your impulsiveness,’ as she expressed it herself—and so she felt safer with Tatyana Pavlovna there.”

“But, good God, what a trick! Think, she let me say all that before a third person, before Tatyana Pavlovna; so she heard everything I said! It ... it’s horrible to conceive of!”

“C’est selon, mon cher. Besides, you spoke just now of ‘breadth’ of view in regard to women and exclaimed ‘Hurrah for breadth!’”

“If I were Othello and you Jago, you could not have done better... . I am laughing though! There can be no sort of Othello, because there have been no relations of the kind. And why laugh indeed? It doesn’t matter! I believe she’s infinitely above me all the same, and I have not lost my ideal! ... If it was a joke on her part I forgive her. A joke with a wretched raw youth doesn’t matter! Besides, I did not pose as anything, and the student—the student was there in her soul, and remained there in spite of everything; it was in her heart, it exists there, and will always exist there! Enough! Listen, what do you think: shall I go to her at once to find out the whole truth or not?”

I said “I am laughing,” but there were tears in my eyes.

“Well, my dear boy, go if you want to.”

“I feel as though I were defiled in soul, from having told you all this. Don’t be angry, dear, but, I repeat, one can’t tell things about a woman to a third person; no confidant will understand. Even an angel wouldn’t understand. If you respect a woman, don’t confide in anyone! If you respect yourself don’t confide in anyone. Now I don’t respect myself. Good-bye for the present; I can’t forgive myself.”

“Nonsense, my dear boy, you exaggerate. You say yourself that ‘there was nothing in it.’”

We came out on the canal bank and said good-bye.

“Will you never give me a real warm kiss, as a child kisses its father?” he said, with a strange quiver in his voice. I kissed him fervently.

“Dear boy ... may you be always as pure in heart as you are now.”

I had never kissed him before in my life, I never could have conceived that he would like me to.

Chapter 6

1

“I’ll go, of course!” I made up my mind as I hurried home, “I’ll go at once. Very likely I shall find her at home alone; whether she is alone or with some one else makes no difference: I can ask her to come out to me. She will receive me; she’ll be surprised, but she will receive me. And if she won’t see me I’ll insist on her seeing me, I’ll send in word that it’s most urgent. She will think it’s something about that letter and will see me. And I’ll find out all about Tatyana there ... and what then? If I am not right I will be her servant, if I am right and she is to blame it’s the end of everything! In any case it’s the end of everything! What am I going to lose? I can lose nothing. I’ll go! I’ll go!”

I shall never forget and I recall with pride that I did NOT go! It will never be known to anyone, it will die with me, but it's enough that I know of it and at such a moment I was capable of an honourable impulse.

"This is a temptation, and I will put it behind me," I made up my mind at last, on second thoughts. They had tried to terrify me with a fact, but I refused to believe it, and had not lost my faith in her purity! And what had I to go for, what was there to find out about? Why was she bound to believe in me as I did in her, to have faith in my "purity," not to be afraid of my "impulsiveness" and not to provide against all risks with Tatyana? I had not yet, as far as she could see, deserved her confidence. No matter, no matter that she does not know that I am worthy of it, that I am not seduced by "temptations," that I do not believe in malicious calumnies against her; I know it and I shall respect myself for it. I shall respect my own feeling. Oh, yes, she had allowed me to utter everything before Tatyana, she had allowed Tatyana to be there, she knew that Tatyana was sitting there listening (for she was incapable of not listening); she knew that she was laughing at me out there,—that was awful, awful! But ... but what if it were impossible to avoid it? What could she have done in her position, and how could one blame her for it? Why, I had told her a lie about Kraft, I had deceived her because that, too, could not be helped, and I had lied innocently against my will. "My God!" I cried suddenly, flushing painfully, "what have I just done myself! Haven't I exposed her, too, before Tatyana, haven't I repeated it all to Versilov just now? Though, after all, there was a difference. It was only a question of the letter; I had in reality only told Versilov about the letter because there was nothing else to tell, and could be nothing else. Was not I the first to declare that "there could not be"? He was a man of insight. Hm! But what hatred there was in his heart for this woman even to this day! And what sort of drama must have taken place between them in the past, and about what? All due to vanity, of course!" **VERSILOV CANNOT BE CAPABLE OF ANY FEELING BUT BOUNDLESS VANITY!"**

That last thought rose spontaneously in my mind and I did not even remark it. Such were the thoughts that floated through my mind one after another, and I was straightforward with myself; I did not cheat or deceive myself; and if there was anything I did not understand at that moment, it was not from sophistry with myself but only from lack of brains.

I returned home in great excitement, and—I don't know why—in a very cheerful, though confused state of mind. But I was afraid of analysing my feelings and did my utmost to distract my mind. I went in at once to see my landlady: it turned out that a terrible quarrel really had taken place between her husband and her. She was in advanced consumption, and though, perhaps, she was a good-natured woman, like all consumptives she was of uncertain temper. I began trying to reconcile them at once; I went to the lodger, who was a very vain little bank clerk, called, Tchervyak, a coarse pock-marked fool. I disliked him very much, but I got on with him quite well, for I often was so mean as to join him in turning Pyotr Ippolitovitch into ridicule. I at once persuaded him to keep on the lodgings, and indeed he would not in any case have really

gone so far as to move. It ended in my reassuring the landlady completely, and even succeeding in very deftly putting a pillow under her head: "Pyotr Ippolitovitch would never have known how to do it," she commented malignantly. Then I busied myself in the kitchen preparing mustard plasters for her and succeeded in making two capital ones with my own hand. Poor Pyotr Ippolitovitch looked on envious, but I did not allow him to touch them, and was rewarded by liberal tears of gratitude from the lady. I remember I suddenly felt sick of it all, and suddenly realized that I was not looking after the invalid from kindness at all, but from something else, some very different motive.

I waited for Matvey with nervous impatience: I had resolved that evening to try my luck at cards for the last time and ... and, apart from my need to win, I had an intense longing to play; but for that, my excitement would have been unbearable. If I had not gone anywhere I might have been unable to hold out and should have gone to her. It was almost time for Matvey to come, when the door was opened and an unexpected visitor, Darya Onisimovna, walked in. I frowned and was surprised. She knew my lodging, for she had been there once with some message from my mother. I made her sit down and looked at her inquiringly. She said nothing, and only looked straight into my face with a deferential smile.

"You've not come from Liza?" it occurred to me to ask.

"No, it's nothing special."

I informed her that I was just going out; she replied again that it was "nothing special," and that she was going herself in a minute. I suddenly for some reason felt sorry for her. I may observe that she had met with a great deal of sympathy from all of us, from my mother, and still more from Tatyana Pavlovna, but after installing her at Mme. Stolbyeev's all of us had rather begun to forget her, except perhaps Liza, who often visited her. I think she was herself the cause of this neglect, for she had a special faculty for effacing herself and holding herself aloof from people in spite of her obsequiousness and her ingratiating smiles. I personally disliked those smiles of hers, and her affected expression, and I even imagined on one occasion that she had not grieved very long for her Olya. But this time for some reason I felt very sorry for her.

And behold, without uttering a word, she suddenly bent forward with her eyes cast down, and all at once, throwing her arms round my waist, hid her face on my knees. She seized my hand, I thought she meant to kiss it, but she pressed it to her eyes, and hot tears trickled upon it. She was shaking all over with sobs, but she wept silently. It sent a pang to my heart, even though I felt at the same time somehow annoyed. But she was embracing me with perfect confidence and without the least fear that I might be vexed, though only just before she had smiled so timidly and cringingly.

I began begging her to calm herself.

"Kind, good friend, I don't know what to do with myself. As soon as it gets dark, I can't bear it; as soon as it gets dark I can't go on bearing it, and I feel drawn into the street, into the darkness. And I am drawn there by my imaginings. My mind is possessed by the fancy that as soon as ever I go out I shall meet her in the street. I

walk and seem to see her. That is other girls are walking along the street and I walk behind them on purpose, and I think: 'Isn't it she, there she is,' I think, 'it really is my Olya!' I dream and dream. I turn giddy at last, and feel sick, and stumble and jostle against people; I stumble as though I were drunk and some swear at me; I hide by myself and don't go to see anyone, and wherever one goes, it makes one's heart more sick; I passed by your lodging just now, and thought: 'I'll go in to him; he is kinder than any of them, and he was there at the time.' Forgive a poor creature who's no use to anyone; I'll go away directly; I'm going... ."

She suddenly got up and made haste to depart. Matvey arrived just then; I made her get into the sledge with me, and left her at Mme. Stolbyeev's on my way.

2

I had of late begun to frequent Zerstchikov's gambling saloon. I had so far visited three gambling houses, always in company with Prince Sergay, who had introduced me to these places. At one of these houses the game was faro especially, and the stakes were high. But I did not care for going there: I saw that one could not get on there without a long purse, and also that the place was crowded with insolent fellows and swaggering young snobs. This was what Prince Sergay liked; he liked playing, too, but he particularly liked getting to know these young prodigals. I noticed that though he went in with me he kept away from me during the evening and did not introduce me to any of "his set." I stared about me like a wild man of the woods, so much so that I sometimes attracted attention. At the gambling table people spoke to one another freely; but once I tried bowing next day to a young fop, with whom I had not only talked but laughed the previous evening, sitting beside him, and had even guessed two cards from him. Yet when I greeted him in the same room next day, he actually did not recognize me. Or what was worse, stared at me with simulated amazement, and passed by with a smile. So I quickly gave up the place and preferred to visit a "sewer"—I don't know what else to call it—it was a wretched sordid little place for roulette, managed by a kept woman, who, however, never showed herself in the saloon. It was all horribly free and easy there, and though officers and wealthy merchants sometimes frequented it, there was a squalid filthiness about the place, though that was an attraction to many. Moreover, I was often lucky there. But I gave that place up, too, after a disgusting scene, which occurred when the game was at its hottest and ended in a fight between two players. I began going instead to Zerstchikov's, to which Prince Sergay took me also. The man was a retired captain, and the tone at his rooms was very tolerable, military, curt, and businesslike, and there was a fastidiously scrupulous keeping up of the forms of punctilio. No boisterous practical jokers or very fast men frequented it. Moreover, the stakes played for were often considerable. Both faro and roulette were played. I had only been there twice before that evening, the 15th of November, but I believe Zerstchikov already knew me by sight; I had made no acquaintances there, however. As luck would have it Prince Sergay did not turn up till

about midnight, when he dropped in with Darzan after spending the evening at the gambling saloon of the young snobs which I had given up; and so that evening I found myself alone and unknown in a crowd of strangers.

If I had a reader and he had read all I have written so far of my adventures, there would be certainly no need to inform him that I am not created for any sort of society. The trouble is I don't know how to behave in company. If I go anywhere among a great many people I always have a feeling as though I were being electrified by so many eyes looking at me. It positively makes me shrivel up, physically shrivel up, even in such places as a theatre, to say nothing of private houses. I did not know how to behave with dignity in these gambling saloons and assemblies; I either sat still, inwardly upbraiding myself for my excessive mildness and politeness, or I suddenly got up and did something rude. And meanwhile all sorts of worthless fellows far inferior to me knew how to behave with wonderful aplomb—and that's what exasperated me above everything, so that I lost my self-possession more and more. I may say frankly, even at that time, if the truth is to be told, the society there, and even winning money at cards, had become revolting and a torture to me. Positively a torture. I did, of course, derive acute enjoyment from it, but this enjoyment was at the cost of torture: the whole thing, the people, the gambling, and, most of all, myself in the midst of them, seemed horribly nasty. "As soon as I win I'll chuck it all up!" I said to myself every time when I woke up in my lodgings in the morning after gambling over night. Then, again, how account for my desire to win, since I certainly was not fond of money? Not that I am going to repeat the hackneyed phrases usual in such explanations, that I played for the sake of the game, for the pleasure of it, for the risk, the excitement and so on, and not for gain. I was horribly in need of money, and though this was not my chosen path, not my idea, yet somehow or other I had made up my mind to try it by way of experiment. I was continually possessed by one overwhelming thought: "You maintained that one could reckon with certainty on becoming a millionaire if only one had sufficient strength of will; you've tested your strength of will already; so show yourself as strong in this case: can more strength of will be needed for roulette than for your idea?" that is what I kept repeating to myself. And as I still retain the conviction, that in games of chance, if one has perfect control of one's will, so that the subtlety of one's intelligence and one's power of calculation are preserved, one cannot fail to overcome the brutality of blind chance and to win, I naturally could not help growing more and more irritated when at every moment I failed to preserve my strength of will and was carried away by excitement, like a regular child. "Though I was able to endure hunger, I am not able to control myself in an absurd thing like this!" that was what provoked me. Moreover, the consciousness that however absurd and abject I might seem, I had within me a rich store of strength which would one day make them all change their opinion of me, that consciousness has been from the days of my oppressed childhood the one spring of life for me, my light, my dignity, my weapon and my consolation, without which I might have committed suicide as a little child. And so how could I help being irritated when I saw what a pitiful creature I became at the gambling table? That is why I could not

give up playing! I see it all clearly now. This was the chief reason, but apart from that my petty vanity was wounded. Losing had lowered me in the eyes of Prince Sergay, of Versilov, though he did not deign to speak of it, of every one, even of Tatyana Pavlovna; that is what I thought, I felt. Finally, I will make another confession! By that time I had begun to be corrupted: it had become hard for me to give up a dinner of seven dishes at the restaurant, to give up Matvey, and the English shop, to lose the good opinion of my hairdresser, and all that, in fact. I was conscious of it even at the time, but I refused to admit the thought; now I blush to write it.

3

Finding myself alone in a crowd of strangers, I established myself at first at a corner of the table and began staking small sums. I remained sitting there without stirring for two hours. For those two hours the play was horribly flat—neither one thing nor another. I let slip some wonderful chances and tried not to lose my temper, but to preserve my coolness and confidence. At the end of the two hours I had neither lost nor won. Out of my three hundred roubles I had lost ten or fifteen roubles. This trivial result exasperated me, and what's more an exceedingly unpleasant, disgusting incident occurred. I know that such gambling saloons are frequented by thieves, who are not simply pickpockets out of the street but well-known gamblers. I am certain that the well-known gambler Aferdov is a thief; he is still to be seen about the town; I met him not long ago driving a pair of his own ponies, but he is a thief and he stole from me. But this incident I will describe later; what happened this evening was simply a prelude.

I spent there two hours sitting at a corner of the table, and beside me, on the left, there was all the time an abominable little dandy, a Jew I believe; he is on some paper though, and even writes something and gets it published. At the very last moment I suddenly won twenty roubles. Two red notes lay before me, and suddenly I saw this wretched little Jew put out his hand and remove one of my notes. I tried to stop him; but with a most impudent air he immediately informed me, without raising his voice in the least, that it was what he had won, that he had just put down a stake and won it; he declined to continue the conversation and turned away. As ill-luck would have it, I was in a state of extreme stupidity at that moment: I was brooding over a great idea, and with a curse I got up quickly and walked away; I did not want to dispute, so made him a present of the red note. And indeed it would have been difficult to go into the matter with an impudent thief, for I had let slip the right moment, and the game was going on again. And that was my great mistake, the effect of which was apparent later on: three or four players near us saw how the matter ended, and noticing how easily I had given way, took me for another of the same sort.

It was just twelve o'clock; I walked into the other room, and after a little reflection formed a new plan. Going back I changed my notes at the bank for half imperials. I received over forty of them. I divided them into ten lots, and resolved to stake four half

imperials ten times running on the zero. "If I win it's my luck. If I lose, so much the better, I'll never play again." I may mention that zero had not turned up once during those two hours, so that at last no one was staking on zero.

I put down my stakes standing, silent, frowning and clenching my teeth. At the third round, Zerstchikov called aloud zero, which had not turned up all day. A hundred and forty half imperials were counted out to me in gold. I had seven chances left and I went on, though everything seemed whirling round, and dancing before my eyes.

"Come here!" I shouted right across the table to a player beside whom I had been sitting before, a grey-headed man with a moustache, and a purple face, wearing evening dress, who had been for some hours staking small sums with ineffable patience and losing stake after stake: "come this end! There's luck here!"

"Are you speaking to me?" the moustached gentleman shouted from the other end of the table, with a note of menacing surprise in his voice.

"Yes, you! You'll go on losing for ever there!"

"That's not your business, please not to interfere!"

But I could not restrain myself. An elderly officer was sitting facing me at the other side of the table. Looking at my stake he muttered to his neighbour:

"That's queer, zero. No, I won't venture on zero."

"Do, colonel!" I shouted laying down another stake.

"Kindly leave me alone, and don't force your advice upon me," he rapped out sharply. "You are making too much noise!"

"I am giving you good advice; would you like to bet on zero's turning up directly: ten gold pieces, I'll bet that, will you take it?"

And I laid down ten half imperials.

"A bet of ten gold pieces! That I can do," he brought out drily and severely. "I'll bet against you that zero won't turn up."

"Ten louis d'or, colonel."

"What do you mean by ten louis d'or?"

"Ten half imperials, colonel, and, in grand language, ten louis d'or."

"Well, then, say they are half imperials, and please don't joke with me."

I did not of course hope to win the bet; there were thirty-six chances against one that zero would not turn up again; but I proposed it out of swagger, and because I wanted to attract every one's attention. I quite saw that for some reason nobody here liked me, and that they all would have taken particular pleasure in letting me know it. The roulette wheel was sent spinning,—and what was the general amazement when it stopped at zero again! There was actually a general shout. The glory of my success dazed me completely. Again a hundred and forty half imperials were counted out to me. Zerstchikov asked me if I would not like to take part of them in notes, but I mumbled something inarticulate in reply, for I was literally incapable of expressing myself in a calm and definite way. My head was going round and my legs felt weak. I suddenly felt that I would take a fearful risk at once; moreover, I had a longing to do something more, to make another bet, to carry off some thousands from some one. Mechanically

I scooped up my notes and gold in the hollow of my hand, and could not collect myself to count them. At that moment I noticed Prince Sergay and Darzan behind me: they had only just come from their faro saloon, where as I heard afterwards they had lost their last farthing.

“Ah! Darzan,” I cried “There’s luck here! Stake on zero!”

“I’ve been losing, I’ve no money,” he answered drily; Prince Sergay actually appeared not to notice or recognize me.

“Here’s money,” I cried pointing to my heap of gold. “As much as you like.”

“Hang it all!” cried Darzan, flushing crimson; “I didn’t ask you for money, I believe.”

“You are being called,” said Zerstchikov pulling my arm.

The colonel who had lost ten half imperials to me had called to me several times almost abusively.

“Kindly take this!” he shouted, purple with rage. “It’s not for me to stand over you, but if I don’t you’ll be saying afterwards you haven’t had the money. Count it.”

“I trust you, I trust you, colonel, without counting; only please don’t shout at me like that and don’t be angry,” and I drew his heap of gold towards me.

“Sir, I beg you to keep your transports for some one else and not to force them on me,” the colonel rasped out. “I’ve never fed pigs with you!”

“It’s queer to admit such people”—“Who is he?”—“Only a lad,” I heard exclamations in undertones.

But I did not listen, I was staking at random, not on zero this time. I staked a whole heap of hundred rouble notes on the first eighteen numbers.

“Let’s go, Darzan,” I heard Prince Sergay’s voice behind me.

“Home?” I asked, turning round to them. “Wait for me: we’ll go together, I’ve had enough.”

My stake won, I had gained a big sum. “Enough!” I cried, and without counting the money I began with trembling hands, gathering up the gold and dropping it into my pockets, and clumsily crumpling the notes in my fingers, and trying to stuff them all at once into my side pocket. Suddenly Aferdov, who was sitting next to me on the right and had been playing for high stakes, laid a fat hand with a ring on the first finger over three of my hundred-rouble notes.

“Excuse me that’s not yours,” he brought out sternly and incisively, though he spoke rather softly.

This was the prelude, which was destined a few days afterwards to have such a serious sequel. Now I swear on my honour those three notes were mine, but to my misfortune, at the time, though I was convinced they were mine I still had the fraction of a doubt, and for an honest man, that is enough; and I am an honest man. What made all the difference was that I did not know at the time that Aferdov was a thief: I did not even know his name then, so that at that moment I might very well imagine I had made a mistake, and that those three notes were really not in the heap that had just been paid me. I had not counted my gains at all, I had simply gathered up the heaps with my hands, and there had been money lying in front of Aferdov too,

and quite close to mine, but in neat heaps and counted. Above all Aferdov was known here and looked upon as a wealthy man; he was treated with respect: all this had an influence on me and again I did not protest. A terrible mistake! The whole beastly incident was the result of my enthusiasm.

"I am awfully sorry, I don't remember for certain; but I really think they are mine," I brought out with lips trembling with indignation. These words at once aroused a murmur.

"To say things like that, you ought to REMEMBER for certain, but you've graciously announced yourself that you DON'T remember for certain," Aferdov observed with insufferable superciliousness.

"Who is he?"—"It can't be allowed!" I heard several exclamations.

"That's not the first time he has done it; there was the same little game over a ten-rouble note with Rechberg just now," a mean little voice said somewhere near.

"That's enough! that's enough!" I exclaimed, "I am not protesting, take it ... where's Prince ... where are Prince Sokolsky and Darzan? Have they gone? Gentlemen, did you see which way Prince Sokolsky and Darzan went?" And gathering up all my money at last, I could not succeed in getting some of the half imperials into my pocket, and holding them in my hands I rushed to overtake Prince Sergay and Darzan. The reader will see, I think, that I don't spare myself, and am recording at this moment what I was then, and all my nastiness, so as to explain the possibility of what followed.

Prince Sergay and Darzan were going downstairs, without taking the slightest notice of my shouts, and calls to them. I had overtaken them, but I stopped for a moment before the hall-porter, and, goodness knows why, thrust three half imperials into his hand; he gazed at me in amazement and did not even thank me. But that was nothing to me, and if Matvey had been there I should probably have pressed handfuls of gold upon him; and so indeed I believe I meant to do, but as I ran out on the steps, I suddenly remembered that I had let him go home when I arrived. At that moment Prince Sergay's horse came up, and he got into his sledge.

"I am coming with you, prince, and to your flat!" I cried, clutching the fur cover and throwing it open, to get into the empty seat; but all at once Darzan skipped past me into the sledge, and the coachman snatched the fur cover out of my hands, and tucked it round them.

"Damn it all!" I cried dumbfounded; it looked as though I had unbuttoned the cover for Darzan's benefit, like a flunkey.

"Home!" shouted Prince Sergay.

"Stop!" I roared, clutching at the sledge, but the horse started, and I was sent rolling in the snow. I even fancied they were laughing. Jumping up I took the first sledge I came across, and dashed after Prince Sergay, urging on the wretched nag at every second.

As ill-luck would have it, the wretched beast crawled along with unnatural slowness, though I promised the driver a whole rouble. The driver did nothing but lash the beast to earn his rouble. My heart was sinking: I began trying to talk to the driver, but I could not even articulate my words, and I muttered something incoherent. This was my condition when I ran up to Prince Sergay's! He had only just come back; he had left Darzan on the way, and was alone. Pale and ill-humoured, he was pacing up and down his study. I repeat again he had lost heavily that evening. He looked at me with a sort of preoccupied wonder.

"You again!" he brought out frowning.

"To settle up with you for good, sir!" I said breathlessly. "How dared you treat me like that!"

He looked at me inquiringly.

"If you meant to drive with Darzan you might have answered that you were going with him, but you started your horse, and I... ."

"Oh yes, you tumbled into the snow," he said and laughed into my face.

"An insult like that can be only answered with a challenge, so to begin with we'll settle accounts... ."

And with a trembling hand I began pulling out my money and laying it on the sofa, on the marble table, and even on an open book, in heaps, in handfuls, and in rolls of notes; several coins rolled on the carpet.

"Oh, yes, you've won, it seems? ... One can tell that from your tone."

He had never spoken to me so insolently before. I was very pale.

"Here ... I don't know how much ... it must be counted. I owe you three thousand ... or how much? ... More or less?"

"I am not pressing you to pay, I believe."

"No, it's I want to pay, and you ought to know why. I know that in that roll there's a thousand roubles, here!" And I began with trembling fingers to count the money, but gave it up. "It doesn't matter, I know it's a thousand. Well, that thousand I will keep for myself, but all the rest, all these heaps, take for what I owe you, for part of what I owe you: I think there's as much as two thousand or may be more!"

"But you are keeping a thousand for yourself then?" said Prince Sergay with a grin.

"Do you want it? In that case ... I was meaning ... I was thinking you didn't wish it ... but if you want it here it is... ."

"No, you need not," he said turning away from me contemptuously, and beginning to pace up and down again.

"And what the devil's put it into your head to want to pay it back?" he said, turning to me suddenly, with a horrible challenge in his face.

"I'm paying it back to be free to insist on your giving me satisfaction!" I vociferated.

“Go to the devil with your everlasting words and gesticulations!” he stamped at me suddenly, as though in a frenzy. “I have been wanting to get rid of you both for ages; you and your Versilov.”

“You’ve gone out of your mind!” I shouted and indeed it did look like it.

“You’ve worried me to death with your high-sounding phrases, and never anything but phrases, phrases, phrases! Of honour for instance! Tfoo! I’ve been wanting to have done with you for a long time... . I am glad, glad, that the minute has come. I considered myself bound, and blushed that I was forced to receive you ... both! But now I don’t consider myself bound in any way, in any way, let me tell you! Your Versilov induced me to attack Madame Ahmakov and to cast aspersions on her... . Don’t dare to talk of honour to me after that. For you are dishonourable people ... both of you, both of you; I wonder you weren’t ashamed to take my money!”

There was a darkness before my eyes.

“I borrowed from you as a comrade,” I began, speaking with a dreadful quietness. “You offered it me yourself, and I believed in your affection... .”

“I am not your comrade! That’s not why I have given you money, you know why it is.”

“I borrowed on account of what you owed Versilov; of course it was stupid, but I ...”

“You could not borrow on Versilov’s account without his permission ... and I could not have given you his money without his permission. I gave you my own money, and you knew it; knew it and took it; and I allowed this hateful farce to go on in my house!”

“What did I know? What farce! Why did you give it to me?”

“*Pour vos beaux yeux, mon cousin!*” he said, laughing straight in my face.

“Go to hell!” I cried. “Take it all, here’s the other thousand too! Now we are quits, and to-morrow... .”

And I flung at him the roll of hundred rouble notes I had meant to keep to live upon. The notes hit him in the waistcoat and flopped on the floor.

With three rapid strides he stepped close up to me:

“Do you dare to tell me,” he said savagely articulating his words as it were syllable by syllable; “that all this time you’ve been taking my money you did not know your sister was with child by me?”

“What! what!” I screamed, and suddenly my legs gave way under me and I sank helplessly on the sofa. He told me himself afterwards that I literally turned as white as a handkerchief. I was stunned. I remember we still stared into each other’s faces in silence. A look of dismay passed over his face; he suddenly bent down, took me by the shoulder and began supporting me. I distinctly remember his set smile, in which there was incredulity and wonder. Yes, he had never dreamed of his words having such an effect, for he was absolutely convinced of my knowledge.

It ended in my fainting, but only for a moment: I came to myself; I got on my feet, gazed at him and reflected—and suddenly the whole truth dawned upon my mind which had been so slow to awaken! If some one had told me of it before and asked me what I should have done at such a moment, I should no doubt have answered that

I should have torn him in pieces. But what happened was quite different and quite independent of my will: I suddenly covered my face with both hands and began sobbing bitterly. It happened of itself. All at once the child came out again in the young man. It seemed that fully half of my soul was still a child's. I fell on the sofa and sobbed out, "Liza! Liza! Poor unhappy girl!" Prince Sergay was completely convinced all at once.

"Good God, how unjust I've been to you!" he cried in deep distress. "How abominably I've misjudged you in my suspiciousness... . Forgive me, Arkady Makarovitch!"

I suddenly jumped up, tried to say something to him, stood facing him, but said nothing, and ran out of the room and out of the flat. I dragged myself home on foot, and don't know how I got there. I threw myself on the bed in the dark, buried my face in the pillow and thought and thought. At such moments orderly and consecutive thought is never possible; my brain and imagination seemed torn to shreds, and I remember I began dreaming about something utterly irrelevant, I don't know what. My grief and trouble came back to my mind suddenly with an ache of anguish, and I wrung my hands again and exclaimed: "Liza, Liza!" and began crying again. I don't remember how I fell asleep, but I slept sweetly and soundly.

Chapter 7

1

I waked up at eight o'clock in the morning, instantly locked my door, sat down by the window and began thinking. So I sat till ten o'clock. The servant knocked at my door twice, but I sent her away. At last at eleven o'clock there was a knock again. I was just going to shout to the servant again, but it was Liza. The servant came in with her, brought me in some coffee, and prepared to light the stove. It was impossible to get rid of the servant, and all the time Fekla was arranging the wood, and blowing up the fire, I strode up and down my little room, not beginning to talk to Liza, and even trying not to look at her. The servant, as though on purpose, was inexpressibly slow in her movements as servants always are when they notice they are preventing people from talking. Liza sat on the chair by the window and watched me.

"Your coffee will be cold," she said suddenly.

I looked at her: not a trace of embarrassment, perfect tranquillity, and even a smile on her lips.

"Such are women," I thought, and could not help shrugging my shoulders. At last the servant had finished lighting the stove and was about to tidy the room, but I turned her out angrily, and at last locked the door.

"Tell me, please, why have you locked the door again?" Liza asked.

I stood before her.

"Liza, I never could have imagined you would deceive me like this!" I exclaimed suddenly, though I had never thought of beginning like that, and instead of being

moved to tears, an angry feeling which was quite unexpected stabbed me to the heart. Liza flushed; she did not turn away, however, but still looked straight in my face.

“Wait, Liza, wait, oh how stupid I’ve been! But was I stupid? I had no hint of it till everything came together yesterday, and from what could I have guessed it before? From your going to Mme. Stolbyeev’s and to that ... Darya Onisimovna? But I looked upon you as the sun, Liza, and how could I dream of such a thing? Do you remember how I met you that day two months ago, at his flat, and how we walked together in the sunshine and rejoiced... . Had it happened then? Had it?”

She answered by nodding her head.

“So you were deceiving me even then! It was not my stupidity, Liza, it was my egoism, more than stupidity, the egoism of my heart and ... maybe my conviction of your holiness. Oh! I have always been convinced that you were all infinitely above me and—now this! I had not time yesterday in one day to realize in spite of all the hints... . And besides I was taken up with something very different yesterday!”

At that point I suddenly thought of Katerina Nikolaevna, and something stabbed me to the heart like a pin, and I flushed crimson. It was natural that I could not be kind at that moment.

“But what are you justifying yourself for? You seem to be in a hurry to defend yourself, Arkady, what for?” Liza asked softly and gently, though her voice was firm and confident.

“What for? What am I to do now? if it were nothing but that question! And you ask what for? I don’t know how to act! I don’t know how brothers do act in such cases... . I know they go with pistols in their hands and force them to marry... . I will behave as a man of honour ought! Only I don’t know how a man of honour ought to behave... . Why? Because we are not gentlefolk, and he’s a prince and has to think of his career; he won’t listen to honest people like us. We are not even brother and sister, but nondescript illegitimate children of a house-serf without a surname; and princes don’t marry house-serfs. Oh, it’s nauseating! And what’s more, you sit now and wonder at me.”

“I believe that you are very much distressed,” said Liza flushing again, “but you are in too great a hurry, and are distressing yourself.”

“Too great a hurry? Why, do you think I’ve not been slow enough! Is it for you, Liza, to say that to me?” I cried, completely carried away by indignation at last. “And what shame I’ve endured, and how that prince must despise me! It’s all clear to me now, and I can see it all like a picture: he quite imagined that I had guessed long ago what his relation was to you, but that I held my tongue or even turned up my nose while I bragged of ‘my honour’— that’s what he may well have thought of me! And that I have been taking his money for my sister, for my sister’s shame! It was that he loathed so, and I think he was quite right, too; to have every day to welcome a scoundrel because he was her brother, and then to talk of honour ... it would turn any heart to stone, even his! And you allowed it all, you did not warn me! He despised me so utterly that he talked of me to Stebelkov, and told me yesterday that he longed to

get rid of us both, Versilov and me. And Stebelkov too! ‘Anna Andreyevna is as much your sister as Lizaveta Makarovna,’ and then he shouted after me, ‘My money’s better than his.’ And I, I insolently lolled on HIS sofa, and forced myself on his acquaintances as though I were an equal, damn them! And you allowed all that! Most likely Darzan knows by now, judging, at least, by his tone yesterday evening... . Everyone, everyone knew it except me!”

“No one knows anything, he has not told any one of his acquaintances, and he COULD NOT,” Liza added. “And about Stebelkov, all I know is that Stebelkov is worrying him, and that it could only have been a guess on Stebelkov’s part anyway... . I have talked to him about you several times, and he fully believed me that you know nothing, and I can’t understand how this happened yesterday.”

“Oh, I paid him all I owed him yesterday, anyway, and that’s a load off my heart! Liza, does mother know? Of course she does; why, yesterday she stood up for you against me. Oh, Liza! Is it possible that in your heart of hearts you think yourself absolutely right, that you really don’t blame yourself in the least? I don’t know how these things are considered nowadays, and what are your ideas, I mean as regards me, your mother, your brother, your father... . Does Versilov know?”

“Mother has told him nothing; he does not ask questions, most likely he does not want to ask.”

“He knows, but does not want to know, that’s it, it’s like him! Well, you may laugh at a brother, a stupid brother, when he talks of pistols, but your mother! Surely you must have thought, Liza, that it’s a reproach to mother? I have been tortured by that idea all night; mother’s first thought now will be: ‘it’s because I did wrong, and the daughter takes after the mother!’”

“Oh, what a cruel and spiteful thing to say!” cried Liza, while the tears gushed from her eyes; she got up and walked rapidly towards the door.

“Stay, stay!” I caught her in my arms, made her sit down again, and sat down beside her, still keeping my arm round her.

“I thought it would be like this when I came here, and that you would insist on my blaming myself. Very well, I do blame myself. It was only through pride I was silent just now, and did not say so, I am much sorrier for you and mother than I am for myself... .”

She could not go on, and suddenly began crying bitterly.

“Don’t, Liza, you mustn’t, I don’t want anything. I can’t judge you. Liza, what does mother say? Tell me, has she known long?”

“I believe she has; but I only told her a little while ago, when THIS happened,” she said softly, dropping her eyes.

“What did she say?”

“She said, ‘bear it,’” Liza said still more softly.

“Ah, Liza, yes, ‘bear it!’ Don’t do anything to yourself, God keep you!”

“I am not going to,” she answered firmly, and she raised her eyes and looked at me. “Don’t be afraid,” she added, “it’s not at all like that.”

“Liza, darling, all I can see is that I know nothing about it, but I’ve only found out now how much I love you. There’s only one thing I can’t understand, Liza; it’s all clear to me, but there’s one thing I can’t understand at all: what made you love him? How could you love a man like that? That’s the question.”

“And I suppose you’ve been worrying yourself all night about that too?” said Liza, with a gentle smile.

“Stay, Liza, that’s a stupid question, and you are laughing; laugh away, but one can’t help being surprised, you know; you and HE, you are such opposite extremes! I have studied him: he’s gloomy, suspicious; perhaps he is very good-hearted, he may be, but on the other hand, he is above all extremely inclined to see evil in everything (though in that he is exactly like me). He has a passionate appreciation of what’s noble, that I admit, but I fancy it’s only in his ideal. Oh, he is apt to feel remorse, he has been all his life continually cursing himself, and repenting, but he will never reform; that’s like me, too, perhaps. Thousands of prejudices and false ideas and no real ideas at all. He is always striving after something heroic and spoiling it all over trifles. Forgive me, Liza, I’m a fool though; I say this and wound you and I know it; I understand it... .”

“It would be a true portrait,” smiled Liza, “but you are too bitter against him on my account, and that’s why nothing you say is true. From the very beginning he was distrustful with you, and you could not see him as he is, but with me, even at Luga... . He has had no eyes for anyone but me, ever since those days at Luga. Yes, he is suspicious and morbid, and but for me he would have gone out of his mind; and if he gives me up, he will go out of his mind, or shoot himself. I believe he has realized that and knows it,” Liza added dreamily as though to herself. “Yes, he is weak continually, but such weak people are capable at times of acting very strongly... . How strangely you talked about a pistol, Arkady; nothing of that sort is wanted and I know what will happen. It’s not my going after him, it’s his coming after me. Mother cries and says that if I marry him I shall be unhappy, that he will cease to love me. I don’t believe that; unhappy, perhaps, I shall be, but he won’t cease to love me. That’s not why I have refused my consent all along, it’s for another reason. For the last two months I’ve refused, but to-day I told him ‘yes, I will marry you.’ Arkasha, do you know yesterday” (her eyes shone and she threw her arms round my neck), “he went to Anna Andreyevna’s and told her with absolute frankness that he could not love her ... ? Yes, he had a complete explanation with her, and that idea’s at an end! He had nothing to do with the project. It was all Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch’s notion, and it was pressed upon him by those tormentors, Stebelkov and some one else... . And today for that I’ve said ‘YES.’ Dear Arkady, he is very anxious to see you, and don’t be offended because of what happened yesterday: he’s not quite well this morning, and will be at home all day. He’s really unwell, Arkady; don’t think it’s an excuse. He has sent me on purpose, and told me to say that he ‘needs’ you, that he has a great deal he must tell you, and that it would be awkward to say it here, in your lodging. Well, good-bye! Oh, Arkady, I am ashamed to say it, as I was coming here I was awfully afraid that you would not love me any more. I kept crossing myself on the way, and you’ve been

so good and kind! I shall never forget it! I am going to mother. And you try and like him a little, won't you?"

I embraced her warmly, and told her:

"I believe, Liza, you're a strong character. And I believe that it's not you who are going after him, but he who is going after you, only ..."

"Only, what made you love him? 'that's the question!'" Liza put in with her old mischievous laugh, pronouncing the words exactly as I had done "that's the question!" And as she said it she lifted her forefinger exactly as I do. We kissed at parting, but when she had gone my heart began to ache again.

2

I note merely for myself there were moments after Liza had gone when a perfect host of the most unexpected ideas rushed into my mind, and I was actually quite pleased with them.

"Well, why should I bother," I thought; "what is it to me? It's the same with every one or nearly so. What of it if it has happened to Liza? Am I bound to save the honour of the family?"

I mention all these details to show how far I was from a sound understanding of the difference between good and evil. It was only feeling saved me: I knew that Liza was unhappy, that mother was unhappy, and I knew this by my feeling when I thought of them, and so I felt that what had happened must be wrong.

Now I may mention beforehand that from that day, right up to the catastrophe of my illness, events followed one another with such rapidity that recalling them now I feel surprised myself that I was able to stand up against them, crushing as they were. They clouded my mind, and even my feelings, and if in the end I had been overwhelmed by them, and had committed a crime (I was within an ace of it), the jury might well have acquitted me. But I will try to describe it all in the exact order of events, though I forewarn the reader that there was little order in my thoughts at that time. Events came rushing on me like the wind, and my thoughts whirled before them like the dead leaves in autumn. Since I was entirely made up of other people's ideas, where could I find principles of my own when they were needed to form independent decisions? I had no guide at all.

I decided to go to see Prince Sergay that evening, that we might be perfectly free to talk things over, and he would be at home till evening. But when it was getting dark I received again a note by post, a note from Stebelkov; it consisted of three lines, containing an urgent and most persuasive request that I would call on him next morning at eleven o'clock on "most important business, and you will see for yourself that it is business." Thinking it over I resolved to be guided by circumstances, as there was plenty of time to decide before to-morrow.

It was already eight o'clock; I should have gone out much earlier, but I kept expecting Versilov; I was longing to express myself to him, and my heart was burning. But Versilov

was not coming and did not come. It was out of the question for me to go to see my mother and Liza for a time, and besides I had a feeling that Versilov certainly would not be there all day. I went on foot, and it occurred to me on the way to look in at the restaurant on the canal side where we had been the day before. Sure enough, Versilov was sitting there in the same place.

"I thought you would come here," he said, smiling strangely and looking strangely at me. His smile was an unpleasant one, such as I had not seen on his face for a long time.

I sat down at the little table and told him in full detail about the prince and Liza, and my scene with Prince Sergay the evening before; I did not forget to mention how I had won at roulette. He listened very attentively, and questioned me as to Prince Sergay's intention to marry Liza.

"Pauvre enfant, she won't gain much by that perhaps. But very likely it won't come off ... though he is capable of it... ."

"Tell me, as a friend: you knew it, I suppose, had an inkling of it?"

"My dear boy, what could I do in the matter? It's all a question of another person's conscience and of feeling, even though only on the part of that poor girl. I tell you again; I meddled enough at one time with other people's consciences, a most unsuitable practice! I don't refuse to help in misfortune so far as I'm able, and if I understand the position myself. And you, my dear boy, did you really suspect nothing all this time?"

"But how could you," I cried, flaring up, "how could you, if you'd a spark of suspicion that I knew of Liza's position, and saw that I was taking money at the same time from Prince Sergay, how could you speak to me, sit with me, hold out your hand to me, when you must have looked on me as a scoundrel, for I bet anything you suspected I knew all about it and borrowed money from Prince Sergay knowingly!"

"Again, it's a question of conscience," he said with a smile. "And how do you know," he added distinctly, with unaccountable emotion, "how do you know I wasn't afraid, as you were yesterday, that I might lose my 'ideal' and find a worthless scamp instead of my impulsive, straightforward boy? I dreaded the minute and put it off. Why not instead of indolence or duplicity imagine something more innocent in me, stupid, perhaps, but more honourable, que diable! I am only too often stupid, without being honourable. What good would you have been to me if you had had such propensities? To persuade and try to reform in that case would be degrading; you would have lost every sort of value in my eyes even if you were reformed... ."

"And Liza? Are you sorry for her?"

"I am very sorry for her, my dear. What makes you think I am so unfeeling... . On the contrary, I will try my very utmost... . And you. What of YOUR affair?"

"Never mind my affair; I have no affairs of my own now. Tell me, why do you doubt that he'll marry her? He was at Anna Andreyevna's yesterday and positively refused ... that is disowned the foolish idea ... that originated with Prince Nikolay Ivanitch ... of making a match between them. He disowned it absolutely."

“Yes? When was that? And from whom did you hear it?” he inquired with interest. I told him all I knew.

“H’m ... !” he pronounced as it were dreamily and pondering, “then it must have happened just about an hour ... before another explanation. H’m ... ! oh, well, of course, such an interview may have taken place between them ... although I know that nothing was said or done either on his side or on hers ... though, of course, a couple of words would be enough for such an explanation. But I tell you what, it’s strange,” he laughed suddenly; “I shall certainly interest you directly with an extraordinary piece of news; if your prince did make his offer yesterday to Anna Andreyevna (and, suspecting about Liza, I should have done my utmost to oppose his suit, *entre nous soit dit*), Anna Andreyevna would in any case have refused him. I believe you are very fond of Anna Andreyevna, you respect and esteem her. That’s very nice on your part, and so you will probably rejoice on her account; she is engaged to be married, my dear boy, and judging from her character I believe she really will get married, while I— well, I give her my blessing, of course.”

“Going to be married? To whom?” I cried, greatly astonished.

“Ah, guess! I won’t torment you; to Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch, to your dear old man.”

I gazed at him with open eyes.

“She must have been cherishing the idea for a long time; and no doubt worked it out artistically in all its aspects,” he went on languidly, dropping out his words one by one. “I imagine this was arranged just an hour after Prince Sergay’s visit. You see how inappropriate was his dashing in! She simply went to Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch and made him a proposal.”

“What, ‘made him a proposal’? You mean he made her a proposal?”

“Oh, how could he! She did, she herself, though to be sure he is perfectly ecstatic. They say he is simply sitting now wondering how it was the idea never occurred to him. I have heard he has even taken to his bed ... from sheer ecstasy, no doubt.”

“Listen, you are talking so ironically ... I can hardly believe it. And how could she propose to him? What did she say?”

“I assure you, my dear boy, that I am genuinely delighted,” he answered, suddenly assuming a wonderfully serious air; “he is old, of course, but by every law and custom he can get married; as for her—again it’s a matter of another person’s conscience, as I’ve told you already, my dear boy. However, she is quite competent to have her own views and make her own decision. But the precise details and the words in which she expressed herself I am not in a position to give you, my dear boy. But no doubt she was equal to doing it, in a way which neither you nor I would have imagined. The best of it all is that there’s nothing scandalous in it, it’s all *très comme il faut* in the eyes of the world. Of course, it’s quite evident that she was eager for a good position in the world, but you know she deserves it. All this, my dear boy, is an entirely worldly matter. And no doubt she made her proposal in a magnificent and artistic style. It’s an austere type, my dear boy, ‘the girl-nun,’ as you once described her; ‘the cool young

lady' has been my name for her a long time past. She has almost been brought up by him, you know, and has seen more than one instance of his kindly feeling towards her. She assured me some time ago that she had 'such a respect for him and such a high opinion of him, such feeling for him and such sympathy with him,' and all the rest of it, so that I was to some extent prepared. I was informed of all this this morning in her name and at her request by my son, her brother Andrey Andreyevitch, whom I believe you don't know, and whom I see regularly twice a year. He respectfully approves of the step she has taken."

"Then it is public already? Good heavens, I am amazed!"

"No, it's certainly not public yet, not for some time... . I don't know ... I am altogether out of it, in fact. But it's all true."

"But now Katerina Nikolaevna... . What do you think? it won't suit Büring's tastes, will it?"

"I don't know ... actually that he will dislike it; but you may be sure that on that side Anna Andreyevna is a highly respectable person. But what a girl she is! Yesterday morning, immediately before this, she inquired of me 'whether I were in love with the widow Ahmakov?' Do you remember I told you of it yesterday with surprise; it would have been impossible for her to marry the father if I had married the daughter! Do you understand now?"

"Oh, to be sure," I cried, "but could Anna Andreyevna really have imagined ... that you could possibly want to marry Katerina Nikolaevna?"

"Evidently she could, my dear boy, but, however ... but, however, I believe it's time for you to go where you were going. My head aches all the time, you know. I'll tell them to play Lucia. I love the solemnity of its dreariness, but I've told you that already ... I repeat myself unpardonably... . Perhaps I'll go away from here though. I love you, my dear boy, but good-bye; whenever I have a headache or toothache I thirst for solitude."

A line of suffering came into his face; I believe now he really was suffering with his head, his head particularly... .

"Till to-morrow," I said.

"Why 'till to-morrow,' and what is to happen to-morrow?" he said with a wry smile.

"I shall go to see you, or you come to see me."

"No, I shan't come to you, but you'll come running to me... ."

There was something quite malevolent in his face, but I had no thoughts to spare for him; what an event!

3

Prince Sergay was really unwell, and was sitting alone with his head wrapped in a wet towel. He was very anxious to see me; but he had not only a headache, he seemed to be aching morally all over. To anticipate events again; all that latter time, right up to the catastrophe, it was somehow my fate to meet with people who were one after another so excited that they were all almost mad, so that I couldn't help being infected

with the same malady myself. I came, I must confess, with evil feelings in my heart, and I was horribly ashamed, too, of having cried before him the previous night. And anyway Liza and he had so clearly succeeded in deceiving me that I could not help seeing myself as a fool. In short, my heart was vibrating on false notes as I went in. But all this affectation and false feeling vanished quickly. I must do him the justice to say that his suspiciousness had quickly disappeared, that he surrendered himself completely; he betrayed almost childish affection, confidence and love. He kissed me with tears and at once began talking of the position... . Yes, he really did need me: his words and the sequence of his ideas betrayed great mental disorder.

He announced with great firmness his intention to marry Liza and as soon as possible. "The fact that she is not of noble birth does not trouble me in the least, believe me," he said to me; "my grandfather married a serf-girl who sang in a neighbouring landowner's private theatre. My family, of course, have rested certain expectations upon me, but now they'll have to give way, and it will not lead to strife. I want to break with my present life for good, for good! To have everything different, everything new! I don't understand what made your sister love me; but if it had not been for her I should not have been alive to this day. I swear from the depth of my soul that my meeting her at Luga was the finger of Providence. I believe she loved me because 'I had fallen so low' ... can you understand that though, Arkady Makarovitch?"

"Perfectly!" I declared in a voice of full conviction. I sat at the table, and he walked about the room.

"I must tell you the whole story of our meeting, without reserve. It began with a secret I had guarded in my heart, of which she alone heard, because only to her could I bring myself to trust it. And to this day no one else knows it. I went to Luga then with despair in my heart, and stayed at Mme. Stolbyeev's, I don't know why, seeking solitude perhaps. I had only just resigned my commission in the regiment, which I had entered on my return from abroad, after my meeting with Andrey Petrovitch out there. I had some money at the time, and in the regiment I led a dissipated life, and spent freely; well, the officers, my comrades, did not like me, though I tried not to offend anyone. And I will confess it to you, no one has ever liked me. There was a certain Cornet Stepanov, I must admit an extremely empty-headed worthless fellow not distinguished in any way. There was no doubt he was honest though. He was in the habit of coming to see me, and I did not stand on ceremony with him; he used to sit in a corner, mute but dignified, for days together, and he did not get in my way at all. One day I told him a story that was going the round, with many foolish additions of my own, such as that the colonel's daughter was in love with me, and that the colonel had his eye upon me for her and so would do anything to please me... . In short, I will pass over the details, but it led to a very complicated and revolting scandal. It was not Stepanov who spread it but my orderly, who had overheard and remembered it all, for I had told an absurd story compromising the young lady. So, when there was an inquiry into the scandal, and this orderly was questioned by the officers, he threw the blame on Stepanov, that is, he said that it was to Stepanov I'd told the story. Stepanov

was put in such a position that he could not deny having heard it; it was a question of honour. And as two-thirds of the story had been lying on my part, the officers were indignant, and the commanding officer who had called us together was forced to clear the matter up. At this point the question was put to Stepanov in the presence of all: had he heard the story or not? And at once he told the whole truth. Well, what did I do then, I, a prince whose line goes back a thousand years? I denied it, and told Stepanov to his face that he was lying, in the most polite way, suggesting that he had ‘misunderstood my words’ and so on... . I’ll leave out the details again, but as Stepanov came to me so often I was able with some appearance of likelihood to put the matter in such a light that he might seem to be plotting with my orderly for motives of his own; and this told in my favour. Stepanov merely looked at me in silence and shrugged his shoulders. I remember the way he looked at me and shall never forget it. Then he promptly resigned his commission; but how do you suppose it ended? Every officer without exception called on him and begged him not to resign. A fortnight later I, too, left the regiment; no one turned me out, no one suggested my resigning, I alleged family reasons for my leaving the army. That was how the matter ended. At first I didn’t mind, and even felt angry with them; I stayed at Luga, made the acquaintance of Lizaveta Makarovna, but a month afterwards I began to look at my revolver and to think about death. I looked at everything gloomily, Arkady Makarovitch. I composed a letter to the commanding officer and my former comrades, with a full confession of my lie, and a vindication of Stepanov’s honour. When I had written the letter I asked myself the question, should I send it and live, or should I send it and die? I should never have decided that question. Chance, blind chance brought me near to Lizaveta Makarovna after a strange and rapid conversation with her. She had been at Mme. Stolbyeev’s before that, we had met and parted with bows and had rarely spoken. I suddenly told her everything. It was then she held out a hand to me.”

“How did she settle the question?”

“I didn’t send the letter. She decided that I should not send it. She argued that if I did send the letter I should, of course, have been doing an honourable action, sufficient to wash away all the filth of the past, and far more, but she doubted my having the strength to endure it. It was her idea that no one would have the strength to bear it, for then the future would be utterly ruined, and no new life would be possible. It is true Stepanov had suffered for it; but he had been acquitted by public opinion, as it was. It was a paradox, of course; but she restrained me, and I gave myself into her hands completely.”

“Her reasoning was jesuitical but feminine,” I cried; “she had begun to love you already!”

“It was my regeneration into a new life. I vowed to change, to begin a new life, to be worthy of myself and of her and—this is how it has ended! It has ended in my going with you to roulette, in my playing faro; I could not resist the fortune, I was delighted at being in the swim, delighted with all these people, with racehorses... . I tortured Liza, to my shame!”

He rubbed his forehead with his hand and walked up and down the room.

“We are both, you and I, stricken by the same Russian curse, Arkady Makarovitch; you don’t know what to do, and I don’t know what to do. If a Russian deviates ever so little from the rut of routine laid down for him by tradition, at once he is at a loss what to do. While he’s in the rut everything’s clear—income, rank, position in society, a carriage, visits, a wife—but ever so little off it—and what am I? A leaf fluttering before the wind, I don’t know what to do! For the last two months I have striven to keep in the rut, I have liked the rut, I’ve been drawn to the rut. You don’t know the depth of my downfall here; I love Liza, but at the same time I’ve been thinking of Mme. Ahmakov!”

“Is it possible?” I cried in distress. “By the way, what did you say yesterday about Versilov’s having instigated you to behave in a mean way to Katerina Nikolaevna?”

“I may have exaggerated it, and perhaps I have been unfair to him in my suspiciousness as I have been to you. Let us drop the subject. Why, do you suppose that I have not been brooding over a lofty ideal of life all this time, ever since Luga, perhaps? I swear that ideal has never left me, it has been with me continually, and has lost none of its beauty in my heart. I remembered the vow I made to Lizaveta Makarovna to reform. When Andrey Petrovitch talked about the aristocracy to me yesterday, he said nothing new, I can assure you. My ideal is firmly established: a few score acres (and only a few score, for I’ve scarcely anything left of the fortune), then absolutely complete abandonment of the world and a career; a rural home, a family, and myself a tiller of the soil or something of the sort. Oh, in our family it’s nothing new; my uncle, my grandfather, too, tilled the soil with their own hands. We have been princes for a thousand years, as aristocratic and as ancient a name as the Rohans, but we are beggars. And this is how I will train my children: ‘Remember always, all your life, that you are a nobleman, that the sacred blood of Russian princes flows in your veins, but never be ashamed that your father tilled the soil with his own hands—he did it like a prince.’ I should not leave them property, nothing but that strip of land, but I would bring them up in the loftiest principles: that I should consider a duty. Oh, I should be helped by Liza, by work, by children; oh, how we have dreamed of this together, dreamed of it here in this room. And would you believe it? at the same time I was thinking of Mme. Ahmakov, and of the possibility of a worldly and wealthy marriage, though I don’t care for the woman in the least! And only after what Nastchokin said about Büring, I resolved to turn to Anna Andreyevna.”

“But you went to decline the match? That was an honourable action anyway, I suppose!”

“You think so?” he stopped short before me. “No, you don’t know my nature, or else there is something I don’t know myself, because it seems I have more than one nature. I love you sincerely, Arkady Makarovitch, and besides I am terribly to blame for the way I’ve treated you for the last two months, and so I want you as Liza’s brother to know all this. I went to Anna Andreyevna to make her an offer of marriage, not to disown the idea.”

"Is it possible? But Liza told me ..."

"I deceived Liza."

"Tell me, please, you made a formal offer and Anna Andreyevna refused it? Was that it? Was that it? The facts are of great importance to me, prince."

"No, I did not make an offer at all, but that was only because I hadn't time; she forestalled me, not in direct words, of course, though the meaning was clear and unmistakable—she 'delicately' gave me to understand that the idea was henceforth out of the question."

"So it was the same as your not making her an offer, and your pride has not suffered!"

"How can you reason like that! My own conscience condemns me, and what of Liza, whom I have deceived ... and meant to abandon? And the vow I made to myself and my forefathers to reform and to atone for all my ignoble past! I entreat you not to tell her that. Perhaps that is the one thing she would not be able to forgive me! I have been ill since what happened yesterday. And now it seems that all is over, and the last of the Sokolskys will be sent to prison. Poor Liza! I have been very anxious to see you all day, Arkady Makarovitch, to tell you as Liza's brother what she knows nothing of as yet. I am a criminal. I have taken part in forging railway shares!"

"Something more! What, you are going to prison?" I cried jumping up and looking at him in horror. His face wore a look of the deepest gloom and utterly hopeless sorrow.

"Sit down," he said, and he sat down in the armchair opposite. "To begin with, you had better know the facts; it was more than a year ago, that same summer that I was at Ems with Lidya, and Katerina Nikolaevna, and afterwards at Paris, just at the time when I was going to Paris for two months. In Paris, of course, I was short of money, and it was just then Stebelkov turned up, though I knew him before. He gave me some money and promised to give me more, but asked me in return to help him; he wanted an artist, a draughtsman, engraver, lithographer, and so on, a chemist, an expert, and—for certain purposes. What those purposes were he hinted pretty plainly from the first. And would you believe it? he understood my character—it only made me laugh. The point is that from my schooldays I had an acquaintance, at present a Russian exile, though he was not really a Russian, but a native of Hamburg. He had been mixed up in some cases of forging papers in Russia already. It was on this man that Stebelkov was reckoning, but he wanted an introduction to him and he applied to me. I wrote a couple of lines for him, and immediately forgot all about it. Afterwards he met me again and again, and I received altogether as much as three thousand from him. I had literally forgotten all about the business. Here I've been borrowing from him all the time with I O Us and securities, and he has been cringing before me like a slave, and suddenly yesterday I learned from him for the first time that I am a criminal."

"When, yesterday?"

"Yesterday morning, when we were shouting in my study just before Nastchokin arrived. For the first time he had the effrontery to speak to me quite openly of Anna Andreyevna. I raised my hand to strike him, but he suddenly stood up and informed

me that his interests were mine, and that I must remember that I was his accomplice and as much a swindler as he—though he did not use those words, that was the sense.”

“What nonsense, why surely it’s all imagination?”

“No, it’s not imagination. He has been here to-day and explained things more exactly. These forged documents have been in circulation a long time, and are still being passed about, but it seems they’ve already begun to be noticed. Of course, I’ve nothing to do with it, but ‘you see though, you were pleased to give me that little letter,’ that’s what Stebelkov told me.”

“So you didn’t know, of course, what for, or did you know?”

“I did know,” Prince Sergay answered in a low voice, dropping his eyes; “that’s to say I knew and didn’t know, you see. I was laughing, I was amused. I did it without thinking, for I had no need of forged documents at that time, and it wasn’t I who meant to make them. But that three thousand he gave me then he did not put down in his account against me and I let it pass. But how do you know, perhaps I really am a forger. I could not help knowing, I am not a child; I did know, but I felt in a merry humour and I helped scoundrels, felons ... helped them for money! So I, too, am a forger!”

“Oh, you are exaggerating; you’ve done wrong, but you’re exaggerating!”

“There’s some one else in it, a young man called Zhibyelsky, some sort of attorney’s clerk. He, too, had something to do with these forgeries, he came afterwards from that gentleman at Hamburg to see me about some nonsense; of course, I didn’t know what it was about myself—it was not about those forgeries I know that ... but he has kept in his possession two documents in my handwriting, only brief notes—and, of course, they are evidence too; I understood that to-day. Stebelkov makes out that this Zhibyelsky is spoiling everything; he has stolen something, public money I believe, but means to steal something more and then to emigrate; so he wants eight thousand, not a penny less, to help him on his way. My share of the fortune I had inherited would satisfy Stebelkov, but he said Zhibyelsky must be satisfied too... . In short I must give up my share of the fortune and ten thousand besides, that’s their final offer. And then they will give me back my two letters. They’re in collusion, that’s clear.”

“It’s obviously absurd! If they inform against you they will betray themselves! Nothing will induce them to give information.”

“I understand that. They don’t threaten to give information at all, they only say, ‘We shall not inform, of course, but if it should be discovered, then ...’ that’s what they say, and that’s all, but I think it’s enough! But that’s not the point; whatever happens, and even if I had those letters in my pocket now, yet to be associated with those swindlers, to be their accomplice for ever and ever! To lie to Russia, to lie to my children, to lie to Liza, to lie to my conscience! ...”

“Does Liza know?”

“No, she does not know everything. It would be too much for her in her condition. I wear the uniform of my regiment, and every time I meet a soldier of the regiment, at every second, I am inwardly conscious that I must not dare to wear the uniform.”

“Listen,” I cried suddenly; “there’s no need to waste time talking about it; there’s only one way of salvation for you; go to Prince Nikolay Ivanitch, borrow ten thousand from him, ask him for it, without telling him what for, then send for those two swindlers, settle up with them finally, buy back your letters ... and the thing is over! The whole thing will be ended, and you can go and till the land! Away with vain imaginings and have faith in life!”

“I have thought of that,” he said resolutely. “I have been making up my mind all day and at last I have decided. I have only been waiting for you; I will go. Do you know I have never in my life borrowed a farthing from Prince Nikolay Ivanitch. He is well disposed to our family and even ... and has come to their assistance, but I, I personally, have never borrowed money from him. But now I am determined to. Our family, you may note, is an older branch of the Sokolskys than Prince Nikolay Ivanitch’s; they are a younger branch, collaterals, in fact, hardly recognized... . There was a feud between our ancestors. At the beginning of the reforms of Peter the Great, my great-grandfather, whose name was Peter too, remained an Old Believer, and was a wanderer in the forest of Kostroma. That Prince Peter married a second wife who was not of noble birth... . So it was then these other Sokolskys dropped out, but I... . What was I talking about? ...”

He was very much exhausted, and seemed talking almost unconsciously.

“Calm yourself,” I said, standing up and taking my hat; “go to bed, that’s the first thing. Prince Nikolay Ivanitch is sure not to refuse, especially now in the overflow of his joy. Have you heard the latest news from that quarter? Haven’t you, really? I have heard a wild story that he is going to get married; it’s a secret, but not from you, of course.”

And I told him all about it, standing, hat in hand. He knew nothing about it. He quickly asked questions, inquiring principally when and where the match had been arranged and how far the rumour was trustworthy. I did not, of course, conceal from him that it had been settled immediately after his visit to Anna Andreyevna. I cannot describe what a painful impression this news made upon him; his face worked and was almost contorted, and his lips twitched convulsively in a wry smile. At the end he turned horribly pale and sank into a reverie, with his eyes on the floor. I suddenly saw quite clearly that his vanity had been deeply wounded by Anna Andreyevna’s refusal of him the day before. Perhaps in his morbid state of mind he realized only too vividly at that minute the absurd and humiliating part he had played the day before in the eyes of the young lady of whose acceptance, as it now appeared, he had all the time been so calmly confident. And worst of all, perhaps, was the thought that he had behaved so shabbily to Liza, and to no purpose! It would be interesting to know for what these foppish young snobs think well of one another, and on what grounds they can respect one another; this prince might well have supposed that Anna Andreyevna knew of his connection with Liza—in reality her sister—or if she did not actually know, that she would be certain to hear of it sooner or later; and yet he had “had no doubt of her acceptance!”

“And could you possibly imagine,” he said suddenly, with a proud and supercilious glance at me, “that now, after learning such a fact, I, I could be capable of going to Prince Nikolay Ivanitch and asking him for money? Ask him, the accepted fiancé of the lady who has just refused me—like a beggar, like a flunkey! No, now all is lost, and if that old man’s help is my only hope, then let my last hope perish!”

In my heart I shared his feeling, but it was necessary to take a broader view of the real position: was the poor old prince really to be looked upon as a successful rival? I had several ideas fermenting in my brain. I had, apart from Prince Sergay’s affairs, made up my mind to visit the old man next day. For the moment I tried to soften the impression made by the news and to get the poor prince to bed! “When you have slept, things will look brighter, you’ll see!” He pressed my hand warmly, but this time he did not kiss me. I promised to come and see him the following evening, and “we’ll talk, we’ll talk; there’s so much to talk of.” He greeted these last words of mine with a fateful smile.

Chapter 8

1

All that night I dreamed of roulette, of play, of gold, and reckonings. I seemed in my dreams to be calculating something at the gambling table, some stake, some chance, and it oppressed me all night like a nightmare. To tell the truth, the whole of the previous day, in spite of all the startling impressions I had received, I had been continually thinking of the money I had won at Zerstchikov’s. I suppressed the thought, but I could not suppress the emotion it aroused, and I quivered all over at the mere recollection of it. That success had put me in a fever; could it be that I was a gambler, or at least—to be more accurate—that I had the qualities of a gambler? Even now, at the time of writing this, I still at moments like thinking about play! It sometimes happens that I sit for hours together absorbed in silent calculations about gambling and in dreams of putting down my stake, of the number turning up, and of picking up my winnings. Yes, I have all sorts of “qualities,” and my nature is not a tranquil one.

At ten o’clock I intended to go to Stebelkov’s and I meant to walk. I sent Matvey home as soon as he appeared. While I was drinking my coffee I tried to think over the position. For some reason I felt pleased; a moment’s self-analysis made me realize that I was chiefly pleased because I was going that day to the old prince’s. But that day was a momentous and startling one in my life, and it began at once with a surprise.

At ten o’clock my door was flung wide open, and Tatyana Pavlovna flew in. There was nothing I expected less than a visit from her, and I jumped up in alarm on seeing her. Her face was ferocious, her manner was incoherent, and I daresay if she had been asked she could not have said why she had hastened to me. I may as well say at once, that she had just received a piece of news that had completely overwhelmed her, and

she had not recovered from the first shock of it. The news overwhelmed me, too. She stayed, however, only half a minute, or perhaps a minute, but not more. She simply pounced upon me.

“So this is what you’ve been up to!” she said, standing facing me and bending forward. “Ah, you young puppy! What have you done! What, you don’t even know! Goes on drinking his coffee! Oh, you babbler, you chatterbox, oh, you imitation lover ... boys like you are whipped, whipped, whipped!”

“Tatyana Pavlovna, what has happened? What is the matter? Is mother? ...”

“You will know!” she shouted menacingly, ran out of the room—and was gone. I should certainly have run after her, but I was restrained by one thought, and that was not a thought but a vague misgiving: I had an inkling that of all her vituperation, “imitation lover” was the most significant phrase. Of course I could not guess what it meant, but I hastened out, that I might finish with Stebelkov and go as soon as possible to Nikolay Ivanitch.

“The key to it all is there!” I thought instinctively.

I can’t imagine how he learned it, but Stebelkov already knew all about Anna Andreyevna down to every detail; I will not describe his conversation and his gestures, but he was in a state of enthusiasm, a perfect ecstasy of enthusiasm over this “master-stroke.”

“She is a person! Yes, she is a person!” he exclaimed. “Yes, that’s not our way; here we sit still and do nothing, but as soon as she wants something of the best she takes it. She’s an antique statue! She is an antique statue of Minerva, only she is walking about and wearing modern dress!”

I asked him to come to business; this business was, as I had guessed, solely to ask me to persuade and induce Prince Sergay to appeal to Prince Nikolay Ivanitch for a loan. “Or it will be a very very bad look-out for him, though it’s none of my doing; that’s so, isn’t it?”

He kept peeping into my face, but I fancy did not detect that I knew anything more than the day before. And indeed he could not have imagined it: I need hardly say that I did not by word or hint betray that I knew anything about the forged documents.

Our explanations did not take long, he began at once promising me money, “and a considerable sum, a considerable sum, if only you will manage that the prince should go. The matter is urgent, very urgent, and that’s the chief point that the matter’s so pressing!”

I did not want to argue and wrangle with him, as I had done the day before, and I got up to go, though to be on the safe side I flung him in reply that “I would try”; but he suddenly amazed me beyond all expression: I was on my way to the door when all at once he put his arm round my waist affectionately and began talking to me in the most incomprehensible way.

I will omit the details of the conversation that I may not be wearisome. The upshot of it was that he made me a proposition that I should introduce him to M. Dergatchev, “since you go there!”

I instantly became quiet, doing my utmost not to betray myself by the slightest gesture. I answered at once, however, that I was quite a stranger there, and though I had been in the house, it was only on one occasion, by chance.

“But if you’ve been ADMITTED once, you might go a second time; isn’t that so?”

I asked him point-blank, and with great coolness, why he wanted it? And to this day I can’t understand such a degree of simplicity in a man who was apparently no fool, and who was a “business man,” as Vassin had said of him! He explained to me quite openly that he suspected “that something prohibited and sternly prohibited was going on at Dergatchev’s, and so if I watch him I may very likely make something by it.” And with a grin he winked at me with his left eye.

I made no definite answer, but pretended to be considering it and promised to “think about it,” and with that I went hastily away. The position was growing more complicated: I flew to Vassin, and at once found him at home.

“What, you ... too!” he said enigmatically on seeing me. Without inquiring the significance of this phrase, I went straight to the point and told him what had happened. He was evidently impressed, though he remained absolutely cool. He cross-examined me minutely.

“It may very well be that you misunderstood him.”

“No, I quite understood him, his meaning was quite clear.”

“In any case I am extremely grateful to you,” he added with sincerity. “Yes, indeed, if that is so, he imagined that you could not resist a certain sum of money.”

“And, besides, he knows my position: I’ve been playing all this time, and behaving badly, Vassin.”

“I have heard about that.”

“What puzzles me most of all is that he knows you go there constantly, too,” I ventured to observe.

“He knows perfectly well,” Vassin answered quite simply, “that I don’t go there with any object. And indeed all those young people are simply chatterers, nothing more; you have reason to remember that as well as anyone.”

I fancied that he did not quite trust me.

“In any case I am very much obliged to you.”

“I have heard that M. Stebelkov’s affairs are in rather a bad way,” I tried to question him once more. “I’ve heard, anyway, of certain shares ...”

“What shares have you heard about?”

I mentioned “the shares” on purpose, but of course not with the idea of telling him the secret Prince Sergay had told me the day before. I only wanted to drop a hint and see from his face, from his eyes, whether he knew anything about “shares.” I attained my object: from a momentary indefinable change in his face, I guessed that he did perhaps know something in this matter, too. I did not answer his question “what shares,” I was silent; and it was worth noting that he did not pursue the subject either.

“How’s Lizaveta Makarovna?” he inquired with sympathetic interest.

“She’s quite well. My sister has always thought very highly of you... .”

There was a gleam of pleasure in his eyes; I had guessed long before that he was not indifferent to Liza.

“Prince Sergay Petrovitch was here the other day,” he informed me suddenly.

“When?” I cried.

“Just four days ago.”

“Not yesterday?”

“No, not yesterday.” He looked at me inquiringly. “Later perhaps I may describe our meeting more fully, but for the moment I feel I must warn you,” Vassin said mysteriously, “that he struck me as being in an abnormal condition of mind, and ... of brain indeed. I had another visit, however,” he added suddenly with a smile, “just before you came, and I was driven to the same conclusion about that visitor, too.”

“Has Prince Sergay just been here?”

“No, not Prince Sergay, I am not speaking of the prince just now. Andrey Petrovitch Versilov has just been here, and ... you’ve heard nothing? Hasn’t something happened to him?”

“Perhaps something has; but what passed between you exactly?” I asked hurriedly.

“Of course, I ought to keep it secret ... we are talking rather queerly, with too much reserve,” he smiled again. “Andrey Petrovitch, however, did not tell me to keep it secret. But you are his son, and as I know your feelings for him, I believe I may be doing right to warn you. Only fancy, he came to me to ask the question: ‘In case it should be necessary for him very shortly, in a day or two, to fight a duel, would I consent to be his second?’ I refused absolutely, of course.”

I was immensely astonished; this piece of news was the most disturbing of all: something was wrong, something had turned up, something had happened of which I knew nothing as yet! I suddenly recalled in a flash how Versilov had said to me the day before: “I shan’t come to you, but you’ll come running to me.”

I rushed off to Prince Nikolay Ivanitch, feeling more than ever that the key to the mystery lay there. As he said good-bye, Vassin thanked me again.

2

The old prince was sitting before an open fire with a rug wrapped round his legs. He met me with an almost questioning air, as though he were surprised that I had come; yet almost every day he had sent messages inviting me. He greeted me affectionately, however. But his answers to my first questions sounded somewhat reluctant, and were fearfully vague. At times he seemed to deliberate, and looked intently at me, as though forgetting and trying to recall something which certainly ought to be connected with me. I told him frankly that I had heard everything and was very glad. A cordial and good-natured smile came into his face at once and his spirits rose; his mistrust and caution vanished at once as though he had forgotten them. And indeed he had, of course.

“My dear young friend, I knew you would be the first to come, and, and do you know, I thought about you yesterday: ‘Who will be pleased? he will!’ Well, no one else will indeed; but that doesn’t matter. People are spiteful gossips, but that’s no great matter... . Cher enfant, this is so exalted and so charming... . But, of course, you know her well. And Anna Andreyevna has the highest opinion of you. It’s a grave and charming face out of an English keepsake. It’s the most charming English engraving possible... . Two years ago I had a regular collection of such engravings... . I always had the intention, always; I only wonder why it was I never thought of it.”

“You always, if I remember rightly, distinguished Anna Andreyevna and were fond of her.”

“My dear boy, we don’t want to hurt anyone. Life with one’s friends, with one’s relations, with those dear to one’s heart is paradise. All the poets... . In short, it has been well known from prehistoric times. In the summer you know we are going to Soden, and then to Bad-Gastein. But what a long time it is since you’ve been to see me, my dear boy; what’s been the matter with you? I’ve been expecting you. And how much, how much has happened meanwhile, hasn’t it? I am only sorry that I am uneasy; as soon as I am alone I feel uneasy. That is why I must not be left alone, must I? That’s as plain as twice two make four. I understood that at once from her first word. Oh, my dear boy, she only spoke two words, but ... it was something like a glorious poem. But, of course, you are her brother, almost her brother, aren’t you? My dear boy, it’s not for nothing I’m so fond of you! I swear I had a presentiment of all this. I kissed her hand and wept.”

He took out his handkerchief as though preparing to weep again. He was violently agitated, suffering, I fancy, from one of his “nervous attacks,” and one of the worst I remember in the whole course of our acquaintance. As a rule, almost always in fact, he was ever so much better and more good-humoured.

“I would forgive everything, my dear boy,” he babbled on. “I long to forgive every one, and it’s a long time since I was angry with anyone. Art, la poésie dans la vie, philanthropy, and she, a biblical beauty, quelle charmante person, eh? Les chants de Salomon ... non, c’est n’est pas Salomon, c’est David qui mettait une jeune belle dans son lit pour se chauffer dans sa vieillesse. Enfin David, Salomon, all that keeps going round in my head—a regular jumble. Everything, cher enfant may be at the same time grand and ridiculous. Cette jeune belle de la vieillesse de David— c’est tout un poème, and Paul de Kock would have made of it a scène de bassinoire, and we should all have laughed. Paul de Kock has neither taste nor sense of proportion, though he is a writer of talent ... Katerina Nikolaevna smiles ... I said that we would not trouble anyone. We have begun our romance and only ask them to let us finish it. Maybe it is a dream, but don’t let them rob me of this dream.”

“How do you mean it’s a dream, prince?”

“A dream? How a dream? Well, let it be a dream, but let me die with that dream.”

“Oh, why talk of dying, prince? You have to live now, only to live!”

“Why, what did I say? That’s just what I keep saying. I simply can’t understand why life is so short. To avoid being tedious, no doubt, for life, too, is the Creator’s work of art, in a perfect and irreproachable form like a poem of Pushkin’s. Brevity is the first essential of true art. But if anyone is not bored, he ought to be allowed to live longer.”

“Tell me, prince, is it public property yet?”

“No, my dear boy, certainly not! We have all agreed upon that. It’s private, private, private. So far I’ve only disclosed it fully to Katerina Nikolaevna, because I felt I was being unfair to her. Oh, Katerina Nikolaevna is an angel, she is an angel!”

“Yes, yes!”

“Yes, and you say ‘yes’? Why, I thought that you were her enemy, too. Ach, by the way, she asked me not to receive you any more. And only fancy, when you came in I quite forgot it.”

“What are you saying?” I cried, jumping up. “Why? Where?”

(My presentiment had not deceived me; I had had a presentiment of something of this sort ever since Tatyana’s visit.)

“Yesterday, my dear boy, yesterday. I don’t understand, in fact, how you got in, for orders were given. How did you come in?”

“I simply walked in.”

“The surest way. If you had tried to creep in by stealth, no doubt they would have caught you, but as you simply walked in they let you pass. Simplicity, cher enfant, is in reality the deepest cunning.”

“I don’t understand: did you, too, decide not to receive me, then!”

“No, my dear boy, I said I had nothing to do with it... . That is I gave my full consent. And believe me, my dear boy, I am much too fond of you. But Katerina Nikolaevna insisted so very strongly... . So, there it is!”

At that instant Katerina Nikolaevna appeared in the doorway. She was dressed to go out, and as usual came in to kiss her father. Seeing me she stopped short in confusion, turned quickly, and went out.

“Voilà!” cried the old prince, impressed and much disturbed.

“It’s a misunderstanding!” I cried. “One moment ... I ... I’ll come back to you directly, prince!”

And I ran after Katerina Nikolaevna.

All that followed upon this happened so quickly that I had no time to reflect, or even to consider in the least how to behave. If I had had time to consider, I should certainly have behaved differently! But I lost my head like a small boy. I was rushing towards her room, but on the way a footman informed me that Katerina Nikolaevna had already gone downstairs and was getting into her carriage. I rushed headlong down the front staircase. Katerina Nikolaevna was descending the stairs, in her fur coat, and beside her—or rather arm-in-arm with her—walked a tall and severe-looking officer, wearing a uniform and a sword, and followed by a footman carrying his great-coat. This was the baron, who was a colonel of five-and-thirty, a typical smart officer, thin,

with rather too long a face, ginger moustache and even eyelashes of the same colour. Though his face was quite ugly, it had a resolute and defiant expression. I describe him briefly, as I saw him at that moment. I had never seen him before. I ran down the stairs after them without a hat or coat. Katerina Nikolaevna was the first to notice me, and she hurriedly whispered something to her companion. He slightly turned his head and then made a sign to the footman and the hall-porter. The footman took a step towards me at the front door, but I pushed him away and rushed after them out on the steps. Büring was assisting Katerina Nikolaevna into the carriage.

“Katerina Nikolaevna! Katerina Nikolaevna!” I cried senselessly like a fool! like a fool! Oh, I remember it all; I had no hat on!

Büring turned savagely to the footman again and shouted something to him loudly, one or two words, I did not take them in. I felt some one clutch me by the elbow. At that moment the carriage began to move; I shouted again and was rushing after the carriage. I saw that Katerina Nikolaevna was peeping out of the carriage window, and she seemed much perturbed. But in my hasty movement I jostled against Büring unconsciously, and trod on his foot, hurting him a good deal, I fancy. He uttered a faint cry, clenched his teeth, with a powerful hand grasped me by the shoulder, and angrily pushed me away, so that I was sent flying a couple of yards. At that instant his great-coat was handed him, he put it on, got into his sledge, and once more shouted angrily to the footman and the porter, pointing to me as he did so. Thereupon they seized me and held me; one footman flung my great-coat on me, while a second handed me my hat and—I don’t remember what they said; they said something, and I stood and listened, understanding nothing of it. All at once I left them and ran away.

3

Seeing nothing and jostling against people as I went, I ran till I reached Tatyana Pavlovna’s flat: it did not even occur to me to take a cab. Büring had pushed me away before her eyes! I had, to be sure, stepped on his foot, and he had thrust me away instinctively as a man who had trodden on his corn—and perhaps I really had trodden on his corn! But she had seen it, and had seen me seized by the footman; it had all happened before her, before her! When I had reached Tatyana Pavlovna’s, for the first minute I could say nothing and my lower jaw was trembling, as though I were in a fever. And indeed I was in a fever and what’s more I was crying... . Oh, I had been so insulted!

“What! Have they kicked you out? Serve you right! serve you right!” said Tatyana Pavlovna. I sank on the sofa without a word and looked at her.

“What’s the matter with him?” she said, looking at me intently. “Come, drink some water, drink a glass of water, drink it up! Tell me what you’ve been up to there now?”

I muttered that I had been turned out, and that Büring had given me a push in the open street.

“Can you understand anything, or are you still incapable? Come here, read and admire it.” And taking a letter from the table she gave it to me, and stood before me expectantly. I at once recognized Versilov’s writing, it consisted of a few lines: it was a letter to Katerina Nikolaevna. I shuddered and instantly comprehension came back to me in a rush. The contents of this horrible, atrocious, grotesque and blackguardly letter were as follows, word for word:

“DEAR MADAM KATERINA NIKOLAEVNA.

Depraved as you are in your nature and your arts, I should have yet expected you to restrain your passions and not to try your wiles on children. But you are not even ashamed to do that. I beg to inform you that the letter you know of was certainly not burnt in a candle and never was in Kraft’s possession, so you won’t score anything there. So don’t seduce a boy for nothing. Spare him, he is hardly grown up, almost a child, undeveloped mentally and physically—what use can you have for him? I am interested in his welfare, and so I have ventured to write to you, though with little hope of attaining my object. I have the honour to inform you that I have sent a copy of this letter to Baron Büiring.

“A. VERSILOV.”

I turned white as I read, then suddenly I flushed crimson and my lips quivered with indignation.

“He writes that about me! About what I told him the day before yesterday!” I cried in a fury.

“So you did tell him!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, snatching the letter from me.

“But ... I didn’t say that, I did not say that at all! Good God, what can she think of me now! But it’s madness, you know. He’s mad ... I saw him yesterday. When was the letter sent?”

“It was sent yesterday, early in the day; it reached her in the evening, and this morning she gave it me herself.”

“But I saw him yesterday myself, he’s mad! Versilov was incapable of writing that, it was written by a madman. Who could write like that to a woman?”

“That’s just what such madmen do write in a fury when they are blind and deaf from jealousy and spite, and their blood is turned to venom... . You did not know what he is like! Now they will pound him to a jelly. He has thrust his head under the axe himself! He’d better have gone at night to the Nikolaevsky railway and have laid his head on the rail. They’d have cut it off for him, if he’s weary of the weight of it! What possessed you to tell him! What induced you to tease him! Did you want to boast?”

“But what hatred! What hatred!” I cried, clapping my hand on my head. “And what for, what for? Of a woman! What has she done to him? What can there have been between them that he can write a letter like that?”

“Ha—atred!” Tatyana Pavlovna mimicked me with furious sarcasm.

The blood rushed to my face again; all at once I seemed to grasp something new; I gazed at her with searching inquiry.

“Get along with you!” she shrieked, turning away from me quickly and waving me off. “I’ve had bother enough with you all! I’ve had enough of it now! You may all sink into the earth for all I care! ... Your mother is the only one I’m sorry for ...”

I ran, of course, to Versilov. But what treachery! What treachery!

4

Versilov was not alone. To explain the position beforehand: after sending that letter to Katerina Nikolaevna the day before and actually dispatching a copy of it to Baron Buring (God only knows why), naturally he was bound to expect certain “consequences” of his action in the course of to-day, and so had taken measures of a sort. He had in the morning moved my mother upstairs to my “coffin,” together with Liza, who, as I learned afterwards, had been taken ill when she got home, and had gone to bed. The other rooms, especially the drawing-room, had been scrubbed and tidied up with extra care. And at two o’clock in the afternoon a certain Baron R. did in fact make his appearance. He was a colonel, a tall thin gentleman about forty, a little bald, of German origin, with ginger-coloured hair like Buring’s, and a look of great physical strength. He was one of those Baron R.s of whom there are so many in the Russian army, all men of the highest baronial dignity, entirely without means, living on their pay, and all zealous and conscientious officers.

I did not come in time for the beginning of their interview; both were very much excited, and they might well be. Versilov was sitting on the sofa facing the table, and the baron was in an armchair on one side. Versilov was pale, but he spoke with restraint, dropping out his words one by one; the baron raised his voice and was evidently given to violent gesticulation. He restrained himself with an effort, but he looked stern, supercilious, and even contemptuous, though somewhat astonished. Seeing me he frowned, but Versilov seemed almost relieved at my coming.

“Good-morning, dear boy. Baron, this is the very young man mentioned in the letter, and I assure you he will not be in your way, and may indeed be of use.” (The baron looked at me contemptuously.) “My dear boy,” Versilov went on, “I am glad that you’ve come, indeed, so sit down in the corner please, till the baron and I have finished. Don’t be uneasy, baron, he will simply sit in the corner.”

I did not care, for I had made up my mind, and besides all this impressed me: I sat down in the corner without speaking, as far back as I could, and went on sitting there without stirring or blinking an eyelid till the interview was over... .

“I tell you again, baron,” said Versilov, rapping out his words resolutely, “that I consider Katerina Nikolaevna Ahmakov, to whom I wrote that unworthy and insane letter, not only the soul of honour, but the acme of all perfection!”

“Such a disavowal of your own words, as I have observed to you already, is equivalent to a repetition of the offence,” growled the baron; “your words are actually lacking in respect.”

“And yet it would be nearest the truth if you take them in their exact sense. I suffer, do you see, from nervous attacks, and ... nervous ailments, and am in fact being treated for them and therefore it has happened in one such moment ...”

“These explanations cannot be admitted. I tell you for the third time that you are persistently mistaken, perhaps purposely wish to be mistaken. I have warned you from the very beginning that the whole question concerning that lady, that is concerning your letter to Mme. Ahmakov, must be entirely excluded from our explanation; you keep going back to it. Baron Buring begged and particularly charged me to make it plain that this matter concerns him only; that is, your insolence in sending him that ‘copy’ and the postscript to it in which you write that ‘you are ready to answer for it when and how he pleases.’”

“But that, I imagine, is quite clear without explanation.”

“I understand, I hear. You do not even offer an apology, but persist in asserting that ‘you are ready to answer for it when and how he pleases.’ But that would be getting off too cheaply. And therefore I now, in view of the turn which you obstinately will give to your explanation, feel myself justified on my side in telling you the truth without ceremony, that is, I have come to the conclusion that it is ut-ter-ly impossible for Baron Buring to meet you ... on an equal footing.”

“Such a decision is no doubt advantageous for your friend, Baron Buring, and I must confess you have not surprised me in the least: I was expecting it.”

I note in parenthesis: it was quite evident to me from the first word and the first glance that Versilov was trying to lead up to this outburst, that he was intentionally teasing and provoking this irascible baron, and was trying to put him out of patience. The baron bristled all over.

“I have heard that you are able to be witty, but being witty is very different from being clever.”

“An extremely profound observation, colonel.”

“I did not ask for your approbation,” cried the baron. “I did not come to bandy words with you. Be so good as to listen. Baron Buring was in doubt how to act when he received your letter, because it was suggestive of a madhouse. And, of course, means might be taken to ... suppress you. However, owing to certain special considerations, your case was treated with indulgence and inquiries were made about you: it turns out that though you have belonged to good society, and did at one time serve in the Guards, you have been excluded from society and your reputation is dubious. Yet in spite of that I’ve come here to ascertain the facts personally, and now, to make things worse, you don’t scruple to play with words, and inform me yourself that you are liable to nervous attacks. It’s enough! Baron Buring’s position and reputation are such that he cannot stoop to be mixed up in such an affair... . In short, I am authorized, sir, to inform you, that if a repetition or anything similar to your recent action should follow hereafter, measures will promptly be found to bring you to your senses, very quickly and very thoroughly I can assure you. We are not living in the jungle, but in a well ordered state!”

“You are so certain of that, my good baron?”

“Confound you,” cried the baron, suddenly getting up; “you tempt me to show you at once that I am not ‘your good baron.’”

“Ach, I must warn you once again,” said Versilov, and he too stood up, “that my wife and daughter are not far off ... and so I must ask you not to speak so loud, for your shouts may reach their ears.”

“Your wife ... the devil ... I am sitting here talking to you solely in order to get to the bottom of this disgusting business,” the baron continued as wrathfully as before, not dropping his voice in the least. “Enough!” he roared furiously, “you are not only excluded from the society of decent people, but you’re a maniac, a regular raving maniac, and such you’ve been proved to be! You do not deserve indulgence, and I can tell you that this very day measures will be taken in regard to you ... and you will be placed where they will know how to restore you to sanity ... and will remove you from the town.”

He marched with rapid strides out of the room. Versilov did not accompany him to the door. He stood gazing at me absentmindedly, as though he did not see me; all at once he smiled, tossed back his hair, and taking his hat, he too made for the door. I clutched at his hand.

“Ach, yes, you are here too. You ... heard?” he said, stopping short before me.

“How could you do it? How could you distort ... disgrace with such treachery!”

He looked at me intently, his smile broadened and broadened till it passed into actual laughter.

“Why, I’ve been disgraced ... before her! before her! They laughed at me before her eyes, and he ... and he pushed me away!” I cried, beside myself.

“Really? Ach, poor boy, I am sorry for you... . So they laughed at you, did they?”

“You are laughing yourself, you are laughing at me; it amuses you!”

He quickly pulled his hand away, put on his hat and laughing, laughing aloud, went out of the flat. What was the use of running after him? I understood and—I had lost everything in one instant! All at once I saw my mother; she had come downstairs and was timidly looking about her.

“Has he gone away?”

I put my arms around her without a word, and she held me tight in hers.

“Mother, my own, surely you can’t stay? Let us go at once, I will shelter you, I will work for you like a slave, for you and for Liza. Leave them all, all, and let us go away. Let us be alone. Mother, do you remember how you came to me at Touchard’s and I would not recognize you?”

“I remember, my own; I have been bad to you all your life. You were my own child, and I was a stranger to you.”

“That was his fault, mother, it was all his fault; he has never loved us.”

“Yes, yes, he did love us.”

“Let us go, mother.”

“How could I go away from him, do you suppose he is happy?”

“Where’s Liza?”

“She’s lying down; she felt ill when she came in; I’m frightened. Why are they so angry with him? What will they do to him now? Where’s he gone? What was that officer threatening?”

“Nothing will happen to him, mother, nothing does happen to him, or ever can happen to him. He’s that sort of man! Here’s Tatyana Pavlovna, ask her, if you don’t believe me, here she is.” (Tatyana Pavlovna came quickly into the room.) “Good-bye, mother. I will come to you directly, and when I come, I shall ask you the same thing again... .”

I ran away. I could not bear to see anyone, let alone Tatyana Pavlovna. Even mother distressed me. I wanted to be alone, alone.

5

But before I had crossed the street, I felt that I could hardly walk, and I jostled aimlessly, heedlessly, against the passers-by, feeling listless and adrift; but what could I do with myself? What use am I to anyone, and—what use is anything to me now? Mechanically I trudged to Prince Sergay’s, though I was not thinking of him at all. He was not at home. I told Pyotr (his man) that I would wait in his study (as I had done many times before). His study was a large one, a very high room, cumbered up with furniture. I crept into the darkest corner, sat down on the sofa and, putting my elbows on the table, rested my head in my hands. Yes, that was the question: “what was of any use to me now?” If I was able to formulate that question then, I was totally unable to answer it.

But I could not myself answer the question, or think about it rationally. I have mentioned already that towards the end of those days I was overwhelmed by the rush of events. I sat now, and everything was whirling round like chaos in my mind. “Yes, I had failed to see all that was in him, and did not understand him at all,” was the thought that glimmered dimly in my mind at moments. “He laughed in my face just now: that was not at me, it was all Büring then, not me. The day before yesterday he knew everything and he was gloomy. He pounced on my stupid confession in the restaurant, and distorted it, regardless of the truth; but what did he care for the truth? He did not believe a syllable of what he wrote to her. All he wanted was to insult her, to insult her senselessly, without knowing what for; he was looking out for a pretext and I gave him the pretext... . He behaved like a mad dog! Does he want to kill Büring now? What for? His heart knows what for! And I know nothing of what’s in his heart... . No, no, I don’t know even now. Can it be that he loves her with such passion? Or does he hate her to such a pitch of passion? I don’t know, but does he know himself? Why did I tell mother that ‘nothing could happen to him’; what did I mean to say by that? Have I lost him or haven’t I?

“... She saw how I was pushed away... . Did she laugh too, or not? I should have laughed! They were beating a spy, a spy... .

“What does it mean,” suddenly flashed on my mind, “what does it mean that in that loathsome letter he puts in that the document has not been burnt, but is in existence?

...

“He is not killing Buring but is sitting at this moment, no doubt, in the restaurant listening to ‘Lucia’! And perhaps after Lucia he will go and kill Buring. Buring pushed me away, almost struck me; did he strike me? And Buring disdains to fight even Versilov, so would he be likely to fight with me? Perhaps I ought to kill him to-morrow with a revolver, waiting for him in the street... .” I let that thought flit through my mind quite mechanically without being brought to a pause by it.

At moments I seemed to dream that the door would open all at once, that Katerina Nikolaevna would come in, would give me her hand, and we should both burst out laughing... . Oh, my student, my dear one! I had a vision of this, or rather an intense longing for it, as soon as it got dark. It was not long ago I had been standing before her saying good-bye to her, and she had given me her hand, and laughed. How could it have happened that in such a short time we were so completely separated! Simply to go to her and to explain everything this minute, simply, simply! Good heavens! how was it that an utterly new world had begun for me so suddenly! Yes, a new world, utterly, utterly new... . And Liza, and Prince Sergay, that was all old... . Here I was now at Prince Sergay’s. And mother—how could she go on living with him if it was like this! I could, I can do anything, but she? What will be now? And the figures of Liza, Anna Andreyevna, Stebelkov, Prince Sergay, Aferdov, kept disconnectedly whirling round in my sick brain. But my thoughts became more and more formless and elusive; I was glad when I succeeded in thinking of something and clutching at it.

“I have ‘my idea’!” I thought suddenly; “but have I? Don’t I repeat that from habit? My idea was the fruit of darkness and solitude, and is it possible to creep back into the old darkness? Oh, my God, I never burnt that ‘letter’! I actually forgot to burn it the day before yesterday. I will go back and burn it in a candle, in a candle of course; only I don’t know if I’m thinking properly... .”

It had long been dark and Pyotr brought candles. He stood over me and asked whether I had had supper. I simply motioned him away. An hour later, however, he brought me some tea, and I greedily drank a large cupful. Then I asked what time it was? It was half- past eight, and I felt no surprise to find I had been sitting there five hours.

“I have been in to you three times already,” said Pyotr, “but I think you were asleep.”

I did not remember his coming in. I don’t know why, but I felt all at once horribly scared to think I had been asleep. I got up and walked about the room, that I might not go to sleep again. At last my head began to ache violently. At ten o’clock Prince Sergay came in and I was surprised that I had been waiting for him: I had completely forgotten him, completely.

“You are here, and I’ve been round to you to fetch you,” he said to me. His face looked gloomy and severe, and there was not a trace of a smile. There was a fixed idea in his eyes.

"I have been doing my very utmost all day and straining every nerve," he said with concentrated intensity; "everything has failed, and nothing in the future, but horror... ." (N.B.— he had not been to Prince Nikolay Ivanitch's.) "I have seen Zhibyelsky, he is an impossible person. You see, to begin with we must get the money, then we shall see. And if we don't succeed with the money, then we shall see... . I have made up my mind not to think about that. If only we get hold of the money to-day, to-morrow we shall see everything. The three thousand you won is still untouched, every farthing of it. It's three thousand all except three roubles. After paying back what I lent you, there is three hundred and forty roubles change for you. Take it. Another seven hundred as well, to make up a thousand, and I will take the other two thousand. Then let us both go to Zerstchikov and try at opposite ends of the table to win ten thousand—perhaps we shall do something, if we don't win it—then... . This is the only way left, anyhow."

He looked at me with a fateful smile.

"Yes, yes!" I cried suddenly, as though coming to life again "let us go. I was only waiting for you... ."

I may remark that I had never once thought of roulette during those hours.

"But the baseness? The degradation of the action?" Prince Sergay asked suddenly.

"Our going to roulette! Why that's everything," I cried, "money's everything. Why, you and I are the only saints, while Buring has sold himself, Anna Andreyevna's sold herself, and Versilov—have you heard that Versilov's a maniac? A maniac! A maniac!"

"Are you quite well, Arkady Makarovitch? Your eyes are somehow strange."

"You say that because you want to go without me! But I shall stick to you now. It's not for nothing I've been dreaming of play all night. Let us go, let us go!" I kept exclaiming, as though I had found the solution to everything.

"Well, let us go, though you're in a fever, and there ..."

He did not finish. His face looked heavy and terrible. We were just going out when he stopped in the doorway.

"Do you know," he said suddenly, "that there is another way out of my trouble, besides play?"

"What way?"

"A princely way."

"What's that? What's that?"

"You'll know what afterwards. Only let me tell you I'm not worthy of it, because I have delayed too long. Let us go, but you remember my words. We'll try the lackey's way... . And do you suppose I don't know that I am consciously, of my own free will, behaving like a lackey?"

6

I flew to the roulette table as though in it were concentrated all hopes of my salvation, all means of escape, and yet as I have mentioned already, I had not once thought of it before Prince Sergay's arrival. Moreover, I was going to gamble, not for myself

but for Prince Sergay, and with his money; I can't explain what was the attraction, but it was an irresistible attraction. Oh, never had those people, those faces, those croupiers with their monotonous shouts, all the details of the squalid gambling saloon seemed so revolting to me, so depressing, so coarse, and so melancholy as that evening! I remember well the sadness and misery that gripped my heart at times during those hours at the gambling table. But why didn't I go away? Why did I endure and, as it were, accept this fate, this sacrifice, this devotion? I will only say one thing: I can hardly say of myself that I was then in my right senses. Yet at the same time, I had never played so prudently as that evening. I was silent and concentrated, attentive and extremely calculating; I was patient and niggardly, and at the same time resolute at critical moments. I established myself again at the zero end of the table, that is between Zerstchikov and Aferdov, who always sat on the former's right hand; the place was distasteful to me, but I had an overwhelming desire to stake on zero, and all the other places at that end were taken. We had been playing over an hour; at last, from my place, I saw Prince Sergay get up from his seat and with a pale face move across to us and remain facing me the other side of the table: he had lost all he had and watched my play in silence, though he probably did not follow it and had ceased to think of play. At that moment I just began winning, and Zerstchikov was counting me out what I had won. Suddenly, without a word, Aferdov with the utmost effrontery took one of my hundred-rouble notes before my very eyes and added it to the pile of money lying before him. I cried out, and caught hold of his hand. Then something quite unexpected happened to me: it was as though I had broken some chain that restrained me, as though all the affronts and insults of that day were concentrated in that moment in the loss of that hundred-rouble note. It was as though everything that had been accumulating and suppressed within me had only been waiting for that moment to break out.

"He's a thief, he has just stolen my hundred roubles," I exclaimed, looking round, beside myself.

I won't describe the hubbub that followed; such a scandal was a novelty there. At Zerstchikov's, people behaved with propriety, and his saloon was famous for it. But I did not know what I was doing. Zerstchikov's voice was suddenly heard in the midst of the clamour and din:

"But the money's not here, and it was lying here! Four hundred roubles!"

Another scene followed at once: the money in the bank had disappeared under Zerstchikov's very nose, a roll of four hundred roubles. Zerstchikov pointed to the spot where the notes had only that minute been lying, and that spot turned out to be close to me, next to the spot where my money was lying, much closer to me than to Aferdov.

"The thief is here! he has stolen it again, search him!" I cried pointing to Aferdov.

"This is what comes of letting in all sorts of people," thundered an impressive voice in the midst of the general uproar. "Persons have been admitted without introduction! Who brought him in? Who is he?"

"A fellow called Dolgoruky."

“Prince Dolgoruky?”

“Prince Sokolsky brought him,” cried some one.

“Listen, prince,” I yelled to him across the table in a frenzy; “they think I’m a thief when I’ve just been robbed myself! Tell them about me, tell them about me!”

And then there followed something worse than all that had happened that day ... worse than anything that had happened in my life: Prince Sergay disowned me. I saw him shrug his shoulders and heard him in answer to a stream of questions pronounce sharply and distinctly:

“I am not responsible for anyone. Please leave me alone.”

Meanwhile Aferdov stood in the middle of the crowd loudly demanding that “he should be searched.” He kept turning out his own pockets. But his demands were met by shouts of “No, no, we know the thief!”

Two footmen were summoned and they seized me by my arms from behind.

“I won’t let myself be searched, I won’t allow it!” I shouted, pulling myself away.

But they dragged me into the next room; there, in the midst of the crowd, they searched me to the last fold of my garments. I screamed and struggled.

“He must have thrown it away, you must look on the floor,” some one decided.

“Where can we look on the floor now?”

“Under the table, he must have somehow managed to throw it away.”

“Of course there’s no trace ...”

I was led out, but I succeeded in stopping in the doorway, and with senseless ferocity I shouted, to be heard by the whole saloon:

“Roulette is prohibited by the police. I shall inform against you all to-day!”

I was led downstairs. My hat and coat were put on me, and ... the door into the street was flung open before me.

Chapter 9

1

The day had ended with a catastrophe, there remained the night, and this is what I remember of that night.

I believe it was one o’clock when I found myself in the street. It was a clear, still and frosty night, I was almost running and in horrible haste, but—not towards home.

“Why home? Can there be a home now? Home is where one lives, I shall wake up to-morrow to live—but is that possible now? Life is over, it is utterly impossible to live now,” I thought.

And as I wandered about the streets, not noticing where I was going, and indeed I don’t know whether I meant to run anywhere in particular, I was very hot and I was continually flinging open my heavy raccoon-lined coat. “No sort of action can have any object for me now” was what I felt at that moment. And strange to say, it seemed to

me that everything about me, even the air I breathed, was from another planet, as though I had suddenly found myself in the moon. Everything—the town, the passers-by, the pavement I was running on—all of these were NOT MINE. “This is the Palace Square, and here is St. Isaak’s,” floated across my mind. “But now I have nothing to do with them.” Everything had become suddenly remote, it had all suddenly become NOT MINE. “I have mother and Liza—but what are mother and Liza to me now? Everything is over, everything is over at one blow, except one thing: that I am a thief for ever.”

“How can I prove that I’m not a thief? Is it possible now? Shall I go to America? What should I prove by that? Versilov will be the first to believe I stole it! My ‘idea’? What idea? What is my ‘idea’ now? If I go on for fifty years, for a hundred years, some one will always turn up, to point at me and say: ‘He’s a thief, he began, “his idea” by stealing money at roulette.’”

Was there resentment in my heart? I don’t know, perhaps there was. Strange to say, I always had, perhaps from my earliest childhood, one characteristic: if I were ill-treated, absolutely wronged and insulted to the last degree, I always showed at once an irresistible desire to submit passively to the insult, and even to accept more than my assailant wanted to inflict upon me, as though I would say: “All right, you have humiliated me, so I will humiliate myself even more; look, and enjoy it!” Touchard beat me and tried to show I was a lackey, and not the son of a senator, and so I promptly took up the rôle of a lackey. I not only handed him his clothes, but of my own accord I snatched up the brush and began brushing off every speck of dust, without any request or order from him, and ran after him brush in hand, in a glow of menial devotion, to remove some particle of dirt from his dress-coat, so much so that he would sometimes check me himself and say, “That’s enough, Arkady, that’s enough.” He would come and take off his overcoat, and I would brush it, fold it carefully, and cover it with a check silk handkerchief. I knew that my school-fellows used to laugh at me and despise me for it, I knew it perfectly well, but that was just what gratified me: “Since they want me to be a lackey, well, I am a lackey then; if I’m to be a cad, well, I will be a cad.” I could keep up a passive hatred and underground resentment in that way for years.

Well, at Zerstchikov’s I had shouted to the whole room in an absolute frenzy:

“I will inform against you all—roulette is forbidden by the police!” And I swear that in that case, too, there was something of the same sort: I was humiliated, searched, publicly proclaimed a thief, crushed. “Well then I can tell you, you have guessed right, I am worse than a thief, I am an informer.” Recalling it now, that is how I explain it; at the time I was incapable of analysis; I shouted that at the time unintentionally, I did not know indeed a second before that I should say it: it shouted itself—the CHARACTERISTIC was there already in my heart.

There is no doubt that I had begun to be delirious while I was running in the streets, but I remember quite well that I knew what I was doing; and yet I can confidently assert that a whole cycle of ideas and conclusions were impossible for me at that time; I felt in myself even at those moments that “some thoughts I was able to think,

but others I was incapable of.” In the same way some of my decisions, though they were formed with perfect consciousness, were utterly devoid of logic. What is more, I remember very well that at some moments I could recognize fully the absurdity of some conclusion and at the same time with complete consciousness proceed to act upon it. Yes, crime was hovering about me that night, and only by chance was not committed.

I suddenly recalled Tatyana Pavlovna’s saying about Versilov: “He’d better have gone at night to the Nikolaevsky Railway and have laid his head on the rails—they’d have cut it off for him.”

For a moment that idea took possession of all my feelings, but I instantly drove it away with a pang at my heart: “If I lay my head on the rails and die, they’ll say to-morrow he did it because he stole the money, he did it from shame—no, for nothing in the world!” And at that instant I remember I experienced a sudden flash of fearful anger. “To clear my character is impossible,” floated through my mind, “to begin a new life is impossible too, and so I must submit, become a lackey, a dog, an insect, an informer, a real informer, while I secretly prepare myself, and one day suddenly blow it all up into the air, annihilate everything and every one, guilty and innocent alike, so that they will all know that this was the man they had all called a thief ... and then kill myself.”

I don’t remember how I ran into a lane somewhere near Konnogvardeysky Boulevard. For about a hundred paces on both sides of this lane there were high stone walls enclosing backyards. Behind the wall on the left I saw a huge stack of wood, a long stack such as one sees in timber-yards, and more than seven feet higher than the wall. I stopped and began pondering.

In my pocket I had wax matches in a little silver matchbox. I repeat, I realized quite distinctly at that time what I was thinking about and what I meant to do, and so I remember it even now, but why I meant to do it I don’t know, I don’t know at all. I only know that I suddenly felt a great longing to do it. “To climb over the wall is quite possible,” I reflected; at that moment I caught sight of a gate in the wall not two paces away, probably barred up for months together. “Standing on the projection below, and taking hold of the top of the gate I could easily climb on to the wall,” I reflected, “and no one will notice me, there’s no one about, everything’s still! And there I can sit on the wall and easily set fire to the woodstack. I can do it without getting down, for the wood almost touches the wall. The frost will make it burn all the better, I have only to take hold of a birch-log with my hand... . And indeed there’s no need to reach a log at all: I can simply strip the bark off with my hand, while I sit on the wall, set light to it with a match and thrust it into the stack— and there will be a blaze. And I will jump down and walk away; there will be no need to run, for it won’t be noticed for a long while... .” That was how I reasoned at the time, and all at once I made up my mind.

I felt an extraordinary satisfaction and enjoyment, and I climbed up. I was very good at climbing: gymnastics had been my speciality at school, but I had my overboots on and it turned out to be a difficult task. I succeeded somehow in catching hold of one

very slight projection above, and raised myself; I lifted my other hand to clutch the top of the wall, but at that instant I slipped and went flying backwards.

I suppose I must have struck the ground with the back of my head, and must have lain for two or three minutes unconscious. When I came to myself I mechanically wrapped my fur coat about me, feeling all at once unbearably cold, and scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I crept into the corner of the gateway and sat crouching and huddled up in the recess between the gate and the wall. My ideas were in confusion, and most likely I soon fell into a doze. I remember now, as it were in a dream, that there suddenly sounded in my ears the deep heavy clang of a bell, and I began listening to it with pleasure.

2

The bell rang steadily and distinctly, once every two or three seconds; it was not an alarm bell, however, but a pleasant and melodious chime, and I suddenly recognized that it was a familiar chime; that it was the bell of St. Nikolay's, the red church opposite Touchard's, the old-fashioned Moscow church which I remembered so well, built in the reign of Tsar Alexey Mihalovitch, full of tracery, and with many domes and columns, and that Easter was only just over, and the new-born little green leaves were trembling on the meagre birches in Touchard's front garden. The brilliant evening sun was pouring its slanting rays into our classroom, and in my little room on the left, where a year before Touchard had put me apart that I might not mix with "counts' and senators' children," there was sitting a visitor. Yes, I, who had no relations, had suddenly got a visitor for the first time since I had been at Touchard's. I recognized this visitor as soon as she came in: it was mother, though I had not seen her once since she had taken me to the village church and the dove had flown across the cupola. We were sitting alone together and I watched her strangely. Many years afterwards I learned that being left by Versilov, who had suddenly gone abroad, she had come on her own account to Moscow, paying for the journey out of her small means, and almost by stealth, without the knowledge of the people who had been commissioned to look after her, and she had done this solely to see me. It was strange, too, that when she came in and talked to Touchard, she did not say one word to me of being my mother. She sat beside me, and I remember I wondered at her talking so little. She had a parcel with her and she undid it: in it there turned out to be six oranges, several gingerbread cakes, and two ordinary loaves of French bread. I was offended at the sight of the bread, and with a constrained air I announced that our 'food' was excellent, and that they gave us a whole French loaf for our tea every day.

"Never mind, darling, in my foolishness I thought 'maybe they don't feed them properly at school,' don't be vexed, my own."

"And Antonina Vassilyevna (Touchard's wife) will be offended. My schoolfellows will laugh at me too... ."

"Won't you have them; perhaps you'll eat them up?"

“Please, don’t... .”

And I did not even touch her presents; the oranges and gingerbread cakes lay on the little table before me, while I sat with my eyes cast down, but with a great air of dignity. Who knows, perhaps I had a great desire to let her see that her visit made me feel ashamed to meet my schoolfellows, to let her have at least a glimpse that she might understand, as though to say, “See, you are disgracing me, and you don’t understand what you are doing.” Oh, by that time I was running after Touchard with a brush to flick off every speck of dust! I was picturing to myself, too, what taunts I should have to endure as soon as she was gone, from my schoolfellows and perhaps from Touchard himself; and there was not the least friendly feeling for her in my heart. I only looked sideways at her dark-coloured old dress, at her rather coarse, almost working-class hands, at her quite coarse shoes, and her terribly thin face; there were already furrows on her forehead, though Antonina Vassilyevna did say that evening after she had gone: “Your mamma must have been very pretty.”

So we sat, and suddenly Agafya came in with a cup of coffee on a tray. It was just after dinner, and at that time Touchard always drank a cup of coffee in his drawing-room. But mother thanked her and did not take the cup: as I learned afterwards she never drank coffee in those days, as it brought on palpitations of the heart. The fact was that Touchard inwardly considered her visit, and his permitting me to see her, an act of great condescension on his part, so that the cup of coffee sent her was, comparatively speaking, a signal proof of humanity which did the utmost credit to his civilization, feelings, and European ideas. And as though on purpose, mother refused it.

I was summoned to Touchard, and he told me to take all my lesson books and exercise books to show my mother: “That she may see what you have succeeded in attaining in my establishment.” At that point Antonina Vassilyevna, pursing up her lips, minced out to me in a jeering and insulting way:

“Your mamma does not seem to like our coffee.”

I collected my exercise books and carried them to my waiting mother, passing through the crowd of “counts’ and senators’ children” in the classroom who were staring at mother and me. And it actually pleased me to carry out Touchard’s behests with literal exactitude. “Here are my lessons in French grammar, here are my dictation exercises, here are the conjugations of the auxiliary verbs avoir and être, here is the geography, descriptions of the principal towns of Europe, and all parts of the world,” and so on. For half an hour or more I went on explaining in a monotonous little voice, keeping my eyes sedately cast down. I knew that my mother knew nothing of these learned subjects, could not perhaps even write, but in this too I was pleased with my part. But I did not succeed in wearying her: she listened all the time without interrupting me, with extraordinary and even reverent attention, so that at last I got tired of it myself and left off; her expression was sad, however, and there was something pitiful in her face.

She got up to go at last; Touchard suddenly walked in, and with an air of foolish importance asked her: "Whether she was satisfied with her son's progress? Mother began muttering incoherent thanks; Antonina Vassilyevna came up too. Mother began begging them both "not to abandon the orphan, who was as good as an orphan now, but to treat him with kindness." ... And with tears in her eyes she bowed to them both, each separately, and to each with a deep bow, exactly as "simple people" bow down when they ask a favour of the gentry. The Touchards had not expected this, and Antonina Vassilyevna was evidently softened, and revised her opinion about the cup of coffee. Touchard humanely responded with even greater dignity "that he made no distinction between the children, that here all were his children, and he was their father, that I was almost on an equal footing with the sons of senators and counts, and that she ought to appreciate that," and so on, and so on. Mother only bowed down, but was much embarrassed. At last she turned to me, and with tears shining in her eyes said: "Good-bye, darling."

She kissed me, that is I allowed myself to be kissed. She evidently wanted to go on kissing, embracing and hugging me, but either she herself felt ashamed before company, or felt hurt by something else, or guessed that I was ashamed of her, for she hurriedly went out, bowing once more to the Touchards. I stood still.

"Mais suivez donc votre mère," said Antonina Vassilyevna: "il n'a pas de coeur, cet enfant!"

Touchard responded by shrugging his shoulders, which meant, of course, "it's not without reason that I treat him as a lackey."

I obediently followed my mother; we went out on to the steps. I knew that they were all looking at me out of the window. Mother turned towards the church and crossed herself three times; her lips were trembling, the deep bell chimed musically and regularly from the belfry. She turned to me and could not restrain herself, she laid both hands on my head and began crying over it.

"Mother, stop ... I'm ashamed ... they can see from the window... ."

She broke out hurriedly:

"Well God ... God be with you... . The heavenly angels keep you. Holy Mother, Saint Nikolay... . My God, my God!" she repeated, speaking rapidly and making as many signs of the cross over me as she possibly could. "My darling, my darling! Stay, my darling... ."

She hurriedly put her hand in her pocket and drew out a handkerchief, a blue checked handkerchief, with a tightly fastened knot at the corner, and began untying the knot ... but it would not come untied... .

"Well never mind, take it with the handkerchief: it's clean, it may be of use perhaps. There are four fourpenny-bits in it, perhaps you'll need the money; forgive me, darling, I have not got any more just now ... forgive me, darling."

I took the handkerchief. I wanted to observe that we were allowed very liberal diet by M. Touchard and Antonina Vassilyevna, and were not in need of anything, but I restrained myself and took the handkerchief.

Once more she made the sign of the cross over me, once more she whispered a prayer, and suddenly—suddenly bowed to me exactly as she had done to the Touchards upstairs—a prolonged low bow—I shall never forget it! Then I shuddered, I don't know why. What had she meant by that bow? "Was she confessing the wrong she had done me?" as I fancied once long afterwards—I don't know. But at the time it made me more ashamed than ever that they "were looking out of window and that Lambert would, most likely, begin beating me."

At last she went away. The apples and oranges had been devoured by the sons of counts and senators, and the four fourpenny-bits were promptly taken from me by Lambert and spent at the confectioner's on tarts and chocolates, of which I was not offered a taste.

Fully six months had passed and it was a wet and windy October. I had quite forgotten about mother. Oh, by then hate, a blind hatred of everything had crept into my heart, and was its sustenance, though I still brushed Touchard as before; but I hated him with all my might, and every day hated him more and more. It was then that in the melancholy dusk of one evening I began rummaging for something in my little box, and suddenly in the corner I saw her blue cotton handkerchief; it had been lying there ever since I had thrust it away. I took it out and even looked at it with some interest. The corner of the handkerchief still retained the creases made by the knot, and even the round impress of the money was distinctly visible; I put the handkerchief in again, however, and pushed the box back. It was the eve of a holiday, and the bells were ringing for the all-night service. The pupils had all gone to their homes after dinner, but this time Lambert had stayed for Sunday. I don't know why he hadn't been fetched. Though he used still to beat me, as before, he used to talk to me a great deal, and often needed me. We talked the whole evening about Lepage's pistols, which neither of us had seen, and Circassian swords and how they cut, how splendid it would be to establish a band of brigands, and finally Lambert passed to the familiar obscene subjects which were his favourite topics, and though I wondered at myself, I remember I liked listening. Suddenly I felt it unbearable, and I told him I had a headache. At ten o'clock we went to bed; I turned away with my head under the quilt and took the blue handkerchief from under my pillow: I had for some reason fetched it from the box an hour before, and as soon as our beds were made I put it under the pillow. I put it to my face and suddenly began kissing it: "Mother, mother," I whispered, and my whole chest contracted as though in a vice. I closed my eyes, and saw her face with the quivering lips when she crossed herself facing the church, and afterwards made the sign of the cross over me, and I said to her, "I'm ashamed, they are looking at us." "Mother darling, mother, were you really with me once? ... Mother darling, where are you now, my far-away visitor? Do you remember your poor boy, whom you came to see? ... Show yourself to me just this once, come to me if only in a dream, just that I may tell you how I love you, may hug you and kiss your blue eyes, and tell you that I'm not ashamed of you now, and tell you that I loved you even then, and that my heart was aching then, though I simply sat like a lackey. You will never know, mother,

how I loved you then! Mother, where are you now? Do you hear me? Mother, mother, do you remember the dove in the country? ...”

“Confound him... . What’s the matter with him!” Lambert grumbled from his bed. “Stop it, I’ll give it you! You won’t let me sleep... .” He jumped out of bed at last, ran to me, and began pulling off the bedclothes, but I kept tight hold of the quilt, which I had wrapped round my head.

“You are blubbering; what are you blubbering about, you fool? I’ll give it you!” and he thumped me, he thumped me hard on my back, on my side, hurting me more and more and ... and I suddenly opened my eyes... .

It was bright daylight, and the snow on the wall was glistening with hoarfrost... . I was sitting huddled up, almost frozen, and almost numb in my fur coat, and some one was standing over me, waking me up, abusing me loudly, and kicking me in the ribs with his right foot. I raised myself and looked: I saw a man wearing a splendid bear-lined coat, and a sable cap. He had black eyes, foppish pitch-black whiskers, a hook nose, white teeth grinning at me, a face white and red like a mask... . He bent down over me very close, and a frosty vapour came from his lips at each breath.

“Frozen, the drunken fool! You’ll freeze like a dog; get up! Getup!”

“Lambert,” I cried.

“Whoever are you?”

“Dolgoruky.”

“Who the devil’s Dolgoruky?”

“SIMPLY Dolgoruky! ... Touchard... . The one you stuck a fork into, in the restaurant! ...”

“Ha-a-a!” he cried, with a slow smile of recollection (could he possibly have forgotten me?), “ha! So it’s you, it’s you!”

He lifted me up and put me on my legs; I could hardly stand, could hardly walk; he led me, supporting me with his arm. He looked into my eyes as though considering and recalling, and listening to me intently, and I babbled on continuously without pause, and I was delighted, so delighted to be talking, and so delighted too that it was Lambert. Whether for some reason I looked on him as my “salvation,” or whether I pounced on him at that moment because I took him for some one of another world, I don’t know—I did not consider it then—but I pounced on him without considering. What I said then, I don’t remember at all, and I doubt whether any of it was coherent, I doubt whether I even pronounced a word clearly; but he listened very attentively. He took the first sledge we came upon, and within a few minutes I was sitting in his room in the warmth.

3

Every man, whoever he may be, must certainly preserve a recollection of something which has happened to him, upon which he looks, or is inclined to look, as something fantastic, exceptional, outside the common order of things, almost miraculous, whether

it be a dream, a meeting, a divination, a presentiment or anything of that kind. I am to this day inclined to look upon this meeting with Lambert as something almost supernatural ... judging, that is, from the circumstances and consequences of that meeting. It all happened from one point of view, however, perfectly naturally; he was simply returning from one of his nocturnal pursuits (the nature of it will be explained later on) half-drunk, and stopping at the gate for a moment, caught sight of me. He had only been in Petersburg a few days.

The room in which I found myself was small and furnished in an unsophisticated style, a typical example of the ordinary Petersburg furnished lodgings of the middling sort. Lambert himself, however, was very well and expensively dressed. On the floor there lay two trunks, only half unpacked. A corner of the room was shut off by a screen which concealed the bed.

“Alphonsine!” cried Lambert.

“Présente!” responded from behind the screen a cracked female voice with a Parisian accent, and two minutes later Mlle. Alphonsine emerged, just out of bed, hurriedly dressed in a loose wrapper, a queer creature, tall and as lean as a rake, a brunette with a long waist and a long face, with dancing eyes and sunken cheeks, who looked terribly the worse for wear.

“Make haste” (he spoke to her in French, I translate), “they must have got a samovar; hot water quick, red wine and sugar, a glass here, look sharp, he’s frozen, it’s a friend of mine ... he’s been sleeping the night in the snow... .”

“Malheureux!” she exclaimed with a theatrical air, clasping her hands.

“Now then!” he shouted, holding up his finger and speaking exactly as though to a dog; she at once desisted and ran to carry out his orders.

He examined me and felt me over; tried my pulse, touched my forehead and my temple. “It’s strange,” he muttered, “that you did not freeze... . However, you were entirely covered with your fur coat, head and all, so that you were sitting in a sort of nest of fur... .”

A glass of something hot arrived, I sipped it greedily and it revived me at once; I began babbling again; I was half lying on the sofa in a corner and was talking all the time, I talked even as I sipped—but what I said, again I scarcely remember; moments and even whole intervals of time I’ve completely forgotten. I repeat: whether he understood anything of what I said, I don’t know; but one thing I distinctly gathered afterwards, and that was that he succeeded in understanding me sufficiently to deduce that he must not take his meeting with me lightly... . I will explain later in its proper place how he came to make this calculation.

I was not only extremely lively, but at moments, I believe, cheerful. I remember the sun suddenly flooding the room with light when the blinds were drawn up, and the crackling stove which some one was lighting, who and how I forget. I remember, too, the tiny black lap-dog which Mlle. Alphonsine held in her arms, coquettishly pressing it to her heart. This lap-dog attracted me so much that I left off talking and

twice stretched out towards it, but Lambert waved his hand, and Alphonsine with her lap-dog instantly vanished behind the screen.

He was very silent himself, he sat facing me and bending close down to me, listened without moving; at times he smiled, a broad slow smile, showing his teeth, and screwing up his eyes as though reflecting intensely and trying to guess something. I have a clear recollection only of the fact that when I told him about the “document,” I could not express myself intelligibly and tell the story consecutively, and from his face I quite saw that he could not understand me, but that he would very much have liked to understand, so much so that he even ventured to stop me with a question, which was risky, as at the slightest interruption I broke off and forgot what I was talking of. How long we sat and talked like this I don’t know and cannot even imagine. He suddenly got up and called to Alphonsine.

“He needs rest; he may have to have the doctor. Do everything he asks, that is ... vous comprenez, ma fille? Vous avez l’argent, no? here!” and he drew out a ten-rouble note. He began whispering with her: “Vous comprenez? vous comprenez?” he repeated to her, holding up his finger menacingly to her, and frowning sternly. I saw that she was dreadfully afraid of him.

“I’ll come back, and you had better go to sleep,” he said, smiling to me, and took his cap. “Mais vous n’avez pas dormi de tout, Maurice!” Alphonsine began pathetically. “Taisez-vous je dormirai après,” and he went out.

“Sauvée,” she murmured, pathetically pointing after him.

“Monsieur, Monsieur,” she began declaiming at once, taking up an attitude in the middle of the room, “jamais homme ne fut si cruel, si Bismarck que cet être, qui regarde une femme, comme une saleté de hazard. Une femme, qu’est-ce que ça dans notre époque? Tue-la! voilà le dernier mot de l’Académie française!”

I stared at her open-eyed; I saw everything double, I had a vision of two Alphonsines... . I suddenly noticed that she was crying, I started and realized that she had been talking to me for a long time, and that I must have been asleep or unconscious.

“... Hélas! de quoi m’aurait servi de le découvrir plutôt,” she exclaimed, “et n’aurais-je pas autant gagné à tenir ma honte cachée toute ma vie? Peut-être n’est-il pas honnête à une demoiselle de s’expliquer si librement devant monsieur, mais enfin je vous avoue que s’il m’était permis de vouloir quelque chose, oh, ce serait de lui plonger au coeur mon couteau, mais en détournant les yeux, de peur que son regard exécrationnel ne fit trembler mon bras et ne glaçât mon courage! Il a assassiné ce pape russe, monsieur, il lui arracha sa barbe rousse pour la vendre à un artiste en cheveux au pont de Maréchaux, tout près de la maison de Monsieur Andrieux— hautes nouveautés, articles de Paris, linge, chemises, vous savez, n’est-ce pas? ... Oh, monsieur, quand l’amitié rassemble à table épouse, enfants, soeurs, amis, quand une vive allégresse enflamme mon coeur, je vous le demande, monsieur: est-il bonheur préférable à celui dont tout jouit? Mais il rit, monsieur, ce monstre exécrationnel et inconcevable, et si ce n’était pas par l’entremise de Monsieur Andrieux, jamais, oh, jamais je ne serais ... Mais quoi, monsieur, qu’avez vous, monsieur?”

She rushed up to me. I believe I had an attack of shivering, perhaps a fainting fit. I cannot express what a painful and miserable impression this half-crazy creature made upon me. She imagined perhaps that she had been commanded to entertain me: at any rate she did not leave my side for one instant. She had perhaps at one time or another been on the stage; she declaimed in a terrible way, pirouetted, talked incessantly, while I had long been silent. All I could understand from her story was that she had been closely connected with “la maison de M. Andrieux—hautes nouveautés, articles de Paris, etc.,” and perhaps was one of the family of la Maison de M. Andrieux; but she had somehow been torn for ever from M. Andrieux, par ce monstre furieux et inconcevable, and that was the point of the tragedy... . She sobbed, but I fancied that this was all part of the performance, and that she was not really crying at all; sometimes I fancied that she would suddenly drop to pieces, like a skeleton; she articulated her words in a jangling, broken voice; the word préférable, for instance, she pronounced préfér-a-able, and on the syllable A positively baa-ed like a sheep. Coming to myself on one occasion I found her executing a pirouette in the middle of the room, but she was not actually dancing, the pirouette had some connection with her story, and she was simply impersonating some figure in it. Suddenly she rushed and opened a little, old, out-of-tune piano that was in the room, and began strumming on it and singing. I believe that for ten minutes or more I lost consciousness completely, I fell asleep, but the lap-dog yelped and I waked up again; for a moment consciousness returned completely and suddenly flooded my mind with light; I jumped up in horror:

“Lambert, I am at Lambert’s!” I thought, and snatching up my hat, I rushed to my fur coat.

“Où allez-vous, monsieur?” cried the vigilant Alphonsine.

“I want to get out, I want to go away! Let me out, don’t keep me... .”

“Oui, monsieur!” Alphonsine assented vigorously, and she rushed to open the door into the corridor herself. “Mais ce n’est pas loin, monsieur, c’est pas loin du tout, ça ne vaut pas la peine de mettre votre chouba, c’est ici près, monsieur!” she shouted for the benefit of the whole corridor. Running out of the room I turned to the right.

“Par ici, monsieur, c’est par ici!” she shouted at the top of her voice, clutching at my coat with her long bony fingers, and with the other hand pointing to the left of the corridor, where I did not at all want to go. I broke away and ran to the outer door opening on to the stairs.

“Il s’en va, il s’en va!” Alphonsine ran after me shouting in her cracked voice; “mais il me tuera, monsieur, ii me tuera!” But I was already on the stairs and, though she ran after me down stairs, I succeeded in opening the front door, dashing out into the street, and jumping into the first sledge I met. I gave the driver my mother’s address... .

But the clear consciousness that had flickered up for one moment was soon dimmed. I still have a faint recollection of the drive and being taken up to my mother's, but there I sank almost at once into complete unconsciousness. Next day, as they told me afterwards, and indeed I remember it myself, I had a moment of lucidity again. I found myself in Versilov's room and on his sofa. I remember around me the faces of Versilov, my mother, Liza; I remember particularly Versilov's speaking to me about Zerstchikov, and about Prince Sergay, and showing me some letter to soothe me. They told me afterwards that I kept asking with horror about someone called Lambert, and kept hearing the barking of some lap-dog. But the faint light of consciousness was soon quenched again: by the evening of the second day I was completely prostrate with brainfever. But I will anticipate events, and explain what had happened.

When I had run out in the street from Zerstchikov's that evening, and when calm had been restored there, Zerstchikov, who had returned to the table, proclaimed aloud that a regrettable mistake had been made: the missing money, four hundred roubles, had been found in a pile of other money, and the bank account turned out to be quite correct. Then Prince Sergay, who had remained in the room, went up to Zerstchikov and insisted that he should make a public declaration of my innocence and should, moreover, send me an apology in the form of a letter. Zerstchikov on his side accepted this suggestion as a very proper one, and promised, in the presence of all, to send me next day a letter of explanation and apology. Prince Sergay gave him Versilov's address. And Versilov did in fact receive next day a letter addressed to me in Zerstchikov's hand, and more than thirteen hundred roubles belonging to me, which I had left on the roulette table. And so the affair with Zerstchikov ended: this joyful news did much to hasten my recovery, when I regained consciousness.

When Prince Sergay returned from the gambling saloon that night he wrote two letters—one to me, and the other to his old regiment, in which he had behaved so scandalously to Cornet Stepanov. He dispatched both letters next morning. After that, he wrote a report for the authorities, and with that report in his hand he went early in the morning to the officer in command of his regiment and announced to him that he, “a common criminal, who had taken part in the forging of the X-- railway shares, surrendered to justice and asked to be tried.” Therewith he handed him the report in which all this was set out in writing. He was arrested.

Here is the letter he wrote to me that night, word for word:

“PRECIOUS ARKADY MAKAROVITCH,

“Having tried the lackey's way of escape, I have lost the right to comfort my soul a little with the thought that I was able in the end to dare to do what was just and fine. I have sinned against my fatherland and against my family, and for this I, the last of my family, am punishing myself. I don't know how I could have caught at the bare idea of self-preservation, and for a time have dreamed of buying them off with money! I should have still remained to all eternity a criminal in my conscience! Even if those

people had given back the notes that compromised me, they would never have been induced to let me alone as long as I lived! What remained? To live with them, to be on a level with them all my life—that was the fate awaiting me! I could not accept it, and have at last found in myself strength enough, or perhaps only despair enough, to act as I am acting now.

“I have written a letter to my old regiment, to my fellow officers, clearing Stepanov’s character. This is not and cannot be an atonement: it is only the last will and testament of a man who will be dead to-morrow. That is how one must look at it.

“Forgive me for turning away from you in the gambling saloon; it was because at the moment I was not sure of you. Now that I am a dead man I can make this confession ... from the other world.

“Poor Liza! she knows nothing of this decision; let her not curse me, but judge of it herself. I cannot defend myself and cannot even find the words to explain anything to her. I must tell you, too, Arkady Makarovitch, that when she came to me yesterday morning for the last time, I confessed that I had deceived her, and owned that I had been to Anna Andreyevna with the intention of making her an offer. I could not, seeing her love, keep this upon my conscience in face of my last determination, and I told her. She forgave me, she forgave everything, but I could not believe her; it is not forgiveness; in her place I could not forgive.

“Remember me a little.

“Your unhappy friend,

“THE LAST PRINCE SOKOLSKY.”

I lay unconscious for exactly nine days.

Part 3

Chapter 1

1

Now for something quite different.

I keep declaring: “something different, something different,” yet I keep on scribbling of nothing but myself. Yet I have announced a thousand times already that I don’t want to describe myself at all, and I firmly meant not to do so when I began my story: I quite understand that I’m not of the slightest interest to the reader. I am describing and want to describe other people, not myself, and if I keep coming in it’s only a lamentable mistake, because I can’t avoid it, however much I should like to. What I regret most is that I describe my own adventures with such heat; by doing so I give ground for supposing that I am still the same as I was. The reader will remember, however, that I have exclaimed more than once, “Oh, if one could only change the past and begin all over again!” I could not have uttered that exclamation if I were not radically changed and had not become an entirely different man now; that is quite evident. And no one can imagine how sick I am of these apologies and prefaces, which I am continually forced to squeeze into the very middle of my narrative!

To return.

After nine days’ unconsciousness I came to myself, regenerated but not reformed; my regeneration was a stupid one, however, of course, if the word is taken in the wide sense, and perhaps if it had happened now it would have been different. The idea, or rather the feeling, that possessed me was, as it had been a thousand times before, the desire to get away altogether, but this time I meant to go away, not as in the past, when I had so often considered the project and been incapable of carrying it out. I didn’t want to revenge myself on anyone, and I give my word of honour that I did not, though I had been insulted by all of them. I meant to go away without loathing, without cursing, and never to return, but I wanted to do this by my own effort, and by real effort unassisted by any one of them, or by anyone in the whole world; yet I was almost on the point of being reconciled with every one! I record this absorbing dream not as a thought, but as an overwhelming sensation. I did not care to formulate it as long as I was in bed. Sick and helpless I lay in Versilov’s room, which they had given up to me; I recognized, with a pang, how abjectly helpless I was.

What was tossing on the bed was not a man but a feeble straw, and this impotence was not only through illness—and how degrading I felt it! And so from the very depth of my being, from all the forces in me, a protest began to rise, and I was choking with a feeling of infinitely exaggerated pride and defiance. Indeed, I can't remember any time in my whole life when I was so full of arrogant feeling as I was during the early days of my convalescence, that is, while I was tossing like a weak straw on my bed.

But for the time I held my peace, and even made up my mind not to think of anything! I kept peeping at their faces, trying to guess from them all I wanted to know. It was evident that they too did not want to ask questions or be inquisitive, but talked of something irrelevant. This pleased me and at the same time mortified me; I won't attempt to explain the contradiction. I did not see Liza so often as my mother, though she came in to see me every day, and indeed twice a day. From fragments of their talk and from their whole air I gathered that Liza had a great deal on her hands and that she was indeed often absent from home on business of her own: the very fact that she could have "business of her own" was something like a grievance to me; but all these were morbid, purely physical, sensations, which are not worth describing. Tatyana Pavlovna came, too, almost daily to see me, and though she was by no means tender with me, she did not abuse me as usual, which annoyed me extremely—so much so that I said to her openly: "You know, Tatyana Pavlovna, when you're not scolding you are very tedious." "Well, then, I won't come and see you," she blurted out, and went away. And I was pleased that I had got rid of one of them, at least.

Most of all I worried my mother; I was irritable with her. I developed a terrific appetite and grumbled very much that the meals were late (and they never were late). Mother did not know how to satisfy me. Once she brought some soup, and began, as usual, feeding me with it herself, and I kept grumbling as I ate it. And suddenly I felt vexed that I was grumbling: "She is perhaps the only one I love, and I am tormenting her." But I was none the less ill-humoured, and I suddenly began to cry from ill-humour; and she, poor darling, thought I was crying from tenderness, stooped down and began kissing me. I restrained myself and endured it, but at that instant I positively hated her. But I always loved my mother, and at that very time I loved her and did not hate her at all, but it happened as it always does—that the one you love best you treat worst.

The only person I hated in those days was the doctor. He was a young man with a conceited air, who talked abruptly and even rudely, as though all these scientific people had only yesterday discovered something special, when in reality nothing special had happened; but the "mediocrity," the man in the street, is always like that. I restrained myself for a long time, but at last I suddenly broke out and informed him before every one that he was hanging about unnecessarily, that I should get better just as well without him; that, though he looked like a scientific man, he was filled with nothing but conventional ideas and did not even understand that medicine had never cured anyone; that, in fact, he was in all probability grossly ill-educated, "like all the specialists who had become so high and mighty among us of late years." The doctor

was very much offended (showing by that very fact that he was that sort of person); however, he still came as before. I told Versilov at last that if the doctor did not give up coming, that I should say something to him ten times as disagreeable. Versilov only observed that it was impossible to say anything even twice as disagreeable as I had said, let alone ten times. I was pleased at his saying that.

He was a man, though! I am speaking of Versilov. He, he was the sole cause of it all, and, strange to say, he was the only one towards whom I did not feel resentful. It was not only his manner to me that won me over. I imagine that we felt at that time that we owed each other many explanations ... and for that very reason it would be our best course never to explain. It's extremely pleasant in such situations to have to do with a man of intelligence: I have mentioned already, in the second part of my story, that he told me briefly and clearly of Prince Sergay's letter to me about Zerstchikov, about what he, Prince Sergay, had said to the latter, and so on. As I had made up my mind to keep quiet, I only asked him two or three brief questions; he answered them clearly and exactly but entirely without superfluous words and, what was best of all, without feeling. I was afraid of superfluous feeling at that time.

I said nothing about Lambert, but the reader will readily understand that I thought a great deal about him. In my delirium I spoke more than once about Lambert; but, recovering from my delirium and looking about me, I quickly reflected that everything about Lambert remained a secret, and that every one, even Versilov, knew nothing about him. Then I was relieved and my fears passed away; but I was mistaken, as I found out later to my astonishment. He had come to the house during my illness, but Versilov said nothing to me about it, and I concluded that Lambert had lost all trace of me for ever. Nevertheless, I often thought of him; what is more, I thought of him not only without repulsion, not only with curiosity, but even with sympathy, as though foreseeing from him something new, some means of escape in harmony with my new feelings and plans. In short, I made up my mind to think over Lambert as soon as I should be ready to think over anything. I will note one strange fact: I had entirely forgotten where he lived and in what street it had all happened. The room, Alphonsine, the lap-dog, the corridor, all I remembered, so that I could have sketched them at once; but where it had all happened—that is, in what street and in what house—I had utterly forgotten. And, what is strangest of all, I only realized this three or four days after I had regained complete consciousness, when I had been occupied with the thought of Lambert for a long time.

These, then, were my first sensations on my resurrection. I have noted only what was most on the surface, and most probably I was not able to detect what was most important. In reality, perhaps, what was really most important was even then taking shape and becoming defined in my heart; I was not, of course, always vexed and resentful simply at my broth's not being brought me. Oh, I remember how sad I was then and how depressed, especially at moments when I had remained a long while alone. As ill-luck would have it, they soon saw that I was dreary with them and that

their sympathy irritated me, and they began more and more often to leave me alone—a superfluous delicacy of perception on their part.

2

On the fourth day of consciousness I was lying in my bed at three o'clock in the afternoon, and there was no one with me. It was a bright day, and I knew that at four o'clock, when the sun would set, its slanting red rays would fall on the corner of my wall, and throw a patch of glaring light upon it. I knew that from the days before, and that that would certainly happen in an hour's time, and above all, that I knew of this beforehand, as certainly as twice two make four, exasperated me to fury. I turned round impulsively and suddenly, in the midst of the profound stillness, I clearly distinguished the words: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us." The words were pronounced in a half-whisper, and were followed by a deep-drawn sigh, and then everything was still again. I raised my head quickly.

I had before, that is the previous day, and even the day before that, noticed something special in our three rooms downstairs. In the little room beyond the dining-room where mother and Liza were accustomed to sleep, there was evidently now some one else. I had more than once heard sounds, both by day and by night, but only for brief moments, and complete stillness followed immediately and lasted for several hours, so that I took no notice of the sounds. The thought had occurred to me the evening before that Versilov was in there, especially as he soon afterwards came in to me, though I knew for a fact from their conversation that during my illness Versilov had been sleeping out in another lodging. I had known for some time past that mother and Liza had moved into my former "coffin" upstairs (to make it quieter for me, I imagined) and I had even once wondered how the two of them could have possibly fitted themselves into it. And now it suddenly appeared that there was some person living in their old room, and that that person was not Versilov. With an ease which I had not the least expected (for I had till then imagined I was quite helpless) I dropped my feet over the bed, slipped them into slippers, threw on a grey astrachan dressing-gown which lay close at hand (Versilov had sacrificed it for my benefit), and made my way through the parlour to what had been mother's bedroom. What I saw there completely astounded me; I had never expected anything of the kind, and I stood still in the doorway petrified. There was sitting there a very grey-headed old man, with a big and very white beard, and it was clear that he had been sitting there for a long time. He was not sitting on the bed but on mother's little bench, resting his back against the bed. He held himself so upright, however, that he hardly seemed to need a support for his back, though he was evidently ill. He had over his shirt a short jacket lined with fur. His knees were covered with mother's plaid, and on his feet were slippers. He was, it could be discerned, tall, broad-shouldered, and of a hale appearance, in spite of his invalid state, though he was somewhat thin and looked ill. He had rather a long face and thick but not very long hair; he looked about seventy. On a little table, within reach,

lay three or four books and a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles. Though I had not the slightest idea of meeting him, I guessed instantly who he was, though I was still unable to imagine how he could have been sitting all those days, almost beside me, so quietly that till that time I had heard nothing of him.

He did not stir on seeing me, he looked intently at me in silence, just as I did at him, the only difference being that I stared at him with the greatest astonishment, and he looked at me without the slightest. Scrutinizing me, on the contrary, from head to foot during those five or ten seconds of silence, he suddenly smiled and even laughed a gentle noiseless laugh, and though the laugh was soon over, traces of its serene gaiety remained upon his face and above all in his eyes, which were very blue, luminous and large, though they were surrounded by innumerable wrinkles, and the eyelids were swollen and drooping. This laugh of his was what had most effect on me.

I consider that in the majority of cases people are revolting to look at when they are laughing. As a rule something vulgar, something as it were degrading, comes to the surface when a man laughs, though he is almost unconscious of the impression he is making in his mirth, as little in fact as anyone knows what he looks like when he is asleep. One person's face will look intelligent asleep, while another man, intelligent in waking life, will look stupid and ridiculous when he is sleeping. I don't know what this is due to: I only mean to say that people laughing, like people asleep, have no idea what they look like. The vast majority of people don't know how to laugh at all. It is not a matter of knowing how, though: it's a gift and it cannot be cultivated. One can only cultivate it, perhaps, by training oneself to be different, by developing and improving and by struggling against the evil instincts of one's character: then a man's laugh might very likely change for the better. A man will sometimes give himself away completely by his laugh, and you suddenly know him through and through. Even an unmistakably intelligent laugh will sometimes be repulsive. What is most essential in laughter is sincerity, and where is one to find sincerity? A good laugh must be free from malice, and people are constantly laughing maliciously. A sincere laugh free from malice is gaiety, and where does one find gaiety nowadays? People don't know how to be gay (Versilov made this observation about gaiety and I remember it). A man's gaiety is what most betrays the whole man from head to foot. Sometimes one will be for a long time unable to read a character, but if the man begins to laugh his whole character will suddenly lie open before you. It is only the loftiest and happiest natures whose gaiety is infectious, that is, good-hearted and irresistible. I am not talking of intellectual development, but of character, of the whole man. And so if you want to see into a man and to understand his soul, don't concentrate your attention on the way he talks or is silent, on his tears, or the emotion he displays over exalted ideas; you will see through him better when he laughs. If a man has a good laugh, it means that he is a good man. Take note of every shade; a man's laugh must never, for instance, strike you as stupid, however gay and good-humoured he may be. If you notice the slightest trace of stupidity in his laughter, you may be sure that that man is of limited intelligence, though he is continually dropping ideas wherever he goes. Even if his laugh

is not stupid, but the man himself strikes you as being ever so little ridiculous when he laughs, you may be sure that the man is deficient in personal dignity, to some extent anyway. Or if the laughter though infectious, strikes you for some reason as vulgar, you may be sure that that man's nature is vulgar, and all the generous and lofty qualities you have observed in him before are either intentionally assumed or unconsciously borrowed and that the man is certain to deteriorate, to go in for the profitable, and to cast off his noble ideas without regret as the errors and enthusiasm of youth.

I am intentionally introducing here this long tirade on the subject of laughter and am sacrificing the continuity of my story for the sake of it, for I consider it one of the most valuable deductions I have drawn from life, and I particularly recommend it to the attention of girls who are ready to accept the man of their choice, but are still hesitating and watching him mistrustfully, unable to make their final decision: and don't let them jeer at a wretched raw youth for obtruding his moral reflections on marriage, a subject which he knows nothing about. But I only understand that laughter is the surest test of the heart. Look at a baby—some children know how to laugh to perfection; a crying baby is disgusting to me, but a laughing, merry one is a sunbeam from paradise, it is a revelation from the future, when man will become at last as pure and simple-hearted as a child. And, indeed, there was something childlike and incredibly attractive in the momentary laughter of this old man. I went up to him at once.

3

"Sit down, sit down a bit, you can scarcely stand on your legs, I dare say," he urged me, motioning me to a seat beside him, and still gazing into my face with the same luminous gaze. I sat down beside him and said:

"I know you, you are Makar Ivanovitch."

"Yes, darling. It's very good that you are up. You are young, it is good for you. The old monk looks towards the grave, but the young must live."

"But are you ill?"

"Yes, dear, chiefly in my legs; my feet brought me as far as the door, and here I've sat down and they are swollen. I've had it since last Friday when there were degrees" (i.e. when there was a frost) "I used to rub them with ointment you see; the year before last the doctor, Edmond Karlovitch, prescribed it me in Moscow, and the ointment did good, aye, it did good; but now it's no use. And my chest, too, is choked up. And since yesterday my spine has been bad, as though dogs were gnawing it... I don't sleep at nights."

"How is it I haven't heard you here at all?" I broke in. He looked at me as though considering something.

"Only don't wake your mother," he added as though suddenly remembering something. "She has been busy close at hand all night, and as quiet as a mouse; and now I know she is lying down. Ach, it's bad for a sick monk," he sighed; "the soul hangs by

a thread it seems, yet it still holds on, and still is glad of the light; and it seems, if all life were to begin over again the soul would not shrink even from that; though maybe such a thought is sinful.”

“Why sinful?”

“Such a thought is a dream, and the old monk should take leave with blissful resignation. Again, if one goes to meet death with murmur or repining that is a great sin, but if from the gladness of the spirit one has grown to love life, I fancy God will forgive, even a monk. It’s hard for a man to tell of every sin what is sinful and what is not; therein is mystery passing the mind of man. A monk must be content at all times, and ought to die in the full light of his understanding, in holy peace and blessedness, filled full with days, yearning for his last hour, and rejoicing when he is gathered as the ear of wheat to the sheaf, and has fulfilled his mystery.”

“You keep talking of ‘mystery’; what does it mean ‘having fulfilled his mystery’?” I asked, and looked round towards the door. I was glad that we were alone, and that all around the stillness was unbroken. The setting sun cast a dazzling light on the window. His talk was rather highflown and rambling, but very sincere; there was a sort of intense exaltation in it, as though he really were delighted at my coming. But I noticed unmistakable signs that he was feverish, extremely so in fact. I, too, was ill; I, too, had been in a fever, from the moment I went in to him.

“What is the mystery? Everything is a mystery, dear; in all is God’s mystery. In every tree, in every blade of grass that same mystery lies hid. Whether the tiny bird of the air is singing, or the stars in all their multitudes shine at night in heaven, the mystery is one, ever the same. And the greatest mystery of all is what awaiteth the soul of man in the world beyond. So it is, dear!”

“I don’t know in what sense you ... I am not speaking, of course, to tease you, and I assure you I believe in God; but all these mysteries have long been discovered by human intelligence, or if they have not yet been discovered they will be, for certain, and probably in a very short time. The botanist knows perfectly well how the tree grows. The psychologist and the anatomist know why the bird sings, or soon will know, and as for the stars, they are not only all counted, but all their motions have been calculated with the greatest exactitude, so that they can predict even a thousand years beforehand the very minute of the appearance of some comet ... and now even the composition of the most remote star is known. You take a microscope, that is a sort of magnifying glass that magnifies a thousand times, and look through it at a drop of water, and you will see in it a whole new world, a whole world of living creatures, yet this, too, was once a mystery, but it has been revealed by science.”

“I’ve heard about that, darling, I have heard folk tell of it more than once. To be sure, it’s a great and glorious thing; all has been vouchsafed to man by God’s will; not for naught did the Lord breathe into him the breath of life; ‘live and learn.’”

“That’s a commonplace. You’re not antagonistic to science though, not a clerical? though I don’t know whether you’ll understand?”

“No, darling, I did not study science in my youth, and though I am not learned I do not repine at that; if it’s not for me it will be for another. Maybe better so, for every man has his allotted part, for science, dear, is not of use for all. All men are unbridled, each wants to astonish all the world, and I should have perhaps more than all if I had been learned. But now being very unlearned, how can I be puffed up when I know nothing? You, now, are young and clever, you must study—such is the lot ordained you. Understand all things, that when you meet an infidel or an evil-doer you may be able to answer him, and he may not lead you astray with his frantic words, or confound your unripe thoughts. That glass I saw not so long ago.”

He took breath and heaved a sigh. There was no doubt that my coming in was a source of great satisfaction to him. His desire to be communicative was almost morbid. What is more, I am certainly not mistaken in declaring that at moments he looked at me with extraordinary affection; he laid his hand on mine caressingly, stroked me on the shoulder ... though there were minutes when I must confess he seemed to forget all about me, as though he had been sitting alone, and though he went on talking warmly, it seemed at times as though he were talking to the air.

“In the Gennadiev desert, dear, there lives a man of great understanding. He is of noble birth, and by rank a major, and he has great possessions. When he lived in the world he would not be bound by marriage; he has been withdrawn from the world for nearly ten years, loving still and silent resting-places, and keeping his heart free from worldly vanities. He follows all the monastic rules, but will not become a monk, and he has so many books, dear, as I have never seen in any other man’s possession; he told me himself that his books were worth eight thousand roubles. His name is Pyotr Valerianitch. He has taught me a great deal at different times, and I loved listening to him exceedingly. I said to him once: ‘How is it, sir, that with your great understanding, after living here ten years in monastic obedience, and in complete renunciation of your will, how is it you don’t take honourable vows, so as to be still more perfect,’ and he said to me thereupon, “You talk of my understanding, old man, but perhaps my understanding has held me in bondage and I have not kept it in submission. And you speak of my obedience; maybe I’ve long since lost the right measure for myself. And you talk of the renunciation of my will; I am ready to be deprived of my money on the spot and to give up my rank and to lay all my medals and ribbons on the table, but my pipe of tobacco, though I’ve been struggling for ten years, I can’t do without. What sort of a monk should I be, and how could you glorify the renunciation of my will?’ And I marvelled then at this humility. Well, last year, about St. Peter’s day, I went again to that desert—the Lord led me there—and I saw standing in his cell that very thing, a microscope; he had ordered it for a great sum of money from abroad. ‘Stay,’ said he, ‘old man, I’ll show you a marvellous thing you have never hitherto looked upon; you see a drop of water as pure as a tear; well, look what is in it and you will see that the mechanics will soon seek out all the mysteries of God and not leave one for either you or me!’ That is what he said, I remember. But I had looked through such a microscope thirty-five years before that, at Alexandr Vladimirovitch Malgasov’s, who

was our old master, Andrey Petrovitch's maternal uncle. It was from him the property came on his death to Andrey Petrovitch. He was a grand gentleman, a great general, and he used to keep a pack of hounds, and I lived many years with him as huntsman; so he, too, set up this microscope; he brought it with him, and he told all the servants to come up one after another, male and female, and look through; he showed them a flea and a louse and the end of a needle, and a hair and a drop of water. And it was diverting, they were afraid to go up and afraid of the master—he was hasty. Some did not know how to look properly, and the elder saw nothing; others were frightened and cried out; the elder Savin Makarov covered his eyes with both hands and cried, 'Do what you will with me, I won't go near!' There was much foolish laughter. I didn't confess to Pyotr Valerianitch, though, that I had seen this marvel before more than thirty-five years ago, because I saw it was a great pleasure to him showing it; I began, on the contrary, admiring it and marvelling. He waited a bit and asked, 'Well, old man, what do you say now?' And I lifted myself up and said to him, 'The Lord said, Let there be light and there was light,' and thereupon he said to me all at once, 'And was there not darkness?' And he said that so strangely, he did not even laugh. I wondered at him then, and he seemed to be angered and said no more."

"The fact of the matter is your Pyotr Valerianitch is eating rice and raisins in the monastery, and bowing to the ground, while he does not believe in God, and you hit on the wrong moment, that's all," I said. "And what's more, he is rather an absurd person: I suppose he must have seen that microscope a dozen times before, why should he go off his head when he saw it for the thirteenth? What nervous susceptibility ... he must have got that from living in a monastery."

"He was a man of pure life and lofty mind," the old man pronounced impressively, "and he was not an infidel. There was a cloud over his mind and his heart was not at peace. Very many such men have come nowadays from the ranks of the gentry and learned. And something more I will tell you, a man punishes himself. But you watch them and do not worry them, and before you lie down to sleep at night remember them in your prayers, for such are seeking God. Do you pray at night?"

"No, I regard it as an empty ceremony. I must own, though, that I like your Pyotr Valerianitch. He's not a man of straw, anyway, but a real person, rather like a man very near and well-known to us both."

The old man only paid attention to the first part of my answer.

"You're wrong, my dear, not to pray; it is a good thing, it cheers the heart before sleep, and rising up from sleep and awakening in the night. Let me tell you this. In the summer in July we were hastening to the monastery of Our Lady for the holy festival. The nearer we got to the place the greater the crowd of people, and at last there were almost two hundred of us gathered together, all hastening to kiss the holy and miraculous relics of the two great saints, Aniky and Grigory. We spent the night, brother, in the open country, and I waked up early in the morning when all was still sleeping and the dear sun had not yet peeped out from behind the forest. I lifted up my head, dear, I gazed about me and sighed. Everywhere beauty passing all utterance! All

was still, the air was light; the grass grows—Grow, grass of God, the bird sings—Sing, bird of God, the babe cries in the woman's arms—God be with you, little man; grow and be happy, little babe! And it seemed that only then for the first time in my life I took it all in... . I lay down again, I slept so sweetly. Life is sweet, dear! If I were better, I should like to go out again in the spring. And that it's a mystery makes it only the better; it fills the heart with awe and wonder and that awe maketh glad the heart: 'All is in Thee my Lord, and I, too, am in Thee; have me in Thy keeping.' Do not repine, young man; it is even more beautiful because it is a mystery," he added fervently.

"It's the more beautiful for being a mystery... . I will remember those words. You express yourself very inaccurately, but I understand you... . It strikes me that you understand and know a great deal more than you can express; only you seem to be in delirium." ... I added abruptly, looking at his feverish eyes and pale face. But he did not seem to hear my words.

"Do you know, dear young man," he began again, as though going on with what he had been saying before: "Do you know there is a limit to the memory of a man on this earth? The memory of a man is limited to a hundred years. For a hundred years after his death his children or his grandchildren who have seen his face can still remember him, but after that though his memory may still remain, it is only by hearsay, in thought, for all who have seen his living face have gone before. And his grave in the churchyard is overgrown with grass, the stones upon it crumble away, and all men, and even his children's children, forget him; afterwards they forget even his name, for only a few are kept in the memory of men— and so be it! You may forget me, dear ones, but I love you from the tomb. I hear, my children, your gay voices; I hear your steps on the graves of your kin; live for a while in the sunshine, rejoice and I will pray to God for you, I will come to you in your dreams ... it is all the same—even in death is love!"

I was myself in the same feverish state as he was; instead of going away or persuading him to be quiet, or perhaps putting him to bed, for he seemed quite delirious, I suddenly seized his arm and bending down to him and squeezing his hand, I said in an excited whisper, with inward tears:

"I am glad of you. I have been waiting a long time for you, perhaps. I don't like any of them; there is no 'seemliness' in them ... I won't follow them, I don't know where I'm going, I'll go with you." ... But luckily mother suddenly came in, or I don't know how it would have ended. She came in only just awake and looking agitated; in her hand she had a tablespoon and a glass; seeing us she exclaimed:

"I knew it would be so! I am late with his quinine and he's all in a fever! I overslept myself, Makar Ivanovitch, darling!"

I got up and went out. She gave him his quinine and put him to bed. I, too, lay down on mine in a state of great excitement. I tossed about pondering on this meeting with intense interest and curiosity. What I expected from it I don't know. Of course, my reasoning was disconnected, and not thoughts but fragments of thoughts flitted through my brain. I lay with my face to the wall, and suddenly I saw in the corner

the patch of glowing light which I had been looking forward to with such curses, and now I remember my whole soul seemed to be leaping for joy, and a new light seemed penetrating to my heart. I remember that sweet moment and I do not want to forget it. It was only an instant of new hope and new strength... . I was convalescent then, and therefore such transports may have been the inevitable result of the state of my nerves; but I have faith even now in that bright hope—that is what I wanted to record and to recall. Of course, even then I knew quite well that I should not go on a pilgrimage with Makar Ivanovitch, and that I did not know the nature of the new impulse that had taken hold of me, but I had pronounced one word, though in delirium, “There is no seemliness in their lives!” “Of course,” I thought in a frenzy, “from this minute I am seeking ‘seemliness,’ and they have none of it, and that is why I am leaving them.”

There was a rustle behind me, I turned round: mother stood there bending down to me and looking with timid inquiry into my face. I took her hand.

“Why did you tell me nothing about our dear guest, mother?” I asked suddenly, not knowing I was going to say it. All the uneasiness vanished from her face at once, and there was a flush as it were of joy, but she made me no reply except the words:

“Liza, don’t forget Liza, either; you’ve forgotten Liza.”

She said this in a hurried murmur, flushing crimson, and would have made haste to get away, for above all things she hated displaying her feelings, and in that she was like me, that is reverent and delicate; of course, too, she would not care to begin on the subject of Makar Ivanovitch with me; what we could say to each other with our eyes was quite enough. But though I hated demonstrativeness, I still kept her by her hand; I looked tenderly into her eyes, and laughed softly and tenderly, and with my other hand stroked her dear face, her hollow cheeks. She bent down and pressed her forehead to mine.

“Well, Christ be with you,” she said suddenly, standing up, beaming all over: “get well, I shall count on your doing so. He is ill, very ill. Life is in God’s hands... . Ach, what have I said, oh that could not be! ...”

She went away. All her life, in fear and trembling and reverence, she had honoured her legal husband, the monk, Makar Ivanovitch, who with large-hearted generosity had forgiven her once and for ever.

Chapter 2

1

I had not ‘forgotten’ Liza; mother was mistaken. The keen-sighted mother saw that there was something like coolness between brother and sister, but it was rather jealousy than lack of love. In view of what followed, I will explain in a couple of words. Ever since Prince Sergay’s arrest, poor Liza had shown a sort of conceited pride, an unapproachable haughtiness, almost unendurable; but every one in the house knew the

truth and understood how she was suffering, and if at first I scowled and was sulky at her manner with us, it was simply owing to my petty irritability, increased tenfold by illness—that is how I explain it now. I had not ceased to love Liza; on the contrary, I loved her more than ever, only I did not want to be the first to make advances, though I understood that nothing would have induced her either to make the first advances.

As soon as all the facts came out about Prince Sergay, that is, immediately after his arrest, Liza made haste at once to take up an attitude to us, and to every one else, that would not admit of the possibility of sympathy or any sort of consolation and excuses for Prince Sergay. On the contrary, she seemed continually priding herself on her luckless lover's action as though it were the loftiest heroism, though she tried to avoid all discussion of the subject. She seemed every moment to be telling us all (though I repeat that she did not utter a word), 'None of you would do the same—you would not give yourself up at the dictates of honour and duty, none of you have such a pure and delicate conscience! And as for his misdeeds, who has not evil actions upon his conscience? Only every one conceals them, and this man preferred facing ruin to remaining ignoble in his own eyes.' This seemed to be expressed by every gesture Liza made. I don't know, but I think in her place I should have behaved almost in the same way. I don't know either whether those were the thoughts in her heart, in fact I privately suspect that they were not. With the other, clear part of her reason, she must have seen through the insignificance of her 'hero,' for who will not agree now that that unhappy man, noble-hearted in his own way as he was, was at the same time an absolutely insignificant person? This very haughtiness and as it were antagonism towards us all, this constant suspiciousness that we were thinking differently of him, made one surmise that in the secret recesses of her heart a very different judgment of her unhappy friend had perhaps been formed. But I hasten to add, however, that in my eyes she was at least half right; it was more pardonable for her than for any of us to hesitate in drawing the final conclusion. I will admit with my whole heart that even now, when all is over, I don't know at all how to judge the unhappy man who was such a problem to us all.

Home was beginning to be almost a little hell on account of her. Liza whose love was so intense was bound to suffer terribly. It was characteristic of her to prefer to suffer in silence. Her character was like mine, proud and domineering, and I thought then, and I think now that it was that that made her love Prince Sergay, just because he had no will at all, and that from the first word, from the first hour, he was utterly in subjection to her. This comes about of itself, in the heart, without any preliminary calculation; but such a love, the love of the strong woman for the weak man, is sometimes incomparably more intense and more agonizing than the love of equal characters, because the stronger unconsciously undertakes responsibility for the weaker. That is what I think at any rate.

All the family from the first surrounded her with the tenderest care, especially mother; but Liza was not softened, she did not respond to sympathy, and seemed to repulse every sort of help. At first she did talk to mother, but every day she became

more reluctant to speak, more abrupt and even more harsh. She asked Versilov's advice at first, but soon afterwards she chose Vassin for her counsellor and helper, as I learned afterwards with surprise... .

She went to see Vassin every day; she went to the law courts, too, by Prince Sergay's instructions; she went to the lawyers, to the crown prosecutor; she came in the end to being absent from home for whole days together. Twice a day, of course, she visited Prince Sergay, who was in prison, in the division for noblemen, but these interviews, as I was fully convinced later, were very distressing to Liza. Of course no third person can judge of the relations of two lovers. But I know that Prince Sergay was always wounding her deeply, and by what do you suppose? Strange to say, by his continual jealousy. Of that, however, I will speak later; but I will add one thought on the subject: it would be hard to decide which of them tormented the other more. Though with us she prided herself on her hero, Liza perhaps behaved quite differently alone with him; I suspect so indeed from various facts, of which, however, I will also speak later.

And so, as regards my feeling and my attitude towards Liza, any external change there was was only simulated, a jealous deception on both sides, but we had never loved each other more than at that time. I must add, too, that though Liza showed surprise and interest when Makar Ivanovitch first arrived, she had since for some reason begun to treat him almost disdainfully, even contemptuously. She seemed intentionally to take not the slightest notice of him.

Having inwardly vowed "to be silent," as I explained in the previous chapter, I expected, of course theoretically, that is in my dreams, to keep my word. Oh, with Versilov, for instance, I would have sooner begun talking of zoology or of the Roman Emperors, than of HER for example, or of that most important line in his letter to her, in which he informed her that 'the document was not burnt but in existence'—a line on which I began pondering to myself again as soon as I had begun to recover and come to my senses after my fever. But alas! from the first steps towards practice, and almost before the first steps, I realized how difficult and impossible it was to stick to such resolutions: the day after my first acquaintance with Makar Ivanovitch, I was fearfully excited by an unexpected circumstance.

2

I was excited by an unexpected visit from Darya Onisimovna, the mother of the dead girl, Olya. From my mother I had heard that she had come once or twice during my illness, and that she was very much concerned about my condition. Whether "that good woman," as my mother always called her when she spoke of her, had come entirely on my account, or whether she had come to visit my mother in accordance with an established custom, I did not ask. Mother usually told me all the news of the household to entertain me when she came with my soup to feed me (before I could feed myself): I always tried to appear uninterested in these domestic details, and so I did not ask about Darya Onisimovna; in fact, I said nothing about her at all.

It was about eleven o'clock; I was just meaning to get out of bed and install myself in the armchair by the table, when she came in. I purposely remained in bed. Mother was very busy upstairs and did not come down, so that we were left alone. She sat down on a chair by the wall facing me, smiled and said not a word. I foresaw this pause, and her entrance altogether made an irritating impression on me. Without even nodding to her, I looked her straight in the face, but she too looked straight at me.

"Are you dull in your flat now the prince has gone?" I asked, suddenly losing patience.

"No, I am not in that flat now. Through Anna Andreyevna I am looking after his honour's baby now."

"Whose baby?"

"Andrey Petrovitch's," she brought out in a confidential whisper, glancing round towards the door.

"Why, but there's Tatyana Pavlovna... ."

"Yes, Tatyana Pavlovna, and Anna Andreyevna, both of them, and Lizaveta Makarovna also, and your mamma ... all of them. They all take an interest; Tatyana Pavlovna and Anna Andreyevna are great friends now."

A piece of news! She grew much livelier as she talked. I looked at her with hatred.

"You are much livelier than when you came to see me last."

"Oh, yes."

"I think, you've grown stouter?"

She looked strangely at me:

"I have grown very fond of her, very."

"Fond of whom?"

"Why, Anna Andreyevna. Very fond. Such a noble young lady, and with such judgment... ."

"You don't say so! What about her, how are things now?"

"She is very quiet, very."

"She was always quiet."

"Always."

"If you've come here with scandal," I cried suddenly, unable to restrain myself, "let me tell you that I won't have anything to do with it, I have decided to drop ... everything, every one... . I don't care—I am going away! ..."

I ceased suddenly, for I realized what I was doing. I felt it degrading to explain my new projects to her. She heard me without surprise and without emotion. But again a pause followed, again she got up, went to the door and peeped into the next room. Having assured herself that there was no one there, and we were alone, she returned with great composure and sat down in the same place as before.

"You did that prettily!" I laughed suddenly.

"You are keeping on your lodging at the clerk's?" she asked suddenly, bending a little towards me, and dropping her voice as though this question were the chief object for which she had come.

"Lodging? I don't know. Perhaps I shall give it up. How do I know?"

“They are anxiously expecting you: the man’s very impatient to see you, and his wife too. Andrey Petrovitch assured them you’d come back for certain.”

“But what is it to you?”

“Anna Andreyevna wanted to know, too; she was very glad to learn that you were staying.”

“How does she know so positively that I shall certainly stay on at that lodging?”

I wanted to add, “And what is it to her,” but I refrained from asking through pride.

“And M. Lambert said the same thing, too.”

“Wha-at?”

“M. Lambert, he declared most positively to Andrey Petrovitch that you would remain, and he assured Anna Andreyevna of it, too.”

I felt shaken all over. What marvels! Then Lambert already knew Versilov, Lambert had found his way to Versilov—Lambert and Anna Andreyevna—he had found his way to her too! I felt overcome with fever, but I kept silent. My soul was flooded with a terrible rush of pride, pride or I don’t know what. But I suddenly said to myself at that moment, “If I ask for one word in explanation, I shall be involved in that world again, and I shall never have done with it.” There was a glow of hate in my heart. I resolutely made up my mind to be mute, and to lie without moving; she was silent too, for a full minute.

“What of Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch?” I asked suddenly, as though I had taken leave of my senses. The fact is, I asked simply to change the subject, and again I chanced to ask the leading question; like a madman I plunged back again into that world from which I had just before, with such a shudder, resolved to flee.

“His honour is at Tsarskoe Syelo. He is rather poorly; and as the hot days have begun in town, they all advised him to move to their house at Tsarskoe for the sake of the air.”

I made no answer.

“Madame and Anna Andreyevna visit him there twice a week, they go together.”

Anna Andreyevna and Madame (that is SHE) were friends then! They go together! I did not speak.

“They have become so friendly, and Anna Andreyevna speaks so highly of Katerina Nikolaevna... .”

I still remained silent.

“And Katerina Nikolaevna is in a whirl of society again; it’s one fête after another; she is making quite a stir; they say all the gentlemen at court are in love with her ... and everything’s over with M. Büring, and there’s to be no wedding; so everybody declares ... it’s been off ever since THEN.”

That is since Versilov’s letter. I trembled all over, but I did not utter a word.

“Anna Andreyevna is so sorry about Prince Sergay, and Katerina Nikolaevna too, and they all say that he will be acquitted and that Stebelkov will be condemned... .”

I looked at her with hatred. She got up and suddenly bent down to me.

“Anna Andreyevna particularly told me to find out how you are,” she said quite in a whisper; “and she particularly begged you to go and see her as soon as you begin to go out; good-bye. Make haste and get well and I’ll tell her... .”

She went away. I sat on the edge of the bed, a cold sweat came out on my forehead, but I did not feel terror: the incredible and grotesque news about Lambert and his machinations did not, for instance, fill me with horror in the least, as might have been expected from the dread, perhaps unaccountable, with which during my illness and the early days of my convalescence I recalled my meeting with him on that night. On the contrary, in that first moment of confusion, as I sat on the bed after Darya Onisimovna had gone, my mind did not dwell on Lambert, but ... more than all I thought about the news of HER, of her rupture with Büring, and of her success in society, of her fêtes, of her triumphs, of the “stir” she was making. “She’s making quite a stir,” Darya Onisimovna’s phrase, was ringing in my ears. And I suddenly felt that I had not the strength to struggle out of that whirlpool; I had known how to control myself, to hold my tongue and not to question Darya Onisimovna after her tales of marvels! An overwhelming thirst for that life, for THEIR life, took possession of my whole spirit and ... and another blissful thirst which I felt as a keen joy and an intense pain. My thoughts were in a whirl; but I let them whirl... . “Why be reasonable,” I felt. “Even mother kept Lambert’s coming a secret,” I thought, in incoherent snatches. “Versilov must have told her not to speak of it... . I would rather die than ask Versilov about Lambert!”

“Versilov,” the thought flashed upon me again. “Versilov and Lambert. Oh, what a lot that’s new among them! Bravo, Versilov! He frightened the German Büring with that letter; he libelled her, la calomnie ... il en reste toujours quelque chose, and the German courtier was afraid of the scandal. Ha! ha! it’s a lesson for her.”

“Lambert ... surely Lambert hasn’t found his way to her? To be sure he has! Why shouldn’t she have an intrigue with him?”

At this point I suddenly gave up pondering on this senseless tangle, and sank back in despair with my head on my pillow. “But it shall not be,” I exclaimed with sudden determination. I jumped out of bed, put on my slippers and dressing-gown, and went straight to Makar Ivanovitch’s room, as though there were in it a talisman to repel all enticements, a means of salvation, and an anchor to which I could cling.

It may really have been that I was feeling this at the time with my whole soul; else why should I have leaped up with such a sudden and irresistible impulse and rushed in to Makar Ivanovitch in such a state of mind?

3

But to my surprise I found other people—my mother and the doctor—with Makar Ivanovitch. As I had for some reason imagined I should find the old man alone, as he had been yesterday, I stopped short in the doorway in blank amazement. Before I

had time to frown, Versilov came in followed by Liza... . So they had all met for some reason in Makar Ivanovitch's room "just when they were not wanted!"

"I have come to ask how you are," I said, going straight up to Makar Ivanovitch.

"Thank you, my dear, I was expecting you; I knew you would come; I was thinking of you in the night."

He looked into my face caressingly, and I saw that perhaps he liked me best of them all, but I could not help seeing instantly that, though his face was cheerful, his illness had made progress in the night. The doctor had only just been examining him very seriously. I learned afterwards that the doctor (the same young man with whom I had quarrelled had been treating Makar Ivanovitch ever since he arrived) had been very attentive to the patient and had diagnosed a complication of various diseases in him—but I don't know their medical terms. Makar Ivanovitch, as I observed from the first glance, was on the warmest, friendliest terms with him; I disliked that at that instant; but I was of course in a very bad mood at the moment.

"Yes, Alexandr Semyonovitch, how is our dear invalid today," inquired Versilov. If I had not been so agitated, it would have been most interesting to me to watch Versilov's attitude to this old man; I had wondered about it the day before. What struck me most of all now was the extremely soft and pleasant expression in Versilov's face, there was something perfectly sincere in it. I have noted already, I believe, that Versilov's face became wonderfully beautiful as soon as it became ever so little kindly.

"Why, we keep quarrelling," answered the doctor.

"With Makar Ivanovitch? I don't believe it; it's impossible to quarrel with him."

"But he won't obey; he doesn't sleep at night... ."

"Come give over, Alexandr Semyonovitch, that's enough scolding," said Makar Ivanovitch laughing. "Well, Andrey Petrovitch, how have they treated our good lady? Here she's been sighing and moaning all the morning, she's worrying," he added, indicating mother.

"Ach, Andrey Petrovitch," cried my mother, who was really very uneasy ; "do make haste and tell us, don't keep us in suspense; how has it been settled for her, poor thing?"

"They have found her guilty and sentenced her!"

"Ach!" cried my mother.

"But not to Siberia, don't distress yourself—to a fine of fifteen roubles, that's all; it was a farce!"

He sat down, the doctor sat down too; they were talking of Tatyana Pavlovna; I knew nothing yet of what had happened. I sat down on Makar Ivanovitch's left, and Liza sat opposite me on the right; she evidently had some special sorrow of her own to-day, with which she had come to my mother; there was a look of uneasiness and irritation in her face. At that moment we exchanged glances, and I thought to myself, "we are both disgraced, and I must make the first advances." My heart was suddenly softened to her. Versilov meanwhile had begun describing what had happened that morning.

It seemed that Tatyana Pavlovna had had to appear before the justice of the peace that morning, on a charge brought against her by her cook. The whole affair was utterly absurd; I have mentioned already that the ill-tempered cook would sometimes, when she was sulky, refuse to speak, and would not say a word to her mistress for a whole week at a time. I mentioned, too, Tatyana's weakness in regard to her, how she put up with anything from her and absolutely refused to get rid of her. All these whimsical caprices of old maiden ladies are, in my eyes, utterly beneath contempt and so undeserving of attention. And I only mention this story here because this cook is destined to play a leading and momentous part in the sequel of my story.

So Tatyana Pavlovna, driven out of all patience by the obstinate Finnish woman, who had refused to answer a word for several days, had suddenly at last struck her, a thing she had never done before. Even then the cook did not utter the slightest sound, but the same day she communicated the fact to a discharged midshipman called Osyetrov, who earned a precarious existence by undertaking cases of various sorts and of course, by getting up such cases as this for the courts. It had ended in Tatyana Pavlovna's being summoned before the justice of the peace, and when the case was tried Versilov had for some reason appeared as a witness.

Versilov described all this with extraordinary gaiety and humour, so that even mother laughed; he even mimicked Tatyana Pavlovna and the midshipman and the cook. The cook had from the very beginning announced to the court that she wanted a money fine, "For if they put my mistress in prison, whom am I going to cook for?" In answer to the judge, Tatyana Pavlovna answered with immense condescension, not even deigning to defend herself; on the contrary, she had concluded with the words, "I did beat her and I shall do it again," whereupon she was promptly fined three roubles for her impudent answer. The midshipman, a lean lanky young man, would have begun with a long speech in defence of his client, but broke down disgracefully to the amusement of the whole court.

The hearing was soon over, and Tatyana Pavlovna was condemned to pay fifteen roubles to the injured Marya.

Tatyana Pavlovna promptly drew out her purse, and proceeded on the spot to pay the money, whereupon the midshipman at once approached her, and was putting out his hand to take it, but Tatyana Pavlovna thrust aside his hand, almost with a blow, and turned to Marya. "Don't you trouble, madam, you needn't put yourself out, put it down in our accounts, I'll settle with this fellow." "See, Marya, what a lanky fellow you've picked out for yourself," said Tatyana Pavlovna, pointing to the midshipman, hugely delighted that Marya had spoken to her at last.

"He is a lanky one to be sure," Marya answered slyly. "Did you order cutlets with peas? I did not hear this morning, I was in a hurry to get here." "Oh no, with cabbage, Marya, and please don't burn it to a cinder, as you did yesterday." "No, I'll do my best to-day, madam, let me have your hand," and she kissed her mistress's hand in token of reconciliation; she entertained the whole court in fact.

“Ah, what a woman!” said mother, shaking her head, very much pleased with the news and Andrey Petrovitch’s account of it, though she looked uneasily on the sly at Liza.

“She has been a self-willed lady from her childhood,” smiled Makar Ivanovitch.

“Spleen and idleness,” opined the doctor.

“Is it I am self-willed? Is it I am spleen and idleness?” asked Tatyana Pavlovna, coming in upon us suddenly, evidently very well pleased with herself. “It’s not for you to talk nonsense, Alexandr Semyonovitch; when you were ten years old, you knew whether I was idle, and you’ve been treating yourself for spleen for the last year and have not been able to cure yourself, so you ought to be ashamed; well, you’ve picked me to pieces enough; thanks for troubling to come to the court, Andrey Petrovitch. Well, how are you, Makarushka; it’s only you I’ve come to see, not this fellow,” she pointed to me, but at once gave me a friendly pat on the shoulder; I had never before seen her in such a good humour. “Well, how is he?” turning suddenly to the doctor and frowning anxiously.

“Why, he won’t lie in bed, and he only tires himself out sitting up like this.”

“Why, I only sit up like this a little, with company,” Makar Ivanovitch murmured with a face of entreaty, like a child’s.

“Yes, we like this, we like this; we like a little gossip when our friends gather round us; I know Makarushka,” said Tatyana Pavlovna.

“Yes you’re a quick one, you are! And there’s no getting over you; wait a bit, let me speak: I’ll lie down, darling, I’ll obey, but you know, to my thinking, ‘If you take to your bed, you may never get up,’ that’s what I’ve got at the back of my head, friend.”

“To be sure I knew that was it, peasant superstitions: ‘If I take to my bed,’ they say, ‘ten to one I shan’t get up,’ that’s what the peasants very often fear, and they would rather keep on their legs when they’re ill than go to a hospital. As for you, Makar Ivanovitch, you’re simply home-sick for freedom, and the open road— that’s all that’s the matter with you, you’ve got out of the habit of staying long in one place. Why, you’re what’s called a pilgrim, aren’t you? And tramping is almost a passion in our peasantry. I’ve noticed it more than once in them, our peasants are tramps before everything.”

“Then Makar is a tramp according to you?” Tatyana Pavlovna caught him up.

“Oh, I did not mean that, I used the word in a general sense. Well yes, a religious tramp, though he is a holy man, yet he is a tramp. In a good respectful sense, but a tramp... . I speak from the medical point of view... .”

“I assure you,” I addressed the doctor suddenly: “that you and I and all the rest here are more like tramps than this old man from whom you and I ought to learn, too, because he has a firm footing in life, while we all of us have no firm standpoint at all... . But how should you understand that, though!”

I spoke very cuttingly, it seemed, but I had come in feeling upset. I don’t know why I went on sitting there, and felt as though I were beside myself.

“What are you saying?” said Tatyana Pavlovna, looking at me suspiciously. “How did you find him, Makar Ivanovitch?” she asked, pointing her finger at me.

“God bless him, he’s a sharp one,” said the old man, with a serious air, but at the words “sharp one” almost every one laughed. I controlled myself somehow; the doctor laughed more than anyone. It was rather unlucky that I did not know at the time of a previous compact between them. Versilov, the doctor, and Tatyana Pavlovna had agreed three days before to do all they could to distract mother from brooding and apprehension on account of Makar Ivanovitch, whose illness was far more dangerous and hopeless than I had any suspicion of then. That’s why they were all making jokes, and trying to laugh. Only the doctor was stupid, and did not know how to make jokes naturally: that was the cause of all that followed. If I had known of their agreement at that time, I should not have done what I did. Liza knew nothing either.

I sat listening with half my mind; they talked and laughed and all the time my head was full of Darya Onisimovna, and her news, and I could not shake off the thought of her; I kept picturing how she had sat and looked, and had cautiously got up, and peeped into the next room. At last they all suddenly laughed. Tatyana Pavlovna, I don’t in the least know why, called the doctor an infidel: “Why, all you doctors are infidels!”

“Makar Ivanovitch!” said the doctor, very stupidly pretending to be offended and to be appealing to him as an umpire, “am I an infidel?”

“You an infidel? No you are not an infidel,” the old man answered sedately, looking at him instantly. “No, thank God!” he said, shaking his head: “you are a merry-hearted man.”

“And if a man’s merry-hearted, he’s not an infidel?” the doctor observed ironically.

“That’s in its own way an idea,” observed Versilov; he was not laughing, however.

“It’s a great idea,” I could not help exclaiming, struck by the thought.

The doctor looked round inquiringly.

“These learned people, these same professors” (probably they had been talking about professors just before), began Makar Ivanovitch, looking down: “at the beginning, ough, I was frightened of them. I was in terror in their presence, for I dreaded an infidel more than anything. I have only one soul, I used to think; what if I lose it, I shan’t be able to find another; but, afterwards, I plucked up heart. ‘After all,’ I thought, ‘they are not gods but just the same as we are, men of like passions with ourselves.’ And my curiosity was great. ‘I shall find out,’ I thought, ‘what this infidelity is like.’ But afterwards even that curiosity passed over.”

He paused, though he meant to go on, still with the same gentle sedate smile. There are simple souls who put complete trust in every, one, and have no suspicion of mockery. Such people are always of limited intelligence, for they are always ready to display all that is precious in their hearts to every newcomer. But in Makar Ivanovitch I fancied there was something else, and the impulse that led him to speak was different, and not only the innocence of simplicity: one caught glimpses as it were of the missionary in him. I even caught, with pleasure, some sly glances he bent upon the doctor, and

even perhaps on Versilov. The conversation was evidently a continuation of a previous discussion between them the week before, but unluckily the fatal phrase which had so electrified me the day before cropped up in it again, and led me to an outburst which I regret to this day.

“I am afraid of the unbeliever, even now perhaps,” the old man went on with concentrated intensity; “only, friend Alexandr Semyonovitch, I tell you what, I’ve never met an infidel, but I have met worldly men; that’s what one must call them. They are of all sorts, big and little, ignorant and learned, and even some of the humblest class, but it’s all vanity. They read and argue all their lives, filling themselves with the sweetness of books, while they remain in perplexity and can come to no conclusion. Some quite let themselves go, and give up taking notice of themselves. Some grow harder than a stone and their hearts are full of wandering dreams; others become heartless and frivolous, and all they can do is to mock and jeer. Another will, out of books, gather some flowers, and those according to his own fancy; but he still is full of vanity, and there is no decision in him. And then again: there is a great deal of dreariness. The small man is in want, he has no bread and naught to keep his babes alive with, he sleeps on rough straw, and all the time his heart is light and merry; he is coarse and sinful, yet his heart is light. But the great man drinks too much, and eats too much, and sits on a pile of gold, yet there is nothing in his heart but gloom. Some have been through all the sciences, and are still depressed, and I fancy that the more intellect a man has, the greater his dreariness. And then again: they have been teaching ever since the world began, and to what good purpose have they taught, that the world might be fairer and merrier, and the abode of every sort of joy? And another thing I must tell you: they have no seemliness, they don’t even want it at all; all are ruined, but they boast of their own destruction; but to return to the one Truth, they never think; and to live without God is naught but torment. And it seems that we curse that whereby we are enlightened and know it not ourselves: and what’s the sense of it? It’s impossible to be a man and not bow down to something; such a man could not bear the burden of himself, nor could there be such a man. If he rejects God, then he bows down to an idol—fashioned of wood, or of gold, or of thought. They are all idolaters and not infidels, that is how we ought to describe them—though we can’t say there are no infidels. There are men who are downright infidels, only they are far more terrible than those others, for they come with God’s name on their lips. I have heard of them more than once, but I have not met them at all. There are such, friend, and I fancy, too, that there are bound to be.”

“There are, Makar Ivanovitch,” Versilov agreed suddenly: “there are such, ‘and there are bound to be.’”

“There certainly are, and ‘there are certainly bound to be,’” I burst out hotly, and impulsively, I don’t know why; but I was carried away by Versilov’s tone, and fascinated by a sort of idea in the words “there are bound to be.” The conversation was an absolute surprise to me. But at that minute something happened also quite unexpected.

It was a very bright day; by the doctor's orders Makar Ivanovitch's blind was as a rule not drawn up all day; but there was a curtain over the window now, instead of the blind, so that the upper part of the window was not covered; this was because the old man was miserable at not seeing the sun at all when he had the blind, and as we were sitting there the sun's rays fell suddenly full upon Makar Ivanovitch's face. At first, absorbed in conversation, he took no notice of it, but mechanically as he talked he several times turned his head on one side, because the bright sunlight hurt and irritated his bad eyes. Mother, standing beside him, glanced several times uneasily towards the window; all that was wanted was to screen the window completely with something, but to avoid interrupting the conversation she thought it better to try and move the bench on which Makar Ivanovitch was sitting a little to the right. It did not need to be moved more than six or at the most eight inches. She had bent down several times and taken hold of the bench, but could not move it; the bench with Makar Ivanovitch sitting on it would not move. Feeling her efforts unconsciously, in the heat of conversation, Makar Ivanovitch several times tried to get up, but his legs would not obey him. But mother went on straining all her strength to move it, and at last all this exasperated Liza horribly. I noticed several angry irritated looks from her, but for the first moment I did not know to what to ascribe them, besides I was carried away by the conversation. And I suddenly heard her almost shout sharply to Makar Ivanovitch:

"Do get up, if it's ever so little: you see how hard it is for mother."

The old man looked at her quickly, instantly grasped her meaning, and hurriedly tried to stand up, but without success; he raised himself a couple of inches and fell back on the bench.

"I can't, my dearie," he answered plaintively, looking, as it were, meekly at Liza.

"You can talk by the hour together, but you haven't the strength to stir an inch!"

"Liza!" cried Tatyana Pavlovna. Makar Ivanovitch made another great effort.

"Take your crutches, they are lying beside you; you can get up with your crutches!" Liza snapped out again.

"To be sure," said the old man, and he made haste to pick up his crutches.

"He must be lifted!" said Versilov, standing up; the doctor, too, moved, and Tatyana Pavlovna ran up, but before they had time to reach him Makar Ivanovitch, leaning on the crutches, with a tremendous effort, suddenly raised himself and stood up, looking round with a triumphant air.

"There, I have got up!" he said almost with pride, laughing gleefully; "thank you, my dear, you have taught me a lesson, and I thought that my poor legs would not obey me at all... ."

But he did not remain standing long; he had hardly finished speaking, when his crutch, on which he was leaning with the whole weight of his body, somehow slipped on the rug, and as his "poor legs" were scarcely any support at all, he fell heavily full

length on the floor. I remember it was almost horrible to see. All cried out, and rushed to lift him up, but, thank God, he had broken no bones; he had only knocked his knees with a heavy thud against the floor, but he had succeeded in putting out his right hand and breaking his fall with it. He was picked up and seated on the bed. He was very pale, not from fright, but from the shock. (The doctor had told them that he was suffering more from disease of the heart than anything.) Mother was beside herself with fright, and still pale, trembling all over and still a little bewildered, Makar Ivanovitch turned suddenly to Liza, and almost tenderly, in a soft voice, said to her:

“No, my dearie, my legs really won’t hold me!”

I cannot express what an impression this made on me, at the time. There was not the faintest note of complaint or reproach in the poor old man’s words; on the contrary, it was perfectly evident that he had not noticed anything spiteful in Liza’s words, and had accepted her shout as something quite befitting, that is, that it was quite right to pitch into him for his remissness. All this had a very great effect on Liza too. At the moment when he fell she had rushed forward, like all the rest of us, and stood numb with horror, and miserable, of course, at having caused it all; hearing his words, she almost instantly flushed crimson with shame and remorse.

“That’s enough!” Tatyana Pavlovna commanded suddenly: “this comes of talking too much! It’s time we were off; it’s a bad look-out when the doctor himself begins to chatter!”

“Quite so,” assented Alexandr Semyonovitch who was occupied with the invalid. “I’m to blame, Tatyana Pavlovna; he needs rest.”

But Tatyana Pavlovna did not hear him: she had been for half a minute watching Liza intently.

“Come here, Liza, and kiss me, that is if you care to kiss an old fool like me,” she said unexpectedly.

And she kissed the girl, I don’t know why, but it seemed exactly the right thing to do; so that I almost rushed to kiss Tatyana Pavlovna myself. What was fitting was not to overwhelm Liza with reproach, but to welcome with joy and congratulation the new feeling that must certainly have sprung up in her. But instead of all those feelings, I suddenly stood up and rapped out resolutely:

“Makar Ivanovitch, you used again the word ‘seemliness,’ and I have been worrying about that word yesterday, and all these days ... in fact, all my life I have been worrying about it, only I didn’t know what it was. This coincidence I look upon as momentous, almost miraculous... . I say this in your presence ...”

But I was instantly checked. I repeat I did not know their compact about mother and Makar Ivanovitch; they considered me, of course judging from my doings in the past, capable of making a scene of any sort.

“Stop him, stop him!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, utterly infuriated. Mother began trembling. Makar Ivanovitch, seeing the general alarm, was alarmed too.

“Arkady, hush!” Versilov cried sternly.

“For me, my friends,” I said raising my voice: “to see you all beside this babe (I indicated Makar) is unseemly; there is only one saint here—and that is mother, and even she ...”

“You are alarming him,” the doctor said emphatically.

“I know I am the enemy to every one in the world” (or something of the sort), I began faltering, but looking round once more, I glared defiantly at Versilov.

“Arkady,” he cried again, “just such a scene has happened once here already between us. I entreat you, restrain yourself now!”

I cannot describe the intense feeling with which he said this. A deep sadness, sincere and complete, was manifest in his face. What was most surprising was that he looked as though he were guilty; as though I were the judge, and he were the criminal. This was the last straw for me.

“Yes,” I shouted to him in reply: “just such a scene we had before, when I buried Versilov, and tore him out of my heart ... but then there followed a resurrection from the dead ... but now ... now there will be no rising again! But ... but all of you here shall see what I am capable of: you have no idea what I can show you!”

Saying this, I rushed into my room. Versilov ran after me.

5

I had a relapse; I had a violent attack of fever, and by nightfall was delirious. But I was not all the time in delirium; I had innumerable dreams, shapeless and following one another, in endless succession. One such dream or fragment of a dream I shall remember as long as I live. I will describe it without attempting to explain it; it was prophetic and I cannot leave it out.

I suddenly found myself with my heart full of a grand and proud design, in a large lofty room; I remember the room very well, it was not at Tatyana Pavlovna's, I may observe, anticipating events. But although I was alone, I felt continually with uneasiness and discomfort that I was not alone at all, that I was awaited, and that something was being expected of me. Somewhere outside the door people were sitting and waiting for what I was going to do. The sensation was unendurable “Oh, if I could only be alone!” And suddenly SHE walked in. She looked at me timidly, she was very much afraid, she looked into my eyes. IN MY HAND I HAD THE LETTER. She smiled to fascinate me, she fawned upon me; I was sorry, but I began to feel repulsion. Suddenly she hid her face in her hands. I flung the letter on the table with unutterable disdain, as much as to say, “You needn't beg, take it, I want nothing of you! I revenge myself for all your insults by contempt.” I went out of the room, choking with immense pride. But at the door Lambert clutched me in the darkness! “Fool, fool!” he whispered, holding me by the arm with all his might, “she will have to open a high-class boarding-house for wenches in Vassilyevsky Island.” (N.B.— to get her living, if her father, hearing of the letter from me, were to deprive her of her inheritance, and drive her out of the house. I quote what Lambert said, word for word, as I dreamed it.)

“Arkady Makarovitch is in quest of ‘seemliness,’” I heard the low voice of Anna Andreyevna, somewhere close by on the stairs; but there was a note, not of approval, but of insufferable mockery in her words. I returned to the room with Lambert. But, seeing Lambert, SHE began to laugh. My first impression was one of horrible dismay, such dismay that I stopped short and would not go up to her. I stared at her, and could not believe my eyes, as though she had just thrown off a mask: the features were the same, but each feature seemed distorted by an insolence that was beyond all bounds. “The ransom, the ransom, madam!” cried Lambert, and both laughed louder than ever, while my heart went cold. “Oh, can that shameless creature be the woman one glance from whom set my heart glowing with virtue!”

“You see what these proud creatures in their good society are ready to do for money!” cried Lambert. But the shameless creature was not even abashed by that; she laughed at my being so horrified. Oh, she was ready to pay the ransom, that I saw, and ... and what came over me? I no longer felt pity or disgust; I was thrilled as I had never been before... . I was overwhelmed by a new and indescribable feeling, such as I had never known before, and strong as life itself... . I could not have gone away now for anything on earth! Oh, how it pleased me that it was so shameful! I clutched her hands; the touch of her hands sent an agonizing thrill through me, and I put my lips to her insolent crimson lips, that invited me, quivering with laughter.

Oh, away with that vile memory? Accursed dream! I swear that until that loathsome dream nothing like that shameful idea had ever been in my mind. There had never been even an unconscious dream of the sort (though I had kept the “letter” sewn up in my pocket, and I sometimes gripped my pocket with a strange smile). How was it all this came to me so complete? It was because I had the soul of a spider! It shows that all this had long ago been hatching in my corrupt heart, and lay latent in my desires, but my waking heart was still ashamed, and my mind dared not consciously picture anything of the sort. But in sleep the soul presented and laid bare all that was hidden in the heart, with the utmost accuracy, in a complete picture and in prophetic form. And was THAT what I had threatened to SHOW them, when I had run out of Makar Ivanovitch’s room that morning? But enough: for the time no more of this! That dream is one of the strangest things that has happened in my life.

Chapter 3

1

Three days later I got up from my bed, and as soon as I was on my legs I felt that I should not go back to it again. I felt all over that convalescence was at hand. All these little details perhaps would not be worth writing, but then several days followed which were not remarkable for anything special that happened, and yet have remained in my memory as something soothing and consolatory, and that is rare in my reminiscences.

I will not for the time attempt to define my spiritual condition; if I were to give an account of it the reader would scarcely believe in it. It will be better for it to be made clear by facts themselves. And so I will only say one thing: let the reader remember the SOUL OF THE SPIDER; and that in the man who longed to get away from them all, and from the whole world for the sake of "seemliness!" The longing for "seemliness" was still there, of course, and very intense, but how it could be linked with other longings of a very different sort is a mystery to me. It always has been a mystery, and I have marvelled a thousand times at that faculty in man (and in the Russian, I believe, more especially) of cherishing in his soul his loftiest ideal side by side with the most abject baseness, and all quite sincerely. Whether this is breadth in the Russian which takes him so far or simply baseness—that is the question!

But enough of that. However that may be, a time of calm followed. All I knew was that I must get well at all costs and as quickly as possible that I might as soon as possible begin to act, and so I resolved to live hygienically and to obey the doctor (whoever he might be), disturbing projects I put off with great good sense (the fruit of this same breadth) to the day of my escape, that is, to the day of my complete recovery. How all the peaceful impressions and sensations in that time of stillness were consistent with the painfully sweet and agitated throbbings of my heart when I dreamed of violent decisions I do not know, but again I put it all down to "breadth." But there was no trace now of the restlessness I had suffered from of late. I put it all off for the time, and did not tremble at the thought of the future as I had so recently, but looked forward to it, like a wealthy man relying on his power and his resources. I felt more and more proud and defiant of the fate awaiting me, and this was partly due, I imagine, to my actual return to health, and the rapid recovery of my vital forces. Those few days of final and complete recovery I recall even now with great pleasure.

Oh, they forgave me everything, that is my outburst, and these were the people whom I had called "unseemly" to their faces! That I love in people; that is what I call intelligence of the heart; anyway, this attracted me at once, to a certain degree, of course. Versilov and I, for instance, talked together like the best of friends, but only to a certain point: if at times we became ever so little too expansive (and we were over-expansive at times) we pulled ourselves up at once as though a trifle ashamed of something. There are cases when the victor cannot help feeling abashed before the vanquished, and just because he has gained the upper hand over him. I was evidently the victor; and I was ashamed.

That morning, that is the one on which I got up again after my relapse, he came in to see me, and then I learned from him for the first time of their compact in regard to mother and Makar Ivanovitch. He added that though the old man was better, the doctor would not answer for the future. I promised him with my whole heart that I would be more careful of my behaviour in the future. While Versilov was telling me all this I detected for the first time that he was most genuinely concerned about the old man, far more, indeed, than I could have expected from a man like him: and that he looked upon him as a being for some reason particularly precious to himself, not

simply for mother's sake. This at once interested me and almost surprised me, and I must confess if it had not been for Versilov I should have overlooked and failed to appreciate a great deal in this old man, who has left one of the most lasting and original impressions on my mind.

Versilov seemed to be afraid of my attitude to Makar Ivanovitch, that is he distrusted my intelligence and my tact, and he was therefore particularly pleased afterwards when he discerned that I knew how to behave with a man of quite different ideas and conceptions, could, in fact, be broad-minded and make allowances. I must confess, too (and I don't think it's humiliating to do so), that in this man of the people I found something absolutely new to me in regard to certain feelings and conceptions, something I had known nothing of, something far more serene and consolatory than my own previous ideas on those subjects. It was none the less impossible sometimes to keep from being impatient at some positive superstitions in which he believed with the most revolting placidity and steadfastness. But this, of course, was only due to his lack of education; his soul was rather happily constructed, so much so that I have never met a man superior in that respect.

2

What attracted one first of all, as I have observed already, was his extraordinary pure-heartedness and his freedom from amour-propre; one felt instinctively that he had an almost sinless heart. He had "gaiety" of heart, and therefore "seemliness." The word "gaiety" he was very fond of and often used. He sometimes showed an almost abnormal exaltation, an almost abnormal fervour, partly, I imagine, because the fever never really left him; but that did not mar his beautiful serenity. There were contrasts in him, too: side by side with his marvellous simplicity (at times, to my vexation, he completely failed to detect irony) there was a sort of sly subtlety, most frequently apparent in controversy. And he was fond of controversy, though at times only through caprice. It was evident that he had been on foot over a great part of Russia, had heard a great deal; but I repeat, what he liked best of all was religious emotion, and therefore everything that led up to it, and he was fond of telling incidents that moved one to tenderness and reverence.

He was fond of telling stories in general. I listened to many tales from him of his own wanderings and various legends of the lives of the "ascetics" of ancient times. I'm not familiar with these stories, but I believe that he told them all wrong, adapting them for the most part from the traditions current among the peasantry. It was simply impossible to accept some of his versions. But together with evident distortions or even inventions there were continual flashes of something wonderfully complete, full of peasant feeling, and always touching... I recall, for instance, one long story out of the life of "Marya of Egypt." Of this "life" and of all such "lives" I had had no idea at all till then. I frankly confess that it was almost impossible to hear the story without tears, not from tender feeling, but from a sort of strange ecstasy. One felt something strange

and burning like the parched sandy desert upon which the holy woman wandered among lions. I don't want to talk of this though, and, indeed, I am not competent to do so.

Apart from the tender feeling of his stories I particularly liked certain extremely original views on disputed questions of modern life. He told me once, for instance, of something that had happened recently with a retired soldier; he had almost witnessed the incident. A soldier had come home to his village from serving in the army and did not like going back to live with peasants, the peasants did not like him either. The man went wrong, took to drinking, and robbed some one. There was no strong evidence against him, but he was taken up and tried. The lawyer was defending him successfully—there was no proof against him, but suddenly, after listening a long time, the prisoner suddenly stood up and interrupted him. “No, you stop,” said he, and then he told the whole story “to the tiniest grain of dust”; he confessed his full guilt with tears and penitence. The jury went out, were shut up to confer, and suddenly they all came back. “No, not guilty!” Every one shouted, and rejoiced, and the soldier stood rooted to the spot; he seemed turned into a post, and couldn't make head or tail of it; he didn't understand a word of the judge's exhortation to him when he dismissed him. The soldier came out to freedom and still couldn't believe it. He began to fret, sank into brooding, gave up eating and drinking, spoke to no one, and on the fifth day he took and hanged himself. “That's what it is to live with sin on the soul,” said Makar Ivanovitch in conclusion. Of course that's a foolish story, and there are masses of such stories nowadays in all the newspapers, but I liked his tone, and most of all some phrases of quite a new significance. Describing, for instance, how the soldier was disliked by the peasants when he went back to the village, Makar Ivanovitch used the expression, “And we know what a soldier is: a soldier's a peasant spoilt.” Speaking afterwards of the lawyer who had almost won the case, he said: “We know what a lawyer is: a lawyer's a conscience for hire.” Both these expressions he brought out without effort and almost without noticing them, and yet those two utterances revealed a complete and special attitude of mind on those subjects, not borrowed but peculiar to Makar Ivanovitch if not to the whole peasantry. These judgments among the peasants in regard to certain subjects are sometimes really marvellous in their originality.

“And how do you look upon the sin of suicide, Makar Ivanovitch?” I asked him, apropos of the same story.

“Suicide is the greatest human sin,” he answered with a sigh, “but God alone is judge of it, for He alone knows all, every limit, every measure. We must pray without ceasing for such sinners. Whenever you hear of such a sin pray fervently at bedtime for the sinner; if only you breathe a sigh for him to God, even though you don't know his name—the more acceptable will be your prayer for him.”

“But will my prayer be any help to him if he is condemned already?”

“How can you tell? There are many, ah, many without faith who thereby confound those of little knowledge. Heed them not, for they know not what foolishness they are speaking. The prayer of the living for the condemned may still, in truth, benefit him.

So what a plight for him who has no one to pray for him. Therefore, at your evening prayer say also at the end: 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on all those also who have none to pray for them.' Very acceptable and pleasant will be this prayer. Also for all living sinners—'Lord, who holdest all destinies in Thy hand, save all sinners that repent not!—that, too, is a good prayer.'

I promised him I would pray, feeling that I was giving him immense pleasure by this promise. And his face did, in fact, beam with joy; but I hasten to add that in such cases he did not take up a superior attitude to me, as a monk speaking to a raw youth; on the contrary, he very often liked listening to me. He was never weary in fact of hearing me talk on various subjects, realizing that though a "youth" I was immeasurably superior to him in education. He was very fond, for instance, of talking of the life of hermits in the desert, and thought of the "desert" as something far above "pilgrimage." I hotly opposed him, laying stress on the egoism of these people, who had abandoned the world and all the services they might have rendered mankind, simply with the egoistic idea of their own salvation. At first he didn't quite understand; I suspect, indeed, he didn't understand at all, but he zealously defended the "desert." "At first, of course, one grieves (that is when first one goes to dwell in the desert), but then each day one is more glad at heart, and at last one looks upon the face of God."

Then I drew a picture to him of the useful activity in the world of the man of science, the doctor, or any friend of humanity, and roused him to real enthusiasm, for I spoke with warmth; he kept eagerly assenting to my words, "That's so, dear, that's so! God bless you, your thoughts are true."

But when I had finished he did not seem to agree entirely.

"To be sure, to be sure," he sighed deeply, "but are there many who hold fast and are not led astray? Though money be not their God, yet it is a demi-god—a great temptation, and then there's the female sex, and then doubt and envy. And so they will forget their great work, and will be absorbed in little things. But in the desert a man strengthens himself for every great deed. My dear, what is there in the world?" he exclaimed with intense feeling. "But is it only a dream? Take a grain of sand and sow it on a stone; when that yellow grain of sand of yours on the stone springs up, then your dream will come true in the world. That's a saying of ours. Very different from Christ's 'Go and give all that thou hast to the poor and become the servant of all.' Then thou wilt be a thousandfold richer than ever before; for not by bread alone, not by rich garments, not by pride, not by envy, wilt thou be happy, but by love multiplied immeasurably. Not a little riches, not a hundred-thousand, not a million, but the whole world wilt thou gain! Now we gather and have not enough and squander senselessly, but then there will be no orphans nor beggars, for all will be my people, all will be akin. I have gained all, I have bought all, every one! Now it is no uncommon thing for the rich and powerful to care nothing for the length of their days, and to be at a loss to invent a pastime; then thy days and thy hours will be multiplied a thousandfold, for thou wilt grudge the loss of a single minute, and wilt rejoice in every minute in gaiety of heart. Then thou wilt attain wisdom, not from books alone, but wilt be face to face

with God Himself; and the earth will shine more brightly than the sun, and there shall be no more sorrow nor sighing, nothing but one priceless Paradise... .”

It was these enthusiastic outbursts that I believe Versilov liked particularly. He was in the room on this occasion.

“Makar Ivanovitch,” I interrupted suddenly, feeling immensely stirred myself (I remember that evening), “why, it’s communism, absolute communism, you’re preaching!”

And as he knew absolutely nothing of the doctrine of communism, and heard the word indeed for the first time, I began at once expounding to him all I knew on the subject. I must confess my knowledge was scanty and confused, even now, in fact, it is not very ample. But in spite of that I discoursed with great heat on what I did know. To this day I recall with pleasure the extraordinary impression I made on the old man. It was more than an impression. It was really an overwhelming effect. He was passionately interested, too, in the historical details, asking, “Where? How? Who arranged it? Who said so?” I have noticed, by the way, that that is characteristic of the Russian peasant. If he is much interested he is not content with general ideas, but insists on having the most solid and exact facts. It was just for such details that I was at a loss, and as Versilov was present I felt ashamed of my incompetence, and that made me hotter than ever. In the end Makar Ivanovitch could do nothing but repeat with emotion, “Yes: yes!” though he had evidently lost the thread and did not understand. I felt vexed, but Versilov interrupted the conversation and said it was bedtime. We were all in the room and it was late. But when he peeped into my room a few minutes later I asked him at once what he thought of Makar Ivanovitch, and what was his opinion of him? Versilov laughed gaily (but not at my mistakes about communism—he did not mention them in fact). I repeat again, he seemed absolutely devoted to Makar Ivanovitch, and I often caught a very attractive smile on his face when he was listening to the old man. At the same time this smile did not prevent his criticising him.

“Makar Ivanovitch is above all not a peasant but a house-serf,” he pronounced with great readiness, “who has been a servant, born a servant, and of servants. The house-serfs and servants used to share a very great deal in the interests of their masters’ private, spiritual, and intellectual life in the past. Note that to this day Makar Ivanovitch is most interested in the life of the gentry and upper class. You don’t know yet how much interest he takes in recent events in Russia. Do you know that he is a great politician? Don’t feed him on honey, but tell him where anyone is fighting and whether we are going to fight. In old days I used to delight him by such accounts. He has the greatest respect for science, and of all sciences is fondest of astronomy. At the same time he has worked out for himself something so independent that nothing you could do would shake it. He has convictions, firm, fairly clear ... and genuine. Though he’s so absolutely uneducated he is often able to astound one by his surprising knowledge of certain ideas which one would never have expected to find in him. He extols the ‘desert’ with enthusiasm, but nothing would induce him to retire to the desert or enter a monastery, because he is above all things a ‘tramp,’ as he was so charmingly

called by Alexandr Semyonovitch (and by the way there's no need for you to be angry with him). Well, and what more? He's something of an artist, many of his sayings are his own, though some are not. He's somewhat halting in his logic, and at times too abstract; he has moods of sentimentality, but of a thoroughly peasant kind, or rather moods of that tenderness universally found among peasants, which the people introduce so freely into their religious feelings. As for his purity of heart and freedom from malice, I won't discuss them; it's not for you and me to begin upon that... ."

3

To complete my picture of Makar Ivanovitch I'll repeat some of his stories, choosing those taken from private life. These stories were of a strange character. It was impossible to extract any sort of moral or general tendency from them, except perhaps that they were all more or less touching. There were some, however, which were not touching, some, in fact, were quite gay, others even made fun of certain foolish monks, so that he actually discredited his own convictions by telling them. I pointed this out to him, but he did not understand what I meant. Sometimes it was difficult to imagine what induced him to tell the story, so that at times I wondered at his talkativeness and put it down to the loquacity of old age and his feverish condition.

"He is not what he used to be," Versilov whispered to me once, "he was not quite like this in the old days. He will soon die, much sooner than we expect, and we must be prepared."

I have forgotten to say that we had begun to have something like "evenings." Besides my mother, who never left him, Versilov was in his little room every evening; I came too—and indeed I had nowhere else to go. Of late Liza, too, had always been present, though she came a little later than the rest of us, and always sat in silence. Tatyana Pavlovna came too, and, though more rarely, the doctor. Somehow I suddenly began to get on with the doctor, and though we were never very friendly there were no further scenes between us. I liked a sort of simple-mindedness which I detected in him, and the attachment he showed to our family, so that I made up my mind at last to forgive him his professional superciliousness, and, moreover, I taught him to wash his hands and clean his nails, even if he couldn't put on clean linen. I explained to him bluntly that this was not a sign of foppishness or of elegant artificiality, but that cleanliness is a natural element of the trade of a doctor, and I proved it to him. Finally, Lukerya often came out of the kitchen and stood at the door listening to Makar Ivanovitch's stories. Versilov once called her in from the door, and asked her to sit down with us. I liked his doing this, but from that time she gave up coming to the door. Her sense of the fitting!

I quote one of his stories, selecting it simply because I remember it more completely. It is a story about a merchant, and I imagine that such incidents occur by thousands in our cities and country towns, if only one knew how to look for them. The reader may prefer to skip the story, especially as I quote it in the old man's words.

I'll tell you now of a wonderful thing that happened in our town, Afimyeusk. There was a merchant living there, his name was Skotoboynikov, Maxim Ivanovitch, and there was no one richer than he in all the countryside. He built a cotton factory, and he kept some hundreds of hands, and he exalted himself exceedingly. And everything, one may say, was at his beck and call, and even those in authority hindered him in nothing, and the archimandrite thanked him for his zeal: he gave freely of his substance to the monastery, and when the fit came upon him he sighed and groaned over his soul and was troubled not a little over the life to come. A widower he was and childless; of his wife there were tales that he had beaten her from the first year of their marriage, and that from his youth up he had been apt to be too free with his hands. Only all that had happened long ago; he had no desire to enter into the bonds of another marriage. He had a weakness for strong drink, too, and when the time came he would run drunk about the town, naked and shouting; the town was of little account and was full of iniquity. And when the time was ended he was moved to anger, and all that he thought fit was good, and all he bade them do was right. He paid his people according to his pleasure, he brings out his reckoning beads, puts on his spectacles: "How much for you, Foma?" "I've had nothing since Christmas, Maxim Ivanovitch; thirty-nine roubles is my due." "Ough! what a sum of money! That's too much for you! It's more than you're worth altogether; it would not be fitting for you; ten roubles off the beads and you take twenty-nine." And the man says nothing; no one dares open his lips; all are dumb before him.

"I know how much I ought to give him," he says. "It's the only way to deal with the folk here. The folk here are corrupt. But for me they would have perished of hunger, all that are here. The folk here are thieves again. They covet all that they behold, there is no courage in them. They are drunkards too; if you pay a man his money he'll take it to the tavern and will sit in the tavern till he's naked—not a thread on him, he will come out as bare as your hand. They are mean wretches. A man will sit on a stone facing the tavern and begin wailing: 'Oh mother, my dear mother, why did you bring me into the world a hopeless drunkard? Better you had strangled me at birth, a hopeless drunkard like me!' Can you call that a man? That's a beast, not a man. One must first teach him better, and then give him money. I know when to give it him."

That's how Maxim Ivanovitch used to talk of the folk of Afimyeusk. Though he spoke evil of them, yet it was the truth. The folk were froward and unstable.

There lived in the same town another merchant, and he died. He was a young man and light-minded. He came to ruin and lost all his fortune. For the last year he struggled like a fish on the sand, and his life drew near its end. He was on bad terms with Maxim Ivanovitch all the time, and was heavily in debt to him. And he left behind a widow, still young, and five children. And for a young widow to be left alone without a husband, like a swallow without a refuge, is a great ordeal, to say nothing of five little children, and nothing to give them to eat. Their last possession, a wooden

house, Maxim Ivanovitch had taken for a debt. She set them all in a row at the church porch, the eldest a boy of seven, and the others all girls, one smaller than another, the biggest of them four, and the youngest babe at the breast. When Mass was over Maxim Ivanovitch came out of church, and all the little ones, all in a row, knelt down before him—she had told them to do this beforehand—and they clasped their little hands before them, and she behind them, with the fifth child in her arms, bowed down to the earth before him in the sight of all the congregation: “Maxim Ivanovitch, have mercy on the orphans! Do not take away their last crust! Do not drive them out of their home!” And all who were present were moved to tears, so well had she taught them. She thought that he would be proud before the people and would forgive the debt, and give back the house to the orphans. But it did not fall out so. Maxim Ivanovitch stood still. “You’re a young widow,” said he, “you want a husband, you are not weeping over your orphans. Your husband cursed me on his deathbed.” And he passed by and did not give up the house. “Why follow their foolishness (that is, connive at it)? If I show her benevolence they’ll abuse me more than ever. All that nonsense will be revived and the slander will only be confirmed.”

For there was a story that ten years before he had sent to that widow before she was married, and had offered her a great sum of money (she was very beautiful), forgetting that that sin is no less than defiling the temple of God. But he did not succeed then in his evil design. Of such abominations he had committed not a few, both in the town and all over the province, and indeed had gone beyond all bounds in such doings.

The mother wailed with her nurselings. He turned the orphans out of the house, and not from spite only, for, indeed, a man sometimes does not know himself what drives him to carry out his will. Well, people helped her at first and then she went out to work for hire. But there was little to be earned, save at the factory; she scrubs floors, weeds in the garden, heats the bath-house, and she carries the babe in her arms, and the other four run about the streets in their little shirts. When she made them kneel down at the church porch they still had little shoes, and little jackets of a sort, for they were merchant’s children but now they began to run barefoot. A child soon gets through its little clothes we know. Well, the children didn’t care: so long as there was sunshine they rejoiced, like birds, did not feel their ruin, and their voices were like little bells. The widow thought “the winter will come and what shall I do with you then? If God would only take you to Him before then!” But she had not to wait for the winter. About our parts the children have a cough, the whooping-cough, which goes from one to the other. First of all the baby died, and after her the others fell ill, and all four little girls she buried that autumn one after the other; one of them, it’s true, was trampled by the horses in the street. And what do you think? She buried them and she wailed. Though she had cursed them, yet when God took them she was sorry. A mother’s heart!

All she had left was the eldest, the boy, and she hung over him trembling. He was weak and tender, with a pretty little face like a girl’s, and she took him to the factory to the foreman who was his godfather, and she herself took a place as nurse.

But one day the boy was running in the yard, and Maxim Ivanovitch suddenly drove up with a pair of horses, and he had just been drinking; and the boy came rushing down the steps straight at him, and slipped and stumbled right against him as he was getting out of the droshky, and hit him with both hands in the stomach. He seized the boy by the hair and yelled, "Whose boy is it? A birch! Thrash him before me, this minute." The boy was half-dead with fright. They began thrashing him; he screamed. "So you scream, too, do you? Thrash him till he leaves off screaming." Whether they thrashed him hard or not, he didn't give up screaming till he fainted altogether. Then they left off thrashing him, they were frightened. The boy lay senseless, hardly breathing. They did say afterwards they had not beaten him much, but the boy was terrified. Maxim Ivanovitch was frightened! "Whose boy is he?" he asked. When they told him, "Upon my word! Take him to his mother. Why is he hanging about the factory here?" For two days afterwards he said nothing. Then he asked again: "How's the boy?" And it had gone hard with the boy. He had fallen ill, and lay in the corner at his mother's, and she had given up her job to look after him, and inflammation of the lungs had set in.

"Upon my word!" said Maxim Ivanovitch, "and for so little. It's not as though he were badly beaten. They only gave him a bit of a fright. I've given all the others just as sound a thrashing and never had this nonsense." He expected the mother to come and complain, and in his pride he said nothing. As though that were likely! The mother didn't dare to complain. And then he sent her fifteen roubles from himself, and a doctor; and not because he was afraid, but because he thought better of it. And then soon his time came and he drank for three weeks.

Winter passed, and at the Holy Ascension of Our Lord, Maxim Ivanovitch asks again: "And how's that same boy?" And all the winter he'd been silent and not asked. And they told him, "He's better and living with his mother, and she goes out by the day." And Maxim Ivanovitch went that day to the widow. He didn't go into the house, but called her out to the gate while he sat in his droshky. "See now, honest widow," says he. "I want to be a real benefactor to your son, and to show him the utmost favour. I will take him from here into my house. And if the boy pleases me I'll settle a decent fortune on him; and if I'm completely satisfied with him I may at my death make him the heir of my whole property as though he were my own son, on condition, however, that you do not come to the house except on great holidays. If this suits you, bring the boy to-morrow morning, he can't always be playing knuckle-bones." And saying this, he drove away, leaving the mother dazed. People had overheard and said to her, "When the boy grows up he'll reproach you himself for having deprived him of such good fortune." In the night she cried over him, but in the morning she took the child. And the lad was more dead than alive.

Maxim Ivanovitch dressed him like a little gentleman, and hired a teacher for him, and sat him at his book from that hour forward; and it came to his never leaving him out of his sight, always keeping him with him. The boy could scarcely begin to yawn before he'd shout at him, "Mind your book! Study! I want to make a man of you." And the boy was frail; ever since the time of that beating he'd had a cough. "As though

we didn't live well in my house!" said Maxim Ivanovitch, wondering; "at his mother's he used to run barefoot and gnaw crusts; why is he more puny than before?" And the teacher said, "Every boy," says he, "needs to play about, not to be studying all the time; he needs exercise," and he explained it all to him reasonably. Maxim Ivanovitch reflected. "That's true," he said. And that teacher's name was Pyotr Stepanovitch; the Kingdom of Heaven be his! He was almost like a crazy saint, he drank much, too much indeed, and that was the reason he had been turned out of so many places, and he lived in the town on alms one may say, but he was of great intelligence and strong in science. "This is not the place for me," he thought to himself, "I ought to be a professor in the university; here I'm buried in the mud, my very garments loathe me." Maxim Ivanovitch sits and shouts to the child, "Play!" and he scarcely dares to breathe before him. And it came to such a pass that the boy could not hear the sound of his voice without trembling all over. And Maxim Ivanovitch wondered more and more. "He's neither one thing nor the other; I picked him out of the mud, I dressed him in drap de dames with little boots of good material, he has embroidered shirts like a general's son, why has he not grown attached to me? Why is he as dumb as a little wolf?" And though people had long given up being surprised at Maxim Ivanovitch, they began to be surprised at him again—the man was beside himself: he pestered the little child and would never let him alone. "As sure as I'm alive I'll root up his character. His father cursed me on his deathbed after he'd taken the last sacrament. It's his father's character." And yet he didn't once use the birch to him (after that time he was afraid to). He frightened him, that's what he did. He frightened him without a birch.

And something happened. One day, as soon as he'd gone out, the boy left his book and jumped on to a chair. He had thrown his ball on to the top of the sideboard, and now he wanted to get it, and his sleeve caught in a china lamp on the sideboard, the lamp fell to the floor and was smashed to pieces, and the crash was heard all over the house, and it was an expensive thing, made of Saxony china. And Maxim Ivanovitch heard at once, though he was two rooms away, and he yelled. The boy rushed away in terror. He ran out on the verandah, across the garden, and through the back gate on to the river-bank. And there was a boulevard running along the river-bank, there were old willows there, it was a pleasant place. He ran down to the water, people saw, and clasped his hands at the very place where the ferry-boat comes in, but seemed frightened of the water, and stood as though turned to stone. And it's a broad open space, the river is swift there, and boats pass by; on the other side there are shops, a square, a temple of God, shining with golden domes. And just then Mme. Ferzing, the colonel's wife, came hurrying down to the ferry with her little daughter. The daughter, who was also a child of eight, was wearing a little white frock; she looked at the boy and laughed, and she was carrying a little country basket, and in it a hedgehog. "Look, mother," said she, "how the boy is looking at my hedgehog!" "No," said the lady, "he's frightened of something. What are you afraid of, pretty boy?" (All this was told afterwards.) "And what a pretty boy," she said; "and how nicely he's dressed. Whose boy are you?" she asked. And he'd never seen a hedgehog before, he went up and looked,

and forgot everything at once—such is childhood! “What is it you have got there?” he asked. “It’s a hedgehog,” said the little lady, “we’ve just bought it from a peasant, he found it in the woods.” “What’s that,” he asked, “what is a hedgehog?” and he began laughing and poking it with his finger, and the hedgehog put up its bristles, and the little girl was delighted with the boy. “We’ll take it home with us and tame it,” she said. “Ach,” said he, “do give me your hedgehog!” And he asked her this so pleadingly, and he’d hardly uttered the words, when Maxim Ivanovitch came running down upon him. “Ah, there you are! Hold him!” (He was in such a rage, that he’d run out of the house after him, without a hat.) Then the boy remembered everything, he screamed, and ran to the water, pressed his little fists against his breast, looked up at the sky (they saw it, they saw it!) and leapt into the water. Well, people cried out, and jumped from the ferry, tried to get him out, but the current carried him away. The river was rapid, and when they got him out, the little thing was dead. His chest was weak, he couldn’t stand being in the water, his hold on life was weak. And such a thing had never been known in those parts, a little child like that to take its life! What a sin! And what could such a little soul say to our Lord God in the world beyond?

And Maxim Ivanovitch brooded over it ever after. The man became so changed one would hardly have known him. He sorrowed grievously. He tried drinking, and drank heavily, but gave it up—it was no help. He gave up going to the factory too, he would listen to no one. If anyone spoke to him, he would be silent, or wave his hand. So he spent two months, and then he began talking to himself. He would walk about talking to himself. Vaskovo, the little village down the hill, caught fire, and nine houses were burnt; Maxim Ivanovitch drove up to look. The peasants whose cottages were burnt came round him wailing; he promised to help them and gave orders, and then he called his steward again and took it back. “There’s no need,” said he, “don’t give them anything,” and he never said why. “God has sent me to be a scorn unto all men,” said he, “like some monster, and therefore so be it. Like the wind,” said he, “has my fame gone abroad.” The archimandrite himself came to him. He was a stern man, the head of the community of the monastery. “What are you doing?” he asked sternly.

“I will tell you.” And Maxim Ivanovitch opened the Bible and pointed to the passage:

“Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Math. xviii, 6.)

“Yes,” said the archimandrite, “though it was not said directly of this, yet it fits it well. It is sad when a man loses his measure—the man is lost. And thou hast exalted thyself.”

And Maxim Ivanovitch sits as though a stupor had come upon him. The archimandrite gazed upon him.

“Listen,” said he, “and remember. It is said: ‘the word of a desperate man flies on the wind.’ And remember, also, that even the angels of God are not perfect. But perfect and sinless is one only, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Him the angels serve. Moreover, thou didst not will the death of that child, but wast only without wisdom. But this,”

said he, "is marvellous in my eyes. Thou hast committed many even worse iniquities. Many men thou hast ruined, many thou hast corrupted, many thou hast destroyed, no less than, if thou hadst slain them. And did not his sisters, all the four babes, die almost before thine eyes? Why has this one only confounded thee? For all these in the past thou hast not grieved, I dare say, but hast even forgotten to think of them. Why art thou so horror-stricken for this child for whom thou wast not greatly to blame?"

"I dream at night," Maxim Ivanovitch said.

"And what?"

But he told nothing more. He sat mute. The archimandrite marvelled, but with that he went away. There was no doing anything with him.

And Maxim Ivanovitch sent for the teacher, for Pyotr Stepanovitch; they had not met since that day.

"You remember him?" says he.

"Yes."

"You painted a picture with oil colours, here in the tavern," said he, "and took a copy of the chief priest's portrait. Could you paint me a picture?"

"I can do anything, I have every talent. I can do everything."

"Paint me a very big picture, to cover the whole wall, and paint in it first of all the river, and the slope, and the ferry, and all the people who were there, the colonel's wife, and her daughter and the hedgehog. And paint me the other bank too, so that one can see the church and the square and the shops, and where the cabs stand— paint it all just as it is. And the boy by the ferry, just above the river, at that very place, and paint him with his two little fists pressed to his little breast. Be sure to do that. And open the heavens above the church on the further side, and let all the angels of heaven be flying to meet him. Can you do it or not?"

"I can do anything."

"I needn't ask a dauber like you. I might send for the finest painter in Moscow, or even from London itself, but you remember his face. If it's not like, or little like, I'll only give you fifty roubles. But if it's just like, I'll give you two hundred. You remember his eyes were blue... . And it must be made a very, very big picture."

It was prepared. Pyotr Stepanovitch began painting and then he suddenly went and said:

"No, it can't be painted like that."

"Why so?"

"Because that sin, suicide, is the greatest of all sins. And would the angels come to meet him after such a sin?"

"But he was a babe, he was not responsible."

"No, he was not a babe, he was a youth. He was eight years old when it happened. He was bound to render some account."

Maxim Ivanovitch was more terror-stricken than ever.

"But I tell you what, I've thought something," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, "we won't open the heaven, and there's no need to paint the angels, but I'll let a beam of light,

one bright ray of light, come down from heaven as though to meet him. It's all the same as long as there's something."

So he painted the ray. I saw that picture myself afterwards, and that very ray of light, and the river. It stretched right across the wall, all blue, and the sweet boy was there, both little hands pressed to his breast, and the little lady, and the hedgehog, he put it all in. Only Maxim Ivanovitch showed no one the picture at the time, but locked it up in his room, away from all eyes; and when the people trooped from all over the town to see it, he bade them drive every one away. There was a great talk about it. Pyotr Stepanovitch seemed as though he were beside himself. "I can do anything now," said he. "I've only to set up in St. Petersburg at the court." He was a very polite man, but he liked boasting beyond all measure. And his fate overtook him; when he received the full two hundred roubles, he began drinking at once, and showed his money to every one, bragging of it, and he was murdered at night, when he was drunk, and his money stolen by a workman with whom he was drinking, and it all became known in the morning.

And it all ended so that even now they remember it everywhere there. Maxim Ivanovitch suddenly drives up to the same widow. She lodged at the edge of the town in a working-woman's hut; he stood before her and bowed down to the ground. And she had been ill ever since that time and could scarcely move.

"Good mother," he wailed, "honest widow, marry me, monster as I am. Let me live again!"

She looks at him more dead than alive.

"I want us to have another boy," said he. "And if he is born, it will mean that that boy has forgiven us both, both you and me. For so the boy has bidden me."

She saw the man was out of his mind, and in a frenzy, but she could not refrain.

"That's all nonsense," she answered him, "and only cowardice. Through the same cowardice I have lost all my children. I cannot bear the sight of you before me, let alone accepting such an everlasting torture."

Maxim Ivanovitch drove off, but he did not give in. The whole town was agog at such a marvel. Maxim Ivanovitch sent match-makers to her. He sent for two of his aunts, working women in the chief town of the province. Aunts they were not, but kinsfolk of some sort, decent people. They began trying to turn her, they kept persuading her and would not leave the cottage. He sent her merchants' wives of the town too, and the wife of the head priest of the cathedral, and the wives of officials; she was besieged by the whole town, and she got really sick of it.

"If my orphans had been living," she said, "but why should I now? Am I to be guilty of such a sin against my children?"

The archimandrite, too, tried to persuade her. He breathed into her ear:

"You will make a new man of him."

She was horrified, and people wondered at her.

"How can you refuse such a piece of luck?"

And this was how he overcame her in the end.

“Anyway he was a suicide,” he said, “and not a babe, but a youth, and owing to his years he could not have been admitted to the Holy Communion, and so he must have been bound to give at least some account. If you enter into matrimony with me, I’ll make you a solemn promise, I’ll build a church of God to the eternal memory of his soul.”

She could not stand out against that, and consented. So they were married.

And all were in amazement. They lived from the very first day in great and unfeigned harmony, jealously guarding their marriage vow, and like one soul in two bodies. She conceived that winter, and they began visiting the churches, and fearing the wrath of God. They stayed in three monasteries, and consulted prophecy. He built the promised church, and also a hospital, and almshouses in the town. He founded an endowment for widows and orphans. And he remembered all whom he had injured, and desired to make them restitution; he began to give away money without stint, so that his wife and the archimandrite even had to restrain him; “for that is enough,” they said. Maxim Ivanovitch listened to them. “I cheated Foma of his wages that time,” said he. So they paid that back to Foma. And Foma was moved even to tears. “As it is I’m content ...” says he, “you’ve given me so much without that.” It touched every one’s heart in fact, and it shows it’s true what they say that a living man will be a good example. And the people are good- hearted there.

His wife began to manage the factory herself, and so well that she’s remembered to this day. He did not give up drinking, but she looked after him at those times, and began to nurse him. His language became more decorous, and even his voice changed. He became merciful beyond all wont, even to animals. If he saw from the window a peasant shamelessly beating his horse on the head, he would send out at once, and buy the horse at double its value. And he received the gift of tears. If any one talked to him he melted into tears. When her time had come, God answered their prayers at last, and sent them a son, and for the first time Maxim Ivanovitch became glad; he gave alms freely, and forgave many debts, and invited the whole town to the christening. And next day he was black as night. His wife saw that something was wrong with him, and held up to him the new-born babe.

“The boy has forgiven us,” she said; “he has accepted our prayers and our tears for him.”

And it must be said they had neither of them said one word on that subject for the whole year, they had kept it from each other in their hearts. And Maxim Ivanovitch looked at her, black as night. “Wait a bit,” said he, “consider, for a whole year he has not come to me, but last night he came in my dream.”

“I was struck to the heart with terror when I heard those strange words,” she said afterwards.

The boy had not come to him in his dream for nothing. Scarcely had Maxim Ivanovitch said this, when something happened to the new-born babe, it suddenly fell ill. And the child was ill for eight days; they prayed unceasingly and sent for doc-

tors, and sent for the very best doctor in Moscow by train. The doctor came, and he flew into a rage.

“I’m the foremost doctor,” said he, “all Moscow is awaiting me.”

He prescribed a drop, and hurried away again. He took eight hundred roubles. And the baby died in the evening.

And what after that? Maxim Ivanovitch settled all his property on his beloved wife, gave up all his money and all his papers to her, doing it all in due form according to law, then he stood before her and bowed down to the earth.

“Let me go, my priceless spouse, save my soul while it is still possible. If I spend the time without profit to my soul, I shall not return. I have been hard and cruel, and laid heavy burdens upon men, but I believe that for the woes and wanderings that lie before me, God will not leave me without requital, seeing that to leave all this is no little cross and no little woe.”

And his wife heard him with many tears.

“You are all I have now upon the earth, and to whom am I left?” said she, “I have laid up affection in my heart for you this year.”

And every one in the town counselled him against it and besought him; and thought to hold him back by force. But he would not listen to them, and he went away in secret by night, and was not seen again. And the tale is that he perseveres in pilgrimage and in patience to this day, and visits his dear wife once a year.

Chapter 4

1

I am now approaching the culminating catastrophe to which my whole story is leading up. But before I can continue I must give a preliminary explanation of things of which I knew nothing at the time when I was taking part in them, but which I only understood and fully realized long afterwards, that is when everything was over. I don’t know how else to be clear, as otherwise I should have to write the whole story in riddles. And so I will give a simple and direct explanation, sacrificing so-called artistic effect, and presenting it without any personal feelings, as though I were not writing it myself, something after the style of an *entrefilet* in the newspaper.

The fact is that my old schoolfellow, Lambert, might well, and indeed with certainty, be said to belong to one of those disreputable gangs of petty scoundrels who form associations for the sake of what is now called *chantage*, an offence nowadays defined and punished by our legal code. The gang to which Lambert belonged had been formed in Moscow and had already succeeded in a good many enterprises there (it was to some extent exposed later on). I heard afterwards that they had in Moscow an extremely experienced and clever leader, a man no longer young. They embarked upon enterprises, sometimes acting individually and sometimes in concert. While they were responsible

for some filthy and indecent scandals (accounts of which have, however, already been published in the newspapers) they also carried out some subtle and elaborate intrigues under the leadership of their chief. I found out about some of them later on, but I will not repeat the details. I will only mention that it was their characteristic method to discover some secret, often in the life of people of the greatest respectability and good position. Then they would go to these persons and threaten to make public documentary evidence (which they often did not possess) and would demand a sum of money as the price of silence. There are things neither sinful nor criminal which even honourable and strong-minded people would dread to have exposed. They worked chiefly upon family secrets. To show how adroit their chief sometimes was in his proceedings, I will describe in three lines and without any details one of their exploits. A really wicked and sinful action was committed in a certain honourable family; the wife of a well-known and highly respected man entered into a secret love-affair with a young and wealthy officer. They scented this out, and what they did was to give the young man plainly to understand that they would inform the husband. They hadn't the slightest proof, and the young man knew that quite well, and indeed they did not conceal it from him. But the whole ingenuity and the whole cunning of their calculations lay in the reflection that on receiving information, even without proofs, the husband would take exactly the same steps as though he had positive proofs. They relied upon their knowledge of the man's character, and of the circumstances of the family. The fact was that one member of the gang was a young man belonging to a very good set, and he had been able to collect information beforehand. They extracted a considerable sum from the lover, and without any risk to themselves, because their victim was himself eager for secrecy.

Though Lambert took part in this affair, he was not actually one of the Moscow gang; acquiring a taste for the work he began by degrees and experimentally acting on his own account. I may mention beforehand that he was not altogether well fitted for it. He was very sharp and calculating, but hasty, and what's more, simple, or rather naive, that is he had very little knowledge of men or of good society. I fancy, for instance, that he did not realize the capacity of the Moscow chief, and imagined that the organization and conduct of such projects were very easy. And he imagined that almost every one was as great a scoundrel as he was himself, and if once he had conceived that a certain person was afraid, or must be afraid for this reason or for that, he would be as certain that the man was afraid as though it were an axiomatic truth. I don't know how to express this; I'll explain the fact more clearly later, but in my opinion he had rather a coarse-grained intelligence, and not only had he no faith in certain good and generous feelings, but perhaps he had actually no conception of them.

He had come to Petersburg because he had long conceived of Petersburg as offering a wider scope for his energies, and because in Moscow he had got into a scrape, and because some one was looking for him there with extremely evil intentions. On arriving in Petersburg he at once got into touch with an old comrade, but he found the outlook unpromising and nothing to be done on a large scale. His acquaintance had increased,

but nothing had come of it. "They're a wretched lot here, no better than boys," he said to me himself afterwards. And behold, one fine morning at sunrise he found me half-frozen under a wall, and at once dropped upon the scent of what he regarded as a "very rich job."

It all rested on my ravings as I thawed in his lodgings. I was practically delirious then! But from my words it was manifest that of all the affronts I had suffered on that momentous day, the thing which most rankled in my heart, and was most vivid in my memory, was the insult I had received from Buring and from her; I should not otherwise have talked of nothing else in my delirium at Lambert's, but should have raved of Zerstchikov for example, but it was only of the former I had talked, as I learned afterwards from Lambert himself. And besides, I was in a sort of ecstasy, and looked upon both Lambert and Alphonsine on that awful morning as, so-to-say, champions and deliverers. Afterwards, as I got better and lay in bed, wondering what Lambert could have learned from my ravings, and to what extent I had babbled, it never occurred to me even to suspect that he could have found out so much. Oh, of course, from the gnawing at my conscience I suspected even then that I had said a great deal I should not have said, but, I repeat, I never imagined that it had gone so far. I hoped, too, that I was not able to articulate my words clearly, and indeed I reckoned upon this, as I distinctly remembered it. And yet it turned out in fact that my articulation had been much more distinct than I afterwards supposed and hoped. But the worst of it was that all this only came to light afterwards, and long afterwards, and that was a misfortune for me.

From my deliriums, my ravings, my mutterings, my transports, and so on, he learned, to begin with, almost all the surnames correctly, and even some addresses. And, secondly, he was able to get a fairly correct idea of the consequence of the persons concerned (the old prince, HER, Buring, Anna Andreyevna, and even Versilov); thirdly, he learned that I had been insulted and was threatening revenge; and lastly, and chiefly, that there was in existence a mysterious, hidden document, a letter, such, that if it were shown to a half-crazy old prince he would learn that his own daughter thought him a lunatic and was already consulting lawyers to get him locked up—and would either go quite mad, or would turn her out of the house, and leave her out of his will, or would marry a certain Mme. Versilov whom he already wanted to marry, and was being prevented from marrying. In short, Lambert understood a great deal; no doubt a great deal still remained obscure, but the expert blackmailer had anyway dropped on a trustworthy scent. When I ran away afterwards from Alphonsine he promptly found out my address (in the simplest possible way, by going to the address bureau); and then immediately made the necessary inquiries, from which he discovered that all these persons about whom I had babbled to him did actually exist. Then he promptly took the first step.

The most important fact was the existence of the DOCUMENT, and that I was in possession of it, and that that document was of the highest value—of that Lambert had no doubt. Here I omit one circumstance, which will come in better later, in its

proper place, and will only mention here that that circumstance was what principally confirmed Lambert in the conviction of the real existence and, still more, of the value of the document. It was, I may say beforehand, a momentous circumstance, of which I could have no conception either at the time or afterwards, until the final catastrophe, when everything was discovered and became evident of itself. And so, convinced of the main facts, his first step was to go to Anna Andreyevna.

Yet one thing perplexes me to this day: how he, Lambert, succeeded in gaining admittance to, and fastening himself upon, such an unapproachable and superior personage as Anna Andreyevna. It is true that he gathered information about her, but what of that? It is true that he was extremely well dressed, spoke French with a Parisian accent, and had a French surname, but surely Anna Andreyevna must have discerned that he was a scoundrel at once? Or is one to suppose that a scoundrel was just what she wanted at that time? But surely that cannot be so?

I never could find out the details of their interview, but I have often pictured the scene to myself in my imagination. What is most likely is that from the first word Lambert posed as a friend of my childhood, anxious over a dear and cherished comrade. But no doubt at that first interview he succeeded in hinting quite clearly that I had a document, and letting her know that it was a secret, and that only he, Lambert, was in possession of it, and that I was intending to revenge myself on Mme. Ahmakov by means of it, and so on, and so on. Above all he could explain to her as precisely as possible the importance and value of this document. As for Anna Andreyevna she was in such a position that she must have caught at any information of this kind, must have listened with the closest attention, and ... must have risen to the bait through "the struggle for existence." Just at that time they had abstracted her fiancé from her, and had carried him off under guardianship to Tsarskoe; and they had even put her under supervision, too. And then a find like this! This was not a case of some old woman whispering in her ear, of tearful lamentations, of scheming and backbiting, there was a letter, an actual piece of writing, that is a positive proof of the treacherous design of his daughter, and of all those who had snatched him from her, and that, therefore, he must be saved even by flight, to her, to Anna Andreyevna, and must be married to her in twenty-four hours, otherwise he would be at once spirited away into a lunatic asylum.

And perhaps the fact that Lambert attempted no subterfuges with the young lady even for a moment, but practically blurted straight out from the first word:

"Mademoiselle, either remain an old maid or become a princess and a millionaire. There is a document and I will steal it from the lad and give it to you ... for a note of hand from you for thirty thousand."

I positively imagine that that's just how it was. Oh, he thought they were all as scoundrelly as himself; I repeat he had that sort of simplicity, that sort of innocence of the scoundrel... . However it happened, it may very well be that even when she was demeaning herself like this, Anna Andreyevna was not embarrassed for a minute, but could perfectly well control herself and listen to the blackmailer talking in his

own style—and all from “the breadth of her nature.” Oh, no doubt she flushed a little at first, and then she mastered herself and listened. And when I imagine that proud, unapproachable, genuinely dignified girl, with her brains, too, hand in hand with Lambert, well ... what a mind! A Russian mind, so large, with such a desire for breadth, a woman’s too, and in such circumstances!

Now I’ll make a résumé. By the time I went out after my illness, Lambert had two plans (I know that for a fact now). The first was to get an IOU for not less than thirty thousand from Anna Andreyevna for the letter, and then to help her to frighten the prince, to abduct him and to get her married to him at once— something of that sort anyway. The plan for this was complete. They were only waiting for my help, that is for the document.

The second plan was to desert Anna Andreyevna, throw her over, and sell the letter to Mme. Ahmakov, if that would pay him better. In this he was reckoning on Büring. But Lambert had not yet applied to Mme. Ahmakov, and was only on her track. He was waiting for me too.

Oh, he needed me, that is, not me but the letter! He had formed two plans in regard to me also. The first was, if necessary, to act in concert with me, and to go halves with me, first taking possession of me morally and physically. But the second plan attracted him much more. It was to deceive me as a silly boy, and to steal the letter from me, or even simply to take it from me by force. This was his favourite plan, and the one he cherished in his dreams. I repeat, there was a circumstance which made him reckon with certainty on the success of his second plan, but, as I have said already, I will explain that later. In any case he awaited me with nervous impatience. Everything depended upon me, every step and every decision.

And I must do him the justice to say that he knew how to restrain himself till the time came, in spite of his hasty temper. He did not come to see me all the while I was ill, he only came once to the house and saw Versilov; he did not worry or frighten me, he kept up an attitude of complete independence as regards me till the day and hour of my going out. As for the possibility of my giving up the letter, telling about it, or destroying it, he had no anxiety on that score. From my words he had been able to gather how much importance I attached to secrecy, and how afraid I was that some one might find out about the letter. And that I should go straight to him and to no one else, on the first day I was well enough, he did not doubt in the least either. Darya Onisimovna came to see me partly by his orders, and he knew that my curiosity and apprehension were already aroused, and that I should not hold out... . And, indeed, he had taken all precautions, he was in a position to know what day I was going out, so that I could hardly have eluded him if I had wanted to.

But however eagerly Lambert may have been expecting me, Anna Andreyevna perhaps was awaiting me even more eagerly. I must say frankly that Lambert was to some extent right in his reckoning when he contemplated throwing her over, and it was her own fault. In spite of the agreement that no doubt existed between them (in what form I don’t know, but I have no doubt about it), Anna Andreyevna up to the very

last moment was not fully open with him. She did not lay all her cards on the table. She hinted at complete agreement on her part and at all sorts of promises—but she confined herself to hints. She listened perhaps to his whole plan in detail; but she only approved in silence. I have good evidence for this conclusion, and the reason of it all was THAT SHE WAS WAITING FOR ME. She would rather have had to do with me than with the rascally Lambert—that's a fact I have no doubt of. That I understand; but her mistake was in letting Lambert at last understand it. And it would not have suited him at all, if passing him by she had enticed the letter out of me and entered into a compact with me. Moreover, at that time he had complete confidence in the "soundness of the job"; another man in his place would have had fears and still have been uncertain; but Lambert was young, insolent, and filled with impatient greed for gain; he knew little of human nature, and confidently assumed that all were scoundrels. Such a man could have no doubts, especially as he had already observed all sorts of traits in Anna Andreyevna which supported his belief.

One last point, and the most important: did Versilov know anything by that time, and had he even then taken part with Lambert in any plan, however remote? No, no, no, at that time he had not. Though, perhaps, even then a fatal word had been dropped. But enough, enough, I am hastening too far ahead.

Well, and what of me? Did I know anything, and what did I know on the day I went out? When I began this entrefilet I declared that I knew nothing on that day, but found out about everything much later, and only when it was all over. That's the truth, but is it the full truth? No, it is not; I certainly knew something already, I knew a great deal, indeed. But how? Let the reader remember my DREAM! If I could have had such a dream, if it could have surged up from my heart and taken that shape, I must have had, not a knowledge but a presentiment of a very great deal of what I have just explained, though in actual fact I only discovered it when everything was over. I had no knowledge of it, but my heart was throbbing with forebodings, and evil spirits had possession of my dreams. And it was to that man that I rushed, fully knowing what sort of man he was and foreseeing everything even in detail. And why did I rush to him? Imagine; it seems to me now at the very minute when I am writing that I knew exactly at the time why I was rushing to him, though, again, I knew nothing then. Perhaps the reader will understand this. Now to get on with my story, fact by fact.

2

It begins two days before my outburst, when Liza came home in the evening in a state of agitation. She felt terribly humiliated and indeed something insufferable had happened to her.

I have already mentioned the terms she was on with Vassin. She went to see him not simply to show us that she did not need us, but because she really had a high opinion of him. Their acquaintance had begun at Luga, and I always fancied that

Vassin was not indifferent to her, in the misfortunes that had overwhelmed her she might naturally have wished for the advice of a calm, resolute, always lofty mind such as she supposed Vassin's to be. Besides, women are not very clever in appreciating a man's mind at its true value when they like a man; and they will gladly accept paradoxes as the closest reasoning, if they fall in with their own desires. What Liza liked in Vassin was his sympathy for her in her position and, as she had fancied at first, his sympathy with Prince Sergay. When, later on, she suspected his feeling for her, she could not help appreciating the sympathy he showed for his rival. When she told Prince Sergay that she sometimes went to consult Vassin, he had from the first shown the greatest uneasiness; he began to be jealous. Liza was offended at this, and purposely maintained her friendly relations with Vassin. Prince Sergay said nothing, but was gloomy. Liza confessed to me (long afterwards) that Vassin had very soon ceased to attract her; he was composed, and just this everlasting unruffled composure, which had so attracted her at first, afterwards seemed to her distasteful. One would have thought he was practical, and he did, in fact, give her some apparently good advice, but all his advice, as ill-luck would have it, appeared later on impossible to carry out. He gave his opinions sometimes too conceitedly, and showed no trace of diffidence with her, becoming more and more free in his manner as time went on, which she ascribed to his unconsciously feeling less and less respect for her position. Once she thanked him for his invariable goodwill to me, and for talking to me as an intellectual equal though he was so superior to me (she was repeating my words). He answered:

"That's not so, and not for that reason. It's because I see no difference between him and other people. I don't consider him more foolish than the clever, or more evil than the good. I treat every one alike because every one's alike in my eyes."

"Why, do you mean to say you see no differences?"

"Oh, of course, people are all different in one way or another, but differences don't exist for me because the differences between people don't concern me; to me they are all the same and everything's the same; and so I'm equally kind to all."

"And don't you find it dull?"

"No, I'm always satisfied with myself."

"And there's nothing you desire?"

"Of course there is. But nothing I desire very much. There's scarcely anything I want, not another rouble. Whether I wear cloth of gold or remain as I am is all the same to me. Cloth of gold would add nothing to me. Tit-bits don't tempt me. Could places or honours be worth the place that I am worth?"

Liza declared on her honour that these were literally his words. But it's not fair to criticize them like this without knowing the circumstances under which they were uttered.

Little by little Liza came also to the conclusion that his indulgent attitude to Prince Sergay was not due to sympathy for her, but was perhaps only because "all were alike to him, and differences did not exist for him." But in the end he did apparently begin to lose his indifference, and to take up an attitude not only of disapproval, but

even of contemptuous irony towards Prince Sergay. This incensed Liza, but Vassin remained unaffected. Above all, he always expressed himself gently, and showed no indignation even in his disapproval, but confined himself to logical exposition of her hero's worthlessness; but there was irony in this very logic. Finally he demonstrated almost directly the "irrationality," the perverse violence of her love. "Your feelings have been mistaken, and a mistake once recognized ought invariably to be corrected."

This had happened on that very day; Liza indignantly got up from her place to go, but it will hardly be believed what this rational man did next, and how he concluded. With the air of a man of honour, and even with feeling, he offered her his hand. Liza bluntly called him a fool to his face and walked out.

To suggest deserting a man in misfortune because that man was "unworthy of her," and above all to suggest it to a woman who was with child by that very man—there you have the mind of these people! I call this being dreadfully theoretical and knowing nothing whatever of life, and put it down to a prodigious conceit. And what's more, Liza saw quite clearly that he was actually proud of his action, because he knew of her condition. With tears of indignation she hurried off to Prince Sergay, and he positively surpassed Vassin. One would have thought that after what she told him he might have been convinced that he had no cause for jealousy; but he became perfectly frantic. But jealous people are always like that! He made a fearful scene and insulted her so outrageously that she almost resolved to break off all relations with him.

She came home, however, still controlling herself, but she could not help telling mother. Oh, that evening the ice was completely broken, and they were on their old affectionate terms again; both, of course, shed tears as usual in each other's arms, and Liza apparently regained her composure, though she was very gloomy. She sat through the evening in Makar Ivanovitch's room, without uttering a word, but without leaving the room. She listened very attentively to what he said. Ever since the incident with the bench she had become extremely and, as it were, timidly respectful to him, though she still remained taciturn.

But this time Makar Ivanovitch suddenly gave an unexpected and wonderful turn to the conversation. I may mention that Versilov and the doctor had talked of his health with very gloomy faces that morning. I may mention, too, that we had for some days been talking a great deal about mother's birthday, and making preparations to celebrate it in five days' time. Apropos of her birthday Makar Ivanovitch suddenly launched into reminiscences of mother's childhood, and the time when she "couldn't stand up on her little feet." "She was never out of my arms," the old man recalled. "I used to teach her to walk too sometimes. I set her up in a corner three steps away and called her, and she used to totter across to me, and she wasn't frightened, but would run to me laughing, she'd rush at me and throw her arms round my neck. I used to tell you fairytales later on, Sofia Andreyevna; you were very fond of fairy tales, you'd sit on my knee listening for two hours at a stretch. They used to wonder in the cottage, 'just see how she's taken to Makar.' Or I'd carry you off into the woods, I'd seek out a raspberry-bush, I would sit you down by it, and cut you a whistle-pipe out

of wood. When we'd had a nice walk, I'd carry you home in my arms—and the little thing would fall asleep. Once she was afraid of a wolf; she flew to me all of a tremble, and there wasn't a wolf there at all."

"I remember that," said mother.

"Can you really remember it?"

"I remember a great deal. Ever since I remember anything in life I have felt your love and tender care over me," she said in a voice full of feeling, and she suddenly flushed crimson.

Makar Ivanovitch paused for a little.

"Forgive me, children, I am leaving you. The term of my life is close at hand. In my old age I have found consolation for all afflictions. Thank you, my dear ones."

"That's enough, Makar Ivanovitch darling," exclaimed Versilov in some agitation. "The doctor told me just now that you were a great deal better... ."

Mother listened in alarm.

"Why, what does he know, your Alexandr Semyonovitch—he's a dear man and nothing more. Give over, friends, do you think that I'm afraid to die? After my morning prayer to-day I had the feeling in my heart that I should never go out again from here; it was told me. Well, what of it, blessed be the name of the Lord. Yet I have a longing to be looking upon all of you still. Job, after all his sufferings, was comforted looking upon his new children, and forgot the children that were gone—it is impossible! Only with the years the sorrow is mingled with the joy and turned to sighs of gladness. So it is in the world. Every soul is tried and is comforted. I thought, children, to say one little word to you," he went on with a gentle, exquisite smile which I shall never forget, and he turned to me, "be zealous for the Holy Church, my dear, and if the time calls for it—die for her; but wait a bit, don't be frightened, it won't be at once," he added, laughing. "Now perhaps you don't think of it, afterwards you will think of it. And something more. Any good thing you bethink yourself to do, do it for the sake of God and not for envy. Stand firmly to your cause, and do not give way through any sort of cowardice; act steadily, neither rushing nor turning about; well, that is all I want to tell you. Only accustom yourself to pray daily and unceasingly. I say this now, maybe you'll remember it. I should like to say something to you, too, Andrey Petrovitch, sir, but God will find your heart without my words. And for long years we have ceased to speak of that, ever since that arrow pierced my heart. Now that I am departing I would only remind you of what you promised then... ."

He almost whispered the last words, with his eyes cast down.

"Makar Ivanovitch!" Versilov said in confusion, and he got up from his chair.

"There, there, don't be troubled, sir, I only recalled it ... and in the sight of God I am more to blame than any of you, seeing that though you were my master I ought not to have allowed this weakness, and therefore, Sofia, fret not your soul too much, for all your sin is mine, and you scarcely had full judgment in those days, so I fancy; nor maybe you either, sir," he smiled with lips that quivered from some sort of pain, "and though I might then have taught you, my wife, even with the rod and indeed ought

to have, yet I pitied you when you fell in tears before me, and hid nothing, and kissed my feet. Not to reproach you have I recalled this, beloved, but only to remind Andrey Petrovitch ... for you remember, sir, yourself your promise, as a nobleman, and all will be covered with the wedding crown. I speak before the children, master ...”

He was extremely agitated and looked at Versilov as though expecting from him some word of confirmation. I repeat it was all so sudden, so unexpected, that I sat motionless. Versilov was no less agitated: he went up to mother in silence and warmly embraced her; then mother, also in silence, went up to Makar Ivanovitch and bowed down to his feet.

In short the scene was overwhelming; on this occasion we were by ourselves. Even Tatyana Pavlovna was not present. Liza drew herself up in her chair and listened in silence; suddenly she stood up and said firmly to Makar Ivanovitch:

“Bless me, too, Makar Ivanovitch for my great anguish. To morrow will decide my whole fate, and you will pray for me to-day.”

And she went out of the room. I knew that Makar Ivanovitch knew all about her already from mother. But it was the first time I had seen mother and Versilov side by side: till then I had only seen her as his slave near him. There was still so much I did not understand and had not detected in that man whom I had condemned, and so I went back to my room in confusion. And it must be said that it was just at this time that my perplexity about him was greatest. He had never seemed to me so mysterious and unfathomable as just at that time; but it’s just about that that I’m writing this whole account; all in its good time.

“It turns out though,” I thought to myself as I got into bed, “that he gave his word ‘as a nobleman’ to marry mother if she were left a widow. He said nothing of that when he told me about Makar Ivanovitch before.”

Liza was out the whole of the following day, and when she came back, rather late, she went straight to Makar Ivanovitch. I thought I would not go in that I might not be in their way, but soon, noticing that mother and Versilov were already there, I went in. Liza was sitting by the old man crying on his shoulder, and he with a sorrowful face was stroking her head.

Versilov told me in my room afterwards that Prince Sergay insisted on having his way, and proposed marrying Liza at the first opportunity before his trial was over. It was hard for Liza to make up her mind to it, though she scarcely had the right to refuse. And indeed Makar Ivanovitch “commanded” her to be married. Of course all this would have come about of itself, and she would certainly have been married of her own accord and without hesitation, but at the moment she had been so insulted by the man she loved, and she was so humiliated by this love even in her own eyes that it was difficult for her to decide. But apart from her mortification there was another circumstance deterring her of which I could have no suspicion.

“Did you hear that all those young people on the Petersburg Side were arrested?” Versilov added suddenly.

“What? Dergatchev?” I cried.

“Yes, and Vassin, too.”

I was amazed, especially to hear about Vassin.

“Why, was he mixed up in anything? Good heavens, what will happen to them now! And just when Liza was being so severe upon him! ... What do you think? What may happen to them? It’s Stebelkov, I swear it’s Stebelkov’s doing.”

“We won’t go into it,” said Versilov, looking at me strangely (as people look at a man who has no knowledge or suspicion of something). “Who can tell what is going on among them, and who can tell what may happen to them? I didn’t come to speak of that. I hear you meant to go out to-morrow. Won’t you be going to see Prince Sergay?”

“The first thing; though I must own it’s very distasteful to me. Why, have you some message to send him?”

“No, nothing. I shall see him myself. I’m sorry for Liza. And what advice can Makar Ivanovitch give her? He knows nothing about life or about people himself. Another thing, my dear boy” (it was a long time since he had called me “my dear boy”), “there are here too ... certain young men ... among whom is your old schoolfellow, Lambert ... I fancy they are all great rascals... . I speak simply to warn you... . But, of course, it’s your business, and I have no right ...”

“Andrey Petrovitch!” I clutched his hand, speaking without a moment’s thought and almost by inspiration as I sometimes do (the room was almost in darkness). “Andrey Petrovitch, I have said nothing; you have seen that of course, I have been silent till now, do you know why? To avoid knowing your secrets. I’ve simply resolved not to know them, ever. I’m a coward. I’m afraid your secrets may tear you out of my heart altogether, and I don’t want that to happen. Since it’s so, why should you know my secrets? It doesn’t matter to you where I go. Does it?”

“You are right; but not a word more, I beseech you!” he said, and went away. So, by accident, we had the merest scrap of an explanation. But he only added to my excitement on the eve of my new step in life next day, and I kept waking up all night in consequence. But I felt quite happy.

3

Next day I went out of the house at ten o’clock in the morning, doing my utmost to steal out quietly without taking leave or saying anything. I, so to speak, slipped out. Why I did so I don’t know; but if even mother had seen that I was going out and spoken to me I should have answered with something spiteful. When I found myself in the street and breathed the cold outdoor air I shuddered from an intense feeling—almost animal—which I might call “carnivorous.” What was I going for, where was I going? The feeling was utterly undefined and at the same time I felt frightened and delighted, both at once.

“Shall I disgrace myself to-day or not?” I thought to myself with a swagger, though I knew that the step once taken that day would be decisive, and could not be retrieved all my life. But it’s no use talking in riddles.

I went straight to the prison to Prince Sergay. I had received a letter for the superintendent from Tatyana Pavlovna two days before, and I met with an excellent reception. I don't know whether he was a good man, and it's beside the point; but he permitted my interview with the prince and arranged that it should take place in his room, courteously giving it up for our use. The room was the typical room of a government official of a certain standing, living in a government building—I think to describe it is unnecessary.

So it turned out that Prince Sergay and I were left alone.

He came in dressed in some sort of half-military attire, but wearing very clean linen and a dandified tie; he was washed and combed, at the same time he looked terribly thin and very yellow. I noticed the same yellowness even in his eyes. In fact he was so changed in appearance that I stood still in amazement.

“How you have changed!” I cried.

“That's nothing. Sit down, dear boy,” half-fatuously he motioned me to the armchair and sat down opposite, facing me. “Let's get to the point. You see, my dear Alexey Makarovitch ...”

“Arkady,” I corrected him.

“What? Oh yes! No matter! Oh yes!” He suddenly collected himself. “Excuse me, my dear fellow, we'll return to the point.”

He was, in fact, in a fearful hurry to turn to something. He was entirely from head to foot absorbed by something; some vital idea which he wanted to formulate and expound to me. He talked a great deal and fearfully fast, gesticulating and explaining with strained and painful effort, but for the first minute I really could make nothing of it.

“To put it briefly” (he had used this expression “To put it briefly” ten times already), “to put it briefly,” he concluded, “I troubled you yesterday, Arkady Makarovitch, and so urgently through Liza begged you to come to me, as though the place were on fire, but seeing that the essential part of the decision is bound to be momentous and conclusive for me ...”

“Excuse me, prince,” I interrupted, “did you send me a message yesterday? Liza said nothing to me about it.”

“What?” he cried, suddenly stopping short in extreme astonishment, almost in alarm.

“She gave me no message at all. She came home last night so upset that she couldn't say a word to me.”

Prince Sergay leapt up from his seat.

“Are you telling me the truth, Arkady Makarovitch? If so this ... this ...”

“Why, what is there so serious about it? Why are you so uneasy? She simply forgot or something.”

He sat down and seemed overcome by a kind of stupor. It seemed as though the news that Liza had given me no message had simply crushed him. He suddenly began talking rapidly and waving his hands, and again it was fearfully difficult to follow him.

“Stay” he exclaimed suddenly, pausing and holding up his finger. “Stay, this ... this ... if I’m not mistaken this is a trick! ...” he muttered with the grin of a maniac, “and it means that ...”

“It means absolutely nothing,” I interposed, “and I can’t understand how such a trivial circumstance can worry you so much... . Ach, prince, since that time—since that night, do you remember ...”

“Since what night, and what of it?” he cried pettishly, evidently annoyed at my interrupting him.

“At Zerstchikov’s, where we saw each other last. Why, before your letter... . Don’t you remember you were terribly excited then, but the difference between then and now is so great that I am positively horrified when I look at you.”

“Oh yes,” he pronounced in the tone of a man of polite society, seeming suddenly to remember. “Oh yes; that evening ... I heard... . Well, and are you better? How are you after all that, Arkady Makarovitch? ... But let us return to the point. I am pursuing three aims precisely, you see; there are three problems before me, and I ...”

He began rapidly talking again of his “chief point.” I realized at last that I was listening to a man who ought at once to have at least a vinegar compress applied to his head, if not perhaps to be bled. All his incoherent talk turned, of course, around his trial, and the possible issue of it, and the fact that the colonel of his regiment had visited him and given him a lengthy piece of advice about something which he had not taken, and the notes he had just lately sent to some one, and the prosecutor, and the certainty that they would deprive him of his rights as a nobleman and send him to the Northern Region of Russia, and the possibility of settling as a colonist and regaining his position, in Tashkent, and his plans for training his son (which Liza would bear him) and handing something down to him “in the wilds of Archangel, in the Holmogory.” “I wanted your opinion, Arkady Makarovitch, believe me I so feel and value... . If only you knew, if only you knew, Arkady Makarovitch, my dear fellow, my brother, what Liza means to me, what she has meant to me here, now, all this time!” he shouted, suddenly clutching at his head with both hands.

“Sergay Petrovitch, surely you won’t sacrifice her by taking her away with you! To the Holmogory!” I could not refrain from exclaiming. Liza’s fate, bound to this maniac for life, suddenly, and as it were for the first time, rose clearly before my imagination. He looked at me, got up again, took one step, turned and sat down again, still holding his head in his hands.

“I’m always dreaming of spiders!” he said suddenly.

“You are terribly agitated. I should advise you to go to bed, prince, and to ask for a doctor at once.”

“No, excuse me—of that afterwards. I asked you to come and see me chiefly to discuss our marriage. The marriage, as you know, is to take place here, at the church. I’ve said so already. Permission has been given for all this, and, in fact, they encourage it... . As for Liza ...”

"Prince, have pity on Liza, my dear fellow!" I cried. "Don't torture her, now, at least, don't be jealous!"

"What!" he cried, staring at me intently with eyes almost starting out of his head, and his whole face distorted into a sort of broad grin of senseless inquiry. It was evident that the words "don't be jealous" had for some reason made a fearful impression on him.

"Forgive me, prince, I spoke without thinking. Oh prince, I have lately come to know an old man, my nominal father... . Oh, if you could see him you would be calmer... . Liza thinks so much of him, too."

"Ah, yes, Liza ... ah, yes, is that your father? Or pardon, mon cher, something of the sort ... I remember ... she told me ... an old man... . I'm sure of it, I'm sure of it. I knew an old man, too ... mais passons... . The chief point is to make clear what's essential at the moment, we must ..."

I got up to go away. It was painful to me to look at him.

"I don't understand!" he pronounced sternly and with dignity, seeing that I had got up to go.

"It hurts me to look at you," I said.

"Arkady Makarovitch, one word, one word more!" He clutched me by the shoulder with quite a different expression and gesture, and sat me down in the armchair. "You've heard about those ... you understand?" he bent down to me.

"Oh yes, Dergatchev. No doubt it's Stebelkov's doing!" I cried impulsively.

"Yes, Stebelkov. And ... you don't know?"

He broke off and again he stared at me with the same wide eyes and the same spasmodic, senselessly questioning grin, which grew broader and broader. His face gradually grew paler. I felt a sudden shudder. I remembered Versilov's expression when he had told me of Vassin's arrest the day before.

"Oh, is it possible?" I cried, panic-stricken.

"You see, Arkady Makarovitch, that's why I sent to you to explain ... I wanted ..." he began whispering rapidly.

"It was you who informed against Vassin!" I cried.

"No; you see, there was a manuscript. Vassin gave it only a few days ago to Liza ... to take care of. And she left it here for me to look at, and then it happened that they quarrelled next day ..."

"You gave the manuscript to the authorities!"

"Arkady Makarovitch, Arkady Makarovitch!"

"And so you," I screamed, leaping up, emphasizing every word, "without any other motive, without any other object, simply because poor Vassin was YOUR RIVAL, simply out of jealousy, you gave up the MANUSCRIPT ENTRUSTED TO LIZA ... gave it up to whom? To whom? To the Public Prosecutor?"

But he did not answer, and he hardly could have answered, for he stood before me like a statue, still with the same sickly smile and the same fixed look. But suddenly the door opened and Liza came in. She almost swooned when she saw us together.

“You’re here? So you’re here?” she cried, her face suddenly distorted, seizing my hand. “So you ... KNOW?”

But she could read in my face already that I “knew.” With a swift irresistible impulse I threw my arms round her and held her close! And at that minute for the first time I grasped in all its intensity the hopeless, endless misery which shrouded in unbroken darkness the whole life of this ... wilful seeker after suffering.

“Is it possible to talk to him now,” she said, tearing herself away from me. “Is it possible to be with him? Why are you here? Look at him! look at him! And can one, can one judge him?”

Her face was full of infinite suffering and infinite compassion as exclaiming this she motioned towards the unhappy wretch.

He was sitting in the armchair with his face hidden in his hands. And she was right. He was a man in a raging fever and not responsible. They put him in the hospital that morning, and by the evening he had brain fever.

4

Leaving Prince Sergay with Liza I went off about one o’clock to my old lodging. I forgot to say that it was a dull, damp day, with a thaw beginning, and a warm wind that would upset the nerves of an elephant. The master of the house met me with a great display of delight, and a great deal of fuss and bustle, which I particularly dislike, especially at such moments. I received this drily, and went straight to my room, but he followed me, and though he did not venture to question me, yet his face was beaming with curiosity, and at the same time he looked as though he had a right to be curious. I had to behave politely for my own sake; but though it was so essential to me to find out something (and I knew I should learn it), I yet felt it revolting to begin cross-examining him. I inquired after the health of his wife, and we went in to see her. The latter met me deferentially indeed, but with a businesslike and taciturn manner; this to some extent softened my heart. To be brief, I learned on this occasion some very wonderful things.

Well, of course, Lambert had been and he came twice afterwards, and “he looked at all the rooms, saying that perhaps he would take them.” Darya Onisimovna had come several times, goodness knows why. “She was very inquisitive,” added my landlord.

But I did not gratify him by asking what she was inquisitive about. I did not ask questions at all, in fact. He did all the talking, while I kept up a pretence of rummaging in my trunk (though there was scarcely anything left in it). But what was most vexatious, he too thought fit to play at being mysterious, and noticing that I refrained from asking questions, felt it incumbent upon him to be more fragmentary and even enigmatic in his communications.

“The young lady has been here, too,” he added, looking at me strangely.

“What young lady?”

“Anna Andreyevna; she’s been here twice; she made the acquaintance of my wife. A very charming person, very pleasant. Such an acquaintance is quite a privilege, Arkady Makarovitch.”

And as he pronounced these words he positively took a step towards me. He seemed very anxious that I should understand something.

“Did she really come twice?” I said with surprise.

“The second time she came with her brother.”

“That was with Lambert,” I thought involuntarily.

“No, not with Mr. Lambert,” he said, seeming to guess at once, as though piercing into my soul with his eyes. “But with her real brother, young Mr. Versilov. A kammerjunker, I believe.”

I was very much confused. He looked at me, smiling very caressingly.

“Oh, and some one else came and was asking after you, that ma’amselle, a French lady, Mamselle Alphonsine de Verden. Oh, how well she sings and recites poetry. She’d slipped off to see Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch at Tskarskoe, to sell him a dog, she told me, a rare kind, black, and no bigger than your fist ...”

I asked him to leave me alone on the pretext of a headache. He immediately fell in with my request, even breaking off in the middle of a sentence, and not only without the slightest sign of huffiness, but almost with pleasure, waving his hand mysteriously, as though to say, “I understand, I understand,” and though he did not actually say this he could not resist the satisfaction of walking out of the room on tiptoe.

There are very vexatious people in the world.

I sat for an hour and a half alone, deliberating; rather, not really deliberating but dreaming. Though I was perplexed I was not in the least surprised. I even expected to hear something more, other marvels. “Perhaps they have already hatched them,” I thought. I had for a long time been firmly persuaded that the machinery of their plot was wound up and was in full swing. “They’re only waiting for me,” I thought again with a sort of irritable and pleasant self-satisfaction. That they were eagerly awaiting me, and were scheming to carry out some plan at my lodging was clear as day. “The old prince’s wedding, can it be? He’s surrounded by a regular network of intrigue. But am I going to permit it, my friends? That’s the question,” I said in conclusion with haughty satisfaction.

“Once I begin I shall be carried away by the whirlpool like a chip. Am I free now, this minute, or am I not? When I go back to mother this evening can I still say to myself as I have done all these days ‘I am my own master’?”

That was the gist of my questions, or rather of the throbbing at my heart in the hour and a half I spent sitting on the bed in the corner, with my elbows on my knees and my head propped in my hands. But I knew, I knew even then that all these questions were utter nonsense, and that I was drawn only by HER—by her, by her alone! At last I have said this straight out and have written it with pen on paper, though even now as I write this a year later I don’t know what name to give to the feeling I had then!

Oh, I was sorry for Liza, and my heart was full of a most unfeigned grief. Nothing but the feeling of pain on her account could have calmed or effaced in me for a time that “carnivorosity” (I recall that word). But I was immensely spurred on by curiosity and a sort of dread and another feeling—I don’t know what; but I know and I knew then that it was an evil feeling. Perhaps my impulse was to fall at HER feet, or perhaps I wanted to put her to every torture, and “quickly, quickly” to show her something. No grief, no compassion for Liza, could stop me. Could I have got up and gone home ... to Makar Ivanovitch?

“And is it quite impossible to go to them, to find out everything from them, and to go away from them for ever, passing unscathed among marvels and monsters?”

At three o’clock, pulling myself together and reflecting that I might be late, I went out hastily, took a cab, and flew to Anna Andreyevna.

Chapter 5

1

As soon as I was announced, Anna Andreyevna threw down her sewing and rushed to meet me in the outermost of her rooms, a thing which had never happened before. She held out both hands to me and flushed quickly. She led me into her room in silence, sat down to her needlework again, made me sit down beside her. She did not go on with her sewing, but still scrutinized me with the same fervent sympathy, without uttering a word.

“You sent Darya Onisimovna to me,” I began bluntly, rather overwhelmed by this exaggerated display of sympathy, though I found it agreeable.

She suddenly began talking without answering my question.

“I have heard all about it, I know all about it. That terrible night... . Oh, what you must have gone through! Can it be true! Can it be true that you were found unconscious in the frost?”

“You heard that ... from Lambert... .” I muttered, reddening.

“I heard it all from him at the time; but I’ve been eager to see you. Oh, he came to me in alarm! At your lodging ... where you have been lying ill, they would not let him in to see you ... and they met him strangely ... I really don’t know how it was, but he kept telling me about that night; he told me that when you had scarcely come to yourself, you spoke of me, and ... and of your devotion to me. I was touched to tears, Arkady Makarovitch, and I don’t know how I have deserved such warm sympathy on your part, especially considering the condition in which you were yourself! Tell me, M. Lambert was the friend of your childhood, was he not?”

“Yes, but what happened? ... I confess I was indiscreet, and perhaps I told him then a great deal I shouldn’t have.”

“Oh, I should have heard of that wicked horrible intrigue apart from him! I always had a presentiment that they would drive you to that, always. Tell me, is it true that Büring dared to lift his hand against you?”

She spoke as though it were entirely owing to Büring and HER that I had been found under the wall. And she is right too, I thought, but I flared up:

“If he had lifted his hand against me, he would not have gone away unpunished. And I should not be sitting before you now without having avenged myself,” I answered hotly. It struck me that she wanted for some reason to irritate me, to set me against somebody (I knew of course against whom); yet I fell in with it.

“You say that you had a presentiment that I should be driven to THIS, but on Katerina Nikolaevna’s side it was of course only a misunderstanding ... though it is true that she was too hasty in allowing her kindly feeling for me to be influenced by that misunderstanding... .”

“I should think she was too hasty indeed!” Anna Andrejevna assented quickly, with a sort of ecstasy of sympathy. “Oh, if only you knew the intrigue that is being hatched there now! Of course, Arkady Makarovitch, of course it is difficult for you to realize now all the delicacy of my position,” she brought out, blushing and casting down her eyes. “Since I saw you last ... that very morning I took a step which not every one would be able to understand and interpret rightly; so it is hardly likely that it would be understood by anyone with your still uncorrupted mind, and your fresh, loving, unsophisticated heart. Believe me, my dear friend, I appreciate your devotion to me, and I shall repay it with my everlasting gratitude. In the world, of course, they will throw stones at me, they have thrown them already. But even if they were right, from their odious point of view, which of them could, which of them dare judge me I have been abandoned by my father from childhood up; we Versilovs are an ancient noble Russian family, yet we are adventurers, and I am eating the bread of charity. Was it not natural I should turn to one who has taken the place of a father to me, at whose hands I have received nothing but kindness during all these years? My feelings for him are known only to God, and he alone can judge them, and I refuse to accept the judgment of the world upon the step I have taken. When there is, moreover, at the bottom of this the most cunning, the most evil intrigue, and the plot to ruin a trusting, noble-hearted father is the work of his own daughter, is it to be endured? No, I will save him if I have to ruin my reputation. I am ready to be with him simply as a nurse, to take care of him, and to look after him, but I will not let hateful, cold, mercenary worldliness triumph!”

She spoke with unwonted fire, very possibly half assumed, though at the same time sincere, because it was evident how deeply involved she was in the matter. Oh, I felt that she was lying (though sincerely, for one can lie sincerely). And that she was now evil; but it is wonderful how it often is, in dealing with women: this assumption of perfect refinement, these lofty manners, these inaccessible heights of well-bred grandeur and proud chastity—all this quite threw me out of my reckoning, and I began agreeing with her on every point, so long as I was with her; that is, I could not bring myself to

contradict her, anyway. Oh, a man is in absolute moral slavery to a woman, especially if he is a generous man! Such a woman can convince a generous man of anything she likes. "She and Lambert, my goodness!" I thought, looking at her in perplexity. To tell the whole truth, however, I don't know what to think of her to this day; truly her feelings were known only to God, and, besides, human beings are such complicated machines, that one cannot analyse them in some cases, and above all if the human being in question is a woman.

"Anna Andreyevna, what is it you exactly want me to do?" I asked, with a good deal of decision however.

"How? What do you mean by your question, Arkady Makarovitch?"

"I fancy, from everything ... and from certain other considerations ..." I explained stammering, "that you sent to me because you expected something from me; so what is it exactly?"

Without answering my question, she immediately began talking again, as rapidly and as earnestly as before:

"But I cannot, I am too proud to enter into explanations and negotiations with unknown persons, like M. Lambert. I have been waiting for you, I don't want M. Lambert. My position is awful, desperate, Arkady Makarovitch! I am forced to duplicity, hemmed in by the machinations of that woman—and that is more than I can endure. I am driven almost to the humiliation of intriguing, and I have been waiting for you as my saviour. You must not blame me for looking greedily about me to find one friend at least, and so I cannot help being glad to see a friend: he, who could think of me and even utter my name, half frozen on that night, must be devoted to me. That's what I've been thinking all this time and that is why I rely on you."

She looked into my face with impatient inquiry. And again I had not the heart to disillusion her, and to tell her plainly that Lambert had deceived her, and that I had by no means told him that I was so devoted to her, and that her name was not the only one I mentioned. And so by my silence I confirmed, as it were, Lambert's lie. Oh, she knew very well, I am convinced, that Lambert had been exaggerating and simply lying to her, solely in order to have a plausible excuse to call upon her, and to get into touch with her; though she looked into my face as though she were convinced of my truth and devotion, she must have known that I did not bring myself to contradict her from delicacy of feeling, and the awkwardness of youth. But whether I was right in this surmise, I don't know. Perhaps I am horribly evil-minded.

"My brother is taking my part," she said with sudden heat, seeing that I was not disposed to speak.

"I'm told you have been at my lodgings," I muttered in confusion.

"Yes ... you know poor Prince Nikolay Ivanitch has no place now where he can take refuge from this intrigue, or rather from his own daughter, unless in your lodgings, that is the lodgings of a friend; you know he looks upon you at least as a friend! ... And if you will only do something for his benefit, then do this—if only you can, if only you have the generosity and courage ... and, and finally if it is really true, that there is

SOMETHING YOU CAN DO. Oh, it is not for my sake, it's not for my sake, but for the sake of the poor old man, the only person who genuinely loved you, and who has become as attached to you as though you were his own son, and is still missing you! For myself I expect nothing, even from you—since even my own father has played me such a treacherous, such a spiteful trick.”

“I believe, Andrey Petrovitch ...” I began.

“Andrey Petrovitch,” she repeated with bitter mockery; “Andrey Petrovitch, in answer to a direct question from me, told me on his word of honour that he had never had any intentions in regard to Katerina Nikolaevna and I completely believed it when I took that step; and yet it seemed that his composure only lasted till he heard of Baron Buring.”

“That's wrong,” I cried, “there was a moment when I too believed in his love for that woman, but it's a mistake ... and even if it were so, he might, I should think, be perfectly composed about it now ... since the retirement of that gentleman.”

“What gentleman?”

“Buring.”

“Who has told you of his retirement? Perhaps the gentle man in question never had any such views,” she jeered malignantly; I fancied too, that she looked at me jeeringly.

“Darya Onisimovna told me,” I muttered in confusion, which I was not able to conceal, and which she saw only too clearly.

“Darya Onisimovna is a very nice person, and, of course, I cannot forbid her loving me, but she has no means of knowing what does not concern her.”

My heart began to ache; and, as she had been reckoning on rousing my indignation, I did in fact begin to feel indignant, but not with “that woman,” but for the time being with Anna Andreyevna herself. I got up.

“As an honourable man, I ought to warn you, Anna Andreyevna, that your expectations ... in regard to me ... may turn out to be utterly unfounded... .”

“I expect you to be my champion,” she said, looking at me resolutely: “abandoned as I am by every one ... your sister, if you care to have it so, Arkady Makarovitch.”

Another instant, and she would have burst into tears.

“Well, you had better not expect anything, for, ‘perhaps’ nothing will come of it,” I muttered with an indescribable feeling of disgust.

“How am I to understand your words?” she said, showing her consternation too plainly.

“Why, that I am going away from you all, and—that's the end of it!” I suddenly exclaimed almost furiously, “and the LETTER—I shall tear up. Good-bye.”

I bowed to her, and went out without speaking, though at the same time I scarcely dared to look at her, but had hardly gone downstairs when Darya Onisimovna ran after me, with a half sheet of paper folded in two. Where Darya Onisimovna had sprung from, and where she had been sitting while I was talking with Anna Andreyevna, I cannot conceive. She did not utter a word, but merely gave me the paper, and ran away. I unfolded it: on the paper, clearly and distinctly written, was Lambert's address, and

it had apparently been got ready several days before. I suddenly recalled that when Darya Onisimovna had been with me that day, I had told her that I did not know where Lambert lived, meaning, "I don't know and don't want to know." But by this time I had learned Lambert's address from Liza, whom I had specially asked to get it for me from the address bureau. Anna Andreyevna's action seemed to me too definite, even cynical: although I had declined to assist her, she was simply sending me straight to Lambert, as though she had not the slightest faith in my refusal. It was quite clear to me that she knew everything about the letter, and from whom could she have learnt it if not from Lambert, to whom she was sending me that I might co-operate with him.

There was no doubt that they all, every one of them, looked upon me as a feeble boy without character or will, with whom they could do anything, I thought with indignation.

2

Nevertheless, I did go to Lambert's. Where else could I have satisfied my curiosity? Lambert, as it appeared, lived a long way off, in Cross Alley, close to the Summer Gardens, still in the same lodgings; but when I ran away from him that night I had so completely failed to notice the way and the distance, that when I got his address from Liza, four days earlier, I was surprised and could scarcely believe that he lived there. As I was going upstairs I noticed at the door of the flat, on the third storey, two young men, and thought they had rung the bell before I came and were waiting for the door to be opened. While I was mounting the stairs they both, turning their backs on the door, scrutinized me very attentively. "The flat is all let out in rooms, and they must be going to see another lodger," I thought, frowning, as I went up to them. It would have been very disagreeable to me to find anyone else at Lambert's. Trying not to look at them, I put out my hand to the bell.

"Attendez!" one of them cried to me.

"Please, please don't ring again yet," said the other young man in a soft musical voice, slightly drawling the words. "Here we'll finish this, and then we'll all ring altogether. Shall we?"

I waited. They were both very young men, about twenty or twenty-two; they were doing something rather strange at the door, and I began to watch them with surprise. The one who had cried "attendez" was a very tall fellow, over six feet, thin and lean, but very muscular, with a very small head in proportion to his height, and with a strange, as it were comic expression of gloom on his rather pock-marked though agreeable and by no means stupid face. There was a look as it were of exaggerated intentness and of unnecessary and excessive determination in his eyes. He was very badly dressed: in an old wadded overcoat, with a little fur collar of mangy-looking raccoon; it was too short for him and obviously second-hand. He had on shabby high boots almost like a peasant's, and on his head was a horribly crushed, dirty-looking top-hat. His whole appearance was marked by slovenliness; his ungloved hands were dirty and his long

nails were black. His companion, on the other hand, was smartly dressed, judging from his light skunk fur coat, his elegant hat, and the light new gloves on his slender fingers; he was about my height, and he had an extremely charming expression on his fresh and youthful face.

The tall fellow was taking off his tie—an utterly threadbare greasy ribbon, hardly better than a piece of tape—and the pretty-looking youth, taking out of his pocket another newly purchased black tie, was putting it round the neck of the tall fellow, who, with a perfectly serious face, submissively stretched out his very long neck, throwing his overcoat back from his shoulders.

“No; it won’t do if the shirt is so dirty,” said the younger one, “the effect won’t be good, it will only make it look dirtier. I told you to put on a collar. I don’t know how ... do you know how to do it,” he said, turning suddenly to me.

“What?” I asked.

“Why, fasten his tie. You see it ought to go like this, to hide his dirty shirt, or else the whole effect is spoilt whatever we do. I have just bought the tie for a rouble at Filip’s, the hairdresser’s, on purpose for him.”

“Was it—that rouble?” muttered the tall one.

“Yes, I haven’t a farthing now. Then you can’t do it? In that case we must ask Alphonsine.”

“To see Lambert?” the tall fellow asked me abruptly.

“Yes,” I answered with no less determination, looking him in the face.

“Dolgorowky?” he went on with the same air and the same voice.

“No, not Korovkin,” I answered as abruptly, mistaking what he said.

“Dolgorowky?” the tall fellow almost shouted again, and he took a step towards me almost menacingly. His companion burst out laughing.

“He says ‘Dolgorowky’ and not Korovkin,” he explained to me. “You know in the *Journal des Débats* the French constantly distort Russian names... .”

“In the *Indépendance*,” growled the tall fellow.

“Well, it’s just the same in the *Indépendance*. Dolgoruky, for instance, they write Dolgorowky—I have seen it myself, and Valonyev is always written comte Wallonieff.”

“Doboyny!” cried the tall fellow.

“Yes, there’s Doboyny, too, I’ve seen it myself; and we both laughed; some Russian Madame Doboyny abroad ... but there’s no need to mention them all, you know,” he said, turning suddenly to the tall fellow.

“Excuse me, are you M. Dolgoruky?”

“Yes, my name is Dolgoruky; how do you know it?”

The tall one suddenly whispered something to the pretty-looking lad; the latter frowned and shook his head, but the tall fellow immediately addressed me;

“Monsieur le prince, vous n’avez pas de rouble d’argent pour nous, pas deux, mais un seul, voulez-vous?”

“Oh, how horrid you are,” cried the boy.

"Nous vous rendons," concluded the tall one, mispronouncing the French words coarsely and clumsily.

"He's a cynic, you know," the boy laughed to me; "and do you suppose he can't speak French? He speaks like a Parisian, but he is mimicking those Russians who are awfully fond of talking aloud in French together before other people, though they can't speak it themselves... ."

"Dans les wagons," the tall fellow explained.

"To be sure, in railway carriages; oh, what a bore you are! There's no need to explain. Why will you always pretend to be a fool?"

Meanwhile I took out a rouble and offered it to the tall fellow.

"Nous vous rendons," said the latter, pocketing the rouble; and turning to the door with a perfectly unmoved and serious face, he proceeded to kick it with his huge coarse boot and without the faintest sign of ill-humour... .

"Ah, you will be fighting with Lambert again!" the boy observed uneasily. "You had much better ring the bell!"

I rang the bell, but the tall fellow continued kicking the door nevertheless.

"Ah, sacré ..." we heard Lambert's voice the other side of the door, and he quickly opened it.

"Dites donc, voulez-vous que je vous casse la tête, mon ami!" he shouted to the tall man.

"Mon ami, voilà Dolgorowky, l'autre mon ami," the tall fellow replied with dignified gravity, staring at Lambert, who was red with anger. As soon as the latter saw me, he seemed suddenly transformed.

"It's you, Arkady! At last! Then you are better, better are you at last?"

He seized my hands, pressing them warmly; he was in fact so genuinely delighted that I felt pleased at once, and even began to like him.

"I've come to you first of all!"

"Alphonsine!" cried Lambert.

She instantly skipped out from behind the screen.

"Le voilà!"

"C'est lui!" cried Alphonsine, clasping and unclasping her hands; she would have rushed to embrace me, but Lambert protected me.

"There, there, there, down, down!" he shouted to her as though she were a dog. "It's like this, Arkady: some fellows have agreed to dine together to-day at the Tatars'. I shan't let you go, you must come with us. We'll have dinner; I'll get rid of these fellows at once, and then we can have a chat. Come in, come in! We'll set off at once, only wait a minute ..."

I went in and stood in the middle of that room, looking about me, and remembering it. Lambert behind the screen hurriedly dressed. The tall fellow and his companion followed us in, in spite of Lambert's words. We all remained standing.

"Mlle. Alphonsine, voulez-vous me baiser?" growled the tall man.

“Mlle. Alphonsine,” the younger one was beginning, showing her the tie, but she flew savagely at both of them.

“Ah, le petit vilain! ” she shouted to the younger one; “ne m’approchez pas, ne me salissez pas, et vous, le grand dadais, je vous planque à la porte tous les deux, savez vous cela!”

Though she warned him off with contempt and disgust, as though she were really afraid of being soiled by contact with him (which I could not at all understand because he was such a pretty fellow, and turned out to be just as well dressed when he took off his overcoat), the younger of the two men kept asking her to tie his tall friend’s cravat for him, and to put him on one of Lambert’s clean collars first. She was on the point of beating them in her indignation at such a suggestion, but Lambert overhearing, shouted to her behind the screen not to hinder them, but to do as they asked; “they won’t leave off if you don’t,” he added, and Alphonsine instantly produced a collar and began to fasten the tall man’s cravat without the slightest sign of disinclination. The man stretched out his neck just as he had done on the stairs, while she tied his cravat.

“Mlle. Alphonsine, avez vous vendu votre bologne?” he asked.

“Qu’est-ce que ça, ma bologne?”

The younger man explained that “ma bologne” meant a lapdog.

“Tiens, quel est ce baragouin?”

“Je parle comme une dame russe sur les eaux minérales,” observed le grand dadais, still with his neck outstretched.

“Qu’est-ce que ça qu’une dame russe sur les eaux minérales et ... où est donc votre jolie montre, que Lambert vous a donnée,” she said suddenly to the younger one.

“What, no watch again,” Lambert chimed in irritably behind the screen.

“We’ve eaten it up!” growled le grand dadais.

“I sold it for eight roubles: it was only silver gilt, and you said it was gold; so now at the shop it’s only sixteen roubles,” the younger answered Lambert, defending himself reluctantly.

“We must put an end to this!” Lambert said even more irritably. “I don’t buy you clothes, my young friend, and give you good things, for you to spend them on your tall friend... . What was that tie too that you bought him?”

“That was only a rouble; that was not with your money. He had no cravat at all, and he ought to buy a hat too.”

“Nonsense!” Lambert was really angry. “I gave him enough for a hat too, and he goes off and wastes it on oysters and champagne. He positively reeks; he’s dirty and untidy; you can’t take him anywhere. How can I take him out to dinner?”

“I’m a cad,” growled the dadais. “Nous avons un rouble d’argent que nous avons prêté chez notre nouvel ami.”

“Don’t you give him anything, Arkady,” Lambert cried again.

“Excuse me, Lambert; I ask you plainly for ten roubles,” cried the boy, growing suddenly angry and flushing, which made him look twice as handsome as before; “and don’t ever dare to say such stupid things as you did just now to Dolgoruky. I must

have ten roubles to pay Dolgoruky back that rouble at once, and with the rest I'll buy Andreyev a hat, so you see."

Lambert came out from behind the screen:

"Here are three yellow notes, and three roubles, and there's nothing more till Tuesday, and don't dare ... or else... ."

Le grand dadais fairly snatched the money from him.

"Dolgorowky, here is the rouble nous vous rendons avec beaucoup de grâce. Petya, come along!" he called to his companion. Then holding up the two notes and waving them in the air, while he stared fixedly at Lambert, he yelled at the top of his voice:

"Ohé Lambert! Oû est Lambert, as-tu vu Lambert?"

"How dare you, how dare you," Lambert yelled too, in terrible wrath: I saw that underlying all this was something in the past of which I knew nothing, and I looked on in astonishment. But the tall fellow was not in the least alarmed by Lambert's wrath; on the contrary, he yelled louder than ever: "Ohé Lambert!" and so on. And so shouting, they went out on the stairs. Lambert was running after them, but he turned back.

"I'll throw them out by the scr-r-ruff of their necks! They cost more than they are worth... . Come along, Arkady! I'm late. I am expected there by another ... fellow I need ... a beast too... . They're all beasts! A low lot, a low lot!" he shouted again, almost gnashing his teeth; but all at once he recovered himself completely.

"I am glad that you have come at last. Alphonsine, not a step out of the house! Let us go."

At the steps a smart turn-out was waiting for him. We got in; but all the way he could not quite regain his composure and get over a sort of rage against the two young men. I was surprised at his taking it so seriously; and what's more, at their being so disrespectful to Lambert, and his seeming almost frightened of them.

From the old impression that had been stamped on me from childhood, it still seemed to me that every one must be afraid of Lambert, as in spite of all my independence, I certainly stood in awe of him myself at that moment.

"I tell you now they are all a low lot," Lambert persisted. "Would you believe it that tall ruffian pestered me, the day before yesterday, in decent company. He stood in front of me and shouted: 'Ohé Lambert!' in decent company! Every one laughed, and do you know, it was for me to give him money—would you believe it. I gave it him. Oh, that—r-r-ruffian! Would you believe it? He was an ensign in a regiment, but he was kicked out, and, you wouldn't imagine it, but he is a man of education: he was brought up in a good family, you would hardly believe it! He has ideas, he might ... and damn it all! And he is a perfect Hercules. He is of use, though of not much use. And you can see he does not wash his hands. I interested a lady in his case, an old lady of very good position, telling her that he was penitent, and on the point of committing suicide from remorse, and he went to see her, sat down and began whistling. And the other, the pretty fellow, is a general's son; his family is ashamed of him. I got him off

when he was arrested, I saved him, and you see how he repays me. There are no people worth their salt here! I'll pay them out, I'll pay them out!"

"They know my name; did you talk to them about me?"

"Yes, it was stupid of me. Please stay on a little after dinner, control your feelings... . There's an awful canaille coming. Yes, he's an awful canaille, and awfully cunning; they are all rascals here, there's not an honest man about! Well, we'll finish— then... . What's your favourite dish? But it doesn't matter, the fare is always good. I'll pay, don't you worry. It's a good thing you are well dressed. I can give you money. You must come often. Only fancy, I've stood them meat and drink here, it's fish pie every day of the week; that watch he sold—it's the second time. That little fellow, Trishatov, you saw him; Alphonsine is sick at the very sight of him, and won't let him come near her; and here in the presence of officers he calls out: 'I must have woodcock.' I stood him woodcock! But I'll pay them out."

"Do you remember, Lambert, how we went to a restaurant together in Moscow, and you stuck a fork into me, and how you had fifty roubles then!"

"Yes, I remember! Damn it, I remember! I like you ... you may believe it. Nobody likes you; but I like you; I'm the only one that does, you remember that... . The pockmarked fellow that is coming here is a cunning canaille; don't you answer any of his questions; if he begins talking, it's all right; but if he begins questioning, make some nonsensical answer, or hold your tongue."

At any rate, in his excitement he did not question me much on the way. I even felt insulted at his having such confidence in me, and not even suspecting that I mistrusted him; I fancied that I detected in him the absurd idea that he could still order me about. "And what's more, he's awfully ignorant and ill-bred," I thought, as I went into the restaurant.

3

I had been into that restaurant, in the Morskaya, before, during my disgraceful period of degradation and depravity, and so the impression of those rooms, of those lackeys looking at me, and recognizing me as a familiar visitor, and finally the impression made on me by the mysterious company of Lambert's friends, amongst whom I found myself so suddenly, and to whom I seemed already to belong, and above all an obscure feeling that of my own freewill I was going into something abominable, and that I should certainly end up by doing something horrid—all this seemed to go through me in a flash. There was a moment when I very nearly went away; but the moment passed and I remained.

The "pock-marked man," of whom for some reason Lambert was so much afraid, was already waiting for us. He was one of those men of stupidly practical appearance, whom I have always from my childhood detested; he was about forty-five, of middle height, with hair just turning grey. He was disgustingly close-shaven, except for two little neatly trimmed grey whiskers, like sausages, one on each side of his extremely

flat and spiteful-looking face. He was of course dull, solemn, and taciturn, and even conceited, as such nonentities always are. He looked at me very attentively, but he did not say a word. Lambert was so stupid that though he sat us down at the same table together, he did not think it necessary to introduce us, and so he may well have taken me for one of the blackmailers associated with Lambert. To the two young men (who arrived almost simultaneously with us) he did not address a single word during the whole of dinner, but it was evident that he knew them well. He talked only to Lambert, and then almost in a whisper, and indeed Lambert did most of the talking, and the pock-marked man confined himself to fragmentary and wrathful ejaculations, which sounded like an ultimatum. He behaved superciliously, was ill-humoured and sarcastic, while Lambert on the other hand was extremely excited and was evidently trying to persuade him all the time, probably urging him on to some undertaking. On one occasion I put out my hand to take a bottle of red wine; the pock-marked man immediately took a bottle of sherry and handed it to me, though he had not said a word to me till then.

“Try this,” he said, offering me the bottle. I guessed, on the spot, that he too, knew everything in the world about me—my story, and my name, and perhaps the fact that Lambert was counting upon me. The idea that he was taking me for a satellite maddened me again, and Lambert’s face betrayed an intense and very stupid uneasiness when the pock-marked man addressed me; the latter noticed it and laughed. “There’s no doubt that Lambert depends on all of them,” I thought, hating him at that instant with my whole soul. In this way, though we were sitting at the same table, throughout the whole dinner we were divided into two groups; the pock-marked man with Lambert, facing each other close to the window, while I was beside the grubby Andreyev, and Trishatov sat facing me. Lambert hurried on the dinner, continually urging the waiters to make haste with the dishes. When the champagne was brought he held out his glass to me:

“To your health, let’s clink glasses!” he said, breaking off his conversation with the pock-marked man.

“And will you let me clink with you too?” said the pretty youth, holding out his glass across the table. Till the champagne arrived he had been very silent, and seemed pensive. The dadais said nothing at all, but sat silent and ate a great deal.

“With pleasure,” I answered Trishatov. We clinked glasses and drank.

“But I’m not going to drink your health,” observed the dadais turning to me; “not because I desire your death, but so that you may not drink any more here to-day.” He spoke gloomily and ponderously. “Three glasses is enough for you. I see you are looking at my unwashed fist!” he went on, putting his fist on the table. “I don’t wash it, but as it is I put it at Lambert’s service for smashing other people’s heads when he’s in a tight place.” And saying this he brought down his fist on the table with such force that he set all the plates and glasses rattling. Besides us there were people dining at four other tables, all of them officers or gentlemen of dignified appearance. It was a fashionable restaurant; all broke off their conversation for a moment and looked round

to our corner; and indeed I fancied we had attracted curiosity for some time past. Lambert flushed crimson.

“Ah, he’s at it again! I thought I had asked you to behave yourself, Nikolay Semyonovitch,” he said to Andreyev in a furious whisper. The latter gave him a prolonged stare.

“I don’t want my new friend Dolgorowky to drink a great deal here to-day.”

Lambert flushed more hotly than ever.

The pock-marked man listened in silence but with evident pleasure. Andreyev’s behaviour seemed to please him, for some reason. I was the only one who did not understand why I was not to drink much wine.

“He says that because he’s only just had some money! You shall have another seven roubles directly after dinner—only do let us have dinner, don’t disgrace us,” Lambert hissed at him.

“Aha!” the dadais growled triumphantly. At this the pock-marked man was absolutely delighted, and he sniggered spitefully.

“Listen, you really ...” began Trishatov to his friend with uneasiness and almost distress in his voice, evidently anxious to restrain him. Andreyev subsided, but not for long; that was not his intention. Just across the table, five paces from us, two gentleman were dining, engaged in lively conversation. Both were middle-aged gentleman, who looked extremely conscious of their own dignity; one was tall and very stout, the other was also very stout but short, they were discussing in Polish the events of the day in Paris. For some time past the dadais had been watching them inquisitively and listening to their talk. The short Pole evidently struck him as a comic figure, and he promptly conceived an aversion for him after the manner of envious and splenetic people, who often take such sudden dislikes for no reason whatever. Suddenly the short Pole pronounced the name of the deputy, Madier de Montjeau, but, as so many Poles do, he pronounced it with an accent on the syllable before the last, instead of on the last syllable; this was enough for the dadais, he turned to the Poles, and drawing up himself with dignity, he suddenly articulated loudly and distinctly as though addressing a question to them:

“Madier de Montjeáu?”

The Poles turned to him savagely.

“What do you want?” the tall stout Pole shouted threateningly to him in Russian.

The dadais paused. “Madier de Montjeáu,” he repeated suddenly again, to be heard by the whole room, giving no sort of explanation, just as he had stupidly set upon me at the door with the reiterated question “Dolgorowky.” The Poles jumped up from their seats, Lambert leapt up from the table and rushed to Andreyev, but leaving him, darted up to the Poles and began making cringing apologies to them.

“They are buffoons, Pani, they are buffoons,” the little Pole repeated contemptuously, as red as a carrot with indignation. “Soon it will be impossible to come!” There was a stir all over the room too, and a murmur of disapproval, though laughter was predominant.

“Come out ... please ... come along!” Lambert muttered completely disconcerted, doing his utmost to get Andreyev out of the room. The latter looking searchingly at Lambert, and judging that he would now give the money, agreed to follow him. Probably he had already extorted money from Lambert by the same kind of disgraceful behaviour. Trishatov seemed about to run after them too, but he looked at me and checked himself.

“Ach, how horrid,” he said hiding his eyes with his slender fingers.

“Very horrid,” whispered the pock-marked man, looking really angry at last.

Meanwhile Lambert came back looking quite pale, and gesticulating eagerly, began whispering something to the pock-marked man. The latter listened disdainfully, and meanwhile ordered the waiter to make haste with the coffee; he was evidently in a hurry to get off. And yet the whole affair had only been a schoolboyish prank. Trishatov got up with his cup of coffee, and came and sat down beside me.

“I am very fond of him,” he said to me with a face as open as though he had been talking to me like this all his life. “You can’t imagine how unhappy Andreyev is. He has wasted all his sister’s dowry on eating and drinking, and in fact all they had he spent on eating and drinking during the year he was in the service, and I see now he worries. And as for his not washing, it’s just through despair. And he has awfully strange ideas: he’ll tell you all of a sudden that he’s both a scoundrel and an honest man—that it’s all the same and no difference: and that there’s no need to do anything, either good or bad, they are just the same, one may do good or bad, but that the best of all is to be still, not taking off one’s clothes for a month at a time, to eat, and drink, and sleep—and nothing else. But believe me, he only says that. And do you know, I really believe he played the fool like this just now to break off with Lambert once for all. He spoke of it yesterday. Would you believe it, sometimes at night or when he has been sitting long alone, he begins to cry, and, do you know, when he cries, it’s different from anyone else; he howls, he howls in an awful way, and you know it’s even more pitiful ... and he’s such a big strong fellow, and then all of a sudden—to see him howling. It is sad, poor fellow, isn’t it? I want to save him, though I am a wretched hopeless scamp myself, you wouldn’t believe. Will you let me in, Dolgoruky, if I ever come and see you?”

“Oh, do come, I really like you.”

“What for? Well, thank you. Listen, will you drink another glass? But after all you’d better not. He was right when he said you had better not drink any more,” he suddenly gave me a significant wink, “but I’ll drink it all the same. I have nothing now, but would you believe it, I can’t hold myself back in anything; if you were to tell me I must not dine at a restaurant again, I should be ready to do anything, simply to dine there. Oh, we genuinely want to be honest, I assure you, but we keep putting it off,

“And the years pass by and the best of our years!

“I am awfully afraid that he will hang himself. He’ll go and do it without telling anyone. He’s like that. They are all hanging themselves nowadays; why, I don’t know—

perhaps there are a great many people like us. I, for instance, can't exist without money to spend. Luxuries matter a great deal more to me than necessities.

"I say, are you fond of music? I'm awfully fond of it. I'll play you something when I come and see you. I play very well on the piano and I studied music a very long time. I've studied seriously. If I were to compose an opera, do you know I should take the subject from Faust. I am very fond of that subject. I am always making up a scene in the cathedral, just imagining it in my head, I mean. The Gothic cathedral, the interior, the choirs, the hymns; Gretchen enters, and mediaeval singing, you know, so that you can hear the fifteenth century in it. Gretchen overwhelmed with grief; to begin with a recitative, subdued but terrible, full of anguish; the choirs thunder on, gloomily, sternly, callously,

"Dies irae, dies illa!

"And all of a sudden—the voice of the devil, the song of the devil. He is unseen, there is only his song, side by side with the hymns, mingling with the hymns, almost melting into them, but at the same time quite different from them—that must be managed somehow. The song is prolonged, persistent, it must be a tenor, it must be a tenor. It begins softly, tenderly: 'Do you remember, Gretchen, when you were innocent, when you were a child, you came with your mother to this cathedral and lisped your prayers from an old prayer-book?' But the song gets louder and louder, more intense; on higher notes: there's a sound of tears in them, misery unceasing, and hopeless, and finally despair. 'There's no forgiveness, Gretchen, there's no forgiveness for you here!' Gretchen tries to pray, but only cries of misery rise up from her soul—you know when the breast is convulsed with tears—but Satan's song never ceases, and pierces deeper and deeper into the soul like a spear; it gets higher and higher, and suddenly breaks off almost in a shriek: 'The end to all, accursed one!' Gretchen falls on her knees, clasps her hands before her—and then comes her prayer, something very short, semi-recitative, but naïve, entirely without ornament, something mediaeval in the extreme, four lines, only four lines altogether—Stradella has some such notes—and at the last note she swoons! General confusion. She is picked up, carried out, and then the choir thunders forth. It is, as it were, a storm of voices, a hymn of inspiration, of victory, overwhelming, something in the style of our

'Borne on high by angels'

—so that everything is shaken to its foundations, and it all passes into the triumphant cry of exaltation 'Hosanna!'—as though it were the cry of the whole universe and it rises and rises, and then the curtain falls! Yes, you know if only I could, I should have done something; only I can never do anything now, I do nothing but dream. I am always dreaming; my whole life has turned into a dream. I dream at night too. Ah, Dolgoruky, have you read Dickens' 'Old Curiosity Shop'?"

"Yes, why?"

"Do you remember—wait, I will have another glass—do you remember, there's one passage at the end, when they—that mad old man and that charming girl of thirteen, his grandchild, take refuge after their fantastic flight and wandering in some remote

place in England, near a Gothic mediaeval church, and the little girl has received some post there, and shows the church to visitors ... then the sun is setting, and the child in the church porch, bathed in the last rays of light, stands and gazes at the sunset, with gentle pensive contemplation in her child soul, a soul full of wonder as though before some mystery, for both alike are mysteries, the sun, the thought of God, and the church, the thought of man, aren't they? Oh, I don't know how to express it, only God loves such first thoughts in children... . While near her, on the step, the crazy old grandfather gazes at her with a fixed look ... you know there's nothing special in it, in that picture of Dickens, there's absolutely nothing in it, but yet one will remember it all one's life, and it has survived for all Europe— why? It's splendid! It's the innocence in it! And I don't know what there is in it, but it's fine. I used always to be reading novels when I was at school. Do you know I had a sister in the country only a year older than me... . Oh, now it's all sold, and we have no country-place! I was sitting with her on the terrace under our old lime trees, we were reading that novel, and the sun was setting too, and suddenly we left off reading, and said to one another that we would be kind too, that we would be good—I was then preparing for the university and ... Ach, Dolgoruky, you know, every man has his memories! ...”

And he suddenly let his pretty little head fall on my shoulder and burst out crying. I felt very very sorry for him. It is true that he had drunk a great deal of wine, but he had talked to me so sincerely, so like a brother, with such feeling... . Suddenly, at that instant, we heard a shout from the street, and there was a violent tapping at the window (there was a large plate-glass window on the ground floor, so that anyone could tap on the window with his fingers from the street). This was the ejected Andreyev.

“Ohé Lambert! Où est Lambert? As-tu vu Lambert?” we heard his wild shout in the street.

“Ah! yes, here he is! So he's not gone away?” cried the boy, jumping up from his place.

“Our account!” Lambert cried through his clenched teeth to the waiter. His hands shook with anger as he paid the bill, but the pock-marked man did not allow Lambert to pay for him.

“Why not? Why, I invited you, you accepted my invitation.”

“No, excuse me,” the pock-marked man pulled out his purse, and reckoning out his share he paid separately.

“You'll offend me, Semyon Sidorovitch.”

“That's what I wish,” Semyon Sidorovitch snapped out, taking his hat, and without saying good-bye to anybody, he walked alone out of the room. Lambert tossed the money to the waiter and hurriedly ran after him, even forgetting my existence in his confusion. Trishatov and I walked out last of all. Andreyev was standing like a post at the door, waiting for Trishatov.

“You scoundrel!” cried Lambert, unable to restrain himself.

"There, there!" Andreyev grunted at him, and with one swing of his arm he knocked off his round hat, which went spinning along the pavement. Lambert flew abjectly to pick it up.

"Vinq-cinq roubles!" Andreyev showed Trishatov the note, which he had just got from Lambert.

"That's enough," Trishatov shouted to him. "Why must you always make an uproar? ... And why have you wrung twenty-five roubles out of him? You only ought to have had seven."

"Why did I wring it out of him? He promised us a private dinner with Athenian women, and instead of women he regaled us with the pock-marked man, and what's more, I did not finish my dinner and I've been freezing here in the cold, it's certainly worth eighteen roubles. He owed me seven, so that makes twenty-five."

"Go to the devil both of you!" yelled Lambert. "I'll send you both packing, I'll pay you out ..."

"Lambert, I'll send you packing. I'll pay you out!" cried Andreyev. "Adieu, mon prince, don't drink any more wine! Petya, marche! Ohé Lambert! Où est Lambert? As-tu vu Lambert?" he roared for the last time as he strode away.

"So I shall come and see you, may I?" Trishatov murmured hurriedly, and hastened after his friend.

I was left alone with Lambert.

"Well ... come along!" he brought out, seeming stupefied and breathing with difficulty.

"Where shall I come along? I'm not coming anywhere with you!" I made haste to reply defiantly.

"You're not coming," he said, startled and apprehensive. "Why, I have only been waiting for us to be alone!"

"But where to go?" I must confess I, too, had a slight ringing in my head, from the three glasses of champagne and the two wine-glasses of sherry I had drunk.

"This way, this way. Do you see?"

"But this is an oyster bar: you see it is written up. It smells so horrid ..."

"That's only because you have just had dinner. We won't have oysters, but I'll give you some champagne... ."

"I don't want any! You want to make me drunk."

"That's what they told you; they've been laughing at you. You believe blackguards like that!"

"No, Trishatov's not a blackguard. But I know how to take care of myself—that's all!"

"So you've a will of your own, have you?"

"Yes, I have a character; more than you have, for you're servile to everybody you meet. You disgraced us, you begged pardon of the Poles like a lackey. I suppose you've often been beaten in restaurants?"

“But we must have a talk, you fool!” he cried with the same contemptuous impatience, which almost implied, what are you driving at? “Why, you are afraid, aren’t you? Are you my friend or not?”

“I am not your friend and you are a swindler. We’ll go along simply to show you I’m not afraid of you. Oh, what a horrid smell, it smells of cheese! How disgusting!”

Chapter 6

1

I must beg the reader to remember again that I had a slight giddiness in my head; if it had not been for that I should have acted and spoken differently. In the shop, in a back room, one could indeed have eaten oysters, and we sat down to a table covered with a filthy cloth. Lambert ordered champagne; a glass of cold wine of a golden colour was set before me and seemed looking at me invitingly; but I felt annoyed.

“You see, Lambert, what annoys me most is that you think you can order me about now as you used to do at Touchard’s, while you are cringing upon everybody here.”

“You fool! Aië, let’s clink glasses.”

“You don’t even deign to keep up appearances with me: you might at least disguise the fact that you want to make me drunk.”

“You are talking rot and you’re drunk. You must drink some more, and you’ll be more cheerful. Take your glass, take it!”

“Why do you keep on ‘take it’? I am going and that’s the end of it.”

And I really did get up. He was awfully vexed:

“It was Trishatov whispered that to you: I saw you whispering. You are a fool for that. Alphonsine is really disgusted if he goes near her... . He’s a dirty beast, I’ll tell you what he’s like.”

“You’ve told me already. You can talk of nothing but your Alphonsine, you’re frightfully limited.”

“Limited?” he did not understand. “They’ve gone over now to that pock-marked fellow. That’s what it is! That’s why I sent them about their business. They’re dishonest. That fellow’s a blackguard and he’s corrupting them. I insisted that they should always behave decently.”

I sat still and as it were mechanically took my glass and drank a draught.

“I’m ever so far ahead of you in education,” I said. But he was only too delighted that I went on sitting there, and at once filled up my glass.

“And you know you’re afraid of them!” I went on taunting him, and no doubt I was even nastier than he was at that moment. “Andreyev knocked your hat off, and you gave him twenty-five roubles for it.”

“I did give it him, but he’ll pay me back. They are rebellious, but I’ll be quits with them.”

“You are awfully upset by that pock-marked man. And do you know it strikes me that I’m the only one left you. All your hopes now are resting on me—aren’t they?”

“Yes, Arkasha, that is so: you are the only friend left me; you are right in saying that!” he slapped me on the shoulder.

What could be done with a man so crude; he was utterly obtuse, and took irony for serious praise.

“You could save me from bad things if you would be a good comrade, Arkady,” he went on, looking at me caressingly.

“In what way could I save you?”

“You know yourself what it is. Without me, like a fool, you will certainly be stupid; but I’d get you thirty thousand and we would go halves and you know how. Why, think who you are; you’re nothing—no name, no position, and here you’d win first prize straight off: and having such a fortune, you’ll know how to make a career!”

I was simply astounded at this attack. I had taken for granted that he would dissemble, but he had begun upon it with such bluntness, such schoolboyish bluntness. I resolved to listen to him from a desire to be open-minded and ... from intense curiosity.

“Look here, Lambert, you won’t understand this, but I’m consenting to listen to you because I’m open-minded,” I declared firmly, and again I took a gulp at my glass. Lambert at once filled it up.

“I’ll tell you what, Arkady: if a fellow like Büiring had dared to abuse me and strike me in the presence of a lady I adored, I don’t know what I should have done! But you put up with it, I’m ashamed of you: you’re a poor creature!”

“How dare you say that Büiring struck me!” I shouted, turning crimson. “It was more I struck him than he me.”

“No, it was he struck you, not you struck him.”

“You’re lying, I trod on his foot too!”

“But he shoved you back, and told the footman to drag you away ... and she sat and looked on from her carriage and laughed at you; she knows that you have no father and that you can be insulted.”

“I don’t understand this schoolboyish conversation, Lambert, and I’m ashamed of it. You are saying this to irritate me, and as crudely and as openly as though I were a boy of sixteen. You’ve been plotting with Anna Andreyevna!” I cried, trembling with anger, and still mechanically sipping my wine.

“Anna Andreyevna’s a sly jade! She’s humbugging you and me and all the world! I have been waiting for you, because you can best finish off with that woman.”

“With what woman?”

“With Madame Ahmakov. I know all about it. You told me yourself that she is afraid of that letter you’ve got ...”

“What letter ... you’re talking nonsense... . Have you seen her?” I muttered in confusion.

“Yes, I saw her. She’s beautiful. Très belle; and you’ve taste.”

“I know you’ve seen her but you did not dare speak to her, and I wish you did not dare to speak of her either.”

“You’re a boy, and she laughs at you—so there! We had a virtuous lady like that in Moscow. Ough, didn’t she turn up her nose! but she began to tremble when we threatened that we would tell all we knew and she knuckled under directly; and we got all we wanted both ways, money, and—you understand? Now she’s virtue unapproachable again in society—foo! my word, isn’t she high and mighty, and hasn’t she got a turn-out. Ah, you should have seen that little back room it happened in! You’ve not lived; if only you knew the little back rooms they don’t shrink from ...”

“I’ve thought that,” I could not help muttering.

“They’re corrupt to their very finger-tips; you don’t know what they’re capable of! Alphonsine lived in a house like that, and she was disgusted.”

“I have thought of that,” I chimed in again.

“But they beat you, and you complain ...”

“Lambert, you’re a blackguard, you’re a damned beast!” I cried, suddenly pulling myself together and beginning to tremble. “I have dreamed all this, you were in it and Anna Andreyevna... . Oh, you damned brute! Did you really think I was such a scoundrel? I dreamed it because I knew that you would say this. And besides, all this can’t be so simple that you can talk to me about it so simply and directly.”

“He is in a rage, tut, tut, tut!” Lambert drawled, laughing and triumphant. “Well, Arkasha, my boy, now I’ve found out all I wanted to know. That’s why I was so eager to see you. Listen, you love her I see, and want to revenge yourself on Büring. That’s what I wanted to find out. I’ve been suspecting it all this time while I’ve been waiting to see you. Ceci posé, celà change la question. And so much the better, for she loves you too. So you must marry her without a moment’s delay, that’s the best thing; you can’t do anything else, that’s your safest position. And then remember, Arkady, that you have a friend in me of whom you can make any use you like. And that friend will help you, and will marry you: I’ll move heaven and earth, Arkasha! And you can give your old friend thirty thousand for his trouble afterwards, eh? And I’ll help you, don’t doubt that. I know all the ins and outs of the business, and they shall give you the whole dowry, and you’ll be a wealthy man with a career before you!”

Though my head was in a whirl I looked at Lambert with wonder. He was in earnest, and not merely in earnest in what he said, but in believing in the possibility of my marrying; I could see that he thoroughly believed in it himself, and, in fact, caught at the idea with enthusiasm. I saw, of course, too, that he was entrapping me like a schoolboy (I certainly must have seen it even then); but the thought of marrying her so thrilled me that though I wondered how Lambert could believe in such a fantastic notion, yet, at the same time I tried violently to believe in it myself, though I did not for an instant lose consciousness of the fact that it could not possibly come to pass. All this was mingled together at the same time.

“But is it possible?” I faltered.

“Why not? you will show her the letter, she’ll be frightened and marry you to keep her money.”

I made up my mind not to stop Lambert in his vile suggestions, for he disclosed them to me with such simplicity and did not suspect that I might be revolted by them; I did mutter, however, that I should not like to marry her simply by force.

“I don’t want to use force for anything; how can you be so base as to think me capable of it!”

“Hoity-toity! Why, she’ll marry you of her own accord: it won’t be your doing, she’ll be frightened and marry you herself, and she’ll marry you because she loves you, too,” Lambert put in hastily.

“That’s a lie; you’re laughing at me. How do you know she loves me?”

“Of course she does. I know it. And Anna Andreyevna assumes it. It’s the truth in earnest. I’m telling you that Anna Andreyevna assumes it. And I’ll tell you something else when you come to me, and you’ll see that she does love you. Alphonsine has been at Tsarskoe; she found out there ...”

“What could she find out there?”

“You come back with me; she’ll tell you herself, and it will please you. Why, aren’t you as good as anybody, you are handsome, you are well educated.”

“Yes, I am well educated,” I answered, hardly able to breathe; my heart was thumping and, of course, not only from the wine.

“You are handsome, you are well dressed.”

“Yes, I’m well dressed.”

“And you are good-natured... .”

“Yes, I’m good-natured.”

“Why shouldn’t she consent? Büring won’t take her without money anyway, and you can deprive her of her money—so she’ll be in a fright: you’ll marry her and punish Büring. Why, you told me yourself that night after you were frozen that she was in love with you.”

“Can I have told you that? I’m sure I did not tell you that.”

“Yes, you did.”

“I was delirious when I said that. I suppose I told you of the letter too?”

“Yes, you told me you had such a letter; I thought at the time: how can he let slip his luck if he has such a letter?”

“It’s all a mad idea, and I’m not so stupid as to believe it,” I muttered; “to begin with there’s a difference in our ages, and besides I’ve no surname.”

“But she’ll marry you though; she can’t help marrying you when it’s a question of so much money—I’ll arrange that. And, what’s more, she loves you. You know that old prince is very well disposed to you; through his protection, you know, you can form connections; and what does it matter if you have no name, nowadays nothing of that’s necessary: once you pocket the money you’ll get on and get on, and in ten years’ time you will be such a millionaire that all Russia will resound with your fame, so you won’t need a name then. Why, you can buy a title in Austria. And when you get married,

keep her well in hand. They want a firm hand. If a woman's in love, she likes to feel a man's got a tight grip on her. Women like will in a man. When you frighten her with the letter, from that hour you will show her you have strength of will. 'Ah,' she'll say 'he's so young, and yet he has will.'"

I sat, as it were, spell-bound. I should never with anyone else have sunk to such an idiotic conversation. But in this case a sort of voluptuous craving drew me on to continue it. Besides, Lambert was so stupid and so low that no one could feel ashamed of anything before him.

"No, do you know, Lambert," I said suddenly: "you may say what you like, but a great deal of this is absurd; I have been talking to you because we were schoolfellows, and we need not be ashamed of saying anything to one another; but I would not have demeaned myself to it with anyone else for any consideration. And, first of all, tell me why you keep repeating so positively that she's in love with me? That was quite good what you said just now about having capital; but you see, Lambert, you don't know anything of good society: all this is still with them on the most patriarchal, family system, so to say, and, therefore, as so far she does not know my abilities and what a position I may achieve in the world, she'll be ashamed of me. But I won't conceal from you, Lambert, that there really is one point that might give one hope. You see: she might marry me from gratitude, because I might save her from a man she hates. And she is afraid of that man."

"Ah, you mean your father? Why, is he so much in love with her?" Lambert said, pricking up his ears with peculiar curiosity.

"Oh no!" I cried: "and how horrid you are, and at the same time how stupid, Lambert! Why, if he were in love with her, how could I want to marry her? After all we are father and son, that would be shameful. He loves my mother, my mother, and I saw how he held her in his arms. I did think at one time he loved Katerina Nikolaevna, but now I know for certain that though he may once have loved her, he has hated her for a long time now ... and wants to revenge himself on her, and she's afraid of him, for I tell you, Lambert, he is very terrible when he begins to revenge himself. He becomes almost insane. When he's in a rage with her, he doesn't stick at anything. This is a feud in the old style on account of the loftiest principles. In our time we don't care a hang for any general principles; nowadays there are no general principles but only special cases. Ah, Lambert, you don't understand, you are as stupid as a post; I am talking to you about these principles, but I am sure you don't understand. You are awfully uneducated. Do you remember you used to beat me! Now I'm stronger than you are—do you know that?"

"Arkasha, come home with me! We'll spend the evening and drink another bottle, and Alphonsine will sing to the guitar."

"No, I'm not coming. Listen, Lambert, I've got an 'idea.' If I don't succeed and don't marry, I shall fall back on the 'idea'; but you haven't an idea."

"All right, all right, you shall tell me about it, come along."

“I am not coming,” I said, getting up. “I don’t want to, and I’m not coming. I shall come and see you, but you are a blackguard. I’ll give you thirty thousand, but I am cleaner and better than you... . I see, you want to deceive me all round. But I forbid you even to think of her: she’s above every one, and your plan is so low that I really wonder at you, Lambert. I want to be married, that’s a different matter; but I don’t want money, I despise money. I wouldn’t take it if she begged me to on her knees ... but marriage, marriage, that’s a different matter. But you know that was quite right what you said, that one ought to keep a tight hand on her. It’s a good thing to love, to love passionately, with all the generosity of which a man is capable, and which can never be found in a woman; but to be despotic is a good thing too. For, do you know, Lambert, a woman loves despotism. You understand woman, Lambert. But you are wonderfully stupid in everything else. And do you know, Lambert, you are not at all such a blackguard as you seem, you’re simple. I like you. Ah, Lambert, why are you such a rogue? What a jolly time we might have if you weren’t! You know Trishatov’s a dear.”

These last incoherent phrases I muttered in the street. Oh, I set all this down in every trivial detail, that the reader may see that with all my enthusiasm and my vows and promises to reform, and to strive for “seemliness,” I was capable then of falling so easily and into such filth. And I swear that if I were not fully convinced that I am no longer the same, but have gained strength of character by practical life, I should not have confessed all this to the reader.

We went out of the shop, and Lambert supported me slightly, putting his arm round me. Suddenly I looked at him, and saw in his fixed, terribly intent and perfectly sober eyes the very same expression as I had seen that morning when I was frozen and when he had led me to the cab with his arm round me in the same way, and listened, all eyes and ears, to my incoherent babble. Men who are drunk but not quite hopelessly drunk, sometimes have moments of absolute soberness.

“I’m not going home with you for anything,” I declared firmly and coherently, looking at him sarcastically and putting aside his arm.

“Come, nonsense. I’ll tell Alphonsine to make tea for us, come!”

He was horribly confident that I should not get away; he put his arm round me and held me with a sort of relish, as his prey, and the prey was what he needed of course, that evening and in that condition! It will be clear later why.

“I’m not coming!” I repeated. “Cab!”

At that instant a sledge drove up and I jumped into it.

“Where are you off to? What are you about!” yelled Lambert, clutching at my fur coat in extreme dismay.

“And don’t dare to follow me!” I cried, “don’t drive after me.” At that very instant the sledge started, and my coat was torn out of Lambert’s hands.

“You’ll come all the same!” he shouted after me in an angry voice.

“I shall come if I want to. I can do as I like!” I retorted, turning round in the sledge.

2

He did not follow me, of course, because there did not happen to be another sledge at hand, and I succeeded in getting out of his sight. I drove on as far as the Haymarket, and there I stopped and dismissed the sledge. I had a great desire to walk. I was not conscious of being tired or of being much intoxicated, I felt full of vigour; I was aware of a fresh flow of energy, of an exceptional readiness for any sort of enterprise, and of innumerable pleasant ideas in my brain.

My heart was thudding violently and loudly, I could hear every beat. And everything seemed so charming, so easy. When I passed the sentry at the Haymarket I felt inclined to go up and kiss him. There was a thaw, the market-place was dingy and evil-smelling, but I was delighted even with the marketplace.

"I am in the Obuhovsky Prospect," I thought, "and afterwards I shall turn to the left and come out in the Semyonovsky Polk. I shall take a short cut, that's delightful, it's all delightful. My coat is unbuttoned, how is it no one snatches it off, where are the thieves? They say there are thieves in the Haymarket; let them come, I might give them my fur coat. What do I want with a fur coat? A fur coat is property. *La propriété c'est le vol*. But what nonsense, and how nice everything is! It's nice that the snow is melting. Why frost? There's no need of a frost at all. It's nice to talk nonsense too. What was it I said to Lambert about principles? I said there were no general principles, but only special cases; that was stuff, utter stuff! And I said it on purpose, out of swagger. I am a little ashamed, but after all it doesn't matter, I'll make up for it. Don't be ashamed, don't distress yourself, Arkady Makarovitch. Arkady Makarovitch. I like you. I like you very much, in fact, my young friend. It's a pity you're a little rascal ... and ... and ... ah, yes ... ah!"

I suddenly stood still, and my heart began to ache with ecstasy again.

"Good God! what was it he said? He said that she loves me. Oh, he is a scoundrel, he told a lot of lies, that was to make me stay the night with him. But perhaps not. He said Anna Andreyevna thinks so too... . Ba! But Darya Onisimovna might have found out something about it for him; she pokes her nose into everything. And why didn't I go to him? I should have found out everything! H'm! He has a plan, and I had a presentiment of it all, every bit of it. The dream. A bold scheme, M. Lambert, only let me tell you it won't be so. Perhaps it will though, perhaps it will! And can he bring off my marriage? Perhaps he can. He is naïve and he believes it. He is stupid and impudent like all practical people. Stupidity and impudence combined are a great force. But confess, you were really afraid of Lambert, Arkady Makarovitch! And what does he want with honest people? He says so seriously: 'There isn't an honest man here!' Why, what are you yourself? And what am I! Don't scoundrels need honest men? In swindling honest men are more needed than anywhere. Ha! ha! You did not know that till now, Arkady Makarovitch, you were so innocent. Good God! What if he really were to bring about my marriage!"

I stood still again. Here I must confess something stupid (as it is all so long ago): I must confess that I had long before been wishing to be married—at least not wishing, and it would never have happened (and I can guarantee it never will in the future), but more than once—a great many times in fact—I had dreamed how splendid it would be to be married, especially as I was falling asleep at night. I began to dream of it when I was about sixteen. I had a schoolfellow of my own age at the high school, called Lavrovsky, such a quiet, sweet, pretty boy, not particularly distinguished in any other way, however. I hardly ever talked to him. One day we happened to be sitting side by side, and he was very dreamy, and suddenly he said to me: ‘Ah, Dolgoruky, what do you think, we ought to be married now; yes, really when should we be married if not now; now would be the very best time, and yet it’s impossible.’ And he said that so frankly. And I agreed with it at once entirely, for I already had visions of something of the sort. For several days afterwards we met and talked, as it were, in secret, only of that however. But afterwards, I don’t know how it happened, but we left off talking to each other and drifted apart. And from that time I began to dream of marriage. This, of course, would not have been worth mentioning, only I wanted to show how far back this feeling sometimes goes... .

“There is only one serious objection,” I mused, as I went on again. “Oh, of course, the trivial difference in our ages is no real obstacle, but she is such an aristocrat and I am simply Dolgoruky! It’s awfully horrid! H’m! Couldn’t Versilov marry mother and petition the government for me to be legitimized as a reward for his services, so to say... . He’s been in the service, so must have rendered services; he was a mediator at the emancipation... . Oh, damn it all, how loathsome.”

I suddenly uttered this exclamation and stood still for the third time, but this time I felt as though I had been crushed to the earth. The agonizing feeling of humiliation from the consciousness that I could desire anything so shameful as the change of my surname by being legitimized, this treachery to my whole childhood, all this in one flash shattered my previous mood, and all my joyfulness was dissipated like smoke. “No, I’ll never tell that to anyone,” I thought, turning crimson: “I’ve sunk so low because I’m in love and stupid... . No, if Lambert is right in anything, it is that nowadays, in our age, the man is what matters, and afterwards his money. Or rather not his money, but rather his property. With a capital like that I would throw myself into the ‘idea,’ and all Russia would ring with my fame in ten years, and I would revenge myself on them all. And there’s no need to stand on ceremony with her. Lambert’s right there. She’ll be frightened and simply marry me. She’ll consent in the simplest and most abject way, and marry me.” “You don’t know, you don’t know in what little back room that happened!” I remembered Lambert’s words. “That’s true,” I went on musing: “Lambert’s right in everything, a thousand times more right than Versilov and I and all the idealists! He is a realist. She shall see that I have strength of will, and she will say: ‘He has will!’ Lambert’s a scoundrel, and all he wants is to get thirty thousand out of me, and yet he is the only friend I have. There is no other sort of friendship and there can be no other, that’s all been invented by unpractical people. And I shan’t

be even degrading her; shall I be degrading her? Not in the least: all women are like that! Are there any women who are not abject? That's why she must have a man over her; that's why she's created a subordinate creature. Woman is vice and temptation, and man is honour and generosity. So it will be to the end of time. And what if I do mean to use that 'document'! That does not matter. That does not prevent honour or generosity. Pure, unadulterated Schillers don't exist, they are invented. It does not matter if one has to pass through filth to get there, as long as the goal is magnificent. It will all be washed off, it will all be smoothed away afterwards. And now it's only 'breadth,' it's only life, it's only vital truth—that's what it is called nowadays."

Oh, I repeat again: I must be forgiven for recording all my drunken ravings at the time. Of course this is only the essence of what I thought then, but I fancy I used those very words. I was bound to record them because I have sat down to write in order to condemn myself. And what is to be condemned, if not that? Can there be anything graver in my life? Wine is no justification. *In vino veritas.*

Entirely absorbed in such dreams I did not notice that I had reached home, that is, mother's lodgings. I did not even notice going in, but as soon as I slipped into our tiny entrance, I realized at once that something unusual was happening.

There were loud voices and outcries in the room, and I could hear that mother was crying. In the doorway I almost fell over Lukerya, who was running from Makar Ivanovitch's room to the kitchen. I flung down my fur coat and went in to Makar Ivanovitch, for they were all gathered together in his room.

There I found mother and Versilov. Mother was supported in his arms, and he was pressing her to his heart. Makar Ivanovitch was sitting as usual on his little bench, but he seemed overcome with weakness, and Liza had her arms round his shoulders and with an effort was holding him up; and it was evident that he was on the point of falling. I took a rapid step towards him and realized with a shudder that the old man was dead.

He had only just died, one minute before I arrived. Only ten minutes before he had felt just as usual. No one was with him then but Liza; she had been sitting with him, telling her grief, and he had been stroking her head just as he had done the day before. Suddenly he began to tremble (Liza told us), tried to stand up, tried to cry out, and began falling on his left side, and was silent. "Rupture of the heart!" said Versilov. Liza uttered a scream that could be heard all over the house, and they had all run in at once, and all that only the minute before I came in.

"Arkady," Versilov cried, "run instantly to Tatyana Pavlovna. She's sure to be at home. Ask her to come at once. Take a sledge. Make haste, I entreat you!"

His eyes were shining. I remember that clearly. I did not notice in his face anything like simple pity, anything like tears. The others, mother, Liza, and Lukerya, were crying. I was struck, on the contrary—and I remember this very well—by a look of unusual excitement almost of elation in his face. I ran for Tatyana Pavlovna.

It was not far to go, as the reader knows already. I did not take a sledge, but ran all the way without stopping. My mind was in confusion, and yet there was something

almost like elation in my heart, too. I realized something momentous was happening. Every trace of drunkenness had disappeared completely, and with it every ignoble thought, by the time I was ringing at Tatyana Pavlovna's door.

The Finnish cook opened the door: "Not at home!" she said and would have shut it at once.

"Not at home?" I cried, and rushed headlong into the passage. "Impossible! Makar Ivanovitch is dead!"

"Wha—at!" I heard Tatyana Pavlovna cry out in her drawing-room, through the closed door.

"He is dead! Makar Ivanovitch is dead! Andrey Petrovitch begs you to go this minute!"

"What nonsense you're talking."

The bolt clicked, but the door only opened an inch. "What has happened, tell me! ..."

"I don't know, he was dead when I arrived. Andrey Petrovitch says it's rupture of the heart!"

"I'll come at once, this minute. Run and tell them I'm coming, run along! run along! run along! What are you stopping for?"

But through the half-opened door I had distinctly seen some one come suddenly out from behind the curtain that screened Tatyana Pavlovna's bed, and that some one was standing at the back of the room behind Tatyana Pavlovna. Mechanically and instinctively I clutched at the lock and would not let the door be shut.

"Arkady Makarovitch, is it really true that he's dead?" I heard a soft, smooth, ringing voice, a well-known voice that thrilled everything in my heart at once. In the question was a note of some emotion that deeply stirred HER heart.

"Oh, if that's how it is," cried Tatyana Pavlovna, abandoning the door, "if that's how it is—you may settle it to please yourself. It's your own doing!"

She ran full speed out of the flat, flinging on her kerchief and her fur coat as she went downstairs. We were left alone. I threw off my fur coat, took a step forward, and shut the door. She stood before me as she had done that time before, with a bright face, and just as she had done then, she held out both hands to me. As though I had been struck down I literally fell at her feet.

3

I was beginning to cry, I don't know why; I don't remember how she made me sit down beside her, I only remember, as one of my most precious memories, that we sat side by side, hand in hand, and talked eagerly: she was questioning me about the old man and his death, and I was telling her about him—so that it might have been supposed that I had been crying over Makar Ivanovitch, though that would have been the acme of absurdity; and I know that she could not possibly have suspected me of such childish banality. All at once I pulled myself together and felt ashamed. I imagine

now that I cried simply from joy, and I believe she knew that perfectly well, so that my heart is quite at rest when I remember it.

It suddenly struck me as very strange that she should go on questioning me about Makar Ivanovitch.

“Why, did you know him?” I asked in surprise.

“Yes. I have never seen him, but he has played a part in my life, too. I was told a great deal about him at one time, by that man whom I fear. You know what man I mean.”

“All I know is that ‘that man’ has been in the past much nearer to your heart than you told me before,” I said. I don’t know what I meant to express by this, but I spoke as it were reproachfully and with a frown.

“You say he was kissing your mother just now? Holding her in his arms? You saw that yourself?” she did not hear what I said, but went on cross-examining me.

“Yes, I saw it; and, believe me,” I hastened to assure her, seeing her joy, “it was with true and generous feeling.”

“God grant it,” she said, crossing herself. “Now he is set free. That admirable old man simply held his life in bondage. His death will mean for him a renewal of duty ... and dignity, as they were renewed once before. Oh, he is before all things generous, he will give peace of heart to your mother, whom he loves more than anything on earth, and will at last be at peace himself, and thank God—it’s high time.”

“He is dear to you?”

“Yes, very dear, though not in the way he would have liked to be and you mean by your question.”

“And is it for yourself or for him that you are afraid now?” I asked suddenly.

“Oh, these are deep questions, let us leave them.”

“Let us leave them, of course; but I knew nothing of this, nor of too much else perhaps; but may you be right, now everything will begin anew, and if anyone is to be renewed, it’s I first of all. I have been base in my thoughts in regard to you, Katerina Nikolaevna, and not more than an hour ago, perhaps, I was guilty of a low action in regard to you, but do you know I am sitting beside you and feel no pang of conscience. For everything now is over, and everything is beginning anew, and the man who was plotting vileness against you an hour ago I don’t know, and don’t want to know!”

“Come, calm yourself,” she smiled; “one would think you were a little delirious.”

“And how can one condemn oneself beside you, whether one is good or vile—you are as far beyond one as the sun... . Tell me, how could you come out to me after all that’s happened? Oh, if only you knew what happened only an hour ago! And what a dream has come true.”

“I expect I know all that,” she smiled softly: “you have just been wanting to punish me in some way, you swore to ruin me, and would certainly have killed, or at least have beaten, anyone who had dared to say one word against me.”

Oh, she smiled and jested: but this was only from her excessive kindness, for her heart at that moment, as I realized later, was full of such an immense anxiety of her

own, such a violent over-mastering emotion, that she can only have talked to me and have answered my foolish irritating questions, she can only have done that as one sometimes answers the persistent prattle of a little child, simply to get rid of it. I understood that dully and felt ashamed, but I could not help persisting.

“No,” I cried, unable to control myself. “No, I did not kill the man who spoke ill of you, I encouraged him instead!”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake, please don’t; there’s no need to tell me anything,” she said, suddenly putting out her hand to stop me, with a look of compassion in her face; but I leapt up from my seat and was standing before her, to tell her everything, and if I had told her, nothing of what happened afterwards would have happened, for it would certainly have ended in my confessing everything and returning the document to her. But she suddenly laughed.

“There’s no need, there’s no need of anything, no facts at all! I know all your misdoings; I’m ready to bet that you meant to marry me or something of that sort, and you have only just been plotting about it with some one, with some accomplice, some old school friend... . Why I believe I’ve guessed right!” she cried, looking gravely at my face.

“What ... how could you guess!” I faltered like a fool, tremendously impressed.

“Well, what next! But that’s enough, that’s enough! I forgive you, but no more about it,” she waved her hand again, with unmistakable impatience. “I am given to dreaming myself, and if you only knew what shifts I have recourse to in my dreams when I let myself go! That’s enough, you make me forget what I was going to say. I am very glad that Tatyana Pavlovna has gone away; I have been very anxious to see you, and we could not have talked as we are doing before her. I believe I was to blame for what happened. I was! Of course I was!”

“You to blame? But I had betrayed you to HIM, and—what can you have thought of me! I have been thinking of that all this time, all these days, I’ve been thinking and feeling about it every minute.” (It was not a lie.)

“There was no need for you to distress yourself so much, I quite understood at the time how it had all happened; you simply spoke too freely in your joy, and told him that you were in love with me and that I ... well, that I listened to you. Just what you would do at twenty. You love him more than anyone in the world, don’t you, and look to him to be your friend, your ideal? I quite understood that, but it was too late. Oh yes, I was to blame: I ought to have sent for you at the time, and have set your mind at rest, but I felt annoyed; and I told them not to admit you; that’s what led to the scene at the entrance, and then that night. And do you know, like you, I’ve been dreaming all this time of meeting you secretly, only I did not know how to arrange it? And what do you suppose I dreaded more than anything? That you would believe what he said against me.”

“Never!” I cried.

“The memory of our meetings in the past is dear to me; the boy in you is very dear to me, and perhaps, too, that very sincerity ... you know, I’m a very serious person, I

am one of the most serious and gloomy characters among modern women, let me tell you ... ha—ha—ha! We'll have another talk some time, but now I'm not quite myself, I am upset and ... I believe I'm a little hysterical. But, at last, at last, HE will let me, too, live in peace."

This exclamation broke from her unconsciously; I understood it at once, and did not want to catch it up, but I trembled all over.

"He knows I've forgiven him!" she exclaimed suddenly again, as though to herself.

"Could you really forgive him that letter? And how could he tell that you forgave him?" I could not help exclaiming.

"How could he tell? Oh, he knows," she went on answering me, yet she looked as though she had forgotten my existence and were talking to herself. "He has come to his senses now. And how could he not know that I forgave him, when he knows every secret of my soul by heart? Why, he knows that I am a little after his kind myself."

"You?"

"Why, yes, he knows that. Oh, I'm not passionate, I'm calm: but like him I should like all men to be fine... . Of course there was something made him love me."

"How could he say that you had all the vices?"

"He only said that; he has another secret in his heart. And didn't he write an awfully funny letter?"

"Funny?" (I was listening to her with strained attention. I imagined that she really was hysterical, and ... was speaking, perhaps, not for my benefit; but I could not resist the question.)

"Oh yes, funny, and how I should have laughed, if ... if I hadn't been frightened. Though I'm not such a coward, don't think it; but I didn't sleep all night after that letter, it seemed written in blood and frenzy ... and after such a letter what was left to come. I love life, I'm horribly afraid for my life, I'm horribly cowardly in that... . Ah, listen," she cried, suddenly darting at me, "go to him, he's alone now, he can't be there still, most likely he's gone off somewhere alone; make haste and find him, you must make haste, run to him, show him that you are his son and love him, prove that you are the dear kind boy, my student whom I ... Oh, God give you happiness, I love nobody, and it is better so, but I want every one to be happy, every one, and him above all, and let him know that ... at once ... I should be very glad."

She got up and suddenly disappeared behind the curtain. At that instant tears were shining on her face (hysterical after her laughter). I remained alone, agitated and confused. I was completely at a loss to what to ascribe such emotion in her, an emotion which I never should have suspected. Something seemed to be clutching at my heart.

I waited five minutes, ten; the profound silence suddenly struck me, and I ventured to peep out of the door, and to call. In answer to my call Marya appeared and informed me in the most stolid tone, that the lady had put on her things long, long ago and gone out by the back way.

Chapter 7

1

This was enough for me. I snatched up my fur coat and, throwing it on as I went, rushed off with the thought: "She bade me go to him, but where shall I find him?"

But together with everything else I was struck by the question, "Why does she suppose that something has happened, and that now HE will leave her in peace? Of course, because he will marry mother, but what is she feeling? Is she glad that he will marry mother, or is she unhappy about it? And was that why she was hysterical? Why is it I can't get to the bottom of it?"

I note this second thought that flashed upon me, literally in order to record it: it is important. That evening was a momentous one. And really one is forced to believe in predestination: I had not gone a hundred steps in the direction of mother's lodging when I came across the man I was looking for. He clutched me by the shoulder and stopped me.

"It's you!" he cried joyfully, and at the same time with the greatest astonishment. "Only fancy, I've been at your lodgings," he began quickly, "I have been looking for you, I've been asking for you, you are the one person I want in the whole universe! Your landlord told me some extraordinary tale; but you weren't there, and I came away and even forgot to tell him to ask you to run round to me at once, and, would you believe it, I set off, nevertheless, with the positive conviction that fate could not fail to send you to me now when most I need you, and here you are the first person to meet me! Come home with me: you've never been to my rooms."

In fact we had been looking for each other, and something of the same sort had happened to each of us. We walked very rapidly.

On the way he uttered only a few brief phrases, telling me he had left mother with Tatyana Pavlovna and so on. He walked holding my arm. His lodging was not far off and we soon arrived. I had, in fact, never been in these rooms of his. It was a small flat of three rooms, which he had taken or rather Tatyana Pavlovna had taken simply for that "tiny baby." The flat had always been under Tatyana Pavlovna's supervision, and in it had been installed a nurse with the baby (and now Darya Onisimovna, too), but there had always been a room there for Versilov, the outermost of the three, a fairly good and spacious room, snugly furnished, like a study for literary pursuits. On the table, on the shelves, and on a whatnot there were numbers of books (while at mother's there were none at all); there were manuscripts and bundles of letters—in fact, it all looked snug and as though it had been long inhabited, and I know that in the past Versilov had sometimes, though not very often, moved into this flat altogether, and had stayed there even for weeks at a time. The first thing that caught my attention was a portrait of mother that hung over the writing table; a photograph in a magnificent carved frame of rare wood, obviously taken abroad and judging from its size a very expensive one. I had never heard of this portrait and knew nothing of it before, and

what struck me most of all was the likeness which was remarkable in a photograph, the spiritual truth of it, so to say; in fact it looked more like a real portrait by the hand of an artist than a mere mechanical print. When I went in I could not help stopping before it at once.

“Isn’t it, isn’t it?” Versilov repeated behind me, meaning, “Isn’t it like?” I glanced at him and was struck by the expression of his face. He was rather pale, but there was a glowing and intense look in his eyes which seemed shining with happiness and strength. I had never seen such an expression on his face.

“I did not know that you loved mother so much!” I blurted out, suddenly delighted.

He smiled blissfully, though in his smile there was a suggestion of something like a martyr’s anguish, or rather something humane and lofty ... I don’t know how to express it; but highly developed people, I fancy, can never have triumphantly and complacently happy faces. He did not answer, but taking the portrait from the rings with both hands brought it close to him, kissed it, and gently hung it back on the wall.

“Observe,” he said; “photographs very rarely turn out good likenesses, and that one can easily understand: the originals, that is all of us, are very rarely like ourselves. Only on rare occasions does a man’s face express his leading quality, his most characteristic thought. The artist studies the face and divines its characteristic meaning, though at the actual moment when he’s painting, it may not be in the face at all. Photography takes a man as he is, and it is extremely possible that at moments Napoleon would have turned out stupid, and Bismarck tender. Here, in this portrait, by good luck the sun caught Sonia in her characteristic moment of modest gentle love and rather wild shrinking chastity. And how happy she was when at last she was convinced that I was so eager to have her portrait. Though that photograph was taken not so long ago, still she was younger then and handsomer; yet even then she had those hollow cheeks, those lines on her forehead, that shrinking timidity in her eyes, which seems to gain upon her with the years, and increase as time goes on. Would you believe it, dear boy? I can scarcely picture her now with a different face, and yet you know she was once young and charming. Russian women go off quickly, their beauty is only a passing gleam, and this is not only due to racial peculiarity, but is because they are capable of unlimited love. The Russian woman gives everything at once when she loves—the moment and her whole destiny and the present and the future: she does not know how to be thrifty, she keeps nothing hidden in reserve; and their beauty is quickly consumed upon him whom they love. Those hollow cheeks, they too were once a beauty that has been consumed on me, on my brief amusement. You are glad that I love your mother, and perhaps you didn’t believe that I did love her? Yes, my dear, I did love her very much, but I’ve done her nothing but harm... . Here is another portrait—look at that, too.”

He took it from the table and handed it me. It, too, was a photograph, a great deal smaller, in a thin oval wooden frame—it was the face of a young girl, thin and consumptive, and at the same time very good-looking; dreamy and yet strangely lacking in thought. The features were regular, of the type suggesting the pampering of generations, but it left a painful impression: it looked as though some fixed idea had

taken possession of this creature and was torturing her, just because it was too much for her strength.

“That ... that is the girl you meant to marry and who died of consumption ... HER step-daughter?” I said rather timidly.

“Yes, I meant to marry her, she died of consumption, HER step- daughter. I knew that you knew ... all that gossip. Though you could have known nothing about it but the gossip. Put the portrait down, my boy, that was a poor, mad girl and nothing more.”

“Really mad?”

“Or imbecile; I think she was mad though. She had a child by Prince Sergay. It came about through madness not through love; it was one of Prince Sergay’s most scoundrelly actions. The child is here now in the next room, and I’ve long wanted to show it to you. Prince Sergay has never dared come here to look at the child; that was the compact I made with him abroad. I took the child to bring up with your mother’s permission. With your mother’s permission I meant at the time to marry that unhappy creature ...”

“Could such permission have been possible?” I protested warmly.

“Oh yes, she allowed it: jealousy could only have been felt of a woman, and that was not a woman.”

“Not a woman to anyone but mother! I shall never in my life believe that mother was not jealous!” I cried.

“And you’re right. I guessed it was so when everything was over, that is when she had given her permission. But enough of that. It all came to nothing through Lidya’s death, and perhaps it wouldn’t have come off if she had lived, and even now I don’t let mother come to see the child. It was only an episode. My dear boy, I’ve been looking forward to having you here for ever so long. I’ve been dreaming of how we should get to know each other here. Do you know how long?—for the last two years.”

He looked at me sincerely and truthfully, and with a warmth of heart in which there was no reserve. I gripped his hand:

“Why have you put it off, why did you not invite me long ago? If only you knew all that has been ... which would not have been if only you had sent for me earlier! ...”

At that instant the samovar was brought in, and Darya Onisimovna suddenly brought in the baby asleep.

“Look at it,” said Versilov; “I am fond of it, and I told them to bring it in now that you might look at it. Well, take it away again, Darya Onisimovna. Sit down to the samovar. I shall imagine that we have always lived together like this, and that we’ve been meeting every evening with no parting before us. Let me look at you: there, sit like this, that I can see your face. How I love your face. How I used to imagine your face when I was expecting you from Moscow. You ask why I did not send for you long ago? Wait a little, perhaps you will understand that now.”

“Can it be that it’s only that old man’s death that has set your tongue free? That’s strange ...”

But though I said that, I looked at him with love. We talked like two friends in the highest and fullest sense of the word. He had asked me to come here to make something clear to me, to tell me something, to justify himself; and yet everything was explained and justified before a word was said. Whatever I might hear from him now, the result was already attained, and we both knew that and were happy, and looked at each other knowing it.

“It’s not the death of that old man,” he answered: “it’s not his death alone, there is something else too, which has happened at the same time... . God bless this moment and our future for a long time to come! Let us talk, my dear boy. I keep wandering from the point and letting myself be drawn off. I want to speak about one thing, but I launch into a thousand side issues. It’s always like that when the heart is full... . But let us talk; the time has come and I’ve been in love with you, boy, for ever so long ...”

He sank back in the armchair and looked at me once more.

“How strange it is to hear that, how strange it is,” I repeated in an ecstasy of delight. And then I remember there suddenly came into his face that habitual line, as it were, of sadness and mockery together, which I knew so well. He controlled himself and with a certain stiffness began.

2

“You see, Arkady, if I had asked you to come earlier what should I have said to you? That question is my whole answer.”

“You mean that now you are mother’s husband, and my father, while then... . You did not know what to say to me before about the social position? Is that it?”

“Not only about that, dear boy. I should not have known what to say to you: there was so much I should have had to be silent about. Much that was absurd, indeed, and humiliating, because it was like a mountebank performance—yes, a regular show at a fair. Come, how could we have understood each other before, when I’ve only understood myself to-day at five o’clock this afternoon, just two hours before Makar Ivanovitch’s death? You look at me with unpleasant perplexity. Don’t be uneasy: I will explain the facts, but what I have just said is absolutely true; my whole life has been lost in mazes and perplexity, and suddenly they are all solved on such a day, at five o’clock this afternoon! It’s quite mortifying, isn’t it? A little while ago I should really have felt mortified.”

I was listening indeed with painful wonder; that old expression of Versilov’s, which I should have liked not to meet that evening after what had been said, was strongly marked. Suddenly I exclaimed:

“My God! You’ve received something from her ... at five o’clock this afternoon?”

He looked at me intently, and was evidently struck at my exclamation: and, perhaps, at my expression: “from her.”

“You shall know all about it,” he said, with a dreamy smile, “and, of course, I shall not conceal from you anything you ought to know; for that’s what I brought you here

for; but let us put that off for a time. You see, my dear boy, I knew long ago that there are children who brood from their earliest years over their family through being humiliated by the unseemliness of their surroundings and of their parents' lives. I noticed these brooding natures while I was still at school, and I concluded then that it all came from their being prematurely envious. Though I was myself a brooding child, yet ... excuse me, my dear, I'm wonderfully absent-minded. I only meant to say that almost all this time I have been continually uneasy about you. I always imagined you one of those little creatures doomed to solitude, though conscious of being gifted. Like you, I was never fond of my schoolfellows. It is sad for those natures who are flung back on their own resources and dreams, especially when they have a passionate, premature and almost vindictive longing for 'seemliness'—yes, 'vindictive.' But enough, dear boy, I'm wandering from the point. Before I had begun to love you, I was picturing you and your solitary wild dreams... . But enough; I've actually forgotten what I had begun to speak about. But all this had to be said, however. But what could I have said to you before? Now I see your eyes looking at me, and I feel it's my SON looking at me. Why, even yesterday I could not have believed that I should ever be sitting and talking to my boy as I am to-day."

He certainly did seem unable to concentrate his mind, and at the same time he seemed, as it were, softened.

"I have no need to dream and brood now; it's enough for me, now, that I have you! I will follow you!" I said, dedicating myself to him with my whole heart.

"Follow me? But my wanderings are just over, they have ended to-day: you are too late, my dear boy. To-day is the end of the last act, and the curtain has gone down. This last act has dragged on long. It began very long ago—the last time I rushed off abroad. I threw up everything then, and you must know, my dear, I broke off all relations for good with your mother, and told her I was doing so myself. That you ought to know. I told her then I was going away for ever; that she would never see me again. What was worst of all, I even forgot to leave her any money. I did not think of you either, not for one minute. I went away meaning to remain in Europe and never to return home, my dear. I emigrated."

"To Herzen? To take part in the revolutionary propaganda abroad? Probably all your life you have been taking part in political conspiracies?" I cried, unable to restrain myself.

"No, my dear, I've never taken part in any conspiracy. But how your eyes sparkle; I like your exclamations, my dear. No, I simply went away then from a sudden attack of melancholy. It was the typical melancholy of the Russian nobleman, I really don't know how to describe it better. The melancholy of our upper class, and nothing else."

"Of the serf-owner ... the emancipation of the serfs," I was beginning to mutter, breathless.

"Serf-owner? You think I was grieving for the loss of it? That I could not endure the emancipation of the serfs. Oh no, my boy; why, we were all for the emancipation. I emigrated with no resentful feeling. I had only just been a mediator, and exerted

myself to the utmost, I exerted myself disinterestedly, and I did not even go away because I got very little for my liberalism. We none of us got anything in those days, that is to say again, not those that were like me. I went away more in pride than in penitence, and, believe me, I was far from imagining that the time had come for me to end my life as a modest shoemaker. Je suis gentilhomme avant tout et je mourrai gentilhomme! Yet all the same I was sad. There are, perhaps, a thousand of my sort in Russia, no more perhaps really, but you know that is quite enough to keep the idea alive. We are the bearers of the idea, my dear boy! ... I am talking, my darling, in the strange hope that you may understand this rigmarole. I've brought you here acting on a caprice of the heart: I've long been dreaming of how I might tell you something ... you, and no one else. However ... however ..."

"No, tell me," I cried: "I see the look of sincerity in your face again... . Tell me, did Europe bring you back to life again? And what do you mean by the 'melancholy of the nobleman!' Forgive me, darling, I don't understand yet."

"Europe bring me back to life? Why, I went to bury Europe!"

"To bury?" I repeated in surprise.

He smiled.

"Arkady dear, my soul was weary then, and I was troubled in spirit. I shall never forget my first moments in Europe that time. I had stayed in Europe before, but this was a special time, and I had never gone there before with such desperate sadness, and ... with such love, as on that occasion. I will tell you about one of my first impressions, one of the dreams I had in those days, a real dream. It was when I was in Germany, I had only just left Dresden, and in absence of mind I passed the station at which I ought to have got out, and went off on to another line. I had to get out at once to change, it was between two and three in the afternoon, a fine day. It was a little German town: I was directed to an hotel. I had to wait; the next train was at eleven o'clock at night. I was quite glad of the adventure, for I was in no particular haste to get anywhere, and was simply wandering from place to place, my dear. The hotel turned out to be small and poor, but all surrounded by green trees and flower-beds, as is always the case in Germany. They gave me a tiny room, and as I had been travelling all night I fell asleep, after dinner, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

"I dreamed a dream that was a complete surprise to me, for I had never had any dreams of the sort before. In the gallery at Dresden there is a picture by Claude Lorraine, called in the catalogue 'Acis and Galatea,' but I used to call it 'The Golden Age,' I don't know why. I had seen it before, but I had noticed it again in passing three days earlier. I dreamed of this picture, but not as a picture, but, as it were, a reality. I don't know exactly what I did dream though: it was just as in the picture, a corner of the Grecian Archipelago, and time seemed to have gone back three thousand years; blue smiling waves, isles and rocks, a flowery shore, a view like fairyland in the distance, a setting sun that seemed calling to me—there's no putting it into words. It seemed a memory of the cradle of Europe, and that thought seemed to fill my soul, too, with a love as of kinship. Here was the earthly paradise of man: the gods came

down from the skies, and were of one kin with men... . Oh, here lived a splendid race! they rose up and lay down to sleep happy and innocent; the woods and meadows were filled with their songs and merry voices. Their wealth of untouched strength was spent on simple-hearted joy and love. The sun bathed them in warmth and light, rejoicing in her splendid children ... Marvellous dream, lofty error of mankind! The Golden Age is the most unlikely of all the dreams that have been, but for it men have given up their life and all their strength, for the sake of it prophets have died and been slain, without it the peoples will not live and cannot die, and the feeling of all this I lived through, as it were, in that dream; rocks and sea, and the slanting rays of the setting sun—all this I seemed still to see when I woke up and opened my eyes, literally wet with tears. I remembered that I was glad, a sensation of happiness I had never known before thrilled my heart till it ached; it was the love of all humanity. It was by then quite evening; through the green of the flowers that stood in the windows of my little room, broke slanting rays that flooded me with light. And then, my dear—that setting sun of the first day of European civilization which I had seen in my dream was transformed for me at once on waking, into the setting sun of the last day of civilization! One seemed to hear the death-knell ringing over Europe in those days. I am not speaking of the war and the Tuileries; apart from that, I knew that all would pass away, the whole face of the old world of Europe— sooner or later, but I, as a Russian European, could not accept it. Yes, they had only just burnt the Tuileries... .

“Oh, rest assured, I know it was logical; I quite understand the irresistible force of the idea, but as the bearer of the idea of the highest Russian culture, I could not accept it, for the highest Russian thought is the reconciliation of ideas, and who in the whole world could understand such a thought at that time; I was a solitary wanderer. I am not speaking of myself personally—it’s the Russian idea I’m speaking of. There all was strife and logic; there the Frenchman was nothing but a Frenchman, the German was nothing but a German, and this more intensely so than at any time in their whole history; consequently never had the Frenchman done so much harm to France, or the German to Germany, as just at that time! In those days in all Europe there was not one European: I alone among all the vitriol-throwers could have told them to their face that their Tuileries was a mistake. And I alone among the avenging reactionists could have told them that the Tuileries, although a crime, was none the less logical. And that, my boy, was because I, as a Russian, was the ONLY EUROPEAN in Russia. I am not talking of myself, I am talking of the whole Russian idea. I have been a wanderer, my boy. I was a wanderer, and I knew well that I must wander and be silent. But yet I was sad. I cannot help respecting my position as a Russian nobleman. My boy, I believe you are laughing?”

“No, I’m not laughing,” I said in a voice full of feeling, “I’m not laughing at all; you thrilled my heart by your vision of ‘The Golden Age,’ and, I assure you, I’m beginning to understand you. But, above all, I’m glad that you have such a respect for yourself. I hasten to tell you so. I never expected that of you!”

“I’ve told you already that I love your exclamations, dear boy,” he smiled again at my naïve exclamation, and getting up from his chair, began unconsciously walking up and down the room. I, too, got up. He went on talking in his strange language which was yet so deeply pregnant with thought.

3

“Yes, boy, I tell you again, I cannot help respecting my position as a Russian nobleman. Among us has been created by the ages, a type of the highest culture never seen before, and existing nowhere else in the world—the type of world-wide compassion for all. It is a Russian type, but since it is taken from the most highly cultured stratum of the Russian people, I have the honour of being a representative of it. That type is the custodian of the future of Russia. There are, perhaps, only a thousand of us in Russia, possibly more, possibly less—but all Russia has existed, so far, only to produce that thousand. I shall be told with indignation that the result is poor, if so many ages and so many millions of people have been spent to produce only this thousand. I don’t think it little.”

I listened with strained attention. A conviction, the guiding principle of a whole life, was emerging. That “thousand men” made his personality stand out in such strong relief!

I felt that his expansiveness with me was due to some external shock. He talked so warmly to me because he loved me; but the reason he had suddenly begun to talk, and the reason he so wanted to talk to me especially, I could not guess.

“I emigrated,” he went on; “and I regretted nothing I had left behind. I had served Russia to the utmost of my abilities as long as I was there; when I went away I went on serving her, too, but in a wider sense. But serving her in that way I served her far more than if I had remained only a Russian, just as the Frenchman at that time was a Frenchman, and a German only a German. In Europe they don’t understand that yet. Europe has created a noble type of Frenchman, of Englishman, and of German, but of the man of the future she scarcely knows at present. And, I fancy, so far she does not want to know. And that one can well imagine; they are not free and we are free. I, with my Russian melancholy, was the only one free in Europe... .

“Take note, my dear, of a strange fact: every Frenchman can serve not only his France, but humanity, only on condition that he remains French to the utmost possible degree, and it’s the same for the Englishman and the German. Only to the Russian, even in our day, has been vouchsafed the capacity to become most of all Russian only when he is most European, and this is true even in our day, that is, long before the millennium has been reached. That is the most essential difference between us Russians and all the rest, and in that respect the position in Russia is as nowhere else. I am in France a Frenchman, with a German I am a German, with the ancient Greeks I am a Greek, and by that very fact I am most typically a Russian. By that very fact I am a true Russian, and am most truly serving Russia, for I am bringing out her

leading idea. I am a pioneer of that idea. I was an emigrant then, but had I forsaken Russia? No, I was still serving her. What though I did nothing in Europe, what if I only went there as a wanderer (indeed, I know that was so) it was enough that I went there with my thought and my consciousness. I carried thither my Russian melancholy. Oh, it was not only the bloodshed in those days that appalled me, and it was not the Tuileries, but all that was bound to follow it. They are doomed to strife for a long time yet, because they are still too German and too French, and have not yet finished struggling in those national characters. And I regret the destruction that must come before they have finished. To the Russian, Europe is as precious as Russia: every stone in her is cherished and dear. Europe is as much our fatherland as Russia. Oh, even more so. No one could love Russia more than I do, but I never reproached myself that Venice, Rome, Paris, the treasures of their arts and sciences, their whole history, are dearer to me than Russia. Oh, those old stones of foreign lands, those wonders of God's ancient world, those fragments of holy marvels are dear to the Russian, and are even dearer to us than to the inhabitants of those lands themselves! They now have other thoughts and other feelings, and they have ceased to treasure the old stones... . There the conservative struggles only for existence; and the vitriol-thrower is only fighting for a crust of bread. Only Russia lives not for herself, but for an idea, and, you must admit, my dear, the remarkable fact that for almost the last hundred years Russia has lived absolutely not for herself, but only for the other States of Europe! And, what of them! Oh, they are doomed to pass through fearful agonies before they attain the Kingdom of God."

I must confess I listened in great perplexity; the very tone of his talk alarmed me, though I could not help being impressed by his ideas. I was morbidly afraid of falsity. I suddenly observed in a stern voice:

"You spoke just now of the 'Kingdom of God.' I've heard that you used to preach, used to wear chains?"

"Let my chains alone," he said with a smile: "that's quite a different matter. I did not preach anything in those days, but that I grieved for their God, that is true. Atheism was proclaimed ... only by one group of them, but that made no difference; it was only the hot-heads, but it was the first active step—that's what mattered. In that, too, you have their logic; but there's always melancholy in logic. I was the outcome of a different culture, and my heart could not accept it. The ingratitude with which they parted from the idea, the hisses and pelting with mud were intolerable to me. The brutality of the process shocked me. Reality always has a smack of the brutal about it, even when there's an unmistakable striving towards the ideal, and, of course, I ought to have known that; but yet I was a man of another type; I was free to choose, and they were not, and I wept, I wept for them, I wept for the old idea. And I wept, perhaps, with real tears, with no figure of speech."

"Did you believe so much in God?" I asked incredulously.

"My dear boy, that question, perhaps, is unnecessary. Supposing I did not believe very much, yet I could not help grieving for the idea. I could not help wondering,

at times, how man could live without God, and whether that will ever be possible. My heart always decided that it was impossible; but at a certain period perhaps it is possible ... I have no doubt that it is coming; but I always imagined a different picture... .”

“What picture?”

It was true that he had told me before that he was happy; there was, of course, a great deal of enthusiasm in his words; that is how I take a great deal that he said. Respecting him as I do, I can't bring myself to record here, on paper, all our conversation; but some points in the strange picture I succeeded in getting out of him I will quote. What had always worried me most was the thought of those “chains,” and I wanted to clear up the matter now, and so I persisted. Some fantastic and extremely strange ideas, to which he gave utterance then, have remained in my heart for ever.

“I picture to myself, my boy,” he said with a dreamy smile, “that war is at an end and strife has ceased. After curses, pelting with mud, and hisses, has come a lull, and men are left alone, according to their desire: the great idea of old has left them; the great source of strength that till then had nourished and fostered them was vanishing like the majestic sun setting in Claude Lorraine's picture, but it was somehow the last day of humanity, and men suddenly understood that they were left quite alone, and at once felt terribly forlorn. I have never, my dear boy, been able to picture men ungrateful and grown stupid. Men left forlorn would begin to draw together more closely and more lovingly; they would clutch one another's hands, realizing that they were all that was left for one another! The great idea of immortality would have vanished, and they would have to fill its place; and all the wealth of love lavished of old upon Him, who was immortal, would be turned upon the whole of nature, on the world, on men, on every blade of grass. They would inevitably grow to love the earth and life as they gradually became aware of their own transitory and finite nature, and with a special love, not as of old, they would begin to observe and would discover in nature phenomena and secrets which they had not suspected before, for they would look on nature with new eyes, as a lover looking on his beloved. On awakening they would hasten to kiss one another, eager to love, knowing that the days are short, and that is all that is left them. They would work for one another, and each would give up all that he had to all, and by that only would be happy. Every child would know and feel that every one on earth was for him like a father or mother. ‘To-morrow may be my last day,’ each one would think, looking at the setting sun; ‘but no matter, I shall die, but all they will remain and after them their children,’ and that thought that they will remain, always as loving and as anxious over each other, would replace the thought of meeting beyond the tomb. Oh, they would be in haste to love, to stifle the great sorrow in their hearts. They would be proud and brave for themselves, but would grow timid for one another; every one would tremble for the life and happiness of each; they would grow tender to one another, and would not be ashamed of it as now, and would be caressing as children. Meeting, they would look at one another with deep and thoughtful eyes, and in their eyes would be love and sorrow... .”

“My dear boy,” he broke off with a smile, “this is a fantasy and a most improbable one; but I have pictured it to myself so often, for all my life I could not have lived without it, and the thought of it. I am not speaking of my belief: my faith is great, I am a deist, a philosophic deist, like all the thousand of us I imagine, but ... but it’s noteworthy that I always complete my picture with Heine’s vision of ‘Christ on the Baltic Sea.’ I could not get on without Him, I could not help imagining Him, in fact, in the midst of His bereaved people. He comes to them, holds out His hands, and asks them, ‘How could they forget Him? And then, as it were, the scales would fall from their eyes and there would break forth the great rapturous hymn of the new and the last resurrection ...

“Enough of that, my dear; but my ‘chains ‘ are all nonsense; don’t trouble your mind about them. And another thing: you know that I am modest and sober of speech; if I’m talking too freely now, it’s ... due to various feelings, and it’s with you; to no one else shall I ever speak like this. I add this to set your mind at rest.”

But I was really touched; there was none of the falsity I had dreaded, and I was particularly delighted to see clearly that he really had been melancholy and suffering, and that he really, undoubtedly, had loved much, and that was more precious to me than anything. I told him this with impulsive eagerness.

“But do you know,” I added suddenly, “it seems to me that in spite of all your melancholy in those days you must have been very happy?”

He laughed gaily.

“You are particularly apt in your remarks to-day,” he said. “Well, yes, I was happy. How could I be unhappy with a melancholy like that? No one is freer and happier than a Russian wanderer in Europe, one of our thousand. I am not laughing when I say that, and there’s a great deal that’s serious in it. And I would not have given up my melancholy for any happiness. In that sense I’ve always been happy, my dear, all my life. And through being happy I began then, for the first time in my life, really to love your mother.”

“How do you mean for the first time in your life?”

“It was just that. Wandering and melancholy, I suddenly began to love her as I had never loved her before, and I sent for her at once.”

“Oh, tell me about that, too, tell me about mother.”

“Yes, that’s why I asked you here,” he smiled gaily. “And do you know I was afraid that you’d forgiven the way I treated your mother for the sake of Herzen, or some little conspiracy... .”

Chapter 8

1

As we talked the whole evening and stayed together till midnight, I am not recording the whole conversation, but am only selecting what cleared up for me one enigmatic point in his life.

I will begin by saying that I have no doubt that he loved my mother, and though he did abandon her and “break off all relations with her” when he went away, it was, of course, only because he was bored or something of that kind, which is apt to happen indeed to every one on earth, but which is always difficult to explain. Abroad, after some length of time, however, he suddenly began to love mother again, at a distance, that is in thought, and sent for her. I shall be told perhaps that it was a “caprice,” but I think differently: to my mind it was a question of all that can be serious in human life, in spite of the apparent sloppiness which I am ready, if you like, to some extent to admit. But I swear that I put his grieving for Europe unmistakably on a level with, and in fact incomparably higher than, any modern practical activity in the construction of railways. His love for humanity I recognize as a most sincere and deep feeling, free from any sort of pose, and his love for mother as something quite beyond dispute, though perhaps a little fantastic. Abroad, in melancholy and happiness, and I may add in the strictest monastic solitude (this fact I learned afterwards through Tatyana Pavlovna), he suddenly thought of mother—to be exact, thought of her “hollow cheeks,” and at once sent for her.

“My dear,” he blurted out among other things, “I suddenly reflected that my serving the idea did not release me, as a morally rational creature, from the duty of making, in the course of my life, at least one fellow-creature happy, in a practical way.”

“Can such a bookish thought have really been the reason of it?” I asked him with surprise.

“It’s not a bookish thought. Though—perhaps it is. It was everything together; you know I loved your mother really, sincerely, not bookishly. If I hadn’t loved her, I shouldn’t have sent for her, but should have made happy some casual German, man or woman, if I had formulated that thought. To make in one’s lifetime at least one fellow-creature happy, in a practical way, that is really happy, I would make a binding duty for every educated man; just as I would make it a law or an obligation for every peasant to plant at least one tree in his life to counteract the deforestation of Russia; though indeed one tree in one’s lifetime isn’t much, one might order him to plant one every year. The man of higher education and culture, pursuing higher ideas, sometimes loses sight of reality altogether becomes ridiculous, capricious and cold, and indeed I may say stupid, not only in practical life but in theory. The duty not to neglect practice and to make at least one real person happy would correct everything and would give fresh life even to the philanthropist himself.

“As a theory this is very absurd; but if it were adopted in practice and became a habit, it would not be stupid at all. I have experienced it myself: so soon as I began to develop this idea of a new creed, and at first of course in jest, I suddenly began to realize the depth of the love for your mother that lay hidden in my heart. Until then I had not understood that I loved her. While I lived with her I was only charmed with her while she was pretty, then I began to be moody and changeable. It was only in Germany that I understood that I loved her. It began with her hollow cheeks, of which I could never think, and sometimes not even see, without a pain in my heart, real physical pain. There are memories that hurt, my dear, that cause actual pain. Almost everyone has some such memories, only people forget them, but it does happen that they suddenly recall them, or perhaps only some feature of them, and then they cannot shake them off. I began to recall a thousand details of my life with Sonia. In the end they recalled themselves, and came crowding on my mind, and almost tortured me while I was waiting for her coming. What distressed me most of all was the memory of her everlasting submissiveness to me, and the way she continually thought herself inferior to me, in every respect, even—imagine it—physically; she was ashamed and flushed crimson when I looked at her hands and fingers, which were by no means aristocratic, and not her fingers only—she was ashamed of everything in herself, in spite of my loving her beauty. She was always shrinkingly modest with me, but what was wrong was that in it there was always a sort of fear, in short she thought herself something insignificant beside me, something almost unseemly in fact. I used really sometimes to think at first that she still looked upon me as her master, and was afraid of me, but it was not that at all. Yet, I assure you, no one was more capable of understanding my failings, and I have never in my life met a woman with so much insight and delicacy of heart. Oh, how unhappy she was if I insisted at first, when she was so pretty, on her dressing smartly; it was a question of vanity, and some other feeling, that was wounded. She realized that it would never be in her line to be a lady, and that in any dress but her own she would simply be ridiculous. As a woman she did not want to be ridiculous in her dress, and knew that every woman has HER OWN style of dress, which thousands and hundreds of thousands of women will never understand— so long as they are dressed in the fashion. She feared my ironical looks—that was what she feared!

“But it was particularly sad for me to recall the look of deep amazement which I often caught fixed upon me, during the time we were together: in her eyes there was the fullest comprehension of her lot and of the future awaiting her, so that I too felt weighed down, by that look in them, though I must admit, in those days, I did not discuss things with her, and treated all this somewhat disdainfully. And, you know, she wasn’t always such a timorous, shy creature as she is now; even now it happens that she will all at once grow gay, and look as pretty as a girl of twenty; and in those days in her youth she was very fond of chattering and laughing, only with people she was at home with, with girls and women belonging to the household; and how she started if I came on her unawares, if she were laughing, how she blushed, and how timorously she

looked at me! Once, not long before I went abroad, almost on the eve of my breaking off all relations with her, in fact, I went into her room and found her alone, at a little table, without any work in her hands, but deep in thought, resting her elbow on the table. It had hardly ever happened to her before to sit without work. At that time I had quite given up showing her affection. I succeeded in stealing in very quietly, on tiptoe, and suddenly embracing and kissing her... . She leapt up—and I shall never forget the rapture, the bliss in her eyes, and suddenly it was succeeded by a swift rush of colour, and her eyes flashed. Do you know what I read in those flashing eyes? ‘You are kissing me as a charity—that’s what it is!’ She began sobbing hysterically, making the excuse that I had startled her, but even at the time it made me think. And, in fact, all such reminiscences are very dreary things, dear boy. It’s like those PAINFUL scenes which you sometimes find in the works of great artists, which one remembers ever afterwards with pain; for instance, Othello’s last monologue in Shakespeare, Yevgeny, at the feet of Tatyana, or the meeting of the runaway convict with the little girl on the cold night at the well, in ‘Les Miserables’ of Victor Hugo; it stabs the heart once for all, and leaves a wound for ever. Oh, how eager I was for Sonia to come and how I longed to hold her in my arms! I dreamed with feverish impatience of a complete new programme of existence; I dreamed that gradually, by systematic efforts, I would break down that constant fear of me in her soul, would make her appreciate her own value, and all in which she was actually superior to me. Oh, I knew quite well, even then, that I always began to love your mother as soon as we were parted, and always grew cold to her at once as soon as we were together again; but that time, it was different, then it was different.”

I was astonished: “And SHE?” the idea flashed across me.

“Well, and how did mother and you meet then?” I asked cautiously.

“Then? Oh, we didn’t meet then at all. She only got as far as Königsberg, and stopped there, and I was on the Rhine. I didn’t go to her, and I told her to stay there and wait. We only saw each other again long after, oh, long after, when I went to her to ask her to consent to my marriage... .”

2

Now I’m coming to the core of it all, that is, as far as I was able to grasp it myself; for, indeed, his own account began to be somewhat disconnected. His talk became ten times as incoherent and rambling as soon as he reached this part of the story.

He met Katerina Nikolaevna suddenly, just when he was expecting mother, at the moment of most impatient expectation. They were all, at the time, on the Rhine, at some spa, all drinking the waters. Katerina Nikolaevna’s husband was by then almost dying, he had, at any rate, been given up by the doctors. She made an impression on him at the first meeting, as it were cast a sort of spell upon him. It was a case of fate. It’s remarkable that recalling it and writing it down now, I don’t remember that he

once used the word “love” in connection with her, or spoke of “being in love.” The word “fate” I remember.

And, of course, it was fate. He did NOT CHOOSE it, “he did not want to love her.” I don’t know whether I can give a clear account of it, but his whole soul was in revolt at the fact that this could have happened to him. Everything in him that was free was annihilated by this meeting. And the man was fettered for life to a woman who had really nothing to do with him. He did not desire this slavery of passion. To state the fact plainly, Katerina Nikolaevna is a type rare amongst society women—a type perhaps unique in that circle. That is, she is an extremely good-natured and straightforward woman. I’ve heard, indeed I know for a fact that this was what made her irresistible in the fashionable world whenever she made her appearance in it. (She used at times to withdraw into complete seclusion.)

Versilov did not believe, of course, when he first met her, that she was like that; in fact, he believed she was the exact opposite, that she was a hypocrite and a Jesuit. At this point I will anticipate by quoting her own criticism of him: she declared that he could not help thinking what he did of her “because an idealist always runs his head against reality and is more inclined than other people to assume anything horrid.”

I don’t know if this is true of idealists in general, but it was entirely true of him, no doubt. I may perhaps add here my own judgment, which flashed across my mind while I was listening to him then: I thought that he loved mother, more so to say with the humane love one feels for all mankind, than with the simple love with which women are loved as a rule, and that as soon as he met a woman whom he began to love with that simple love, he at once turned against that love—most probably because the feeling was new to him. Perhaps, though, this idea is incorrect; I did not of course utter it to him. It would have been indelicate, and he really was in such a condition that it was almost necessary to spare him: he was agitated; at some points in his story he simply broke off, and was silent for some moments, walking about the room with a vindictive face.

She soon divined his secret. Oh, perhaps she flirted with him on purpose; even the most candid women are base in these cases, and it is their overwhelming instinct. It ended in a rupture full of rankling bitterness, and I believe he tried to kill her; he frightened her, and would have killed her, perhaps, “but it was all turned to hatred.” Then there came a strange period: he was suddenly possessed by the strange idea of torturing himself by a discipline, “the same as that used by the monks. Gradually, by systematic practice, you overcome your will, beginning with the most absurd and trivial things, and end by conquering your will completely, and become free.” He added that this practice of the monks is a serious thing; in the course of a thousand years it has been brought by them to a science. But what is most remarkable is that he gave himself up to this idea of discipline, not in order to get rid of the image of Katerina Nikolaevna, but in the full conviction that he had not only ceased to love her, but hated her. He so thoroughly believed in his hatred for her as to conceive the idea of loving and marrying her step-daughter, who had been seduced by Prince Sergay, to persuade

himself absolutely of this new love, and to win the poor imbecile's heart completely, by his devotion making her perfectly happy. Why, instead of devoting himself to her, he did not think of mother, who was all this time waiting for him at Königsberg, remained for me inexplicable... . He quite forgot mother, indeed, and even neglected to send money for her maintenance, so that Tatyana Pavlovna had to come to her rescue; yet finally he did go to mother "to ask her permission" to marry the young lady, pleading that "such a bride was not a woman." Oh, perhaps all this is only a portrait of a theoretical man, as Katerina Nikolaevna said of him later. But why is it, though, that these theoretical people (if they really are theoretical people) are capable of such very real suffering, and end in such very real tragedy? On that evening, however, I looked at it differently, and I was disturbed by the thought:

"All your development, your whole soul, has been won by the suffering and the struggle of your whole life, while her perfection has cost her nothing. That's unjust... . Woman is revolting in that way." I said this without the least intention of flattering him, speaking with warmth and indignation.

"Perfection? Her perfection? But she has no sort of perfection!" he said suddenly, seeming almost surprised at my words. "She is the most ordinary woman, she is really a contemptible woman... . But she is bound to have every perfection!"

"Why is she bound to?"

"Because she has such power, she is bound to have every sort of perfection!" he cried vindictively.

"The saddest thing is that you are so harassed even now," I could not help blurting out suddenly.

"How harassed!" he repeated my words again, standing still before me as though in some perplexity. And suddenly a slow, gentle, dreamy smile lighted up his whole face, and he held up his finger as though considering. Then as though waking up, he took from the table an open letter, and flung it down in front of me.

"Read it! You must know everything ... and why have you made me rake up all this bygone foolishness? ... It has only roused up nasty and spiteful feelings in my heart... ."

I cannot describe my astonishment. The letter was from her to him, received by him that afternoon at five o'clock. I read it, almost shaking with emotion. It was not long, and was written so simply and straightforwardly, that as I read it I seemed to see her before me and hear her words. With the most simple truthfulness (and so almost touchingly) she confessed her terror, and then simply besought him to "leave her in peace." In conclusion, she told him that she definitely was to marry Büring. Till then she had never written a word to him.

And this is what I could make out of his explanation:

As soon as he had read the letter that day, he was aware of a new sensation: for the first time in those fatal two years he felt not the slightest hatred for her, or the slightest shock of emotion, such as had "driven him out of his mind" at a mere rumour of Büring. "On the contrary, I sent her my blessing, with perfect sincerity," he told

me, with deep feeling. I heard these words with ecstasy. Then all the passion and agony that had possessed him had vanished all at once of itself, like a dream, like an obsession that had lasted two years. Hardly yet able to believe in himself he hastened to mother's and—arrived at the very moment when she was set free by the death of the old man who had bequeathed her to him. The coincidence of these two events had deeply stirred his soul. Not long afterwards he rushed to find me—and that immediate thought of me I shall never forget.

I shall never forget the end of that evening either. The whole man was suddenly transformed again. We did not separate till late at night. The effect that all he told me had upon me I will describe later, in its proper place, and will confine myself now to a few words, in conclusion, about him. Reflecting upon it now, I realize that what captivated me so much at the time was his humility, so to speak, with me, his frank sincerity with a boy like me! "It was infatuation, but my blessings on it!" he exclaimed. "But for that blind obsession I might perhaps have never discovered in my heart my sole queen, my suffering darling—your mother." These passionate words, wrung from him by over-mastering feeling, I note particularly, in view of what followed. But at the time he gained complete possession of my heart and conquered it.

I remember in the end we became very cheerful. He asked for some champagne, and we drank to mother, and to the "future." Oh, he was so full of life, and so eager to live! But we suddenly became extremely merry, not from the wine: we only drank two glasses. I don't know why, but in the end we laughed almost helplessly. We began talking of quite extraneous matters; he began telling me an anecdote and I told him one. And our laughter and our anecdotes, were by no means malicious or amusing, but we were merry. He was unwilling to let me go: "Stay, stay a little longer," he repeated, and I stayed. He even came out to see me home; it was an exquisite evening, with a slight frost. "Tell me, have you sent her an answer yet?" I asked, quite casually, as I pressed his hand for the last time at the cross road.

"No, not yet, but that's no matter. Come to-morrow, come early... . Oh, and another thing: drop Lambert altogether and tear up that 'document,' and make haste about it. Goodbye!"

Saying this he went away quickly; I remained standing still, and so much taken aback that I could not bring myself to call after him. The expression, the "document," startled me particularly: how could he have known of it, and that particular word too, if not from Lambert? I went home in great confusion. And how can it have happened, the question flashed upon me suddenly, that such an obsession for two years can have vanished like a dream, like a vapour, like a phantom.

Chapter 9

1

But I waked up next morning feeling fresher and in better heart. I unconsciously reproached myself, indeed, with perfect sincerity, for a certain levity, and, as it were, superciliousness, with which it seemed to me, recalling it, I had listened to some parts of his “confession” the evening before. Supposing it had been to some extent muddled, and some revelations had been, as it were, a little delirious and incoherent, he had not, of course, prepared to deliver a speech when he invited me the day before. He had simply done me a great honour in turning to me, as his one friend at such a moment, and I shall never forget his doing it. On the contrary, his confession was “touching,” though people may laugh at me for saying so, and if there were glimpses from time to time of something cynical, or even something that seemed ridiculous, I was not so narrow as to be unable to understand and accept realism, which did not, however, detract from the ideal. The great point was now that I understood the man, and I even felt, and was almost vexed at feeling, that it had all turned out to be so simple: I had always in my heart set that man on a supreme pinnacle, in the clouds, and had insisted on shrouding his life in mystery, so that I had naturally wished not to fit the key to it so easily.

In his meeting WITH HER, however, and in the sufferings he had endured for two years, there was much that was complex. “He did not want to live under the yoke of fate; he wanted to be free, and not a slave to fate; through his bondage to fate he had been forced to hurt mother, who was still waiting for him at Königsberg... .” Besides, I looked upon him in any case as a preacher: he cherished in his heart the golden age, and knew all about the future of atheism; and then the meeting with HER had shattered everything, distorted everything! Oh, I was not a traitor to her, but still I was on his side. Mother, for instance, I reflected, would have been no hindrance, nor would marriage with her be so indeed. That I understood; that was something utterly different from his meeting with THAT WOMAN. Mother, it is true, would not have given him peace either, but that was all the better: one cannot judge of such men as of others, and their life must always be different; and that’s not unseemly at all; on the contrary, it would be unseemly if they settled down and became altogether like other ordinary people. His praises of the nobility, and his words: “Je mourrai gentilhomme,” did not disconcert me in the least; I understood what sort of gentilhomme he was; he was a man ready to abandon everything, and to become the champion of political rights for all, and the leading Russian thought of a universal harmony of ideas. And even though all this might be nonsense, that is “the universal harmony of ideas” (which is of course inconceivable), yet the very fact that he had all his life bowed down to an idea, and not to the stupid golden calf, was good. My God! why, conceiving “my idea,” had I, I myself—could I—have been bowing down to the golden calf, could I have been aiming only at money, then? I swear that all I wanted was the idea! I swear I would

not have had one chair, one sofa upholstered in velvet, and I would have eaten the same plate of soup as now, if I had had millions. I dressed and hurried off impatiently to see him. I may add that in regard to his outburst yesterday about the "document," I was ever so much more at ease in my mind than I had been the day before. To begin with, I hoped to have it out with him, and besides, what was there in Lambert's having wormed his way in to him, and having talked to him of something? But what rejoiced me most was an extraordinary sensation: it came from the thought that "he no longer loved HER"; I put absolute faith in it, and felt as if some one had lifted a fearful weight off my heart. I recall a conjecture that flashed upon me at the time: that the unseemliness and senselessness of his last violent outbreak, on hearing about Büring, and the sending of that insulting letter, that that final crisis might be taken as a sign and augury of a change in his feeling, and an approaching return to sanity; it must be as it is in illness, I thought, and, in fact, he is bound to reach the opposite extreme, it is a pathological episode, and nothing more.

This thought made me happy.

"And let her arrange her life as she pleases, let her marry her Büring as much as she likes, so long as he, my father, my friend, loves her no longer," I exclaimed.

I had, however, certain secret feelings of my own, on which I do not care to enlarge in my notes here.

That's enough. And now, without further reflections, I will give an account of the awful event that followed, and how the facts worked together to bring it about.

2

At ten o'clock, just as I was getting ready to go out, to see him of course, Darya Onisimovna appeared. I asked her joyfully: "whether she came from him?" and heard with vexation that she did not come from him, but from Anna Andreyevna, and that she, Darya Onisimovna, "had left the lodging as soon as it was light."

"What lodging?"

"Why, the same where you were yesterday. You know, the lodging where you were yesterday, where the baby is; it is taken in my name now, and Tatyana Pavlovna pays the rent... ."

"Oh, well, that's nothing to me!" I interrupted with annoyance. "Is he at home, anyway? Shall I find him?"

And to my surprise I heard from her that he had gone out even before she had; so she had gone out as soon as it was light, and he had gone out even earlier.

"Then has he come back yet?"

"No, he's certainly not back yet, and perhaps he won't come back at all," she declared, turning upon me the same sharp and furtive eye, and keeping it fixed on me, as she had done on the occasion I have described, when she visited me as I lay ill in bed. What infuriated me most was that their mysteries and imbecilities should be forced on me again, and that these people could not get on without secrets and intrigues.

“Why do you say: ‘he will certainly not come back’? What do you mean by that? He has gone to see mother, that’s all!”

“I d—don’t know.”

“And what have you come for?”

She told me that she had just come from Anna Andreyevna, who had sent her for me, and urgently expected me at once, or else it would be “too late.” These last enigmatic words finally exasperated me:

“Why too late? I don’t want to come and I’m not coming! I won’t let them take possession of me again! I don’t care a damn for Lambert, you can tell her so, and if she sends Lambert to me, I’ll kick him out, you can tell her so!”

Darya Onisimovna was awfully alarmed.

“Oh no,” she said, taking a step towards me, clasping her hands as though she were beseeching me. “Don’t be so hasty. There’s something very important the matter, very important to yourself, to them, too, to Andrey Petrovitch, to your mamma, to every one... . Go and see Anna Andreyevna at once, she can’t wait any longer ... I assure you, on my honour ... and afterwards you can make your decision.”

I looked at her with surprise and repulsion.

“Nonsense, it will be nothing, I’m not coming!” I shouted obstinately and vindictively: “Now everything’s different! Though how could you understand that? Good-bye, Darya Onisimovna, I won’t go on purpose, I won’t question you on purpose. You simply bother me. I don’t want to know anything about your mysteries.”

As she did not go away, however, but still stood waiting, I snatched up my fur coat and cap, and went out myself, leaving her in the middle of the room. There were no letters or papers in my room, and I never used to lock my door when I went out. But before I had reached the front door my landlord ran after me downstairs, without his hat, and not in full uniform.

“Arkady Makarovitch! Arkady Makarovitch!”

“What now?”

“Have you no instructions to leave?”

“No, nothing.”

He looked at me with eyes like gimlets, in evident uneasiness:

“About your room, for instance?”

“What about my room? Why, I sent you the rent when it was due?”

“Oh no, sir, I was not thinking of the money,” he said with a broad smile, his eyes still piercing into me like pins.

“Why, what on earth’s the matter with you all?” I shouted at last, growing almost savage. “What do you want too?”

He waited for a few seconds longer, still seeming to expect something from me.

“Well, then, you will give instructions later ... if you are not in the humour now,” he muttered, grinning more broadly than ever; “you go on and I’ll see to it.”

He ran back upstairs. Of course all this might well make one reflect. I purposely avoid omitting a single detail in all that petty tomfoolery, for every little detail helped

to make up the final situation and had its place in it, a fact of which the reader will be convinced. But that they really did bother me was true. If I was upset and irritated, it was at hearing again in their words that tone of intrigue and mystery of which I was so sick, and which so brought back the past. But to continue.

It turned out that Versilov was not at home, and it appeared that he really had gone out as soon as it was light. "To mother's, of course": I stuck obstinately to my idea. I did not question the nurse, rather a stupid peasant woman, and there was no one else in the lodging. I ran to mother's and I must admit I was so anxious that I took a sledge half-way. HE HAD NOT BEEN AT MOTHER'S SINCE THE EVENING BEFORE. There was no one with mother except Tatyana Pavlovna and Liza. Liza began getting ready to go out as soon as I went in.

They were all sitting upstairs, in my "coffin." In the drawing room Makar Ivanovitch was laid out on the table, and an old man was reading the psalter over him in an even, monotonous voice. For the future I am not going to describe anything more that does not relate to the matter in hand. I will only say that the coffin, which they had already made, was standing in the middle of the room, and was not a plain one, though it was black; it was upholstered in velvet, and the pall was of an expensive sumptuousness that was not in keeping with the character of a monk, or with the convictions of the dead man; but such was the special desire of my mother and Tatyana Pavlovna, who arranged the matter together.

I had not of course expected to find them cheerful; but the peculiar overwhelming distress mixed with uneasiness and anxiety, which I read in their eyes, struck me at once, and I instantly concluded that "sorrow for the dead was certainly not the only cause." All this, I repeat, I remember perfectly.

In spite of everything I embraced mother tenderly and at once asked about HIM. A gleam of tremulous curiosity came into mother's eyes at once. I made haste to mention that we had spent the whole evening together, till late at night, but that to-day he had been away from home since early morning, though at parting last night he had asked me to come as early as I could this morning. Mother made no answer, and Tatyana Pavlovna, seizing a favourable moment, shook her finger at me meaningly.

"Good-bye, brother," Liza blurted out, going quickly out of the room. I ran after her, of course, but she stopped short at the outer door.

"I thought you would guess you must come with me," she said in a rapid whisper.

"Liza, what's the matter?"

"I don't know what, but a great deal, no doubt the last chapter of 'the same old story.' He has not come, but they have heard something about him. They won't tell you, you needn't trouble yourself, and you won't ask, if you are sensible; but mother's shattered. I've not asked about anything either. Good-bye."

She opened the door.

"And, Liza, about you, yourself, have you nothing to tell me?" I dashed after her into the entry. Her terribly exhausted and despairing face pierced my heart. She looked

at me, not simply with anger, but with a sort of exasperated fury, laughed bitterly, and waved me off.

“If only he were dead I should thank God!” she flung up at me from the stairs, and was gone. She said this of Prince Sergay, and he, at that very time, was lying delirious and unconscious.

I went upstairs, sad but excited. “The same old story! What same old story?” I thought defiantly, and I had suddenly an irresistible impulse to tell them at least a part of the impression left upon me by his last night’s confession, and the confession too. “They’re thinking some evil of him now, so let them know all about it!” floated through my mind.

I remember that I succeeded very cleverly in beginning to tell them my story. Instantly their faces betrayed an intense curiosity. This time Tatyana Pavlovna positively fixed me with her eyes; but mother showed more reserve; she was very grave, but the glimmer of a faint, beautiful, though utterly hopeless smile came into her face, and scarcely left it all the time I was talking. I told the story well, of course, though I knew that it would be almost beyond their comprehension. To my surprise Tatyana Pavlovna did not attack me, did not insist on minute details, or try to pick holes as she usually did as soon as I began telling anything. She only pinched up her lips and screwed up her eyes, as though making an effort to get to the bottom of it. At times I positively fancied that they understood it all, though that could hardly have been so... . I spoke for instance of his convictions, but principally of his enthusiasm last night, his enthusiastic feeling for mother, his love for mother and how he had kissed her portrait... . Hearing this they exchanged a rapid silent glance with each other, and mother flushed all over, though both continued silent. Then ... then I could not of course BEFORE MOTHER touch on the principal point, that is his meeting with HER and all the rest of it, above all HER letter to him the day before, and his moral resurrection after getting that letter; and that indeed was the chief point, so that all his feeling, with which I had hoped to please mother so much, naturally remained inexplicable, though of course that was not my fault; I had told all that could be told extremely well. I ended in complete confusion; their silence was still unbroken and I began to feel very uncomfortable with them.

“Most likely he’s come back now, and may be at my lodgings waiting for me,” I said, and got up to go.

“Go and see! go and see!” Tatyana Pavlovna urged me resolutely.

“Have you been downstairs?” mother asked me, in a sort of half whisper, as she said good-bye.

“Yes, I have been, and I bowed down and prayed for him. What a peaceful, serene face he has, mother! Thank you, mother, for not sparing expense over his coffin. At first I thought it strange, but I thought, at once, that I should have done the same.”

“Will you come to the church to-morrow?” she asked, and her lips trembled.

“What do you mean, mother?” I asked in surprise. “I shall come to the requiem service to-day, and I shall come again; and ... besides, to-morrow is your birthday, mother darling! To think that he died only three days before!”

I went away painfully surprised: how could she ask such questions, whether I were coming to the funeral service in the church? “If that’s what they think of me, what must they think of HIM?”

I knew that Tatyana Pavlovna would run after me and I purposely waited at the outer door of the flat; but she pushed me out on to the stairs and closed the door behind her.

“Tatyana Pavlovna, don’t you expect Andrey Petrovitch today or to-morrow, then? I am alarmed... .”

“Hold your tongue. Much it matters your being alarmed. Tell me, tell me what you kept back when you were telling us about that rigmarole last night!”

I didn’t think it necessary to conceal it, and feeling almost irritated with Versilov I told her all about Katerina Nikolaevna’s letter to him the day before and of the effect of the letter, that is of his resurrection into a new life. To my amazement the fact of the letter did not surprise her in the least, and I guessed that she knew of it already.

“But you are lying.”

“No, I’m not.”

“I dare say,” she smiled malignantly, as though meditating: “risen again, has he, so that’s the latest, is it? But is it true that he kissed her portrait?”

“Yes, Tatyana Pavlovna.”

“Did he kiss it with feeling, he wasn’t putting it on?”

“Putting it on, as though he ever did! For shame, Tatyana Pavlovna; you’ve a coarse soul, a woman’s soul.”

I said this with heat; but she did not seem to hear me; she seemed to be pondering something again, in spite of the terrible chilliness of the stairs. I had on my fur coat, but she was in her indoor dress.

“I might have asked you to do something, the only pity is you’re so stupid,” she said with contempt and apparent vexation. “Listen, go to Anna Andreyevna’s, and see what’s going on there... . But no, don’t go; a booby’s always a booby! Go along, quick march, why do you stand like a post?”

“And I’m not going to Anna Andreyevna’s. Anna Andreyevna sent to ask me herself.”

“She did? Darya Onisimovna?” she turned to me quickly; she had been on the point of going away, and had already opened the door, but she shut it again with a slam.

“Nothing will induce me to go to Anna Andreyevna’s,” I repeated with spiteful enjoyment; “I won’t go because I’ve just been called a booby, though I’ve never been so sharp-sighted as to-day. I see all you’re doing, it’s as clear as day, but I’m not going to Anna Andreyevna all the same!”

“I know it,” she exclaimed, but again pursuing her own thoughts, and taking no notice of my words at all. “They will devour her now completely, and draw her into a deadly noose.”

“Anna Andreyevna?”

“Fool!”

“Then whom do you mean? Surely not Katerina Nikolaevna? What sort of deadly noose?”

I was terribly frightened, a vague but terrible idea set my whole heart quivering. Tatyana Pavlovna looked at me searchingly.

“What are you up to there?” she asked suddenly. “What are you meddling in there? I’ve heard something about you too, you’d better look out!”

“Listen, Tatyana Pavlovna, I’ll tell you a terrible secret, only not just now, there’s not time now, but to-morrow, when we’re alone; but in return you tell me the whole truth, how and what you mean by a deadly noose, for I am all in a tremble... .”

“Much I care for your trembling,” she exclaimed. “What’s this other secret you want to tell to-morrow? Why, you know nothing whatever!” she transfixed me with a questioning look. “Why, you swore then that Kraft had burnt the letter, didn’t you?”

“Tatyana Pavlovna, I tell you again, don’t torment me,” I persisted in my turn, not answering her question, for I was beside myself. “Take care, Tatyana Pavlovna, that your hiding this from me may not lead to something worse ... why, yesterday he was absolutely turning over a new leaf!”

“Go along, you idiot! you are like a love-sick sparrow yourself, I’ll be bound; father and son in love with the same idol! Foo, horrid creatures!”

She vanished, slamming the door indignantly. Furious at the impudent, shameless cynicism of these last words, a cynicism of which only a woman would have been capable, I ran away, deeply insulted. But I won’t describe my vague sensations as I have vowed to keep to facts which will explain everything now; on my way of course, I called in at his lodging, and heard from the nurse that he had not been home at all.

“And isn’t he coming at all?”

“Goodness knows.”

3

Facts, facts! ... But will the reader understand? I remember how these facts overwhelmed me and prevented me from thinking clearly, so that by the end of the day my head was in a perfect whirl. And so I think I must say two or three words by way of introduction.

The question that tormented me was this: if he really had gone through a spiritual change and had ceased to love her, in that case where should he have been now? The answer was: first of all with me whom he had embraced the evening before, and next with mother, whose portrait he had kissed. And yet, in spite of these natural alternatives, he had suddenly, “as soon as it was light,” left home and gone off somewhere, and Darya Onisimovna had for some reason babbled of his not being likely to return. What’s more, Liza had hinted at the “last chapter” of some “same old story,” and of

mother's having some news of him, and the latest news, too; moreover, they undoubtedly knew of Katerina Nikolaevna's letter, too (I noticed that), and yet they did not believe in "his resurrection into a new life" though they had listened to me attentively. Mother was crushed, and Tatyana Pavlovna had been diabolically sarcastic at the word "resurrection." But if all this was so, it must mean that some revulsion of feeling had come over him again in the night, another crisis, and this—after yesterday's enthusiasm, emotion, pathos! So all his "resurrection" had burst like a soap-bubble, and he, perhaps, was rushing about somewhere again now, in the same frenzy as he had been after hearing the news of Buring! There was the question, too, what would become of mother, of me, of all of us, and ... and, finally, what would become of HER? What was the deadly noose Tatyana had babbled of when she was sending me to Anna Andreyevna? So that "deadly noose" was there, at Anna Andreyevna's! Why at Anna Andreyevna's? Of course I should run to Anna Andreyevna's; I had said that I wouldn't go on purpose, only in annoyance; I would run there at once, but what was it Tatyana had said about the "document"? And hadn't he himself said to me the evening before: "Burn the document"?

These were my thoughts, this was what strangled me, too, in a deadly noose; but what I wanted most of all was HIM. With him I could have decided everything—I felt that; we should have understood each other in two words! I should have gripped his hands, pressed them; I should have found burning words in my heart—this was the dream that haunted me. Oh, I would have calmed his frenzy... . But where was he? Where was he?

And, as though this were not enough, Lambert must needs turn up at such a moment, when I was so excited! When I was only a few steps from my door I met him; he uttered a yell of delight on seeing me, and seized me by the arm.

"I've been to see you thr-r-ree times already... . Enfin! come and have lunch."

"Stay, have you been to my rooms; was Andrey Petrovitch there?"

"No, there was no one there. Dr-r-rop them all! You're a fool, you were cross yesterday; you were drunk, and I've something important to tell you; I heard a splendid piece of news this morning, about what we were discussing yesterday... ."

"Lambert," I interrupted hurriedly, breathing hard and unconsciously declaiming a little. "I am only stopping with you now to finish with you for good. I told you yesterday, but you still won't understand. Lambert, you're a baby and as stupid as a Frenchman. You persist in thinking that it's the same as it was at Touchard's, and that I'm as stupid as at Touchard's... . But I'm not so silly as I was at Touchard's... . I was drunk yesterday, but not from wine, but because I was excited; and if I seemed to agree with the stuff you talked, it was because I pretended, so as to find out what you were driving at. I deceived you, and you were delighted and believed it and went on talking nonsense. Let me tell you that marrying her is such nonsense that it wouldn't take in a schoolboy in the first form. How could you imagine I should believe it? Did you believe it? You believed it because you have never been in aristocratic society, and don't know how things are done among decent people. Things aren't done so simply

in aristocratic society, and it's not possible for her so simply to go and get married... . Now I will tell you plainly what it is you want: you mean to entice me, so as to make me drunk, and to get me to give up the document, and to join you in some scoundrelly plot against Katerina Nikolaevna! So I tell you it's nonsense! I'll never come to you. And you may as well know that to-morrow or the day after that letter will be in her own hands, for it belongs to her, for it was written by her, and I'll give it to her myself, and if you care to know where, I can tell you that through Tatyana Pavlovna, her friend, I shall give it at Tatyana Pavlovna's, and in Tatyana Pavlovna's presence, and I'll take nothing from her for giving it her. And now be off and keep away from me for ever, or else ... or else, I shan't treat you so civilly next time, Lambert... .”

As I finished I was in a slight shudder all over. A very serious thing and the nastiest habit in life, which vitiates everything in all one does, is ... is showing off. Some evil spirit prompted me to work myself up with Lambert, till rapping out the words with relish, and raising my voice higher and higher, in my heat I ended up by dragging in the quite unnecessary detail, that I should return the document through Tatyana Pavlovna, and in her lodging! But I had such a longing to crush him! When I burst out so directly about the letter, and suddenly saw his stupid alarm, I immediately felt a desire to overwhelm him by giving him precise details. And this womanish, boastful babbling was afterwards the cause of terrible misfortunes, for that detail about Tatyana Pavlovna and her lodging was naturally caught up and retained by a scoundrel who had a practical mind for little things; in more exalted and important matters he was useless and unintelligent, but for such trifles he had a keen sense, nevertheless. If I had held my tongue about Tatyana Pavlovna, great disasters would not have occurred. Yet when he heard what I said, for the first minute he was terribly upset.

“Listen,” he muttered. “Alphonsine ... Alphonsine will sing... . Alphonsine has been to see HER; listen. I have a letter, almost a letter, in which Mme. Ahmakov writes of you; the pock-marked fellow got it for me, do you remember him—and you will see, you will see, come along!”

“You are lying; show me the letter!”

“It's at home, Alphonsine has got it; come along!”

He was lying and talking wildly, of course, trembling for fear I should run away from him; but I suddenly abandoned him in the middle of the street, and when he seemed disposed to follow me I stood still and shook my fist at him. But he already stood hesitating, and let me get away; perhaps a new plan had dawned upon him. But the meetings and surprises in store for me were not yet over... . And when I remember the whole of that disastrous day, it always seems as though all those surprises and unforeseen accidents were somehow conspiring together and were showered on my head from some accursed horn of plenty. I had scarcely opened the door of my lodging when in the entry I jostled against a tall young man, of dignified and elegant exterior with a long pale face, wearing a magnificent fur coat. He had a pince-nez on his nose; but as soon as he saw me he took it off (evidently as a mark of politeness), and courteously lifting his top-hat, but without stopping, however, said to me with an elegant smile:

“Hullo, bonsoir,” and passing me went downstairs. We recognized each other at once, though I had only once seen him for a moment in Moscow. It was Anna Andreyevna’s brother, the young kammer-junker, Versilov’s son, and consequently almost my brother. He was accompanied by my landlady. (The landlord was not yet back from his office.) As soon as he had gone, I simply pounced on her:

“What has he been doing here? Has he been in my room?”

“He’s not been in your room at all. He came to see me ...” she snapped out briefly and dryly, and returned to her room.

“No, you can’t put me off like that,” I cried. “Kindly answer me; why did he come?”

“My goodness! Am I always to tell you why people come to see me? We may have our own interests to consider, mayn’t we? The young man may have wanted to borrow money; he found out an address from me. Perhaps I promised it him last time... .”

“Last time? When?”

“Oh my goodness, why it’s not the first time he’s been!”

She went away. The chief thing I gathered was the change of tone. They had begun to be rude to me. It was clear that this was another secret; secrets were accumulating with every step, with every hour. For the first time young Versilov had come with his sister, with Anna Andreyevna, when I was ill; I remember that perfectly, as well as Anna Andreyevna’s amazing words the day before, that, perhaps, the old prince would stay at my rooms... . But all this was so mixed up and so monstrous that I could scarcely gather anything from it. Clapping my hands to my forehead, and not even sitting down to rest, I ran to Anna Andreyevna’s; it appeared that she was not at home, and I received from the porter the information that “she had gone to Tsarskoe; and might, perhaps, not be back till about this time to-morrow.”

She was at Tsarskoe, and no doubt with the old prince, and her brother was examining my lodgings! “No, that shall not be,” I cried, gnashing my teeth; “and if there really is some ‘deadly noose’ I will defend ‘the poor woman’!”

From Anna Andreyevna’s I did not return home, for there suddenly flashed upon my feverish brain the thought of the restaurant on the canal side, where Andrey Petrovitch had the habit of going in his gloomy hours. Delighted at this conjecture, I instantly ran thither; it was by now four o’clock and was already beginning to get dark. In the restaurant I was told that he had been there, stayed a little while and had gone away, but, perhaps, he would come back. I suddenly determined to wait for him, and ordered dinner; there was a hope any how.

I ate my dinner, ate, indeed, more than I wanted, so as to have a right to stay as long as possible, and I stayed, I believe, four hours. I won’t describe my disappointment and feverish impatience, everything within me seemed shaking and quivering. That organ, those diners—oh, all the dreariness of it is stamped upon my soul, perhaps for the rest of my life! I won’t describe the ideas that whirled in my head like a crowd of dry leaves in autumn after a hurricane; it really was something like that, and I confess that I felt at times that my reason was beginning to desert me.

But what worried me till it was a positive pain (in a side-current, of course, besides my chief torment) was a persistent poisonous impression, persistent as a venomous autumn fly, which one does not think about but which whirls about one, pesters one, and suddenly bites one painfully; it was only a reminiscence, an incident of which I had never spoken to anyone in the world before. This was what it was, since it seems I must tell this, too.

4

When it was settled that I was to leave Moscow and come to Petersburg, I received instructions through Nikolay Semyonovitch to wait for money to be sent me for the journey. From whom the money was coming I did not ask; I knew it was from Versilov, and as I dreamed day and night of my meeting with him, making exalted plans about it while my heart almost swooned within me, I had quite given up speaking about him aloud even to Marie Ivanovna. I remember that I had money of my own, but I proceeded to wait expectantly for the money to come by post.

Suddenly, however, Nikolay Semyonovitch, returning home, informed me (as usual briefly and without going off into explanations) that I was to go next day to Myasnitsky, at eleven o'clock in the morning, to Prince V.'s flat, and that there Andrey Petrovitch's son, the kammer-junker, Versilov, who had just arrived from Petersburg and was staying with his schoolfellow, Prince V., would hand over to me a sum of money for my journey. On the face of it the arrangement was simple enough: Andrey Petrovitch might well send the money by his son rather than by post; but the news crushed me and filled me with alarm. I had no doubt that Versilov wished to bring his son, my brother, and me together; this threw a light upon the intentions and feelings of the man of whom I dreamed; but a question of the utmost magnitude presented itself to me: how should I, and how must I behave at this utterly unexpected interview, and how could I best keep up my dignity?

Next day, exactly at eleven o'clock, I turned up at Prince V.'s flat, which, as I was able to judge, was splendidly furnished, though it was a bachelor's establishment. I was kept waiting in the hall where there were several lackeys in livery. And from the next room came sounds of loud talk and laughter: Prince V. had other visitors besides the kammer-junker. I told the footman to announce me, and, I fancy, in rather haughty terms. Anyway, he looked at me strangely, and, as I fancied, not so respectfully as he should have done. To my amazement he was a very long time in announcing me, five minutes, and all the while the same laughter, and the same sounds of conversation reached me.

I waited standing, knowing that it would be impossible and unseemly for me, "just as much a gentleman," to sit down in a hall where there were footmen. My pride would have prevented me under any circumstances from entering the drawing-room without a special invitation; over-fastidious pride perhaps it was, but that was only fitting. To my amazement the two lackeys who were left in the hall had the impertinence

to sit down. I turned away to avoid noticing it, and yet I could not help quivering all over, and suddenly turning and stepping up to one of the footmen, I ORDERED him to go “at once” and take in my name again. In spite of my stern expression and extreme excitement, the lackey looked at me lazily, without getting up, and the other one answered for him:

“It’s been taken in, don’t disturb yourself.”

I made up my mind to wait only another minute or possibly even less, and then TO GO. I was very well-dressed: my suit and overcoat were new anyway, and my linen was perfectly fresh, Marie Ivanovna had seen to that with a special view to the occasion. But I learned for a fact, much later, when I was in Petersburg, that these lackeys had heard the evening before from young Versilov’s valet that “the young gentleman’s bastard brother, a student, was coming.” I know this now for a fact.

The minute passed. It’s a strange sensation when one decides and cannot decide. “Shall I go or not, shall I go or not?” I repeated to myself every second, almost in a fever, and suddenly the lackey who had taken my name returned. Between his fingers he held fluttering four red notes—forty roubles!

“Here, sir, will you please take forty roubles!”

I boiled over. This was such an insult! All the night before I had been dreaming of the meeting Versilov had arranged between us two brothers; I had spent the whole night in feverish visions of the demeanour I ought to adopt, that I might not discredit—not discredit the whole cycle of ideas which I had worked out in my solitude, and which might have made me feel proud in any circle. I dreamed of how proud, gentlemanly, and sad, perhaps, I would be even in Prince V.’s society, and how in that way I should be admitted into that circle—oh, I’m not sparing myself, and so be it, for it’s just such details that I ought to record! And then— to be given forty roubles by a lackey in the hall, and after being kept ten minutes waiting, and not even in an envelope, not even on a salver, but straight from the lackey’s fingers!

I shouted so violently at the lackey that he started and stepped back; I told him he must go back at once and “his master must bring the money himself”—in fact, my request was, of course, incoherent and incomprehensible to the man. But I shouted so that he went. To make things worse my shouting was heard in the room, and the talk and laughter suddenly subsided.

Almost at the same time I heard footsteps, dignified, quiet, unhurried, and a tall figure of a handsome and haughty-looking young man (he seemed to me then even thinner and paler than when I met him to-day) appeared in the doorway a yard from the door leading into the passage. He was wearing a magnificent red silk dressing-gown and slippers, and had a pince-nez on his nose. Without uttering a word he fixed me with his pince-nez and proceeded to stare at me. I took one step towards him like a wild beast, and began glaring at him defiantly. But he only scrutinized me for a moment, ten seconds at the utmost; suddenly I detected on his lips a scarcely perceptible, but most malignant smile—what made it so malignant was that it was scarcely perceptible: he turned round without a word and went back into the room, just as deliberately, just

as quietly and smoothly as he had come. Oh, these insolent fellows are trained by their mothers from childhood to be insolent! I lost my head of course... . Oh, why did I lose my head!

Almost at that moment the same lackey reappeared with the same notes in his hand.

“Be so good as to take this, it is sent you from Petersburg, but his honour can’t see you: ‘perhaps another time, when he’s more at leisure.’” I felt that these last words were his own addition. But I was still overwhelmed with confusion. I took the money and walked to the door, I took it simply because I was confused, I ought not to have taken it; but the lackey, no doubt wanting to mortify me further, ventured upon a regular flunkey’s impertinence; he flung the door extra wide open before me, and pronounced with exaggerated emphasis and dignity, as I went out:

“This way, if you please!”

“You blackguard,” I roared at him, and I raised my hand, but I did not bring it down; “and your master’s a blackguard, too! Tell him so directly,” I added, and went down the stairs.

“Don’t you dare! if I were to report that to my master, you would be taken, that very minute, with a note to the police station. And don’t you dare threaten me!”

I went down the stairs. It was a grand open staircase, and above I could be watched as I went down the red carpeted stairs. All three lackeys came out and stood looking over the banisters. I made up my mind to keep quiet, of course: to brawl with lackeys was impossible. I walked the whole length of the stairs without increasing my pace; I believe I even moved more slowly.

Oh, there may be philosophers (and shame upon them!) who will say that all this is nonsense, the irritability of a milksop; let them say so, but for me it was a wound—a wound which has not healed to this day, even to the present moment, when I am writing this, when all is over and even avenged. Oh, I swear I am not given to harbouring malice and I am not revengeful. No doubt I always, even before my illness, wanted to revenge myself when I was insulted, but I swear it was only to revenge myself by magnanimity. Let me revenge myself magnanimously, but so that he felt it and understood, and I should have been avenged! And, by the way, I must add: that though I am not revengeful I have a good memory for injuries, in spite of being magnanimous; I wonder whether others are the same? Then, oh, then I went with generous feelings, perhaps absurd, but no matter: better they were absurd and generous, than not absurd but mean, vulgar and mediocre! I never told anyone of that meeting with “my brother,” even Marie Ivanovna, even Liza: that interview was exactly like an insulting slap in the face. And now I came across this gentleman when I least expected to meet him; he smiles to me, takes off his hat and says bonsoir in quite a friendly way. That give one something to think about of course... . But the wound was reopened.

After sitting for more than four hours in the restaurant I suddenly rushed away as though I were in a fit, again to Versilov's of course, and again, of course, I did not find him at home; he had not been to the house at all; the nurse was bored, and she asked me to send Darya Onisimovna; as though I had thoughts for that! I ran to mother's, but did not go in. Calling Lukerya into the passage I learnt from her that he had not been there either, and that Liza, too, was not at home. I saw that Lukerya, too, would have liked to ask me something, and also, perhaps, to give me some commission; but I had no thoughts for that! There was one last hope left— that he had gone to my lodging; but I had no faith in this.

I have already stated that I was almost out of my mind. And lo, and behold! in my room I found Alphonsine and my landlord. They were coming out, it is true, and in Pyotr Ippolitovitch's hand was a candle.

"What's this?" I yelled at the landlord, almost senselessly. "How dare you take that hussy into my room?"

"Tien," cried Alphonsine "et les amis?"

"Get out," I roared.

"Mais c'est un ours!" she whisked out into the passage, pretending to be alarmed, and instantly disappeared into the landlady's room. Pyotr Ippolitovitch, still holding the candle in his hand, came up to me with a severe face.

"Allow me to observe, Arkady Makarovitch, that you are too hasty; with all respect to you, Mademoiselle Alphonsine is not a hussy, but quite the contrary, indeed, is here, not as your visitor, but as my wife's, with whom she has been for some time past acquainted."

"And how dared you take her into my room?" I repeated, clutching at my head, which almost suddenly began to ache violently.

"By chance. I went in to shut the window, which I had opened to air the room; and as Alphonsine Karlovna and I were continuing our conversation, she came into your room simply following me."

"That's a lie. Alphonsine's a spy, Lambert's a spy! Perhaps you're a spy, too! And Alphonsine came into my room to steal something."

"That's as you please. You'll say one thing to-day, but tomorrow you'll speak differently. And I've let our rooms for some time, and have moved with my wife into the little room so that Alphonsine Karlovna is almost as much a lodger here as you are."

"You've let your rooms to Lambert?" I cried in dismay.

"No, not to Lambert," he answered with the same broad grin, in which, however, the hesitation I had seen in the morning was replaced by determination. "I imagine that you know to whom and only affect not to know for the sake of appearances, and that's why you're angry. Good-night, sir!"

"Yes, yes, leave me, leave me alone!" I waved my hand, almost crying, so that he looked at me in surprise; he went away, however. I fastened the door with the hook

and threw myself on my bed with my face in the pillow. And that is how I passed that awful day, the first of those three momentous days with which my story concludes.

Chapter 10

1

But, again anticipating the course of events, I find it is necessary to explain to the reader something of what is coming, for the logical sequence of the story is obscured by such numerous incidents, that otherwise it would be impossible to understand it.

That something is the “deadly noose” to which Tatyana Pavlovna let slip an allusion. It appeared that Anna Andreyevna had ventured at last on the most audacious step that could be imagined in her position; she certainly had a will of her own! On the pretext of his health the old prince had been in the nick of time carried off to Tsarskoe Syelo so that the news of his approaching marriage with Anna Andreyevna might not be spread abroad, but might for the time be stifled, so to say, in embryo, yet the feeble old man, with whom one could do anything else, would not on any consideration have consented to give up his idea and jilt Anna Andreyevna, who had made him an offer. On this subject he was a paragon of chivalry, so that he might sooner or later bestir himself and suddenly proceed to carry out his intentions with that irresistible force which is so very frequently met with in weak characters, for they often have a line beyond which they cannot be driven. Moreover, he fully recognised the delicacy of the position of Anna Andreyevna, for whom he had an unbounded respect; he was quite alive to the possibility of rumours, of gibes, of injurious gossip. The only thing that checked him and kept him quiet for the time was that Katerina Nikolaevna had never once allowed herself to drop the faintest hint reflecting on Anna Andreyevna in his presence, or to raise the faintest objection to his intention of marrying her; on the contrary, she showed the greatest cordiality and every attention to her father’s fiancée. In this way Anna Andreyevna was placed in an extremely awkward position, perceiving with her subtle feminine instinct that she would wound all the old prince’s tenderest feelings, and would arouse his distrust and even, perhaps, his indignation by the slightest criticism of Katerina Nikolaevna, whom he worshipped, too, and now more than ever just because she had so graciously and dutifully consented to his marriage. And so for the present the conflict was waged on that plane: the two rivals vied with one another in delicacy and patience, and as time went on the prince did not know which of them to admire the most, and like all weak but tender-hearted people, he ended by being miserable and blaming himself for everything. His depression of spirits reached a morbid point, I was told: his nerves were thoroughly upset, and instead of regaining health in Tsarskoe, he was, so I was assured, on the point of taking to his bed.

Here I may note in parenthesis what I only learnt long afterwards that Buring had bluntly proposed to Katerina Nikolaevna that they should take the old gentleman abroad, inducing him to go by some sort of strategy, letting people know privately meanwhile that he had gone out of his mind, and obtaining a doctor's certificate to that effect abroad. But Katerina Nikolaevna would not consent to that on any account; so at least it was declared afterwards. She seems to have rejected the project with indignation. All this is only a rather roundabout rumour, but I believe it.

And just when things had reached this apparently hopeless position, Anna Andreyevna suddenly learnt through Lambert that there was in existence a letter, in which the daughter had consulted a lawyer about declaring her father insane. Her proud and revengeful mind was roused to the utmost. Recalling previous conversations with me and putting together many trifling circumstances, she could not doubt the truth of it. Then, inevitably, the plan of a bold stroke matured in her resolute, inflexible, feminine heart... . That plan was to tell the prince all about it, suddenly, with no preliminaries or negotiations, to frighten him, to give him a shock, to prove to him that what inevitably awaited him was the lunatic asylum, and if he were perverse, if he refused to believe and expressed indignation, to show him his daughter's letter, as though to say, "Since there was once an intention of declaring him insane, it might well be tried again in order to prevent his marriage." Then to take the frightened and shattered old man to Petersburg—STRAIGHT TO MY LODGING.

It was a terrible risk, but she had complete confidence in her powers. Here I will digress for a moment to observe that the later course of events proved that she had not been mistaken as to the effect of this blow; what is more, the effect of it exceeded her expectations. The news of the existence of this letter produced, perhaps, a far stronger effect on the old prince than she or any of us had anticipated. I had no idea until then that the old prince had heard of this letter before; but like all weak and timid people he did not believe the rumour, and did his utmost to dismiss it from his mind in order to preserve his serenity; what is more, he reproached himself for his baseness in being ready to believe it. I may add that the fact, that is the existence of the letter, had a far greater effect on Katerina Nikolaevna than I had expected... . In fact, this scrap of paper turned out to be of far greater consequence than I, carrying it in my pocket, had imagined. But I am running too far ahead.

But why, I shall be asked to my lodgings? Why convey the old prince to my pitiful little den, and alarm him, perhaps, by the sordidness of his surroundings? If not to his own home (where all her plans might be thwarted at once), why not to some "sumptuous" private apartments, as Lambert urged? But it was just on this that Anna Andreyevna reckoned in her desperate step.

Her chief object was to confront the prince with the document; but nothing would have induced me to give it up. And as there was no time to lose, Anna Andreyevna, relying on her power to carry off the position, resolved to begin without the document, bringing the old prince straight to me—for what purpose? To catch me by that same step; so to say, to kill two birds with one stone. She reckoned on working upon me

by the sudden blow, the shock, the unexpectedness of it. She anticipated that when I found the old man in my room, when I saw his helplessness and his alarm, and heard them all imploring me, I should give in and show the document! I must confess her calculation was crafty and clever, and showed psychological insight; what is more, she was very nearly successful... . As for the old man, Anna Andreyevna had succeeded in bringing him away, and had forced him to believe her simply by telling him that she was bringing him TO ME. All this I learned later; the mere statement that the letter was in my hands extinguished in his timid heart the last doubts of the fact—so great were his love and respect for me!

I may remark, too, that Anna Andreyevna herself never for a moment doubted that I still had the letter and had not let it go out of my hands: her great mistake was that she had a wrong conception of my character and was cynically reckoning on my innocence, my good- nature, and even my sentimentality; and, on the other hand, she imagined that even if I had made up my mind to give up the letter, to Katerina Nikolaevna for instance, I should only do so under special conditions, and she made haste to anticipate those conditions by the suddenness, the unexpectedness of her master- stroke.

And, finally, Lambert confirmed her in all this. I have mentioned already that Lambert's position at this time was most critical; the traitor would have liked above everything to lure me from Anna Andreyevna so that with him I might sell the letter to Mme. Ahmakov, which he, for some reason, considered a more profitable course; but since nothing would induce me to give up the document till the last moment, he decided, at any rate, to act with Anna Andreyevna also, that he might not risk losing everything, and therefore he did his utmost to force his services on her till the very last hour, and I know that he even offered to procure a priest, if necessary ... but Anna Andreyevna had asked him, with a contemptuous smile, not to suggest this. Lambert struck her as horribly coarse, and aroused her utmost aversion; but to be on the safe side she still accepted his services, as a spy for instance. By the way, I do not know for certain to this day whether they bought over Pyotr Ippolitovitch, my landlord, and whether he got anything at all from them for his services, or whether he simply worked for them for the joy of intrigue; but that he acted as a spy upon me, and that his wife did also, I know for a fact.

The reader will understand now that though I was to some extent forewarned, yet I could not have guessed that the next day, or the day after, I should find the old prince in my lodgings and in such circumstances. Indeed, I never could have conceived of such audacity from Anna Andreyevna. One may talk freely and hint at anything one likes, but to decide, to act, and to carry things out— well, that really is character!

2

To continue.

I waked up late in the morning. I slept an exceptionally sound and dreamless sleep, as I remember with wonder, so that I waked up next morning feeling unusually confident again, as though nothing had happened the day before. I intended not going first to mother's but straight to the church of the cemetery, with the idea of returning to mother's after the ceremony and remaining the rest of the day. I was firmly convinced that in any case I should meet him sooner or later at mother's.

Neither Alphonsine nor the landlord had been at the flat for a long time. I would not on any account question the landlady, and, indeed, I made up my mind to cut off all relations with them for the future, and even to give up my lodgings as soon as I could; and so, as soon as my coffee had been brought, I put the hook on the door again. But suddenly there was a knock at the door, and to my surprise it turned out to be Trishatov.

I opened the door at once and, delighted to see him, asked him to come in, but he refused.

"I will only say two words from the door ... or, perhaps, I will come in, for I fancy one must talk in a whisper here; only I won't sit down. You are looking at my horrid coat: Lambert took my great-coat."

He was, in fact, wearing a wretched old great-coat, which did not fit him. He stood before me without taking off his hat, a gloomy, dejected figure, with his hands in his pockets.

"I won't sit down, I won't sit down. Listen, Dolgoruky, I know nothing in detail, but I know that Lambert is preparing some treachery against you at once, and you won't escape it—and that's certain. And so be careful; I was told by that pock-marked fellow, do you remember him? But he did not tell me anything more about it, so I can't tell you. I've only come to warn you—good-bye."

"But sit down, dear Trishatov; though I'm in a hurry I'm so glad to see you... ." I cried.

"I won't sit down, I won't sit down; but I shall remember you were glad to see me. Oh, Dolgoruky, why deceive others? I've consciously of my own free will consented to every sort of abomination, to things so vile, that I can't speak of them before you. Now we are at the pock-marked fellow's. Good-bye. I am not worthy to sit down with you."

"Nonsense, Trishatov, dear... ."

"No, you see, Dolgoruky, I keep a bold face before every one, and I'm going to have a rollicking time. I shall soon have a better fur coat than my old one, and shall be driving a fast trotter. But I shall know in my own mind that I did not sit down in your room, because I judge myself unworthy, because I'm low compared with you. It will always be nice for me to remember that when I'm in the midst of disgraceful debauchery. Good-bye, good-bye. And I won't give you my hand; why, Alphonsine won't take my hand. And please don't follow me or come to see me, that's a compact between us."

The strange boy turned and went out. I had no time then, but I made up my mind to seek him out as soon as I had settled our affairs.

I won't describe the rest of that morning, though there is a great deal that might be recalled. Versilov was not at the funeral service in the church, and I fancy from their faces I could have gathered that they did not expect him there. Mother prayed devoutly and seemed entirely absorbed in the service; there were only Liza and Tatyana Pavlovna by the coffin. But I will describe nothing, nothing. After the burial we all returned and sat down to a meal, and again I gathered by their faces that he was not expected to it. When we rose from the table, I went up to mother, embraced her and congratulated her on her birthday; Liza did the same after me.

"Listen, brother," Liza whispered to me on the sly; "they are expecting him."

"I guessed so, Liza. I see it."

"He's certainly coming."

"So they must have heard something positive," I thought, but I didn't ask any question. Though I'm not going to describe my feelings, all this mystery began to weigh like a stone upon my heart again in spite of my confident mood. We all settled down in the drawing-room, near mother, at the round table. Oh, how I liked being with her then, and looking at her! Mother suddenly asked me to read something out of the Gospel. I read a chapter from St. Luke. She did not weep, and was not even very sorrowful, but her face had never seemed to me so full of spiritual meaning. There was the light of thought in her gentle eyes, but I could not trace in them any sign that she expected something with apprehension. The conversation never flagged; we recalled many reminiscences of Makar Ivanovitch; Tatyana Pavlovna, too, told us many things about him of which I had no idea before. And, in fact, it would make an interesting chapter if it were all written down. Even Tatyana Pavlovna wore quite a different air from usual: she was very gentle, very affectionate, and, what is more, also very quiet, though she talked a good deal to distract mother's mind. But one detail I remember well: mother was sitting on the sofa, and on a special round table on her left there lay, apparently put there for some purpose, a plain antique ikon, with halos on the heads of the saints, of which there were two. This ikon had belonged to Makar Ivanovitch—I knew that, and knew also that the old man had never parted from it, and looked upon it with superstitious reverence. Tatyana Pavlovna glanced at it several times.

"Listen, Sofia," she said, suddenly changing the conversation; "instead of the ikon's lying down, would it not be better to stand it up on the table against the wall, and to light the lamp before it?"

"No, better as it is," said mother.

"I dare say you're right; it might seem making too much fuss... ."

I did not understand at the time, but this ikon had long ago been verbally bequeathed by Makar Ivanovitch to Andrey Petrovitch, and mother was preparing to give it to him now.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon; we were still talking when I noticed a sudden quiver in mother's face; she drew herself up quickly and began listening, while Tatyana Pavlovna, who was speaking at the time, went on talking without noticing anything. I at once turned to the door, and an instant later saw Andrey Petrovitch in the doorway.

He had come in by the back stairs, through the kitchen and the passage, and mother was the only one of us who had heard his footsteps. Now I will describe the whole of the insane scene that followed, word by word, and gesture by gesture; it was brief.

To begin with, I did not, at the first glance anyway, observe the slightest change in his face. He was dressed as always, that is almost foppishly; in his hand was a small but expensive nosegay of fresh flowers. He went up and handed it to mother with a smile; she was looking at him with frightened perplexity, but she took the nosegay, and a faint flush at once glowed on her pale cheeks, and there was a gleam of pleasure in her eyes.

“I knew you would take it like that, Sonia,” he said. As we all got up when he came in, he took Liza’s easy-chair, which was on the left of mother, and sat down in it without noticing he was taking her seat. And so he was quite close to the little table on which the ikon was lying.

“Good evening to you all; I felt I must bring you this nosegay on your birthday, Sonia, and so I did not go to the funeral, as I could not come to the grave with a nosegay; and you didn’t expect me at the funeral, I know. The old man certainly won’t be angry at these flowers, for he bequeathed us joy himself, didn’t he? I believe he’s here somewhere in the room.”

Mother looked at him strangely; Tatyana Pavlovna seemed to wince.

“Who’s here in the room?” she asked.

“Makar Ivanovitch. Never mind. You know that the man who is not entirely a believer in these marvels is always more prone to superstition... . But I had better tell you about the nosegay: how I succeeded in bringing it I don’t know. Three times on the way I had a longing to throw it in the snow and trample on it.”

Mother shuddered.

“A terrible longing. You must have pity on me and my poor head, Sonia. I longed to, because they are too beautiful. Is there any object in the world more beautiful than a flower? I carried it, with snow and frost all round. Our frost and flowers—such an incongruity! I wasn’t thinking of that though, I simply longed to crush it because it was so lovely. Sonia, though I’m disappearing again now, I shall soon come back, for I believe I shall be afraid. If I am afraid, who will heal me of my terrors, where can I find an angel like Sonia? ... What is this ikon you’ve got here? Ah, Makar Ivanovitch’s, I remember. It belonged to his family, his ancestors; he would never part from it; I know, I remember he left it to me; I quite remember ... and I fancy it’s an unorthodox one. Let me have a look at it.”

He took up the ikon, carried it to the light and looked at it intently, but, after holding it a few seconds only, laid it on the table before him. I was astonished, but all his strange speech was uttered so quickly that I had not time to reflect upon it. All I remember is that a sick feeling of dread began to clutch at my heart. Mother’s alarm had passed into perplexity and compassion; she looked on him as some one, above all, to be pitied; it had sometimes happened in the past that he had talked almost as strangely as now. Liza, for some reason, became suddenly very pale, and strangely

made a sign to me with a motion of her head towards him. But most frightened of all was Tatyana Pavlovna.

“What’s the matter with you, Andrey Petrovitch darling?” she inquired cautiously.

“I really don’t know, Tatyana Pavlovna dear, what’s the matter with me. Don’t be uneasy, I still remember that you are Tatyana Pavlovna, and that you are dear. But I’ve only come for a minute though; I should like to say something nice to Sonia, and I keep trying to find the right word, though my heart is full of words, which I don’t know how to utter; yes, really, all such strange words somehow. Do you know I feel as though I were split in two”— he looked round at us all with a terribly serious face and with perfectly genuine candour. “Yes, I am really split in two mentally, and I’m horribly afraid of it. It’s just as though one’s second self were standing beside one; one is sensible and rational oneself, but the other self is impelled to do something perfectly senseless, and sometimes very funny; and suddenly you notice that you are longing to do that amusing thing, goodness knows why; that is you want to, as it were, against your will; though you fight against it with all your might, you want to. I once knew a doctor who suddenly began whistling in church, at his father’s funeral. I really was afraid to come to the funeral to-day, because, for some reason, I was possessed by a firm conviction that I should begin to whistle or laugh in church, like that unfortunate doctor, who came to rather a bad end... . And I really don’t know why, but I’ve been haunted by the thought of that doctor all day; I am so haunted by him that I can’t shake him off. Do you know, Sonia, here I’ve taken up the ikon again” (he had picked it up and was turning it about in his hand), “and do you know, I have a dreadful longing now, this very second, to smash it against the stove, against this corner. I am sure it would break into two halves—neither more nor less.”

What was most striking was that he said this without the slightest trace of affectation or whimsical caprice; he spoke quite simply, but that made it all the more terrible; and he seemed really frightened of something; I noticed suddenly that his hands were trembling a little.

“Andrey Petrovitch!” cried mother, clasping her hands.

“Let the ikon alone, let it alone, Andrey Petrovitch, let it alone, put it down!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, jumping up. “Undress sad go to bed. Arkady, run for the doctor!”

“But ... but what a fuss you’re making,” he said gently, scrutinising us all intently. Then he suddenly put both elbows on the table and leaned his head in his hands.

“I’m scaring you, but I tell you what, my friends, try to comfort me a little, sit down again, and all be calm, if only for a minute! Sonia, I did not come to talk of this at all; I came to tell you something, but it was quite different. Good-bye, Sonia, I’m going off on my wanderings again, as I have left you several times before ... but, no doubt, I shall come back to you again one day—in that sense you are inevitable. To whom should I come back, when all is over? Believe, Sonia, that I’ve come to you now as to an angel, and not as to an enemy; how could you be an enemy to me, how could you be an enemy! Don’t imagine that I came to break this ikon, for do you know, Sonia, I am still longing to break it all the same... .”

When Tatyana Pavlovna had cried out “Let the ikon alone,” she had snatched it out of his hands and was holding it in hers. Suddenly, at his last word, he jumped up impulsively, snatched the ikon in a flash from Tatyana’s hands, and with a ferocious swing smashed it with all his might against the corner of the tiled stove. The ikon was broken into two pieces... . He turned to us and his pale face suddenly flushed red, almost purple, and every feature in his face quivered and worked.

“Don’t take it for a symbol, Sonia; it’s not as Makar’s legacy I have broken it, but only to break something ... and, anyway, I shall come back to you, my last angel! You may take it as a symbol, though; of course it must have been so! ...”

And with sudden haste he went out of the room, going again through the kitchen (where he had left his fur coat and cap). I won’t attempt to describe what happened to mother: in mortal terror she stood clasping her hands above her, and she suddenly screamed after him:

“Andrey Petrovitch, come back, if only to say good-bye, dear!”

“He’ll come, Sofia, he’ll come! Don’t worry yourself!” Tatyana shrieked, trembling all over in a terrible rage, a really brutal rage. “Why, you heard he promised to come back himself! Let him go and amuse himself for the last time, the fool. He’s getting old—and who’ll nurse him when he’s bedridden except you, his old nurse? Why, he tells you so himself, he’s not ashamed... .”

As for us, Liza was in a swoon; I would have run after him, but I rushed to mother. I threw my arms round her and held her tight. Lukerya ran in with a glass of water for Liza, but mother soon came to herself, she sank on the sofa, hid her face in her hands, and began crying.

“But ... but you’d better run after him,” Tatyana Pavlovna shouted suddenly with all her might, as though she had suddenly waked up. “Go along ... go along ... overtake him, don’t leave him for a minute, go along, go along!” She pulled me forcibly away from mother. “Oh, I shall run myself.”

“Arkasha, oh, run after him, make haste!” mother cried suddenly, too.

I ran off, full speed, through the kitchen and through the yard, but there was no sign of him anywhere. In the distance I saw black shadows in the darkness; I ran after them and examined each passer- by carefully as I overtook them. So I ran on to the cross-roads.

“People are not angry with the insane,” suddenly flashed through my mind, “but Tatyana was wild with rage at him, so he’s not mad at all... .” Oh, it seemed to me all the time that it was symbolic, and that he was bent on putting an end to everything as he did to the ikon, and showing that to us, to mother, and all. But that second self was unmistakably beside him, too; of that there could be no doubt... .

3

He was nowhere to be found, however, and I could not run to him. It was difficult to believe that he would have simply gone home. Suddenly an idea flashed upon me and I rushed off to Anna Andreyevna.

Anna Andreyevna had just returned, and I was shown up at once. I went in, controlling myself as far as I could. Without sitting down, I at once described to her the scene which had just taken place, that is the “second self.” I shall never forget the greedy but pitilessly composed and self-complacent curiosity with which she listened, also standing, and I shall never forgive her for it.

“Where is he? Perhaps you know?” I ended, insistently. “Tatyana Pavlovna sent me to you yesterday... .”

“I sent for you, too, yesterday. Yesterday he was at Tsarskoe Syelo; he came to see me, too. And now” (she looked at her watch), “now it is seven o’clock... . So he’s pretty sure to be at home.”

“I see that you know all about it—so tell me, tell me,” I cried.

“I know a good deal; but I don’t know everything. Of course, there’s no reason to conceal it from you... .” She scanned me with a strange glance, smiling and as though deliberating. “Yesterday morning, in answer to her letter, he made Katerina Nikolaevna a formal offer of marriage.”

“That’s false,” I said, opening my eyes wide.

“The letter went through my hands; I took it to her myself, unopened. This time he behaved ‘chivalrously’ and concealed nothing from me.”

“Anna Andreyevna, I can’t understand it!”

“Of course, it’s hard to understand it, but it’s like a gambler who stakes his last crown, while he has a loaded pistol ready in his pocket—that’s what his offer amounts to. It’s ten to one she won’t accept his offer; but still he’s reckoning on that tenth chance, and I confess that’s very curious; I imagine, though, that it may be a case of frenzy, that ‘second self,’ as you said so well just now.”

“And you laugh? And am I really to believe that the letter was given through you? Why, you are the fiancée of her father? Spare me, Anna Andreyevna!”

“He asked me to sacrifice my future to his happiness, though he didn’t really ask; it was all done rather silently. I simply read it all in his eyes. Oh, my goodness, what will he do next! Why, he went to Königsberg to ask your mother’s leave to marry Katerina Nikolaevna’s step-daughter. That’s very like his pitching on me for his go-between and confidante yesterday.”

She was rather pale. But her calmness was only exaggerated sarcasm. Oh, I forgave her much then, as I began to grasp the position. For a minute I pondered; she waited in silence.

“Do you know,” I laughed suddenly, “you delivered the letter because there was not the slightest risk for you, because there’s no chance of a marriage, but what of him? Of her, too? Of course she will reject his offer and then ... what may not happen

then? Where is he now, Anna Andreyevna?" I cried. "Every minute is precious now, any minute there may be trouble!"

"He's at home. I have told you so. In the letter to Katerina Nikolaevna, which I delivered, he asked her in ANY CASE to grant him an interview in his lodgings to-day at seven o'clock this evening. She promised."

"She's going to his lodging? How can that be?"

"Why not, the lodging is Darya Onisimovna's; they might very well meet there as her guests... ."

"But she's afraid of him... . He may kill her."

Anna Andreyevna only smiled.

"In spite of the terror which I detected in her myself, Katerina Nikolaevna has always from the first cherished a certain reverence and admiration for the nobility of Andrey Petrovitch's principles and the loftiness of his mind. She is trusting herself to him this once, so as to have done with him for ever. In his letter he gave her the most solemn and chivalrous promise that she should have nothing to fear... . In short, I don't remember the words of the letter, but she trusted herself ... so to speak, for the last time ... and so to speak, responding with the same heroic feelings. There may have been a sort of chivalrous rivalry on both sides."

"But the second self, the second self!" I exclaimed; "besides, he's out of his mind!"

"Yesterday, when she gave her promise to grant him an interview, Katerina Nikolaevna probably did not conceive of the possibility of that."

I suddenly turned and was rushing out ... to him, to them, of course! But from the next room I ran back for a second.

"But, perhaps, that is just what would suit you, that he should kill her!" I cried, and ran out of the house.

I was shaking all over, as though in a fit, but I went into the lodging quietly, through the kitchen, and asked in a whisper to see Darya Onisimovna; she came out at once and fastened a gaze of intense curiosity upon me.

"His honour ... he's not at home."

But in a rapid whisper I explained, bluntly and exactly, that I knew all about it from Anna Andreyevna, and that I had just come from her.

"Darya Onisimovna, where are they?"

"They are in the room where you sat the day before yesterday, at the table."

"Darya Onisimovna, let me go in!"

"That's impossible!"

"Not in there, but in the next room. Darya Onisimovna, Anna Andreyevna wishes it, perhaps; if she didn't wish it, she wouldn't have told me herself. They won't hear me ... she wishes it herself... ."

"And if she doesn't wish it?" said Darya Onisimovna, her eyes still riveted upon me.

"Darya Onisimovna, I remember your Olya; let me in."

Her lips and chin suddenly began to quiver.

“Dear friend ... for Olya’s sake ... for the sake of your feeling ... don’t desert Anna Andreyevna. My dear! you won’t desert her, will you? You won’t desert her?”

“No, I won’t!”

“Give me your solemn promise, you won’t rush out upon them, and won’t call out if I hide you in there?”

“I swear on my honour, Darya Onisimovna.”

She took me by my coat, led me into a dark room—next to the one where they were sitting—guided me, almost noiselessly, over the soft carpet to the doorway, stationed me at the curtain that hung over it, and lifting the curtain a fraction of an inch showed me them both.

I remained; she went away. Of course, I remained. I knew that I was eavesdropping, spying on other people’s secrets, but I remained. How could I help remaining with the thought of the ‘second self’ in my mind! Why, he had smashed the ikon before my eyes!

4

They were sitting facing one another at the table at which we had yesterday drunk to his “resurrection.” I got a good view of their faces. She was wearing a simple black dress, and was as beautiful and apparently calm as always. He was speaking; she was listening with intense and sympathetic attention. Perhaps there was some trace of timidity in her, too. He was terribly excited. I had come in the middle of their conversation, and so for some time I could make nothing of it. I remember she suddenly asked:

“And I was the cause?”

“No, I was the cause,” he answered; “and you were only innocently guilty. You know that there are the innocently guilty. Those are generally the most unpardonable crimes, and they almost always bring their punishment,” he added, laughing strangely. “And I actually thought for a moment that I had forgotten you and could laugh at my stupid passion ... but you know that. What is he to me, though, that man you’re going to marry? Yesterday I made you an offer, forgive me for it; it was absurd and yet I had no alternative but that... . What could I have done but that absurd thing? I don’t know... .”

As he said this, he laughed hopelessly, suddenly lifting his eyes to her; till then he had looked away as he talked. If I had been in her place, I should have been frightened at that laugh, I felt that. He suddenly got up from his chair.

“Tell me, how could you consent to come here?” he asked suddenly, as though remembering the real point. “My invitation and my whole letter was absurd... . Stay, I can quite imagine how it came to pass that you consented to come, but—why did you come? that’s the question. Can you have come simply from fear?”

“I came to see you,” she said, looking at him with timid caution. Both were silent for half a minute. Versilov sank back in his chair, and in a voice soft but almost trembling and full of intense feeling began:

"It's so terribly long since I've seen you, Katerina Nikolaevna, so long that I scarcely thought it possible I should ever be sitting beside you again as I now am, looking into your face and listening to your voice... . For two years we've not seen each other, for two years we've not talked. I never thought to speak to you again. But so be it, what is past is past, and what is will vanish like smoke to-morrow—so be it! I assent because there is no alternative again, but don't let your coming be in vain," he added suddenly, almost imploringly; "since you have shown me this charity and have come, don't let it be in vain; answer me one question!"

"What question?"

"You know we shall never see each other again, and what is it to you? Tell me the truth for once, and answer me one question which sensible people never ask. Did you ever love me, or was I ... mistaken?"

She flushed crimson.

"I did love you," she brought out.

I expected she would say that. Oh, always truthful, always sincere, always honest!

"And now?" he went on.

"I don't love you now."

"And you are laughing?"

"No, I laughed just now by accident, because I knew you would ask, 'And now.' And I smiled at that, because when one guesses right one always does smile... ."

It seemed quite strange to me; I had never seen her so much on her guard, almost timid, indeed, and embarrassed.

His eyes devoured her.

"I know that you don't love me ... and—you don't love me at all?"

"Perhaps not at all. I don't love you," she added firmly, without smiling or flushing. "Yes, I did love you, but not for long. I very soon got over it."

"I know, I know, you saw that it was not what you wanted, but ... what do you want? Explain that once more... ."

"Have I ever explained that to you? What do I want? Why, I'm the most ordinary woman; I'm a peaceful person. I like ... I like cheerful people."

"Cheerful?"

"You see, I don't know even how to talk to you. I believe that if you could have loved me less, I should have loved you then," she smiled timidly again. The most absolute sincerity was transparent in her answer; and was it possible she did not realise that her answer was the most final summing up of their relations, explaining everything. Oh, how well he must have understood that! But he looked at her and smiled strangely.

"Is Büring a cheerful person?" he went on, questioning her.

"He ought not to trouble you at all," she answered with some haste. "I'm marrying him simply because with him I shall be most at peace. My whole heart remains in my own keeping."

"They say that you have grown fond of society, of the fashionable world again?"

“Not fond of it. I know that there is just the same disorderliness in good society as everywhere else; but the outer forms are still attractive, so that if one lives only to pass the time, one can do it better there than anywhere.”

“I’ve often heard the word ‘disorderliness’ of late; you used to be afraid of my disorderliness, too—chains, ideas, and imbecilities!”

“No, it was not quite that... .”

“What then, for God’s sake tell me all, frankly.”

“Well, I’ll tell you frankly, for I look on you as a man of great intellect... . I always felt there was something ridiculous about you.” When she had said this she suddenly flushed crimson, as though she feared she had said something fearfully indiscreet.

“For what you have just said I can forgive you a great deal,” he commented strangely.

“I hadn’t finished,” she said hurriedly, still flushing. “It’s I who am ridiculous to talk to you like a fool.”

“No, you are not ridiculous, you are only a depraved, worldly woman,” he said, turning horribly white. “I did not finish either, when I asked you why you had come. Would you like me to finish? There is a document, a letter in existence, and you’re awfully afraid of it, because if that letter comes into your father’s hands, he may curse you, and cut you out of his will. You’re afraid of that letter, and you’ve come for that letter,” he brought out. He was shaking all over, and his teeth were almost chattering. She listened to him with a despondent and pained expression of face.

“I know that you can do all sorts of things to harm me,” she said, as if warding off his words, “but I have come not so much to persuade you not to persecute me, as to see you yourself. I’ve been wanting to meet you very much for a long time. But I find you just the same as ever,” she added suddenly, as though carried away by a special and striking thought, and even by some strange sudden emotion.

“Did you hope to see me different, after my letter about your depravity? Tell me, did you come here without any fear?”

“I came because I once loved you; but do you know, I beg you not to threaten me, please, with anything. While we are now together, don’t remind me of my evil thoughts and feelings. If you could talk to me of something else I should be very glad. Let threats come afterwards; but it should be different now... . I came really to see you for a minute and to hear you. Oh, well, if you can’t help it, kill me straight off, only don’t threaten me and don’t torture yourself before me,” she concluded, looking at him in strange expectation, as though she really thought he might kill her. He got up from his seat again, and looking at her with glowing eyes, said resolutely:

“While you are here you will suffer not the slightest annoyance.”

“Oh yes, your word of honour,” she said, smiling.

“No, not only because I gave my word of honour in my letter, but because I want to think of you all night... .”

“To torture yourself?”

“I picture you in my mind whenever I’m alone. I do nothing but talk to you. I go into some squalid, dirty hole, and as a contrast you appear to me at once. But you

always laugh at me as you do now... ." He said this as though he were beside himself...

"I have never laughed at you, never!" she exclaimed in a voice full of feeling, and with a look of the greatest compassion in her face. "In coming here I tried my utmost to do it so that you should have no reason to be mortified," she added suddenly. "I came here to tell you that I almost love you... . Forgive me, perhaps I used the wrong words," she went on hurriedly.

He laughed.

"How is it you cannot dissemble? Why is it you are such a simple creature? Why is it you're not like all the rest? ... Why, how can you tell a man you are turning away that you 'almost love him'?"

"It's only that I could not express myself," she put in hurriedly. "I used the wrong words; it's because I've always felt abashed and unable to talk to you from the first time I met you, and if I used the wrong words, saying that I almost love you, in my thought it was almost so—so that's why I said so, though I love you with that ... well, with that GENERAL love with which one loves every one and which one is never ashamed to own... ."

He listened in silence, fixing his glowing eyes upon her.

"I am offending you, of course," he went on, as though beside himself. "This must really be what they call passion... . All I know is that in your presence I am done for, in your absence, too. It's just the same whether you are there or not, wherever you may be you are always before me. I know, too, that I can hate you intensely, more than I can love you. But I've long given up thinking about anything now—it's all the same to me. I am only sorry I should love a woman like you."

His voice broke; he went on, as it were, gasping for breath.

"What is it to you? You think it wild of me to talk like that!" He smiled a pale smile. "I believe, if only that would charm you, I would be ready to stand for thirty years like a post on one leg... . I see you are sorry for me; your face says 'I would love you if I could but I can't... .' Yes? Never mind, I've no pride. I'm ready to take any charity from you like a beggar—do you hear, any ... a beggar has no pride."

She got up and went to him. "Dear friend," she said, with inexpressible feeling in her face, touching his shoulder with her hand, "I can't hear you talk like that! I shall think of you all my life as some one most precious, great-hearted, as some thing most sacred of all that I respect and Love. Andrey Petrovitch, understand what I say. Why, it's not for nothing I've come here now, dear friend ... dear to me then and now: I shall never forget how deeply you stirred my mind when first we met. Let us part as friends, and you will be for me the most earnest and dearest thought in my whole life."

"Let us part and then I will love you; I will love you—only let us part. Listen," he brought out, perfectly white, "grant me one charity more: don't love me, don't live with me, let us never meet; I will be your slave if you summon me, and I will vanish at once if you don't want to see me, or hear me, only ... ONLY DON'T MARRY ANYONE!"

It sent a pang to my heart to hear those words. That naïvely humiliating entreaty was the more pitiful, the more heartrending for being so flagrant and impossible. Yes, indeed, he was asking charity! Could he imagine she would consent? Yet he had humbled himself to put it to the test; he had tried entreating her! This depth of spiritual degradation was insufferable to watch. Every feature in her face seemed suddenly distorted with pain, but before she had time to utter a word, he suddenly realised what he had done.

“I will STRANGLE you,” he said suddenly, in a strange distorted voice unlike his own.

But she answered him strangely, too, and she, too, spoke in a different voice, unlike her own.

“If I granted you charity,” she said with sudden firmness, “you would punish me for it afterwards worse than you threaten me now, for you would never forget that you stood before me as a beggar... . I can’t listen to threats from you!” she added, looking at him with indignation, almost defiance.

“‘Threats from you,’ you mean—from such a beggar. I was joking,” he said softly, smiling. “I won’t touch you, don’t be afraid, go away ... and I’ll do my utmost to send you that letter—only go; go! I wrote you a stupid letter, and you answered my stupid letter in kind by coming; we are quits. This is your way.” He pointed towards the door. (She was moving towards the room in which I was standing behind the curtain.)

“Forgive me if you can,” she said, stopping in the doorway.

“What if we meet some day quite friends and recall this scene with laughter?” he said suddenly, but his face was quivering all over like the face of a man in convulsions.

“Oh, God grant we may!” she cried, clasping her hands, though she watched his face timidly, as though trying to guess what he meant.

“Go along. Much sense we have, the pair of us, but you... . Oh, you are one of my own kind! I wrote you a mad letter, and you agreed to come to tell me that ‘you almost love me.’ Yes, we are possessed by the same madness! Be always as mad, don’t change, and we shall meet as friends—that I predict, that I swear!”

“And then I shall certainly love you, for I feel that even now!” The woman in her could not resist flinging those last words to him from the doorway.

She went out. With noiseless haste I went into the kitchen, and scarcely glancing at Darya Onisimovna, who was waiting for me, I went down the back staircase and across the yard into the street, but I had only time to see her get into the sledge that was waiting for her at the steps. I ran down the street.

Chapter 11

1

I ran to Lambert. Oh, how I should have liked to give a show of logic to my behaviour, and to find some trace of common sense in my actions that evening and all that night; but even now, when I can reflect on it all, I am utterly unable to present my conduct in any clear and logical connection. It was a case of feeling, or rather a perfect chaos of feelings, in the midst of which I was naturally bound to go astray. It is true there was one dominant feeling, which mastered me completely and overwhelmed all the others, but ... need I confess to it? Especially as I am not certain... .

I ran to Lambert, beside myself of course. I positively scared Alphonsine and him for the first minute. I have always noticed that even the most profligate, most degraded Frenchmen are in their domestic life extremely given to a sort of bourgeois routine, a sort of very prosaic daily ceremonial of life established once and for ever. Lambert quickly realised, however, that something had happened, and was delighted that I had come to him at last, and that I was IN HIS CLUTCHES. He had been thinking of nothing else day and night! Oh, how badly he needed me! And behold now, when he had lost all hope, I had suddenly appeared of my own accord, and in such a frantic state—just in the state which suited him.

“Lambert, wine!” I cried: “let’s drink, let’s have a jolly time. Alphonsine, where’s your guitar?”

I won’t describe the scene, it’s unnecessary. We drank, and I told him all about it, everything. He listened greedily. I openly of my own accord suggested a plot, a general flare-up. To begin with, we were by letter to ask Katerina Nikolaevna to come to us... .

“That’s possible,” Lambert assented, gloating over every word I said.

Secondly, we must send a copy of the “document” in full, that she might see at once that she was not being deceived.

“That’s right, that’s what we must do!” Lambert agreed, continually exchanging glances with Alphonsine.

Thirdly, Lambert must ask her to come, writing as though he were an unknown person and had just arrived from Moscow, and I must bring Versilov.

“And we might have Versilov, too,” Lambert assented.

“Not might, but must!” I cried. “It’s essential! It’s for his sake it’s all being done!” I explained, taking one sip after another from my glass. (We were all three drinking, while I believe I really drank the whole bottle of champagne, while they only made a show of drinking.) “Versilov and I will sit in the next room”—(Lambert would have to take the next room!)—“and suddenly when she had agreed to everything—to paying the cash, and to his OTHER demands too, for all women were abject creatures, then Versilov and I would come in and convict her of being abject, and Versilov, seeing what

a horrid woman she was, would at once be cured, and reject her with scorn. Only we ought to have Buring too, that he might see her put to shame.”

“No, we don’t want Buring,” Lambert observed.

“We do, we do,” I yelled again: “you don’t know anything about it, Lambert, for you are a fool! On the contrary, let it make a scandal in fashionable society, it will be our revenge on fashionable society, and upon her, and let her be punished! Lambert, she will give you an IOU... . I don’t want money, I don’t care a damn for money, but you can stoop to pick it up and stuff it in your pocket, and my curse with it, but I shall crush her!”

“Yes, yes,” Lambert kept approving, “you are right there.”

He kept exchanging glances with Alphonsine.

“Lambert, she has an awful reverence for Versilov: I saw that for certain just now,” I babbled to him.

“It’s a good thing you did peep and see it all. I should never have thought that you would have made such a good spy and that you had so much sense!” He said this to flatter me.

“That’s a lie, Frenchman; I’m not a spy, but I have plenty of sense! And do you know, Lambert, she loves him, really!” I went on making desperate efforts to express myself. “But she won’t marry him because Buring’s an officer in the guards, and Versilov is only a noble-hearted man, and a friend of humanity: to their thinking a comic person and nothing else! Oh, she understands his passion and gloats over it, flirts, is carried away by it, but won’t marry him! She’s a woman, she’s a serpent! Every woman is a serpent, and every serpent is a woman! He must be cured; we must tear the scales off his eyes; let him see what she is and be cured. I will bring him to you, Lambert!”

“Just so,” Lambert kept repeating, filling up my glass every minute.

He was in a perfect tremble of anxiety to avoid contradicting or offending me and to make me go on drinking. It was so coarse and obvious that even at the time I could not help noticing it. But nothing could have made me go away; I kept drinking and talking, and was desperately anxious to give full expression to what I was feeling. When Lambert brought in another bottle, Alphonsine was playing some Spanish air on the guitar; I was almost in tears.

“Lambert, do you know everything?” I exclaimed with intense feeling. “That man must be saved, for he’s spell-bound ... by sorcery. If she were to marry him, he would spurn her from him the day after the wedding ... for that does happen sometimes. For such a wild outrageous love is like a fit, like a deadly noose, like an illness, and—as soon as it is gratified—the scales fall from the eyes at once and the opposite feeling comes—loathing and hatred, the desire to strangle, to crush. Do you know the story of Avisage, Lambert? Have you read it?”

“No, I don’t remember: a novel?” muttered Lambert.

“Oh, you know nothing. Lambert, you’re fearfully, fearfully ignorant ... but I don’t care a damn for that. It’s no matter. Oh, he loves mother, he kissed her portrait; he’ll

spurn that woman next morning and come back to mother of himself; but then it will be too late, so we must save him now... .”

In the end I began crying bitterly, but I still went on talking and drank a fearful quantity of champagne. It was most characteristic of Lambert that all that evening he did not once ask about the “document”: where it was, that I should show it, should put it on the table. What would have been more natural than to inquire about it, since we were planning to take action? Another point: we kept saying that we must do “this,” that we certainly would do “this,” but of the place, the time and manner—we did not say a word! He only assented to all I said and kept looking at Alphonsine, that was all! Of course, I was incapable of reflecting on that at the time, but I remember it.

I ended by falling asleep on his sofa without undressing. I slept a long time and waked up very late. I remember that after waking I lay for a long time on the sofa, as it were petrified, trying to reflect and remember, and pretending that I was still asleep. But it appeared that Lambert was not in the room, he had gone out. It was past nine o’clock, the stove had been heated and was crackling exactly as it had done when I found myself the first time at Lambert’s after that night. But Alphonsine was behind the screen keeping guard on me; I noticed it at once, for she had twice peeped out and glanced at me, but each time I shut my eyes and pretended to be asleep. I did this because I was overwhelmed and wanted to think over my position. I felt with horror all the ineptitude and loathsomeness of my confession to Lambert, my plotting with him, the blunder I had made in running to him! But, thank God, the letter was still in my keeping; it was still sewn up in my side pocket; I felt with my hand—it was there! So all I had to do was to get up and run away, I need not care what Lambert thought of me afterwards. Lambert was not worth it.

But I was ashamed of myself! I was my own judge, and—my God, what was there in my heart! But there’s no need to describe that hellish, insufferable feeling, and that consciousness of filth and vileness. But yet I must confess it, for I feel the time has come. It must be recorded in my story. So let it be known that I meant to shame her, and planned to be almost a witness of her yielding to Lambert’s demands—oh, the baseness!—not for the sake of saving Versilov in his madness and bringing him back to mother, but because ... perhaps because I was myself in love and jealous! Jealous of whom: of Büring, of Versilov? Of anyone she might look at, or talk to at a ball, while I should be standing in a corner ashamed of myself... . Oh, the hideousness of it!

In short, I don’t know of whom I was jealous on her account; but all I felt and knew the evening before was that as certainly as twice two make four, she was lost to me, that that woman would spurn me and laugh at me for falseness and absurdity! She was truthful and honest, while I—I was a spy, using letters to threaten her!

All this I have kept hidden in my heart ever since, but now the day has come and I make up my account, but, again, for the last time. Perhaps fully half, or perhaps even seventy-five per cent. of what I am saying is a libel upon myself! That night I hated her in a kind of delirium, and afterwards like a drunken rowdy. I have said already that it was a chaos of feelings and sensations in which I could distinguish nothing clearly

myself. But still I have had to confess it, for though only a part of what I felt, it was certainly present.

With an overpowering sense of disgust, and a firm determination to cancel all that had happened, I suddenly jumped up from the sofa; but as I jumped up, Alphonsine instantly popped out. I seized my overcoat and cap and told her to tell Lambert that I had been raving the evening before, that I had slandered a woman, that I had been joking, and that Lambert must not dare come near me again... . All this I expressed in a blundering fashion, talking hurriedly in French, and, of course, anything but clearly, but, to my surprise, Alphonsine understood everything perfectly; and what was most surprising of all, she seemed positively relieved at something.

“Oui, oui,” she said approvingly, “c’est une honte! Une dame... . Oh, vous être généreux, vous! Soyez tranquille, je ferai voir raison à Lambert... .”

So that I was even at that moment puzzled to explain the sudden change in her attitude, and consequently I suppose in Lambert’s. I went away, however, saying nothing; all was in confusion within me, and I was hardly capable of reasoning. Oh, afterwards I could explain it all, but then it was too late! Oh, what a hellish plot it was! I will pause here and explain it beforehand, as otherwise it will be impossible for the reader to understand it.

The fact was that at my very first interview with Lambert, when I was thawing in his lodging, I had muttered to him like a fool that the letter was sewn up in my pocket; then I had suddenly fallen asleep for a time on the sofa in the corner, and Lambert had promptly felt my pocket and was convinced that there was a piece of paper sewn up in it. Several times afterwards he made sure that the paper was still there; when we were dining, for instance, at the “Tatar’s,” I remember that he several times put his arms round my waist on purpose. Grasping the importance of the letter he made a separate plan of his own of which I had no suspicion at all. I, like a fool, imagined all the time that he urged me to come home so persistently to get me to join his gang and to act only in concert with him, but, alas! he invited me with quite a different object! He wanted to make me dead drunk, and when I was stretched snoring and unconscious, to rip open my pocket and take possession of the letter. This was precisely what he and Alphonsine had done that night; Alphonsine had unpicked the pocket, taking out the letter, HER LETTER, the document I had brought from Moscow, they had taken a piece of plain notepaper the same size, put it in the pocket and sewn it up again, as if nothing had happened, so that I might notice no difference. Alphonsine had sewn it up. And I, up to the very end, for another day and a half—still went on believing that I was in possession of the secret, and that Katerina Nikolaevna’s fate was still in my hands.

A last word: that theft of the letter was the cause of everything and of all the other disasters that followed.

2

The last twenty-four hours of my story have come and I am at the end!

It was, I believe, about half-past ten, when excited, and, as far as I remember, strangely absent-minded, but with a firm determination in my heart, I dragged myself to my lodgings. I was not in a hurry, I knew how I was going to act. And scarcely had I stepped into the passage when I realised at once that a new calamity had occurred, and an extraordinary complication had arisen: the old prince had just been brought from Tsarskoe-Syelo and was in the flat; with him was Anna Andreyevna!

He had been put not in my room but in the two rooms next to mine that had been occupied by my landlord and his wife. The day before, as it appeared, some changes and improvements had been made in the room, but only of the most superficial kind. The landlord and his wife had moved into the little room of the whimsical lodger marked with small-pox whom I have mentioned already, and that individual had been temporarily banished, I don't know where.

I was met by the landlord, who at once whisked into my room. He looked less sure of his ground than he had done the evening before, but was in an unusual state of excitement, so to say, at the climax of the affair. I said nothing to him, but, moving aside into a corner and clutching my head in my hands, I stood so for a moment. He thought for the first moment that I was "putting it on," but at last his fortitude gave way, and he could not help being scared.

"Can anything be wrong?" he muttered. "I've been waiting for you to ask," he added, seeing I did not answer, "whether you preferred that door to be opened so that you may have direct access to the prince's rooms ... instead of going by the passage?" He pointed to the door at the side always locked, which led to the landlord's rooms, now the old prince's apartments.

"Look here, Pyotr Ippolitovitch," I turned to him with a stern air, "I humbly beg you to go to Anna Andreyevna and ask her to come here at once to discuss the situation. Have they been here long?"

"Going on for an hour."

"Go and fetch her then."

He went and brought the strange reply "that Anna Andreyevna and Prince Nikolay Ivanitch were impatiently expecting me in the next room"; so Anna Andreyevna would not come. I smoothed out my coat, which was creased from sleeping in it that night, brushed it, washed, combed my hair; I did all this deliberately, realising how necessary it was to be careful, and I went in to the old prince.

The prince was sitting on the sofa at a round table, and Anna Andreyevna in another corner, at another table covered with a cloth, on which the landlady's samovar, polished as it had never been before, was boiling for tea. I walked in with the same stern look on my face, and the old man instantly noticed this and winced, and the smile on his face was instantly replaced by a look of terror; but I could not keep it up, I instantly

laughed and held out my hands to him; the poor old fellow simply flung himself into my arms.

I realised unmistakably at once the condition of the man I had to deal with. To begin with, it was as clear as twice two make four that in the interval since I had seen him last they had turned the old man, till lately almost hale, and to some extent rational, and not altogether without will-power, into a sort of mummy, a scared and mistrustful child. I may add, he quite knew why they had brought him here, and everything had been done as I have explained already. He was suddenly shocked, crushed, and overwhelmed by being told of his daughter's treachery and of a possible madhouse. He had allowed himself to be carried off, so scared that he hardly knew what he was doing; he was told that I was in possession of the secret and that I had the proof that would establish the fact conclusively. I may mention at once: it was just that proof that would establish the fact which he dreaded more than anything in the world. He was expecting me to go in to him with a sort of death sentence in my face and a document in my hand, and was immensely delighted that I was ready meanwhile to laugh and chatter of other things. While we were embracing he shed tears. I must confess I shed a tear also; I felt suddenly very sorry for him. Alphonsine's little lap-dog broke into a bark as shrill as a bell, and made dashes at me from the sofa. He had not parted from this tiny dog since he had had it and even slept with it.

"Oh je disais, qu'il a du coeur!" he exclaimed, indicating me to Anna Andreyevna.

"But how much stronger you look, prince, how well and fresh and strong you look!" I observed. Alas! It was just the opposite: he looked like a mummy and I only said it to cheer him up!

"N'est-ce pas, n'est-ce pas?" he repeated joyfully. "Oh, I've regained my health wonderfully."

"But drink your tea, and if you'll give me a cup I'll drink some with you."

"That's delightful! 'Let us drink the cup that cheers' ... or how does it go, that's in some poem. Anna Andreyevna, give him some tea; il prend toujours par les sentiments... . Give us some tea, my dear."

Anna Andreyevna poured out the tea, but suddenly turning to me began with extreme solemnity:

"Arkady Makarovitch, we both, my benefactor, Prince Nikolay Ivanitch and I, have taken refuge with you. I consider that we have come to you, to you alone, and we both beg of you to shelter us. Remember that the whole fate of this saintly, this noble and injured man, is in your hands ... we await the decision, and count upon the justice of your heart!"

But she could not go on; the old prince was reduced to terror and almost trembling with alarm.

"Après, après, n'est-ce pas, chère amie," he kept repeating, holding out his hands to her.

I cannot express how disagreeably her outburst impressed me. I made no response but a chilly and dignified bow; then I sat down to the table, and with undisguised

intention began talking of other things, of various trifles, laughing and making jokes... . The old man was evidently grateful to me and was enthusiastically delighted; but enthusiastic as his gaiety was, it was evidently insincere and might any moment have been followed by absolute dejection: that was clear from the first glance.

“Cher enfant, I hear you’ve been ill... . Ah, pardon, I hear you’ve been busy with spiritualism all this time.”

“I never thought of such a thing,” I said smiling.

“No? who was it told me about spiritualism?”

“It was your landlord here, Pyotr Ippolitovitch,” Anna Andreyevna explained, “he’s a very amusing man and knows a great many anecdotes; shall I ask him in?”

“Oui, oui, il est charmant ... he knows anecdotes, but better send for him later. We’ll send for him and he’ll tell us stories, mais après. Only fancy, they were laying the table just now and he said: ‘Don’t be uneasy, it won’t fly about, we are not spiritualists.’ Is it possible that the tables fly about among the spiritualists?”

“I really don’t know, they say so, they say they jump right off the ground.”

“Mais c’est terrible ce que tu dis,” he looked at me in alarm.

“Oh, don’t be uneasy, of course that’s nonsense.”

“That’s what I say too. Nastasya Stepanovna Salomeyev ... you know her, of course ... oh no, you don’t know her ... would you believe it she believes in spiritualism, too; and only fancy, chère enfant,” he turned to Anna Andreyevna, “I said to her, there are tables in the Ministry of Finance and eight pairs of clerks’ hands are lying on them, writing all the while, so why is it the tables don’t dance there? Fancy if they suddenly all began dancing! The revolt of the tables in the Ministry of Finance or popular education—that’s the last straw.”

“What charming things you say, prince, just as you always did,” I exclaimed, trying to laugh as genuinely as possible.

“N’est-ce pas? Je ne parle pas trop, mais je dis bien.”

“I will bring Pyotr Ippolitovitch,” Anna Andreyevna said, getting up. There was a gleam of pleasure in her face: she was relieved at seeing how affectionate I was with the old prince. But she had hardly gone out when the old man’s face changed instantly. He looked hurriedly at the door, glanced about him, and stooping towards me from the sofa, whispered to me in a frightened voice:

“Cher ami! Oh, if I could see them both here together! Oh, cher enfant!”

“Prince, don’t distress yourself... .”

“Yes, yes, but ... we’ll reconcile them, n’est-ce pas? It’s a foolish petty quarrel between two most estimable women, n’est-ce pas? You are my only hope... . We’ll set everything straight here; and what a queer place this is,” he looked about him almost fearfully; “and that landlord, you know ... he’s got such a face... . Tell me! He’s not dangerous?”

“The landlord? Oh no, how could he be dangerous?”

“C’est ça. So much the better. Il semble qu’il est bête, ce gentilhomme. Cher enfant, for Christ’s sake don’t tell Anna Andreyevna that I’m afraid of everything here; I

praised everything from the first moment, I praised the landlord too. Listen, do you know the story of what happened to Von Sohn—do you remember?”

“Well, what of it?”

“Rien, rien de tout... . Mais je suis libre ici, n'est-ce pas? What do you think, nothing could happen to me here ... of the same sort?”

“But I assure you, dear prince ... upon my word!”

“Mon ami, mon enfant!” he exclaimed suddenly, clasping his hands before him, not seeking to disguise his alarm: “if you really have something ... some document ... in fact—if you have something to say to me, don’t say it; for God’s sake don’t say anything at all ... put it off as long as you can... .”

He was on the point of throwing himself in my arms; tears were flowing down his face; I cannot describe how it made my heart ache; the poor old man was like a pitiful frightened child stolen from his home by gypsies and carried away to live with strangers, but we were not allowed to embrace. The door opened and Anna Andreyevna walked in, not with the landlord, but with her brother, the kammer- junker. This new surprise petrified me. I got up and was making for the door.

“Arkady Makarovitch, allow me to introduce you,” Anna Andreyevna said aloud, so that I was compelled to stop.

“I know your brother TOO well already,” I rapped out, laying special emphasis on the word “too.”

“Ah, that was a terrible blunder! And I’m so sor-r-ry, dear, and ... Andrey Makarovitch,” the young man began lisping, coming up to me with an extraordinarily free-and-easy air and seizing my hand, which I was incapable of withdrawing, “it was all the fault of my Stepan; he announced you so stupidly that I mistook you for some one else: that was in Moscow,” he explained to his sister: “afterwards, I did everything I could to look you up and explain, but I was ill, ask her. Cher prince, nous devons être amis même par droit de naissance... .”

And the impudent young man had the effrontery to put his arm round my shoulder, which was the height of familiarity. I drew back, but overcome by embarrassment preferred to beat a hasty retreat, without saying a word. Going back to my room I sat down on my bed in uncertainty and agitation. I felt suffocated by the atmosphere of intrigue, but I could not deal Anna Andreyevna such a direct and crushing blow. I suddenly felt that she, too, was dear to me, and that her position was an awful one.

3

As I had expected, she came into my room herself, leaving the prince with her brother, who immediately began telling him some society scandal, as fresh as hot cakes, which at once distracted the impressionable old man’s attention and cheered him up. I got up from the bed in silence, with a look of inquiry.

“I have told you everything, Arkady Makarovitch,” she began directly, “our fate is in your hands.”

“But I told you beforehand that I cannot ... the most sacred duties prevent me doing what you desire... .”

“Yes? Is that your answer? Well, let me perish, but what of the old prince? What do you expect? Why, he’ll be out of his mind by the evening!”

“No, he’ll go out of his mind if I show him the letter in which his daughter writes to a lawyer about certifying him insane!” I cried with heat. “That’s what would be too much for him. Do you know he won’t believe that letter, he’s told me so already!”

I lied, saying he had said this of the letter; but it was effective.

“He has said so already? I thought so! In that case I’m lost. He’s been crying already and asking to go home.”

“Tell me, what’s your plan exactly?” I asked insistently. She flushed from exasperated haughtiness, so to speak, but she controlled herself:

“With that letter of his daughter’s in our hands, we are justified in the eyes of the world. I should send it at once to Prince V. and to Boris Mihalovitch Pelistchev, the friends of his childhood; both persons highly respected and influential in society, and I know that some years ago they were indignant with the conduct of his greedy and merciless daughter. They will of course reconcile him with his daughter at my request. I shall insist on it myself; but the position of affairs will be completely changed. And my relations, too, the Fanariotovs, will, I judge, make up their minds to support my rights, but what weighs most with me is his happiness: I want him to understand and appreciate who is really devoted to him. Of course I’ve always reckoned most on your influence with him, Arkady Makarovitch; you are so fond of him... . And who does care for him except you and me? He has done nothing but talk about you these last few days; he was pining for you ‘his young friend... .’ I need not say that for the rest of my life my gratitude will be unmeasured... .”

She was actually promising me a reward—money perhaps.

I interrupted her sharply.

“Whatever you say I cannot,” I brought out with an air of immovable determination. “I can only repay you with equal frankness and explain my final decision: I shall, at the earliest possible moment, put this fatal letter into Katerina Nikolaevna’s hands, but only on condition that all that has happened shall not be made a scandal, and that she gives me her word beforehand that she will not interfere with your happiness; that’s all that I can do.”

“That’s impossible!” she said, flushing all over. The mere idea that Katerina Nikolaevna would SPARE her roused her to indignation.

“I shall not change, Anna Andreyevna.”

“Perhaps you will change.”

“You had better apply to Lambert!”

“Arkady Makarovitch, you don’t know what misery may come from your obstinacy,” she said with grim exasperation.

“Misery will follow, that’s true ... my head is going round. I’ve had enough of you: I’ve made up my mind—and that’s the end of it. Only I beg you for God’s sake don’t bring your brother in to me.”

“But he is very anxious to make up for ...”

“There is nothing to make up for! I don’t want it, I don’t wish for it, I don’t wish for it!” I exclaimed, clutching my head. (Oh, perhaps I treated her too disdainfully then.) “Tell me, though, where will the prince sleep to-night? Surely not here?”

“He will stay the night here in your flat, and with you.”

“I am moving into another lodging this evening.”

And uttering these ruthless words I seized my cap and began putting on my great-coat. Anna Andreyevna watched me in sullen silence. I felt sorry for her—oh, I felt sorry for that proud girl! But I rushed out of the flat, without leaving her one word of hope.

4

I will try to be brief. My decision was taken beyond recall, and I went straight to Tatyana Pavlovna. Alas! A great calamity might have been averted if I had only found her at home; but as though of design, I was pursued by ill-luck all that day. I went of course to my mother’s, in the first place to see her, and secondly, because I reckoned certainly on meeting Tatyana Pavlovna there. But she was not there either; she had only just gone away, while mother was lying down ill, and Liza was left alone with her. Liza begged me not to go in, and not to wake mother: “She has not slept all night, she’s so worried; thank God she has fallen asleep at last.” I embraced Liza and said two or three words to her, telling her I had made an immense and momentous resolution, and should carry it out at once. She listened without particular surprise, as though to the usual thing. Oh, they had all grown used by then to my constantly repeated ‘final resolutions,’ and the feeble cancelling of them afterwards. But this time, this time it would be a different matter. I went to the eating-house on the canal side and sat down there to wait awhile in the certainty of finding Tatyana Pavlovna afterwards. I must explain, though, why I found it so necessary to see that lady. The fact is that I wanted to send her at once to Katerina Nikolaevna, to ask her to come back with her, meaning in Tatyana Pavlovna’s presence to return the letter, explaining everything once for all. In short, I wanted nothing but what was fitting; I wanted to put myself right once and for all. At the same time I was quite determined to put in a few words on behalf of Anna Andreyevna and, if possible, to take Katerina Nikolaevna, together with Tatyana Pavlovna (by way of a witness), back with me to see the prince, there to reconcile the hostile ladies, to bring the old prince back to life and ... and ... in fact, in that little group anyway, to make every one happy on the spot, that very day, so that there would be none left unhappy but Versilov and mother. I could have no doubt of my success. From gratitude for my restoration of the letter from which I should ask nothing of her in return, Katerina Nikolaevna would not have refused me such a

request. Alas! I still imagined I was in possession of the document. Oh, what a stupid and ignominious position I was in, though without suspecting it!

It was getting quite dark, about four o'clock, when I called at Tatyana Pavlovna's again. Marya answered gruffly that she had not come in. I remember very well now the strange look Marya gave me from under her brows; but of course it did not strike me at the time. I was suddenly stung by another idea. As I went down the stairs, from Tatyana Pavlovna's, vexed and somewhat dejected, I thought of the poor old prince, who had held out his hands to me that morning, and I suddenly reproached myself bitterly for having deserted him, perhaps indeed from feeling personally aggrieved.

I began uneasily imagining that something really very bad might have happened in my absence, and hurriedly went home. At home, however, all that had been happening was this.

When Anna Andreyevna had gone out of my room in a rage, that morning, she had not yet lost heart; I must mention that she had already, that morning, sent to Lambert, then she sent to him again, and as Lambert appeared to be still absent from home, she finally dispatched her brother to look for him. In face of my opposition the poor girl was resting her last hopes on Lambert and his influence on me; she expected him with impatience, and only wondered that after hovering round her and never leaving her side till that day, he should now have suddenly deserted her and vanished. Alas! she could not possibly have imagined that Lambert, being now in possession of the document, had made entirely different plans, and so, of course, was keeping out of the way and hiding from her on purpose.

And so in her anxiety and growing uneasiness Anna Andreyevna was scarcely capable of entertaining the old man: his uneasiness was growing to threatening proportions, he kept asking strange and timorous questions, he began looking suspiciously at her, and several times fell to weeping. Young Versilov did not stay long. After he had gone Anna Andreyevna was reduced to bringing in Pyotr Ippolitovitch, on whom she was relying, but he did not please the old prince at all, and even aroused his aversion. In fact the old prince, for some reason regarded Pyotr Ippolitovitch with increasing distrust and suspicion. As ill-luck would have it, the landlord launched again into a disquisition on spiritualism, and described all sorts of tricks which he said he had seen himself at séances. He declared that one medium had, before the whole audience, cut off people's heads, so that blood flowed, and every one saw it, and afterwards put them back on their necks, and that they grew on again, also in the sight of the whole audience, and all this happened in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-nine. The old prince was so frightened, and at the same time for some reason was so indignant, that Anna Andreyevna was obliged to get rid of the story-teller promptly; fortunately, dinner arrived, ordered expressly the evening before from somewhere near (through Lambert and Alphonsine) from a remarkable French cook who was out of a place, and wanted to find a situation in a nobleman's family or a club. The dinner and the champagne that accompanied it greatly cheered the old prince; he ate a great deal and was very jocose. After dinner he felt heavy and drowsy, of course, and as he always took a nap

after dinner, Anna Andreyevna made up a bed for him. He kept kissing her hand as he fell asleep and declaring that she was his paradise, his hope, his houri, "his golden flower"—in fact he dropped into the most Oriental expressions. At last he fell asleep, and it was just then I came back.

Anna Andreyevna came in to me hurriedly, clasped her hands before me and said, that not for her own sake, but for the prince's she besought me not to go away, but to go in to him as soon as he waked up. "He will be lost without you, he will have a nervous attack; I'm afraid he may break down before night... ." She added that she herself would be compelled to be away "possibly for a couple of hours, and so she would be leaving the prince in my sole charge." I promised her warmly that I would remain till the evening, and that when the prince waked up I would do my very best to entertain him.

"And I will do my duty!" she declared with energy.

She went out. I may add, anticipating events, that she went out to look for Lambert herself; this was her last hope; she also went to her brother's, and to her relations, the Fanariotovs'; it may well be understood what her state of mind must have been when she returned.

The old prince waked up about an hour after her departure. I heard him groan through the wall, and at once ran in to him; I found him sitting on the bed in his dressing-gown, but so terrified by his isolation, the light of the solitary lamp, and the strange room, that when I went in he started, jumped up and screamed. I flew up to him, and when he recognised me, he began embracing me with tears of joy.

"I was told that you had moved into another lodging, that you had taken fright, and run away."

"Who can have told you that?"

"Who could? You see I may have imagined it myself, or some one may have told me. Only fancy, I've just had a dream: an old man with a beard came in carrying an ikon, an ikon broken in two, and all at once he said, 'So shall your life be broken in two!'"

"Good heavens! You must have heard from some one that Versilov broke an ikon in two yesterday?"

"N'est-ce pas? I heard so, I heard so! I heard from Darya Onisimovna yesterday morning. She brought my trunk here and the dog."

"And so you dreamed of it."

"Yes, I suppose so, and that old man kept shaking his finger at me. Where is Anna Andreyevna?"

"She'll be back directly."

"Where from? Has she gone away, too?" he exclaimed piteously.

"No, no, she'll be here directly, and she asked me to stay with you."

"Oui. And so our Andrey Petrovitch has gone off his head, 'so rapidly and unexpectedly!' I always predicted that that's how he'd end. Stay, my dear... ."

He suddenly clutched me by my coat, and drew me towards him.

"The landlord," he whispered: "brought in some photographs just now, horrid photographs of women, naked women in various oriental poses, and began showing them me in a glass... . I admired them of course, though I did not like them, but you know that's just as they brought horrid women to that poor fellow, so as to make him drunk more easily... ."

"Why, you are talking of Von Sohn, but that's enough, prince! The landlord's a fool and nothing more!"

"A fool and nothing more! C'est mon opinion! My dear, rescue me from here if you can!" He suddenly clasped his hands before me.

"Prince, I will do everything I can! I am entirely at your service... . Dear prince, wait a little and perhaps I will put everything right!"

"N'est-ce pas? We'll cut and run and we'll leave my trunk here to look as though we are coming back."

"Where should we run to! And what of Anna Andreyevna?"

"No, no, we'll go with Anna Andreyevna... . Oh, mon cher, there's a regular muddle in my head... . Stay: there in my bag on the right, is Katya's portrait. I slipped it in on the sly so that Anna Andreyevna, and still more, that Darya Onisimovna should not notice it; take it out, for goodness' sake make haste, be careful, mind we are not caught... . Couldn't you fasten the door with the hook?"

I did in fact, find in the bag a photograph of Katerina Nikolaevna in an oval frame. He took it in his hands, carried it to the light, and tears suddenly flowed down his thin yellow cheeks.

"C'est un ange, c'est un ange du ciel!" he exclaimed: "I never have been as good to her as I ought ... and see what's happened now! Cher enfant, I don't believe a word of it, not a word of it! My dear, tell me: can you imagine, they are wanting to put me in a madhouse? Je dis des choses charmantes et tout le monde rit ... and all of a sudden they take a man like that to a madhouse!"

"That's never happened!" I cried, "that's a mistake. I know her feelings."

"You know her feelings, too? That's splendid! My dear, you've given me new life. How could they say things against you! My dear, fetch Katya here, and let them kiss each other before me, and I will take them home, and we'll get rid of the landlord!"

He stood up, clasped his hands, and fell on his knees before me.

"Cher," he whispered, shaking like a leaf in a sort of insane terror: "My dear, tell me the whole truth: where will they put me now?"

"My God!" I cried, raising him up, and making him sit on the bed: "why you don't believe in me at last; do you think that I'm in the plot too? I won't let anyone lay a finger on you!"

"C'est-ça, don't let them," he faltered, clutching me tightly by the elbow with both hands, and still trembling. "Don't let anyone touch me! And don't tell me lies yourself about anything ... for will they take me away from here? Listen, that landlord, Ippolit or whatever his name is ... isn't a doctor?"

"A doctor?"

“This ... this isn’t a madhouse, here, in this room?”

But at that instant the door opened, and Anna Andreyevna came in. She must have been listening at the door, and, could not resist opening the door too suddenly—and the prince, who started at every creak, shrieked, and flung himself on his face on the pillow. Finally he had something like a fit, which ended in sobs.

“See? This is your doing,” I said to her, pointing to the old man.

“No, it’s your doing!” she raised her voice harshly, “I appeal to you for the last time, Arkady Makarovitch, will you unmask the diabolical intrigue against this defenceless old man, and sacrifice ‘your mad and childish dreams of love,’ to save your OWN sister?”

“I will save you all, but only in the way I told you this morning! I am running off again, and perhaps in an hour Katerina Nikolaevna will be here herself! I will reconcile you all, and you will all be happy!” I exclaimed almost with inspiration.

“Fetch her, fetch her here,” cried the prince in a flutter. “Take me to her! I want to see Katya and to bless her,” he exclaimed, lifting up his hands and springing off the bed.

“You see,” I said to Anna Andreyevna, motioning towards him: “you hear what he says: now at all events no ‘document’ will be any help to you.”

“I see, but it might help to justify my conduct in the opinion of the world, as it is, I’m disgraced! Enough, my conscience is clear. I am abandoned by everyone, even by my own brother, who has taken fright at my failure... . But I will do my duty and will remain by this unhappy man, to take care of him and be his nurse!”

But there was no time to be lost. I ran out of the room: “I shall come back in an hour, and shall not come back alone,” I cried from the doorway.

Chapter 12

1

At last I found Tatyana Pavlovna at home! I at once explained everything to her—all about the “document,” and every detail of what was going on at my lodgings. Though she quite understood the position, and might have fully grasped what was happening in two words, yet the explanation took us, I believe, some ten minutes. I did the talking, I put aside all shame and told her the whole truth. She sat in her chair silent and immovable, drawing herself up straight as a knitting needle, with her lips compressed, and her eyes fixed upon me, listening greedily. But when I finished she promptly jumped up from her chair, and with such impetuosity that I jumped up too.

“Ach, you puppy! So you really had that letter sewn up in your pocket and it was sewn up there by that fool Marya Ivanovna! Oh, you shameless villains! So you came here to conquer hearts and take the fashionable world by storm. You wanted to revenge yourself on the devil knows who, because you’re an illegitimate son, eh?”

“Tatyana Pavlovna, don’t dare to abuse me!” I cried. “Perhaps you in your abuse have been the cause from the very beginning of my vindictiveness here. Yes, I am an illegitimate son, and perhaps I worked to revenge myself for being an illegitimate son, and perhaps I did want to revenge myself on the devil knows who, the devil himself could scarcely find who is guilty; but remember, I’ve cut off all connection with these villains, and have conquered my passions. I will lay the document before her in silence and will go away without even waiting for a word from her; you’ll be the witness of it!”

“Give me the letter, give me the letter, lay it on the table at once; but you are lying, perhaps.”

“It’s sewn up in my pocket. Marya Ivanovna sewed it up herself; and when I had a new coat made here I took it out of the old one and sewed it up in the new coat; here it is, feel it, I’m not lying!”

“Give it me, take it out,” Tatyana Pavlovna stormed.

“Not on any account, I tell you again; I will lay it before her in your presence and will go away without waiting for a single word; but she must know and see with her eyes that it is my doing, that I’m giving it up to her of my own accord, without compulsion and without recompense.”

“Showing off again? You’re in love, puppy, eh?”

“You may say horrid things to me as much as you like. I’ve deserved them, but I’m not offended. Oh, I may seem to her a paltry boy who has been keeping watch on her and plotting against her; but let her recognise that I have conquered myself and put her happiness above everything on earth! Never mind, Tatyana Pavlovna, never mind! I keep crying to myself: courage and hope! What if this is my first step in life, anyway it is ending well, it is ending honourably! And what if I do love her,” I went on fervently with flashing eyes; “I am not ashamed of it: mother is a heavenly angel, but she is an earthly queen! Versilov will go back to mother, and I’ve no cause to be ashamed to face her; you know I once heard what Versilov and she were saying, I stood behind the curtain... . Oh, we are all three possessed by the same madness. Oh, do you know whose phrase that is ‘possessed by the same madness’? They are his words, Andrey Petrovitch’s! But do you know, perhaps there are more than three of us possessed by the same madness? Yes, I don’t mind betting, you’re a fourth—possessed by the same madness! Shall I say it—I will bet that you’ve been in love with Andrey Petrovitch all your life and perhaps you are so still ...”

I repeat I was carried away by excitement and a sort of happiness, but I could not finish; she suddenly, with superhuman quickness, seized me by the hair and twice shook me backwards and forwards with all her might... . Then she suddenly abandoned me and retreated into the corner, and hid her face in her handkerchief.

“You young puppy! Never dare say that to me again!” she brought out, crying.

All this was so unexpected, that I was naturally thunderstruck. I stood gazing at her, not knowing what to do.

“Foo, you stupid! Come here and give me a kiss, though I am an old fool!” she said suddenly, laughing and crying: “and don’t you dare, don’t you ever dare to say that to me again ... but I love you and have always loved you ... you stupid.”

I kissed her. I may mention in parenthesis that Tatyana Pavlovna and I were friends from that time forward.

“But oh! what am I doing?” she said suddenly, slapping herself on the forehead; “but what were you saying: the old prince is at your lodging? But is it true?”

“I assure you he is.”

“Oh, my goodness! Ach, it makes me sick!” she hurried to and fro about the room. “And they are doing what they like with him there! Ech, is there nothing will frighten the fools! And ever since the morning! Oh, oh, Anna Andreyevna. Oh, oh, the nun! And she of course, Militrissa, knows nothing about it.”

“What Militrissa?”

“Why, your earthly queen, your ideal! Ach, but what’s to be done now?”

“Tatyana Pavlovna,” I cried, coming to myself, “we’ve been talking nonsense and have forgotten what matters; I ran out to fetch Katerina Nikolaevna, and they’re all waiting for me there.”

And I explained that I should give up the letter only on condition that she promised to be reconciled to Anna Andreyevna at once, and even agree to the marriage... .

“Quite right, too,” Tatyana Pavlovna interposed, “and I’ve said the same thing to her a hundred times. Why, he’ll die before the wedding—he won’t be married anyhow, and if he leaves money to Anna in his will, why their names are in it as it is, and will remain there.”

“Surely it’s not only the money that Katerina Nikolaevna cares about?”

“No, she has been afraid all along that the letter was in Anna’s hands, and I was afraid of it, too! We were keeping watch on her. The daughter did not want to give the old father a shock, and the German, Büring, certainly did feel anxious about the money.”

“And after that she can marry Büring?”

“Why, what’s one to do with a little fool? It’s a true saying, a fool’s a fool and will be a fool for ever. He gives her a certain calm you see; ‘Since I must marry some one,’ she said, ‘I’ll marry him, he will suit me better than anyone’; she says; but we shall see afterwards how he suits her. One may tear one’s hair afterwards, but then it’s too late.”

“Then why do you allow it? You are fond of her, aren’t you? Why, you told her to her face you were in love with her!”

“Yes, I am in love with her, and I love her more than all the rest of you put together, but she’s a senseless little fool all the same.”

“Well, run and fetch her now, and we will settle it all, and take her to her father ourselves.”

“But we can’t, we can’t, you little stupid! That’s just it! Ach, what are we to do! Ach, it makes me sick!” She fell to rushing to and fro again, though she snatched up her

shawl. "Ech, if only you had come to me four hours earlier, but now it's eight o'clock, and she went off just now to the Pelistchevs' to dinner, and afterwards she was going with them to the opera."

"Good heavens! can't we run to the opera then ... oh, no, we can't. What will become of the old man now? He may die in the night!"

"Listen, don't go there, but go to your mother's for the night, and early to-morrow ..."

"No, I won't desert the old man, whatever happens."

"Well, don't desert him; you are right there. But do you know I'll run round to her and leave a note ... I write in our own words (she'll understand), that the document's here and that she must be here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning—punctually! Don't worry yourself, she'll come, she'll obey me; and then we'll put everything right. And you run home, and use all your little arts to please the old prince, put him to bed, and perhaps he'll hold out till the morning! Don't frighten Anna either, I am fond of her too; you are unjust to her, because you can't understand: she feels injured, she has been injured from a child; ach, you've all been a burden on me! Oh, don't forget, tell her from me, that I'll see to this business myself, and with a good will, and tell her not to worry, and her pride shall not suffer... . You see of late we've done nothing but quarrel—we've been spitting and scolding at one another! Come, run along... . But stay, show me your pocket again ... is it true, is it true? Oh, is it true? Give me that letter if only for the night, what is it to you? Leave it, I won't eat it. You may let it slip out of your hands in the night you know... . You'll change your mind?"

"Not for anything!" I shouted. "Here, feel it, look at it, but I won't leave it for anything!"

"I see it's paper," she said, feeling it with her fingers. "Oh, very well, go along, and I'll go round to her, maybe I'll look in at the theatre, too, that was a good idea of yours! But run along, run along!"

"Tatyana Pavlovna, wait a minute. How is mother?"

"She's alive."

"And Andrey Petrovitch?"

She waved her hand.

"He will come to himself!"

I ran off, feeling cheered, and more hopeful, although I had not been successful, as I had reckoned to be, but alas! destiny had decided otherwise, and there were other things in store for me— there certainly is a fate in things.

2

From the stairs I heard a noise in my lodging, and the door of the flat turned out to be open. At the door stood a servant in livery whom I did not know. Pyotr Ippolitovitch and his wife were both in the passage, too, looking scared and expectant. The door into the prince's room was open, and I could hear within a voice of thunder, which I could

recognise at once—the voice of Büring. I had hardly taken two steps forward when I saw the old prince trembling and in tears, led out into the passage by Büring and Baron R., the gentleman who had called on Versilov about the duel. The prince was sobbing loudly, embracing and kissing Büring. Büring was shouting at Anna Andreyevna, who had followed the old prince into the passage. Büring was threatening her, and I believe stamped at her—in fact the coarse German soldier came to the surface in spite of his aristocratic breeding. It afterwards came out that he had somehow got hold of the notion that Anna Andreyevna was guilty of something positively criminal, and certainly would have to answer for her conduct before a court of law. In his ignorance he exaggerated it as the ignorant commonly do, and so considered he had the right to be unceremonious in the extreme. He had not yet got to the bottom of the business: he had been informed of it by an anonymous letter (which I shall have to refer to later) and he had rushed round in that state of fury in which even the most sharp-witted people of his nationality are sometimes prepared to fight like brigands. Anna Andreyevna had met all this outburst with the utmost dignity, but I missed that. All I saw was that, after bringing the old man into the passage, Büring left him in the hands of Baron R., and rushing impetuously back to her, shouted, probably in reply to some remark of hers:

“You’re an intriguing adventuress, you’re after his money! You’ve disgraced yourself in society and will answer for it in a court of law! ...”

“You’re taking advantage of an unfortunate invalid and driving him to madness ... and you’re shouting at me because I’m a woman, and there’s no one to defend me ...”

“Oh, yes, you are his betrothed, a fine betrothed,” Büring chuckled, with spiteful violence.

“Baron, Baron ... *chère enfant*, je nous aime,” wailed the prince, stretching out his hands towards Anna Andreyevna.

“Go along, prince, go along, there’s been a plot against you, and maybe your life was threatened,” shouted Büring.

“Qui, oui, je comprends, j’ai compris au commencement ...”

“Prince,” Anna Andreyevna raised her voice. “You are insulting me, and letting me be insulted!”

“Get along with you,” Büring shouted at her suddenly.

That I could not endure.

“Blackguard!” I yelled at him: “Anna Andreyevna, I’m here to defend you!”

What happened then I cannot describe exactly, and will not attempt to. The scene that followed was horrible and degrading. I seemed suddenly to lose my reason. I believe I dashed up and struck him, or at least gave him a violent push. He struck me with all his might on my head so that I fell on the floor. When I came to, I rushed after them down stairs. I remember that my nose was bleeding. At the entrance a carriage was waiting for them, and while they were getting the prince in, I ran up, and in spite of the lackey, who pushed me back I rushed at Büring again. At this point the police turned up, I don’t know how. Büring seized me by the collar and in a threatening

voice ordered the police to take me into custody. I shouted that he ought to come with me, that we might make our affirmation together, and that they dare not take me almost from my own lodging. But as it had all happened in the street and not in the flat, and as I shouted and fought like a drunken man, and as Buring was wearing his uniform, the policeman took me. But flying into a perfect frenzy, I believe at that point I struck the policeman too. Then I remember two of them suddenly appeared and carried me off. I faintly remember they took me to a room full of tobacco smoke, with all sorts of people standing and sitting about in it waiting and writing; here too I went on shouting, and insisting on making a statement. But things had gone beyond that, and were complicated by violence and resisting the police, besides I looked absolutely disreputable. Some one shouted at me angrily. Meanwhile the policeman charging me with fighting was describing the colonel ...

“What’s your name?” some one shouted to me.

“Dolgoruky,” I yelled.

“Prince Dolgoruky?”

Beside myself, I answered by a very coarse word of abuse, and then ... then I remember they dragged me to a very dark little room, set apart for drunkards. Oh, I’m not complaining. Readers will have seen of late in the newspapers a complaint made by a gentleman who was kept all night under arrest, tied up, and in a room set apart for drunkards, but I believe he was quite innocent while I had done something. I threw myself on the common bed which I shared with two unconscious sleepers. My head ached, my temples throbbed, and so did my heart. I must have been unconscious, and I believe I was delirious. I only remember waking up in the middle of the night, and sitting on the bed. I remembered everything at once and understood it in all its bearings, and, with my elbow propped on my knees and my head in my hands, I sank into profound meditation.

Oh, I am not going to describe my feelings, and there is no time to do it, but I will note one thing only: perhaps I never spent moments more consolatory to my soul than those moments of reflection in the middle of the night on that prison bed. This will perhaps strike the reader as strange, and he may be inclined to set it down to brag and the desire to be original—and yet it was just as I have said. It was one of those minutes which come perhaps to every one, but only come once in a lifetime. At such moments men decide their fate, define their point of view, and say to themselves once and for all: “That’s where the truth lies, and that is the path to take to attain it.” Yes, those moments were the light of my soul. Insulted by haughty Buring and expecting to be insulted next day by that aristocratic lady, I knew that I could revenge myself on them, but I decided not to revenge myself. I decided, in spite of every temptation, that I would not produce the letter, and publish it to the whole world (the idea had been floating in my mind); I repeated to myself that next day I would put that letter before her, and, if need be, instead of gratitude, would bear her ironical smile, but in any case I would not say a word but would go away from her for ever... . There is no need to enlarge on this, however. What would happen next day here, how I should be

brought before the authorities, and what they would do with me—I almost forgot to think about. I crossed myself with love in my heart, lay down on the bed, and fell into a sound childlike sleep.

I waked up late, when it was daylight. I found myself alone in the room. I sat down to wait in silence and waited about an hour; it must have been about nine o'clock when I was suddenly summoned. I might go into greater detail but it is not worth while, for all this is now irrelevant; I need only record what matters. I must note, however, that to my great astonishment I was treated with unexpected courtesy; I was questioned, I answered, and I was at once allowed to depart. I went out in silence, and to my satisfaction saw in their faces some surprise at a man who was able to keep up his dignity even in such circumstances. If I had not noticed that, I should not have recorded it. Tatyana Pavlovna was waiting for me at the entrance. I will explain in a couple of words why I was let off so easily.

Early in the morning, by eight o'clock perhaps, Tatyana Pavlovna had flown round to my lodging, that is to Pyotr Ippolitovitch's, expecting to find the old prince still there, and she heard at once of all the horrors of the previous day, above all that I had been arrested. She instantly rushed off to Katerina Nikolaevna (who on returning from the theatre the evening before had had an interview with the father who had been restored to her). Tatyana Pavlovna waked her up, alarmed her and insisted that I should be at once released. With a note from her she flew at once to Buring's and demanded from him forthwith another note, to the proper authorities, with an urgent request from Buring himself that I should be released, as I had been arrested through a misunderstanding. With this note she presented herself to the prison and her request was respectfully granted.

3

Now I will go on with my story.

Tatyana Pavlovna pounced on me, put me in a sledge, and took me home with her, she immediately ordered the samovar, and washed and brushed me herself in the kitchen. In the kitchen she told me in a loud voice that at half-past eleven Katerina Nikolaevna would come herself—as they had agreed that morning—to meet me. Marya overheard this. A few minutes later she brought in the samovar, and two minutes later, when Tatyana Pavlovna called her, she did not answer; it appeared that she had gone out for something. I beg the reader to make special note of this; it was about a quarter to ten I believe. Though Tatyana Pavlovna was angry at her disappearance without asking leave, she only thought she had gone out to the shop, and immediately forgot about it. And, indeed, we had no thoughts to spare for it, we talked away without ceasing, for we had plenty to talk about, so that I, at least, scarcely noticed Marya's disappearance; I beg the reader to make a note of that.

As for me, I was in a sort of delirium, I poured out my feelings, and above all we were expecting Katerina Nikolaevna, and the thought that in an hour I should meet

her at last, and at such a turning-point in my life, made me tremble and quiver. At last, when I had drunk two cups of tea, Tatyana Pavlovna suddenly stood up, took a pair of scissors from the table, and said:

“Let me have your pocket, I must take out the letter, we can’t unpick it when she’s here.”

“Yes,” I exclaimed and unbuttoned my coat.

“What a muddle it’s in! who sewed it up?”

“I did, I did, Tatyana Pavlovna.”

“Well, I can see you did. Come, here it is... .”

We took it out ... the old envelope was the same, but inside was a blank sheet of paper.

“What’s this?” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, turning it round and round ... “what’s the matter with you?”

But I was standing pale and speechless ... and I suddenly sank helplessly into a chair. I really almost fainted.

“What does it mean?” wailed Tatyana Pavlovna. “Where is your letter?”

“Lambert!” I jumped up suddenly, slapping myself on the forehead as I guessed.

With breathless haste I explained to her—the night at Lambert’s and our plot; I had, however, confessed that to her the night before.

“They’ve stolen it, they’ve stolen it!” I cried, stamping on the floor and clutching at my hair.

“That’s terrible!” cried Tatyana Pavlovna, grasping what had happened.

“What time is it?”

It was about eleven.

“Ech, there’s no Marya! ... Marya, Marya!”

“What is it, mistress?” Marya responded from the kitchen.

“Are you here? What are we to do now! I will fly to her... . Ah, slow coach, slow coach!”

“And I to Lambert,” I yelled, “and I will strangle him if need be.”

“Mistress,” Marya piped suddenly from the kitchen, “here’s a person asking for you very particularly.”

But before she had time to finish, the person burst in from the kitchen, making a great outcry and lamentation. It was Alphonsine. I will not describe the scene in detail; the scene was a fraud and a deception, but I must say Alphonsine acted it splendidly. With tears of repentance and with violent gesticulations she babbled (in French, of course), that she had unpicked the letter herself, that it was now in Lambert’s hands, and that Lambert, together with that “brigand,” cet homme noir, meant to entice Mme. la générale to shoot her, immediately within an hour ... that she knew all this from them, and that she had suddenly taken fright because she saw they had a pistol, le pistolet, and now she had rushed off to us, that we might go, might save, might warn... . That cet homme noir... .”

In fact, it all sounded very probable, the very stupidity of some of Alphonsine's expressions only increased its apparent truthfulness.

"What homme noir?" cried Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Tien, j'ai oublié son nom... Un homme affreux... Tiens, Versilov."

"Versilov, it cannot be," I cried!

"Oh, yes, it can!" wailed Tatyana Pavlovna: "come, tell us my good woman without dancing about, don't wave your arms about; what do they want? Explain, my good woman; I don't believe they mean to shoot her."

"My good woman" did explain as follows (N.B.—it was all a lie, I must remind the reader again): Versilov was to sit at the door and when she went in Lambert was to show her *cette lettre*, then Versilov was to rush in and they would... . Oh! *ils feront leur vengeance!* that she, Alphonsine, was afraid there would be trouble, because she had had a share in the business herself, *cette dame, la générale* would certainly come at once, at once, because they had sent her a copy of the letter, and she would see at once that they really had the letter, and would go to interview them, but only Lambert had written the letter, so she knew nothing about Versilov; and Lambert had introduced himself as a stranger who had come from a lady in Moscow, *une dame de Moscou* (N.B.—Marie Ivanovna!)

"Ach, I feel sick! Ach, I feel sick!" exclaimed Tatyana Pavlovna.

"Sauvez la, sauvez la!" cried Alphonsine.

Oh, of course there was something inconsistent, even at first sight, in this mad story, but there was no time to think it over, for in essentials it sounded very probable. Of course, one might still suppose, and with the greatest likelihood, that Katerina Nikolaevna, on receiving Lambert's summons, would come first to Tatyana Pavlovna's to discuss the matter with us; and on the other hand, this might not happen, and she might go straight to him, and then—she was lost! It was difficult to believe that she would rush off to a stranger like Lambert at the first summons; yet, again, this might somehow happen, after seeing the copy and satisfying herself that they really had her letter, and then there would be disaster anyway! Above all, we had no time even to reflect.

"Versilov will murder her! if he has stooped to make use of Lambert he'll murder her! It's the second self," I cried.

"Ah that 'second self'!" cried Tatyana Pavlovna, wringing her hands. "Well, this is no use," she said decidedly, "take your cap and coat and quick march together. Lead us straight to them, my good woman. Ach, it's a long way. Marya, Marya, if Katerina Nikolaevna comes, tell her I shall be back directly and make her sit and wait for me, and if she does not want to wait, lock the door and keep her by force. Tell her I told her to. A hundred roubles for you, Marya, if you deserve it."

We ran down stairs. No doubt nothing better could have been suggested, for, in any case, the chief scene of danger was in Lambert's lodging, and if Katerina Nikolaevna did really come first to Tatyana Pavlovna's lodgings, Marya could always detain her. Yet after she had called a sledge, Tatyana Pavlovna changed her mind.

“You go with her,” she bade me, leaving me with Alphonsine “and if need be, die there, do you understand? I’ll follow you directly, but first I’ll whisk round to her, maybe I shall find her, for say what you like, I feel suspicious!”

And she flew off to Katerina Nikolaevna.

Alphonsine and I went our way towards Lambert’s. I urged on the driver and continued to question Alphonsine, but she confined herself to exclamations, and finally took refuge in tears. But God saved and preserved us all when everything was hanging on a thread. We had not driven a quarter of the way when I suddenly heard a shout behind me; some one was calling me by my name. I looked round—Trishatov was driving after us in another sledge.

“Where are you going,” he shouted in alarm, “and with her, with Alphonsine?”

“Trishatov,” I cried, “you told the truth, there is trouble! I am going to that scoundrel, Lambert’s! Let’s go together, the more the better!”

“Turn back, turn back at once,” shouted Trishatov, “Lambert’s deceiving you, and Alphonsine’s deceiving you. The pock-marked fellow sent me; they are not at home, I met Versilov and Lambert just now; they were driving to Tatyana Pavlovna’s ... they’re there now... .”

I stopped the driver and jumped out to join Trishatov. To this day I don’t know how I could make up my mind so quickly, but I believed him at once, and made up my mind. Alphonsine raised a terrible outcry, but we did not trouble ourselves about her, and I don’t know whether she followed us or went home, anyway, I did not see her again.

In the sledge, Trishatov told me breathlessly that there was some sort of plot on foot, that Lambert had been plotting with the pock-marked man, but that the latter had betrayed him at the last moment, and had sent Trishatov to Tatyana Pavlovna’s to warn her not to believe Lambert and Alphonsine. Trishatov added that he knew nothing more, and that the pock-marked gentleman had told him nothing more, for he had been in a hurry himself, and it had all been settled in haste. “I saw you driving,” Trishatov went on, “and drove after you.”

It was clear, of course, that this pock-marked individual also knew the whole story, since he had sent Trishatov straight to Tatyana Pavlovna’s, but that was another mystery. But to avoid a muddle I will, before describing the catastrophe, explain the actual fact, and for the last time anticipate the order of events.

4

After stealing the letter Lambert at once got into communication with Versilov. How Versilov could have brought himself to join Lambert—I won’t discuss for the time; that will come later; what was chiefly responsible was the “second self!” After joining Versilov, Lambert still had to entice Katerina Nikolaevna as cunningly as he could. Versilov assured him at once that she would not come. But ever since the day before yesterday, when I met him in the street in the evening, broke off all relations with

him, and told him that I should give back the letter at Tatyana Pavlovna's lodgings and in her presence—Lambert had arranged to keep a watch on Tatyana Pavlovna's lodgings; Marya was bought over as a spy. Marya was given twenty roubles, and after the theft of the letter, Lambert visited Marya a second time, settling with her finally, and promising to pay her two hundred roubles for her services.

That was why Marya had rushed from the flat and galloped off in a sledge to Lambert's, with the news, as soon as she heard that Katerina Nikolaevna was to be at Tatyana Pavlovna's at half-past eleven, and that I, too, should be present. This was just the information she was to bring Lambert; that was precisely the duty assigned her. Versilov happened to be with Lambert at that very moment. In one moment Versilov had devised the diabolical plan. They say that madmen are at times extraordinarily cunning.

The plot was to lure both of us, Tatyana and me, out of the flat at all costs, if only for a quarter of an hour, but before Katerina Nikolaevna arrived. Then they meant to wait in the street, and as soon as Tatyana Pavlovna and I had come out, to run into the flat, which Marya was to open to them, and there to await Katerina Nikolaevna. Alphonsine, meantime, was to do her utmost to detain us where and how she pleased. Katerina Nikolaevna would be sure to come, as she promised, at half-past eleven, so that she would certainly be there long before we could be back. (Of course, Katerina Nikolaevna had received no summons from Lambert. Alphonsine had told us a lie and Versilov had invented the story in all its details, and Alphonsine had simply played the part of the frightened traitor.) Of course, it was a risk, but they probably reasoned that if it answered all would be well, if it failed nothing would have been lost, for the document would still be in their possession. But it did answer and could not possibly have failed to do so, for we could not but follow Alphonsine on the barest supposition that what she said might be true. I repeat again: there was no time to reflect.

5

We ran with Trishatov into the kitchen and found Marya in a fright. She was horrified to notice that when she let Versilov and Lambert in, that the latter had a revolver in his hand. Though she had taken money, the revolver had not entered into her calculations. She was bewildered and rushed at me as soon as she saw me.

"The lady has come and they've got a pistol!"

"Trishatov, stay here in the kitchen," I said, "and as soon as I shout, run as quickly as you can to help me."

Marya opened the door in the passage and I slipped into Tatyana Pavlovna's bedroom—into the tiny cupboard of a room in which there was only space for Tatyana Pavlovna's bed, and in which once I had already accidentally played the eavesdropper. I sat down on the bed and at once found a peephole for myself in the curtain.

There was already a noise in the room and they were talking loudly; I may mention that Katerina Nikolaevna arrived at the flat just a minute after them. I heard the

noise and talk from the kitchen: Lambert was shouting. She was sitting on the sofa, and he was standing before her shouting like a fool. Now I know why he lost his head so stupidly: he was in a hurry and afraid they would be discovered. I will explain later who it was he feared. The letter was in his hand. But Versilov was not in the room. I was ready to rush in at the first sign of danger. I record only the gist of the conversation, perhaps a good deal I don't remember correctly, but I was too much excited to remember with perfect accuracy.

"This letter's worth thirty thousand roubles, and you are surprised! It's worth a hundred thousand, and I only ask thirty!" Lambert said in a loud voice, terribly excited.

Though Katerina Nikolaevna was evidently frightened, she looked at him with a sort of contemptuous wonder.

"I see that a trap has been laid for me, and I don't understand it," she said: "but if only that letter is really in your hands."

"But here it is, see for yourself! Isn't that it? An IOU for thirty thousand and not a farthing less!" Lambert interrupted her.

"I've no money."

"Write an IOU—here's paper. Then go and get the money, and I will wait a week—no more... . Give me the money and then I will give you back the IOU and give you the letter."

"You take such a strange tone. You are making a mistake. That letter will be taken from you, if I go to-day and lodge a complaint."

"To whom? Ha-ha-ha? What of the scandal, and we shall show the letter to the prince! Where are they going to find it? I don't keep the document at my lodging. I shall show it to your father through a third person. Don't be obstinate, madam, be thankful that I'm not asking much, any other man would ask for something else besides ... you know what ... which many a pretty woman would not refuse in such trying circumstances, that's what I mean ... ha-ha-ha! Vous êtes belle, vous!"

Katerina Nikolaevna rose impetuously, turned crimson—and spat in his face. Then she turned quickly towards the door. It was at this point that the fool, Lambert, pulled out the revolver.

Like an unimaginative fool he had put blind faith in the effect of the document; his chief error lay in not distinguishing what sort of woman he had to deal with, because, as I have said already, he thought every one was as mean in their feelings as he was. He angered her from the first word by his rudeness, though perhaps otherwise she might not have declined to consider the question of payment.

"Don't stir!" he yelled, furious at her spitting at him, clutching her by the shoulder, and showing her the revolver—simply, of course, to frighten her. She uttered a shriek and sank on the sofa. I burst into the room; but, at the same instant, Versilov ran in at the other door. (He had been standing outside the door waiting.) In a flash he had snatched the revolver from Lambert, and with all his might hit him on the head with it. Lambert staggered and fell senseless; the blood streamed from his head upon the carpet.

She saw Versilov, turned suddenly as white as a sheet, gazed at him for some moments immovable with indescribable horror, and fell into a swoon. He rushed to her. It all flashes before my eyes as I write. I remember with what terror I saw his flushed almost purple face and his bloodshot eyes. I believe that though he saw me in the room he did not recognise me. He caught her as she fell unconscious, and with amazing ease lifted her up in his arms, as though she were a feather, and began aimlessly carrying her about the room like a baby. It was a tiny room, but he paced to and fro from corner to corner, evidently with no idea why he was doing so. In one instant he had lost his reason. He kept gazing at her, at her face. I ran after him; what I was most afraid of was the revolver, which he seemed to have forgotten in his right hand, and was holding close to her head. But he pushed me away, once with his elbow, and the second time with his foot. I wanted to shout to Trishatov, but I was afraid of irritating the madman. At last I drew back the curtain and began entreating him to put her on the bed. He went up and laid her down on it, stood over her, and gazed at her face; and, suddenly bending down, kissed her twice on her pale lips. Oh, I realised at last that this was a man utterly beside himself. He suddenly waved the revolver over her, but, as though realising, turned the revolver and aimed it at her face. I instantly seized his arm and shouted to Trishatov. I remember we both struggled with him, but he succeeded in pulling away his arm and firing at himself. He would have shot her and then himself, but since we would not let him get at her, he pressed the revolver against his heart; I succeeded, however, in pushing his arm upwards, and the bullet struck him in the shoulder. At that instant Tatyana Pavlovna burst into the room shrieking; but he was already lying senseless on the carpet beside Lambert.

Chapter 13 - Conclusion

1

Almost six months have passed since that scene, much has happened, much has completely changed, and a new life has begun for me since then... . But I must settle what I have left doubtful in my story.

To me at least, the first question at the time, and long afterwards was: how Versilov could have brought himself to act in concert with a man like Lambert, and what were his objects in doing so? Little by little, I have arrived at an explanation of a sort; to my thinking, at those moments, that is, all that last day and the day before, Versilov can have had no definite aim, and I believe, indeed, he did not reflect on the matter at all, but acted under the influence of a whirlwind of conflicting emotions. But the theory of actual madness I cannot accept, especially as he is not in the least mad now. But the "second self" I do accept unquestionably. What is a second self exactly? The second self, according to a medical book, written by an expert, which I purposely read afterwards, is nothing else than the first stage of serious mental derangement,

which may lead to something very bad. And in that scene at my mother's, Versilov himself had with strange frankness described the "duality" of his will and feelings. But I repeat again: though that scene at mother's and that broken ikon were undoubtedly partly due to the influence of a real "second self," yet I have ever since been haunted by the fancy that there was in it an element of a sort of vindictive symbolism, a sort of resentment against the expectations of those women, a sort of angry revolt against their rights and their criticism. And so hand in hand with the "second self" he broke the ikon, as though to say "that's how your expectations will be shattered!" In fact, even though the "second self" did come in, it was partly simply a whim... . But all this is only my theory; it would be hard to decide for certain.

It is true that in spite of his adoration for Katerina Nikolaevna, he had a deep-rooted and perfectly genuine disbelief in her moral qualities. I really believe that he waited outside the door then, to see her humiliated before Lambert. But did he desire it, if even he waited for it? Again I repeat: I firmly believe that he had no desire, no intention even. He simply wanted to be there, to rush in afterwards, to say something, perhaps to insult, perhaps even to kill her... . Anything might happen then; but when he came with Lambert he had no idea what would happen. I may add that the revolver was Lambert's and that he himself came unarmed. Seeing her proud dignity, and above all, exasperated by Lambert's blackguardliness in threatening her, he dashed in—and only then went mad. Did he mean to shoot her at that instant? In my opinion he did not know what he was doing, but he certainly would have shot her if we had not thrust aside his hand.

His wound proved to be not a fatal one, and it healed, but he was ill in bed rather a long time, at mother's, of course.

Now as I am writing these lines it is the middle of May, an exquisite spring day, and our windows are open. Mother is sitting beside him: he strokes her cheeks and hair and gazes into her face with tender emotion. Oh, this is only the half of the old Versilov, he never leaves mother's side now, and will never leave her again. He has even gained the "gift of tears," as Makar Ivanovitch, of precious memory, said in his story about the merchant. I fancy, however, that Versilov has a long life before him. With us he is perfectly good-natured and candid as a child, though he never loses his sense of proportion and self-control, and does not talk too freely. All his intellect and his moral nature have remained unchanged, though all his ideal side has become more marked. I may say frankly that I have never loved him so much as now, and I regret that I have neither time nor space to say more about him.

I will, however, tell one recent anecdote about him (and there are many). He had quite recovered by Lent, and in the sixth week declared that he would fast and take the sacrament. He had not taken the sacrament for thirty years or more I believe. Mother was delighted; they began preparing Lenten dishes, rather expensive, dainty ones, however. In the next room I heard him on Monday and Tuesday chanting to himself "The Bridegroom cometh," and he was delighted with the verses and the chant. He spoke beautifully of religion several times during those days; but on Wednesday

the fast suddenly came to an end. Something suddenly irritated him, some “amusing contrast,” as he expressed it, laughing; he disliked something in the exterior of the priest, in the surroundings; whatever it was, he returned and said with a gentle smile: “My friends, I love God, but I am not fitted for that.” The same day roast beef was served at dinner.

But I know that even now mother often sits beside him, and in a low voice, with a gentle smile, begins to talk to him of the most abstract subjects: now she has somehow grown DARING with him, but how this has come to pass I don’t know. She sits beside him and speaks to him usually in a whisper. He listens with a smile, strokes her hair, kisses her hand, and there is the light of perfect happiness in his face. He sometimes has attacks that are almost like hysterics. Then he takes her photograph, the one he kissed that evening, gazes at it with tears, kisses it, recalls the past, gathers us all round him, but at such moments he says little.

Katerina Nikolaevna he seems to have completely forgotten and has never once mentioned. Nothing has been said of marriage with my mother so far, either. They did think of taking him abroad for the summer; but Tatyana Pavlovna strongly opposed it, and he did not desire it himself. They will spend the summer at a villa, in some country place in the neighbourhood of Petersburg. By the way we are all still living at the expense of Tatyana Pavlovna. One thing I will add: I am dreadfully sorry that I have several times in this narrative allowed myself to take up a disrespectful and superior attitude in regard to Versilov. But as I wrote I imagined myself precisely at each of the moments I was describing. As I finish my narrative and write the last lines, I suddenly feel by the very process of recalling and recording, I have re-educated myself. I regret a great deal I have written, especially the tone of certain sentences and pages, but I will not cross them out or correct a single word.

I have stated that he never says one word of Katerina Nikolaevna; but I really believe that he is quite cured of his passion. Of her I never speak except sometimes to Tatyana Pavlovna, and then in secret. Katerina Nikolaevna is now abroad; I saw her before she went away, and visited her several times. Since she has been abroad I have received two letters from her, and have answered them. But of what was in her letter and what we discussed I will say nothing; that is another story, a quite NEW story, and perhaps it is still in the future; indeed there are some things of which I say nothing even to Tatyana Pavlovna, but enough of that. I will only add that she is not married, and that she is travelling, with the Pelistchevs. Her father is dead and she is the richest of widows. At this moment she is in Paris.

Her rupture with Büring took place very quickly, and as it were of itself, that is, extremely naturally. I will describe it, however.

On the morning of that terrible scene, the pock-marked man to whom Trishatov and his tall friend had gone over, succeeded in letting Büring know of the proposed crime. This was how it happened. Lambert still tried to persuade him to work with him, and, when he gained possession of the letter, he told him all the details of the undertaking, up to the very last moment, that is, when Versilov suggested the trick to get rid of Tatyana

Pavlovna. But at the last moment the pock-marked man, who had more sense than the rest, and foresaw the possibility of a serious crime being committed, preferred to betray Lambert. He reckoned upon Biring's gratitude as something more secure than the fantastic plan made by Lambert, who was clumsy and hotheaded, and by Versilov, who was almost mad with passion. All this I learned afterwards from Trishatov. I know nothing, by the way, of Lambert's relations with the pock-marked man, and I cannot understand why Lambert could not have acted without him. A question of far more interest for me is why Lambert needed Versilov when, having the letter in his possession, he might perfectly well have dispensed with the latter's assistance. The answer is clear to me now. Versilov was of use to Lambert from his knowledge of all the circumstances; moreover, if their plans miscarried, or some accident happened, Lambert reckoned on throwing all responsibility on Versilov. And since the latter did not want money, Lambert thought his help very opportune.

But Biring did not arrive in time. When he reached the scene of action an hour later, Tatyana Pavlovna's flat wore a very different aspect. Five minutes after Versilov had fallen on the carpet, covered with blood, Lambert, whom we all believed to be dead, raised his head and got up. He looked about him with amazement, quickly grasped the position, went into the kitchen without saying a word, put on his coat, and disappeared for ever. The document he left on the table. I have heard that he was not seriously ill but only slightly indisposed afterwards; the blow from the revolver had stunned him and drawn blood, but had done no further harm.

Meanwhile Trishatov had run for the doctor; but before the doctor arrived, Versilov, too, returned to consciousness, though before that Tatyana Pavlovna succeeded in bringing Katerina Nikolaevna to herself and taking her home. And so when Biring ran in upon us he found in Tatyana Pavlovna's flat only me, the doctor, Versilov, and my mother, who had been fetched by Trishatov, and though still ill, had come in haste, beside herself with anxiety. Biring stared at us with amazement, and as soon as he learned that Katerina Nikolaevna had gone home he went off to see her without saying another word to us.

He was perturbed; he saw clearly that now scandal and gossip were almost inevitable. The affair did not make any great scandal, however. The pistol-shot could not be concealed, it is true; but the chief facts remained almost unknown. All that was discovered by the investigation that was made was that a certain V., a man passionately in love, though almost fifty and with a family, had declared his feelings to the young lady, a person worthy of the highest respect, who did not share his sentiments, and in a sudden access of madness had shot himself. Nothing more than this came out, and in that form the story even got into the papers, no names being mentioned but only initials. I know that Lambert was not troubled in any way.

Nevertheless Biring was alarmed. To make matters worse he chanced to learn of the interview between Katerina Nikolaevna and Versilov two days before the catastrophe. This enraged him, and he rather incautiously ventured to observe to Katerina Nikolaevna that after that he was not surprised that such extraordinary adventures

could happen to her. Katerina Nikolaevna refused him on the spot, without anger, but without hesitation. All her preconceived ideas of the judiciousness of marrying such a man vanished like smoke. Possibly she had seen through him long before, and perhaps the shock she had been exposed to had changed some of her views and feelings. But of that again I will say nothing. I will only add that Lambert made his escape to Moscow, and that I have heard he got into trouble over something there. Trishatov I have lost sight of since that day, though I am still trying to track him; he vanished after the death of his friend "le grand dadais," who shot himself.

2

I have mentioned the death of the old prince Nikolay Ivanovitch. The good-natured, kindly old man died not long after his adventure. His death took place, however, quite a month later in his bed at night, from a stroke. I never saw him again after the day he was in my flat. I was told that during that month he became far more rational, more tender in his manner even, he ceased to be apprehensive, shed no more tears, and did not once utter a word about Anna Andreyevna. All his affection was centred on his daughter. On one occasion, a week before his death, Katerina Nikolaevna suggested inviting me to entertain him, but he actually frowned: I simply state this fact without trying to explain it. His estate turned out to be in good order at his death, and he left a very considerable fortune as well. A third of this fortune was by his will divided between his innumerable goddaughters but it struck every one as strange, that there was no mention of Anna Andreyevna in his will at all; her name was omitted. But I know for a fact that a few days before his death, the old man summoned his daughter and his friends, Pelistchev and Prince V., and instructed Katerina Nikolaevna, in view of the possibility of his speedy decease, to set aside out of his fortune sixty thousand roubles for Anna Andreyevna. He expressed his wishes briefly, clearly and precisely, not indulging in a single exclamation or explanation. After his death, and when his affairs were put in order, Katerina Nikolaevna, through her lawyer, informed Anna Andreyevna that the sixty thousand roubles were at her disposal; but drily, with no unnecessary words, Anna Andreyevna declined the money: she refused to accept it in spite of every assurance that this had been the old prince's desire. The money still lies waiting for her, and Katerina Nikolaevna still hopes to induce her to change her mind; but this will never happen of that I am positive, for I am now one of Anna Andreyevna's closest and most intimate friends. Her refusal made rather a stir, and people talked about it. Her aunt, Madame Fanariotov, who had been annoyed at first by her scandalous affair with the old prince, suddenly took a different view of it, and, after she refused the money, made her a solemn assurance of her respect. Her brother, on the other hand, quarrelled with her finally on account of it. But though I often go to see Anna Andreyevna, I cannot say that we ever discuss anything very intimate; we never refer to the past; she is very glad to see me, but talks to me chiefly of abstract subjects. Among other things, she has told me that she is firmly resolved to go into a

convent; that was not long ago; but I don't believe this, and look upon it simply as an expression of bitterness.

But what is really tragic is what I have to tell of my sister Liza's fate. That is real unhappiness. What are all my failures beside her bitter lot? It began with Prince Sergay Petrovitch's dying in the hospital before his trial. He died before Prince Nikolay Ivanovitch. Liza was left to face the world with her unborn child. She did not shed tears and was outwardly calm, she became gentle and resigned; but all her old fire seemed to have vanished for ever. She helped mother meekly, nursed Andrey Petrovitch through his illness, but became very silent and never seemed to notice anyone or anything, as though nothing mattered to her, as though she were simply passing by. When Versilov was better, she began to sleep a great deal. I used to take her books, but she did not read; she became terribly thin. I did not dare to try to comfort her, though I often went in to her intending to; but in her presence I could not approach her, and I found no words to speak to her. It went on like this till something terrible happened: she fell down our stairs; she did not fall far, only three steps, but it brought on a miscarriage, and she was ill all the rest of the winter. Now she is on her feet again, but her health has been shaken and it will be a long time before she is strong. She is still dreamy and silent with us, but she has begun to talk with mother a little. These last few days we have had bright, clear spring sunshine, and I am all the while inwardly recalling that sunny morning last autumn, when she and I walked along the street, both full of joy and hope and love for one another. Alas, what has happened since then? I don't complain, for me a new life has begun, but for her? Her future is a problem, and I cannot look at her even now without pain.

Three weeks ago I did succeed, however, in interesting her with news of Vassin. He was released at last and is now at liberty. That judicious person gave, so I am told, the most precise explanation and the most interesting information which completely cleared his character in the eyes of those on whom his fate depended. Moreover his celebrated manuscript turned out to be no more than a translation from the French, upon which he had intended to write an article for a magazine. He is now in the X. province, and his stepfather, Stebelkov, is still in prison on the same charge, which I hear grows more extensive and complicated as it goes on. Liza heard the news of Vassin with a strange smile, and even observed that that was just what was sure to have happened to him. But she was evidently pleased, no doubt that Prince Sergay's action had not brought worse harm to Vassin. Of Dergatchev and his friends I have nothing to say here.

I have finished. Perhaps some reader may care to know: what has become of my "idea," and what is the new life that is beginning for me now, to which I refer so mysteriously? But that new life, that new way which is opening before me is my "idea," the same as before, though in such a different form, that it could hardly be recognised. But I cannot enter into that in this story, that is something quite different. My old life has passed away completely, and the new is just beginning. But I will add one essential matter: Tatyana Pavlovna, a true and dear friend to me, pesters me almost

every day with exhortations to enter the university: "When you've taken your degree," she says, "then you can consider the position, but now you must finish your studies." I must confess I am considering her suggestion, but I don't know how I shall decide. Among other objections I have urged that I have not the right to continue my studies, as it is my duty now to work to maintain mother and Liza; but she offers to undertake this, and she says her means are sufficient to do so all the time I am at the university. I have determined at last to ask the advice of some one. Looking about me, I have chosen that some one carefully and critically. I have fixed on Nikolay Semyonovitch, my former tutor in Moscow, the husband of Marie Ivanovna. Not so much that I need advice about anything, but I feel an irresistible longing to hear the opinion of this outsider, who is a rather coldly egoistic, but undoubtedly clever man. I have sent him my whole manuscript, asking him to keep it secret from every one, especially Tatyana Pavlovna, because I have not shown it to any one so far. The manuscript came back to me a fortnight later, and with it a rather long letter. From this letter I make a few extracts, as I find in them a certain general view and something that may be explanatory. Here are the extracts.

3

"... You could never have employed your leisure time more profitably, my ever precious Arkady Makarovitch, than in writing this autobiography! You have given yourself, so to say, an unflinching account of your first stormy, perilous steps on the path of life. I quite believe that you may by this exposition have to a great extent 're-educated yourself,' to use your own expression. I shall not, of course, venture upon the smallest criticism: though every page makes one reflect ... for instance, the circumstance, that you so long and so obstinately retained possession of the 'document'—is highly characteristic... . But that is only one remark out of hundreds, which I permitted myself. I greatly appreciate also, the fact of your deciding to confide to me, and apparently to me alone, 'the secret of your idea,' to use your own expression. But your request that I should give you my opinion on that 'idea' I must resolutely refuse: to begin with, it would be out of place in a letter, and secondly, I am not prepared to give an answer off-hand; I must ruminate upon it further. I will only observe that your 'idea' is distinguished by originality, whereas young men of the present generation, for the most part, throw themselves into ready-made ideas, of which there is always an ample provision, and which are a source of danger. Your idea, for instance, did at any rate save you for the time from the ideas of Messrs. Dergatchev and Co., certainly less original than yours. Finally I am absolutely in agreement with that honoured lady, Tatyana Pavlovna, whom I had till now failed to esteem as she deserves, though I know her personally. Her plan that you should enter the university will be of the greatest possible benefit for you. Study and life will undoubtedly in three or four years widen the horizon of your ideas and aspirations, and if after the university you still desire to return to your 'idea,' there will be nothing to prevent it.

“Now allow me, though you have not requested it, to give you frankly some thoughts and impressions that have occurred to my mind while perusing your extremely candid ‘autobiography.’ Yes, I agree with Andrey Petrovitch, that one might well feel anxiety about you and your SOLITARY YOUTH. And there are more than a few lads like you, and there really is always a danger of their talents leading them astray, either into secret sensuality, or a latent desire for lawlessness. But this thirst for lawlessness proceeds most frequently, perhaps, from a latent craving for discipline and ‘seemliness’—(I am using your own words). Youth is pure, just because it is youth. Perhaps in these precocious impulses of madness, there lie concealed a craving for discipline and a search for truth, and whose fault is it that some young people of to-day see that truth and that discipline in such stupid and ridiculous things, that one cannot imagine how they can believe in them! I may mention, by the way, that in the recent past, a generation ago at most, such interesting lads were not so much to be pitied, for in those days they almost always ended by successfully attaching themselves to our most highly cultivated class and merging into it and even if they did at the onset recognise their own lack of order and consistency, the lack of nobility even in their family surroundings, the lack of an ancestral tradition, and of fine finished forms of social life, it was a gain for them, for they consciously strove towards all this and thereby learned to prize it. Nowadays the position is somewhat different, for there is scarcely anything the young can attach themselves to.

“I will explain by comparison, or, so to say, by analogy. If I had been a Russian novelist and had talent I should certainly have chosen my heroes from the old nobility, because only in that type of cultivated Russian is it possible to find at least that outward semblance of fine order and aesthetic beauty so necessary in a novel to produce an artistic effect on the reader. I am not joking when I say this, although I am not a nobleman myself, as you are indeed aware. Pushkin selected the subject for his future novels from the ‘Traditions of the Russian Family,’ and believe me that everything beautiful we have had so far is to be found therein. Everything that has been brought to some sort of perfection, anyway. I don’t say this because I am accepting unconditionally the truth and justness of that beauty; but at least there were completely worked out forms of honour and duty which have never existed anywhere in Russia except in the nobility, even in the most rudimentary shape. I speak as a calm man seeking calm.

“Whether that honour was a good thing, and whether that duty was a true one—is a secondary question. What to my mind is of most consequence is the finality of the forms and the existence of some sort of order, not prescribed from above, but developed from within. Good heavens, what matters most of all for us is to have any sort of order of our own! All hopes for the future and, so to say, restfulness of outlook lie in our having something at last built up, instead of this everlasting destruction, instead of chips flying in all directions, rubbish and disorder which has led to nothing for two hundred years.

“Don’t accuse me of Slavophilism; I only say this from misanthropy, for my heart is heavy! Something is happening to us to-day and in the recent past, the very opposite

of what I have imagined above. It is not that the worthless attach themselves to the highest stratum of society, but, on the contrary, with light-hearted haste, fragments are torn from what is fine and noble and thrown into one mass with the lawless and the envious. And there have been many instances of fathers and heads of what have been cultured families, laughing at what their children perhaps would have liked to believe in. What is more, they eagerly display to their children their spiteful pleasure at the sudden licence to be dishonest, which they have all at once deduced, wholesale, from something. I am not speaking of the true progressives, dear Arkady Makarovitch, but only of that rabble, so numerous it seems, of whom it has been said 'grattez le Russe et vous verrez le Tatare,' and believe me there are by no means so many true liberals, true and noble friends of humanity among us, as we have imagined.

"But all this is theorising; let us come back to our supposed novelist. The position of our novelist in this case would be perfectly definite; he could not write in any other form but the historical, for there is no fine type in our day, and if there were remnants of it left they would not, according to the prevalent ideas of the day, have retained their beauty. Oh! and in historical form it is possible to depict a multitude of extremely attractive and consolatory details! It is possible so to fascinate the reader indeed that he will take the historical picture for the possible and the actual. Such a work, if executed with great talent, would belong not so much to Russian literature as to Russian history.

"It would be a picture artistically worked out of the Russian ideal, having a real existence so long as it was not guessed that it was an ideal. The grandson of those heroes who have been depicted in a picture of a Russian family of the upper middle cultivated class during three generations, side by side with and in connection with Russian history—that descendant of his forefathers would not be depicted in his modern type except in a somewhat misanthropic solitary and distinctly melancholy aspect. He is even bound to appear a somewhat strange figure, so that the reader might from the first glance recognise him as one retreating from the field of action, and might be convinced there was no field of action left for him. A little further and even that misanthrope, that grandson of heroes, will disappear entirely; new characters will appear, unknown to us as yet, and a new ideal; but what sort of characters? If they are without beauty, then the Russian novel is impossible in the future. But alas! will the novel be the only thing impossible?

"I will not pursue this further, but will hasten back to your manuscript. Consider, for instance, both the families of M. Versilov (for this once I will venture to be quite open). I won't enlarge on Andrey Petrovitch himself; but he is anyway of a good old family. He is a nobleman of ancient lineage, and at the same time a Parisian communard. He is a true poet and loves Russia, yet denies her absolutely. He is without any sort of religion, but yet almost ready to die for something indefinite, to which he cannot give a name, but in which he fervently believes, like a number of Russian adherents of European civilisation of the Petersburg period of Russian history. But enough of him. As for his legitimate family, I won't discuss his son, and indeed, he is not worthy of

the honour. All who have eyes know what upstarts like that come to in Russia, and what they bring others to as well. Then his daughter, Anna Andreyevna—she is surely a girl of strong character? A figure on the scale of the Mother Abbess Mitrofanina, not that I mean to predict anything criminal—which would be unjust on my part.

“If you can assure me, Arkady Makarovitch, that that family is an exceptional phenomenon it will rejoice my heart. But would it not be on the contrary a truer conclusion, that a multitude of unquestionably aristocratic Russian families are with irresistible force passing in masses into exceptional families and mingling with them in the general lawlessness and chaos. A typical example of such an exceptional family is sketched by you in your manuscript. Yes, Arkady Makarovitch, you are A MEMBER OF AN EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY, in contrary distinction to the aristocratic types who have had such a very different childhood and adolescence from yours.

“I must say I should not like to be a novelist whose hero comes of an exceptional family!

“To describe him is an ungrateful task and can have no beauty of form. Moreover these types are in any case transitory, and so a novel about them cannot have artistic finish. One may make serious mistakes, exaggerations, misjudgments. In any case, one would have to guess too much. But what is the writer to do who doesn’t want to confine himself to the historical form, and is possessed by a longing for the present? To guess ... and make mistakes.

“But such an autobiography as yours might serve as material for a future work of art, for a future picture of a lawless epoch already passed. Oh, when the angry strife of the day has passed, and the future has come, then a future artist will discover beautiful forms for depicting past lawlessness and chaos. Then such autobiographies as yours—so long as they are sincere—will be of use and provide material in spite of their chaotic and fortuitous character ... they will preserve at any rate some faithful traits by which one may guess what may have lain hidden in the heart of some raw youth of that troubled time—a knowledge not altogether valueless since from raw youths are made up the generations.”

The Christmas Tree and The Wedding

The other day I saw a wedding... But no! I would rather tell you about a Christmas tree. The wedding was superb. I liked it immensely. But the other incident was still finer. I don't know why it is that the sight of the wedding reminded me of the Christmas tree. This is the way it happened:

Exactly five years ago, on New Year's Eve, I was invited to a children's ball by a man high up in the business world, who had his connections, his circle of acquaintances, and his intrigues. So it seemed as though the children's ball was merely a pretext for the parents to come together and discuss matters of interest to themselves, quite innocently and casually.

I was an outsider, and, as I had no special matters to air, I was able to spend the evening independently of the others. There was another gentleman present who like myself had just stumbled upon this affair of domestic bliss. He was the first to attract my attention. His appearance was not that of a man of birth or high family. He was tall, rather thin, very serious, and well dressed. Apparently he had no heart for the family festivities. The instant he went off into a corner by himself the smile disappeared from his face, and his thick dark brows knitted into a frown. He knew no one except the host and showed every sign of being bored to death, though bravely sustaining the role of thorough enjoyment to the end. Later I learned that he was a provincial, had come to the capital on some important, brain-racking business, had brought a letter of recommendation to our host, and our host had taken him under his protection, not at all *con amore*. It was merely out of politeness that he had invited him to the children's ball.

They did not play cards with him, they did not offer him cigars. No one entered into conversation with him. Possibly they recognised the bird by its feathers from a distance. Thus, my gentleman, not knowing what to do with his hands, was compelled to spend the evening stroking his whiskers. His whiskers were really fine, but he stroked them so assiduously that one got the feeling that the whiskers had come into the world first and afterwards the man in order to stroke them.

There was another guest who interested me. But he was of quite a different order. He was a personage. They called him Julian Mastakovich. At first glance one could tell he was an honoured guest and stood in the same relation to the host as the host to the gentleman of the whiskers. The host and hostess said no end of amiable things to him, were most attentive, wining him, hovering over him, bringing guests up to be introduced, but never leading him to any one else. I noticed tears glisten in our host's eyes when Julian Mastakovich remarked that he had rarely spent such a pleasant evening. Somehow I began to feel uncomfortable in this personage's presence. So, after amusing myself with the children, five of whom, remarkably well-fed young persons, were our host's, I went into a little sitting-room, entirely unoccupied, and seated myself at the end that was a conservatory and took up almost half the room.

The children were charming. They absolutely refused to resemble their elders, notwithstanding the efforts of mothers and governesses. In a jiffy they had denuded

the Christmas tree down to the very last sweet and had already succeeded in breaking half of their playthings before they even found out which belonged to whom.

One of them was a particularly handsome little lad, dark-eyed, curly-haired, who stubbornly persisted in aiming at me with his wooden gun. But the child that attracted the greatest attention was his sister, a girl of about eleven, lovely as a Cupid. She was quiet and thoughtful, with large, full, dreamy eyes. The children had somehow offended her, and she left them and walked into the same room that I had withdrawn into. There she seated herself with her doll in a corner.

“Her father is an immensely wealthy business man,” the guests informed each other in tones of awe. “Three hundred thousand rubles set aside for her dowry already.”

As I turned to look at the group from which I heard this news item issuing, my glance met Julian Mastakovich’s. He stood listening to the insipid chatter in an attitude of concentrated attention, with his hands behind his back and his head inclined to one side.

All the while I was quite lost in admiration of the shrewdness our host displayed in the dispensing of the gifts. The little maid of the many-rubied dowry received the handsomest doll, and the rest of the gifts were graded in value according to the diminishing scale of the parents’ stations in life. The last child, a tiny chap of ten, thin, red-haired, freckled, came into possession of a small book of nature stories without illustrations or even head and tail pieces. He was the governess’s child. She was a poor widow, and her little boy, clad in a sorry-looking little nankeen jacket, looked thoroughly crushed and intimidated. He took the book of nature stories and circled slowly about the children’s toys. He would have given anything to play with them. But he did not dare to. You could tell he already knew his place.

I like to observe children. It is fascinating to watch the individuality in them struggling for self-assertion. I could see that the other children’s things had tremendous charm for the red-haired boy, especially a toy theatre, in which he was so anxious to take a part that he resolved to fawn upon the other children. He smiled and began to play with them. His one and only apple he handed over to a puffy urchin whose pockets were already crammed with sweets, and he even carried another youngster pickaback—all simply that he might be allowed to stay with the theatre.

But in a few moments an impudent young person fell on him and gave him a pummelling. He did not dare even to cry. The governess came and told him to leave off interfering with the other children’s games, and he crept away to the same room the little girl and I were in. She let him sit down beside her, and the two set themselves busily dressing the expensive doll.

Almost half an hour passed, and I was nearly dozing off, as I sat there in the conservatory half listening to the chatter of the red-haired boy and the dowered beauty, when Julian Mastakovich entered suddenly. He had slipped out of the drawing-room under cover of a noisy scene among the children. From my secluded corner it had not escaped my notice that a few moments before he had been eagerly conversing with the rich girl’s father, to whom he had only just been introduced.

He stood still for a while reflecting and mumbling to himself, as if counting something on his fingers.

“Three hundred—three hundred—eleven—twelve—thirteen—sixteen—in five years! Let’s say four per cent—five times twelve—sixty, and on these sixty—. Let us assume that in five years it will amount to—well, four hundred. Hm—hm! But the shrewd old fox isn’t likely to be satisfied with four per cent. He gets eight or even ten, perhaps. Let’s suppose five hundred, five hundred thousand, at least, that’s sure. Anything above that for pocket money—hm—”

He blew his nose and was about to leave the room when he spied the girl and stood still. I, behind the plants, escaped his notice. He seemed to me to be quivering with excitement. It must have been his calculations that upset him so. He rubbed his hands and danced from place to place, and kept getting more and more excited. Finally, however, he conquered his emotions and came to a standstill. He cast a determined look at the future bride and wanted to move toward her, but glanced about first. Then, as if with a guilty conscience, he stepped over to the child on tip-toe, smiling, and bent down and kissed her head.

His coming was so unexpected that she uttered a shriek of alarm.

“What are you doing here, dear child?” he whispered, looking around and pinching her cheek.

“We’re playing.”

“What, with him?” said Julian Mastakovich with a look askance at the governess’s child. “You should go into the drawing-room, my lad,” he said to him.

The boy remained silent and looked up at the man with wide-open eyes. Julian Mastakovich glanced round again cautiously and bent down over the girl.

“What have you got, a doll, my dear?”

“Yes, sir.” The child quailed a little, and her brow wrinkled.

“A doll? And do you know, my dear, what dolls are made of?”

“No, sir,” she said weakly, and lowered her head.

“Out of rags, my dear. You, boy, you go back to the drawing-room, to the children,” said Julian Mastakovich looking at the boy sternly.

The two children frowned. They caught hold of each other and would not part.

“And do you know why they gave you the doll?” asked Julian Mastakovich, dropping his voice lower and lower.

“No.”

“Because you were a good, very good little girl the whole week.”

Saying which, Julian Mastakovich was seized with a paroxysm of agitation. He looked round and said in a tone faint, almost inaudible with excitement and impatience:

“If I come to visit your parents will you love me, my dear?”

He tried to kiss the sweet little creature, but the red-haired boy saw that she was on the verge of tears, and he caught her hand and sobbed out loud in sympathy. That enraged the man.

“Go away! Go away! Go back to the other room, to your playmates.”

"I don't want him to. I don't want him to! You go away!" cried the girl. "Let him alone! Let him alone!" She was almost weeping.

There was a sound of footsteps in the doorway. Julian Mastakovich started and straightened up his respectable body. The red-haired boy was even more alarmed. He let go the girl's hand, sidled along the wall, and escaped through the drawing-room into the dining-room.

Not to attract attention, Julian Mastakovich also made for the dining-room. He was red as a lobster. The sight of himself in a mirror seemed to embarrass him. Presumably he was annoyed at his own ardour and impatience. Without due respect to his importance and dignity, his calculations had lured and pricked him to the greedy eagerness of a boy, who makes straight for his object—though this was not as yet an object; it only would be so in five years' time. I followed the worthy man into the dining-room, where I witnessed a remarkable play.

Julian Mastakovich, all flushed with vexation, venom in his look, began to threaten the red-haired boy. The red-haired boy retreated farther and farther until there was no place left for him to retreat to, and he did not know where to turn in his fright.

"Get out of here! What are you doing here? Get out, I say, you good-for-nothing! Stealing fruit, are you? Oh, so, stealing fruit! Get out, you freckle face, go to your likes!"

The frightened child, as a last desperate resort, crawled quickly under the table. His persecutor, completely infuriated, pulled out his large linen handkerchief and used it as a lash to drive the boy out of his position.

Here I must remark that Julian Mastakovich was a somewhat corpulent man, heavy, well-fed, puffy-cheeked, with a paunch and ankles as round as nuts. He perspired and puffed and panted. So strong was his dislike (or was it jealousy?) of the child that he actually began to carry on like a madman.

I laughed heartily. Julian Mastakovich turned. He was utterly confused and for a moment, apparently, quite oblivious of his immense importance. At that moment our host appeared in the doorway opposite. The boy crawled out from under the table and wiped his knees and elbows. Julian Mastakovich hastened to carry his handkerchief, which he had been dangling by the corner, to his nose. Our host looked at the three of us rather suspiciously. But, like a man who knows the world and can readily adjust himself, he seized upon the opportunity to lay hold of his very valuable guest and get what he wanted out of him.

"Here's the boy I was talking to you about," he said, indicating the red-haired child. "I took the liberty of presuming on your goodness in his behalf."

"Oh," replied Julian Mastakovich, still not quite master of himself.

"He's my governess's son," our host continued in a beseeching tone. "She's a poor creature, the widow of an honest official. That's why, if it were possible for you—"

"Impossible, impossible!" Julian Mastakovich cried hastily. "You must excuse me, Philip Alexeyevich, I really cannot. I've made inquiries. There are no vacancies, and there is a waiting list of ten who have a greater right—I'm sorry."

“Too bad,” said our host. “He’s a quiet, unobtrusive child.”

“A very naughty little rascal, I should say,” said Julian Mastakovich, wryly. “Go away, boy. Why are you here still? Be off with you to the other children.”

Unable to control himself, he gave me a sidelong glance. Nor could I control myself. I laughed straight in his face. He turned away and asked our host, in tones quite audible to me, who that odd young fellow was. They whispered to each other and left the room, disregarding me.

I shook with laughter. Then I, too, went to the drawing-room. There the great man, already surrounded by the fathers and mothers and the host and the hostess, had begun to talk eagerly with a lady to whom he had just been introduced. The lady held the rich little girl’s hand. Julian Mastakovich went into fulsome praise of her. He waxed ecstatic over the dear child’s beauty, her talents, her grace, her excellent breeding, plainly laying himself out to flatter the mother, who listened scarcely able to restrain tears of joy, while the father showed his delight by a gratified smile.

The joy was contagious. Everybody shared in it. Even the children were obliged to stop playing so as not to disturb the conversation. The atmosphere was surcharged with awe. I heard the mother of the important little girl, touched to her profoundest depths, ask Julian Mastakovich in the choicest language of courtesy, whether he would honour them by coming to see them. I heard Julian Mastakovich accept the invitation with unfeigned enthusiasm. Then the guests scattered decorously to different parts of the room, and I heard them, with veneration in their tones, extol the business man, the business man’s wife, the business man’s daughter, and, especially, Julian Mastakovich.

“Is he married?” I asked out loud of an acquaintance of mine standing beside Julian Mastakovich.

Julian Mastakovich gave me a venomous look.

“No,” answered my acquaintance, profoundly shocked by my—intentional—indiscretion.

* * * * *

Not long ago I passed the Church of—. I was struck by the concourse of people gathered there to witness a wedding. It was a dreary day. A drizzling rain was beginning to come down. I made my way through the throng into the church. The bridegroom was a round, well-fed, pot-bellied little man, very much dressed up. He ran and fussed about and gave orders and arranged things. Finally word was passed that the bride was coming. I pushed through the crowd, and I beheld a marvellous beauty whose first spring was scarcely commencing. But the beauty was pale and sad. She looked distracted. It seemed to me even that her eyes were red from recent weeping. The classic severity of every line of her face imparted a peculiar significance and solemnity to her beauty. But through that severity and solemnity, through the sadness, shone the innocence of a child. There was something inexpressibly naive, unsettled and young in her features, which, without words, seemed to plead for mercy.

They said she was just sixteen years old. I looked at the bridegroom carefully. Suddenly I recognised Julian Mastakovich, whom I had not seen again in all those

five years. Then I looked at the bride again.—Good God! I made my way, as quickly as I could, out of the church. I heard gossiping in the crowd about the bride's wealth—about her dowry of five hundred thousand rubles—so and so much for pocket money.

“Then his calculations were correct,” I thought, as I pressed out into the street.

The Crocodile

Translated by Constance Garnett

A true story of how a gentleman of a certain age and of respectable appearance was swallowed alive by the crocodile in the Arcade, and of the consequences that followed.
Oh Lambert! Ou est Lambert?
As-tu vu Lambert?

Chapter 1

On the thirteenth of January of this present year, 1865, at half-past twelve in the day, Elena Ivanovna, the wife of my cultured friend Ivan Matveitch, who is a colleague in the same department, and may be said to be a distant relation of mine, too, expressed the desire to see the crocodile now on view at a fixed charge in the Arcade. As Ivan Matveitch had already in his pocket his ticket for a tour abroad (not so much for the sake of his health as for the improvement of his mind), and was consequently free from his official duties and had nothing whatever to do that morning, he offered no objection to his wife's irresistible fancy, but was positively aflame with curiosity himself.

"A capital idea!" he said, with the utmost satisfaction. "We'll have a look at the crocodile! On the eve of visiting Europe it is as well to acquaint ourselves on the spot with its indigenous inhabitants." And with these words, taking his wife's arm, he set off with her at once for the Arcade. I joined them, as I usually do, being an intimate friend of the family. I have never seen Ivan Matveitch in a more agreeable frame of mind than he was on that memorable morning—how true it is that we know not beforehand the fate that awaits us! On entering the Arcade he was at once full of admiration for the splendours of the building and, when we reached the shop in which the monster lately arrived in Petersburg was being exhibited, he volunteered to pay the quarter-rouble for me to the crocodile owner—a thing which had never happened before. Walking into a little room, we observed that besides the crocodile there were in it parrots of the species known as cockatoo, and also a group of monkeys in a special case in a recess. Near the entrance, along the left wall stood a big tin tank that looked like a bath covered with a thin iron grating, filled with water to the depth of two inches. In this shallow pool was kept a huge crocodile, which lay like a log absolutely motionless and apparently deprived of all its faculties by our damp climate, so inhospitable to foreign visitors. This monster at first aroused no special interest in any one of us.

"So this is the crocodile!" said Elena Ivanovna, with a pathetic cadence of regret. "Why, I thought it was ... something different."

Most probably she thought it was made of diamonds. The owner of the crocodile, a German, came out and looked at us with an air of extraordinary pride.

"He has a right to be," Ivan Matveitch whispered to me, "he knows he is the only man in Russia exhibiting a crocodile".

This quite nonsensical observation I ascribe also to the extremely good-humoured mood which had overtaken Ivan Matveitch, who was on other occasions of rather envious disposition.

“I fancy your crocodile is not alive,” said Elena Ivanovna, piqued by the irresponsible stolidity of the proprietor, and addressing him with a charming smile in order to soften his churlishness—a manoeuvre so typically feminine.

“Oh, no, madam,” the latter replied in broken Russian; and instantly moving the grating half off the tank, he poked the monster’s head with a stick.

Then the treacherous monster, to show that it was alive, faintly stirred its paws and tail, raised its snout and emitted something like a prolonged snuffle.

“Come, don’t be cross, Karlchen,” said the German caressingly, gratified in his vanity.

“How horrid that crocodile is! I am really frightened,” Elena Ivanovna twittered, still more coquettishly. “I know I shall dream of him now.”

“But he won’t bite you if you do dream of him,” the German retorted gallantly, and was the first to laugh at his own jest, but none of us responded.

“Come, Semyon Semyonitch,” said Elena Ivanovna, addressing me exclusively, “let us go and look at the monkeys. I am awfully fond of monkeys; they are such darlings ... and the crocodile is horrid.”

“Oh, don’t be afraid, my dear!” Ivan Matveitch called after us, gallantly displaying his manly courage to his wife. “This drowsy denizen of the realms of the Pharaohs will do us no harm.” And he remained by the tank. What is more, he took his glove and began tickling the crocodile’s nose with it, wishing, as he said afterwards, to induce him to snort. The proprietor showed his politeness to a lady by following Elena Ivanovna to the case of monkeys.

So everything was going well, and nothing could have been foreseen. Elena Ivanovna was quite skittish in her raptures over the monkeys, and seemed completely taken up with them. With shrieks of delight she was continually turning to me, as though determined not to notice the proprietor, and kept gushing with laughter at the resemblance she detected between these monkeys and her intimate friends and acquaintances. I, too, was amused, for the resemblance was unmistakable. The German did not know whether to laugh or not, and so at last was reduced to frowning. And it was at that moment that a terrible, I may say unnatural, scream set the room vibrating. Not knowing what to think, for the first moment I stood still, numb with horror, but, noticing that Elena Ivanovna was screaming too, I quickly turned round—and what did I behold! I saw—oh, heavens!—I saw the luckless Ivan Matveitch in the terrible jaws of the crocodile, held by them round the waist, lifted horizontally in the air and desperately kicking. Then—one moment, and no trace remained of him. But I must describe it in detail, for I stood all the while motionless, and had time to watch the whole process taking place before me with an attention and interest such as I never remember to have felt before. “What,” I thought at that critical moment, “what if all that had happened to me instead of to Ivan Matveitch—how unpleasant it would have been for me!”

But to return to my story. The crocodile began by turning the unhappy Ivan Matveitch in his terrible jaws so that he could swallow his legs first; then bringing up Ivan Matveitch, who kept trying to jump out and clutching at the sides of the tank, sucked him down again as far as his waist. Then bringing him up again, gulped him down, and so again and again. In this way Ivan Matveitch was visibly disappearing before our eyes. At last, with a final gulp, the crocodile swallowed my cultured friend entirely, this time leaving no trace of him. From the outside of the crocodile we could see the protuberances of Ivan Matveitch's figure as he passed down the inside of the monster. I was on the point of screaming again when destiny played another treacherous trick upon us. The crocodile made a tremendous effort, probably oppressed by the magnitude of the object he had swallowed, once more opened his terrible jaws, and with a final hiccup he suddenly let the head of Ivan Matveitch pop out for a second, with an expression of despair on his face. In that brief instant the spectacles dropped off his nose to the bottom of the tank. It seemed as though that despairing countenance had only popped out to cast one last look on the objects around it, to take its last farewell of all earthly pleasures. But it had not time to carry out its intention; the crocodile made another effort, gave a gulp and instantly it vanished again—this time for ever. This appearance and disappearance of a still living human head was so horrible, but all the same—either from its rapidity and unexpectedness or from the dropping of the spectacles—there was something so comic about it that I suddenly quite unexpectedly exploded with laughter. But pulling myself together and realising that to laugh at such a moment was not the thing for an old family friend, I turned at once to Elena Ivanovna and said with a sympathetic air:

“Now it's all over with our friend Ivan Matveitch!”

I cannot even attempt to describe how violent was the agitation of Elena Ivanovna during the whole process. After the first scream she seemed rooted to the spot, and stared at the catastrophe with apparent indifference, though her eyes looked as though they were starting out of her head; then she suddenly went off into a heart-rending wail, but I seized her hands. At this instant the proprietor, too, who had at first been also petrified by horror, suddenly elapsd his hands and cried, gazing upwards:

“Oh, my crocodile! Oh, mein allerliebster Karlchen! Mutter, Mutter, Mutter!”

A door at the rear of the room opened at this cry, and the Mutter, a rosy-cheeked, elderly but dishevelled woman in a cap made her appearance, and rushed with a shriek to her German.

A perfect Bedlam followed. Elena Ivanovna kept shrieking out the same phrase, as though in a frenzy, “Flay him! flay him!” apparently entreating them—probably in a moment of oblivion—to flay somebody for something. The proprietor and Mutter took no notice whatever of either of us; they were both bellowing like calves over the crocodile.

“He did for himself! He will burst himself at once, for he did swallow a ganz official!” cried the proprietor.

“Unser Karlchen, unser allerliebster Karlchen wird sterben,” howled his wife.

“We are bereaved and without bread!” chimed in the proprietor.

“Flay him! flay him! flay him!” clamoured Elena Ivanovna, clutching at the German’s coat.

“He did tease the crocodile. For what did your man tease the crocodile?” cried the German, pulling away from her. “You will, if Karlchen wird burst, therefore pay, das war mein Sohn, das war mein einziger Sohn.”

I must own I was intensely indignant at the sight of such egoism in the German and the cold-heartedness of his dishevelled Mutter; at the same time Elena Ivanovna’s reiterated shriek of “Flay him! flay him!” troubled me even more and absorbed at last my whole attention, positively alarming me. I may as well say straight of that I entirely misunderstood this strange exclamation: it seemed to me that Elena Ivanovna had for the moment taken leave of her senses, but nevertheless wishing to avenge the loss of her beloved Ivan Matveitch, was demanding by way of compensation that the crocodile should be severely thrashed, while she was meaning something quite different. Looking round at the door, not without embarrassment, I began to entreat Elena Ivanovna to calm herself, and above all not to use the shocking word ‘flay’. For such a reactionary desire here, in the midst of the Arcade and of the most cultured society, not two paces from the hall where at this very minute Mr. Lavrov was perhaps delivering a public lecture, was not only impossible but unthinkable, and might at any moment bring upon us the hisses of culture and the caricatures of Mr. Stepanov. To my horror I was immediately proved to be correct in my alarmed suspicions: the curtain that divided the crocodile room from the little entry where the quarter-roubles were taken suddenly parted, and in the opening there appeared a figure with moustaches and beard, carrying a cap, with the upper part of its body bent a long way forward, though the feet were scrupulously held beyond the threshold of the crocodile room in order to avoid the necessity of paying the entrance money.

“Such a reactionary desire, madam,” said the stranger, trying to avoid falling over in our direction and to remain standing outside the room, “does no credit to your development, and is conditioned by lack of phosphorus in your brain. You will be promptly held up to shame in the Chronicle of Progress and in our satirical prints...”

But he could not complete his remarks; the proprietor coming to himself, and seeing with horror that a man was talking in the crocodile room without having paid entrance money, rushed furiously at the progressive stranger and turned him out with a punch from each fist. For a moment both vanished from our sight behind a curtain, and only then I grasped that the whole uproar was about nothing. Elena Ivanovna turned out quite innocent; she had, as I have mentioned already, no idea whatever of subjecting the crocodile to a degrading corporal punishment, and had simply expressed the desire that he should be opened and her husband released from his interior.

“What! You wish that my crocodile be perished!” the proprietor yelled, running in again. “No! let your husband be perished first, before my crocodile! ... Mein Vater showed crocodile, mein Grossvater showed crocodile, mein Sohn will show crocodile,

and I will show crocodile! All will show crocodile! I am known to ganz Europa, and you are not known to ganz Europa, and you must pay me a Strafe!”

“Ja, ja,” put in the vindictive German woman, “we shall not let you go, Strafe, since Karlchen is burst!”

“And, indeed, it’s useless to flay the creature,” I added calmly, anxious to get Elena Ivanovna away home as quickly as possible, “as our dear Ivan Matveitch is by now probably soaring somewhere in the empyrean.”

“My dear”—we suddenly heard, to our intense amazement, the voice of Ivan Matveitch—“my dear, my advice is to apply direct to the superintendent’s office, as without the assistance of the police the German will never be made to see reason.”

These words, uttered with firmness and aplomb, and expressing an exceptional presence of mind, for the first minute so astounded us that we could not believe our ears. But, of course, we ran at once to the crocodile’s tank, and with equal reverence and incredulity listened to the unhappy captive. His voice was muffled, thin and even squeaky, as though it came from a considerable distance. It reminded one of a jocose person who, covering his mouth with a pillow, shouts from an adjoining room, trying to mimic the sound of two peasants calling to one another in a deserted plain or across a wide ravine—a performance to which I once had the pleasure of listening in a friend’s house at Christmas.

“Ivan Matveitch, my dear, and so you are alive!” faltered Elena Ivanovna.

“Alive and well,” answered Ivan Matveitch, “and, thanks to the Almighty, swallowed without any damage whatever. I am only uneasy as to the view my superiors may take of the incident; for after getting a permit to go abroad I’ve got into a crocodile, which seems anything but clever.”

“But, my dear, don’t trouble your head about being clever; first of all we must somehow excavate you from where you are,” Elena Ivanovna interrupted.

“Excavate!” cried the proprietor. “I will not let my crocodile be excavated. Now the Public will come many more, and I will funzig kopecks ask and Karlchen will cease to burst.”

“Gott sei Dank!” put in his wife.

“They are right,” Ivan Matveitch observed tranquilly; “the principles of economics before everything.”

“My dear! I will fly at once to the authorities and lodge a complaint, for I feel that we cannot settle this mess by ourselves.”

“I think so too.” observed Ivan Matveitch; “but in our age of industrial crisis it is not easy to rip open the belly of a crocodile without economic compensation, and meanwhile the inevitable question presents itself: What will the German take for his crocodile? And with it another: How will it be paid? For, as you know, I have no means ...”

“Perhaps out of your salary ...” I observed timidly, but the proprietor interrupted me at once.

“I will not the crocodile sell; I will for three thousand the crocodile sell! I will for four thousand the crocodile sell! Now the Public will come very many. I will for five thousand the crocodile sell!”

In fact he gave himself insufferable airs. Covetousness and a revolting greed gleamed joyfully in his eyes.

“I am going!” I cried indignantly.

“And I! I too! I shall go to Andrey Osipitch himself. I will soften him with my tears,” whined Elena Ivanovna.

“Don’t do that, my dear,” Ivan Matveitch hastened to interpose. He had long been jealous of Andrey Osipitch on his wife’s account, and he knew she would enjoy going to weep before a gentleman of refinement, for tears suited her. “And I don’t advise you to do so either, my friend,” he added, addressing me. “It’s no good plunging headlong in that slap-dash way; there’s no knowing what it may lead to. You had much better go today to Timofey Semyonitch, as though to pay an ordinary visit; he is an old-fashioned and by no means brilliant man, but he is trustworthy, and what matters most of all, he is straightforward. Give him my greetings and describe the circumstances of the case. And since I owe him seven roubles over our last game of cards, take the opportunity to pay him the money; that will soften the stern old man. In any case his advice may serve as a guide for us. And meanwhile take Elena Ivanovna home.... Calm yourself, my dear,” he continued, addressing her. “I am weary of these outcries and feminine squabbings, and should like a nap. It’s soft and warm in here, though I have hardly had time to look round in this unexpected haven.”

“Look round! Why, is it light in there?” cried Elena Ivanovna in a tone of relief.

“I am surrounded by impenetrable night,” answered the poor captive, “but I can feel and, so to speak, have a look round with my hands.... Good-bye; set your mind at rest and don’t deny yourself recreation and diversion. Till to-morrow! And you, Semyon Semyonitch, come to me in the evening, and as you are absent-minded and may forget it, tie a knot in your handkerchief.”

I confess I was glad to get away, for I was overtired and somewhat bored. Hastening to offer my arm to the disconsolate Elena Ivanovna, whose charms were only enhanced by her agitation, I hurriedly led her out of the crocodile room.

“The charge will be another quarter-rouble in the evening,” the proprietor called after us.

“Oh, dear, how greedy they are!” said Elena Ivanovna, looking at herself in every mirror on the walls of the Arcade, and evidently aware that she was looking prettier than usual.

“The principles of economics,” I answered with some emotion, proud that passers-by should see the lady on my arm.

“The principles of economics,” she drawled in a touching little voice. “I did not in the least understand what Ivan Matveitch said about those horrid economics just now.”

"I will explain to you," I answered, and began at once telling her of the beneficial effects of the introduction of foreign capital into our country, upon which I had read an article in the Petersburg News and the Voice that morning.

"How strange it is," she interrupted, after listening for some time. "But do leave off, you horrid man. What nonsense you are talking.... Tell me, do I look purple?"

"You look perfect, and not purple!" I observed, seizing the opportunity to pay her a compliment.

"Naughty man!" she said complacently. "Poor Ivan Matveitch," she added a minute later, putting her little head on one side coquettishly. "I am really sorry for him. Oh, dear!" she cried suddenly, "how is he going to have his dinner ... and ... and ... what will he do ... if he wants anything?"

"An unforeseen question," I answered, perplexed in my turn. To tell the truth, it had not entered my head, so much more practical are women than we men in the solution of the problems of daily life!

"Poor dear! How could he have got into such a mess ... nothing to amuse him, and in the dark How vexing it is that I have no photograph of him. And so now I am a sort of widow," she added, with a seductive smile, evidently interested in her new position. "Hm! ... I am sorry for him, though."

It was, in short, the expression of the very natural and intelligible grief of a young and interesting wife for the loss of her husband. I took her home at last, soothed her, and after dining with her and drinking a cup of aromatic coffee, set off at six o'clock to Timofey Semyonitch, calculating that at that hour all married people of settled habits would be sitting or lying down at home.

Having written this first chapter in a style appropriate to the incident recorded, I intended to proceed in a language more natural though less elevated, and I beg to forewarn the reader of the fact.

Chapter 2

The venerable Timofey Semyonitch met me rather nervously, as though somewhat embarrassed. He led me to his tiny study and shut the door carefully, "that the children may not hinder us," he added with evident uneasiness. There he made me sit down on a chair by the writing-table, sat down himself in an easy chair, wrapped round him the skirts of his old wadded dressing-gown, and assumed an official and even severe air, in readiness for anything, though he was not my chief nor Ivan Matveitch's, and had hitherto been reckoned as a colleague and even a friend.

"First of all," he said, "take note that I am not a person in authority, but just such a subordinate official as you and Ivan Matveitch.... I have nothing to do with it, and do not intend to mix myself up in the affair."

I was surprised to find that he apparently knew all about it already. In spite of that I told him the whole story over in detail. I spoke with positive excitement, for I was

at that moment fulfilling the obligations of a true friend. He listened without special surprise, but with evident signs of suspicion.

“Only fancy,” he said, “I always believed that this would be sure to happen to him.”

“Why, Timofey Semyonitch? It is a very unusual incident in itself ...”

“I admit it. But Ivan Matveitch’s whole career in the service was leading up to this end. He was flighty-conceited indeed. It was always ‘progress’ and ideas of all sorts, and this is what progress brings people to!”

“But this is a most unusual incident and cannot possibly serve as a general rule for all progressives.”

“Yes, indeed it can. You see, it’s the effect of over-education, I assure you. For over-education leads people to poke their noses into all sorts of places, especially where they are not invited. Though perhaps you know best,” he added, as though offended. “I am an old man and not of much education. I began as a soldier’s son, and this year has been the jubilee of my service.”

“Oh, no, Timofey Semyonitch, not at all. On the contrary, Ivan Matveitch is eager for your advice; he is eager for your guidance. He implores it, so to say, with tears.”

“So to say, with tears! Hm! Those are crocodile’s tears and one cannot quite believe in them. Tell me, what possessed him to want to go abroad? And how could he afford to go? Why, he has no private means!”

“He had saved the money from his last bonus,” I answered plaintively. “He only wanted to go for three months—to Switzerland ... to the land of William Tell.”

“William Tell? Hm!”

“He wanted to meet the spring at Naples, to see the museums, the customs, the animals ...”

“Hm! The animals! I think it was simply from pride. What animals? Animals, indeed! Haven’t we animals enough? We have museums, menageries, camels. There are bears quite close to Petersburg! And here he’s got inside a crocodile himself...”

“Oh, come, Timofey Semyonitch! The man is in trouble, the man appeals to you as to a friend, as to an older relation, craves for advice—and you reproach him. Have pity at least on the unfortunate Elena Ivanovna!”

“You are speaking of his wife? A charming little lady,” said Timofey Semyonitch, visibly softening and taking a pinch of snuff with relish. “Particularly prepossessing. And so plump, and always putting her pretty little head on one side. Very agreeable. Andrey Osipitch was speaking of her only the other day.”

“Speaking of her?”

“Yes, and in very flattering terms. Such a bust, he said, such eyes, such hairA sugar-plum, he said, not a lady—and then he laughed. He is still a young man, of course,” Timofey Semyonitch blew his nose with a loud noise. “And yet, young though he is, what a career he is making for himself.”

“That’s quite a different thing, Timofey Semyonitch.”

“Of course, of course.”

“Well, what do You say then, Timofey Semyonitch?”

“Why, what can I do?”

“Give advice, guidance, as a man of experience, a relative! What are we to do? What steps are we to take? Go to the authorities and ... “

“To the authorities? Certainly not.” Timofey Semyonitch replied hurriedly. “If you ask my advice, you had better, above all, hush the matter up and act, so to speak, as a private person. It is a suspicious incident, quite unheard of. Unheard of, above all; there is no precedent for it, and it is far from creditable... . And so discretion above all... . Let him lie there a bit. We must wait and see ... “

“But how can we wait and see, Timofey Semyonitch? What if he is stifled there?”

“Why should he be? I think you told me that he made himself fairly comfortable there?”

I told him the whole story over again. Timofey Semyonitch pondered.

“Hm!” he said, twisting his snuff-box in his hands. “To my mind it’s really a good thing he should lie there a bit, instead of going abroad. Let him reflect at his leisure. Of course he mustn’t be stifled, and so he must take measures to preserve his health, avoiding a cough, for instance, and so on.... And as for the German, it’s my personal opinion he is within his rights, and even more so than the other side, because it was the other party who got into his crocodile without asking permission, and not he who got into Ivan Matveitch’s crocodile without asking permission, though, so far as I recollect, the latter has no crocodile. And a crocodile is private property, and so it is impossible to slit him open without compensation.”

“For the saving of human life, Timofey Semyonitch.”

“Oh, well, that’s a matter for the police. You must go to them.”

“But Ivan Matveitch may be needed in the department. He may be asked for.”

“Ivan Matveitch needed? Ha-ha! Besides, he is on leave, so that we may ignore him—let him inspect the countries of Europe! It will be a different matter if he doesn’t turn up when his leave is over. Then we shall ask for him and make inquiries.”

“Three months! Timofey Semyonitch, for pity’s sake!”

“It’s his own fault. Nobody thrust him there. At this rate we should have to get a nurse to look after him at government expense, and that is not allowed for in the regulations. But the chief point is that the crocodile is private property, so that the principles of economics apply in this question. And the principles of economics are paramount. Only the other evening, at Luke Andreitch’s, Ignaty Prokofyitch was saying so. Do you know Ignaty Prokofyitch? A capitalist, in a big way of business, and he speaks so fluently. ‘We need industrial development,’ he said; ‘there is very little development among us. We must create it. We must create capital, so we must create a middle-class, the so-called bourgeoisie. And as we haven’t capital we must attract it from abroad. We must, in the first place, give facilities to foreign companies to buy up lands in Russia as is done now abroad. The communal holding of land is poison, is ruin.’ And, you know, he spoke with such heat; well, that’s all right for him—a wealthy man, and not in the service. ‘With the communal system,’ he said, ‘there will be no improvement in industrial development or agriculture. Foreign companies,’ he said,

‘must as far as possible buy up the whole of our land in big lots, and then split it up, split it up, split it up, in the smallest parts possible’—and do you know he pronounced the words ‘split it up’ with such determination—‘and then sell it as private property. Or rather, not sell it, but simply let it. When,’ he said, ‘all the land is in the hands of foreign companies they can fix any rent they like. And so the peasant will work three times as much for his daily bread and he can be turned out at pleasure. So that he will feel it, will be submissive and industrious, and will work three times as much for the same wages. But as it is, with the commune, what does he care? He knows he won’t die of hunger, so he is lazy and drunken. And meanwhile money will be attracted into Russia, capital will be created and the bourgeoisie will spring up. The English political and literary paper, *The Times*, in an article the other day on our finances stated that the reason our financial position was so unsatisfactory was that we had no middle-class, no big fortunes, no accommodating proletariat.’ Ignaty Prokofyitch speaks well. He is an orator. He wants to lay a report on the subject before the authorities, and then to get it published in the *News*. That’s something very different from verses like Ivan Matveitch’s ...”

“But how about Ivan Matveitch?” I put in, after letting the old man babble on.

Timofey Semyonitch was sometimes fond of talking and showing that he was not behind the times, but knew all about things.

“How about Ivan Matveitch? Why, I am coming to that. Here we are, anxious to bring foreign capital into the country—and only consider: as soon as the capital of a foreigner, who has been attracted to Petersburg, has been doubled through Ivan Matveitch, instead of protecting the foreign capitalist, we are proposing to rip open the belly of his original capital—the crocodile. Is it consistent? To my mind, Ivan Matveitch, as the true son of his fatherland, ought to rejoice and to be proud that through him the value of a foreign crocodile has been doubled and possibly even trebled. That’s just what is wanted to attract capital. If one man succeeds, mind you, another will come with a crocodile, and a third will bring two or three of them at once, and capital will grow up about them—there you have a bourgeoisie. It must be encouraged.”

“Upon my word, Timofey Semyonitch!” I cried, “you are demanding almost supernatural self-sacrifice from poor Ivan Matveitch.”

“I demand nothing, and I beg you, before everything—as I have said already—to remember that I am not a person in authority and so cannot demand anything of anyone. I am speaking as a son of the fatherland, that is, not as the Son of the Fatherland, but as a son of the fatherland. Again, what possessed him to get into the crocodile? A respectable man, a man of good grade in the service, lawfully married—and then to behave like that! Is it consistent?”

“But it was an accident.”

“Who knows? And where is the money to compensate the owner to come from?”

“Perhaps out of his salary, Timofey Semyonitch?”

“Would that be enough?”

“No, it wouldn’t, Timofey Semyonitch,” I answered sadly. “The proprietor was at first alarmed that the crocodile would burst, but as soon as he was sure that it was all right, he began to bluster and was delighted to think that he could double the charge for entry.”

“Treble and quadruple perhaps! The public will simply stampede the place now, and crocodile owners are smart people. Besides, it’s not Lent yet, and people are keen on diversions, and so I say again, the great thing is that Ivan Matveitch should preserve his incognito, don’t let him be in a hurry. Let everybody know, perhaps, that he is in the crocodile, but don’t let them be officially informed of it. Ivan Matveitch is in particularly favourable circumstances for that, for he is reckoned to be abroad. It will be said he is in the crocodile, and we will refuse to believe it. That is how it can be managed. The great thing is that he should wait; and why should he be in a hurry?”

“Well, but if ...”

“Don’t worry, he has a good constitution.”

“Well, and afterwards, when he has waited?”

“Well, I won’t conceal from you that the case is exceptional in the highest degree. One doesn’t know what to think of it, and the worst of it is there is no precedent. If we had a precedent we might have something to go by. But as it is, what is one to say? It will certainly take time to settle it.”

A happy thought flashed upon my mind.

“Cannot we arrange,” I said, “that, if he is destined to remain in the entrails of the monster and it is the will of Providence that he should remain alive, he should send in a petition to be reckoned as still serving?”

“Hm! ... Possibly as on leave and without salary ...”

“But couldn’t it be with salary?”

“On what grounds?”

“As sent on a special commission.”

“What commission and where?”

“Why, into the entrails, the entrails of the crocodile. So to speak, for exploration, for investigation of the facts on the spot. It would, of course, be a novelty, but that is progressive and would at the same time show zeal for enlightenment.”

Timofey Semyonitch thought a little.

“To send a special official,” he said at last, “to the inside of a crocodile to conduct a special inquiry is, in my personal opinion, an absurdity. It is not in the regulations. And what sort of special inquiry could there be there?”

“The scientific study of nature on the spot, in the living subject. The natural sciences are all the fashion nowadays, botany... . He could live there and report his observations. ... For instance, concerning digestion or simply habits. For the sake of accumulating facts.”

“You mean as statistics. Well, I am no great authority on that subject, indeed I am no philosopher at all. You say ‘facts’-we are overwhelmed with facts as it is, and don’t know what to do with them. Besides, statistics are a danger.”

“In what way?”

“They are a danger. Moreover, you will admit he will report facts, so to speak, lying like a log. And, can one do one’s official duties lying like a log? That would be another novelty and a dangerous one; and again, there is no precedent for it. If we had any sort of precedent for it, then, to my thinking, he might have been given the job.”

“But no live crocodiles have been brought over hitherto, Timofey Semyonitch.”

“Hm ... yes,” he reflected again. “Your objection is a just one, if you like, and might indeed serve as a ground for carrying the matter further; but consider again, that if with the arrival of living crocodiles government clerks begin to disappear, and then on the ground that they are warm and comfortable there, expect to receive the official sanction for their position, and then take their ease there ... you must admit it would be a bad example. We should have everyone trying to go the same way to get a salary for nothing.”

“Do your best for him, Timofey Semyonitch. By the way, Ivan Matveitch asked me to give you seven roubles he had lost to you at cards.”

“Ah, he lost that the other day at Nikifor Nikiforitch’s. I remember. And how gay and amusing he was—and now!”

The old man was genuinely touched.

“Intercede for him, Timofey Semyonitch!”

“I will do my best. I will speak in my own name, as a private person, as though I were asking for information. And meanwhile, you find out indirectly, unofficially, how much would the proprietor consent to take for his crocodile?”

Timofey Semyonitch was visibly more friendly.

“Certainly,” I answered. “And I will come back to you at once to report.”

“And his wife ... is she alone now? Is she depressed?”

“You should call on her, Timofey Semyonitch.”

“I will. I thought of doing so before; it’s a good opportunity.... And what on earth possessed him to go and look at the crocodile. Though, indeed, I should like to see it myself.”

“Go and see the poor fellow, Timofey Semyonitch.”

“I will. Of course, I don’t want to raise his hopes by doing so. I shall go as a private person.... Well, good-bye, I am going to Nikifor Nikiforitch’s again; shall you be there?”

“No, I am going to see the poor prisoner.”

“Yes, now he is a prisoner! ... Ah, that’s what comes of thoughtlessness!”

I said good-bye to the old man. Ideas of all kinds were straying through my mind. A good-natured and most honest man, Timofey Semyonitch, yet, as I left him, I felt pleased at the thought that he had celebrated his fiftieth year of service, and that Timofey Semyonitchs are now a rarity among us. I flew at once, of course, to the Arcade to tell poor Ivan Matveitch all the news. And, indeed, I was moved by curiosity to know how he was getting on in the crocodile and how it was possible to live in a crocodile. And, indeed, was it possible to live in a crocodile at all? At times it really

seemed to me as though it were all an outlandish, monstrous dream, especially as an outlandish monster was the chief figure in it.

Chapter 3

And yet it was not a dream, but actual, indubitable fact. Should I be telling the story if it were not? But to continue.

It was late, about nine o'clock, before I reached the Arcade, and I had to go into the crocodile room by the back entrance, for the German had closed the shop earlier than usual that evening. Now in the seclusion of domesticity he was walking about in a greasy old frock-coat, but he seemed three times as pleased as he had been in the morning. It was evidently that he had no apprehensions now, and that the public had been coming "many more". The Mutter came out later, evidently to keep an eye on me. The German and the Mutter frequently whispered together. Although the shop was closed he charged me a quarter rouble. What unnecessary exactitude!

"You will every time pay; the public will one rouble, and you one quarter pay; for you are the good friend of your good friend; and I a friend respect ..."

"Are you alive, are you alive, my cultured friend?" I cried, as I approached the crocodile, expecting my words to reach Ivan Matveitch from a distance and to flatter his vanity.

"Alive and well," he answered, as though from a long way off or from under the bed, though I was standing close beside him. "Alive and well; but of that later... . How are things going?"

As though purposely not hearing the question, I was just beginning with sympathetic haste to question him how he was, what it was like in the crocodile, and what, in fact, there was inside a crocodile. Both friendship and common civility demanded this. But with capricious annoyance he interrupted me.

"How are things going?" he shouted, in a shrill and on this occasion particularly revolting voice, addressing me peremptorily as usual.

I described to him my whole conversation with Timofey Semyonitch down to the smallest detail. As I told my story I tried to show my resentment in my voice.

"The old man is right," Ivan Matveitch pronounced as abruptly as usual in his conversation with me. "I like practical people, and can't endure sentimental milk-sops. I am ready to admit, however, that your idea about a special commission is not altogether absurd. I certainly have a great deal to report, both from a scientific and from an ethical point of view. But now all this has taken a new and unexpected aspect, and it is not worth while to trouble about mere salary. Listen attentively. Are you sitting down?"

"No, I am standing up."

"Sit down on the floor if there is nothing else, and listen attentively.

Resentfully I took a chair and put it down on the floor with a bang, in my anger.

"Listen," he began dictatorially. "The public came to-day in masses. There was no room left in the evening, and the police came in to keep order. At eight o'clock, that is, earlier than usual, the proprietor thought it necessary to close the shop and end the exhibition to count the money he had taken and prepare for to-morrow more conveniently. So I know there will be a regular fair to-morrow. So we may assume that all the most cultivated people in the capital, the ladies of the best society, the foreign ambassadors, the leading lawyers and so on, will all be present. What's more, people will be flowing here from the remotest provinces of our vast and interesting empire. The upshot of it is that I am the cynosure of all eyes, and though hidden to sight, I am eminent. I shall teach the idle crowd. Taught by experience, I shall be an example of greatness and resignation to fate! I shall be, so to say, a pulpit from which to instruct mankind. The mere biological details I can furnish about the monster I am inhabiting are of priceless value. And so, far from repining at what has happened, I confidently hope for the most brilliant of careers."

"You won't find it wearisome?" I asked sarcastically.

What irritated me more than anything was the extreme pomposity of his language. Nevertheless, it all rather disconcerted me. "What on earth, what, can this frivolous blockhead find to be so cocky about?" I muttered to myself. "He ought to be crying instead of being cocky."

"No!" he answered my observation sharply, "for I am full of great ideas, only now can I at leisure ponder over the amelioration of the lot of humanity. Truth and light will come forth now from the crocodile. I shall certainly develop a new economic theory of my own and I shall be proud of it—which I have hitherto been prevented from doing by my official duties and by trivial distractions. I shall refute everything and be a new Fourier. By the way, did you give Timofey Semyonitch the seven roubles?"

"Yes, out of my own pocket," I answered, trying to emphasise that fact in my voice.

"We will settle it," he answered superciliously. "I confidently expect my salary to be raised, for who should get a rise if not I? I am of the utmost service now. But to business, My wife?"

"You are, I suppose, inquiring after Elena Ivanovna?"

"My wife?" he shouted, this time in a positive squeal.

There was no help for it! Meekly, though gnashing my teeth, I told him how I had left Elena Ivanovna. He did not even hear me out.

"I have special plans in regard to her," he began impatiently. "If I am celebrated here, I wish her to be celebrated there. Savants, poets, philosophers, foreign mineralogists, statesmen, after conversing in the morning with me, will visit her salon in the evening. From next week onwards she must have an 'At Home' every evening. With my salary doubled, we shall have the means for entertaining, and as the entertainment must not go beyond tea and hired footmen—that's settled. Both here and there they will talk of me. I have long thirsted for an opportunity for being talked about, but could not attain it, fettered by my humble position and low grade in the service. And now all this has been attained by a simple gulp on the part of the crocodile. Every word of mine will

be listened to, every utterance will be thought over, repeated, printed. And I'll teach them what I am worth! They shall understand at last what abilities they have allowed to vanish in the entrails of a monster. 'This man might have been Foreign Minister or might have ruled a kingdom,' some will say. 'And that man did not rule a kingdom,' others will say. In what way am I inferior to a Garnier-Pagesishky or whatever they are called? My wife must be a worthy second—I have brains, she has beauty and charm. 'She is beautiful, and that is why she is his wife,' some will say. 'She is beautiful because she is his wife,' others will amend. To be ready for anything let Elena Ivanovna buy to-morrow the Encyclopedia edited by Andrey Kraevsky, that she may be able to converse on any topic. Above all, let her be sure to read the political leader in the Petersburg News, comparing it every day with the Voice. I imagine that the proprietor will consent to take me sometimes with the crocodile to my wife's brilliant salon. I will be in a tank in the middle of the magnificent drawing-room, and I will scintillate with witticisms which I will prepare in the morning. To the statesman I will impart my projects; to the poet I will speak in rhyme; with the ladies I can be amusing and charming without impropriety, since I shall be no danger to their husbands' peace of mind. To all the rest I shall serve as a pattern of resignation to fate and the will of Providence. I shall make my wife a brilliant literary lady; I shall bring her forward and explain her to the public; as my wife she must be full of the most striking virtues; and if they are right in calling Andrey Alexandrovitch our Russian Alfred de Musset, they will be still more right in calling her our Russian Yevgenia Tour."

I must confess that, although this wild nonsense was rather in Ivan Matveitch's habitual style, it did occur to me that he was in a fever and delirious. It was the same, everyday Ivan Matveitch, but magnified twenty times.

"My friend," I asked him, "are you hoping for a long life? Tell me, in fact, are you well? How do you eat, how do you sleep, how do you breathe? I am your friend, and you must admit that the incident is most unnatural, and consequently my curiosity is most natural."

"Idle curiosity and nothing else," he pronounced sententiously, "but you shall be satisfied. You ask how I am managing in the entrails of the monster? To begin with, the crocodile, to my amusement, turns out to be perfectly empty. His inside consists of a sort of huge empty sack made of gutta-percha, like the elastic goods sold in the Gorohovy Street, in the Morskaya, and, if I am not mistaken, in the Voznesensky Prospect. Otherwise, if you think of it, how could I find room?"

"Is it possible?" I cried, in a surprise that may well be understood. "Can the crocodile be perfectly empty?"

"Perfectly," Ivan Matveitch maintained sternly and impressively. "And in all probability, it is so constructed by the laws of Nature. The crocodile possesses nothing but jaws furnished with sharp teeth, and besides the jaws, a tail of considerable length—that is all, properly speaking. The middle part between these two extremities is an empty space enclosed by something of the nature of gutta-percha, probably really gutta-percha."

“But the ribs, the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the heart?” I interrupted quite angrily.

“There is nothing, absolutely nothing of all that, and probably there never has been. All that is the idle fancy of frivolous travellers. As one inflates an air-cushion, I am now with my person inflating the crocodile. He is incredibly elastic. Indeed, you might, as the friend of the family, get in with me if you were generous and self-sacrificing enough—and even with you here there would be room to spare. I even think that in the last resort I might send for Elena Ivanovna. However, this void, hollow formation of the crocodile is quite in keeping with the teachings of natural science. If, for instance, one had to construct a new crocodile, the question would naturally present itself. What is the fundamental characteristic of the crocodile? The answer is clear: to swallow human beings. How is one, in constructing the crocodile, to secure that he should swallow people? The answer is clearer still: construct him hollow. It was settled by physics long ago that Nature abhors a vacuum. Hence the inside of the crocodile must be hollow so that it may abhor the vacuum, and consequently swallow and so fill itself with anything it can come across. And that is the sole rational cause why every crocodile swallows men. It is not the same in the constitution of man: the emptier a man’s head is, for instance, the less he feels the thirst to fill it, and that is the one exception to the general rule. It is all as clear as day to me now. I have deduced it by my own observation and experience, being, so to say, in the very bowels of Nature, in its retort, listening to the throbbing of its pulse. Even etymology supports me, for the very word crocodile means voracity. Crocodile—crocodillo—is evidently an Italian word, dating perhaps from the Egyptian Pharaohs, and evidently derived from the French verb croquer, which means to eat, to devour, in general to absorb nourishment. All these remarks I intend to deliver as my first lecture in Elena Ivanovna’s salon when they take me there in the tank.”

“My friend, oughtn’t you at least to take some purgative?” I cried involuntarily.

“He is in a fever, a fever, he is feverish!” I repeated to myself in alarm.

“Nonsense!” he answered contemptuously. “Besides, in my present position it would be most inconvenient. I knew, though, you would be sure to talk of taking medicine.”

“But, my friend, how ... how do you take food now? Have you dined to-day?”

“No, but I am not hungry, and most likely I shall never take food again. And that, too, is quite natural; filling the whole interior of the crocodile I make him feel always full. Now he need not be fed for some years. On the other hand, nourished by me, he will naturally impart to me all the vital juices of his body; it is the same as with some accomplished coquettes who embed themselves and their whole persons for the night in raw steak, and then, after their morning bath, are fresh, supple, buxom and fascinating. In that way nourishing the crocodile, I myself obtain nourishment from him, consequently we mutually nourish one another. But as it is difficult even for a crocodile to digest a man like me, he must, no doubt, be conscious of a certain weight in his stomach—an organ which he does not, however, possess—and that is why, to avoid causing the creature suffering, I do not often turn over, and although I could

turn over I do not do so from humanitarian motives. This is the one drawback of my present position, and in an allegorical sense Timofey Semyonitch was right in saying I was lying like a log. But I will prove that even lying like a log—nay, that only lying like a log—one can revolutionise the lot of mankind. All the great ideas and movements of our newspapers and magazines have evidently been the work of men who were lying like logs; that is why they call them divorced from the realities of life—but what does it matter, their saying that! I am constructing now a complete system of my own, and you wouldn't believe how easy it is! You have only to creep into a secluded corner or into a crocodile, to shut your eyes, and you immediately devise a perfect millennium for mankind. When you went away this afternoon I set to work at once and have already invented three systems, now I am preparing the fourth. It is true that at first one must refute everything that has gone before, but from the crocodile it is so easy to refute it; besides, it all becomes clearer, seen from the inside of the crocodile. There are some drawbacks, though small ones, in my position, however; it is somewhat damp here and covered with a sort of slime; moreover, there is rather a smell of India-rubber exactly like the smell of my old galoshes. That is all, there are no other drawbacks."

"Ivan Matveitch," I interrupted, "all this is a miracle in which I can scarcely believe. And can you, can you intend never to dine again?"

"What trivial nonsense you are troubling about, you thoughtless, frivolous creature! I talk to you about great ideas, and you ... Understand that I am sufficiently nourished by the great ideas which light up the darkness in which I am enveloped. The good-natured proprietor has, however, after consulting the kindly Mutter, decided with her that they will every morning insert into the monster's jaws a bent metal tube, something like a whistle pipe, by means of which I can absorb coffee or broth with bread soaked in it. The pipe has already been bespoken in the neighbourhood, but I think this is superfluous luxury. I hope to live at least a thousand years, if it is true that crocodiles live so long, which, by the way—good thing I thought of it—you had better look up in some natural history to-morrow and tell me, for I may have been mistaken and have mixed it up with some excavated monster. There is only one reflection rather troubles me: as I am dressed in cloth and have boots on, the crocodile can obviously not digest me. Besides, I am alive, and so am opposing the process of digestion with my whole will power; for you can understand that I do not wish to be turned into what all nourishment turns into, for that would be too humiliating for me. But there is one thing I am afraid of: in a thousand years the cloth of my coat, unfortunately of Russian make, may decay, and then, left without clothing, I might perhaps, in spite of my indignation, begin to be digested; and though by day nothing would induce me to allow it, at night, in my sleep, when a man's will deserts him, I may be overtaken by the humiliating destiny of a potato, a pancake, or veal. Such an idea reduces me to fury. This alone is an argument for the revision of the tariff and the encouragement of the importation of English cloth, which is stronger and so will withstand Nature longer when one is swallowed by a crocodile. At the first opportunity I will impart this idea to some statesman and at the same time to the political writers on our Petersburg

dailies. Let them publish it abroad. I trust this will not be the only idea they will borrow from me. I foresee that every morning a regular crowd of them, provided with quarter roubles from the editorial office, will be flocking round me to seize my ideas on the telegrams of the previous day. In brief, the future presents itself to me in the rosiest light."

"Fever, fever!" I whispered to myself.

"My friend, and freedom?" I asked, wishing to learn his views thoroughly. "You are, so to speak, in prison, while every man has a right to the enjoyment of freedom."

"You are a fool," he answered. "Savages love independence, wise men love order; and if there is no order.

"Ivan Matveitch, spare me, please!"

"Hold your tongue and listen!" he squealed, vexed at my interrupting him. "Never has my spirit soared as now. In my narrow refuge there is only one thing that I dread—the literary criticisms of the monthlies and the loss of our satirical papers. I am afraid that thoughtless visitors, stupid and envious people and nihilists in general, may turn me into ridicule. But I will take measures. I am impatiently awaiting the response of the public to-morrow, and especially the opinion of the newspapers. You must tell me about the papers to-morrow."

"Very good; to-morrow I will bring a perfect pile of papers with me."

"To-morrow it is too soon to expect reports in the newspapers, for it will take four days for it to be advertised. But from to-day come to me every evening by the back way through the yard. I am intending to employ you as my secretary. You shall read the newspapers and magazines to me, and I will dictate to you my ideas and give you commissions. Be particularly careful not to forget the foreign telegrams. Let all the European telegrams be here every day. But enough; most likely you are sleepy by now. Go home, and do not think of what I said just now about criticisms: I am not afraid of it, for the critics themselves are in a critical position. One has only to be wise and virtuous and one will certainly get on to a pedestal. If not Socrates, then Diogenes, or perhaps both of them together—that is my future role among mankind."

So frivolously and boastfully did Ivan Matveitch hasten to express himself before me, like feverish weak-willed women who, as we are told by the proverb, cannot keep a secret. All that he told me about the crocodile struck me as most suspicious. How was it possible that the crocodile was absolutely hollow? I don't mind betting that he was bragging from vanity and partly to humiliate me. It is true that he was an invalid and one must make allowances for invalids; but I must frankly confess, I never could endure Ivan Matveitch. I have been trying all my life, from a child up, to escape from his tutelage and have not been able to! A thousand times over I have been tempted to break with him altogether, and every time I have been drawn to him again, as though I were still hoping to prove something to him or to revenge myself on him. A strange thing, this friendship! I can positively assert that nine-tenths of my friendship for him was made up of malice. On this occasion, however, we parted with genuine feeling.

“Your friend a very clever man!” the German said to me in an undertone as he moved to see me out; he had been listening all the time attentively to our conversation.

“Apropos,” I said, “while I think of it: how much would you ask for your crocodile in case anyone wanted to buy it?”

Ivan Matveitch, who heard the question, was waiting with curiosity for the answer; it was evident that he did not want the German to ask too little; anyway, he cleared his throat in a peculiar way on hearing my question.

At first the German would not listen—was positively angry.

“No one will dare my own crocodile to buy!” he cried furiously, and turned as red as a boiled lobster. “Me not want to sell the crocodile! I would not for the crocodile a million thalers take. I took a hundred and thirty thalers from the public to-day, and I shall to-morrow ten thousand take, and then a hundred thousand every day I shall take. I will not him sell.”

Ivan Matveitch positively chuckled with satisfaction. Controlling myself—for I felt it was a duty to my friend—I hinted coolly and reasonably to the crazy German that his calculations were not quite correct, that if he makes a hundred thousand every day, all Petersburg will have visited him in four days, and then there will be no one left to bring him roubles, that life and death are in God’s hands, that the crocodile may burst or Ivan Matveitch may fall ill and die, and so on and so on.

The German grew pensive.

“I will him drops from the chemist’s get,” he said, after pondering, “and will save your friend that he die not.”

“Drops are all very well,” I answered, “but consider, too, that the thing may get into the law courts. Ivan Matveitch’s wife may demand the restitution of her lawful spouse. You are intending to get rich, but do you intend to give Elena Ivanovna a pension?”

“No, me not intend,” said the German in stern decision.

“No, we not intend,” said the Mutter, with positive malignancy.

“And so would it not be better for you to accept something now, at once, a secure and solid though moderate sum, than to leave things to chance? I ought to tell you that I am inquiring simply from curiosity.”

The German drew the Mutter aside to consult with her in a corner where there stood a case with the largest and ugliest monkey of his collection.

“Well, you will see!” said Ivan Matveitch.

As for me, I was at that moment burning with the desire, first, to give the German a thrashing, next, to give the Mutter an even sounder one, and, thirdly, to give Ivan Matveitch the soundest thrashing of all for his boundless vanity. But all this paled beside the answer of the rapacious German.

After consultation with the Mutter he demanded for his crocodile fifty thousand roubles in bonds of the last Russian loan with lottery voucher attached, a brick house in Gorohovy Street with a chemist’s shop attached, and in addition the rank of Russian colonel.

“You see!” Ivan Matveitch cried triumphantly. “I told you so! Apart from this last senseless desire for the rank of a colonel, he is perfectly right, for he fully understands the present value of the monster he is exhibiting. The economic principle before everything!”

“Upon my word!” I cried furiously to the German. “But what should you be made a colonel for? What exploit have you performed? What service have you done? In what way have you gained military glory? You are really crazy!”

“Crazy!” cried the German, offended. “No, a person very sensible, but you very stupid! I have a colonel deserved for that I have a crocodile shown and in him a live Hofrath sitting! And a Russian can a crocodile not show and a live Hofrath in him sitting! Me extremely clever man and much wish colonel to be!”

“Well, good-bye, then, Ivan Matveitch!” I cried, shaking with fury, and I went out of the crocodile room almost at a run.

I felt that in another minute I could not have answered for myself. The unnatural expectations of these two blockheads were insupportable. The cold air refreshed me and somewhat moderated my indignation. At last, after spitting vigorously fifteen times on each side, I took a cab, got home, undressed and flung myself into bed. What vexed me more than anything was my having become his secretary. Now I was to die of boredom there every evening, doing the duty of a true friend! I was ready to beat myself for it, and I did, in fact, after putting out the candle and pulling up the bedclothes, punch myself several times on the head and various parts of my body. That somewhat relieved me, and at last I fell asleep fairly soundly, in fact, for I was very tired. All night long I could dream of nothing but monkeys, but towards morning I dreamt of Elena Ivanovna.

Chapter 4

The monkeys I dreamed about, I suppose, because they were shut up in the case at the German’s; but Elena Ivanovna was a different story.

I may as well say at once, I loved the lady, but I make haste—post-haste—to make a qualification. I loved her as a father, neither more nor less. I judge that because I often felt an irresistible desire to kiss her little head or her rosy cheek. And though I never carried out this inclination, I would not have refused even to kiss her lips. And not merely her lips, but her teeth, which always gleamed so charmingly like two rows of pretty, well-matched pearls when she laughed. She laughed extraordinarily often. Ivan Matveitch in demonstrative moments used to call her his “darling absurdity”—a name extremely happy and appropriate. She was a perfect sugarplum, and that was all one could say of her. Therefore I am utterly at a loss to understand what possessed Ivan Matveitch to imagine his wife as a Russian Yevgenia Tour? Anyway, my dream, with the exception of the monkeys, left a most pleasant impression upon me, and going over all the incidents of the previous day as I drank my morning cup of tea, I resolved

to go and see Elena Ivanovna at once on my way to the office—which, indeed, I was bound to do as the friend of the family.

In a tiny little room out of the bedroom—the so-called little drawing-room, though their big drawing-room was little too—Elena Ivanovna was sitting, in some half-transparent morning wrapper, on a smart little sofa before a little tea-table, drinking coffee out of a little cup in which she was dipping a minute biscuit. She was ravishingly pretty, but struck me as being at the same time rather pensive.

“Ah, that’s you, naughty man!” she said, greeting me with an absent-minded smile. “Sit down, feather-head, have some coffee. Well, what were you doing yesterday? Were you at the masquerade?”

“Why, were you? I don’t go, you know. Besides, yesterday I was visiting our captive—I sighed and assumed a pious expression as I took the coffee.

“Whom? ... What captive? ... Oh, yes! Poor fellow! Well, how is he—bored? Do you know ... I wanted to ask you ... I suppose I can ask for a divorce now?”

“A divorce!” I cried in indignation and almost spilled the coffee. “It’s that swarthy fellow,” I thought to myself bitterly.

There was a certain swarthy gentleman with little moustaches who was something in the architectural fine, and who came far too often to see them, and was extremely skilful in amusing Elena Ivanovna. I must confess I hated him and there was no doubt that he had succeeded in seeing Elena Ivanovna yesterday either at the masquerade or even here, and putting all sorts of nonsense into her head.

“Why,” Elena Ivanovna rattled off hurriedly, as though it were a lesson she had learnt, “if he is going to stay on in the crocodile, perhaps not come back all his life, while I sit waiting for him here! A husband ought to live at home, and not in a crocodile... .”

“But this was an unforeseen occurrence,” I was beginning, in very comprehensible agitation.

“Oh, no, don’t talk to me, I won’t listen, I won’t listen,” she cried, suddenly getting quite cross. “You are always against me, you wretch! There’s no doing anything with you, you will never give me any advice! Other people tell me that I can get a divorce because Ivan Matveitch will not get his salary now.”

“Elena Ivanovna! is it you I hear!” I exclaimed pathetically. “What villain could have put such an idea into your head? And divorce on such a trivial ground as a salary is quite impossible. And poor Ivan Matveitch, poor Ivan Matveitch is, so to speak, burning with love for you even in the bowels of the monster. What’s more, he is melting away with love like a lump of sugar. Yesterday while you were enjoying yourself at the masquerade, he was saying that he might in the last resort send for you as his lawful spouse to join him in the entrails of the monster, especially as it appears the crocodile is exceedingly roomy, not only able to accommodate two but even three persons... .”

And then I told her all that interesting part of my conversation the night before with Ivan Matveitch.

“What, what!” she cried, in surprise. “You want me to get into the monster too, to be with Ivan Matveitch? What an idea! And how am I to get in there, in my hat and crinoline? Heavens, what foolishness! And what should I look like while I was getting into it, and very likely there would be someone there to see me! It’s absurd! And what should I have to eat there? And ... and ... and what should I do there when ... Oh, my goodness, what will they think of next? ... And what should I have to amuse me there? ... You say there’s a smell of gutta-percha? And what should I do if we quarrelled—should we have to go on staying there side by side? Foo, how horrid!”

“I agree, I agree with all those arguments, my sweet Elena Ivanovna,” I interrupted, striving to express myself with that natural enthusiasm which always overtakes a man when he feels the truth is on his side. “But one thing you have not appreciated in all this, you have not realised that he cannot live without you if he is inviting you there; that is a proof of love, passionate, faithful, ardent love... . You have thought too little of his love, dear Elena Ivanovna!”

“I won’t, I won’t, I won’t hear anything about it!” waving me off with her pretty little hand with glistening pink nails that had just been washed and polished. “Horrid man! You will reduce me to tears! Get into it yourself, if you like the prospect. You are his friend, get in and keep him company, and spend your life discussing some tedious science... .”

“You are wrong to laugh at this suggestion”—I checked the frivolous woman with dignity—“Ivan Matveitch has invited me as it is. You, of course, are summoned there by duty; for me, it would be an act of generosity. But when Ivan Matveitch described to me last night the elasticity of the crocodile, he hinted very plainly that there would be room not only for you two, but for me also as a friend of the family, especially if I wished to join you, and therefore ...”

“How so, the three of us?” cried Elena Ivanovna, looking at me in surprise. “Why, how should we ... are we going to be all three there together? Ha-ha-ha! How silly you both are! Ha-ha-ha! I shall certainly pinch you all the time, you wretch! Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha!”

And falling back on the sofa, she laughed until she cried. All this—the tears and the laughter—were so fascinating that I could not resist rushing eagerly to kiss her hand, which she did not oppose, though she did pinch my ears lightly as a sign of reconciliation.

Then we both grew very cheerful, and I described to her in detail all Ivan Matveitch’s plans. The thought of her evening receptions and her salon pleased her very much.

“Only I should need a great many new dresses,” she observed, “and so Ivan Matveitch must send me as much of his salary as possible and as soon as possible. Only ... only I don’t know about that,” she added thoughtfully. “How can he be brought here in the tank? That’s very absurd. I don’t want my husband to be carried about in a tank. I should feel quite ashamed for my visitors to see it.... I don’t want that, no, I don’t.”

“By the way, while I think of it, was Timofey Semyonitch here yesterday?”

“Oh, yes, he was; he came to comfort me, and do you know, we played cards all the time. He played for sweetmeats, and if I lost he was to kiss my hands. What a wretch he is! And only fancy, he almost came to the masquerade with me, really!”

“He was carried away by his feelings!” I observed. “And who would not be with you, you charmer?”

“Oh, get along with your compliments! Stay, I’ll give you a pinch as a parting present. I’ve learnt to pinch awfully well lately. Well, what do you say to that? By the way, you say Ivan Matveitch spoke several times of me yesterday?”

“N-no, not exactly.... I must say he is thinking more now of the fate of humanity, and wants ...”

“Oh, let him! You needn’t go on! I am sure it’s fearfully boring. I’ll go and see him some time. I shall certainly go tomorrow. Only not to-day; I’ve got a headache, and besides, there will be such a lot of people there to-day.... They’ll say, ‘That’s his wife,’ and I shall feel ashamed.... Good-bye. You will be ... there this evening, won’t you?”

“To see him, yes. He asked me to go and take him the papers.”

“That’s capital. Go and read to him. But don’t come and see me to-day. I am not well, and perhaps I may go and see someone. Good-bye, you naughty man.”

“It’s that swarthy fellow is going to see her this evening,” I thought.

At the office, of course, I gave no sign of being consumed by these cares and anxieties. But soon I noticed some of the most progressive papers seemed to be passing particularly rapidly from hand to hand among my colleagues, and were being read with an extremely serious expression of face. The first one that reached me was the News-sheet, a paper of no particular party but humanitarian in general, for which it was regarded with contempt among us, though it was read. Not without surprise I read in it the following paragraph:

“Yesterday strange rumours were circulating among the spacious ways and sumptuous buildings of our vast metropolis. A certain well-known bon-vivant of the highest society, probably weary of the cuisine at Borel’s and at the X. Club, went into the Arcade, into the place where an immense crocodile recently brought to the metropolis is being exhibited, and insisted on its being prepared for his dinner. After bargaining with the proprietor he at once set to work to devour him (that is, not the proprietor, a very meek and punctilious German, but his crocodile), cutting juicy morsels with his penknife from the living animal, and swallowing them with extraordinary rapidity. By degrees the whole crocodile disappeared into the vast recesses of his stomach, so that he was even on the point of attacking an ichneumon, a constant companion of the crocodile, probably imagining that the latter would be as savoury. We are by no means opposed to that new article of diet with which foreign gourmands have long been familiar. We have, indeed, predicted that it would come. English lords and travellers make up regular parties for catching crocodiles in Egypt, and consume the back of the monster cooked like beef-steak, with mustard, onions and potatoes. The French followed in the train of Lesseps prefer the paws baked in hot ashes, which they do, however, in opposition to the English, who laugh at them. Probably both ways would be appreciated among

us. For our part, we are delighted at a new branch of industry, of which our great and varied fatherland stands pre-eminently in need. Probably before a year is out crocodiles will be brought in hundreds to replace this first one, lost in the stomach of a Petersburg gourmand. And why should not the crocodile be acclimatised among us in Russia? If the water of the Neva is too cold for these interesting strangers, there are ponds in the capital and rivers and lakes outside it. Why not breed crocodiles at Pargolovo, for instance, or at Pavlovsk, in the Presnensky Ponds and in Samoteka in Moscow? While providing agreeable, wholesome nourishment for our fastidious gourmands, they might at the same time entertain the ladies who walk about these ponds and instruct the children in natural history. The crocodile skin might be used for making jewel-cases, boxes, cigar-cases, pocket-books, and possibly more than one thousand saved up in the greasy notes that are peculiarly beloved of merchants might be laid by in crocodile skin. We hope to return more than once to this interesting topic.”

Though I had foreseen something of the sort, yet the reckless inaccuracy of the paragraph overwhelmed me. Finding no one with whom to share my impression, I turned to Prohor Savvitch who was sitting opposite to me, and noticed that the latter had been watching me for some time, while in his hand he held the Voice as though he were on the point of passing it to me. Without a word he took the News-sheet from me, and as he handed me the Voice he drew a line with his nail against an article to which he probably wished to call my attention. This Prohor Savvitch was a very queer man: a taciturn old bachelor, he was not on intimate terms with any of us, scarcely spoke to anyone in the office, always had an opinion of his own about everything, but could not bear to impart it to anyone. He lived alone. Hardly anyone among us had ever been in his lodging.

This was what I read in the Voice.

“Everyone knows that we are progressive and humanitarian and want to be on a level with Europe in this respect. But in spite of all our exertions and the efforts of our paper we are still far from maturity, as may be judged from the shocking incident which took place yesterday in the Arcade and which we predicted long ago. A foreigner arrives in the capital bringing with him a crocodile which he begins exhibiting in the Arcade. We immediately hasten to welcome a new branch of useful industry such as our powerful and varied fatherland stands in great need of. Suddenly yesterday at four o’clock in the afternoon a gentleman of exceptional stoutness enters the foreigner’s shop in an intoxicated condition, pays his entrance money, and immediately without any warning leaps into the jaws of the crocodile, who was forced, of course, to swallow him, if only from an instinct of self-preservation, to avoid being crushed. Tumbling into the inside of the crocodile, the stranger at once dropped asleep. Neither the shouts of the foreign proprietor, nor the lamentations of his terrified family, nor threats to send for the police made the slightest impression. Within the crocodile was heard nothing but laughter and a promise to flay him (sic), though the poor mammal, compelled to swallow such a mass, was vainly shedding tears. An uninvited guest is worse than a Tartar. But in spite of the proverb the insolent visitor would not leave. We do not know

how to explain such barbarous incidents which prove our lack of culture and disgrace us in the eyes of foreigners. The recklessness of the Russian temperament has found a fresh outlet. It may be asked what was the object of the uninvited visitor? A warm and comfortable abode? But there are many excellent houses in the capital with very cheap and comfortable lodgings, with the Neva water laid on, and a staircase lighted by gas, frequently with a hall-porter maintained by the proprietor. We would call our readers' attention to the barbarous treatment of domestic animals: it is difficult, of course, for the crocodile to digest such a mass all at once, and now he lies swollen out to the size of a mountain, awaiting death in insufferable agonies. In Europe persons guilty of inhumanity towards domestic animals have long been punished by law. But in spite of our European enlightenment, in spite of our European pavements, in spite of the European architecture of our houses, we are still far from shaking off our time-honoured traditions.

"Though the houses are new, the conventions are old."

And, indeed, the houses are not new, at least the staircases in them are not. We have more than once in our paper alluded to the fact that in the Petersburg Side in the house of the merchant Lukyanov the steps of the wooden staircase have decayed, fallen away, and have long been a danger for Afimya Skapidarov, a soldier's wife who works in the house, and is often obliged to go up the stairs with water or armfuls of wood. At last our predictions have come true: yesterday evening at half-past eight Afimya Skapidarov fell down with a basin of soup and broke her leg. We do not know whether Lukyanov will mend his staircase now, Russians are often wise after the event, but the victim of Russian carelessness has by now been taken to the hospital. In the same way we shall never cease to maintain that the house-porters who clear away the mud from the wooden pavement in the Viborgsky Side ought not to spatter the legs of passers-by, but should throw the mud up into heaps as is done in Europe," and so on, and so on.

"What's this?" I asked in some perplexity, looking at Prohor Savvitch. "What's the meaning of it?"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, upon my word! Instead of pitying Ivan Matveitch, they pity the crocodile!"

"What of it? They have pity even for a beast, a mammal. We must be up to Europe, mustn't we? They have a very warm feeling for crocodiles there too. He-he-he!"

Saying this, queer old Prohor Savvitch dived into his papers and would not utter another word.

I stuffed the Voice and the News-sheet into my pocket and collected as many old copies of the newspapers as I could find for Ivan Matveitch's diversion in the evening, and though the evening was far off, yet on this occasion I slipped away from the office early to go to the Arcade and look, if only from a distance, at what was going on there, and to listen to the various remarks and currents of opinion. I foresaw that there would be a regular crush there, and turned up the collar of my coat to meet it. I somehow

felt rather shy—so unaccustomed are we to publicity. But I feel that I have no right to report my own prosaic feelings when faced with this remarkable and original incident.

The Dream of a Ridiculous Man

1

I am a ridiculous person. Now they call me a madman. That would be a promotion if it were not that I remain as ridiculous in their eyes as before. But now I do not resent it, they are all dear to me now, even when they laugh at me - and, indeed, it is just then that they are particularly dear to me. I could join in their laughter - not exactly at myself, but through affection for them, if I did not feel so sad as I look at them. Sad because they do not know the truth and I do know it. Oh, how hard it is to be the only one who knows the truth! But they won't understand that. No, they won't understand it.

In old days I used to be miserable at seeming ridiculous. Not seeming, but being. I have always been ridiculous, and I have known it, perhaps, from the hour I was born. Perhaps from the time I was seven years old I knew I was ridiculous. Afterwards I went to school, studied at the university, and, do you know, the more I learned, the more thoroughly I understood that I was ridiculous. So that it seemed in the end as though all the sciences I studied at the university existed only to prove and make evident to me as I went more deeply into them that I was ridiculous. It was the same with life as it was with science. With every year the same consciousness of the ridiculous figure I cut in every relation grew and strengthened. Everyone always laughed at me. But not one of them knew or guessed that if there were one man on earth who knew better than anybody else that I was absurd, it was myself, and what I resented most of all was that they did not know that. But that was my own fault; I was so proud that nothing would have ever induced me to tell it to anyone. This pride grew in me with the years; and if it had happened that I allowed myself to confess to anyone that I was ridiculous, I believe that I should have blown out my brains the same evening. Oh, how I suffered in my early youth from the fear that I might give way and confess it to my schoolfellows. But since I grew to manhood, I have for some unknown reason become calmer, though I realised my awful characteristic more fully every year. I say 'unknown', for to this day I cannot tell why it was. Perhaps it was owing to the terrible misery that was growing in my soul through something which was of more consequence than anything else about me: that something was the conviction that had come upon me that nothing in the world mattered. I had long had an inkling of it, but the full realisation came last year almost suddenly. I suddenly felt that it was all the same to me whether the world existed or whether there had never been anything at all: I began to feel with all my being that there was nothing existing. At first I fancied that many things had existed in the past, but afterwards I guessed that there never had been anything in the past either, but that it had only seemed so for some reason. Little by little I guessed that there would be nothing in the future either. Then I left off being

angry with people and almost ceased to notice them. Indeed this showed itself even in the pettiest trifles: I used, for instance, to knock against people in the street. And not so much from being lost in thought: what had I to think about? I had almost given up thinking by that time; nothing mattered to me. If at least I had solved my problems! Oh, I had not settled one of them, and how many there were! But I gave up caring about anything, and all the problems disappeared.

And it was after that that I found out the truth. I learnt the truth last November - on the third of November, to be precise - and I remember every instant since. It was a gloomy evening, one of the gloomiest possible evenings. I was going home at about eleven o'clock, and I remember that I thought that the evening could not be gloomier. Even physically. Rain had been falling all day, and it had been a cold, gloomy, almost menacing rain, with, I remember, an unmistakable spite against mankind. Suddenly between ten and eleven it had stopped, and was followed by a horrible dampness, colder and damper than the rain, and a sort of steam was rising from everything, from every stone in the street, and from every by-lane if one looked down it as far as one could. A thought suddenly occurred to me, that if all the street lamps had been put out it would have been less cheerless, that the gas made one's heart sadder because it lighted it all up. I had had scarcely any dinner that day, and had been spending the evening with an engineer, and two other friends had been there also. I sat silent - I fancy I bored them. They talked of something rousing and suddenly they got excited over it. But they did not really care, I could see that, and only made a show of being excited. I suddenly said as much to them. "My friends," I said, "you really do not care one way or the other." They were not offended, but they laughed at me. That was because I spoke without any note of reproach, simply because it did not matter to me. They saw it did not, and it amused them.

As I was thinking about the gas lamps in the street I looked up at the sky. The sky was horribly dark, but one could distinctly see tattered clouds, and between them fathomless black patches. Suddenly I noticed in one of these patches a star, and began watching it intently. That was because that star had given me an idea: I decided to kill myself that night. I had firmly determined to do so two months before, and poor as I was, I bought a splendid revolver that very day, and loaded it. But two months had passed and it was still lying in my drawer; I was so utterly indifferent that I wanted to seize a moment when I would not be so indifferent - why, I don't know. And so for two months every night that I came home I thought I would shoot myself. I kept waiting for the right moment. And so now this star gave me a thought. I made up my mind that it should certainly be that night. And why the star gave me the thought I don't know.

And just as I was looking at the sky, this little girl took me by the elbow. The street was empty, and there was scarcely anyone to be seen. A cabman was sleeping in the distance in his cab. It was a child of eight with a kerchief on her head, wearing nothing but a wretched little dress all soaked with rain, but I noticed her wet broken shoes and I recall them now. They caught my eye particularly. She suddenly pulled me by

the elbow and called me. She was not weeping, but was spasmodically crying out some words which could not utter properly, because she was shivering and shuddering all over. She was in terror about something, and kept crying, "Mammy, mammy!" I turned facing her, I did not say a word and went on; but she ran, pulling at me, and there was that note in her voice which in frightened children means despair. I know that sound. Though she did not articulate the words, I understood that her mother was dying, or that something of the sort was happening to them, and that she had run out to call someone, to find something to help her mother. I did not go with her; on the contrary, I had an impulse to drive her away. I told her first to go to a policeman. But clasping her hands, she ran beside me sobbing and gasping, and would not leave me. Then I stamped my foot and shouted at her. She called out "Sir! sir!.." but suddenly abandoned me and rushed headlong across the road. Some other passerby appeared there, and she evidently flew from me to him.

I mounted up to my fifth storey. I have a room in a flat where there are other lodgers. My room is small and poor, with a garret window in the shape of a semicircle. I have a sofa covered with American leather, a table with books on it, two chairs and a comfortable arm-chair, as old as old can be, but of the good old-fashioned shape. I sat down, lighted the candle, and began thinking. In the room next to mine, through the partition wall, a perfect Bedlam was going on. It had been going on for the last three days. A retired captain lived there, and he had half a dozen visitors, gentlemen of doubtful reputation, drinking vodka and playing stoss with old cards. The night before there had been a fight, and I know that two of them had been for a long time engaged in dragging each other about by the hair. The landlady wanted to complain, but she was in abject terror of the captain. There was only one other lodger in the flat, a thin little regimental lady, on a visit to Petersburg, with three little children who had been taken ill since they came into the lodgings. Both she and her children were in mortal fear of the captain, and lay trembling and crossing themselves all night, and the youngest child had a sort of fit from fright. That captain, I know for a fact, sometimes stops people in the Nevsky Prospect and begs. They won't take him into the service, but strange to say (that's why I am telling this), all this month that the captain has been here his behaviour has caused me no annoyance. I have, of course, tried to avoid his acquaintance from the very beginning, and he, too, was bored with me from the first; but I never care how much they shout the other side of the partition nor how many of them there are in there: I sit up all night and forget them so completely that I do not even hear them. I stay awake till daybreak, and have been going on like that for the last year. I sit up all night in my arm-chair at the table, doing nothing. I only read by day. I sit - don't even think; ideas of a sort wander through my mind and I let them come and go as they will. A whole candle is burnt every night. I sat down quietly at the table, took out the revolver and put it down before me. When I had put it down I asked myself, I remember, "Is that so?" and answered with complete conviction, "It is." That is, I shall shoot myself. I knew that I should shoot myself that night for certain,

but how much longer I should go on sitting at the table I did not know. And no doubt I should have shot myself if it had not been for that little girl.

2

You see, though nothing mattered to me, I could feel pain, for instance. If anyone had stuck me it would have hurt me. It was the same morally: if anything very pathetic happened, I should have felt pity just as I used to do in old days when there were things in life that did matter to me. I had felt pity that evening. I should have certainly helped a child. Why, then, had I not helped the little girl? Because of an idea that occurred to me at the time: when she was calling and pulling at me, a question suddenly arose before me and I could not settle it. The question was an idle one, but I was vexed. I was vexed at the reflection that if I were going to make an end of myself that night, nothing in life ought to have mattered to me. Why was it that all at once I did not feel a strange pang, quite incongruous in my position. Really I do not know better how to convey my fleeting sensation at the moment, but the sensation persisted at home when I was sitting at the table, and I was very much irritated as I had not been for a long time past. One reflection followed another. I saw clearly that so long as I was still a human being and not nothingness, I was alive and so could suffer, be angry and feel shame at my actions. So be it. But if I am going to kill myself, in two hours, say, what is the little girl to me and what have I to do with shame or with anything else in the world? I shall turn into nothing, absolutely nothing. And can it really be true that the consciousness that I shall completely cease to exist immediately and so everything else will cease to exist, does not in the least affect my feeling of pity for the child nor the feeling of shame after a contemptible action? I stamped and shouted at the unhappy child as though to say - not only I feel no pity, but even if I behave inhumanly and contemptibly, I am free to, for in another two hours everything will be extinguished. Do you believe that that was why I shouted that? I am almost convinced of it now. It seemed clear to me that life and the world somehow depended upon me now. I may almost say that the world now seemed created for me alone: if I shot myself the world would cease to be at least for me. I say nothing of its being likely that nothing will exist for anyone when I am gone, and that as soon as my consciousness is extinguished the whole world will vanish too and become void like a phantom, as a mere appurtenance of my consciousness, for possibly all this world and all these people are only me myself. I remember that as I sat and reflected, I turned all these new questions that swarmed one after another quite the other way, and thought of something quite new. For instance, a strange reflection suddenly occurred to me, that if I had lived before on the moon or on Mars and there had committed the most disgraceful and dishonourable action and had there been put to such shame and ignominy as one can only conceive and realise in dreams, in nightmares, and if, finding myself afterwards on earth, I were able to retain the memory of what I had done on the other planet and at the same time knew that I should never, under any circumstances, return there, then looking from the earth to

the moon - should I care or not? Should I feel shame for that action or not? These were idle and superfluous questions for the revolver was already lying before me, and I knew in every fibre of my being that it would happen for certain, but they excited me and I raged. I could not die now without having first settled something. In short, the child had saved me, for I put off my pistol shot for the sake of these questions. Meanwhile the clamour had begun to subside in the captain's room: they had finished their game, were settling down to sleep, and meanwhile were grumbling and languidly winding up their quarrels. At that point, I suddenly fell asleep in my chair at the table - a thing which had never happened to me before. I dropped asleep quite unawares.

Dreams, as we all know, are very queer things: some parts are presented with appalling vividness, with details worked up with the elaborate finish of jewellery, while others one gallops through, as it were, without noticing them at all, as, for instance, through space and time. Dreams seem to be spurred on not by reason but by desire, not by the head but by the heart, and yet what complicated tricks my reason has played sometimes in dreams, what utterly incomprehensible things happen to it! Mr brother died five years ago, for instance. I sometimes dream of him; he takes part in my affairs, we are very much interested, and yet all through my dream I quite know and remember that my brother is dead and buried. How is it that I am not surprised that, though he is dead, he is here beside me and working with me? Why is it that my reason fully accepts it? But enough. I will begin about my dream. Yes, I dreamed a dream, my dream of the third of November. They tease me now, telling me it was only a dream. But does it matter whether it was a dream or reality, if the dream made known to me the truth? If once one has recognized the truth and seen it, you know that it is the truth and that there is no other and there cannot be, whether you are asleep or awake. Let it be a dream, so be it, but that real life of which you make so much I had meant to extinguish by suicide, and my dream, my dream - oh, it revealed to me a different life, renewed, grand and full of power!

Listen.

3

I have mentioned that I dropped asleep unawares and even seemed to be still reflecting on the same subjects. I suddenly dreamt that I picked up the revolver and aimed it straight at my heart - my heart, and not my head; and I had determined beforehand to fire at my head, at my right temple. After aiming at my chest I waited a second or two, and suddenly my candle, my table, and the wall in front of me began moving and heaving. I made haste to pull the trigger.

In dreams you sometimes fall from a height, or are stabbed, or beaten, but you never feel pain unless, perhaps, you really bruise yourself against the bedstead, then you feel pain and almost always wake up from it. It was the same in my dream. I did not feel any pain, but it seemed as though with my shot everything within me was shaken and everything was suddenly dimmed, and it grew horribly black around me. I seemed to

be blinded, and it benumbed, and I was lying on something hard, stretched on my back; I saw nothing, and could not make the slightest movement. People were walking and shouting around me, the captain bawled, the landlady shrieked - and suddenly another break and I was being carried in a closed coffin. And I felt how the coffin was shaking and reflected upon it, and for the first time the idea struck me that I was dead, utterly dead, I knew it and had no doubt of it, I could neither see nor move and yet I was feeling and reflecting. But I was soon reconciled to the position, and as one usually does in a dream, accepted the facts without disputing them.

And now I was buried in the earth. They all went away, I was left alone, utterly alone. I did not move. Whenever before I had imagined being buried the one sensation I associated with the grave was that of damp and cold. So now I felt that I was very cold, especially the tips of my toes, but I felt nothing else.

I lay still, strange to say I expected nothing, accepting without dispute that a dead man had nothing to expect. But it was damp. I don't know how long a time passed - whether an hour or several days, or many days. But all at once a drop of water fell on my closed left eye, making its way through the coffin lid; it was followed a minute later by a second, then a minute later by a third - and so on, regularly every minute. There was a sudden glow of profound indignation in my heart, and I suddenly felt in it a pang of physical pain. "That's my wound," I thought; "that's the bullet.." And drop after drop every minute kept falling on my closed eyelid. And all at once, not with my voice, but with my entire being, I called upon the power that was responsible for all that was happening to me: "Whoever you may be, if you exist, and if anything more rational than what is happening here is possible, suffer it to be here now. But if you are revenging yourself upon me for my senseless suicide by the hideousness and absurdity of this subsequent existence, then let me tell you that no torture could ever equal the contempt which I shall go on dumbly feeling, though my martyrdom may last a million years!"

I made this appeal and held my peace. There was a full minute of unbroken silence and again another drop fell, but I knew with infinite unshakable certainty that everything would change immediately. And behold my grave suddenly was rent asunder, that is, I don't know whether it was opened or dug up, but I was caught up by some dark and unknown being and we found ourselves in space. I suddenly regained my sight. It was the dead of night, and never, never had there been such darkness. We were flying through space far away from the earth. I did not question the being who was taking me; I was proud and waited. I assured myself that I was not afraid, and was thrilled with ecstasy at the thought that I was not afraid. I do not know how long we were flying, I cannot imagine; it happened as it always does in dreams when you skip over space and time, and the laws of thought and existence, and only pause upon the points for which the heart yearns. I remember that I suddenly saw in the darkness a star. "Is that Sirius?" I asked impulsively, though I had not meant to ask questions.

"No, that is the star you saw between the clouds when you were coming home," the being who was carrying me replied.

I knew that it had something like a human face. Strange to say, I did not like that being, in fact I felt an intense aversion for it. I had expected complete non-existence, and that was why I had put a bullet through my heart. And here I was in the hands of a creature not human, of course, but yet living, existing. "And so there is life beyond the grave," I thought with the strange frivolity one has in dreams. But in its inmost depth my heart remained unchanged. "And if I have got to exist again," I thought, "and live once more under the control of some irresistible power, I won't be vanquished and humiliated."

"You know that I am afraid of you and despise me for that," I said suddenly to my companion, unable to refrain from the humiliating question which implied a confession, and feeling my humiliation stab my heart as with a pin. He did not answer my question, but all at once I felt that he was not even despising me, but was laughing at me and had no compassion for me, and that our journey had an unknown and mysterious object that concerned me only. Fear was growing in my heart. Something was mutely and painfully communicated to me from my silent companion, and permeated my whole being. We were flying through dark, unknown space. I had for some time lost sight of the constellations familiar to my eyes. I knew that there were stars in the heavenly spaces the light of which took thousands or millions of years to reach the earth. Perhaps we were already flying through those spaces. I expected something with a terrible anguish that tortured my heart. And suddenly I was thrilled by a familiar feeling that stirred me to the depths: I suddenly caught sight of our sun! I knew that it could not be our sun, that gave life to our earth, and that we were an infinite distance from our sun, but for some reason I knew in my whole being that it was a sun exactly like ours, a duplicate of it. A sweet, thrilling feeling resounded with ecstasy in my heart: the kindred power of the same light which had given me light stirred an echo in my heart and awakened it, and I had a sensation of life, the old life of the past for the first time since I had been in the grave.

"But if that is the sun, if that is exactly the same as our sun," I cried, "where is the earth?"

And my companion pointed to a star twinkling in the distance with an emerald light. We were flying straight towards it.

"And are such repetitions possible in the universe? Can that be the law of Nature?.. And if that is an earth there, can it be just the same earth as ours.. just the same, as poor, as unhappy, but precious and beloved for ever, arousing in the most ungrateful of her children the same poignant love for her that we feel for our earth?" I cried out, shaken by irresistible, ecstatic love for the old familiar earth which I had left. The image of the poor child whom I had repulsed flashed through my mind.

"You shall see it all," answered my companion, and there was a note of sorrow in his voice.

But we were rapidly approaching the planet. It was growing before my eyes; I could already distinguish the ocean, the outline of Europe; and suddenly a feeling of a great and holy jealousy glowed in my heart.

“How can it be repeated and what for? I love and can love only that earth which I have left, stained with my blood, when, in my ingratitude, I quenched my life with a bullet in my heart. But I have never, never ceased to love that earth, and perhaps on the very night I parted from it I loved it more than ever. Is there suffering upon this new earth? On our earth we can only love with suffering and through suffering. We cannot love otherwise, and we know of no other sort of love. I want suffering in order to love. I long, I thirst, this very instant, to kiss with tears the earth that I have left, and I don't want, I won't accept life on any other!”

But my companion had already left me. I suddenly, quite without noticing how, found myself on this other earth, in the bright light of a sunny day, fair as paradise. I believe I was standing on one of the islands that make up on our globe the Greek archipelago, or on the coast of the mainland facing that archipelago. Oh, everything was exactly as it is with us, only everything seemed to have a festive radiance, the splendour of some great, holy triumph attained at last. The caressing sea, green as emerald, splashed softly upon the shore and kissed it with manifest, almost conscious love. The tall, lovely trees stood in all the glory of their blossom, and their innumerable leaves greeted me, I am certain, with their soft, caressing rustle and seemed to articulate words of love. The grass glowed with bright and fragrant flowers. Birds were flying in flocks in the air, and perched fearlessly on my shoulders and arms and joyfully struck me with their darling, fluttering wings. And at last I saw and knew the people of this happy land. That came to me of themselves, they surrounded me, kissed me. The children of the sun, the children of their sun - oh, how beautiful they were! Never had I seen on our own earth such beauty in mankind. Only perhaps in our children, in their earliest years, one might find, some remote faint reflection of this beauty. The eyes of these happy people shone with a clear brightness. Their faces were radiant with the light of reason and fullness of a serenity that comes of perfect understanding, but those faces were gay; in their words and voices there was a note of childlike joy. Oh, from the first moment, from the first glance at them, I understood it all! It was the earth untarnished by the Fall; on it lived people who had not sinned. They lived just in such a paradise as that in which, according to all the legends of mankind, our first parents lived before they sinned; the only difference was that all this earth was the same paradise. These people, laughing joyfully, thronged round me and caressed me; they took me home with them, and each of them tried to reassure me. Oh, they asked me no questions, but they seemed, I fancied, to know everything without asking, and they wanted to make haste to smoothe away the signs of suffering from my face.

4

And do you know what? Well, granted that it was only a dream, yet the sensation of the love of those innocent and beautiful people has remained with me for ever, and I feel as though their love is still flowing out to me from over there. I have seen them myself, have known them and been convinced; I loved them, I suffered for them afterwards.

Oh, I understood at once even at the time that in many things I could not understand them at all; as an up-to-date Russian progressive and contemptible Petersburger, it struck me as inexplicable that, knowing so much, they had, for instance, no science like our. But I soon realised that their knowledge was gained and fostered by intuitions different from those of us on earth, and that their aspirations, too, were quite different. They desired nothing and were at peace; they did not aspire to knowledge of life as we aspire to understand it, because their lives were full. But their knowledge was higher and deeper than ours; for our science seeks to explain what life is, aspires to understand it in order to teach others how to love, while they without science knew how to live; and that I understood, but I could not understand their knowledge. They showed me their trees, and I could not understand the intense love with which they looked at them; it was as though they were talking with creatures like themselves. And perhaps I shall not be mistaken if I say that they conversed with them. Yes, they had found their language, and I am convinced that the trees understood them. They looked at all Nature like that - at the animals who lived in peace with them and did not attack them, but loved them, conquered by their love. They pointed to the stars and told me something about them which I could not understand, but I am convinced that they were somehow in touch with the stars, not only in thought, but by some living channel. Oh, these people did not persist in trying to make me understand them, they loved me without that, but I knew that they would never understand me, and so I hardly spoke to them about our earth. I only kissed in their presence the earth on which they lived and mutely worshipped them themselves. And they saw that and let me worship them without being abashed at my adoration, for they themselves loved much. They were not unhappy on my account when at times I kissed their feet with tears, joyfully conscious of the love with which they would respond to mine. At times I asked myself with wonder how it was they were able never to offend a creature like me, and never once to arouse a feeling of jealousy or envy in me? Often I wondered how it could be that, boastful and untruthful as I was, I never talked to them of what I knew - of which, of course, they had no notion - that I was never tempted to do so by a desire to astonish or even to benefit them.

They were as gay and sportive as children. They wandered about their lovely woods and copses, they sang their lovely songs; their fair was light - the fruits of their trees, the honey from their woods, and the milk of the animals who loved them. The work they did for food and raiment was brief and not labourious. They loved and begot children, but I never noticed in them the impulse of that cruel sensuality which overcomes almost every man on this earth, all and each, and is the source of almost every sin of mankind on earth. They rejoiced at the arrival of children as new beings to share their happiness. There was no quarrelling, no jealousy among them, and they did not even know what the words meant. Their children were the children of all, for they all made up one family. There was scarcely any illness among them, though there was death; but their old people died peacefully, as though falling asleep, giving blessings and smiles to those who surrounded them to take their last farewell with bright and lovely smiles.

I never saw grief or tears on those occasions, but only love, which reached the point of ecstasy, but a calm ecstasy, made perfect and contemplative. One might think that they were still in contact with the departed after death, and that their earthly union was not cut short by death. They scarcely understood me when I questioned them about immortality, but evidently they were so convinced of it without reasoning that it was not for them a question at all. They had no temples, but they had a real living and uninterrupted sense of oneness with the whole of the universe; they had no creed, but they had a certain knowledge that when their earthly joy had reached the limits of earthly nature, then there would come for them, for the living and for the dead, a still greater fullness of contact with the whole of the universe. They looked forward to that moment with joy, but without haste, not pining for it, but seeming to have a foretaste of it in their hearts, of which they talked to one another.

In the evening before going to sleep they liked singing in musical and harmonious chorus. In those songs they expressed all the sensations that the parting day had given them, sang its glories and took leave of it. They sang the praises of nature, of the sea, of the woods. They liked making songs about one another, and praised each other like children; they were the simplest songs, but they sprang from their hearts and went to one's heart. And not only in their songs but in all their lives they seemed to do nothing but admire one another. It was like being in love with each other, but an all-embracing, universal feeling.

Some of their songs, solemn and rapturous, I scarcely understood at all. Though I understood the words I could never fathom their full significance. It remained, as it were, beyond the grasp of my mind, yet my heart unconsciously absorbed it more and more. I often told them that I had had a presentiment of it long before, that this joy and glory had come to me on our earth in the form of a yearning melancholy that at times approached insufferable sorrow; that I had had a foreknowledge of them all and of their glory in the dreams of my heart and the visions of my mind; that often on our earth I could not look at the setting sun without tears.. that in my hatred for the men of our earth there was always a yearning anguish: why could I not hate them without loving them? why could I not help forgiving them? and in my love for them there was a yearning grief: why could I not love them without hating them? They listened to me, and I saw they could not conceive what I was saying, but I did not regret that I had spoken to them of it: I knew that they understood the intensity of my yearning anguish over those whom I had left. But when they looked at me with their sweet eyes full of love, when I felt that in their presence my heart, too, became as innocent and just as theirs, the feeling of the fullness of life took my breath away, and I worshipped them in silence.

Oh, everyone laughs in my face now, and assures me that one cannot dream of such details as I am telling now, that I only dreamed or felt one sensation that arose in my heart in delirium and made up the details myself when I woke up. And when I told them that perhaps it really was so, my God, how they shouted with laughter in my face, and what mirth I caused! Oh, yes, of course I was overcome by the mere sensation

of my dream, and that was all that was preserved in my cruelly wounded heart; but the actual forms and images of my dream, that is, the very ones I really saw at the very time of my dream, were filled with such harmony, were so lovely and enchanting and were so actual, that on awakening I was, of course, incapable of clothing them in our poor language, so that they were bound to become blurred in my mind; and so perhaps I really was forced afterwards to make up the details, and so of course to distort them in my passionate desire to convey some at least of them as quickly as I could. But on the other hand, how can I help believing that it was all true? It was perhaps a thousand times brighter, happier and more joyful than I describe it. Granted that I dreamed it, yet it must have been real. You know, I will tell you a secret: perhaps it was not a dream at all! For then something happened so awful, something so horribly true, that it could not have been imagined in a dream. My heart may have originated the dream, but would my heart alone have been capable of originating the awful event which happened to me afterwards? How could I alone have invented it or imagined it in my dream? Could my petty heart and fickle, trivial mind have risen to such a revelation of truth? Oh, judge for yourselves: hitherto I have concealed it, but now I will tell the truth. The fact is that I.. corrupted them all!

5

Yes, yes, it ended in my corrupting them all! How it could come to pass I do not know, but I remember it clearly. The dream embraced thousands of years and left in me only a sense of the whole. I only know that I was the cause of their sin and downfall. Like a vile trichina, like a germ of the plague infecting whole kingdoms, so I contaminated all this earth, so happy and sinless before my coming. They learnt to lie, grew fond of lying, and discovered the charm of falsehood. Oh, at first perhaps it began innocently, with a jest, coquetry, with amorous play, perhaps indeed with a germ, but that germ of falsity made its way into their hearts and pleased them. Then sensuality was soon begotten, sensuality begot jealousy, jealousy - cruelty.. Oh, I don't know, I don't remember; but soon, very soon the first blood was shed. They marvelled and were horrified, and began to be split up and divided. They formed into unions, but it was against one another. Reproaches, upbraidings followed. They came to know shame, and shame brought them to virtue. The conception of honour sprang up, and every union began waving its flags. They began torturing animals, and the animals withdrew from them into the forests and became hostile to them. They began to struggle for separation, for isolation, for individuality, for mine and thine. They began to talk in different languages. They became acquainted with sorrow and loved sorrow; they thirsted for suffering, and said that truth could only be attained through suffering. Then science appeared. As they became wicked they began talking of brotherhood and humanitarianism, and understood those ideas. As they became criminal, they invented justice and drew up whole legal codes in order to observe it, and to ensure their being kept, set up a guillotine. They hardly remembered what they had lost, in fact refused

to believe that they had ever been happy and innocent. They even laughed at the possibility of this happiness in the past, and called it a dream. They could not even imagine it in definite form and shape, but, strange and wonderful to relate, though they lost all faith in their past happiness and called it a legend, they so longed to be happy and innocent once more that they succumbed to this desire like children, made an idol of it, set up temples and worshipped their own idea, their own desire; though at the same time they fully believed that it was unattainable and could not be realised, yet they bowed down to it and adored it with tears! Nevertheless, if it could have happened that they had returned to the innocent and happy condition which they had lost, and if someone had shown it to them again and had asked them whether they wanted to go back to it, they would certainly have refused. They answered me: "We may be deceitful, wicked and unjust, we know it and weep over it, we grieve over it; we torment and punish ourselves more perhaps than that merciful Judge Who will judge us and whose Name we know not. But we have science, and by the means of it we shall find the truth and we shall arrive at it consciously. Knowledge is higher than feeling, the consciousness of life is higher than life. Science will give us wisdom, wisdom will reveal the laws, and the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness."

That is what they said, and after saying such things everyone began to love himself better than anyone else, and indeed they could not do otherwise. All became so jealous of the rights of their own personality that they did their very utmost to curtail and destroy them in others, and made that the chief thing in their lives. Slavery followed, even voluntary slavery; the weak eagerly submitted to the strong, on condition that the latter aided them to subdue the still weaker. Then there were saints who came to these people, weeping, and talked to them of their pride, of their loss of harmony and due proportion, of their loss of shame. They were laughed at or pelted with stones. Holy blood was shed on the threshold of the temples. Then there arose men who began to think how to bring all people together again, so that everybody, while still loving himself best of all, might not interfere with others, and all might live together in something like a harmonious society. Regular wars sprang up over this idea. All the combatants at the same time firmly believed that science, wisdom and the instinct of self-preservation would force men at last to unite into a harmonious and rational society; and so, meanwhile, to hasten matters, 'the wise' endeavoured to exterminate as rapidly as possible all who were 'not wise' and did not understand their idea, that the latter might not hinder its triumph. But the instinct of self-preservation grew rapidly weaker; there arose men, haughty and sensual, who demanded all or nothing. In order to obtain everything they resorted to crime, and if they did not succeed - to suicide. There arose religions with a cult of non-existence and self-destruction for the sake of the everlasting peace of annihilation. At last these people grew weary of their meaningless toil, and signs of suffering came into their faces, and then they proclaimed that suffering was a beauty, for in suffering alone was there meaning. They glorified suffering in their songs. I moved about among them, wringing my hands and weeping over them, but I loved them perhaps more than in old days when there was no suffering

in their faces and when they were innocent and so lovely. I loved the earth they had polluted even more than when it had been a paradise, if only because sorrow had come to it. Alas! I always loved sorrow and tribulation, but only for myself, for myself; but I wept over them, pitying them. I stretched out my hands to them in despair, blaming, cursing and despising myself. I told them that all this was my doing, mine alone; that it was I had brought them corruption, contamination and falsity. I besought them to crucify me, I taught them how to make a cross. I could not kill myself, I had not the strength, but I wanted to suffer at their hands. I yearned for suffering, I longed that my blood should be drained to the last drop in these agonies. But they only laughed at me, and began at last to look upon me as crazy. They justified me, they declared that they had only got what they wanted themselves, and that all that now was could not have been otherwise. At last they declared to me that I was becoming dangerous and that they should lock me up in a madhouse if I did not hold my tongue. Then such grief took possession of my soul that my heart was wrung, and I felt as though I were dying; and then.. then I awoke.

It was morning, that is, it was not yet daylight, but about six o'clock. I woke up in the same arm-chair; my candle had burnt out; everyone was asleep in the captain's room, and there was a stillness all round, rare in our flat. First of all I leapt up in great amazement: nothing like this had ever happened to me before, not even in the most trivial detail; I had never, for instance, fallen asleep like this in my arm-chair. While I was standing and coming to myself I suddenly caught sight of my revolver lying loaded, ready - but instantly I thrust it away! Oh, now, life, life! I lifted up my hands and called upon eternal truth, not with words, but with tears; ecstasy, immeasurable ecstasy flooded my soul. Yes, life and spreading the good tidings! Oh, I at that moment resolved to spread the tidings, and resolved it, of course, for my whole life. I go to spread the tidings, I want to spread the tidings - of what? Of the truth, for I have seen it, have seen it with my own eyes, have seen it in all its glory.

And since then I have been preaching! Moreover I love all those who laugh at me more than any of the rest. Why that is so I do not know and cannot explain, but so be it. I am told that I am vague and confused, and if I am vague and confused now, what shall I be later on? It is true indeed: I am vague and confused, and perhaps as time goes on I shall be more so. And of course I shall make many blunders before I find out how to preach, that is, find out what words to say, what things to do, for it is a very difficult task. I see all that as clear as daylight, but, listen, who does not make mistakes? An yet, you know, all are making for the same goal, all are striving in the same direction anyway, from the sage to the lowest robber, only by different roads. It is an old truth, but this is what is new: I cannot go far wrong. For I have seen the truth; I have seen and I know that people can be beautiful and happy without losing the power of living on earth. I will not and cannot believe that evil is the normal condition of mankind. And it is just this faith of mine that they laugh at. But how can I help believing it? I have seen the truth - it is not as though I had invented it with my mind, I have seen it, seen it, and the living image of it has filled my soul for ever. I

have seen it in such full perfection that I cannot believe that it is impossible for people to have it. And so how can I go wrong? I shall make some slips no doubt, and shall perhaps talk in second-hand language, but not for long: the living image of what I saw will always be with me and will always correct and guide me. Oh, I am full of courage and freshness, and I will go on and on if it were for a thousand years! Do you know, at first I meant to conceal the fact that I corrupted them, but that was a mistake - that was my first mistake! But truth whispered to me that I was lying, and preserved me and corrected me. But how to establish paradise - I don't know, because I do not know how to put it into words. After my dream I lost command of words. All the chief words, anyway, the most necessary ones. But never mind, I shall go and I shall keep talking, I won't leave off, for anyway I have seen it with my own eyes, though I cannot describe what I saw. But the scoffers do not understand that. It was a dream, they say, delirium, hallucination. Oh! As though that meant so much! And they are so proud! A dream! What is a dream? And is not our life a dream? I will say more. Suppose that this paradise will never come to pass (that I understand), yet I shall go on preaching it. And yet how simple it is: in one day, in one hour everything could be arranged at once! The chief thing is to love others like yourself, that's the chief thing, and that's everything; nothing else is wanted - you will find out at once how to arrange it all. And yet it's an old truth which has been told and retold a billion times - but it has not formed part of our lives! The consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness - that is what one must contend against. And I shall. If only everyone wants it, it can be arranged at once.

And I tracked down that little girl.. and I shall go on and on!

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