A Morning of a Landed Proprietor

Leo Tolstoy

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Tolstoy lived on his family estate until 1851, when his brother, an artillery officer, convinced him to visit Caucasia. Charmed by the life there, he joined an artillery regiment and in 1853 was attached to the army of the Danube during the Crimean campaign. During this time he wrote The Morning of a Landed Proprietor, which he intended to be a novel. However, the work was left unfinished and was only rediscovered after Tolstoy's death.

I

Prince Nekhlyudov was nineteen years old when he came from the Third Course of the university to pass his vacation on his estate, and remained there by himself all summer. In the autumn he wrote in his unformed childish hand to his aunt, Countess Byeloryetski, who, in his opinion, was his best friend and the most brilliant woman in the world. The letter was in French, and ran as follows?:

"Dear Aunty?: — I have made a resolution on which the fate of my whole life must depend. I will leave the university in order to devote myself to country life, because I feel that I was born for it. For God's sake, dear aunty, do not laugh at me! You will say that I am young; and, indeed, I may still be a child, but this does not prevent me from feeling what my calling is, and from wishing to do good, and loving it.

"As I have written you before, I found affairs in an indescribable disorder. Wishing to straighten them out, and to understand them, I discovered that the main evil lay in the most pitiable, poverty-stricken condition of the peasants, and that the evil was such that it could be mended by labour and patience alone. If you could only see two of my peasants, David and Ivan, and the lives which they lead with their families, I am sure that the mere sight of these unfortunates would convince you more than all I might say to explain my intention to you.

"Is it not my sacred and direct duty to care for the welfare of these seven hundred men, for whom I shall be held responsible before God? Is it not a sin to abandon them to the arbitrariness of rude elders and managers, for plans of enjoyment and ambition? And why should I look in another sphere for opportunities of being useful and doing good, when such a noble, brilliant, and immediate duty is open to me?

"I feel myself capable of being a good landed proprietor; and, in order to be one, as I understand this word, one needs neither a university diploma, nor ranks, which you are so anxious I should obtain. Dear aunty, make no ambitious plans for me! Accustom yourself to the thought that I have chosen an entirely different path, which is, nevertheless, good, and which, I feel, will bring me happiness. I have thought much, very much, about my future duty, have written out rules for my actions, and, if God will only grant me life and strength, shall succeed in my undertaking.

"Do not show this letter to my brother Vanya. I am afraid of his ridicule; he is in the habit of directing me, and I of submitting to him. Vanya will understand my intention, even though he may not approve of it."

The countess answered with the following French letter.

"Your letter, dear Dmitri, proved nothing to me, except that you have a beautiful soul, which fact I have never doubted. But, dear friend, our good qualities do us more

harm in life than our bad ones. I will not tell you that you are committing a folly, and that your con- duct mortifies me; I will try to influence you by arguments alone. Let us reason, my friend. You say that you feel a calling for country life, that you wish to make your peasants happy, and that you hope to be a good proprietor. (1) I must tell you that we feel a calling only after we have made a mistake in it; (2) that it is easier to make yourself happy than others; and (3) that in order to be a good proprietor, one must be a cold and severe man, which you will scarcely be, however much you may try to dissemble.

"You consider your reflections incontrovertible, and even accept them as rules of conduct; but at my age, my dear, we do not believe in reflections and rules, but only in experience; and experience tells me that your plans are childish. I am not far from fifty, and I have known many worthy people, but I have never heard of a young man of good family and of ability burying himself in the country, for the sake of doing good. You always wished to appear original, but your originality is nothing but superfluous self-love. And, my dear, you had better choose well-trodden paths! They lead more easily to success, and success, though you may not need it as success, is necessary in order to have the possibility of doing the good which you wish.

"The poverty of a few peasants is a necessary evil, or an evil which may be remedied without forgetting all your obligations to society, to your relatives, and to your- self. With your intellect, with your heart and love of virtue, there is not a career in which you would not obtain success; but at least choose one which would be worthy of you and would do you honour.

"I believe in your sincerity, when you say that you have no ambition; but you are deceiving yourself. Ambition is a virtue at your years and with your means; but it becomes a defect and a vulgarity, when a man is no longer able to satisfy that passion. You, too, will experience it, if you will not be false to your intention. Good-bye, dear Mitya! It seems to me that I love you even more for your insipid, but noble and magnanimous, plan. Do as you think best, but I confess I cannot agree with you."

Having received this letter, the young man long meditated over it; finally, having decided that even a brilliant woman may make mistakes, he petitioned for a discharge from the university, and for ever remained in the country.

II

The young proprietor, as he wrote to his aunt, had formed rules of action for his estate, and all his life and occupations were scheduled by hours, days, and months. Sunday was appointed for the reception of petitioners, domestic and manorial serfs, for the inspection of the farms of the needy peasants, and for the distribution of supplies with the consent of the Commune, which met every Sunday evening, and was to decide what aid each was to receive. More than a year passed in these occupations, and the young man was not entirely a novice, either in the practical or in the theoretical knowledge of farming.

It was a clear June Sunday when Nekhlyudov, after drinking his coffee, and running through a chapter of "Maison Eustique," with a note-book and a package of bills in the pocket of his light overcoat, walked out of the large, columnated, and terraced country-house, in which he occupied a small room on the lower story, and directed his way, over the neglected, weed-grown paths of the old English garden, to the village that was situated on both sides of the highway. Nekhlyudov was a tall, slender young man with long, thick, wavy, auburn hair, with a bright sparkle in his black eyes, with red cheeks, and ruby lips over which the first down of youth was just appearing. In all his movements and in his gait were to be seen strength, energy, and the good-natured self-satisfaction of youth. The peasants were returning in variegated crowds from church?; old men, girls, children, women with their suckling babes, in gala attire, were scattering to their huts, bowing low to their master, and making a circuit around him. When Nekhlyudov reached the street, he stopped, drew his note-book from his pocket, and on the last page, which was covered with a childish handwriting, read several peasant names, with notes. "Ivan Churis asked for fork posts," he read, and, proceeding in the street, walked up to the gate of the second hut on the right.

Churis's dwelling consisted of a half-rotten log square, musty at the corners, bending to one side, and so sunken in the ground that one broken, red, slanting window, with its battered shutter, and another smaller window, stopped up with a bundle of flax, were to be seen right over the dung-heap. A plank vestibule, with a decayed threshold and low door?; another smaller square, more rickety and lower than the vestibule?; a gate, and a wicker shed clung to the main hut. All that had at one time been covered by one uneven thatch?; but now the black, rotting straw hung only over the eaves, so that in places the framework and the rafters could be seen. In front of the yard was a well, with a dilapidated box, with a remnant of a post and wheel, and a dirty puddle made by the tramping of the cattle, in which some ducks were splashing. Near the well stood two ancient, cracked, and broken willows, with scanty, pale green leaves. Under

one of these willows, which witnessed to the fact that at some time in the past some one had tried to beautify the spot, sat an eight-year-old blonde little maiden, with another two-year-old girl crawling on the ground. A pup, which was wagging his tail near them, ran headlong under the gate, the moment he noticed the master, and from there burst into a frightened, quivering bark.

"Is Ivan at home?" asked Nekhlyudov.

The older girl was almost petrified at this question, and was opening her eyes wider and wider, but did not answer; the smaller one opened her mouth, and was getting ready to cry. A small old woman, in a torn checkered dress, girded low with an old, reddish belt, looked from behind the door, but did not answer. Nekhlyudov walked up to the vestibule, and repeated his question.

"At home, benefactor," said the old woman, in a quivering voice, bowing low, and agitated with terror.

When Nekhlyudov greeted her, and passed through the vestibule into the narrow yard, the old woman put her hand to her chin, walked up to the door, and, without turning her eyes away from the master, began slowly to shake her head.

The yard looked wretched. Here and there lay old blackened manure that had not been removed; on the manure-heap lay carelessly a musty block, a fork, and two harrows. The sheds about the yard, under which stood, on one side, a plough and a cart without a wheel, and lay a mass of empty, useless beehives in confusion, were nearly all unthatched, and one side had fallen in, so that the girders no longer rested on the fork posts, but on the manure.

Churis, striking with the edge and head of his axe, was trying to remove a wicker fence which the roof had crushed. Ivan Churis was a man about fifty years of age. He was below the average height. The features of his tanned, oblong face, encased in an auburn beard with streaks of gray, and thick hair of the same colour, were fair and expressive. His dark blue, half-shut eyes shone with intelligence and careless good nature. A small, regular mouth, sharply defined under a scanty blond moustache, expressed, whenever he smiled, calm self-confidence and a certain derisive indifference to his surroundings. From the coarseness of his skin, deep wrinkles, sharply defined veins on his neck, face, and hands, from his unnatural stoop, and crooked, arch-like legs, it could be seen that all his life had passed in extremely hard labour, which was beyond his strength. His attire consisted of white hempen drawers, with blue patches over his knees, and a similar dirty shirt, which was threadbare on his back and arms. The shirt was girded low by a thin ribbon, from which hung a brass key.

"God aid you!" said the master, entering the yard.

Churis looked around him, and again took up his work. After an energetic effort he straightened out the wicker work from under the shed?; then only he struck the axe into a block, pulled his shirt in shape, and walked into the middle of the yard.

"I wish you a pleasant holiday, your Grace!" he said, making a low obeisance, and shaking his hair.

"Thank you, my dear. I just came to look at your farm," said Nekhlyudov, with childish friendliness and embarrassment, examining the peasant's garb. "Let me see for what you need the fork posts that you asked of me at the meeting of the Commune."

"The forks? Why, your Grace, you know what forks are for. I just wanted to give a little support to it, — you may see for yourself. Only a few days ago a corner fell in, and by God's kindness there were no animals in it at the time. It barely hangs together," said Churis, contemptuously surveying his unthatched, crooked, and dilapidated sheds. "When it comes to that, there is not a decent girder, rafter, or box case in them. Where am I to get the timber? You know that yourself."

"Then why do you ask for five forks when one shed is all fallen in, and the others soon will fall? What you need is not forks, but rafters, girders, posts, — all new ones," said the master, obviously parading his familiarity with the subject.

Churis was silent.

"What you need, therefore, is timber and not forks. You ought to have said so."

"Of course, I need that, but where am I to get it? It won't do to go for everything to the manor. What kind of peasants should we be if we were permitted to go to the manor to ask your Grace for everything? But if you will permit me to take the oak posts that are lying uselessly in the threshing-floor of the manor," he said, bowing, and resting now on one foot, now on the other, "I might manage, by changing some, and cutting down others, to fix something with that old material."

"With the old material? But you say yourself that everything of yours is old and rotten. To-day one corner is falling in, to-morrow another, and day after to-morrow a third. So, if you are to do anything about it, you had better put in everything new, or else your labour will be lost. Tell me, what is your opinion? Can your buildings last through the winter, or not?"

"Who knows?"

"No, what do you think? Will they fall in, or not?"

Churis meditated for a moment.

"It will all fall in," he said, suddenly.

"Well, you see, you ought to have said at the meeting that you have to get the whole property mended, and not that you need a few forks. I am only too glad to aid you."

"We are very well satisfied with your favour," answered Churis, incredulously, without looking at the master. "If you would only favour me with four logs and the forks, I might manage it myself; and whatever useless timber I shall take out, might be used for supports in the hut."

"Is your hut in a bad condition, too?"

"My wife and I are expecting every moment to be crushed," Churis answered, with indifference. "Lately a strut from the ceiling struck down my old woman."

"What? Struck down?"

"Yes, struck her down, your Grace. It just whacked her on the back so that she was left for dead until the evening."

"Well, did she get over it?"

"She did get over it, but she is ailng now. Although, of course, she has been sickly since her birth."

"What, are you sick?" Nekhlyudov asked the old woman, who continued to stand in the door, and began to groan the moment her husband spoke of her.

"Something catches right in here, that's all," she answered, pointing to her dirty, emaciated bosom.

"Again!" angrily exclaimed the young master, shrugging his shoulders. "There you are, sick, and you did not come to the hospital. That is what the hospital was made for. Have you not been told of it?"

"They told us, benefactor, but we have had no time?: there is the manorial work, and the house, and the children, — I am all alone! There is nobody to help me —"

III

Nekhlyudov walked into the hut. The uneven, grimy walls were in the kitchen corner covered with all kinds of rags and clothes, while the corner of honour was literally red with cockroaches that swarmed about the images and benches. In the middle of this black, ill-smelling, eighteen-foot hut there was a large crack in the ceiling, and although supports were put in two places, the ceiling was so bent that it threatened to fall down any minute.

"Yes, the hut is in a very bad shape," said the master, gazing at the face of Churis, who, it seemed, did not wish to begin a conversation about this matter.

"It will kill us, and the children, too," the old woman kept saying, in a tearful voice, leaning against the oven under the hanging beds.

"Don't talk!" sternly spoke Churis, and, turning to the master, with a light, barely perceptible smile, which had formed itself under his quivering moustache, he said?: "I am at a loss, your Grace, what to do with this hut. I have braced it and mended it, but all in vain."

"How are we to pass a winter in it? Oh, oh, oh!" said the woman.

"Now, if I could put in a few braces and fix a new strut," her husband interrupted her, with a calm, businesslike expression, "and change one rafter, we might be able to get through another winter. We might be able to live here, only it will be all cut up by the braces?; and if anybody should touch it, not a thing would be left alive?; but it might do, as long as it stands and holds together," he concluded, evidently satisfied with his argument.

Nekhlyiidov was annoyed and pained because Churis had come to such a state without having asked his aid before, whereas he had not once since his arrival refused the peasants anything, and had requested that everybody should come to him directly if they needed anything. He was even vexed at the peasant, angrily shrugged his shoulders, and frowned?; but the sight of wretchedness about him, and Churis's calm and self-satisfied countenance amidst this wretchedness, changed his vexation into a melancholy, hopeless feeling.

"Now, Ivan, why did you not tell me before?" he re- marked reproachfully, sitting down on a dirty, crooked bench.

"I did not dare to, your Grace," answered Churis, with the same scarcely perceptible smile, shuffling his black, bare feet on the uneven dirt floor?; but he said it so boldly and quietly that it was hard to believe that he had been afraid to approach the master.

"We are peasants?: how dare we — "began the woman, sobbing.

"Stop your prattling," Churis again turned to her.

"You cannot live in this hut, that is impossible!" said Nekhlyudov, after a moment's silence. "This is what we will do, my friend —"

"I am listening, sir," Churis interrupted him.

"Have you seen the stone huts, with the hollow walls, that I have had built in the new hamlet?"

"Of course I have, sir," replied Churis, showing his good white teeth in his smile. "We marvelled a great deal as they were building them, — wonderful huts! The boys made sport of them, saying that the hollow walls were storehouses, to keep rats away. Fine huts!" he concluded, with an expression of sarcastic incredulity, shaking his head. "Regular jails!"

"Yes, excellent huts, dry and warm, and not so likely to take fire," retorted the master, with a frown on his youthful face, obviously dissatisfied with the peasant's sarcasm.

"No question about that, your Grace, fine huts."

"Now, one of those huts is all ready. It is a thirty- foot hut, with vestibules and a storeroom, ready for occupancy. I will let you have it at your price?; you will pay me when you can," said the master, with a self-satisfied smile, which he could not keep back, at the thought that he was doing a good act. "You will break down your old hut," he continued?; "it will do yet for a barn. We will transfer the outhouses in some way. There is excellent water there. I will cut a garden for you out of the cleared ground, and also will lay out a piece of land for you in three parcels. You will be happy there. Well, are you not satisfied?" asked Nekhlyudov, when he noticed that the moment he mentioned changing quarters Churis stood in complete immobility and, without a smile, gazed at the floor.

"It is your Grace's will," he answered, without lifting his eyes.

The old woman moved forward, as if touched to the quick, and was about to say something, but her husband anticipated her.

"It is your Grace's will," he repeated, firmly, and at the same time humbly, looking at his master, and shaking his hair, "but it will not do for us to live in the new hamlet."

"Why?"

"No, your Grace! We are badly off here, but if you transfer us there, we sha'n't stay peasants long. What kind of peasants can we be there? It is impossible to live there, saving your Grace!"

"Why not?"

"We shall be completely ruined, your Grace!"

"But why is it impossible to have there?"

"What life will it be? You judge for yourself?: the place has never been inhabited?; the quality of the water is unknown?; there is no place to drive the cattle to. Our hemp plots have been manured here since time immemorial, but how is it there? Why, there is nothing but barrenness there. Neither fences, nor kilns, nor sheds, — nothing. We shall be ruined, your Grace, if you insist upon our going there, completely ruined! It

is a new place, an unknown place — "he repeated, with a melancholy, but firm, shake of his head.

Nekhlyudov began to prove to the peasant that the transfer would be very profitable to him, that fences and sheds would be put up, that the water was good there, and so forth?; but Churis's dull silence embarrassed him, and he felt that he was not saying what he ought to. Churls did not reply?; but when the master grew silent, he remarked, with a light smile, that it would be best to settle the old domestic servants and Aleshka the fool in that hamlet, to keep a watch on the grain.

"Now that would be excellent," he remarked, and smiled again. "It is a useless affair, your Grace!"

"What of it if it is an uninhabited place?" Nekhlyudov expatiated, patiently. "Here was once an uninhabited place, and people are living in it now. And so you had better settle there in a lucky hour — Yes, you had better settle there —"

"But, your Grace, there is no comparison!" Churis answered with animation, as if afraid that the master might have taken his final resolution. "Here is a cheery place, a gay place, and we are used to it, and to the road, and the pond, where the women wash the clothes and the cattle go to water?; and all our peasant surroundings have been here since time immemorial, — the threshing-floor, the garden, and the willows that my parents have set out. My grandfather and father have given their souls to God here, and I ask nothing else, your Grace, but to be able to end my days here. If it should be your favour to mend the hut, we shall be greatly obliged to your Grace?; if not, we shall manage to end our days in the old hut. Let us pray to the Lord all our days," he continued, making low obeisances. "Drive us not from our nest, sir."

While Churis was speaking, ever louder and louder sobs were heard under the beds, in the place where his wife stood, and when her husband pronounced the word "sir," his wife suddenly rushed out and, weeping, threw herself down at the master's feet?:

"Do not ruin us, benefactor! You are our father, you are our mother! What business have we to move? We are old and lonely people. Both God and you — "She burst out in tears.

Nekhlyudov jumped up from his seat, and wanted to raise the old woman, but she struck the earth floor with a certain voluptuousness of despair, and pushed away the master's hand.

"What are you doing? Get up, please! If you do not wish, you do not have to," he said, waving his hands, and retreating to the door.

When Nekhlyudov seated himself again on the bench, and silence reigned in the hut, interrupted only by the blubbering of the old woman, who had again removed herself to her place under the beds, and was there wiping off her tears with the sleeve of her shirt, the young proprietor comprehended what meaning the dilapidated wretched hut, the broken well with the dirty puddle, the rotting stables and barns, and the split willows that could be seen through the crooked window, had for Churis and his wife, and a heavy, melancholy feeling came over him, and he was embarrassed.

"Why did you not say at the meeting of last week that you needed a hut? I do not know now how to help you. I told you all at the first meeting that I was settled in the estate, and that I meant to devote my life to you?; that I was prepared to deprive myself of everything in order to see you contented and happy, — and I vow before God that I will keep my word," said the youthful proprietor, unconscious of the fact that such ebullitions were unable to gain the confidence of any man, least of all a Russian, who loves not words but deeds, and who is averse to the expression of feelings, however beautiful.

The simple-hearted young man was so happy in the sentiment which he was experiencing that he could not help pouring it out.

Churis bent his head sideways and, blinking slowly, listened with forced attention to his master as to a man who must be listened to, though he may say things that are not very agreeable and have not the least reference to the listener.

"But I cannot give everybody all they ask of me. If I did not refuse anybody who asks me for timber, I should soon be left with none myself, and would be unable to give to him who is really in need of it. That is why I have put aside a part of the forest to be used for mending the peasant buildings, and have turned it over to the Commune. That forest is no longer mine, but yours, the peasants', and I have no say about it, but the Commune controls it as it sees fit. Come this evening to the meeting?; I will tell the Commune of your need?: if it resolves to give you a new hut, it is well, but I have no forest. I am anxious to help you with all my heart?; but if you do not want to move, the Commune will have to arrange it for you, and not I. Do you understand me?"

"We are very well satisfied with your favour," answered the embarrassed Churis. "If you will deign to let me have a little timber for the outbuildings, I will manage one way or other. The Commune? Well, we know —"

"No, you had better come."

"Your servant, sir. I shall be there. Why should I not go? Only I will not ask the Commune for anything."

IV

The young proprietor evidently wanted to ask the peasant people something else; he did not rise from the bench, and with indecision looked now at Churis, and now into the empty, cold oven.

"Have you had your dinner?" he finally asked them.

Under Churis's moustache played a sarcastic smile, as though it amused him to hear the master ask such foolish questions?; he did not answer.

"What dinner, benefactor?" said the old woman, with a deep sigh. "We have eaten some bread. That was our dinner. There was no time to-day to go for some sorrel, and so there was nothing to make soup with, and what kvas there was I gave to the children."

"To-day we have a hunger fast, your Grace," Churis chimed in, glossing his wife's words. "Bread and onions, — such is our peasant food. Thank the Lord I have some little bread?; by your favour it has lasted until now?; but the rest of our peasants have not even that. The onions are a failure this year. We sent a few days ago to Mikhaylo the gardener, but he asks a penny a bunch, and we are too poor for that. We have not been to church since Easter, and we have no money with which to buy a candle for St. Nicholas."

Nekhlyudov had long known, not by hearsay, nor trusting the words of others, but by experience, all the extreme wretchedness of his peasants?; but all that reality was so incompatible with his education, his turn of mind, and manner of life, that he involuntarily forgot the truth?; and every time when he was reminded of it in a vivid and palpable manner, as now, his heart felt intolerably heavy and sad, as though he were tormented by the recollection of some unatoned crime which he had committed.

"Why are you so poor?" he said, involuntarily expressing his thought.

"What else are we to be, your Grace, if not poor? You know yourself what kind of soil we have?: clay and clumps, and we must have angered God, for since the cholera we have had very poor crops of grain. The meadows and fields have grown less?; some have been taken into the estate, others have been directly attached to the manorial fields. I am all alone and old, I would gladly try to do something, but I have no strength. My old woman is sick, and every year she bears a girl?; they have to be fed. I am working hard all by myself, and there are seven souls in the house. It is a sin before God our Lord, but I often think it would be well if he took some of them away as soon as possible. It would be easier for me and for them too, it would be better than to suffer here —"

"Oh, oh!" the woman sighed aloud, as though confirming her husband's words.

"Here is my whole help," continued Churis, pointing to a flaxen-haired, shaggy boy of some seven years, with an immense belly, who, softly creaking the door, had just entered timidly, and, morosely fixing his wondering eyes upon the master, with both his hands was holding on to his father's shirt. "Here is my entire help," continued Churis, in a sonorous voice, passing his rough hand through his child's hair. "It will be awhile before he will be able to do anything, and in the meantime the work is above my strength. It is not so much my age as the rupture that is undoing me. In bad weather it just makes me scream. I ought to have given up the land long ago, and been accounted an old man. Here is Ermilov, Demkin, Zyabrev, — they are all younger than I, but they have long ago given up the land. But I have no one to whom I might turn over the land, — that's where the trouble is. I must support the family, so I am struggling, your Grace."

"I would gladly make it easier for you, really. How can I?" said the young master, sympathetically, looking at the peasant.

"How make it easier? Of course, he who holds land must do the manorial work?; that is an established rule. I shall wait for the little fellow to grow up. If it is your will, excuse him from school?; for a few days ago the village scribe came and said that your Grace wanted him to come to school. Do excuse him?: what mind can he have, your Grace? He is too young, and has not much sense yet."

"No?; this, my friend, must be," said the master. "Your boy can comprehend, it is time for him to study. I am saying it for your own good. You judge yourself?: when he grows up, and becomes a householder, he will know how to read and write, and he will read in church, — everything will go well with you, with God's aid," said Nekhlyudov, trying to express himself as clearly as possible, and, at the same time, blushing and stammering.

"No doubt, your Grace, you do not wish us any harm?; but there is nobody at home; my wife and I have to work in the manorial field, and, small though he is, he helps us some, by driving the cattle home, and taking the horses to water. As little as he is, he is a peasant all the same," and Churis, smiling, took hold of his boy's nose between his thick fingers, and cleaned it.

"Still, send him when he is at home, and has time, — do you hear? — without fail."

Churis drew a deep sigh, and did not reply.

V

"There is something else I wanted to tell you," said Nekhlyudov. "Why has not your manure been removed?"

"What manure is there to take away, your Grace? How many animals have I? A little mare and a colt, and the young heifer I gave last autumn to the porter?; that is all the animals I have."

"You have so few animals, and yet you gave your heifer away?" the master asked, in amazement.

"What was I to feed her on?"

"Have you not enough straw to feed a cow with? Everybody else has."

"Others have manured land, and my land is mere clay that you can't do anything with."

"But that is what your manure is for, to take away the clay?: and the soil will produce grain, and you will have something to feed your animals with."

"But if there are no animals, where is the manure to come from?"

"This is a strange cercle vicieux" thought Nekhlyudov, but was at a loss how to advise the peasant.

"And then again, your Grace, not the manure makes the grain grow, but God," continued Churis. "Now, last year I got six ricks out of one unmanured eighth, but from another dressed eighth I did not reap as much as a cock. God alone!" he added, with a sigh. "And the cattle somehow do not thrive in our yard. They have died for six years in succession. Last year a heifer died, the other I sold, for we had nothing to live on?; two years ago a fine cow died?; when she was driven home from the herd, there was nothing the matter with her, but she suddenly staggered, and staggered, and off she went. Just my bad luck!"

"Well, my friend, you may say what you please about not having any cattle, because you have no feed, and about having no feed, because you have no cattle, — here is some money for a cow," said Nekhlyudov, blushing, and taking from his trousers' pocket a package of crumpled bills, and running through it. "Buy yourself a cow, with my luck, and get the feed from the barn, — I will give orders. Be sure and have a cow by next Sunday, — I will look in."

Churis smiled and shuffled his feet, and for so long did not stretch out his hand for the money, that Nekhlyudov put it on the end of the table, and reddened even more.

"We are very well satisfied with your favour," said Churis, with his usual, slightly sarcastic smile.

The old woman sighed heavily several times, standing under the beds, and seemed to be uttering a prayer.

The young master felt embarrassed?; he hastily rose from his bench, walked out into the vestibule, and called Churis. The sight of a man to whom he had done a good turn was so pleasant, that he did not wish to part from it so soon.

"I am glad I can help you," he said, stopping near the well. "It is all right to help you, because I know you are not a lazy man. You will work, and I will help you?; with God's aid things will improve."

"There is no place for improvement, your Grace," said Churis, suddenly assuming a serious, and even an austere, expression on his face, as though dissatisfied with the master's supposition that he might improve. "I lived with my brothers when my father was alive, and we suffered no want; but when he died, and we separated, things went from worse to worse. It is all because we are alone!"

"But why did you separate?"

"All on account of the women, your Grace. At that time your grandfather was not living, or they would not have dared to; then there was real order. He looked after everything, like you, — and we should not have dared to think of separating. Your grandfather did not let the peasants off so easily. But after him the estate was managed by Audrey Ilich, — may he not live by this memory, — he was a drunkard and an unreliable man. We went to him once, and a second time. ' There is no getting along with the women,' we said, ' let us separate.' Well, he gave it to us, but, in the end, the women had their way, and we separated?; and you know what a peasant is all by himself! Well, there was no order here, and Audrey Ilich treated us as he pleased. ' Let there be everything! ' but he never asked where a peasant was to get it. Then they increased the capitation tax, and began to collect more provisions for the table, but the land grew less, and the crops began to fail. And when it came to resurveying the land, he attached our manured land to the manorial strip, the rascal, and he left us just to die!

"Your father — the kingdom of heaven be his — was a good master, but we hardly ever saw him?: he lived all the time in Moscow?; of course, we had to carry supplies there frequently. There may have been bad roads, and no fodder, but we had to go! How could the master get along without it? We can't complain about that, only there was no order. Now, your Grace admits every peasant into your presence, and we are different people, and the steward is a different man. But before, the estate was left in guardianship, and there was no real master?; the guardian was master, and Ilich was master, and his wife was mistress, and the scribe was master. The peasants came to grief, oh, to so much grief!"

Again Nekhlyudov experienced a feeling akin to shame or to pricks of conscience. He raised his hat a little, and walked away.

VI

"YUKHVANKA the Shrewd wants to sell a horse," Nekhlyudov read in his notebook, and crossed the street. Yukhvanka's hut was carefully thatched with straw from the manorial barn, and was constructed of fresh, light gray aspen timbers (also from the manorial forest), with two shutters painted red, and a porch with a roof, and a quaint shingle balustrade of an artistic design. The vestibule and the "cold "hut were also in proper condition?; but the general aspect of sufficiency and well-being, which this collection of buildings had, was somewhat impaired by the outhouse which leaned against the gate, with its unfinished wicker fence and open thatch which could be seen from behind it.

At the same time that Nekhlyudov was approaching the porch from one side, two peasant women came from the other with a full tub. One of them was the wife, the other the mother of Yukhvanka the Shrewd. The first was a plump, red-cheeked woman, with an unusually well-developed bosom, and broad, fleshy cheek-bones. She wore a clean shirt, embroidered on the sleeves and collar, an apron similarly decorated, a new linen skirt, leather shoes, glass beads, and a foppish square head-gear made of red paper and spangles.

The end of the yoke did not shake, but lay firmly on her broad and solid shoulder. The light exertion which was noticeable in her ruddy face, in the curvature of her back, and in the measured motion of her arms and legs, pointed to extraordinary health and masculine strength.

Yukhvanka's mother, who was carrying the other end of the yoke, was, on the contrary, one of those old women who seem to have reached the extreme limit of old age and disintegration possible in living man. Her bony frame, covered with a black, torn shirt and colourless skirt, was so bent that the yoke rested more on her back than on her shoulder. Both her hands, with the distorted fingers of which she seemed to cling to the yoke, were of a dark brown colour, and seemed incapable of unbending?; her drooping head, which was wrapped in a rag, bore the most monstrous traces of wretchedness and old age. From under her narrow brow, which was furrowed in all directions by deep wrinkles, two red eyes, bereft of their lashes, looked dimly to the ground. One yellow tooth protruded from her upper sunken lip, and, shaking continually, now and then collided with her sharp chin. The wrinkles on the lower part of her face and throat resembled pouches that kept on shaking with every motion. She breathed heavily and hoarsely?; but her bare, distorted feet, though apparently shuffling with difficulty against the ground, moved evenly one after the other.

VII

Having almost collided with the master, the young woman deftly put down the tub, looked abashed, made a bow, glanced timidly at the master with her sparkling eyes, and trying with the sleeve of her embroidered shirt to conceal a light smile, and tripping in her leather shoes, ran up the steps.

"Mother, take the yoke to Aunt Nastasya," she said, stopping in the door and turning to the old woman.

The modest young proprietor looked sternly, but attentively, at the ruddy woman, frowned, and turned to the old woman, who straightened out the yoke with her crooked fingers, and, slinging it over her shoulder, obediently directed her steps to the neighbouring hut.

"Is your son at home?" asked the master.

The old woman bent her arched figure still more, bowed, and was about to say something, but she put her hands to her mouth and coughed so convulsively that Nekhlyudov did not wait for the answer, and walked into the hut.

Yukhvanka, who was sitting in the red ^ corner on a bench, rushed to the oven the moment he espied the master, as if trying to hide from him?; he hastily pushed something on the beds, and twitching his mouth and eyes, pressed against the wall, as if to make way for the master.

Yukhvanka was a blond, about thirty years of age, spare, slender, with a young beard that ran down to a point?; he would have been a handsome man but for his fleeting hazel eyes which looked unpleasantly beneath his wrinkled brows, and for the absence of two front teeth, which was very noticeable because his lips were short and in continuous motion. He was clad in a holiday shirt with bright red gussets, striped calico drawers, and heavy boots with wrinkled boot-legs.

The interior of Yukhvanka's hut was not so small and gloomy as Churis's, though it was as close, and smelled of smoke and sheepskins, and the peasant clothes and utensils were scattered about in the same disorderly fashion. Two things strangely arrested the attention?: a small dented samovar, which stood on a shelf, and a black frame with a remnant of a glass, and a portrait of a general in a red uniform, which was hanging near the images.

Nekhlyudov looked with dissatisfaction at the samovar, at the general's portrait, and at the beds, where from under a rag peeped out the end of a brass-covered pipe, and turned to the peasant.

"Good morning, Epifan," he said, looking into his eyes.

Epifan bowed, and mumbled, “We wish you health, ‘r Grace,” pronouncing the last words with peculiar tenderness, and his eyes in a twinkle surveyed the whole form of the master, the hut, the floor, and the ceiling, not stopping at anything?; then he hurriedly walked up to the beds, pulled down a coat from them, and began to put it on.

“Why are you dressing yourself?” said Nekhlyudov, seating himself on a bench, and obviously trying to look as stern as possible at Epifan.

“Please, ‘r Grace, how can I? It seems to me we know —”

“I came in to see why you must sell a horse, how many horses you have, and what horse it is you want to sell,” dryly said the master, evidently repeating questions prepared in advance.

“We are well satisfied with ‘r Grace, because you have deigned to call on me, a peasant,” replied Yukhvanka, casting rapid glances at the general’s portrait, at the oven, at the master’s boots, and at all objects except Nekhlyudov’s face. “We always pray God for ‘r Grace —”

“Why are you selling a horse?” repeated Nekhlyudov, raising his voice, and clearing his throat.

Yukhvanka sighed, shook his hair (his glance again surveyed the whole hut), and, noticing the cat that had been quietly purring on a bench, he called out to her, “Scat, you scamp!” and hurriedly turned to the master. “The horse, ‘r Grace, which is useless — If it were a good animal I would not sell it, ‘r Grace.”

“How many horses have you in all?”

“Three, ‘r Grace.”

“Have you any colts?”

“Why, yes, ‘r Grace! I have one colt.”

1 The best corner, corresponding to a sitting-room, is called “red.”

VIII

"Come, show me your horses! Are they in the yard?"

"Yes, 'r Grace. I have done as I have been ordered to, 'r Grace. Would we dare to disobey 'r Grace? Yakov Alpatych commanded me not to let the horses out to pasture for the next day, as the prince wanted to inspect them, so we did not let them out. We do not dare disobey 'r Grace."

As Nekhlyudov walked out of the door, Yukhvanka got the pipe down from the beds, and threw it behind the oven. His lips quivered just as restlessly, though the master was not looking at him.

A lean gray mare was rummaging through some musty hay under the shed?; a two-months-old, long-legged colt of an indefinable colour, with bluish feet and mouth, did not leave her mother's thin tail that was all stuck up with burrs. In the middle of the yard stood, blinking and pensively lowering his head, a thick-bellied chestnut gelding, apparently a good peasant horse.

"Are these all your horses?"

"By no means, 'r Grace. Here is a little mare and a little colt," answered Yukhvanka, pointing to the horses which the master could not help having noticed.

"I see that. Now, which one do you want to sell?"

"This one, 'r Grace," he answered, waving with the flap of his coat in the direction of the drowsy gelding, continually blinking, and twitching his lips. The gelding opened his eyes and lazily turned his back to him.

"He does not look old, and is apparently a sound horse," said Nekhlyudov. "Catch him, and show me his teeth! I will find out if he is old."

"It is impossible for one person to catch him, 'r Grace. The whole beast is not worth a penny. He has a temper?: he bites and kicks, 'r Grace," answered Yukhvanka, smiling merrily, and turning his eyes in all directions.

"What nonsense! Catch him, I tell you!"

Yukhvanka smiled for a long time, and shuffled his feet, and not until Nekhlyudov cried out in anger, "Well, will you?" did he run under the shed and bring a halter. He began to run after the horse, frightening him, and walking up to him from behind, and not in front.

The young master was evidently disgusted, and, no doubt, wanted to show his agility. "Give me the halter!" he said.

"I pray, 'r Grace! How can you? —"

But Nekhlyudov walked up to the horse's head and, suddenly taking hold of his ears, bent it down with such a force that the gelding, who, as could be seen, was a very

gentle peasant horse, tottered and groaned, in his attempt to tear himself away. When Nekhlyudov noticed that it was unnecessary to use such force, and when he glanced at Yukhvanka, who did not cease smiling, the thought, so offensive at his years, occurred to him that Yukhvanka was making fun of him and mentally regarding him as a child. He blushed, let the horse go, and without the help of a halter opened his mouth and examined his teeth?: the teeth were sound, the crowns full, and the young proprietor was enough informed to know that all this meant that the horse was young.

Yukhvanka, in the meantime, had gone under the shed, and, noticing that the harrow was not in place, he lifted it and put it on edge against the fence.

"Come here!" cried the master, with an expression of childlike annoyance on his face, and almost with tears of mortification and anger in his voice. "Well, you call that an old horse?"

"I pray, 'r Grace, he is very old, some twenty years old — some horses —"

"Silence! You are a liar and a good-for-nothing, because an honest peasant would not lie, — he has no cause to lie!" said Nekhlyudov, choking with tears of anger, which rose in his throat. He grew silent in order not to burst out into tears, and thus disgrace himself before the peasant. Yukhvanka, too, was silent, and, with the expression of a man who is ready to burst into tears, snuffled and slightly jerked his head.

"Well, with what animal will you plough your field when you have sold this horse?" continued Nekhlyudov, having calmed down sufficiently to speak in his customary voice. "You are purposely sent to do work on foot, so as to give your horses a chance to improve for the ploughing, and you want to sell your last horse. But, the main thing is, why do you lie?"

The moment the master grew calm, Yukhvanka quieted down, too. He stood straight, and, still jerking his lips, let his eyes flit from one object to another.

"We will drive out to work, 'r Grace," he replied, "not worse than the rest."

"What will you drive with?"

"Do not worry, we will do the work of 'r Grace," he answered, shouting to the gelding, and driving him away. "I should not have thought of selling him if I did not need the money."

"What do you need the money for?"

"There is no bread, 'r Grace, and I have to pay my debts to the peasants, 'r Grace,"

"How so, no bread? How is it the others, who have families, have bread, and you, who have none, have not any? What has become of your grain?"

"We have eaten it up, and now not a crumb is left. I will buy a horse in the fall, 'r Grace."

"You shall not dare sell this horse!"

"If so, 'r Grace, what kind of a life will it be? There is no bread, and I must not sell anything," he answered sideways, twitching his lips, and suddenly casting a bold glance upon the master's face. "It means, we shall have to starve."

"Look here, man!" cried Nekhlyudov, pale with anger, and experiencing a feeling of personal hatred for the peasant. "I will not keep such peasants as you. It will go hard with you."

"Such will be your will, 'r Grace," he answered, covering his eyes with a feigned expression of humility, "if I have not served you right. And yet, nobody has noticed any vices in me. Of course, if 'r Grace is displeased with me, 'r Grace will do as you wish?; only I do not know why I should suffer."

"I will tell you why?: because your yard is not fenced in, your manure not ploughed up, your fences are broken, and you sit at home and smoke a pipe, and do not work?; because you do not give your mother, who has turned the whole farm over to you, a piece of bread, and permit your wife to strike her, and have treated her so badly that she has come to me to complain about you."

"I beg your pardon, 'r Grace, I do not know what pipes you are speaking of," Yukhvanka answered, confusedly, apparently very much insulted by the accusation of smoking a pipe. "It is easy to say anything about a man."

"There you are lying again! I saw myself —"

"How would I dare to lie to 'r Grace?"

Nekhlyudov was silent, and, biting his lips, paced the yard. Yukhvanka stood in one spot and, without raising his eyes, watched his master's feet.

"Listen, Epifan," said Nekhlyudov, in a voice of childlike gentleness, stopping in front of the peasant, and endeavouring to conceal his agitation. "Bethink yourself. If you want to be a good peasant, you must change your life?: leave your bad habits, stop lying, give up drinking, and honour your mother. I know all about you. Attend to your farm, and stop stealing timber in the Crown forest and frequenting the tavern! What good is there in it, think! If you have need of anything, come to me, ask straight out for what you need, and tell why you need it, and do not lie, but tell the whole truth, and I will not refuse you anything I can do for you."

"If you please, 'r Grace, we can understand 'r Grace!" answered Yukhvanka, smiling, as if fully comprehending the charm of the master's jest.

This smile and reply completely disappointed Nekhlyudov, who had hoped to touch the peasant and bring him back on the true path by persuasion. And then, it seemed improper for him, who was possessed of power, to persuade his peasant, and it seemed, too, that everything he said was not exactly what he ought to have said. He lowered his head in sadness and walked into the vestibule. The old woman was sitting on the threshold and groaning aloud, in order, as it seemed, to express her sympathy with the master's words which she had heard.

"Here is some money for bread," Nekhlyiidov whispered into her ear, putting a bill into her hand. "Only buy for yourself, and do not give it to Yukhvanka, who will spend it in drinks."

The old woman took hold of the lintel with her bony hand, in order to rise and thank the master, and her head began to shake, but Nekhlyudov was on the other side of the street when she rose.

IX

"Davydka the White asked for grain and posts," it said in the note-book after Yukhvanka.

After passing several huts, Nekhlyudov, in turning into a lane, met his steward, Yakov Alpatych, who, upon noticing his master at a distance, doffed his oilcloth cap, and, taking out his fulled handkerchief, began to wipe his fat, red face.

"Put it on, Yakov! Yakov, put it on, I tell you —"

"Where have you been, your Grace?" asked Yakov, protecting himself with his cap against the sun, but not donning it.

"I have been at Yukhvanka the Shrewd' s. Tell me, if you please, what has made him so bad," said the master, continuing on his way.

"Why so, your Grace?" replied the manager, following the master at a respectful distance. He had put on his cap and was twirling his moustache.

"Why? He is a thorough scamp, a lazy man, a thief, a liar?; he torments his mother, and, so far as I can see, he is such a confirmed good-for-nothing that he will never reform."

"I do not know, your Grace, why he has displeased you so much —"

"And his wife," the master interrupted his manager, "seems to be a worthless wench. The old woman is clad worse than a mendicant, and has nothing to eat, but she is all dressed up, and so is he. I really do not know what to do with them."

Yakov was obviously embarrassed when Nekhlyudov spoke of Yukhvanka's wife.

"Well, if he has acted like that, your Grace," he began, "we must find means. It is true he is indigent, like all peasants who are alone, but he is taking some care of himself, not like the others. He is a clever and intelligent peasant, and passably honest. He always comes when the capitation tax is collected. And he has been elder for three years, during my administration, and no fault was found with him. In the third year it pleased the guardian to depose him, and then he attended properly to his farm. It is true, when he lived at the post in town, he used to drink a bit, — and measures must be taken. When he went on a spree, we threatened him, and he came back to his senses?: he was then all right, and in his family there was peace?; but if you are not pleased to take these measures, I really do not know what to do with him. Well, he has got very low. He is not fit to be sent into the army again because, as you may have noticed, he lacks two teeth. But he is not the only one, I take the liberty of reporting to you, who is not in the least afraid —"

"Let this alone, Yakov," answered Nekhlyudov, softly smiling?; "we have talked it over often enough. You know what I think of it, and I shall not change my mind, whatever you may tell me."

"Of course, your Grace, all this is known to you," said Yakov, shrugging his shoulders and gazing at the master's back, as though what he saw did not promise anything good. "But as to your troubling yourself about the old woman, it is all in vain," he continued. "It is true she has brought up the orphans, has raised and married off Yukhvanka, and all that. But it is a common rule with the peasants that when a father or mother transfers the farm to the son, the son and daughter-in-law become the masters, and the old woman has to earn her bread as best she can. Of course they have not any tender feelings, but that is the common rule among peasants. And I take the liberty of informing you that the old woman has troubled you in vain. She is a clever old woman and a good housekeeper?; but why should she trouble the master for everything? I will admit she may have quarrelled with her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law may have pushed her, — those are women's affairs. They might have made up again, without her troubling you. You deign to take it too much to heart," said the manager, looking with a certain gentleness and condescension at the master, who was silently walking, with long steps, up the street in front of him.

"Homeward bound, sir?" he asked.

"No, to Davydka the White, or Kozlov?: is not that his name?"

"He, too, is a good-for-nothing, permit me to inform you. The whole tribe of the Kozlovs is like that. No matter what you may do with them, it has no effect. I drove yesterday over the peasant field, and I saw he had not sowed any buckwheat?; what are we to do with such a lot? If only the old man taught the son, but he is just such a good-for-nothing?: he bungles everything, whether he works for himself or for the manor. The guardian and I have tried everything with him?: we have sent him to the commissary's office, and have punished him at home, — but you do not like that —"

"Whom, the old man?"

"The old man, sir. The guardian has punished him often, and at the full gatherings of the Commune?; but will you believe it, your Grace, it had no effect?: he just shook himself, and went away, and did the same. And I must say, Davydka is a peaceful peasant, and not at all stupid?: he does not smoke, nor drink, that is," explained Yakov, "he does something worse than drink. All there is left to do is to send him to the army, or to Siberia, and nothing else. The whole tribe of the Kozlovs is like that. Matryushka, who lives in that hovel, also belongs to their family, and is the same kind of an accursed good-for-nothing. So you do not need me, your Grace?" added the manager, noticing that the master was not listening to him.

"No, you may go," Nekhlyiidov answered, absent-mindedly, and directed his steps to Davydka the White.

Davydka's hut stood crooked and alone at the edge of the village. Near it was no yard, no kiln, no barn?; only a few dirty stalls clung to one side of it?: on the other were heaped in a pile wattles and timber that were to be used for the yard. Tall, green

steppe-grass grew in the place where formerly had been the yard. There was not a living being near the hut, except a pig that lay in the mud in front of the threshold, and squealed.

Nekhlyudov knocked at the broken window; but, as nobody answered him, he walked up to the vestibule and shouted?: "Ho there!" Nobody replied. He walked through the vestibule, looked into the empty stalls, and walked through the open door into the hut.

An old red cock and two hens promenaded over the floor and benches, jerking their crops, and clattering with their claws. When they saw a man, they fluttered with wide-spread wings against the walls with a clucking of despair, and one of them flew upon the oven.

The eighteen-foot hut was all occupied by the oven with a broken pipe, a weaver's loom which had not been removed in spite of summer, and a begrimed table with a warped and cracked board. Though it was dry without, there was a dirty puddle near the threshold which had been formed at a previous rain by a leak in the ceiling and roof. There were no beds. It was hard to believe that this was an inhabited place, there was such a decided aspect of neglect and disorder, both inside and outside the hut?; and yet Davydka the White lived in it with his whole family. At that particular moment, in spite of the heat of the June day, Davydka lay, his head wrapped in a sheepskin half-coat, on the corner of the oven, fast asleep. The frightened hen, which had alighted on the oven and had not yet calmed down, was walking over Davydka's back, without waking him.

Not finding any one in the hut, Nekhlyudov was on the point of leaving, when a protracted, humid sigh betrayed the peasant.

"Oh, who is there?" cried the master.

On the oven was heard another protracted sigh.

"Who is there? Come here!"

Another sigh, a growl, and a loud yawn were the answer to the master's call.

"Well, will you come?"

Something stirred on the oven. There appeared the flap of a worn-out sheepskin?; a big foot in a torn bast shoe came down, then another, and finally the whole form of Davydka the White sat up on the oven, and lazily and discontentedly rubbed his eyes with his large fist. He slowly bent his head, yawned, gazed at the hut, and, when he espied the master, began to turn around a little faster than before, but still so leisurely that Nekhlyudov had sufficient time to pace three times the distance from the puddle to the loom, before Davydka got off the oven.

Davydka the White was actually white?; his hair, his body, and face, — everything was exceedingly white. He was tall and very stout, that is, stout like a peasant, with his whole body, and not merely with his belly?; but it was a flabby, unhealthy obesity. His fairly handsome face, with its dark blue, calm eyes and broad, long beard, bore the imprint of infirmity. There was neither tan nor ruddiness in his face?; it was of a pale, sallow complexion, with a light violet shade under his eyes, and looked suffused with fat, and swollen. His hands were swollen and sallow, like those of people who suffer

with the dropsy, and were covered with fine white hair. He was so sleepy that he could not open his eyes wide, nor stand still, without tottering and yawning.

"Are you not ashamed," began Nekhlyudov, "to sleep in bright daylight, when you ought to build a yard, and when you have no grain?"

As soon as Davydka came to his senses, and began to understand that the master was standing before him, he folded his hands over his abdomen, lowered his head, turning it a little to one side, and did not stir a limb. He was silent?; but the expression of his face and the attitude of his whole form said, "I know, I know, it is not the first time I hear that. Beat me if you must, — I will bear it."

It looked as though he wanted the master to stop talking and to start beating him at once?; to strike him hard on his cheeks, but to leave him in peace as soon as possible.

When Nekhlyudov noticed that Davydka did not understand him, he tried with various questions to rouse the peasant from his servile and patient silence.

"Why did you ask me for timber when you have had some lying here for a month, and that, too, when you have most time your own, eh?"

Davydka kept stubborn silence, and did not stir.

"Well, answer!"

Davydka muttered something, and blinked with his white eyelashes.

"But you must work, my dear?: what will happen without work? Now, you have no grain, and why? Because your land is badly ploughed, and has not been harrowed, and was sowed in too late, — all on account of laziness. You ask me for grain?: suppose I give it to you, because you must not starve! It will not do to act in this way. Whose grain am I giving you? What do you think, whose? Answer me?: whose grain am I giving you?" Nekhlyudov stubbornly repeated his question.

"The manorial," mumbled Davydka, timidly and questioningly raising his eyes.

"And where does the manorial grain come from? Think of it?: who has ploughed the field? Who has harrowed it? Who has sowed it in, and garnered it? The peasants? Is it not so? So you see, if I am to give the manorial grain to the peasants, I ought to give more to those who have worked more for it?; but you have worked less, and they complain of you at the manor?; you have worked less, and you ask more. Why should I give to you, and not to others? If all were lying on their sides and sleeping, as you are doing, we should all have starved long ago. We must work, my friend, but this is bad, — do you hear, Davydka?"

"I hear, sir," he slowly muttered through his teeth.

X

Just then the head of a peasant woman carrying linen on a yoke flashed by the window, and a minute later Davydka's mother entered the hut. She was a tall woman of about fifty years, and was well preserved and active. Her pockmarked and wrinkled face was not handsome, but her straight, firm nose, her compressed thin lips, and her keen gray eyes expressed intelligence and energy. The angularity of her shoulders, the flatness of her bosom, the bony state of her hands, and the well- developed muscles on her black bare feet witnessed to the fact that she had long ceased to be a woman, and was only a labourer.

She entered boldly into the room, closed the door, pulled down her skirt, and angrily looked at her son. Nekhlyudov wanted to tell her something, but she turned away from him, and began to make the signs of the cross before a black wooden image that peered out from behind the loom. Having finished her devotion, she straightened out her dirty checkered kerchief in which her head was wrapped, and made a low obeisance before the master.

"A pleasant Lord's Day to your Grace," she said. "May God preserve you, our father —!"

When Davydka saw his mother he evidently became embarrassed, bent his back a little, and lowered his neck even more.

"Thank you, Arina," answered Nekhlyudov. "I have just been speaking with your son about your farm."

Anna, or, as the peasants had called her when she was still a maiden, Arishka-Burlak,[1] supported her chin with the fist of her right hand, which, in its turn, was resting on the palm of her left hand?; and, without hearing what the master had still to say, began to speak in such a penetrating and loud voice that the whole hut was filled with sound, and in the street it might have appeared that several women were speaking at the same time.

"What use, father, is there of speaking to him? He can't even speak like a man. There he stands, block- head," she continued, contemptuously pointing with her head to Davydka's wretched, massive figure. "My farm, your Grace? We are mendicants?; there are no people in your whole village more wretched?: we have neither of our own, nor anything for the manorial dues — a shame! He has brought us to all this. I bore him, raised, and fed him, and with anticipation waited for him to grow up. Here he is: the grain is bursting, but there is no more work in him than in this rotten log. All he

[1] Biu'lak is a labourer towing boats up the Volga.

knows how to do is to lie on the oven, or to stand and scratch his stupid head," she said, mocking him. "If you, father, could threaten him somehow! I beg you?: punish him for the Lord's sake?; send him to the army, and make an end of it. I have lost my patience with him, I tell you."

"How is it you are not ashamed, Davydka, to bring your mother to such a state?" said Nekhlyudov, reproachfully turning to the peasant.

Davydka did not budge.

"It would be different if he were a sickly man," Arina continued, with the same vivacity and gestures, "but you look at him, he is fatter than a mill pig. He is a good-looking chap, fit enough to work! But no, he lies like a lubber all day on the oven. My eyes get tired looking when he undertakes to do something?; when he rises, or moves, or anything," she said, drawling her words and awkwardly turning her angular shoulders from side to side. "Now, for example, to-day the old man has gone for brushwood into the forest, and he has told him to dig holes?; but no, not he, he has not had the spade in his hands — "She grew silent for a moment. "He has undone me, abandoned woman!" she suddenly whined, waving her hands, and walking up to her son with a threatening gesture. "Your smooth, good-for-nothing snout, the Lord forgive me!"

She turned away contemptuously and in despair from him, spit out, and again turned to the master, continuing to wave her hands, with the same animation and with tears in her eyes?:

"I am all alone, benefactor. My old man is sick and old, and there is little good in him, and I am all sole alone. It is enough to make a stone burst. It would be easier if I just could die?; that would be the end. He has worn me out, that rascal! Our father! I have no more strength! My daughter-in-law died from work, and I shall, too."

XI

"What, died?" Nekhlyudov asked, incredulously.

"She died from exertion, benefactor, as God is holy. We took her two years ago from Baburin," she continued, suddenly changing her angry expression to one of tearfulness and sadness. "She was a young, healthy, obedient woman, father. She had lived, as a maiden, in plenty, at her father's home, and had experienced no want?; but when she came to us, and had to do the work, — in the manor and at home, and everywhere — She and I, that was all there was. To me it did not matter much. I am used to it, but she was pregnant, and began to suffer?; and she worked all the while beyond her strength, until she, my dear girl, overworked herself. Last year, during St. Peter's Fast, she, to her misfortune, bore a boy, and there was no bread?; we barely managed to pick up something, father?; the hard work was on hand, and her breasts dried up. It was her first-born, there was no cow, and we are peasant people, and it is not for us to bring up children on the bottle?; and, of course, she was a foolish woman, and worried her life away. And when her baby died, she cried and cried from sorrow, and sobbed and sobbed, my darling, and there was want, and work, ever worse and worse?; she wore herself out all summer, and died, my darling, on the day of St. Mary's Intercession. It is he who has undone her, beast!" She again turned to her son with the anger of despair. «?I wanted to ask you, your Grace," she continued after a short silence, lowering her head, and bowing.

"What is it?" Nekhlyudov asked absent-mindedly, still agitated by her recital.

"He is a young man yet. You can't expect much work from me?; to-day I am alive, to-morrow dead. How can he be without a wife? He will not be a peasant, if he is not married. Have pity on us, father."

"That is, you want to marry him off? Well?"

"Do us this favour before God! You are our father and mother."

She gave her son a sign, and both dropped on the ground before their master's feet.

"Why do you make these earth obeisances?" said Nekhlyudov, angrily raising her by her shoulder. "Can't you tell it without doing so? You know that I do not like it. Marry off your son, if you wish. I should be glad to hear that you have a bride in view."

The old woman rose, and began to wipe off her dry eyes with her sleeve. Davydka followed her example, and, having wiped his eyes with his dry fist, continued to stand in the same patient and subservient attitude as before, and to listen to what Arina was saying.

"There is a bride, why not? Mikhey's Vasyiitka is a likely enough girl, but she will not marry him without your will."

“Does she not consent?”

“No, benefactor, not if it comes to consenting.”

“Well, then what is to be done? I cannot compel her?; look for another girl, if not here, elsewhere?; I will buy her out, as long as she will give her own consent, but you can’t marry by force. There is no law for that, and it would be a great sin.”

“benefactor! But is it likely that any girl would be willing to marry him, seeing our manner of life and poverty? Even a soldier’s wife would not wish to take upon herself such misery. What peasant will be willing to give his daughter to us? The most desperate man will not give his. We are mendicants, and nothing else. They will say that we have starved one woman, and would do so with their daughter. Who will give his?” she added, skeptically shaking her head. “Consider this, your Grace.”

«?But what can I do?”

“Think of some plan for us, father!” Arina repeated, persuasively. “What are we to do?”

“What plan can I find? I can do nothing for you in this matter.”

“Who will do something for us, if not you?” said Arina, dropping her head, and waving her hands with an expression of sad perplexity.

“You have asked for grain, and I will order it to be given to you,” said the master, after a short silence, during which Arina drew deep breaths and Davydka seconded her. «?That is all I can do.”

Nekhlyudov stepped into the vestibule. The woman and her son followed the master, bowing.

XII

"O MY orphanhood!" said Arina, drawing a deep breath.

She stopped, and angrily looked at her son. Davydka immediately wheeled around and, with difficulty lifting his fat leg, in an immense dirty bast shoe, over the threshold, was lost in the opposite door.

"What am I going to do with him, father?" continued Arina, turning to the master. "You see yourself what he is! He is not a bad peasant?: he does not drink, is peaceful, and would not harm a child, — it would be a sin to say otherwise?; there is nothing bad about him, and God only knows what it is that has befallen him that he has become his own enemy. He himself is not satisfied with it. Really, father, it makes my heart bleed when I see how he worries about it himself. Such as he is, my womb has borne him?; I am sorry, very sorry for him! He would do no harm to me, or his father, or the authorities?; he is a timid man, I might say, like a child. How can he remain a widower? Do something for us, benefactor," she repeated, evidently trying to correct the bad impression which her scolding might have produced on the master. "Your Grace," she continued, in a confidential whisper, "I have reasoned this way and that way, but I can't make out what has made him so. It cannot be otherwise but that evil people have bewitched him."

She was silent for a moment.

"If the man could be found, he might be cured."

"What nonsense you are talking, Arina! How can one bewitch?"

"Father, they can bewitch so as to make one a no-man for all his life! There are many evil people in the world! Out of malice they take out a handful of earth in one's track — or something else — and one is a no-man for ever. It is easy to sin! I have been thinking of going to see old man Dunduk, who lives at Vorobevka: he knows all kinds of incantations, and he knows herbs, and he takes away the evil eye, and draws the dropsy out of the spine. Maybe he will help!" said the woman. "Maybe he will cure him!"

"Now that is wretchedness and ignorance!" thought the young master, sorrowfully bending his head, and walking with long strides down the village. "What shall I do with him? It is impossible to leave him in this state, on my account, and as an example for others, and for his own sake," he said to himself, counting out the causes on his fingers. "I cannot see him in this condition, but how am I to take him out of it? He destroys all my best plans for the estate. If such peasants are left in it, my dreams will never be fulfilled," he thought, experiencing mortification and anger against the peasant for destroying his plans. "Shall I send him as a settler to Siberia, as Yakov

says, when he does not want to be well off, or into the army? That's it. I shall at least be rid of him, and shall thus save a good peasant," he reflected.

He thought of it with delight?; at the same time a certain indistinct consciousness told him that he was thinking with one side of his reason only, and something was wrong. He stopped. "Wait, what am I thinking about?" he said to himself?; "yes, into the army, to Siberia. Tor what? He is a good man, better than many others, and how do I know — Give him his liberty?" he reflected, considering the question not with one side of his reason only, as before, "It is unjust, and impossible." Suddenly a thought came to him that gave him great pleasure?; he smiled, with the expression of a man who has solved a difficult problem. "I will take him to the manor," he said to himself. "I will watch over him myself, and with gentleness and persuasion, and proper selection of occupations, accustom him to work, and reform him."

XIII

"I WILL do so," Nekhlyudov said to himself with cheerful self-satisfaction, and, recalling that he had to visit yet the rich peasant, Dutlov, he directed his steps to a tall and spacious building, with two chimneys, which stood in the middle of the village. As he was getting near it, he met, near the neighbouring hut, a tall, slatternly woman, of some forty years of age, who came out to see him.

"A pleasant holiday, sir," the woman said, without the least timidity, stopping near him, smiling pleasantly, and bowing.

"Good morning, nurse," he answered. "How are you getting on? I am going to see your neighbour."

"Yes, your Grace, that is good. But why do you not deign to call on us? My old man would be ever so happy to see you."

"Well, I will come in, to talk with you, nurse. Is this your hut?"

"Yes, sir."

And the nurse ran ahead. Nekhlyudov walked after her into the vestibule, sat down on a pail, took out a cigarette, and lighted it.

"It is hot there?; let us stay here and talk," he answered to the nurse's invitation to walk into the hut.

The nurse was still in her prime, and a fine-looking woman. In her features, and especially in her large black eyes, there was a great resemblance to the master's face. She put her hands under her apron, and, boldly looking at the master aud continually shaking her head, began to speak with him?:

"What is the reason, sir, you are honouring Dutlov with a visit?"

"I want him to rent from me thirty desyatinas[1] of land, and start a farm of his own, and also to buy some timber with me. He has money, — why should it he idle? What do you think about that, nurse?"

"Well! Of course, sir, the Dutlovs are powerful people. I suppose he is the first peasant in the whole estate," answered the nurse, nodding her head. "Last year he added a new structure out of his own timber, — he did not trouble the master. Of horses, there will be some six sets of three, outside of colts and yearlings?; and of stock, there are so many cows and sheep that when they drive them home from the field, and the women go out to drive them into the yard, there is a terrible crush at the gate?; and of bees, there must be two hundred hives, and maybe more. He is a powerful peasant, he must have money, too."

[1] A desyatina is equal to 2,400 square fathoms.

"Do you think he has much money?" the master asked.

"People say, of course, out of malice, that the man has a great deal?; naturally, he would not tell, nor would he let his sons know, but he must have. Why should he not put his money out for a forest? Unless he should be afraid to let out the rumour about having money. Some five years ago he invested a little money in bottom meadows with Shkalik the porter?; but I think Shkalik cheated him, so that the old man was out of three hundred roubles?; since then he has given it up. And why should he not be well fixed, your Grace," continued the nurse, "he is living on three parcels of land, the family is large, all workers, and the old man himself — there is nothing to be said against him — is a fine manager. He has luck in everything, so that the people are all wondering?; he has luck with the grain, with the horses, the cattle, the bees, and his children. He has married them all off. He found wives for them among his own, and now he has married Ilyushka to a free girl, — he has himself paid for her emancipation. And she has turned out to be a fine woman."

"Do they live peaceably?" asked the master.

"As long as there is a real head in the house, there will be peace. Though with the Dutlovs it is as elsewhere with women?: the daughters-in-law quarrel behind the oven, yet the sons live peacefully together under the old man."

The nurse grew silent for a moment.

"Now the old man wants to make his eldest son, Karp, the master of the house. He says he is getting too old and that his business is with the bees. Well, Karp is a good man, an accurate man, but he will not be such a manager as the old man, by a good deal. He has not his intellect."

"Maybe Karp will be willing to take up land and forests, what do you think?" said the master, wishing to find out from his nurse what she knew about her neighbours.

"I doubt it, sir," continued the nurse?; "the old man has not disclosed his money to his son. As long as the old man is alive, and the money is in his house, his mind will direct affairs?; besides, they are more interested in teaming."

"And the old man will not consent?"

"He will be afraid."

"What will he be afraid of?"

"How can a manorial peasant declare his money, sir? There might be an unlucky hour, and all his money would be lost! There, he went into partnership with the porter, and he made a mistake. How could he sue him? And thus the money was all lost?; and with the proprietor it would be lost without appeal."

"Yes, on this account — "said Nekhlyudov, blushing. "Good-bye, nurse."

"Good-bye, your Grace. I thank you humbly."

XIV

"Had I not better go home?" thought Nekhlyudov, walking up to Dutlov's gate, and feeling an indefinable melancholy and moral fatigue.

Just then the new plank gate opened before him with a creak, and a fine-looking, ruddy, light-complexioned lad, of about eighteen years of age, in driver's attire, appeared in the gateway, leading behind him a set of three stout- legged, sweaty, shaggy horses?; boldly shaking his flaxen hair, he bowed to the master.

"Is your father at home, Пуа?" asked Nekhlyudov.

"He is with the bees, back of the yard," answered the lad, leading one horse after another through the half-open gate.

"No, I will stick to my determination?; I will make the proposition to him, and will do my part," thought Nekhlyudov, and, letting the horses pass by, he went into Dutlov's spacious yard. He could see that the manure had lately been removed?: the earth was still black and sweaty, and in places, particularly near the gate, lay scattered red-fibred shreds. In the yard, and under the high sheds, stood in good order many carts, ploughs, sleighs, blocks, tubs, and all kinds of peasant possessions. Pigeons flitted to and fro and cooed in the shade under the broad, solid rafters. There was an odour of manure and tar.

In one corner Karp and Ignat were fixing a new transom-bed on a large, three-horse, steel-rimmed cart. Dutlov's three sons resembled each other very much. The youngest, Ilya, whom Nekhlyildov had met iu the gate, had no beard, and was smaller, ruddier, and more foppishly clad than the other two. The second, Ignat, was taller, more tanned, had a pointed beard, and, although he too wore boots, a driver's shirt, and a lambskin cap, he did not have the careless, holiday aspect of his younger brother. The eldest, Karp, was taller still, wore bast shoes, a gray caftan, and a shirt without gussets?; he had a long red beard, and looked not only solemn, but even gloomy.

"Do you command me to send for father, your Grace?" he said, walking up to the master and bowing slightly and awkwardly.

"No, I will go myself to the apiary?; I wish to look at his arrangement of it?; but I want to talk with you," said Nekhlyudov, walking over to the other end of the yard, so that Ignat might not hear what he was going to say to Karp.

The self-confidence and a certain pride, which were noticeable in the whole manner of these two peasants, and that which his nurse had told him, so embarrassed the young master that he found it hard to make up his mind to tell him of the matter in hand. He felt as though he were guilty of something?; and it was easier for him to

speak to one of the brothers, without being heard by the other. Karp looked somewhat surprised at being asked by the master to step aside, but he followed him.

"It is this," began Nekhlyudov, hesitating, "I wanted to ask you how many horses you had."

"There will be some five sets of three?; there are also some colts," Karp answered, freely, scratching his back.

"Do your brothers drive the stage?"

"We drive the stage with three troykas. Ilyushka has been doing some hauling?; he has just returned."

"Do you find that profitable? How much do you earn in this manner?"

"What profit can there be, your Grace? We just feed ourselves and the horses, and God be thanked for that."

"Then why do you not busy yourselves with something else? You might buy some forest or rent some land."

"Of course, your Grace, we might rent some land, if it came handy."

"This is what I want to propose to you. What is the use of teaming, just to earn your feed, when you can rent some thirty desyatinas of me? I will let you have the whole parcel which lies behind Sapov's, and you can start a large farm."

Nekhlyudov was now carried away by his plan of a peasant farm, which he had thought over and recited to himself more than once, and he began to expound to Karp, without stammering, his plan of a peasant farm. Karp listened attentively to the words of the master.

"We are very well satisfied with your favour," he said, when Nekhlyudov stopped and looked at him, expecting an answer. "Of course, there is nothing bad in this. It is better for a peasant to attend to the soil than to flourish his whip. Peasants of our kind get easily spoilt, when they travel among strange men, and meet all kinds of people. There is nothing better for a peasant than to busy himself with the land."

"What do you think of it, then?"

"As long as father is alive, your Grace, there is no use in my thinking. His will decides."

"Take me to the apiary?; I will talk to him."

"This way, if you please," said Karp, slowly turning toward the barn in the back of the yard. He opened a low gate which led to the beehives, and, letting the master walk through it, and closing it, he walked up to Ignat, and resumed his interrupted work.

XV

NEKHLYUD0V bent his head, and passed through the low gate underneath the shady shed to the apiary, which was back of the yard. The small space, surrounded by straw and a wicker fence which admitted the sunlight, where stood symmetrically arranged the beehives, covered with small boards, and surrounded by golden bees circling noisily about them, was all bathed in the hot, brilliant rays of the June sun.

A well-trodden path led from the gate through the middle of the apiary to a wooden-roofed cross with a brass-foil image upon it, which shone glaringly in the sun. A few stately linden-trees, which towered with their curly tops above the straw thatch of the neighbouring yard, rustled their fresh dark green foliage almost inaudibly, on account of the buzzing of the bees. All the shadows from the roofed fence, from the lindens, and from the beehives that were covered with boards, fell black and short upon the small, wiry grass that sprouted between the hives.

The small, bent form of an old man, with his uncovered gray, and partly bald, head shining in the sun, was seen near the door of a newly thatched, moss-calked plank building, which was situated between the lindens. Upon hearing the creaking of the gate, the old man turned around and, wiping off his perspiring, sunburnt face with the skirt of his shirt, and smiling gently and joyfully, came to meet the master.

The apiary was so cosy, so pleasant, so quiet, and so sunlit?; the face of the gray-haired old man, with the abundant ray-like wrinkles about his eyes, in his wide shoes over his bare feet, who, waddling along and smiling good-naturedly and contentedly, welcomed the master in his exclusive possessions, was so simple-hearted and kind, that Nekhlyudov immediately forgot the heavy impressions of the morning, and his favourite dream rose up before him. He saw all his peasants just as rich and good-natured as old Dutlov, and all smiled kindly and joyously at him, because they owed to him alone all their wealth and happiness.

"Will you not have a net, your Grace? The bees are angry now, and they sting," said the old man, taking down from the fence a dirty linen bag fragrant with honey, which was sewed to a bark hoop, and offering it to the master. "The bees know me, and do not sting me," he added, with a gentle smile, which hardly ever left his handsome, sunburnt face.

"Then I shall not need it, either. Well, are they swarming already?" asked Nekhlyudov, also smiling, though he knew not why.

"They are swarming, Father Dmitri Nikolaevich," answered the old man, wishing to express his especial kindness by calling his master by his name and patronymic, "but they have just begun to do it properly. It has been a cold spring, you know."

"I have read in a book," began Nekhlyudov, warding off a bee that had lost itself in his hair, and was buzzing over his very ear, "that when the combs are placed straight on little bars, the bees begin to swarm earlier. For this purpose they make hives out of boards — with cross-bea —"

"Please do not wave your hand, it will make it only worse," said the old man. "Had I not better give you the net?"

Nekhlyudov was experiencing pain, but a certain childish conceit prevented him from acknowledging it?; he again refused the net, and continued to tell the old man about the construction of beehives, of which he had read in the "Maison Rustique," and in which the bees, according to his opinion, would swarm twice as much?; but a bee stung his neck, and he stopped confused in the middle of his argument.

"That is so, Father Dmitri Nikolaevich," said the old man, glancing at the master with fatherly condescension, "they write so in books. But they may write so maliciously. ' Let him do,' they probably say, ' as we write, and we will have the laugh on him.' I believe that is possible! For how are you going to teach the bees where to build their combs? They fix them in the hollow blocks as they please, sometimes crossways, and at others straight. Look here, if you please," he added, uncorking one of the nearest blocks, and looking through the opening, which was covered with buzzing and creeping bees along the crooked combs. "Now here, these young ones, they have their mind on a queen bee, but they build the comb straightways and aslant, just as it fits best into the block," said the old man, obviously carried away by his favourite subject, and not noticing the master's condition. "They are coming heavily laden to-day, it is a warm day, and everything can be seen," he added, corking up the hive, and crushing a creeping bee with a rag, and then brushing off with his coarse hand a few bees from his wrinkled brow. The bees did not sting him. But Nekhlyudov could no longer repress his desire to run out of the apiary?; the bees had stung him in three places, and they were buzzing on all sides about his head and neck.

"Have you many hives?" he asked, retreating to the gate.

"As many as God has given," answered Dutlov, smiling. "One must not count them, father! the bees do not like that. Now, your Grace, I wanted to ask you," he continued, pointing to thin hives that stood near the fence, "in regard to Osip, the nurse's husband. Could you not tell him to stop it? It is mean to act thus to a neighbour of your own village."

"What is mean? — But they do sting me!" answered the master, taking hold of the latch of the gate.

"Every year he lets out his bees against my young ones. They ought to have a chance to improve, but somebody else's bees steal their wax, and do other damage," said the old man, without noticing the master's grimaces.

"All right, later, directly," said Nekhlyudov, and, unable to stand the pain any longer, he rushed out of the gate, defending himself with both hands.

"Rub it in with dirt?; it will pass," said the old man, following the master into the yard. The master rubbed with dirt the place where he had been stung, blushingly looked at Karp and Iguat, who did not see him, and frowned angrily.

XVI

"I WANTED to ask your Grace about my children," said the old man, accidentally or purposely paying no attention to the master's angry look.

"What?"

"Thank the Lord, we are well off for horses, and we have a hired man, so there will be no trouble about the manorial dues."

"What of it?"

"If you would be kind enough to let my sons substitute money payment for their manorial labour, Ilyushka and Ignat would take out three troykas to do some teaming all summer. They may be able to earn something."

"Where will they go?"

"Wherever it may be," replied Ilyushka, who had in the meantime tied the horses under the shed, and had come up to his father. "The Kadma boys took eight troykas out to Eomen, and they made a good living, and brought back home thirty roubles for each troyka?; and they say fodder is cheap in Odessa."

"It is precisely this that I wanted to talk to you about," said the master, turning to the old man, and trying to introduce the discussion about the farm as deftly as possible. "Tell me, if you please, is it more profitable to do hauling than attend to a farm?"

"No end more profitable, your Grace!" again interrupted Ilya, boldly shaking his hair. "There is no fodder at home to feed the horses with."

"Well, and how much do you expect to earn in a summer?"

"In the spring, when fodder was dreadfully expensive, we travelled to Kiev with goods?; in Kursk we again took a load of grits for Moscow, and we made our living, the horses had enough to eat, and I brought fifteen roubles home."

"It is not a disgrace to have an honest trade," said the master, again turning to the old man, "but it seems to me one might find another occupation?; besides, it is a kind of work where a young fellow travels about, sees all kinds of people, and gets easily spoilt," he said, repeating Karp's words.

"What are we peasants to take up, if not hauling?" answered the old man, with his gentle smile. "If you have a good job at teaming, you yourself have enough to eat, and so have the horses. And as to spoiling, thank the Lord, they are not hauling the first year?; and I myself have done teaming, and have never seen anything bad, nothing but good."

"There are many things you might take up at home?: land and meadows —"

"How can we, your Grace?" Ilyushka interrupted him with animation. "We were born for this?; we know all about it?; the business is adapted to us, and we like it very much, your Grace, and there is nothing like teaming for us fellows."

"Your Grace, will you do us the honour to walk into the hut? You have not yet seen our new house," said the old man, bowing low, and winking to his son. Ilyushka ran at full speed into the hut, and Nekhlyudov followed him, with the old man.

XVII

When they entered the hut, the old man bowed again, wiped off the bench in the front corner with the flap of his coat, and, smiling, asked?:

"What may we serve to you, your Grace?"

The hut was white (with a chimney), spacious, and had both hanging and bench beds. The fresh aspen-wood beams, between which the moss-calking had just begun to fade, had not yet turned black?; the new benches and beds had not yet become smooth, and the floor was not yet stamped down.

A young, haggard peasant woman, with an oval, pensive face, Ilya's wife, was sitting on the bench-bed, and rocking with her foot a cradle that hung down from the ceiling by a long pole. In the cradle a suckling babe lay stretched out, and slept, barely breathing, and closing its eyes. Another, a plump, red-cheeked woman, Karp's wife, stood, with her sunburnt arms bared above the elbows, near the oven, and cut onions into a wooden bowl. A third, a pockmarked, pregnant woman, stood at the oven, shielding herself with her sleeve. The hut was hot, not only from the sun, but from the oven also, and was fragrant with freshly baked bread. From the hanging beds the flaxen heads of two boys and a girl, who had climbed there in expectation of dinner, looked down with curiosity at the master.

Nekhlyudov was happy to see this well-being?; but, at the same time, he felt embarrassed before these women and children who gazed at him. He sat down on the bench, blushing.

"Give me a piece of warm bread, I like it," he said, and blushed even more.

Karp's wife cut off a big slice of bread, and handed it to the master on a plate. Nekhlyudov was silent, not knowing what to say?; the women were silent, too?; the old man smiled gently.

"Really, what am I ashamed of? I am acting as though I were guilty of something," thought Nekhlyudov. "Why should I not make the proposition about the farm to him? How foolish!" But still he kept silent.

"Well, Father Dmitri Nikolaevich, what will your order be about the boys?" said the old man.

"I should advise you not to send them away, but to find work for them here," suddenly spoke Nekhlyudov, taking courage. "Do you know what I have thought out for you? Buy in partnership with me a young grove in the Crown forest, and fields —"

"How, your Grace? Where shall I get the money for it?" he interrupted the master.

"A small grove, for about two hundred roubles," remarked Nekhlyudov.

The old man smiled angrily.

"It would not hurt to buy it if I had the money," he said.

"Do you mean to tell me you have not that amount?" said the master, reproachfully.

"Oh, your Grace!" answered the old man, in a sorrowful voice, looking at the door. "I have enough to do to feed the family, and it is not for me to buy groves."

"But you have money, and why should it lie idle?" insisted Nekhlyudov.

The old man became greatly agitated?; his eyes flashed, he began to shrug his shoulders.

"It may be evil people have told you something about me," he spoke in a trembling voice, "but, as you believe in God," he said, becoming more and more animated, and turning his eyes to the image, "may my eyes burst, may I go through the floor, if I have anything outside of the fifteen roubles which Ilyushka has brought me, and I must pay the capitation tax, and, you know yourself, I have just built a new hut —"

"All right, all right!" said the master, rising from the bench. "Good-bye, people!"

XVIII

"My God! My God!" thought Nekhlyudov, making his way with long strides to the house through the shady avenues of the weed-grown garden, and absent-mindedly tearing off leaves and branches on his way. "Is it possible all my dreams of the aims and duties of my life have been absurd? Why do I feel so oppressed and melancholy, as though I were dissatisfied with myself, whereas I had imagined that the moment I entered on the path, I would continually experience that fulness of a morally satisfied feeling which I had experienced when these thoughts came to me for the first time?"

He transferred himself, in imagination, with extraordinary vividness and clearness, a year back, to that blissful moment.

He had risen early in the morning before everybody in the house, painfully agitated by some secret, inexpressible impulses of youth?; had aimlessly walked into the garden, thence into the forest?; and, amidst the strong, luscious, but calm Nature of a May day, he had long wandered alone, without thought, suffering from an excess of some feeling, and unable to find an expression for it.

His youthful imagination, full of the charm of the unknown, represented to him the voluptuous image of a woman, and it seemed to him that this was the unexpressed desire. But another higher feeling said to him, "Not this," and compelled him to seek something else. Then again, his vivid imagination, rising higher and higher, into the sphere of abstractions, opened up to him. as he thought, the laws of being, and he dwelt with proud delight upon these thoughts. And again a higher feeling said, "Not this," and again caused him to seek and be agitated.

Without ideas and desires, as always happens after an intensified activity, he lay down on his back under a tree, and began to gaze at the translucent morning clouds, which scudded above him over the deep, endless sky. Suddenly tears stood, without any cause, in his eyes, and, God knows how, there came to him the clear thought, which filled his soul, and which he seized with delight, — the thought that love and goodness were truth and happiness, and the only truth and possible happiness in the world. A higher feeling did not say, "Not this," and he arose, and began to verify his thought.

"It is, it is, yes!" he said to himself in ecstasy, measuring all his former convictions, all the phenomena of life, with the newly discovered and, as he thought, entirely new truth. "How stupid is all which I have known, and which I have believed in and loved," he said to himself. "Love, self-sacrifice, — these constitute the only true happiness which is independent of accident!" he repeated, smiling, and waving his hands. He applied this thought to life from every side, and he found its confirmation in life, and

in the inner voice which told him, "It is this," and he experienced a novel feeling of joyful agitation and transport. "And thus, I must do good in order to be happy," he thought, and all his future was vividly pictured to him, not in the abstract, but in concrete form, in the shape of a landed proprietor.

He saw before him an immense field of action for his whole life, which he would henceforth devote to doing good, and in which he, consequently, would be happy. He would not have to look for a sphere of action?: it was there?; he had a direct duty, — he had peasants —

What refreshing and grateful labour his imagination evoked?: "To act upon this simple, receptive, uncorrupted class of people?; to save them from poverty?; to give them a sufficiency?; to transmit to them the education which I enjoy through good fortune?; to reform their vices which are the issue of ignorance and superstition?; to develop their morality?; to cause them to love goodness — What a brilliant and happy future! And I, who will be doing it all for my own happiness, shall enjoy their gratitude, and shall see how with every day I come nearer and nearer to the goal which I have set for myself. Enchanting future! How could I have failed to see it before?

"And besides," he thought at the same time, "who prevents my being happy in my love for a woman, in domestic life?"

And his youthful imagination painted a still more entrancing future to him.

"I and my wife, whom I love as no one in the world has ever loved, will always live amidst this tranquil, poetical country Nature, with our children, perhaps with an old aunt. We have a common love, the love for our children, and both of us know that our destiny is goodness. We help each other to walk toward this goal. I take general measures, furnish general and just assistance, start a farm, savings-banks, factories; but she, with her pretty little head, in a simple white dress, lifted over her dainty foot, walks through the mud to the peasant school, to the hospital, to some unfortunate peasant, who really does not deserve any aid, and everywhere she consoles and helps — The children and the old men and women worship her, and look upon her as upon an angel, a vision. Then she returns home, and she conceals from me that she has gone to see the unfortunate peasant, and has given him money?; but I know everything, and I embrace her tightly, and firmly and tenderly kiss her charming eyes, her bashfully blushing cheeks, and her smiling ruddy lips —"

XIX

"Where are these dreams?" now thought the youth, as he approached his house after his visits. "It is now more than a year that I have been seeking happiness upon this road, and what have I found? It is true, at times I feel that I might be satisfied with myself, but it is a kind of dry, mental satisfaction. Yes and no, I am simply dissatisfied with myself! I am dissatisfied because I have found no happiness here, and yet I wish, I passionately wish for happiness. I have not experienced enjoyment, and have already cut off from me everything which gives it. Why? For what? Who has been better off for it? My aunt was right when she said that it is easier to find happiness than to give it to others.

"Have my peasants grown richer? Have they been morally educated and developed? Not in the least. They are not better off, but I feel worse with every day. If I only saw any success in my undertaking, if I saw gratitude — but no, I see the perverted routine, vice, suspicion, helplessness.

"I am wasting in vain the best years of my life," he thought, and it occurred to him that his nurse had told him that his neighbours called him a "minor "?; that there was no money left in his office; that the new threshing-machine, which he had invented, to the common delight of the peasants, only whistled but did not thresh, when it was for the first time set in motion in the threshing-barn, before a large audience?; that from day to day he might expect the arrival of the agrarian court in order to take an invoice of the estate, since he had allowed payments on the mortgage to lapse, in his preoccupation with all kinds of new farm undertakings.

And suddenly, just as vividly as before, came to him the picture of his walk through the forest, and the dream of a country life?; and just as vividly stood before him his student room in Moscow, in which he used to stay up late at night, by one candle, with his classmate and adored sixteen-year-old friend. They read and recited for hours in succession some tiresome notes of civil law, and, after finishing them, sent for supper, pooled on a bottle of champagne, and talked of the future that was in store for them. How differently the future had presented itself to a young student! Then the future was full of enjoyment, of varied activities, of splendid successes, and incontestably led both of them to the highest good in the world, as it then was understood by them, — to fame!

"He is walking, and rapidly walking, on that road," thought Nekhlyudov of his friend, "and I —"

At this time he had arrived at the entrance of the house, where ten or more peasants and domestics stood, waiting for the master with all kinds of requests, and he had to turn from his dreams to the reality before him.

Here was a ragged, dishevelled, and blood-stained peasant woman who complained in tears of her father-in-law, who, she said, wanted to kill her?; here were two brothers who had been for two years quarrelling about the division of their farm, and who looked upon each other with desperate malice?; here was also an unshaven, gray-haired servant, with hands quivering from intoxication, whom his son, the gardener, had brought to the master, to complain of his dissolute conduct?; here was a peasant who had driven his wife out of the house because she had not worked all the spring?; here was also that sick woman, his wife, who sat, sobbing and saying nothing, on the grass near the entrance, and displayed her inflamed, swollen leg, carelessly wrapped in a dirty rag —

Nekhlyudov listened to all requests and complaints, and he gave his advice to some, and settled the quarrels or made promises to others. He experienced a certain mixed feeling of weariness, shame, helplessness, and remorse, and walked to his room.

XX

In the small room which Nekhlyudov occupied, stood an old leather divan studded with brass nails, several chairs of the same description, an open antiquated card- table, with incrustations, indentations, and a brass rim, on which lay papers, and an antiquated, yellow, open English grand, with worn, narrow keys. Between the windows hung a large mirror in an old gilt carved frame. On the floor, near the table, lay stacks of papers, books, and accounts. The room bore altogether a disorderly aspect, and was devoid of character; and this living disorder formed a sharp contrast to the affected, old- fashioned, aristocratic arrangement of the other rooms of the large house.

Upon entering the room Nekhlyudov angrily threw his hat upon the table, and sat down on a chair which stood in front of the grand, and crossed his legs and dropped his head.

"Well, will you have your breakfast, your Grace?" said, upon entering the room, a tall, haggard, wrinkled old woman, in cap, large kerchief, and chintz dress.

Nekhlyudov turned around to take a look at her, and kept' silent for awhile, as though considering something.

"No, I do not care to, nurse," he said, and again became pensive.

The nurse angrily shook her head at him, and sighed.

"Oh, Dmitri Nikolaevich, why do you look so sad? There are greater sorrows, and they pass, — really they do —"

"But I am not sad. What makes you think so, Mother Malanya Finogenovna?" answered Nekhlyudov, trying to smile.

"Yes, you are. Don't I see it?" the nurse began to speak with animation. "You are day in, day out, all alone. And you take everything to heart, and attend to everything yourself. You have even quit eating. Is this right? If you only went to visit the city, or your neighbours, — but this is an unheard-of thing. You are young, so why should you worry about everything? Forgive me, sir, I will sit down," continued the nurse, seating herself near the door. "You have been so indulgent with them, that nobody is afraid of you. Is this the way masters do? There is nothing good in it. You are ruining yourself, and the people are getting spoilt. You know, our peasants do not understand what you are doing for them, really they don't. Why do you not go to see your aunty?; she wrote you the truth — "the nurse admonished him.

Nekhlyudov kept growing more and more despondent. His right hand, which was resting on his knee, fell flaccidly upon the keys. They gave forth a chord, a second, a third — Nekhlyudov moved up, drew his other hand from his pocket, and began to play. The chords which he took were sometimes unprepared, and not always correct?;

they were often common enough to be trite, and did not display the least musical talent; but this occupation afforded him a certain indefinable melancholy pleasure.

At every change of harmony, he waited in breathless expectancy what would come out of it, and, when something came, his imagination dimly supplied what was lacking. It seemed to him that he heard hundreds of melodies?: a chorus and an orchestra, in conformity with his harmony.

But he derived his chief pleasure from the intensified activity of his imagination, which at that time brought up before him, disconnectedly and fragmentarily, but with wonderful clearness, the most varied, mixed, and absurd images and pictures from the past and future.

Now he saw the bloated form of Davydka the White timidly blinking with his white eyelashes at the sight of his mother's black, venous fist?; his curved back, and immense hands covered with white hair, answering to all tortures and deprivations with patience and submission to fate.

Then he saw the nimble nurse, emboldened through her association with the manor, and he imagined her visiting the villages and preaching to the peasants that they must conceal their money from the proprietors?; and he unconsciously repeated to himself, "Yes, it is necessary to conceal the money from the proprietors!"

Then suddenly presented itself to him the blonde head of his future wife, for some reason in tears, and in great anguish leaning upon his shoulder.

Then he saw Churis's kindly blue eyes, tenderly looking down upon his only thick-bellied little son. Yes, he saw in him not only a son, but a helper and saviour. "This is love!" he whispered.

Then he recalled Yukhvanka's mother, and the expression of long-suffering and forgiveness which he had noticed upon her aged face, in spite of her prominent tooth and abhorrent features. "No doubt, I am the first one to have noticed this, in the seventy years of her life," he thought?; and he whispered, "It is strange," and continued unconsciously to run his fingers over the keys and to listen to the sounds they made.

Then he vividly recalled his flight from the apiary, and the expression of the faces of Ignat and Karp, who evidently wanted to laugh, but pretended that they did not see him.

He blushed, and involuntarily looked at his nurse, who remained sitting at the door, silently gazing at him, and now and then shaking her gray hair.

Suddenly there came to him the troyka of sweaty horses, and Ilyushka's handsome and strong figure, with his blond curls, beaming, narrow blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, and light- coloured down just beginning to cover his lip and chin. He remembered how Ilyushka was afraid he would not be permitted to go teaming, and how warmly he defended his cause, which he liked so well. And he saw a gray, misty morning, a slippery highway, and a long row of heavily laden, mat-covered three-horse wagons, marked with big black letters. The stout-legged, well-fed horses, jingling their bells, bending their backs, and tugging at their traces, pulled evenly up-hill, straining their legs so that the sponges might catch on the slippery road. Down- hill, past the train

of wagons, came dashing the stage, tinkling its little bells, which reechoed far into the large forest that extended on both sides of the road.

"Whew!" shouted, in a childish voice, the first driver, with a tin label on his lambskin cap, raising his whip above his head.

Karp, with his red beard and gloomy look, was striding heavily in his huge boots beside the front wheel of the first wagon. From the second wagon stuck out the handsome head of Ilyushka, who, at the early dawn, was making himself snug and warm under the front mat. Three troykas, laden with portmanteaus, dashed by, with rumbling wheels, jingling bells, and shouts. Ilyushka again hid his handsome head under the mat, and fell asleep.

Now it was a clear, warm evening. The plank gate creaked for the tired teams that were crowded in front of the tavern, and the tall, mat-covered wagons, jolting over the board that lay in the gate entrance, disappeared one after another under the spacious sheds.

Ilyushka merrily greeted the fair-complexioned, broad- chested landlady, who asked, "Do you come far? And will you have a good supper?" looking with pleasure at the handsome lad, with his sparkling, kindly eyes.

Now, having unharnessed the horses, he went into the close hut crowded with people, made the sign of the cross, sat down at a full wooden bowl, and chatted merrily with the landlady and his companions.

And then his bed was under the starry heaven, which was visible from the shed, and upon the fragrant hay, near his horses which, stamping and snorting, rummaged through the fodder in the wooden cribs. He walked up to the hay, turned to the east, and, crossing himself some thirty times in succession, over his broad, powerful breast, and shaking his bright curls, he said the Lord's Prayer, and repeated some twenty times the "Kyrie eleison," and, wrapping his cloak around body and head, slept the sound, careless sleep of a strong, healthy man.

And he saw in his dream the city of Kiev, with its saints and throngs of pilgrims?; Eomen, with its merchants and merchandise?; and Odessa and the endless blue sea with its white sails?; and the city of Constantinople, with its golden houses, and white-breasted, black-browed Turkish maidens?; and he flew there, rising on some invisible pinions. He flew freely and easily, farther and farther, and saw below him golden cities bathed in bright splendour, and the blue heaven with its pure stars, and the blue sea with its white sails, and he felt a joy and pleasure in flying ever farther and farther —

"Glorious!" Nekhlyudov whispered to himself, and the thought came to him, "Why am I not Ilyushka?"

Leo Tolstoy
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<archive.org/details/childhoodboyhood00tols>
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