

The Non-Fiction of Fyodor Dostoyevsky

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The Dream of a Queer Fellow

I

I am a queer fellow. They call me mad now. That would be a promotion, if I were not still the same queer fellow for them as before. But I'm not cross with them any more; now I love them all — even when they laugh at me, somehow I love them more than ever. I would laugh with them myself — not at myself, but for love of them — if it did not make me so sad to look at them; sad, because they do not know the truth, and I do. How hard it is for one man who knows the truth! But they won't understand this. They won't understand it.

Before, I used to suffer deeply, because I seemed queer. Not seemed, but was. I always was queer; perhaps I 've known it from the day of my birth. Perhaps when I was only seven I knew that I was queer. Afterwards I went to school, then to the university, and — well, the more I studied the more I discovered that I was queer. So that finally it seemed to me that all my university knowledge existed only to explain and prove to me, the deeper I plunged into it, that I was queer. Each day increased and strengthened my consciousness that I looked queer in every way. Everybody always laughed at me. But not one of them knew or guessed that if there was a man on earth who really knew how queer I was, that man was myself; their not knowing that was quite the most insulting thing of all, but there I was to blame. I was always so proud that nothing would induce me to confess that to any one. My pride increased with years, and I verily believe that if it had happened that I had allowed myself to confess that I was queer to any living soul, I would have blown out my brains with a revolver on the spot. Oh, how much I suffered as a youth for fear I might not be able to hold out, and might suddenly, somehow, confess to my comrades.

But since I became a young man, though each year I realised my awful nature more and more, for some reason I have been a little calmer. For some reason or other, I say, for even now I cannot define it. Perhaps because a terrible anguish had been born in my soul of one thing which was infinitely higher than the whole of me — it was the conviction that had descended upon me that it is all the same, everywhere on earth. I had suspected it long before, but the full conviction came somehow suddenly last year. I suddenly felt that it would be all the same to me if the world really existed, or if there was nothing anywhere. I began to feel with all my being that there had been nothing behind me. At first I thought that there really had been a great deal, but afterwards I guessed that even before there had been nothing, but it had only

seemed so, somehow. Little by little I became convince'd that there never would be anything. Then I suddenly stopped being angry with people, and began almost not to notice them. Indeed, that was shown in the most trivial things. It would happen, for instance, that I would walk in the street and knock into people. Not because I was lost in thought — what had I to think about, I had utterly ceased to think by then? — it was all the same to me. And as for solving questions; oh, I didn't solve one, yet what thousands there were! But it had become all the same to me, and all the questions disappeared.

Just after that, I learned the truth. I learned the truth last November, the 3rd of November last, and I remember every instant since that day. It was a gloomy night, the gloomiest night you can conceive. I was going home at about eleven o'clock, and I remember I thought that it would be impossible to find a gloomier hour. Even physically. It had poured with rain all day, the coldest and gloomiest rain; some of it, I remember, was positively menacing, manifestly hostile to humankind. Suddenly, at eleven o'clock it stopped, and a horrible dampness followed, damper even and colder than when the rain was pouring. A mist ascended from everything, from every stone in the street, and from every alley, when I looked away from the street into the depths. I suddenly thought that it would be comfortable if the gas went out, for the heart was sadder with the gas alight, because it lit up all those mists. That day I had had practically no food; from the early evening I had been sitting with an engineer I knew, who had two other friends with him. I was silent all the while, and I believe I bored them. They talked of something provocative and suddenly they became quite excited. But it was really all the same to them. I saw that. They were excited all for nothing. Suddenly I broke out: 'I say, gentlemen, . . . but it's all the same to you.' They were not offended, but they all began to laugh at me. That was because I spoke without any reproach, just because it was all the same to me. They saw it was all the same to me, and cheered up.

While I was thinking about the gas in the street, I glanced at the sky. The sky was terribly black, but I could clearly distinguish the ragged clouds, and between them bottomless spaces of black. Suddenly I caught sight of a little star in one of these spaces and began to stare at it. For the little star had given me an idea: I proposed to kill myself that night. I had firmly decided to kill myself two months before, and though I was very poor, I bought myself an excellent revolver and loaded it that very same day. Two months had passed since and it still lay in my drawer; it was so much the same to me that at last I longed to find a day when it would not be all the same, — why, I do not know. So, every night for these two months, as I returned home, I thought that I would shoot myself. But all the while I was waiting for the moment. Now the little star had given me the idea, and I decided that it would happen that night infallibly. But why the little star should have given me the idea — I do not know.

And just as I was looking at the sky, that girl suddenly caught me by the arm. The street was already empty; hardly a soul was in it. Far away, a cabman was asleep on his box. The girl was about eight years old, and wore a little shawl. She had no coat

and was wet through. But I particularly remember her wet, ragged boots; I remember them even now. They caught my eye particularly. She suddenly began to pull me by the arm and to cry out. She did not weep, but cried out some words abruptly somehow. She could not utter the words properly because she continually shivered all over from the cold. She was terrified by something and cried despairingly: ‘ Mother, Mother!’ I turned my face towards her, but did not speak. I walked on. But she ran and pulled at me. In her voice was the sound which with very frightened people means despair. I know that sound. Though she had not uttered the words, I realised that her mother was dying somewhere, or something had happened to them, and she had run out to call some one or find something to help mother. But I did not follow her; on the contrary, the idea suddenly came to me to drive her away. First, I told her to find a policeman. But she suddenly clasped her hands together and kept running at my side, sobbing and breathless, and would not leave me. Then I stamped my foot and shouted at her. She only cried out: ‘ Please, sir, sir . . .’; but suddenly she left me and rushed across the street. A passer-by appeared. Evidently she had rushed from me to him.

I climbed up to my fifth floor. I rent a room from the landlord: there are other rooms. My room is poverty-stricken and small. The window is an attic window, semi-circular. I have a sofa covered in American cloth, a table with some books, two chairs and an easy-chair, old, incredibly old, but still an easy-chair. I sat down, lit the candle, and began to think. Next door in the other room, behind the partition, pandemonium went on. It had been going on since the day before yesterday.

A retired captain lived there, and he had friends — about half a dozen beauties — who drank vodka, and played faro with old cards. Last night there was a scuffle, and I know that a couple of them pulled each other about by the hair for a long while. The landlady wanted to complain to the police, but she is terribly afraid of the captain. The only other lodger in our rooms is a small, thin, military lady, who is only passing through here, with three little children who have already got ill through being in the rooms. She and the children faint with fear of the captain: all night long they tremble and cross themselves, and the youngest child has had a fit from fright. I know for a fact that this captain sometimes accosts passers-by on the Nevsky Prospekt and begs. He is turned out of every office, but strange to say — this is the reason why I speak of him — for the whole month he has not aroused my resentment. From the very beginning, of course, I avoided his acquaintance: and he was bored by me at our very first meeting. But however loud they shouted behind the partition and however many of them there were — it was all the same to me. I sit up all night long, and really I do not hear them, so utterly do I forget them. Every night I do not sleep till dawn. That has been going on for a year. I sit in my easy-chair by the table all night and do nothing. I read books only in the daytime. I sit and do not even think, but even so some thoughts keep wandering, and I let them wander at will. The whole candle burns away during the night.

I sat by the table, took out the revolver, and put it in front of me. When I had put it there, I remember, I asked myself: ‘ Is it true? ‘ and I answered with absolute

conviction: ' Perfectly true' — that is, that I was going to shoot myself. I knew for certain that I would shoot myself that night, but how long I would sit by the table — that I did not know. I should certainly have shot myself, but for that little girl.

II

You see: though it was all the same to me, I felt pain, for instance. If any one were to strike me, I should feel pain. Exactly the same in the moral sense: if anything very pitiful happened, I would feel pity, just as I did before everything in life became all the same to me. I had felt pity just before: surely, I would have helped a child without fail. Why did I not help the little girl, then? It was because of an idea that came into my mind then. When she was pulling at me and calling to me, suddenly a question arose before me, which I could not answer. The question was an idle one; but it made me angry. I was angry because of my conclusion, that if I had already made up my mind that I would put an end to myself to-night, then now more than ever before everything in the world should be all the same to me. Why was it that I felt it was not all the same to me, and pitied the little girl? I remember I pitied her very much: so much that I felt a pain that was even strange and incredible in my situation. Really, I cannot give a more definite account of my momentary sensation; but it continued even when I reached home, when I had sat down to my table. I was more irritated than I had been for a long time. One thought followed another.

It seemed clear that if I was a man and not a cipher yet, and until I was changed into a cipher, then I was alive and therefore could suffer, be angry and feel shame for my actions. Very well. But if I were to kill myself, for instance, in two hours from now, what is the girl to me, and what have I to do with shame or with anything on earth? I am going to be a cipher, an absolute zero. Could my consciousness that I would soon absolutely cease to exist, and that therefore nothing would exist, have not the least influence on my feeling of pity for the girl or on my sense of shame for the vileness I had committed? But that was the very reason why I had stamped and shouted wildly at the poor child, as it were to show that not only did I feel no pity, but even if I should commit some inhuman vileness, then I had the right to do so, because in two hours everything would be extinguished. Do you believe that was why I shouted? Now I am almost convinced of it. It became clear to me that life and the world, as it were, depended upon me. I might even say that the world had existed for me alone. I should shoot myself, and then there would be no world at all, for me at least. Not to mention that perhaps there will really be nothing for any one after me, and the whole world, as soon as my consciousness is extinguished, will also be extinguished like a phantom, as part of my consciousness only, and be utterly abolished, since perhaps all this world and all these men are myself alone. I remember that as I sat and thought, I turned all these new, thronging questions to a completely different aspect, and excogitated something utterly new. For instance, one strange consideration suddenly presented itself to me. If

I had previously lived on the moon or in Mars, and I had there been dishonoured and disgraced so utterly that one can only imagine it sometimes in a dream or a nightmare, and if I afterwards found myself on earth and still preserved a consciousness of what I had done on the other planet, and if I knew besides that I would never by any chance return, then, if I were to look at the moon from the earth — would it be all the same to me or not? Would I feel any shame for my action or not? The questions were idle and useless, for the revolver was already lying before me, and I knew with all my being that this thing would happen for certain: but the questions excited me to rage. I could not die now, without having solved this first. In a word, that little girl saved me, for my questions made me postpone pulling the trigger. Meanwhile everything had begun to quiet down at the captain's. They had finished their cards, and had begun to settle themselves to sleep, grumbling and reviling each other at their leisure the while. Then I suddenly fell asleep in the easy-chair by the table, a thing which had never happened to me before. I fell asleep quite unconsciously.

Dreams are extraordinarily strange. One thing appears with terrifying clarity, with the details finely set like jewels, while you leap over another, as though you did not notice it at all — space and time, for instance. It seems that dreams are the work not of mind but of desire, not of the head but of the heart; and what complicated things my mind has sometimes contrived in a dream! In a dream things quite incomprehensible come to pass. For instance, my brother died five years ago. Sometimes I see him in a dream: he takes part in my affairs, and we are very excited, while I, all the time my dream goes on, know and remember perfectly that my brother is dead and buried. Why am I not surprised that he, though dead, is still near me and busied about me? Why does my mind allow all that? But enough of that. I will proceed to my dream. Yes, then it was I dreamed that dream, my dream of the 3rd of November. Now they tease me because it was only a dream. But is it not the same whether it was a dream or not, if that dream revealed the Truth to me? Surely if you once knew the Truth and saw her, then you would know that she is the Truth, and that there is not, neither could there be, another Truth, whether in sleep or wakefulness. Well, let it be a dream; nevertheless I wanted to extinguish by suicide this life that you praise so highly, while my dream, my dream — it announced to me a new life, great, renewed, and strong! Listen.

III

I said I had fallen asleep unconsciously, as it were still thinking about the same things. Suddenly I dreamed that I took the revolver and pointed it straight at my heart as I sat — at my heart and not at my head. Before I had firmly decided to shoot myself through the head — to be exact, through the right temple. Pointing it at my heart I waited a second or two. My candle, the table, and the wall in front of me suddenly began to move and shake. I pulled the trigger quickly.

In a dream you sometimes fall from a height, or your throat is cut, or you are beaten; but you never feel pain, unless, somehow, you really hurt yourself in bed. Then you will feel pain and nearly always will wake because of it. So it was in my dream: I felt no pain, but it seemed to me that with the report, everything in me was convulsed, and everything suddenly extinguished. It was terribly black all about me. I became as though blind and numb, and I lay on my back on something hard. I could see nothing, neither could I make any sound. People were walking and making a noise about me: the captain's bass voice, the landlady's screams. . . . Suddenly there was a break. I am being carried in a closed coffin. I feel the coffin swinging and I think about that, and suddenly for the first time the idea strikes me that I am dead, quite dead. I know it and do not doubt it; I cannot see nor move, yet at the same time I feel and think. But I am soon reconciled to that, and as usual in a dream I accept the reality without a question.

Now I am being buried in the earth. Every one leaves me and I am alone, quite alone. I do not stir. Before, when I imagined how I would really be buried in my grave, I always associated with it only the feeling of damp and cold. Now, too, I felt, that I was very cold, particularly in the tips of my toes, but I felt nothing besides.

I lay there and — strange to say — I expected nothing, accepting without question that a dead man has nothing to expect. But it was damp. I do not know how long passed — an hour, a few days, or many days. Suddenly, on my left eye which was closed, a drop of water fell, which had leaked through the top of the grave. In a minute fell another, then a third, and so on, every minute. Suddenly, deep indignation kindled in my heart and suddenly in my heart I felt physical pain. 'It's my wound,' I thought. 'It's where I shot myself. The bullet is there.' And all the while the water dripped straight on to my closed eye. Suddenly, I cried out, not with a voice, for I was motionless, but with all my being, to the arbiter of all that was being done to me.

'Whosoever thou art, if thou art, and if there exists a purpose more intelligent than the things which are now taking place, let it be present here also. But if thou dost take vengeance upon me for my foolish suicide, then know, by the indecency and absurdity of further existence, that no torture whatever that may befall me, can ever be compared to the contempt which I will silently feel, even through millions of years of martyrdom.'

I cried out and was silent. Deep silence lasted a whole minute. One more drop even fell. But I knew and believed, infinitely and steadfastly, that in a moment everything would infallibly change. Suddenly, my grave opened. I do not know whether it had been uncovered and opened, but I was taken by some dark being unknown to me, and we found ourselves in space. Suddenly, I saw. It was deep night; never, never had such darkness been! We were borne through space and were already far from the earth. I asked nothing of him who led me. I was proud and waited. I assured myself that I was not afraid, and my heart melted with rapture at the thought that I was not afraid. I do not remember how long we rushed through space, and I cannot imagine it. It happened as always in a dream when you leap over space and time and the laws of life

and mind, and you stop only there where your heart delights. I remember, I suddenly saw in the darkness one little star.

‘ Is it Sirius? ‘ I asked, suddenly losing control of myself, for I did not want to ask him anything.

‘ No, it is the same star which thou didst see returning home,’ replied the being who bore me away. I knew that he had, as it were, a human face. It is strange, but I did not love that being; I felt even a deep repugnance towards him. I had expected utter annihilation, and with that idea I had shot myself in the heart. And now I was in the power of a being, who was, of course, not human, but who was, and did exist. ‘ So there is life after the grave,’ I thought, with the strange light-heartedness of a dream. But the essence of my heart in all its depth remained to me. ‘ And if it is necessary to be once more,’ I thought, ‘ and to live again by some one’s inexorable will, then I will not be conquered and degraded!’

‘ Thou knowest that I do not fear thee: therefore thou dost despise me? ‘ I suddenly said to my companion, unable to restrain myself from a humiliating question in which was contained a confession, and I felt my humiliation like the stab of a needle in my heart. He did not answer my question, but suddenly I felt that I was not despised, neither laughed at, nor even pitied, but that our journey had an unknown and mysterious purpose which concerned myself alone. Fear grew in my heart. Some dumb yet painful influence reached me from my silent companion and penetrated me. We were rushing through dark and unknown spaces. I had long since ceased to see any constellation familiar to my eyes. I knew there were stars in the heavenly spaces, whose rays reach the earth only after thousands and millions of years. Perhaps we had already passed beyond those spaces. With terrible anguish that wore out my heart, I was expecting something. Suddenly a familiar yet most overwhelming emotion shook me through. I saw our sun. I knew that it could not be our sun, which had begotten our earth, and that we were an infinite distance away, but somehow all through me I recognised that it was exactly the same sun as ours, its copy and double. A sweet and moving delight echoed rapturously through my soul. The dear power of light, of that same light which had given me birth, touched my heart and revived it, and I felt life, the old life, for the first time since my death.

‘ But if it is the sun, the same sun as ours,’ I exclaimed, ‘ then where is the earth? ‘ And my companion pointed to the little star which twinkled in the darkness with an emerald radiance. We were borne straight towards it.

‘ And can there be such repetitions in the universe? Is that the law of nature. . . . And if it is the earth there, is it just the same earth as ours . . . the very same, poor, unhapp3r, dear, ever-beloved earth, that rouses the same painful love for her in her most ungrateful children, just as our own? ‘ . . . I cried, trembling with irresistible, rapturous love for my own earth of old that I had left. The image of the little girl I had wronged rose before me.

‘ You will see everything,’ replied my companion, and I could hear a note of sadness in his words. We were fast approaching the planet. It grew before my eyes. I could

already discern the ocean, the outlines of Europe. Suddenly a strange feeling of great and sacred jealousy was kindled in my heart.

‘ How can such a repetition be, and why? It’s only the earth that I love or can love, the earth which I left, which was sprinkled with my blood, when I, the ungrateful, put an end to my life with a pistol-shot. But never once, never once, did I cease to love the earth, and even on that -jglit when I parted from her, I loved her perhaps more poignantly than ever. Is there pain on this new earth? On earth we can love truly only with pain and only through pain! We cannot love otherwise, and we know no other love. I need pain in order to love. At this very moment, I want, I long, to melt into tears and kiss only that earth which I have left. I do not want, I will not accept, life on any other earth.’

But my companion had already left me. Suddenly, as it were quite unperceived by myself, I stood on that other earth in the bright light of a sunny day, beautiful as Paradise. I believe I stood on one of those islands which on our earth are the Greek Archipelago, or somewhere on the mainland coast near to that Archipelago. Oh, everything was exactly as on earth, but everything seemed to be bright with holiday, with a great and sacred triumph, finally achieved. The smiling emerald sea gently lapped the shores, kissing them with love, with manifest, visible, almost conscious love. Tall, splendid trees stood in all the glory of their bloom, and I am convinced that their innumerable leaves greeted me with a sweet, caressing sound, as though they uttered words of love. The grass was aflame with brilliant and sweet-scented colours. Flights of birds wheeled in the air, and fearlessly settled on my shoulders and my hands, joyfully tapping me with their dear, tremulous little wings. At last I saw and recognised the people of that happy land. They came to me themselves, thronged me about, and kissed me. Children of the sun, children of the sun — oh, how beautiful they were! Never on earth have I seen such beauty in man. In our children alone, in their very earliest years, one could perhaps find a remote and faint reflection of that beauty. The eyes of those happy people shone with a bright radiance. Their faces gleamed with wisdom, and with a certain consciousness, consummated in tranquillity; but their faces were happy. In their words and voices sounded a childlike joy. Oh, instantly, at the first glimpse of their faces I understood everything, everything! It was the earth as yet unpolluted by transgression; on it lived men who had yet known no sin. They lived in the same paradise in which, according to the universal tradition of mankind, our fallen ancestors once lived, save that here all the earth was everywhere one single paradise. Laughing joyfully they thronged me and caressed me; they led me to their homes, and each one of them wished to make me happy.

Oh, they asked me no questions; it seemed that they already knew all, and they wished to remove all trace of suffering from my face as quickly as they might.

IV

Again, grant that it was only a dream. But the sensation of the love of those beautiful and innocent people has remained with me for ever, and even now I feel that their love breathes upon me from yonder. I saw them with my own eyes, I came to know them, and to know that I loved them; afterwards I suffered for them. Oh, I knew immediately even then that in many things I would not understand them at all. To me, a modern Russian radical, and an abominable Petersburger, it seemed for instance unintelligible that, knowing so much, they yet did not possess our science. But I soon perceived that their knowledge was achieved and nourished by other intuitions than those we have on earth, and that their aspirations were quite other. They desired nothing, but were calm; they did not aspire to a knowledge of life, as we aspire to knowledge, because their life was fulfilled. But their knowledge was deeper and higher than our science, for our science seeks to explain what is life, she aspires to know life, that she may teach others how to live; but they, without science, knew how to live. That also I understood, but I could not understand their knowledge. They showed me their trees, but I could not understand the depth of love with which they looked at them; exactly as though they spoke with their fellows. And perhaps I should not be wrong if I said they did speak with them. Yes, they had found their language and I am convinced that the trees understood them. In the same way did they regard all nature — the animals which lived at peace with them, did not attack them, but loved them, subdued by their love. They pointed out the stars to me and told me something about them that I could not understand, but I am convinced that in some way they were in contact with the stars of heaven, having connection with them not by thought alone but in some physical way. Oh, they did not try to make me understand them; they loved me without that. But I knew they would never understand me, and therefore I hardly spoke to them of our earth. I only kissed the earth on which they lived, in their presence, and without words I adored them, and they saw it and let themselves be adored, and felt no shame that I adored them, because they loved much. They did not suffer for me when I in tears kissed their feet, joyfully knowing in my heart with how great power of love they would requite me. Sometimes I asked myself in amazement, how could it be that they should not have offended such an one as myself all this while, and never have aroused in me either jealousy or envy? Many times I asked myself, how could it be that I, a braggart and a liar, had not told them of my learning, of which, of course, they had no notion — how could it be that I had not wished to surprise them with it, even though only for the love I bore them? They were playful and happy as children. They wandered through their beautiful groves and forests, sang their lovely songs, fed on ambrosial food, the fruits of their trees, the honey of their forests, and the milk of the beasts that loved them. For their food and raiment they laboured but little and with ease. Love was amongst them and children were born, but never did I see amongst them the transports of that cruel sensuality which overtakes almost all men on our earth, and is the one source of nearly all their sins. They rejoiced in the children born

to them as in new partners of their bliss. There were no quarrels among them, neither any jealousy: they did not even understand what it meant. Their children were the children of all, because they were all one family. There was hardly any disease among them, though there was death; but their old folk died quietly, as though they fell asleep, surrounded by friends who took leave of them, whom they blessed and smiled upon, themselves well sped by their friends' bright smiles. At this parting I never saw sorrow, neither tears: there was only love, as it were multiplied to ecstasy, but to an ecstasy quiet, consummated, and full of contemplation. One could have believed that they still had communion with their dead even after death, and that their earthly union was not severed by the grave. They hardly understood me when I asked them concerning eternal life, but they were evidently so convinced of it that it was no question to them. They had no temples, but they had a real, living, and continual communion with the whole universe; they had no religion, but they had the firm knowledge that when their earthly joy had been consummated to the limit of their earthly nature, then would begin for them, living as well as dead, a yet greater expansion of their contact with the whole universe. They awaited this moment with joy, but without impatience, with no anguished longing for it, but already as it were partaking of it in the presentiments of their hearts which they communicated each to the other. In the evenings, before they went to rest, they loved to sing sweetly and harmoniously in chorus. In these songs they expressed all the feelings which the dying day had given them; they glorified it and bade it farewell. They glorified nature, the earth, the sea, the forests. They loved to make songs to each other, which rose from the heart and touched the heart. And not in songs alone, for it seemed that all their life was spent in mutual admiration. They were enamoured one of the other, completely, universally. Others of their solemn and exalted songs I could hardly understand at all. I understood the words, but I could never penetrate their deep meaning, which remained as it were inaccessible to my mind, but, unaccountably, my heart felt it only the more. I often told them that long ago I had had a presentiment of all this, that all their joy and praise had appeared to me while still upon our earth, with an anguish of yearning which sometimes reached intolerable pain; that I had anticipated them and their grace in the dreams of my heart and the visions of my mind; that often, on earth, I could not look toward the setting sun without tears . . . that in my hatred of the people on the earth was always anguish — why could I not hate them without loving them? Why could I not but forgive them; and in my love for them was also anguish: why could I not love them without hating them? They listened to me, and I saw that they could not understand what I said, but I did not regret that I had spoken to them of it: for I knew that they understood all the force of my anguish for those whom I had left. Yes, when they looked at me with their dear, love-suffused eyes, when I felt that in their presence my heart too had become as innocent and truthful as their own, then I did not regret that I did not understand them. My feeling of the completeness of their life deprived me of speech, and I revered them in silence.

Oh, every one now laughs in my face, and tells me that it is impossible even in a dream to see such details as I am telling now. They tell me that in my dream I saw or felt but one thing, begotten of my own heart in delirium, but that I myself created the particulars when I was awake. And when I said that perhaps it was so — my God, how they burst out laughing in my face, and what pleasure I gave them! Oh yes, of course, I was overcome by the sensation of that dream alone, and that alone remained whole in my bleeding heart: yet the real images and forms of my dream, which I indeed saw at the very moment of my dream, were perfected to such a harmony, were so enchanting and beautiful, and so true, that when I awoke I certainly could not clothe them in our weak words. Therefore they must needs have blurred in my mind, and perhaps I myself unconsciously was obliged to compose the details afterwards, of course distorting them, above all by reason of my passionate desire to tell it instantly even though only in part. But, for all that, how could I not believe that all these things had really been? It was perhaps a thousand times better, brighter, and more joyful than I have told. Let it be a dream, but yet all this could not but have really been. I will tell you a secret: perhaps all this was not a dream at all! For something happened, a thing to such a degree of horror true that it could not have belonged to a sleeping dream. Let my heart have begotten my dream, but could my heart alone have begotten the horrid truth, which happened afterwards? How could I alone have invented it or dreamed it within my heart? Could my paltry heart and my capricious, petty mind have risen to such a revelation of truth? Oh, judge for yourselves: hitherto I have concealed it, but now I will tell openly this truth also. I ruined them all!

V

Yes, yes, it ended with that. I corrupted them all! How could it have been achieved — I do not know, yet I remember clearly. The dream passed aeons away, and left in me only the sensation of the whole. I only know that the cause of the fall was I. Like a filthy germ, like an atom of pestilence, infecting whole peoples, so did I infect with my soul that happy land, that knew not sin before me. They learned to lie, and loved lying, and knew the beauty of lies. Oh, this perhaps began innocently, from a jest, from playfulness, in a loving game, perhaps indeed from an atom, but the atom of lie entered their hearts and they loved it. Soon was begotten voluptuousness, of voluptuousness — jealousy, of jealousy — cruelty. . . . Oh,

I do not know, I do not remember, but soon, very soon, the first blood was spilled. They were surprised and horrified and began to be disunited and to disperse. Unions appeared, but they were unions one against the other. Reproach and recrimination began. They came to know shame, and made of shame a virtue. The idea of honour was born and each union had its flag. They began to use the beasts ill, and the beasts withdrew into the woods and became their enemies. A war of disunion began, in which they fought for separation, for personality, for mine and thine. They began to speak

different tongues. They came to know and to love sadness; they longed for suffering and said that truth could be achieved by suffering alone. Then science appeared among them. When they were angered, they began to talk of brotherhood and humanity, and conceived those ideas. When they committed crime, they invented justice and prescribed for themselves whole codes of laws to maintain it, and to maintain the codes they set up a guillotine. Hardly, hardly did they remember what they had lost; they did not even want to believe that they had once been innocent and happy. They laughed even at the possibility of that old happiness and called it a dream. They could not even present it to themselves in forms and images, but it is strange and wonderful, that when they had lost all belief in their former happiness, calling it a legend, they conceived so great a desire to be innocent and happy again once more that they fell before the desire of their hearts like children, and worshipped this desire; they built many temples to it and began to pray to their ideal, to their own desire; though they fully believed it was impracticable and impossible, still they worshipped and adored it with tears. And yet if it could only have happened that they might return to the innocent and happy state which they had lost, and if some one had suddenly showed it to them and asked them if they wished to return to it, they would surely have refused. They would answer me: ‘ Grant that we are liars, evil, and unjust, we know that and weep for it, we torture and torment ourselves, and punish ourselves more hardly perhaps than even that merciful Judge, who will judge us and whose name we do not know. But we have science, and by her aid we will find the truth again, and this time we will accept her consciously. Knowledge is higher than feeling; the consciousness of life is higher than life. Science will give us wisdom; wisdom will reveal to us laws, and the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness.’ That is what they said, and after such words, each one loved himself above all others, neither could they do otherwise. Each one had become so jealous of his own individuality that he sought with all his might only to degrade and belittle it in others; therein he saw his life. Slavery appeared, even voluntary slavery; the weak readily submitted to the strong, with one aim alone, that the strong should help them to crush those yet weaker than themselves. Godly men appeared who came to these people with tears and spoke to them of their pride, of their lack of measure and harmony, of their loss of shame. They were laughed at and stoned with stones. Sacred blood flowed on the thresholds of the temples. Yet there began to appear men who pondered how they might be united in such a way that each, without ceasing to love himself most of all, might yet not stand in the way of others; they might live all together as it were in a united society. Whole wars were fought for this idea. All those who fought believed firmly that science and wisdom and the instinct of self-preservation would at last unite men into a harmonious and reasonable society; in the meanwhile, to help the work along, ‘ the wise’ tried to exterminate with all speed ‘ the foolish’ and those who did not understand their idea in order that they should not prevent its triumph. But the instinct of self-preservation quickly began to weaken. Proud and voluptuous men appeared who straightway demanded everything or nothing. To acquire all things they had recourse to murder, and if they failed, to

suicide. Religions appeared devoted to the cult of not-being and of self-destruction for the sake of eternal rest in nothingness. Finally these men became tired of their foolish labour, and on their faces showed suffering; and they proclaimed that suffering was beauty, since thought was in suffering alone. They praised suffering in their songs. I walked among them wringing my hands and wept over them; yet I loved them perhaps still more than when there was no suffering in their faces, and they were innocent and beautiful. I loved the earth which they had polluted more than when it was a paradise, for this alone that sorrow had appeared upon it. Alas, I have always loved sorrow and sadness, but for myself, myself alone, and I wept for them, pitying them. I stretched out my hands to them, accusing, cursing, and despising myself in my despair. I told them that this was all my work, mine alone; that it was I who had brought corruption, infection, and the lie among them! I implored them to crucify me on the cross, I taught them how to make a cross. I could not kill myself, I had not the power, but I wanted to submit to tortures from them, I yearned for torments, I longed that in those torments my last drop of blood should be spilled. But they only laughed at me, and at last began to think me mad. They defended me; they said they had only received that which themselves desired, and that everything that was, could not but have been. At last they declared to me that I was becoming dangerous to them, and that they would put me in a mad-house if I did not hold my peace. Their sorrow so mightily entered my soul that my heart shrank and I felt that I would die. . . . Then I awoke.

It was already morning; that is to say, day had not yet dawned, but it was six o'clock. I awoke in the same easy-chair, my candle was burnt out. They were asleep at the captain's, and all about was a stillness such as was seldom in our house. First, I jumped up in surprised astonishment. Nothing like it had ever happened to me before, it was strange even to the smallest details. For instance, I had never fallen asleep in my easy-chair. Then suddenly, while I stood regaining my senses, my loaded revolver suddenly appeared before me. But instantly I put it away from me. Oh, now — life, life! I lifted my hands and called upon the eternal truth, not called, but wept. Rapture, ineffable rapture exalted all my being. Yes, to live and — to preach! Oh, that very minute I decided to preach, yes, to preach all my life long. I would preach, I longed to preach — what? Truth, for I had seen her, seen her with my eyes, seen her in all her glory.

Since then I have preached. More than that, I love all men, above all those who laugh at me. Why is it so? I do not know, I cannot explain, but so let it be. They say already that I'm wandering: if he wanders now what will the end be! It's true. I wander, and perhaps it will be worse in the future. And of course I shall wander many times before I find out how to preach, with what words and deeds, for these are hard to find. Even now I see all this as clear as day; but listen. Who does not go astray? Yet all are tending to one and the same goal, at least all aspire to the same goal, from the wise man to the lowest murderer, but only by different ways. It is an old truth, but there is this new in it: I cannot go far astray. I saw the truth. I saw and know that men could be beautiful and happy, without losing the capacity to live upon the earth.

I will not, I cannot believe that evil is the normal condition of men. Yet all of them only laugh at my belief. But how could I not believe? I saw the truth, I did not invent it with my mind. I saw, saw, and her living image filled my soul for ever. I saw her in such consummate perfection that I cannot possibly believe that she was not among men. How can I then go astray? I shall wander, of course, more than once even, and I will perhaps even speak with another's words, but not for long. The living image of what I saw will be with me always, and will correct and guide me always. Oh, I am strong and fresh, I can go on, go on, even for a thousand years. You know at first I even wanted to conceal that I had corrupted them all, but it was a mistake — the first mistake, you see! But truth whispered to me that I was lying; she guarded and guided me. But how to make a paradise I do not know, because I cannot express it in words. After my dream I lost all my words, at least, all the important words, those I need most. But so let it be; I will go on and preach untiringly, because I saw plainly, although I cannot relate what I saw. But the mockers do not understand: 'He saw a dream, a delirious vision, a hallucination.' Ah, but is this really wise? A dream? What is a dream? Is not our life a dream? I'll say more! Let it be that this will never come to pass and there will be no paradise — that at least I understand — well, still I will preach. And it is so simple: in one day, in one hour, everything would be settled at once. The one thing is — love thy neighbour as thyself — that is the one thing. That is all, nothing else is needed. You will instantly find how to live. Though it is an old truth, repeated and read ten million times, yet it is discovered. 'The knowledge of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness — is higher than happiness' — that is what must be fought. And I will fight. If only every one wanted it, then everything would be right in an instant.

And the little girl I found. . . . I'll go to her, I'll go.

Pushkin

I

A Word of Explanation Concerning the Speech on Pushkin Published Below

My speech upon Pushkin and his significance, printed below, which forms the chief matter of this number of *The Journal of an Author* (the only number published in 1880), was delivered on the 8th of June of this year in the presence of a numerous audience at the grand meeting of the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature, and made a considerable impression. Ivan Scrgueyevich Aksakov, who there said of himself that all people considered him the leader of the Slavophiles, declared from the chair that my speech was ‘an event.’ I do not refer to this now to boast, but to say just this: if my speech is an event, then it is an event from one and only one point of view, which I will proceed to expound. That is the reason of this foreword. In my speech I endeavoured to emphasise only these four aspects of the value of Pushkin to Russia.

1. Pushkin with his profound insight, his genius, and his purely Russian heart, was the first to detect and exhibit the chief symptom of the sickness of our intellectual society, uprooted from the soil and raised above the people. He exhibited and set in relief before us our negative type, the disturbed and unsatisfied man, who can believe neither in his own country nor in its powers, who finally denies Russia and himself (that is, his own society, his own intellectual stratum, raised from our native soil), who does not want to work with others, and who suffers sincerely. Aleko and Onyegin were the fathers of a host of their similars in our literature. After them came the Pechorins, Tchichikovs, Rudins, and Lavrezkys, Bolkonskys (in Tolstoi’s *War and Peace*) and many others who by the mere fact of their appearance bore witness to the truth of the idea originally enunciated by Pushkin. All honour and glory to him, to his mighty mind and genius, who discovered the most sore disease of the society which had grown up amongst us after Peter’s great reform. To his skilful diagnosis we owe our knowledge and realisation of our disease, and it was he who first gave us consolation, for he gave us also the great hope that the disease is not mortal, but that Russian society could be cured, regenerated, and revived if it were bathed in the truth of the people, because². He was the first — the first indeed: none was before him — to give us artistic types of Russian moral beauty, which had sprung directly out of the Russian soul, which had its home in the truth of the people, in our very soil — these types did Pushkin trace out. To which bear witness Tatiana, a perfectly Russian woman, who guarded

herself from the monstrous lie; historical types, for instance the Monk and others in Boris Godunov; realistic types, as in *The Captain's Daughter*, and many other figures which appear in his poems, his stories, his memories, and even in his account of the riot at Pougachov. But what must be chiefly emphasised is that all these types of the positive beauty of the Russian and the Russian soul are wholly drawn from the spirit of the people. Now the whole truth must be said: not in our present civilisation, not in the so-called European culture (which, by the way, never existed with us), not in the monstrosities of European ideas and forms only outwardly assimilated, did Pushkin discover this beauty, but he found it in the spirit of the people alone. Thus, I repeat, having revealed the disease, he gave us also a great hope. 'Believe-in the spirit of the people, expect salvation from it alone, and you will be saved.' It is impossible not to come to this conclusion, when one has really gone deep into Pushkin.

3. The third aspect of Pushkin's significance which I wished to emphasise, is that most peculiar and characteristic trait of his artistic genius, one never met before — his capacity for universal sympathy, and for the most complete reincarnation in the genius of other nations, a reincarnation almost perfect. I said in my 'Speech' that there had been mighty world-geniuses in Europe: a Shakespeare, a Cervantes, a Schiller, but in none of them do we find this capacity — save in Pushkin alone. Not the sympathy only is here in point, but the astonishing completeness of the reincarnation. This capacity of course I could not help emphasising as the most characteristic peculiarity of his genius, which belongs to him alone of all the artists of the world, by which he differs from them all. I did not say it to belittle European geniuses so great as Shakespeare and Schiller: only a fool could draw a conclusion so foolish from my words. The universal comprehensibility and unfathomable depth of the types of Aryan man created by Shakespeare meet with no scepticism in me. And had Shakespeare created Othello really a Venetian Moor, and not an Englishman, he would only have added a halo of local, national peculiarity to his creation. But the universal significance of the type would have been the same, for in an Italian too he would have expressed what he wanted to say with the same power. I repeat, I did not want to diminish from the universal significance of a Shakespeare and a Schiller when I pointed out Pushkin's wonderful faculty for reincarnating himself in the genius of foreign nations: I only wanted to point out the great and prophetic indication for us in this faculty and its perfection, because⁴. This faculty is a completely Russian faculty, a national faculty. Pushkin only shares it with the whole Russian people; but as a perfect artist, he most perfectly expresses this faculty, in his sphere at least, in the sphere of his art. Our people does truly contain within its soul this tendency to universal sympathy and reconciliation; it has already given voice to it more than once in the two centuries since Peter's reforms. As I pointed out this capacity of our people I could not help showing that in this very fact is the great consolation of our future, our great, perhaps our greatest, hope, shining for us ahead. Above all, I showed that our aspiration after Europe, in spite of all its infatuations and extremes, was not only right and necessary in its basis, but also popular; it fully coincided with the aspirations of the national

spirit itself, and was without doubt ultimately a higher purpose also. In my very short speech I naturally could not develop my idea fully, but what I said at least seems to me clear. And people should not be indignant with me for saying: 'Perhaps our poor country will at the end say the new word to the world.' It is ridiculous to assert that we must complete our economic, scientific, and social development, before we can dream of saying 'new words' to such perfect organisms as the states of Europe. Indeed, I emphasise it in my 'Speech,' that I make no attempt to compare Russia with the western nations in the matter of economic or scientific renown. I say only that the Russian soul, the genius of the Russian people, is perhaps among all nations the most capable of upholding the ideal of a universal union of mankind, of brotherly love, of the calm conception which forgives contrasts, allows for and excuses the unlike, and softens all contradictions. This is not an economical, but a moral trait; and can any one deny that it is present in the Russian people? Can any one say that the Russian nation is only an inert mass, doomed to serve, only economically, the prosperity and development of the European intelligentsia which has lifted itself above the people; that the mass of the people in itself contains only a dead inertia, from which nothing can be expected, nor any hopes be formed? Alas, many people assert this, but I dared to proclaim something different. I repeat, I naturally could not prove 'this fancy of mine,' as I myself called it, circumstantially and fully; neither could I help pointing it out. To assert that our poor untidy country cannot harbour such lofty aspirations until it has become economically and socially the equal of the West, is simply absurd. In their fundamental substance at least the moral treasures of the spirit do not depend upon economical power. Our poor untidy land, save for its upper classes, is as one single man. The eighty millions of her population represent a spiritual union whose like cannot be found anywhere in Europe, and because of this alone, it is impossible to say that the land is untidy, it is strictly impossible to say even that it is poor. On the other hand, in Europe — this Europe where so many treasures have been amassed — the whole social foundation of every European nation is undermined, and perhaps will crumble away to-morrow, leaving no trace behind, and in its place will arise something radically new and utterly unlike that which was before. And all the treasures which Europe has amassed will not save her from her fall, for 'in the twinkling of an eye all riches too will be destroyed.' To this social order, infected and rotten indeed, our people is being pointed as to an ideal to which they must aspire, and only when they have reached it, should they dare to whisper their word to Europe. But we assert that it is possible to contain and cherish the power of a loving spirit of universal union even in our present economic poverty, and in poverty still greater than this. It can be preserved and cherished even in such poverty as there was after the Tartar invasion, or after the disasters of the 'Troublous Age' when Russia was saved solely by her national spirit of unity. Finally, if it is indeed required, in order to love mankind and preserve within ourselves a soul for universal unity; in order to have within ourselves the capacity not to hate foreign nations because they are not like us; in order to have the desire not to let our national feeling grow so strong that we should aim at getting

everything and the other nations be only so many lemons to be squeezed — there are nations of this spirit in Europe! — if to obtain all this, it is necessary, I repeat, that we should first become a rich nation and adapt the European social order to ourselves, then must we still slavishly imitate that European order which may crumble to pieces in Europe to-morrow? Will the Russian organism even now not be suffered to develop nationally by its own organic strength, but must it necessarily lose its individuality in a servile imitation of Europe? What is then to be done with the Russian organism? Do these gentlemen understand what an organism is? And they still talk of natural sciences. ‘The people will not suffer that,’ said a friend of mine on an occasion two years ago to a vehement Westernist. ‘Then the people should be destroyed!’ was the quiet and majestic answer. And he was not a person of no importance, but one of the leaders of our intellectuals. The story is true.

In these four aspects I showed Pushkin’s significance for us, and my ‘Speech’ made an impression. It did not make an impression by its merits — I emphasise this — nor by any talent in its exposition (wherein I agree with all my opponents, and do not boast), but by its sincerity, and I will even say by some irresistible power in the facts displayed, notwithstanding its brevity and incompleteness.

But wherein lay ‘the event,’ as Ivan Sergueyevich Ak^akov put it? In that the Slavophiles, or the Russian party so-called — we have a Russian party! — made an immense, and perhaps final step towards reconciliation with the Westernists, for the Slavophiles fully recognised the validity of the Westernist aspiration after Europe, the validity even of their most extreme enthusiasms and conclusions, and explained this validity by our purely Russian and national aspiration, which coincides with the national spirit itself. They explained the enthusiasms by historical necessity, by historical destiny, so that in the whole sum-total (if that sum-total is ever reckoned) it will appear that the Westernists have served the Russian land and spirit as much as all those purely Russian men who have sincerely loved their native land and hitherto perhaps too jealously guarded her from all the infatuations of ‘Russian foreigners.’ It was finally declared that all the friction between the two parties and all their unpleasant quarrels had been due to a misunderstanding. This perhaps might have been an event, for the representatives of the Slavophiles present fully agreed with the conclusions of my speech when it was ended. And I declare now — as I declared in my ‘Speech’ also — that the honour of this new step (for even a sincere desire for reconciliation is an honour), that the merit of this new word, if you will, belongs not to me alone, but to the whole Slavophile movement, to the whole spirit and tendency of our ‘party,’ that this was always clear to those who impartially examined the movement, and that the idea which I expressed had more than once been, if not expressed, at least indicated by the Slavophiles. My part was only to seize the opportune moment. Now this is the conclusion: if the Western is to accept our reasoning and agree with it, then of course all the misunderstandings between both parties will be removed, and the Westernists and the Slavophiles will have nothing to quarrel about, since, as Ivan Sergueyevich put it, ‘from this day forward everything has been cleared up.’ Naturally, from this

point of view my ‘ Speech ‘ would have been an event. But, alas! the word ‘ event’ was uttered in a moment of sincere enthusiasm by one side, but whether it will be accepted by the other side and not remain merely an ideal — that is another question. Together with the Slavophiles who embraced me and shook me by the hand on the platform as soon as I had finished my speech, there came up to me Westernists also, the leading representatives of the movement who occupy the principal rôles in it, above all at the present time. They pressed my hand with the same sincere and fervent enthusiasm as the Slavophiles, spoke of my speech as the work of genius, and repeated the word over and over again. But I am afraid, genuinely afraid, that this word was pronounced in the first rush of enthusiasm. Oh, I am not afraid that they will recant their opinion that my speech was the work of genius. I myself know that it was not, I was not at all deceived by the praise, so that from my whole heart I shall forgive them their disappointment in my genius. But it may happen that the Westernists, upon reflection, will say — mark well that I am not writing of those who pressed my hand, but of the Westernists in general—’ Ah,’

they will perhaps say (you hear; no more ‘ perhaps ‘)—’ Ah, you ‘ve agreed at last, after so much dispute and discussion, that our aspiration after Europe was justified and normal, you have acknowledged that there was truth on our side as well, and you have lowered your flag. Well, we accept your acknowledgment good-heartedly, and hasten to assure you that it is not at all bad on your part. At least it shows a certain intelligence in you, which indeed we never denied, with the exception perhaps of our stupidest members, for whom we have neither the will nor the power to be responsible, but . . .’ Here you see another ‘ but’ appears, and it must be explained immediately. ‘ The point is that your thesis and conclusion that in our enthusiasms we, as it were, coincided with the national spirit and were mysteriously guided by it — that proposition is still more than doubtful to us, and so an agreement between us once more becomes impossible. Please understand that we were guided by Europe, by her science, and by Peter’s reforms, but not by the spirit of the people at all, for we neither met nor scented this spirit on our way; on the contrary, we left it behind and ran away from it as soon as we could. From the very outset we went our way independently, and did not in the least follow some instinct or other which is leading the Russian people to universal sympathy and the unification of mankind — to all that you have just talked so much about. In the Russian people, for the time has come to speak perfectly frankly, we see, as before, only an inert mass, from which we have nothing to learn, which, on the contrary, hinders Russia’s development towards something better, and must be wholly recreated and remade — if it is impossible organically, then mechanically at least — by simply making them obey us once for all. And to obtain this obedience we must adopt the social order just as it is in European countries, which we were discussing just now. Strictly speaking, our nation is poor and untidy, as it always has been, and can have neither individuality nor ideal. The whole history of our people is absurd, from which you have deduced the devil knows what, while we alone have looked at it soberly. It is necessary that a people like ours should have no history, and that what

it has in the shape of a history should be utterly forgotten by it in disgust. Only an intellectual society must have a history, and this society the people must serve, and only serve, with its labour and powers.

‘ Don’t worry and don’t shout! We don’t want to enslave our people when we talk of making it obey, of course not. Please don’t rush to such conclusions. We are humane, we are Europeans, you know that as well as we. On the contrary, we intend to develop our people gradually, in due order, and to crown our edifice by raising up the people to ourselves and by remaking its nationality into something different which will appear when its development is complete. We will lay the foundations of education and begin whence we ourselves started, with the renunciation of all the past, and with the damnation’to which the people must itself deliver up its past. The moment we have taught one of the people to read and write, we shall immediately make him scent the delights of Europe, we will seduce him with Europe,

by the refinement of European life, of European,customs, clothes, drinks,.dances — in a word, we will make him ashamed of his bast shoes and his kvass, ashamed of his old songs, and though there are many excellent, musical songs among them, we will make him sing vaudeville, no matter how furious you may be. In brief, for the good purpose, by any and every means, we will first work on the weak springs of his character, just as it has been in our case, and then the people will be ours. He will be ashamed of his past and will curse it. He who curses his past — is ours! — that is our formula. We will apply it to the full when we begin to raise up the people to ourselves. And if the people prove itself incapable of enlightenment, then “ remove the people.” For then it will be clearly shown that our people is only a worthless and barbarous horde, only to be made to obey. For what else is there to be done? Truth exists in the intellectuals and in Europe alone, and therefore though you have eighty million people — you seem to boast of it — all these millions must first serve this European truth, since there is not and cannot be another truth. You won’t frighten us with your millions. That is our permanent conclusion, though you have it now in its nakedness. We abide by it. We cannot accept your conclusions and talk together, for instance, about such a strange thing as the PravoslaviS1 and its so-called particular significance. We hope at least that you will not expect it of us, above all at a time when the last word of Europe and European Science is an enlightened and humane atheism, and we can but follow Europe. 1 The idea of the Orthodox Faith.

‘ Therefore — well — we agree to accept with certain limitations that half of your speech in which you pay us compliments: yes, we will do you this kindness. As for the other half which refers to you and those “ principles “ of yours, please forgive us, but we cannot accept it.’

Such is the sad conclusion possible. I repeat, not only would I not venture to put this conclusion into the mouths of the Westernists who pressed my hand, but not even into the mouths of a very great number of the most enlightened among them, Russian workers and perfect Russians, and, in spite of their theories, respectable and esteemed Russian citizens. But the mass, the great mass of those who have been uprooted, the

outcasts, your Westernists, the average, the men in the street, through which the ideal is being dragged — all these rank and file of ‘ the tendency,’ as many as the sand of the sea, will say something of the kind, perhaps have already said it. (Concerning religion, for instance, one paper has already said, with its peculiar wit, that the aim of the Slavophiles is to rebaptize all Europe into orthodoxy.) But let us throw off gloomy thoughts and place our hope in the leaders of Europeanism. If they will accept only one half of our conclusions and our hopes in them, then honour and glory to them, and we shall meet them with full hearts. If they accept only one half, and acknowledge the independence and the individuality of the Russian spirit, the justification of its being, and its humane tendency to universal unity, even then there will be nothing left to quarrel about, at least nothing of fundamental importance. Then my ‘ Speech ‘ would really serve for the foundation of a new event — not the ‘ Speech ‘ itself, I repeat for the last time, (it is not worthy of such a name), but the solemn celebration of the mighty Pushkin, which was the occasion of our union — a union now of all sincere and enlightened Russians for the great purpose of the future.

II

A SPEECH DELIVERED ON 8TH JUNE 1880 AT THE MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF LOVERS OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

Pushkin is an extraordinary phenomenon, and, perhaps, the unique phenomenon of the Russian spirit, said Gogol. I will add, ‘ and a prophetic phenomenon.’ Yes, in his appearing there is contained for all us Russians, something incontestably prophetic. Pushkin arrives exactly at the beginning of our true self-consciousness, which had only just begun to exist a whole century after Peter’s reforms, and Pushkin’s coming mightily aids us in our dark way by a new guiding light. In this sense Pushkin is a presage and a prophecy.

I divide the activity of our great poet into three periods. I speak now not as a literary critic. I dwell on Pushkin’s creative activity only to elucidate my conception of his prophetic significance to us, and the meaning I give the word prophecy. I would, however, observe in passing that the periods of Pushkin’s activity do not seem to me to be marked off from each other by firm boundaries. The beginning of Eugene Onyegin, for instance, in my opinion belongs still to the first period, while Onyegin ends in the second period when Pushkin had already found his ideals in his native land, had taken them to his heart and cherished them in his loving and clairvoyant soul. It is said that in his first period Pushkin imitated European poets, Parny and Andre Chenier, and above all, Byron. Without doubt the poets of Europe had a great influence upon the development of his genius, and they maintained their influence all through his life. Nevertheless, even the very earliest poems of Pushkin were not mere imitations, and in them the extraordinary independence of his genius was expressed. In an imitation there never appears such individual suffering and such depths of self-consciousness as

Pushkin displayed, for instance, in *The Gipsies*, a poem which I ascribe in its entirety to his first period; not to mention the creative force and impetuosity which would never have been so evident had his work been only imitation. Already, in the character of Aleko, the hero of *The Gipsies*, is exhibited a powerful, profound, and purely Russian idea, later to be expressed in harmonious perfection in *Onyegin*, where almost the same Aleko appears not in a fantastic light, but as tangible, real and comprehensible. In Aleko Pushkin had already discovered, and portrayed with genius, the unhappy wanderer in his native land, the Russian sufferer of history, whose appearance in our society, uprooted from among the people, was a historic necessity. The type is true and perfectly rendered, it is an eternal type, long since settled in our Russian land. These homeless Russian wanderers are wandering still, and the time will be long before they disappear. If they in our day no longer go to gipsy camps to seek their universal ideals in the wild life of the Gipsies and their consolation away from the confused and pointless life of our Russian intellectuals, in the bosom of nature, they launch into Socialism, which did not exist in Aleko's day, they march with a new faith into another field, and there work zealously, believing, like Aleko, that they will by their fantastic occupations obtain their aims and happiness, not for themselves alone, but for all mankind. For the Russian wanderer can find his own peace only in the happiness of all men; he will not be more cheaply satisfied, at least while it is still a matter of theory. It is the same Russian man who appears at a different time. This man, I repeat, was born just at the beginning of the second century after Peter's great reforms, in an intellectual society, uprooted from among the people. Oh, the vast majority of intellectual Russians in Pushkin's time were serving then as they are serving now, as civil servants, in government appointments, in railways or in banks, or earning money in whatever way, or engaged in the sciences, delivering lectures — all this in a regular, leisurely, peaceful manner, receiving salaries, playing whist, without any longing to escape into gipsy camps or other places more in accordance with our modern times. They go only so far as to play the liberal, 'with a tinge of European Socialism,' to which Socialism is given a certain benign Russian character — but it is only a matter of time: What if one has not yet begun to be disturbed, while another has already come up against a bolted door and violently beaten his head against it? The same fate awaits all men in their turn, unless they walk in the saving road of humble communion with the people. But suppose that this fate does not await them all: let the chosen suffice, let only a tenth part be disturbed lest the vast majority remaining should find no rest through them. Aleko, of course, is still unable to express his anguish rightly: with him everything is still somehow abstract; he has only a yearning after nature, a grudge against high society, aspirations for all men, lamentations for the truth, which some one has somewhere lost, and he can by no means find. Wherein is this truth, where and in what she could appear, and when exactly she was lost, he, of course, cannot say, but he suffers sincerely. In the meantime a fantastic and impatient person seeks for salvation above all in external phenomena; and so it should be. Truth is as it were somewhere outside himself, perhaps in some other European land, with their firm and

historical political organisations and their established social and civil life. And he will never understand that the truth is first of all within himself. How could he understand this? For a whole century he has not been himself in his own land. He has forgotten how to work, he has no culture, he has grown up like a convent schoolgirl within closed walls, he has fulfilled strange and unaccountable duties according as he belonged to one or another of the fourteen classes into which educated Russian society is divided. For the time being he is only a blade of grass torn from the roots and blown through the air. And he feels it, and suffers for it, suffers often acutely! Well, what if, perhaps belonging by birth to the nobility and probably possessing serfs, he allowed himself a nobleman's liberty, the pleasant fancy of being charmed by men who live 'without laws,' and began to lead a performing bear in a gipsy camp? Of course a woman, 'a wild woman,' as a certain poet says, would be most likely to give him hope of a way out of his anguish, and with an easy-going, but passionate belief, he throws himself into the arms of Zemphira. 'Here is my way of escape; here I can find my happiness, here in the bosom of nature far from the world, here with people who have neither civilisation nor law.' And what happens? He cannot endure his first collision with the conditions of this wild nature, and his hands are stained with blood. The wretched dreamer was not only unfitted for universal harmony, but even for gipsies, and they drive him away — without vengeance, without malice, with simple dignity.

Leave us, proud man.

We are wild and without law,

We torture not, neither do we punish.

This is, of course, all fantastic, but the proud man is real, his image sharply caught. Pushkin was the first to seize the type, and we should remember this. Should anything happen in the least degree not to his liking, he is ready to torment cruelly and punish for the wrong done to him, or, more comfortable still, he will remember that he belongs to one of the fourteen classes, and will himself call upon — this has happened often — the torturing and punishing law, if only his private wrong may be revenged. No, this poem of genius is not an imitation! Here already is whispered the Russian solution of the question, 'the accursed question,' in accordance with the faith and justice of the people. 'Humble yourself, proud man, and first of all break down your pride. Humble yourself, idle man, and first of all labour on your native land' — that is the solution according to the wisdom and justice of the people. 'Truth is not outside thee, but in thyself. Find thyself in thyself, subdue thyself to thyself, be master of thyself and thou wilt see the truth. Not in things is this truth, not outside thee or abroad, but first of all in thine own labour upon thyself. If thou conquer and subdue thyself, then thou wilt be freer than thou hast ever dreamed, and thou wilt begin a great work and make others free, and thou wilt see happiness, for thy life will be fulfilled and thou wilt at the last understand thy people and its sacred truth. Not with the Gipsies nor elsewhere is universal harmony, if thou thyself art first unworthy of her, malicious and proud, and thou dost demand life as a gift, not even thinking, that man must pay for her.' This solution of the question is strongly foreshadowed in Pushkin's poem. Still

more clearly is it expressed in Eugene Onyegin, which is not a fantastic, but a tangible and realistic poem, in which the real Russian life is embodied with a creative power and a perfection such as had not been before Pushkin and perhaps never after him.

Onyegin comes from Petersburg. Certainly from Petersburg: it is beyond all doubt necessary to the poem, and Pushkin could not omit that all-important realistic trait in the life of his hero. I repeat, he is the same Aleko, particularly when later on in the poem he cries in anguish:

Why am I not, like the assessor of Tula, Stricken with palsy?

But now at the beginning of the poem he is still half a coxeomb and a man of the world; he had lived too little to be utterly disappointed in life. But he is already visited and disturbed by The demon lord of hidden weariness.

In a remote place, in the heart of his mother country, he is of course an exile in a foreign land. He does not know what to do and is somehow conscious of his own quest. Afterwards, wandering over his native country and over foreign lands, he, beyond doubt clever and sincere, feels himself among strangers, still more a stranger to himself. True, he loves his native land, but he does not trust in it. Of course he has heard of national ideals, but he does not believe in them. He only believes in the utter impossibility of any work whatever in his native land, and upon those who believe in this possibility — then, as now, but few — he looks with sorrowful derision. He had killed Lensky out of spleen, perhaps from spleen born of yearning for the universal ideal — that is quite like us, quite probable.

Tatiana is different. She is a strong character, strongly standing on her own ground. She is deeper than Onyegin and certainly wiser than he. With a noble instinct she divines where and what is truth, and her thought finds expression in the finale of the poem. Perhaps Pushkin would even have done better to call his poem Tatiana, and not Onyegin, for she is indubitably the chief character. She is positive and not negative, a type of positive beauty, the apotheosis of the Russian woman, and the poet destined her to express the idea of his poem in the famous scene of the final meeting of Tatiana with Onyegin. One may even say that so beautiful or positive a type of the Russian woman has never been created since in our literature, save perhaps the figure of Liza in Turgeniev's *A Nest of Gentlefolk*. But because of his way of looking down upon people, Onyegin did not even understand Tatiana when he met her for the first time, in a remote place, under the modest guise of a pure, innocent girl, who was at first so shy of him. He could not see the completeness and perfection of the poor girl, and perhaps he really took her for a 'moral embryo.' She, the embryo! She, after her letter to Onyegin! If there is a moral embryo in the poem, it is he himself, Onyegin, beyond all debate. And he could not comprehend her. Does he know the human soul? He has been an abstract person, a restless dreamer, all his life long. Nor does he comprehend her later in Petersburg, as a grand lady, when in the words of his own letter to her 'he in his soul understood all her perfections.' But these are only words. She passed through his life unrecognised by him and unappreciated: therein is the tragedy of their love. But if at his first meeting with her in the village Childe Harold had arrived from England, or

even, by a miracle, Lord Byron himself, and had noticed her timid, modest beauty and pointed her out to him, oh, Onyegin would have been instantly struck with admiration, for in these universal sufferers there is sometimes so much spiritual servility! But this did not happen, and the seeker after universal harmony, having read her a sermon, and having done very honestly by her, set off with his universal anguish and the blood of his friend, spilt in foolish anger, on his hands, to wander over his mother country, blind to her;

and, bubbling over with health and strength, he exclaims with an oath:

I am yet young and life is strong in me,

Yet what awaits me? — anguish, anguish, anguish.

This Tatiana understood. In the immortal lines of the romance the poet represented her coming to see the house of the man who is so wonderful and still so incomprehensible to her. I do not speak of the unattainable artistic beauty and profundity of the lines. She is in his study; she looks at his books and possessions; she tries through them to understand his soul, to solve her enigma, and * the moral embryo ‘ at last pauses thoughtfully, with a foreboding that her riddle is solved, and gently whispers:

Perhaps he is only a parody?

Yes, she had to whisper this; she had divined him. Later, long afterwards in Petersburg, when they meet again, she knows him perfectly. By the way, who was it that said that the life of the court and society had affected her soul for the worse, and that her new position as a lady of fashion and her new ideas were in part the reason for her refusing Onyegin? This is not true. No, she is the same Tanya, the same country Tanya as before! She is not spoiled; on the contrary, she is tormented by the splendid life of Petersburg, she is worn down by it and suffers: she hates her position as a lady of society, and whoever thinks otherwise of her, has no understanding of what Pushkin wanted to say. Now she says firmly to Onyegin:

Now am I to another given: To him I will be faithful unto death.

She said this as a Russian woman, indeed, and herein is her apotheosis. She expresses the truths of the poem. I shall not say a word of her religious convictions, her views on the sacrament of marriage — no, I shall not touch upon that. But then, did she refuse to follow him although she herself had said to him ‘ I love you ‘? Did she refuse because she, ‘ as a Russian woman ‘ (and not a Southern or a French woman), is incapable of a bold step or has not the power to sacrifice the fascination of honours, riches, position in society, the conventions of virtue? No, a Russian woman is brave. A Russian woman will boldly follow what she believes, and she has proved it. But she ‘ is to another given; to him she will be faithful unto death.’ To whom, to what will she be true? To what obligations be faithful? Is it to that old general whom she cannot possibly love, whom she married only because ‘ with tears and adjurations her mother did beseech her,’ and in her wronged and wounded soul was there then only despair and neither hope nor ray of light at all? Yes, she is true to that general, to her husband, to an honest man who loves her, respects her, and is proud of her. Her mother ‘ did beseech her,’ but it was she and she alone who consented, she herself

swore an oath to be his faithful wife. She married him out of despair. But now he is her husband, and her perfidy will cover him with disgrace and shame and will kill him. Can any one build his happiness on the unhappiness of another? Happiness is not in the delights of love alone, but also in the spirit's highest harmony. How could the spirit be appeased if behind it stood a dishonourable, merciless, inhuman action? Should she run away merely because her happiness lay therein? What kind of happiness would that be, based on the unhappiness of another? Imagine that you yourself are building a palace of human destiny for the final end of making all men happy, and of giving them peace and rest at last. And imagine also that for that purpose it is necessary and inevitable to torture to death one single human being, and him not a great soul, but even in some one's eyes a ridiculous being, not a Shakespeare, but simply an honest old man, the husband of a young wife in whom he believes blindly, and whom, although he does not know her heart at all, he respects, of whom he is proud, with whom he is happy and at rest. He has only to be disgraced, dishonoured, and tortured, and on his dishonoured suffering your palace shall be built! Would you consent to be the architect on this condition? That is the question. Can you for one moment admit the thought that those for whom the building had been built would agree to receive that happiness from you, if its foundation was suffering, the suffering of an insignificant being perhaps, but one who had been cruelly and unjustly put to death, even if, when they had attained that happiness, they should be happy for ever? Could Tatiana's great soul, which had so deeply suffered, have chosen otherwise? No, a pure, Russian soul decides thus: Let me, let me alone be deprived of happiness, let my happiness be infinitely greater than the unhappiness of this old man, and finally let no one, not this old man, know and appreciate my sacrifice: but I will not be happy through having ruined another. Here is a tragedy in act, the line cannot be passed, and Tatiana sends Onyegin away.

It may be said: But Onyegin too is unhappy. She has saved one, and ruined the other. But that is another question, perhaps the most important in the poem. By the way, the question, Why did not Tatiana go away with Onyegin? has with us, in our literature at least, a very characteristic history, and therefore I have allowed myself to dwell upon it. The most characteristic thing is that the moral solution of the question should have been so long subject to doubt. I think that even if Tatiana had been free and her old husband had died and she become a widow, even then she would not have gone away with Onyegin. But one must understand the essential substance of the character. She sees what he is. The eternal wanderer has suddenly seen the woman whom he had previously scorned in a new and unattainable setting. In this setting is perhaps the essence of the matter. The girl whom he almost despised is now adored by all society — society, the awful authority for Onyegin, for all his universal aspirations. That is why he throws himself, dazzled, at her feet. Here is my ideal, he cries, - here is my salvation, here is the escape from my anguish. I did not see her then, when 'happiness was so possible, so near.' And as before Aleko turned to Zemphira, so does Onyegin turn to Tatiana, seeking in his new, capricious fancy the solution of all his questions.

But does not Tatiana see this in him, had she not seen it long ago? She knows beyond a doubt that at bottom he loves his new caprice, and not her, the humble Tatiana as of old. She knows that he takes her for something else, and not for what she is, that it is not her whom he loves, that perhaps he does not love any one, is incapable of loving any one, although he suffers so acutely. He loves a caprice, but he himself is a caprice. If she were to follow him, then to-morrow he would be disillusioned and look with mockery upon his infatuation. He has no root at all, he is a blade of grass, borne on the wind. She is otherwise: even in her despair, in the painful consciousness that her life has been ruined, she still has something solid and unshakable upon which her soul may bear. These are the memories of her childhood, the reminiscences of her country, her remote village, in which her pure and humble life had begun: it is the woven shade of branches that o'erhang her nurse's grave.

Oh, these memories and the pictures of the past are most precious to her now; these alone are left to her, but they do save her soul from final despair. And this is not a little, but rather much, for there is here a whole foundation, unshakable and indestructible. Here is contact with her own land, with her own people, and with their sanctities. And he — what has he and what is he? Nothing, that she should follow him out of compassion, to amuse him, to give him a moment's gift of a mirage of happiness out of the infinite pity of her love, knowing well beforehand that to-morrow he would look on his happiness with mockery. No, these are deep, firm souls, which cannot deliberately give their sanctities to dishonour, even from infinite compassion. No, Tatiana could not follow Onyegin.

Thus in Onyegin, that immortal and unequalled poem, Pushkin was revealed as a great national writer, unlike any before him. In one stroke, with the extreme of exactness and insight, he defined the very inmost essence of our high society that stands above the people. He defined the type of the Russian wanderer before our day and in our day; he was the first to divine him, with the flair of genius, to divine his destiny in history and his enormous significance in our destiny to be. Side by side he placed a type of positive and indubitable beauty in the person of a Russian woman. Besides, of course, he was the first Russian writer to show us, in his other works of that period, a whole gallery of positively beautiful Russian types, finding them in the Russian people. The paramount beauty of these lies in their truth, their tangible and indubitable truth. It is impossible to deny them, they stand as though sculptured. I would remind you again. I speak not as a literary critic, and therefore do not intend to elucidate my idea by a particular and detailed literary discussion of these works of the poet's genius. Concerning the type of the Russian monkish ehronieler, for instance, a whole book might be written to show the importance and meaning for us of this lofty Russian figure, discovered by Pushkin in the Russian land, portrayed and sculptured by him, and now eternally set before us in its humble, exalted, indubitable spiritual beauty, as the evidence of that mighty spirit of national life which can send forth from itself figures of such certain loveliness. This type is now given; he exists, he cannot be disputed; it cannot be said that he is only the poet's fancy and ideal. You yourself see

and agree: Yes, he exists, therefore the spirit of the nation which created him exists also, therefore the vital power of this spirit exists and is mighty and vast. Throughout Pushkin sounds a belief in the Russian character, in its spiritual might; and if there is belief, there is hope also, the great hope for the man of Russia.

In the hope of glory and good I look without fear ahead,
said the poet himself on another occasion; but the words may be applied directly to the whole of his national, creative activity. And yet no single Russian writer, before or after him, did ever associate himself so intimately and fraternally with his people as Pushkin. Oh, we have a multitude of experts on the people among our writers, who have written about the people, with talent and knowledge and love, and yet if we compare them with Pushkin, then in reality, with one or at most two exceptions among his latest followers, they will be found to be only ‘gentlemen’ writing about the masses. Even in the most gifted of them, even in the two exceptions I have just mentioned, sometimes appears a sudden flash of something haughty, something from another life and world, something which desires to raise the people up to the writer, and so to make them happy. But in Pushkin there is something allied indeed to the people, which in him rises on occasion to some of the most naive emotions. Take his story of The Bear, and how a peasant killed the bear’s mate; or remember the verses,

Kinsman John, when we begin to drink . . .
and you will understand what I mean.

All these treasures of art and artistic insight are left by our great poet as it were a landmark for the Turgeniev and Tolstoi are meant.

writers who should come after him, for future labourers in the same field. One may say positively that if Pushkin had not existed, there would not have been the gifted writers who came after him. At least they would not have displayed themselves with such power and clarity, in spite of the great gifts with which they have succeeded in expressing themselves in our day. But not in poetry alone, not in artistic creation alone: if Pushkin had not existed, there would not have been expressed with the irresistible force with which it appeared after him (not in all writers, but in a chosen few), our belief in our Russian individuality, our now conscious faith in the people’s powers, and finally the belief in our future individual destiny among the family of European nations. This achievement of Pushkin’s is particularly displayed if one examines what I call the third period of his activity.

I repeat, there are no fixed divisions between the periods. Some of the works of even the third period might have been written at the very beginning of the poet’s artistic activity, for Pushkin was always a complete whole, as it were a perfect organism carrying within itself at once every one of its principles, not receiving them from beyond. The beyond only awakened in him that which was already in the depths of his soul. But this organism developed and the phases of this development could really be marked and defined, each of them by its peculiar character and the regular generation of one phase from another. Thus to the third period can be assigned those of his works in which universal ideas were pre-eminently reflected, in which the poetic

conceptions of other nations were mirrored and their genius re-embodied. Some of these appeared after Pushkin's death. And in this period the poet reveals something almost miraculous, never seen or heard at any time or in any nation before. There had been in the literatures of Europe men of colossal artistic genius — a Shakespeare, a Cervantes, a Schiller. But show me one of these great geniuses who possessed such a capacity for universal sympathy as our Pushkin. This capacity, the preeminent capacity of our nation, he shares with our nation, and by that above all he is our national poet. The greatest of European poets could never so powerfully embody in themselves the genius of a foreign, even a neighbouring, people, its spirit in all its hidden depth, and all its yearning after its appointed end, as Pushkin could. On the contrary, when they turned to foreign nations European poets most often made them one with their own people, and understood them after their own fashion. Even Shakespeare's Italians, for instance, are almost always Englishmen. Pushkin's alone of all world poets possessed the capacity of fully identifying himself with another nationality. Take scenes from Faust, take The Miserly Knight, take the ballad 'Once there Lived a Poor Knight'; read Don Juan again. Had Pushkin not signed them, you would never know that they were not written by a Spaniard. How profound and fantastic is the imagination in the poem 'A Feast in Time of Plague.' But in this fantastic imagination is the genius of England; and in the hero's wonderful song about the plague, and in Mary's song,

Our children's voices in the noisy school
Were heard . . .

These are English songs; this is the yearning of the British genius, its lament, its painful presentiment of its future. Remember the strange lines:

Once as I wandered through the valley wild.

It is almost a literal transposition of the first three pages of a strange mystical book, written in prose by an old English sectarian — but is it only a transposition? In the sad and rapturous music of these verses is the very soul of Northern Protestantism, of the English heresiarch, of the illimitable mystic with his dull, sombre, invincible aspiration, and the impetuous power of his mystical dreaming. As you read these strange verses, you seem to hear the spirit of the times, of the Reformation, you understand the warlike fire of early Protestantism, and finally history herself, not merely by thought but as one who passes through the armed sectarian camp, sings psalms with them, weeps with them in their religious ecstasies, and with them believed in their belief. Then set beside this religious mysticism, religious verses from the Koran or 'Imitations from the Koran.' Is there not here a Mohammedan, is it not the very spirit of the Koran and its sword, the naive grandeur of faith and her terrible, bloody power? And here is the ancient world; here are Egyptian Nights, here sit the gods of earth, who sat above their people like gods, and despised the genius of the people and its aspirations, who became gods in isolation, and went mad in their isolation, in the anguish of their weariness unto death, diverting themselves with fanatic brutalities, with the voluptuousness of creeping things, of a she-spider devouring her male. No, I will say deliberately, there never had been a poet with a universal sympathy like Pushkin's. And it is not his sympathy alone, but his amazing profundity, the reincarnation of his spirit in the

spirit of foreign nations, a reincarnation almost perfect and therefore also miraculous, because the phenomenon has never been repeated in any poet in all the world. It is only in Pushkin; and by this, I repeat, he is a phenomenon never seen and never heard of before, and in my opinion, a prophetic phenomenon, because . . . because herein was expressed the national spirit of his poetry, the national spirit in its future development, the national spirit of our future, which is already implicit in the present, and it was expressed prophetically. For what is the power of the spirit of Russian nationality if not its aspiration after the final goal of universality and omni-humanity? No sooner had he become a completely national poet, no sooner had he come into contact with the national power, than he already anticipated the great future of that power. In this he was a seer, in this a prophet.

For what is the reform of Peter the Great to us, not merely for the future, but in that which has been and has already been plainly manifested to us? What did that reform mean to us? Surely it was not only the adoption of European clothes, customs, inventions and science. Let us examine how it was, let us look more steadily. Yes, it is very probable that at the outset Peter began his reform in this narrowly utilitarian sense, but in course of time, as his idea developed, Peter undoubtedly obeyed some hidden instinct which drew him and his work to future purposes, undoubtedly more vast than narrow utilitarianism. Just as the Russian people did not accept the reform in the utilitarian spirit alone; but undoubtedly with a presentiment which almost instantly forewarned them of a distant and incomparably higher goal than mere utilitarianism. I repeat, the people felt that purpose unconsciously, but it felt it directly and quite vitally. Surely we then turned at once to the most vital reunion, to the unity of all mankind! Not in a spirit of enmity (as one might have thought it would have been) but in friendliness and perfect love, we received into our soul the geniuses of foreign nations, all alike without preference of race, able by instinct from almost the very first step to discern, to discount distinctions, to excuse and reconcile them, and therein we already showed our readiness and inclination, which had only just become manifest to ourselves, for a common and universal union with all the races of the great Aryan family. Yes, beyond all doubt, the destiny of a Russian is pan-European and universal. To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully, (in the end of all, I repeat) means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universe man. All our Slavophilism and Westernism is only a great misunderstanding, even though historically necessary. To a true Russian, Europe and the destiny of all the mighty Aryan family is as dear as Russia herself, as the destiny of his own native country, because our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite mankind. If you go deep into our history since Peter's reform, you will already find traces and indications of this idea, of this dream of mine, if you will, in the character of our intercourse with European nations, even in the policy of the state. For what has Russian policy been doing for these two centuries if not serving Europe, perhaps, far more than she has served herself. I do not believe this came to pass through the incapacity of our statesmen. The nations

of Europe know how dear they are to us. And in course of time I believe that we — not we, of course, but our children to come — will all without exception understand that to be a true Russian does indeed mean to aspire finally to reconcile the contradictions of Europe, to show the end of European yearning in our Russian soul, omni-human and all-uniting, to include within our soul by brotherly love all our brethren, and at last, it may be, to pronounce the final Word of the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ! I know, I know too well, that my words may appear ecstatic, exaggerated and fantastic. Let them be so, I do not repent having uttered them. They ought to be uttered, above all now, at the moment that we honour our great genius who by his artistic power embodied his idea. The idea has been expressed manjy times before. I say nothing new. But chiefly it will appear presumptuous. ‘ Is this our dest my, the destiny of oui ooor, brutal land? Are we predestined among mankinl to utter the new wr’r J?’

Do I speak of economic glory, of the glory of the sword or of sciei ice? I speak only of the brotherhood of man; I sa y that to this universal, omni-human union the heart of Russia, perhaps more than all other nations, is chiefly predestined; I see its traces in our history, our men of genius, in the artistic genius of Pushkin. Let our country be poor, but this poor land ‘ Christ traversed with blessing, in the garb of a serf.’ Why then should we not contain His final word? Was not He Himself born in a manger? I say again, we at least can already point to Pushkin, to the universality and omni-humanity of his genius. He surely could contain the genius of foreign lands in his soul as his own. In art at least, in artistie creation, he undeniably revealed this universality of the aspiration of the Russian spirit, and therein is a great promise. If our thought is a dream, then in Pushkin at least this dream has solid foundation. Had he lived longer, he would perhaps have revealed great and immortal embodiments of the Russian soul, which would then have been intelligible to our European brethren; he would have attracted them much more and closer than they are attracted now, perhaps he would have succeeded in explaining to them all the truth of our aspirations; and they would understand us more than they do now, they would have begun to have insight into us, and would have ceased to look at us so suspiciously and presumptuous” as they still do. Had Pushkin lived longer, then amo.ng us too there would perhaps be fewe: misunderstandings and quarrels than we st o now. But God saw otherwise. Pushkin died n the full maturity of his yXowers, and undeniably)ore away with him a great secret into the grave. And now we, without him, are seeking to divine his secret.

III

TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY. FOUR SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS READ TO ME ON THE OCCASION OF ONE LECTURE, BY M. GRADOVSKY. WITH AN ADVERTISEMENT TO M. GRADOVSKY.

Of one very fundamental thing

I had just been putting the finishing touch to my Journal, confining it to my ‘Speech,’ delivered in Moscow on the 8th of June, and to the foreword which I had written, anticipating the fuss which was actually made by the press after the publication of my ‘Speech’ in the *Moskovskaia Viedomosti*. But when I had read your criticism, M. Gradovsky, I delayed the publication of my Journal in order to add to it also my answer to your attacks. Oh, my misgivings were justified. There was a terrible fuss. ‘I am haughty.’ I am a coward.’ I am a Manilov,¹ and a poet.’ The police should be called in to suppress these public outbursts — the moral police, the liberal police, of course. But why not the real police? The real police nowadays are quite as liberal as the liberals themselves. Truly, it is only a very little less than calling in the real police! But we will leave that for the meanwhile; I will answer your points immediately.

From the very beginning I will confess that I personally have nothing to do, or to discuss, with you. It is impossible for me to come to an understanding with you; and therefore I have no thought either of persuading or dissuading you. When I read some of your previous articles, I naturally was always amazed by the trend of your thought. So why should I answer you now? Simply because I have in view the others who will judge between us — the public. For them I am writing now.

I hear, I feel, I even see that new elements are rising and springing forth, which thirst for a new word, which are sick and tired of the old liberal giggling at any word of hope for Russia, sick and tired of the old toothless liberal scepticism, sick and tired of the old corpses who have forgotten to be buried and still take themselves for the rising generation, sick and tired of the old liberal guide and saviour of Russia, who after the whole twenty-five years that he stayed with us was ultimately defined, in the people’s speech, as ‘a man who shouts for nothing in the market-place.’ In a word, I should like to do a great deal more than to reply to your observations. In replying now, therefore, I have only seized an opportunity.

First of all you question me and even reprove me, asking why I did not show more clearly whence the ‘wanderers’ came of whom I spoke in my ‘Speech’? Well, that is a long story; one would have to go back too far. Besides, whatever answer I made to that question, you would not agree, because you have already preconceived and prepared your own solution of the question whence and how the ‘wanderers’ came. ‘From weariness of living with Skvoznik-Dmuhanovskys,¹ and from the social yearning after the as yet unliberated serfs.’ A conclusion eminently worthy of a modern liberal-minded man, for whom everything that has to do with Russia has been settled and signed long ago, with the extraordinary ease peculiar to the Russian Liberal alone. Nevertheless the question is more complicated than you think, far more complicated, in spite of your very final solution. I will speak elsewhere of ‘Skvozniks and Yearning,’ but first of all permit me to take hold of one most characteristic word of yours, spoken

¹ A sentimental liar, from Gogol.

with a lightness that is already on the border of playfulness, a word which I cannot pass by in silence. You say:

‘ Whether this be so or no, two centuries have already passed since we have been under the influence of European enlightenment, which acts extremely strongly upon us by reason of the “ universal sensitiveness “ of the Russian, which M. Dostoyevsky acknowledged to be our national trait. There is no way of escape from this enlightenment; neither is there any need to escape. It is a fact, against which we can do nothing for this simple reason, that every Russian who desires to be enlightened, must get this enlightenment from a western European source, because of the absolute lack of sources in Russia.’

Certainly it is playfully expressed, but you have also uttered an important word: enlightenment. Let me ask you then what you mean by it. The sciences of the West, the useful sciences and crafts, or spiritual enlightenment? The former, the 1 A type of cunning, petty swindler, taken from Gogol.

sciences and crafts, must not pass by us unheeded: assuredly we must not avoid them, neither is there any need. I also agree fully that there is no source whence we may obtain them save in Western Europe, for which our praise and gratitude to Europe shall be eternal. But by enlightenment I understand (I think that every one is bound to understand) that which is literally expressed in the very word: enlightenment — a spiritual light which shines upon the soul and illumines the heart, which directs the mind and reveals to it the way of life. If this be so, then allow me to observe that for this enlightenment we have no need to go to Western European sources because of the absolute sufficiency (not the absolute lack) of sources in Russia. You are surprised? You see, in discussion I love to begin with the very substance of the matter, and at once to grapple with the most disputable point.

I assert that our people became enlightened long ago, by taking into its essential soul Christ and His teaching. I may be told it has no knowledge of Christ’s teaching, for no sermons are preached to it. But this is an empty objection. It knows indeed everything that it needs to know, though it cannot pass an examination in the catechism. It came to know this in temples where for centuries it had heard prayers and hymns which are better than sermons. The people repeated and sang these prayers while they were still in the forests, in hiding from their enemies; perhaps as long ago as the invasion of Batu-Khan they sang: ‘ Lord of Powers, be with us!’ and then perhaps they won a firm knowledge of that hymn, because nothing was left to them but Christ, and in that one hymn is all the Christian truth. What of it that the people hear no sermons and the clerks mumble indistinctly, which is the greatest accusation levelled against our Church, an accusation invented by the Liberals together with the inconvenience of the ecclesiastical Slavonic language, which is supposed to be incomprehensible to the common people? What of it? Instead, the priest stands forth and reads: ‘ Lord Sovereign of my life ‘ — in this prayer is the whole essence of Christianity, all its catechism, and the people know this prayer by heart. They also know by heart many Lives of the Saints; they tell them over and over again and listen to them with deep

emotion. But the greatest school of Christianity through which they have passed are the centuries of innumerable and unending sufferings which they have endured through their history when, deserted by all, trodden down by all, working in all places and for all men, they remained with Christ alone, Christ the Consoler whom they had taken into their soul for ever, and who in return had saved their souls from despair! But why do I tell you all this? Do I desire to convince you? My words will assuredly appear to you childish, almost indecent. But for the third time I say: it is not for you that I am writing. And the matter is important. Concerning it I must speak particularly and at length, and so long as I can hold a pen in my fingers, I will speak. But now I will only express the fundamental basis of my thought. If our people have already been enlightened long ago by having received into their essential soul Christ and His teaching, then with Him, with Christ, they assuredly have received the true enlightenment also. Combined with such a deep store of enlightenment the sciences of the West will of course become a true blessing to the people. Christ Himself will not be eclipsed by the sciences, as in the West, where, however, He was not eclipsed by the sciences, as the Liberals assert, but long before the advent of science, when the Western Church herself distorted the image of Christ, changing herself from a Church into a Roman State, and again incarnating the State in the form of the Papacy. Yes, in the West Christianity and the Church truly exist no longer, though there are still many Christians, nor will they ever disappear. Catholicism is truly Christianity no longer; it degenerates into idolatry: and Protestantism with giant strides runs down the steep into Atheism and into a wavering, fluid, fickle, instead of an eternal, morality.

Oh, of course, you will instantly reply that Christianity and the worship of Christ does by no means comprise in itself and by itself the whole cycle of enlightenment, that it is only one rung of the ladder, that there is need besides of science, of social ideals, of progress and the rest. To that I have nothing to reply; moreover it would be indecent to reply, for though you are right in part, concerning science, for instance, you will never agree that the Christianity of our people is and must for ever remain the chiefest and most vital basis of its enlightenment. In my 'Speech' I said that Tatiana, by her refusal to follow Onyegin acted like a Russian, according to the Russian national truth. One of my critics, offended at finding that the Russian people has a truth of its own, replied with the ques-

tion: * What about promiscuity? ' Can such a critic be answered? The chief cause of his taking offence is that the Russian people should have a truth of its own, and therefore should be really enlightened. But does promiscuity exist throughout the whole of our people, and does it exist as a truth? Does the whole people take it for a truth? Yes, the people are coarse, though by no means all, by no means all. This I can swear upon oath, because I have seen the people and known them. I have lived with them years enough, I have eaten and slept with them and I myself have been ' reckoned with the transgressors ' ; with them I worked real work and hard, while others ' whose hands were washed in blood,' playing the liberal and sniggering at the people, settled in lectures and magazine articles that our people is of' the likeness and the seal of the

Beast.' Don't tell me, then, that I do not know the people! I do know them. From them I received Christ into my soul once more, whom I knew in the home of my childhood, and whom I all but lost when in my turn I changed into ' a European Liberal.' But let us grant that our people is sinful and coarse, let us grant that his likeness is still the likeness of the Beast.

The son rode his mother,
His young wife the trace horse. . . .

There must be a reason for this people's song? All Russian songs are built upon some actual event, you have observed that? But be just, only for once, you liberal minds. Remember what our people has endured through so many centuries! Remember who is chiefly to blame for the likeness of the Beast, and do not condemn! But it is ludicrous to condemn the peasant because he does not have his hair cut by the coiffeur on the Great Morskaja. Yet to such heights of accusation do our European Liberals almost reach when they rise up against the Russian people and begin to deny them. They have not developed an individuality. They have not even a national character. And in the West, by God, wherever you will, in whatever nation you choose — is there less drunkenness and robbery, is there not the same bestiality, and into the bargain an obduracy which is not to be found in our people, and a true and veritable ignorance, a real unenlightenment, because it is often connected with a lawlessness which is there no longer considered as sin, but has begun to be held for truth? Let there be bestiality and sin among our people, but what there is incontestably within them is that they, at least as a whole, and not only in the ideal, but in the very real reality, neither accept nor desire to accept their sin for truth! Our peasant may sin, but he will always say sooner or later: ' I did falsely.' If the sinner will not say it, then another will say it for him, and the truth will be fulfilled. Sin is a stench, and the stench will pass away when the sun shines fully. Sin is passing, Christ is eternal. The people sins and defiles itself daily, but in its best moments, in its Christian moments, it will never mistake the truth. It is indeed important, in what the people believes as its truth, in what it finds her, how it represents her to itself, what it holds for its best desire, what it has come to love, what it asks of God, for what it prays and weeps. And the ideal of the people — is Christ. And surely with Christ is en-

lightenment; and in its highest and most crucial moments our people always decides and always has decided every matter of their commonwealth absolutely according to Christ. You will jeer and say: ' It is not enough to cry, neither to sigh; one must also do, one must also be.' And among yourselves, you Russian enlightened Europeans, are there many righteous? Show me your righteous, whom you prefer before Christ? But know that among the people there are righteous. There are positive characters of unimaginable beauty and power whom your observation has not yet touched. These righteous and martyrs for truth do exist, whether we see them or not. He who has eyes to see, he will see them; but he who has eyes only for the likeness of the Beast, he of course will see nothing. But our people at least knows that there are righteous and martyrs among them, and believes that they are there. The people is strong with this

knowledge and with the hope that in the moment of common need they will save them. And how many times has the people saved the country? And but lately, defiled in sin, drunkenness and depravity, the spirit of the people, of all the people as one whole, rejoiced at the recent war for the faith of the Christian Slavs which had been trampled underfoot by the Turks. The people embraced the war, and took it as a sacrifice in expiation for its unrighteousness and sin; it sent its sons to die for a sacred cause, and did not wail because the rouble was falling and the price of food was rising. I know the elevation of the spirit of our people in the last war; but the Liberals do not recognise the causes of that elevation, they laugh at the idea: ‘ This canaille with a collec-

tive ideal, a social sense, a political idea — impossible!’ And why, why is our European Liberal so often the enemy of the Russian people? Why is it that in Europe those who call themselves democrats always stand for the people, or at any rate always rely on the people, while our democrat is often an aristocrat, nearly always supports that which oppresses the power of the people and ends by becoming a despot. Oh, I do not assert that they are consciously the enemies of the people; the tragedy is that it is not conscious. You will be exasperated by these questions? Well, all these things are axioms to me, and of course I shall go on demonstrating and proving them so long as I can write and speak.

Let me finish thus: sciences, certainly, but enlightenment we have no need to imbibe from any Western European source, or we may imbibe such social formulae as, for instance, *Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous* or *Après moi, le deluge*. Oh, it will be said instantly: ‘ Haven’t we such sayings of our own: “The taste of a man’s salt is always forgotten,” and hundreds of other proverbs of that kind? ‘ Yes, there are a host of sayings of all kinds among the people. The mind of the people is broad, its humour too; the developed consciousness always whispers a negation. But all these are only sayings: our people does not believe in their moral truth, it laughs at them and mocks them, and as a body, at least, it denies them. But will you venture to assert that *Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous* is only a saying, and not an established social formula, accepted by everybody in the West, which all Westerners serve and in which they all believe?

At least, all those who stand above the people, who keep the people in check, who are masters of the land and the proletariat, and who stand sentinel over ‘ European enlightenment.’ Of what use to us is that enlightenment? Let us search for a different enlightenment among ourselves. Science is one thing; enlightenment another. By hope in our people and its powers we will perhaps at some time develop in fulness, in perfect radiance and illumination, this Christian enlightenment of ours.

You will of course tell me that this long discourse of mine is not an answer to your criticism. Granted. I myself consider it only a preface, but a necessary one. Just as you discover and indicate in me, in my ‘ Speech,’ the points wherein I differ from you, which you consider the most important and paramount, so have I first of all indicated and displayed the point in you where I consider our most fundamental discord lies,

which more than all else prevents our coming to an agreement. But the preface is over. Let me proceed to your criticism, henceforward without digressions.

2

Aleko and Derzhimorda. Aleko's Yearnings After the Serfs. Anecdotes

You write in criticism of my speech:

‘ But Pushkin, in portraying Aleko and Onyegin with their denial, did not show exactly what they “ denied,” and it would be extremely rash to assert that they denied “ the national truth,” the funda-

mental principles of the Russian conception of the world. This is nowhere evident.’

Well, whether it is evident or not, whether it is rash to assert it or not — to that question we shall return immediately; but first, this is what you say of the Dmuhanovskys from whom Aleko is supposed to have run to the Gipsies.

‘ But really the world of those old wanderers,’ you write, ‘ was a world which denied another world. To explain these types other types are necessary, and these Pushkin did not create, though he turned towards them at times with burning indignation. The nature of his genius prevented him from descending into this darkness and from making “ a gem of creation “ out of the owls and bats which crowded the basements of the Russian House [and not the upper floors as well? (Dostoyevsky)]. This Gogol did, Gogol the great reverse of Pushkin. He told the world why Aleko ran to the Gipsies, why Onyegin was weary, why “ superfluous people “ had come into the world, the men whom Turgeniev was to immortalise. Korobochka, Sobakievieh, Skvoz-nik-Dmuhanovsky, Derzhimorda, Tyapkin¹ — Lyap-kin — these are the dark side of Aleko, Beltov, Rudin and many others. These are the background without which the latter figures are not to be understood. And these Gogol heroes were Russians; how very Russian they were! Korobochka had no world-sorrow, Skvoznik-Dmuhanovsky could deal splendidly with tradesmen, Sobakievich saw through his peasants and they saw through him as well. Certainly Aleko and Rudin did not see all this fully, nor did they understand it; they simply ran away ¹ All these are realistic types from Gogol.

wherever they could, Aleko to the Gipsies, Rudin to Paris, to die for a cause completely foreign to him.’

You see ‘ they simply ran away.’ Easy solution, like a feuilleton! And how simply you put it, how beautifully prepared and settled everything is with you! Truly the words are ready to your tongue. But, by the way, why did you let drop that all these Gogol heroes were Russians, ‘ Oh, how very Russian they were!’ It has nothing at all to do with our discussion. Who does not know that they were Russians? Aleko and Onyegin were also Russians, you and I are also Russians; Rudin also was Russian, thoroughly Russian — Rudin who ran away to Paris to die for a cause, as you say, completely foreign to him. But for this very reason he is superlatively Russian, because the cause for which he died in Paris was by no means so foreign to him as it would have been to an Englishman or a German; for a European cause, a world-cause, a universal

human cause, has long since not been foreign to a Russian. That is Rudin's distinctive characteristic. Rudin's tragedy strictly was that he could find no work in his native fields, and he died on another's fields, which were, however, nothing like so foreign to him as you say. However, the point is this: all these Skvoznik-Dmuhanovskys and Sobakieviches, though Russians, are Russians spoiled, torn from the soil; and though they know the life of the people on one side, knowing nothing of the other, and not even suspecting that the other side does really exist — this is the whole point. The soul of the people, that for which the people thirsts, for which the people asks in a spirit of prayer, this they did not even suspect, because they terribly despised the people. They even denied his soul, except perhaps for the purpose of the census.¹ 'Soba-kievich saw through his peasants,' you assert. That is impossible. Sobakievich saw in his Proshka only so much labour, which he could sell to Chichikov. You assert that Skvoznik-Dmuhanovsky could manage tradesmen splendidly. Heavens above! Read once more the monologue of the provost to the tradesmen in the fifth act. Only dogs are treated in that way, not men. Is this to manage a Russian splendidly? Do you really praise it? It would be far better to give them a blow in the face or drag them by their hair. In my childhood I once saw on the high road a King's Messenger, in a uniform with revers, and a three-cornered hat with a feather, who never stopped beating the driver with his fist, while the driver madly lashed his sweating, galloping troika team. The King's Messenger was, of course, a Russian born, but so blinded, so far torn from out the people, that he had no other way of dealing with a Russian than by his huge fist, instead of any human speech. Yet he had passed his whole life with post-boys and all sorts of Russian peasants. But the revers of his uniform, his feathered hat, his rank as an officer, his patent-leather Petersburg boots, were dearer to him, psychologically and spiritually, not only than the Russian peasant, but perhaps than the whole of Russia, which he had galloped over far and wide, but in which he probably found nothing worthy of remark or of any other¹ In official returns in Russia an individual is referred to as 'a soul.' Thus, a town of ten thousand inhabitants is in the Russian census, a town of ten thousand souls. It is significant of the English temperament that the corresponding use of the word is chiefly confined to those who go down to the sea in ships.

attention save a blow of his fist or a kick with his patent-leather boot. All Russia was to him represented only by his superiors; outside them everything was almost unworthy to exist. How could such an one understand the people or their soul? Though he was a Russian, he was a 'European' Russian, who had begun to be European, not for enlightenment, but for debauchery, as many, very many, began. Yes, debauchery of this kind has more than once been held with us to be the surest way of remaking Russians into Europeans. The son of such a King's Messenger will perhaps be a professor, that is a European by letters patent.

So do not talk of those Gogol types understanding the essence of the people. A Pushkin, a Khomia-kov, a Samarin, an Aksakov were needed before one could begin to speak of the real essence of the people. (It had been discussed before them, indeed,

but in a classical and theatrical way.) And when they began to speak of ‘ the national truth,’ every one looked upon them as epileptics and idiots, whose ideal was ‘ to eat radishes and write secret informations.’ Yes, informations! Their appearance and their opinions so much astonished everybody at first that the Liberals began even to suspect, ‘ Surely they want to lay informations against us?’ And tell me, please, how far modern Liberals have advanced beyond this silly conception of the Slavophiles.

But to get to business. You assert that Aleko ran to the Gipsies to get away from a Derzhimorda. Let us suppose that it is true. But the worst of all, M. Gradovsky, is that you yourself quite convincingly admit Aleko’s right to all his aversion. ‘ He could not help running away to the Gipsies, for a Derzhimorda was too disgusting.’ And I assert that Aleko and Onyegin were also Derzhimordas in their way, and in certain respects even worse. The only difference is that I do not in the least blame them for it, for I know perfectly well the tragedy of their fate, while you praise them for running away. ‘ Could such great and interesting men really live with those monsters?’ ‘ You are profoundly mistaken. You conclude that Aleko and Onyegin did not tear themselves away from the soil at all, and did not at all deny ‘ the national truth.’ Moreover, ‘ They were not proud at all’ — you go so far as to assert that. But pride is here the direct, logical and inevitable outcome of their abstraction and detachment from the soil. You cannot deny that they did not know the soil; they grew and were brought up like children in a convent school; they got to know Russia in their office in Petersburg; their relations with the people were those of a landlord with a serf. And suppose even that they had lived in the country with the peasants. My King’s Messenger had mixed with post-boys all his life long, and he found in them only stuff for his clenched fist. Aleko and Onyegin were haughty and impatient with Russia, like all who live in a separate coterie apart from the people, with all found, who live, that is, on the labour of the peasants and on European enlightenment which they also got for nothing. Indeed, the fact that all our intellectuals for almost the whole of two centuries of our history, as the result of a certain stage in their evolution, became merely idlers, explains their abstraction and detachment from their native soil. Aleko perished not because of Derzhimorda, but because of his inability to understand Derzhimorda and his genesis. For that he was too proud. Since he was unable to understand, he found it impossible to work in his native field. And he considered those who did believe in that possibility, as fools or as Derzhimordas also. And not only with Derzhimorda was our wanderer proud, but with Russia as well, since his final conclusion was that Russia contained only serfs and Derzhimordas. If there were any nobler element in her, then it was they, the Alekos and Onyegins, and no one besides. After that, pride comes of itself: living in abstraction they naturally began to be amazed by their own nobility and their superiority over the disgusting Derzhimordas, in whom they could understand nothing at all. Had they not been proud, they would have seen that they also were Derzhimordas, and seeing this they might perhaps have found in that very vision a way of reconciliation. Towards the people they felt not pride so much as utter loathing.

You will not believe all this. On the contrary, when you say that certain traits of the Alekos and Onyegins are uncomely, you presumptuously begin to reprove me for the narrowness of my outlook, because ‘ it is hardly reasonable to cure the symptoms and neglect the cause of the disease.’ You assert that when I say ‘ Humble thyself, proud man,’ I am accusing Aleko for his personal qualities merely, and am leaving out of account the root of the matter, ‘ as if the whole point in question were the personal qualities of those who are proud and do not desire to humble themselves.” The question is not settled,’ you say, ‘ on what the wanderers did pride themselves; and the other question is also unanswered — before what should they humble themselves?’

This is all very presumptuous. I thought that I concluded in so many words that the ‘ wanderers ‘ are a product of the historical evolution of our society. Therefore I do not throw all the blame on them alone personally and on their personal qualities. You have read it; it is written and printed. Why then do you misrepresent me? You quote the passage ‘ Humble thyself,’ and write:

‘ In these words M. Dostoyevsky expressed the holy of holies among his convictions, that which is at once the strength and weakness of the author of *The Brothers Karamazov*. In these words is contained a great religious ideal, a mighty charge to personal morality, but there is not even an allusion to social ideals.’

After these words you instantly begin to criticise the ideal of ‘ personal perfection in the spirit of Christian love.’ I will deal with your opinion of ‘ personal perfection ‘ presently, but I will first turn inside out before your eyes all the lining of your soul which you apparently would like to hide. And that is: you are angry with me not merely because I accuse the ‘ wanderer,’ but because I do not acknowledge him as the ideal of personal perfection, as a healthy Russian, which he alone could, and ought to, be! You admit that there are uncomely traits in Aleko and Onyegin, but you are only dodging. In your inner belief, which for some reason you do not wish to reveal fully, the ‘ wanderers ‘ are normal and excellent, excellent by this alone that they ran away from the Dcrzhimordas. You look indig-

nant if any one ventures to detect even the slightest fault in them. You say immediately: ‘ It would be absurd to assert that they were destroyed by their pride, and they did not want to humble themselves before the national truth.’ And finally you hotly assert and insist that it was they who liberated the serfs. You write:

‘ I will say more: if in the soul of the best of these wanderers some great idea was preserved, then it was the care for the people; their most burning hatred was directed against serfdom, which lay heavy on the people. Grant that they loved the people and hated serfdom in their own way, grant that it was a European way. But who else than they prepared our society for the abolition of serfdom? In what they could they too served “the native field,” first as the apostles of liberation and then as arbiters of peace.’

The point is that ‘ the wanderers ‘ hated serfdom in their own way, in ‘ the European way.’ The whole value of the argument is there. It is that they hated serfdom not for the sake of the Russian peasant, who worked for them, and fed them, and was therefore

oppressed by them no less than others. If their social sorrow had indeed so strong a hold on them that they had to run away to the Gipsies or the barricades in Paris, what prevented, what hindered them from purely and simply liberating their own peasants and giving them their land, and thus removing the social sorrow, in so far at least as they were themselves responsible? But one heard too little of such liberations, and too much of social rhetoric. ‘ Their environment ruined them; moreover, why should they lose their capital? ‘ But why should they not lose it if they had come to such a pitch — that from sorrow for the peasants they had to run away to the barricades? And that is the root of the matter. In the cosy corners of Paris a man still needs money, even though he stands sentry on a barricade, and the serfs had to forward their poll-taxes. Or ‘ the wanderers ‘ took a still simpler course: they mortgaged, sold or exchanged — isn’t it all the same? — their peasants, and when they had realised them, they went off to Paris to help in publishing French radical papers, and reviews for the salvation of all mankind, not merely of the Russian moujik. You assure me that they were devoured by sorrow for the serf? Not by sorrow for the serf, but by an abstract sorrow for slavery in mankind: it must not be, it is uncivilised. Liberie, Egalite, Fraternalite. And as for the Russian peasant personally, perhaps sorrow for him did by no means inflict such terrible torments upon those great hearts. I know and remember many of the intimate opinions of very, very ‘ enlightened ‘ men of the good old days. * Undoubtedly slavery is a terrible evil,’ they used to whisper intimately among themselves, ‘ but if you take it all in all, is our people really — a people? Well, is it like the people of Paris in ‘03? It has grown accustomed to slavery; it has the face and figure of a slave. Of course a eat-o’-nine-tails is an abominable thing, speaking generally, but for a Russian, by Jove, the cat’s still a necessity.’ . . . ‘ You must flog a Russian peasant. A Russian peasant would pine away if he wasn’t flogged — that’s the kind of nation it is.’ That is what I have heard, I swear, in my time even from very enlightened men. That is ‘ the sober truth.’ Perhaps Onyegin did not flog his domestics, though it’s really hard to say, but Aleko — well, I’m sure that Aleko used to give them a flogging, not from cruelty of heart, but almost out of compassion, almost for a good purpose. ‘ He must have it. He can’t live without a dose of flogging. He comes himself and asks:

Give me a flogging, sir; make a man of me. I ‘ve been spoiled!’” Pray tell me what can be done with such a character. Well, I’ll satisfy him, and give him a flogging!’

I repeat, their feeling towards the peasant at times reached nausea. And what a mass of contemptuous anecdotes about the Russian peasant circulated among them, contemptuous and obscene anecdotes about his slavish soul, his ‘ idolatry,’ his priest, his wife — all these were retailed light-heartedly, sometimes by men whose private life was fit for a brothel — oh, of course, not always because of an evil soul, but sometimes really only from excessive ardour to adopt the latest European ideas (d la Lucretia Floriana, for instance) which were understood and assimilated in our own way, with true Russian impetuosity. Russians had a hand in anything! Russian sorrowing wanderers ‘ were at times great rogues, M. Gradovsky, and those same little anecdotes about the Russian peasant, and their contemptuous obiter dicta about him, nearly

always assuaged the poignancy of their hearts' social sorrow for serfdom, by giving to it an abstract and universal character. And with the abstract and universal kind of sorrow a man can easily live in comfort, feeding spiritually upon the contemplation of his own moral beauty and the elevation of his social thought, and physically —

well, still feeding, and feeding richly, on the rent from these same peasants!

Quite lately an old eye-witness who had observed those days told an anecdote in a review about a certain meeting of the foremost men of liberal and universal minds of that time with a peasant woman. Here we have gathered wanderers par excellence, wanderers by letters patent, as it were, who had proved their title in the matter of history. In the summer of 18-45 a crowd of guests arrived at an admirable country house near Moscow, where, in the words of an eye-witness, 'colossal dinners' were given. The guests comprised the most humanitarian professors, the most amazing amateurs and connoisseurs of the fine arts and other things as well, the most renowned democrats, and finally famous political workers of world-wide importance, critics, writers, highly educated women. Suddenly the whole company, probably after a champagne dinner, with fish-pies and pigeon's milk — there must have been some reason why these dinners were called 'colossal' — set out for a walk in the fields. In a remote corner of the corn they meet a woman harvester. Heavy summer work in the fields during harvest-time: the peasants and their women-folk get up at four o'clock to get in the corn and work until night. It's very hard to bend and reap for twelve solid hours; the sun is burning. When a harvest woman gets into the corn she generally cannot be seen. And now, here in the corn, our company finds a harvest woman — imagine it, in 'a primitive costume' (in her shirt!). It is terrible. The universal feelings of humaneness are offended; an indignant voice is instantly heard. 'Only the Russian woman among all women has no sense of shame.' Of course, the inference is inevitable. 'Only before a Russian woman is one ashamed of nothing.' A discussion began. Advocates of the Russian woman also appeared, but what advocates! and with what objections they had to contend. And all kinds of opinions and conclusions could be heard among the crowd of wanderers — landlords who slaked their thirst with champagne, swallowed oysters — and who paid? The woman with her labour! It is for you, you universal sufferers, that she is working; her labour paid for your feast. And because, while she was in the corn where she could not be seen, tormented by sun and sweat, she took off her skirt and worked in her shirt alone, she is shameless and has offended your sense of modesty—' she is of all women most shameless '— oh, you chaste gentlemen! What about your 'cosy corners in Paris' and your pranks in 'the gay little city,' and those pleasant little cancanes at the Bal Mabille, only to tell of which makes a Russian leap for joy, and that fascinating little chanson,

Ma commere, quand je danse Comment va mon cotillon?

with the charming upward flick of the skirt, and the twitch of the rump — this does not in the least offend our chaste Russian gentlemen; on the contrary it delights them! 'By Jove, it's so graceful, the cancan, the fascinating twitch — it's the most exquisite article de Paris of its kind: but there you have a hag, a Russian hag, a block, a log!'

And now it's not even the conviction of the foulness of our peasant and our people any more, but it is a personal feeling of aversion to the peasant — oh, of course, an involuntary, almost unconscious aversion, which they themselves hardly even notice. But I confess I can by no means agree with your very fundamental proposition, M. Gradovsky: 'Who else but they prepared our society for the abolition of serfdom?' Perhaps they served the cause only with their abstract trivialities, while they shed their social sorrow according to all the rules. Oh, naturally, it made part of the general economy and had its use. But the liberation of the peasants was furthered, and those who laboured for that liberation were helped, rather by men who followed Samarin's trend of ideas than by your wanderers. Men of the type, like Samarin,² a type perfectly unlike the wanderers, appeared for the great work of that time: they were by no means few, M. Gradovsky, but of them, of course, you say not a single word. The wanderers, according to all the evidence, were very soon bored by the work of emancipation, and commenced to turn up their noses again. They would not have been wanderers had they acted otherwise. Upon the receipt of the compensation — the Government paid the landlords when it freed the serfs — they began to sell the rest of their lands and forests to merchants and speculators to be cut down and destroyed; they emigrated, and introduced absenteeism. ... Of course, you won't agree with my opinion, Herr Professor, but what can I do? I cannot possibly agree to accept the picture of your darling, the superior and liberal-minded Russian, as the ideal of the real and normal Russian, as he was, is now, and ever shall be. Little good work have these men done during the last decades in the national field. And there is more truth in my statement than in your dithyrambs in honour of these gentlemen of the good old times.

3

Two Halves

Now I come to your views on 'personal perfection in the spirit of Christian love' and to what you call its insufficiency in comparison with 'social ideals,' and above all in comparison with 'political institutions.' You yourself begin with the assertion that this is the most important point of disagreement between us. You write:

'Now we have reached the most important point in our disagreement with M. Dostoyevsky. While he demands humiliation before the national truth and the national ideals, he assumes that that truth and those ideals are something ready prepared, unshakable and eternal. We will allow ourselves to assure him of the contrary. The social ideals of our people are still in process of formation and development. The people has still much work to do upon itself, that it may be worthy of the name of a great people.'

I have already partly replied to you concerning 'the truth' and national ideals at the beginning of this article, in the first section. You find that truth and those ideals quite

² Samarin was a famous Slavophile leader.

insufficient for the development of Russia's political ideals, as though you were to have said that religion is one thing and political work another. With your scientific knife you cut a whole, living organism into two separate halves and assert that these halves must be quite independent of each other. Let us look more closely, let us examine each of these two halves separately, and perhaps we shall come to some conclusion. Let us first investigate the half concerning 'personal perfection in the spirit of Christian love.' You write:

' M. Dostoyevsky calls to men to work upon themselves and to humble themselves. Personal self-perfection in the spirit of Christian love is, of course, the first premiss of any activity, great or small! But it does not follow that men who are personally perfected in the Christian sense will infallibly form a perfect society. I shall allow myself to put forward an instance.

4 Paul the Apostle instructs slaves and masters concerning their mutual relations. Slaves and masters alike could hearken, and usually did hearken to the word of the apostle. Personally they were good Christians; but slavery was not sanctified thereby. It remained an immoral institution. In the same way, M. Dostoyevsky, like all of us, has known splendid Christians, landlords and peasants alike. But serfdom remained an abomination in the sight of God, and the Tsar Liberator appeared as the spokesman of the demands not merely of personal but of social morality as well, of which social morality there was no right conception in the olden time, although perhaps there were then as many good people as there are now.

' Personal and social morality are not one and the same. Whence it follows that no social perfection can be attained solely through the improvement of the personal qualities of those who form the society.

Let us take another example. Suppose that, beginning from the year 1800, a whole series of preachers of Christian love and humility had begun to improve the morality of the Korobochkas and the Sobakieviches. Can it be supposed that they would have achieved the abolition of serfdom, so that the word of authority would not have been necessary for the removal of that phenomenon? On the contrary, a Korobochka would have begun to demonstrate that she was a true Christian and a genuine "mother" of her peasants, and she would have remained in this conviction in spite of all the arguments of the preachers.

' The improvement of the people in the social sense cannot be effected by work "upon oneself" alone and by "humbling oneself." To work upon oneself and to subdue one's own passions — this can be done even in the wilderness or upon a desert island. But as social beings, people develop and improve by work beside one another, for one another and with one another. That is why the social perfection of a people very greatly depends upon the degree of perfection of their political institutions, which educate in man the civic, if not the Christian virtues. . . .'

You see how much of you I have copied out! It is all very high and mighty, and 'personal perfection in the spirit of Christian love' gets much the worst of it. It appears that in civic affairs it is good for nothing, or almost so. You have a strange

way of understanding Christianity. Only imagine that Korobochka and Sobakievich should become real Christians, already perfect — you yourself speak of perfection — can they be persuaded to renounce serfdom? That is the artful question which you ask, and, of course, reply: ‘ No, it’s quite impossible to persuade Korobochka, even if she were to become a perfect Christian.’ To this I will reply immediately, that if only Korobochka could become, and became, a genuine, perfect Christian, then serfdom would no longer exist on her estate at all, so that there would be no need to trouble, notwithstanding that the title deeds and conveyances remained in her strong-box as before. But Korobochka was a Christian before and was born a Christian! So that when you speak of the new preachers of Christianity you understand by the word something which is in essence the same as the old Christianity, but in a strengthened, perfect form, as it were having reached its ideal? Well, how could there be slaves and masters then?

But one must have some small understanding of Christianity! What would it matter to Korobochka, already a perfect Christian, whether her peasants were serfs or not? She is ‘ a mother ‘ to them, a genuine mother, and the ‘ mother ‘ would instantly abolish the ‘ lady ‘ that was. That would come of itself. The lady and the slave that were would dissolve away like mist before the sun, and quite new people would appear, in quite new relations with one another, relations that had never been heard of before. And an unheard-of thing would be accomplished. Everywhere would appear perfect Christians, who, when they were scattered individuals, were so few that no one was sensible of their presence. You made that fantastic supposition yourself, M. Gradovsky; you yourself opened the door upon that wonderful fantasy, and since you opened the door, then you must take the consequences. I assure you, M. Gradovsky, that Korobochka’s peasants would themselves refuse to leave her, for the simple reason that every man seeks what is better for himself. Would it be better for them among your institutions than with the mother-lady who loved them? I also venture to assure you that if slavery existed in the clays of Paul the Apostle, it was only because the churches which had sprung up in those days were as yet imperfect — which we can also see from the epistles of the Apostle. And those members of the churches who had then attained to personal perfection, no longer had nor could have slaves because the slaves turned brothers, and a brother who is a true brother cannot have his brother as a slave. According to you, it follows somehow that the preaching of Christianity was impotent.

At all events, you write that slavery was not sanctified by the Apostle’s preaching. But other learned men, particularly European historians as a whole, have rebuked Christianity because, as they say, it sanctifies slavery. Which means that they fail to understand the essence of the matter. Is it possible even to imagine that Mary of Egypt could have serfs and yet not want to set them free! What absurdity! In Christianity, in true Christianity, there are and there will ever be, masters and servants, but a slave can never be even conceived. I speak of a true and perfect Christianity. Servants are not slaves. The pupil Timothy served Paul when they journeyed together; but read

Paul's epistle to Timothy. Is it written to a slave, to a servant even? He is in truth his 'child Timothy,'

his beloved son. These, these are indeed the relations that will be between master and servant, if master and servant became perfect Christians! Servants and masters there will be, but masters will be no longer lords nor servants slaves. Imagine that there will be a Kepler, a Kant, and a Shakespeare in the society of the future. They are working at a great work for all men, and all men acknowledge it and respect them. But Shakespeare has no time to tear himself away from his work to tidy his room, to clean up everything. Be sure another citizen will infallibly come to wait upon him, of his own desire. He will come of his own free will and tidy up Shakespeare's room. Will he be thereby degraded? Will he be a slave? By no means. He knows that Shakespeare is infinitely more useful than himself. 'Honour and glory to thee,' he will say, 'and I am glad to serve thee. Thereby I wish to do though it be only a little service to the common good, for thus I will save thy time for thy great work, but I am not a slave. Indeed, by confessing that thou, Shakespeare, are higher than myself by thy genius, and coming to serve thee, by this my admission I have, proved that in the moral dignity I am not in the least below thee, and as a man, I am thy equal.' But he will not even say that then, for the simple reason that such questions then will not arise; they will not be even thinkable. For verily all men will be new men, the children of Christ, and the beast of old will be conquered. You will, of course, say that this is another dream. But it was not I who was the first to dream, but you: it was you who imagined a Korobochka, already a perfect Christian, holding 'children serfs' whom she will not set free. This a worse dream than mine.

Here the clever people will laugh and say: 'After that, it's all very well to worry about self-perfection in the spirit of Christian love, when there is no real Christianity at all on the earth, or so little of it that it is hard to see, because otherwise everything would be right in an instant, all slavery would be abolished, every Korobochka would be regenerated into a shining genius, and one thing alone would be left for all to do — to sing a hymn to God.' Yes, of course, you sneering gentlemen, real Christians are still terribly few (though they do exist). But how do you know how many indeed are wanted that the ideal of Christianity should not perish from the people, and the people's great hope perish with it? Apply the thought to secular conceptions. How many real citizens are wanted that civic virtue should not perish from society? And this you will not answer. Here is a strange political economy, one of a quite different kind and wholly unknown to you, even to you, M. Gradovsky, wholly unknown. It will be said again: 'If there are so few confessors of the great idea, what is the good of it? And how do you know to what advantage it will lead in the end? Hitherto it was evidently necessary that the great idea should not perish. It is a different matter now when a new thing is descending everywhere upon the world and every man should be prepared for it. . . .

And here the point is not one of advantage at all, but of truth. If I believe that the truth is here, here exactly in what I believe, then what do I care if even the whole world should refuse my truth,

mock at me and go its way? In this indeed is the strength of a great moral idea, that it unites people into the strongest union, that it is not measured by immediate advantage, but it guides the future of men towards eternal aims and absolute joy. Wherewith will you unite men for the attainment of your civic aims if you have no foundation of a primary, great moral idea? Moral ideas are all of one kind: all of them are based upon the idea of absolute personal self-perfection in the future, in the ideal, since self-perfection bears in it all things, all aspirations, all yearnings, and from it therefore spring all our civic ideals also. Try to unite people into a civic society with the one sole aim of 'saving their little lives.' You will achieve nothing but the moral formula: *Chacun your soi et Dieu four tous*. By that formula no civic institution will live long, M. Gradovsky.

But I will go further; I intend to surprise you. Know, learned professor, that social and civic ideals, as such, in so far as they are not organically connected with moral ideals, but exist by themselves like a separate half cut off from the whole by your learned knife; in so far, finally, as they may be taken from the outside and successfully transplanted to any other place, in so far as they are a separate 'institution' — such ideals, I say, neither have nor have had nor ever could have any existence at all! For what is a social ideal and how shall we understand the word? Surely its essence lies in men's aspiration to find a formula of political organisation for themselves, a possible organisation which shall be faultless and satisfactory to all — is it not so?

But people do not know the formula. Though they have been searching for it through the six thousand years of history, they cannot find it. The ant knows the formula of the ant-hill, the bee of the hive — though they do not know it after the manner of human knowledge, they know it in their own way and desire nothing beyond — but man does not know his formula. If this be so, whence could the ideal of civic organisation appear in human society? Examine the question historically and you will immediately see whence it comes. You will see that is nothing else than the product of the moral self-perfection of the individual units. Thence it takes its rise, and it has been so from time immemorial and it will be so for ever and ever. In the origin of any people or any nation, the moral idea has always preceded the birth of the nation, because it was the moral idea which created the nation. This moral idea always issued forth from mystical ideas, from the conviction that man is eternal, that he is more than an earth-born animal, that he is united to other worlds and to eternity. Those convictions have always and everywhere been formulated into a religion, into a confession of a new idea, and always so soon as a new religion began, a new nationality was also created immediately. Consider the Jews and the Moslems. The Jewish nationality was formed only after the law of Moses, though it began with the law of Abraham, and the Moslem nationalities appeared only after the Koran. In order to preserve the spiritual treasures they had received men instantly began to draw towards each other, and only

then, jealously and avidly, working ‘ beside one another, for one another, and with one another, as you so eloquently express it, only then did men begin to seek how they should organise themselves so as to preserve without loss the treasures they had received, how they should find a civic formula of common life that would really help them to exhibit in its full glory to the whole world the moral treasure which they had received.

And observe that so soon as the spiritual ideal — after times and centuries had passed — had begun to be shaken and weakened in a particular nationality, the nationality itself also began to decline, and at the same time her civic organisation began to fall and all the civic ideals which had formed in her began to be obscured. According to the mould in which a nation’s religion was being cast, the social forms of the people were also engendered and formulated. Therefore civic ideals are always directly and organically connected with moral ideas, and generally the former are created by the latter alone. They never appear of themselves, for when they appear they have one aim alone, the satisfaction of the moral aspirations of the particular people to the exact degree to which those moral aspirations are being formed. Therefore ‘ self-perfection in the spirit of religion ‘ in the life of nations is the foundation of everything, since self-perfection is the confession of the religion which they have received, and ‘ civic ideals ‘ never appear nor can they be engendered without the aspiration to self-perfection. You will perhaps reply that you yourself said that ‘ personal self-perfection is the beginning of everything ‘ and that you severed nothing at all with your knife. But this is the very thing that you severed; you cut the living organism into two halves. Self-

perfection is not only ‘ the beginning of everything,’ it is the continuation and the issue as well. It, and it alone, includes, creates and preserves the organism of nationality. For its sake does the civic formula of a nation live, since it was created only in order to preserve it as the treasure primarily received. But when a nationality begins to lose the desire within itself for a common self-perfection of its individuals in the spirit which gave it birth, then all the ‘ civic institutions’ gradually perish, because there is nothing left to be preserved. Thus it is quite impossible to say what you say in the following phrase:

‘ That is why the social perfection of a people very greatly depends upon the degree of perfection of their political institutions, which educate in man the civic, if not the Christian virtues.’

‘ The civic, if not the Christian virtues ‘! Can you not see here the learned knife which divides the indivisible, which cuts the whole and living organism into two separate, dead halves, the moral and the civic? You will say that the most lofty moral idea may be contained in ‘ political institutions ‘ and the title of ‘ citizen,’ that in mature and developed nations the ‘ civic idea’ always takes the place of the original religious idea, which degenerates into the former, and to which the civic idea succeeds by right. Yes, there are many who assert this thing; but we have not yet seen this dream in realisation. When the moral and religious idea of a nationality is spent, there is always revealed a panic and cowardly desire for a union, whose sole purpose is ‘ to

save men's bellies ' — there are no other purposes left for a civic union. At the present moment the French bourgeoisie is actually uniting itself with this purpose of saving their bellies ' from the fourth estate which is already battering at its doors. But ' the saving of bellies ' is the last and most impotent idea of all those which unite mankind. This is already the beginning of the end, the omen of annihilation. They are uniting themselves and keeping a sharp eye open for the first moment of danger when they will scatter like lightning. And what can save ' the institution ' as such, taken by itself? If these are brothers, there will be brotherhood. If there are no brothers, you will not achieve brotherhood by any ' institution.' What is the sense of erecting an ' institution ' and carving upon it *Liberie, Egalite, Fraternite*”? You will get no good from an ' institution ' and you will be driven, necessarily and infallibly you will be driven, to add to the three consiuiant words the fourth also: *ou la mort. Fraternie ou la mori*: and brother will begin to chop off the head of brother in order to attain brotherhood by means of a 4 civic institution.' This is only an example, but it is a good one.

You, M. Gradovsky, like Aleko, look for salvation in things and in external phenomena. Grant that we have fools and rogues in Russia. We have only to transplant some institution from Europe and — according to you—' everything will be saved.' The mechanical transportation of European forms into Russia (which will be shattered in Europe tomorrow), which are foreign to our people and contrary to the popular will, is we know well the all-important word of Russian Europeanism. And by the way, M. Gradovsky, when you censure our lack of organisation, blaming Russia and pointing to Europe with admiration, you say:

' And in the meanwhile we cannot get rid of the inconsistencies and contradictions of which Europe got rid long ago.'

Has Europe got rid of them? Where did you learn this? She is on the eve of ruin, your Europe, of a general, universal and terrible catastrophe. The ant-hill which has long been in course of formation within her, without a Church and without Christ (for the Church, having muddled her ideal, was long ago embodied in the State), with a moral principle shattered to its foundations, having lost all that it had of universal and of absolute, — that ant-hill, I say, is wholly undermined. The fourth estate is coming; it knocks and batters at the door, and if the door be not opened, it will be broken down. The fourth estate does not want the ideals of old; it denounces all that has been up till now. It will not make little compromises, little concessions; you will not save the building by little supports. Something will come which none imagine. All these parliamentarisms, all the social theories nowadays professed, banks, science, Jews — all will be annihilated in a single instant and leave no trace, except perhaps the Jews, who will even then devise a method of action by which the work of destruction may be profitable to them. All these things are near, ' at the gate.' You laugh? Blessed are they that laugh. God grant you years that you may yourself behold it. You will be surprised in that day. You will laugh and say: ' Plow well you love Europe if you prophesy this of her!' Am I glad? I have only the feeling that the reckoning is made. The final account, the payment of the bill, may come to pass much

sooner than the quickest imagination can conceive. The symptoms are terrible. Alone, the inveterately unnatural political situation of the powers of Europe may serve for a beginning to anything! How could they be natural, if their formation was unnatural and the abnormality has accumulated for centuries? One small portion of mankind shall not possess the rest as a slave; yet it was solely for this purpose that all the civic institutions of Europe (long since un-Christian, which are now perfectly pagan) have hitherto been formed. This unnaturalness and these ‘ insoluble ‘ political questions (which are, by the way, familiar to everybody) must infallibly lead to one huge, final, disintegrating, political war, in which all Powers will have a share, and which will break out in our century, perhaps even in the coming decade. And do you think that society now can endure a long political war? The capitalists are cowardly and timorous, the Jews also; all the factories and banks will be closed as soon as the war begins to be protracted or threatens to be a long one, and millions of hungry mouths, of miserable proletarians, will be thrown into the street. Do you rely upon the wisdom of statesmen and upon their refusal to undertake a war? When was it possible to place any reliance upon that wisdom? Do you put your trust in Parliaments, and believe that they will foresee the results and refuse the money for the war? But when have Parliaments foreseen results and refused money to the slightest insistence of a man in power? But the proletarian is in the street. Do you think he will wait and starve in patience as he used? After he has tasted political socialism, after the International, after the Socialist Congresses and the Paris Commune? No, it will not now be as it used to be. They will hurl themselves upon Europe and all the old things will crumble for ever. The waves will be broken by our shore alone, since only then will it be palpably and evidently revealed how greatly different is our national organism from the European. Then, even you, messieurs les doctrinaires, will perhaps bethink yourselves and begin to search in our people for ‘ national principles ‘ at which you only laugh now.

And now, gentlemen, now you point us to Europe and appeal to us to transplant those very institutions which will crumble there to-morrow, as absurdities which have had their day and in which a great many clever people even there no longer believe, which maintain themselves and exist only by the force of inertia. Who but an abstract doctrinaire could seriously take the comedy of the union of the bourgeoisie, which we see in Europe, as the normal formula of the union of men upon the earth? We are told that they got rid of contradictions long ago — and this after twenty constitutions in less than a century, and after well-nigh a dozen revolutions? Oh, perhaps, it will only be then that we shall be freed for a while from Europe, and ourselves engage, without European tutelage, in the pursuit of our own social ideals which inevitably spring from Christ and personal self-perfection, M. Gradovsky.

You will ask: ‘ What social and political ideals of our own can we have to save Europe? ‘ Why, social ideals better than the European, stronger than the European, stronger than yours and even — oh, horror — more liberal than yours! Yes, more liberal because they spring directly from the organism of our people and are not a servile and bloodless im-

portation from the West. I cannot of course say-much upon this subject, if only because this paper is already too long. But in this connection, remember what was the ancient Christian Church and what it aspires to be. It began immediately after the death of Christ, with a handful of people, and instantly, almost in the very first days after the death of Christ, it attempted to discover its ‘civic formula,’ which was wholly based upon the moral expectation of satisfying the spirit by the principles of personal self-perfection. Then arose the Christian communities — Churches; then speedily began to be created a new and hitherto unheard-of nationality, a nationality of universal brotherhood and humanity, in the shape of the catholic oecumenical Church. But the Church was persecuted, and the ideal grew beneath the earth, and above it, on the face of the earth, an immense building was also being formed, a huge ant-hill, the old Roman empire, which was also the ideal and the outcome of the moral aspirations of the whole ancient world. But the ant-hill did not fortify itself; it was undermined by the Church. Then occurred the collision of the two most opposite ideas that could exist in the world. The Man-God met the God-Man, the Apollo Belvedere met the Christ. A compromise arose: the Empire accepted Christianity, and the Church accepted Roman law and the Roman state. A small part of the Church went into the desert and began to continue its former work. Christian communities once more appeared, then monasteries; and there were only attempts, attempts that have lasted even unto our day. The large remaining part of the Church was subsequently divided, it is well known, into two halves. In the Western half the State ultimately completely overcame the Church. The Church was destroyed and finally transformed into the State. The Papacy appeared — the continuation of the ancient Roman Empire in a new incarnation. In the Eastern half the State was subdued and destroyed by the sword of Mahomet, and there remained Christ alone, already separated from the Church. And the State, which had accepted and exalted Christ anew, suffered such terrible and unending sufferings at the hands of its enemies, from the Tartar kingdoms, from disorganisation, from serfdom, from Europe and Europeanism, and endures so much until this day, that a real social formula in the sense of the spirit of love and Christian self-perfection has not yet been evolved in it. You, M. Gradovsky, mercilessly reproach Russia with her disorganisation. But who was it that hindered her from organising herself well during the whole of the last two centuries and especially during the last fifty years? Just such people as yourself, M. Gradovsky, Russian Europeans who were always with us for the two centuries and now have settled upon us particularly. Who is the enemy of Russia’s organic and independent development upon her own national principles? Who sneers and will not admit even the existence of those principles and does not even want to see them? Who wanted to remake our people, by fantastically ‘raising them up to himself’ — simply in order to manufacture little Europeans, like themselves, by occasionally breaking off from the mass of the people a single individual and corrupting him into a European, if only by virtue of the reverse of his uniform? By that I do not mean that a European is corrupt; I say only that to remake a Russian into a European in the way in which the Liberals do, is often real corruption. Yet in this lies the whole ideal of their programme

of activity, in just paring off single individuals from the general mass. What absurdity! Did they really want to tear off and remake in exactly this way all the eighty millions of our people? Do you seriously believe that all our people, as a whole, in its great mass, will consent to become such an impersonality as these gentlemen, these Russian Europeans?

4

To One — Humble Thyself, and to Another — Be Proud. A Storm in a Tea-cup

Hitherto I have only been debating with you, M. Gradovsky; but now I wish to accuse you for your deliberate distortion of my thought, of the chief point of my ‘Speech.’ You write:

‘ There is still too much untruth, the residue of long years of slavery, in our people, for it to demand worship for itself, and to pretend, moreover, to the task of converting all Europe to the true path, as M. Dostoyevsky predicts. . . .

‘ A strange phenomenon! The man who punishes pride in the persons of individual wanderers invites a whole people to be proud, because he sees in them a universal apostle. To the one he says, “Humble thyself! “; to the other he says,” Exalt thyself! ““

And further:

‘ Not yet having become a nation, suddenly to dream of a universal role! Is it not too early? M. Dostoyevsky is proud of the fact that we have served Europe for two hundred years. We must confess that the thought of this “service “ excites no feelings of pleasure in us. Can the time of the Congress of Vienna and the age of Congresses in general be an object of pride to us? Is it by chance the time when we, serving Metternich, suppressed the national movement in Italy and Germany and looked askance even at our co-religionists, the Greeks? What undying hatred we have gained in Europe for that very “service “!’

First, I will dwell for a moment on this last, almost innocent, little misrepresentation. Did I, when I said that k we had served Europe during the last two hundred years perhaps even more than we served ourselves,’ — did I praise the manner of our service? I only wanted to point to the fact of our service, and the fact is true. But the fact of our service and the manner of our service are two utterly different things. We may have made many political blunders, as the Europeans make them every day, but it was not our blunders which I praised. I only pointed to the fact of our almost always disinterested service. Do you really not understand that these are two different things?

‘ M. Dostoyevsky is proud because we served Europe,’ you say. I was not priding myself at all when I said that. I was only pointing out a characteristic of our national spirit, a very significant characteristic. Does it mean that one is proud if he should find an admirable and healthy characteristic in the national spirit? And why do you talk of Metternich and the Congresses? Are you going to give, me instruction in history? When you were still a student I spoke of our service to Metternich in language much

stronger than yours, and for my words concerning our ill-omened service to Metternich (among other words, of course) — I paid, as you know now, thirty years ago. Why did you distort my words? To show everybody: ‘ See what a Liberal I am, and now listen to the poet, the enthusiastic lover of the people, and hear what reaction he is babbling, priding himself on our service to Metternich!’ That is conceit, M. Gradovsky.

This is of course a trifle, but what follows is no trifle at all.

So, to say to the people, ‘ Exalt thy spirit!’ is the same as to say ‘ Be proud!’; is the same as inciting to pride, as teaching pride. Imagine, M. Gradovsky, that you should say to your own children: ‘ My children, exalt your spirit, be noble!’ — does it indeed mean that you teach them pride, or that you, in teaching them, are proud? And what did I say? I spoke of the hope of ‘ at the last becoming brothers of all men,’ begging that my hearers should underline the words ‘ at the last.’ Is the bright hope that some day brotherhood will be realised in our suffering world, and that we may be allowed to become brothers of all men — is that hope pride, and an incitement to pride? But I said directly, in so many words, at the conclusion of my ‘ Speech’:

‘ Do I speak of economic glory, of the glory of the sword or of science? I speak only of the brotherhood of man; I say that to this universal omni-human union the heart of Russia, perhaps more than all other nations, is predestined.’

These were my words. And do they contain an incitement to pride? Immediately after the words I have quoted from my ‘ Speech’ I added:

‘ Let our eountry be poor, but this poor land “ Christ traversed with blessing in the guise of a serf.” Why then should we not contain his final word?’

Does this word of Christ imply an incitement to pride; and is the hope of containing this word, pride? You write indignantly: ‘ It is too early for us to demand worship for ourselves.’ But where, pray, is the demand for worship? Is it the desire for universal service, the desire to become servants and brothers of all men and to serve them with love — does that mean to demand worship from all? If there be here any demand for worship, then the sacred, disinterested desire for universal service instantly becomes an absurdity. One does not bow down to servants, and a brother does not want his brother to kneel before him.

Imagine to yourself, M. Gradovsky, that you have done or are about to do a good deed, and on your way in the elation of your good feelings you think to yourself: ‘ How glad the poor fellow will be at the unexpected help I am bringing him; how his spirits will be raised, how he will revive, how he ‘ll tell of his good fortune to his friends and his children, how he ‘ll weep with them. . . .’ As you think all this to yourself, you will naturally have a feeling of elation, and sometimes tears will even come to your eyes — have you really never experienced that? — and then comes a clever voice beside you, whispering into your ear: ‘ You are being proud of yourself, thinking all this to yourself.

You are weeping tears of pride.’ But now, the mere hope that we Russians may have some small significance for mankind, and that we may ultimately be worthy of doing it brotherly service — this mere hope roused enthusiasm, and enthusiastic tears,

in the thousands who listened to me. I do not recall this for boasting's sake, or for pride; I only wish to mark the seriousness of the moment. There was given only the bright hope that we too may be something for mankind if only as brothers to other men, and that passionate hint alone sufficed to unite all in one thought and one feeling. Strangers embraced and vowed to be better men. Two old men came up to me and said, 'For twenty years we were enemies and did each other wrong. Your words have reconciled us.' A certain newspaper made haste to remark that all this enthusiasm meant nothing. The mood was already there, and it was idle for the orators to speak and make perorations. Whatever they said the enthusiasm would be the same, for the benign mood was prevalent in Moscow. The journalist should himself have come to Moscow and have made a speech. Would men rush to hear him, as they rushed to me, or not? Why was it that when speeches were made three days before, great ovations were given to the speakers, but to none of them happened what happened to me? That was the only moment in the Pushkin celebrations, and it was not repeated. God is my witness that I tell this not to my own praise. But the moment was too serious to be passed by in silence. Its seriousness consisted exactly in that new elements in society were brightly and clearly revealed; there appeared new men who long for heroic action, for the consolation of an idea, for a labour of devotion. It meant that society is no longer ready to be satisfied with our liberal sniggering at Russia. It meant that the doctrine of Russia's perpetual impotence already stinks in the nostrils. Only a hope, only a hint, and men's hearts were kindled by the sacred longing for an omni-human task, for a service and an action of universal brotherhood. Were those tears the tears of pride? Was that an incitement to pride? Ah, you!

You see, M. Gradovsky, the seriousness of the moment suddenly terrified a great many people in our liberal tea-cup, the more so, seeing it was so unexpected. 'What! Hitherto we sniggered at and bespattered everything — so pleasantly and profitably — and then comes this speech. . . . But it's a riot. . . . Call the police! 'Several frightened gentlemen sprang up: 'What will happen to us now? We used to write, too . . . what are we to do now? We must smother all this as quickly as we can, so that not a trace shall be left, and we must instantly proclaim to the four corners of Russia that it was only due to a benign mood that happened to be prevalent in hospitable Moscow, a pleasant little moment after a series of dinners, no more than that — and as for the riot, well, we '11 have the police in!'

And they have begun. They say I am a coward and a poet, and a mere nobody. My speech is quite valueless. In a word, in the heat of their passion they have even acted imprudently. The public might not believe them. The thing ought to be done skilfully. It should be taken in colder blood.

Something in my 'Speech' ought even to be praised. 'Still,' they should say, 'there is a sequence of ideas in his "Speech,"' and then little by little they should spit on it all, and smother it to the general satisfaction. In brief, they have not been so very clever. There was a blank space: it had to be filled quickly, and then and there appeared a solid, serious critic who combines a recklessness in attack with the proper blend of

cmnme il faut. You were that critic, M. Gradovsky. You wrote: every one read: and all was quiet. You have at least served a common and an admirable cause. You were reprinted everywhere: 'The poet's speech will not bear serious criticism. Poets are poets, but wise men are on their guard and at the appointed time will always pour cold water on the dreamer.' At the very end of your article you ask me to forgive such expressions as I may consider hard in your article. As I finish my article, I will not offer you an apology for my sharp expressions, M. Gradovsky, if there are any in my article. I am not speaking personally to A. D. Gradovsky, but to the publicist A. Gradovsky. Personally I have not the least reason for not respecting you. But if I do not respect your opinions, and insist upon it, how can I smooth matters by apologising? It gave me pain to see that a very serious and critical moment in the life of our society was misrepresented and wrongly explained. It gave me pain to see the idea which I serve dragged about the street. It was you who dragged it there.

I know, and every one will tell me, that it was not worth while, that it was ridiculous to write this long answer to your article, which was rather short com-

pared with mine. But I repeat, your article served only as a pretext: I wished to say some things generally. I am going to begin *The Journal of an Author* again next year.³ Let the present number serve as a profession of faith for the future, a specimen copy, so to say.

It may perhaps still be said that by my answer I have destroyed the whole sense of the 'Speech' which I delivered in Moscow, wherein I myself called upon both Russian parties to be united and reconciled, and admitted the justification of them both. No, no, no! The sense of my 'Speech' is not destroyed; on the contrary, it is made still stronger, since in my answer to you I point out that both parties, estranged one from the other, in hostility one to the other, have put themselves and their activity into an abnormal situation, whereas in mutual union and agreement, they would perhaps exalt everything, save everything, awaken endless powers and summon Russia to a new, healthy, and mighty life, hitherto unseen.

³ At the beginning of that year Dostoyevsky died.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



The Non-Fiction of Fyodor Dostoyevsky

<archive.org/details/dreamofqueerfell00fyod>
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